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## Asian Art in London prize winners reveal

Last week's gala party for Asian Art in London, held at Bonhams on November 14, was also the occasion to announce the winners of the event's two art awards.



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The award for most outstanding work of art from an auction house, sponsored by *ATG*, was given to Christie's for the pair of 19in (48cm) high Qianlong 'daji' double gourd form plaques, **above**.

Offered for sale by a direct descendant of the prominent Scottish merchant Daniel Beale (1759-1842) who had acquired them in China in the early 19th century, these were constructed of precious materials (lapis lazuli, jade, rose quartz, stained ivory, coral, kingfisher feathers, zitan and silver wire) to convey numerous auspicious messages.

### Monumental figure

The award for the most outstanding work of art from a dealer went to Jonathan Tucker Antonia Tozer Asian Art for the 2nd or 3rd century Gandharan sculpture pictured **above**.

The monumental 2ft 4in (71cm) high carved schist figure of a long-haired Bodhisattva dressed in the attire and adornments of Kushan royalty comes from an English collection.

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## Qing magnificence rules across Asian Art London sale series

Market-fresh examples of Qing imperial splendour dominated a week of auctions timed to coincide with this year's Asian Art in London event.



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Christie's posted the top lot among the 'big three' salerooms selling a pair of Qianlong (1735-96) 'daji' double gourd form plaques for £610,000 (estimate £120,000-180,000) at a £4.9m sale on November 5.

These deluxe imperial confections, bursting with auspicious messages expressed through the careful choice of motifs and rebuses, were offered for sale by a direct descendant of a China trade merchant. The pair also received the award for the most outstanding work of art from an auction house (also see *AAL* prize winners story).

A £4.7m sale titled *Imperial Porcelain – A Private Collection* on November 6 produced Sotheby's best-seller. A 7in (18cm) Qianlong mark and period *yingxitu* vase painted with roundels of boys playing with goldfish and butterflies – a scene representing prosperity, wealth and longevity and the desire for male offspring – doubled hopes to sell at £420,000.

Last sold in 1995, the vase was formerly owned by the celebrated Chicago collector Stephen Junkunc III (d.1978).

On the same day, the firm's £4.5m mixed-vendor sale of *Important Chinese Art* was topped by a 7in (17cm) Qianlong mark and period copper-red decorated moonflask intricately painted with a complex geometric design after a Yongle prototype took £190,000. It is one of three similar vessels collected by Robert C Bruce (1898-1953). Two others were sold by Sotheby's in 1953 and 1979 with this one coming by descent with an estimate of £30,000-50,000.

Catalogued as late Qing or Republican, a pair of cloisonné enamel stools from the estate of the Littlewoods heir and arts patron Sir Peter Moores leapfrogged a £10,000-15,000 guide to bring £235,000.

Bonhams' £1.7m Chinese art sale on November 7 was topped by two good jades from contrasting periods. A 6½in (16cm) Qianlong pale green jade *luohan* boulder was on the market for the first time since it was acquired in Hong Kong in the 1950s. It is carved with two of the Sixteen Luohans in landscape grottos – identified in inscriptions as *Angaja* (holding a flywhisk) and *Kalika* (a bell in each hand). It sold at £200,000, 10 times the estimate.

A 7in (18cm) pale green jade figure of the bodhisattva of wisdom Mahasthamaprapta was made in the 13th or 14th century at the end of the Song or the beginning of the Yuan period. Offered by descent from an English private collector with hopes of up to £120,000, it took £180,000.

## Japanese works of art



📷 Mitsukuni Defying the Skeleton Spectre Conjured Up By Princess Takiyasha by Utagawa Kuniyoshi – £160,000 at Sotheby's.

The top Japanese work of art sold last week came in a Bonhams sale on November 7 titled Masterpieces of Japanese art from a Royal Collection.

Sold at £300,000 was a large-scale 2ft x 15in (61 x 38cm) Shibata Zeshin (1807-91) lacquer panel of a farmhouse in the snow at Sano. The scene, taken from the Noh play *Hachi no ki*, shows the impoverished courtier Tsuneyo Genzaemon offering hospitality to Lord Hojo Tokiyori disguised as a wandering monk.

It is signed in gold maki-e characters *Gyonen nanajunana Koma Zeshin sei* (Made by Koma Zeshin, aged 77) and is dated 1883. An accompanying receipt records its sale in Japan in April 1926 for ¥3750 but it has a much more recent auction history, having been sold by Bonhams in November 2014 for £700,000.

The previous day Bonhams sold the second tranche of a collection of netsuke formed by Robert Huthart, the Newcastle-born manager of the Hong Kong department store conglomerate Lane Crawford.



📷 A kurogaki netsuke frog by Seiyodo Tomiharu from the Robert Huthart collection – £16,500 at Bonhams.

His focus was the distinctive netsuke produced by late 18th and early 19th century carvers based in the seaboard province of Iwami (present-day Shimane Prefecture). A *kurogaki* (black persimmon) carving of a frog by Seiyodo Tomiharu (1733-1810), formerly in the Anne Hull Grundy collection, topped the £300,000 sale at £16,500.

The November 5 £2.2m sale of Fine Japanese Art at Sotheby's recorded bids of £160,000 each for impressions of well-known Edo *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. These were Katsushika Hokusai's *Shower Below the Summit* (also known as *Black Fuji*) c.1831 and Utagawa Kuniyoshi's depiction of a monstrous skeleton spread across a three-sheet triptych. The latter, sold for almost 10 times the estimate, was untrimmed, an early state and still brightly coloured.

More sales of Asian art are being held early this week.

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## Chinese vase bought in charity shop for £1 sold for £380,000 at Sworders auction

Purchased for £1 from a Hertfordshire charity shop earlier this year, a Qianlong (1736-95) famille rose wall vase sold for £380,000 at Sworders in London today (plus 25% buyer's premium).



📷 This c.1740-50 Qianlong wall pocket vase sold at Sworders on November 8 at £380,000 (plus 25% buyer's premium).

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The lucky vendor of the vessel – which is inscribed with an imperial poem – was in the room at the Westbury Hotel, Mayfair on November 8 to watch it sell after a 10-minute bidding contest.

Unaware of the significance of his find he has had been deluged with bids and enquiries after briefly listing it for sale on eBay. After withdrawing it from sale it was taken to his local auction for a fuller appraisal. Swords's valuation had been £50,000-80,000 but serious interest at much higher levels had been expressed prior to sale.

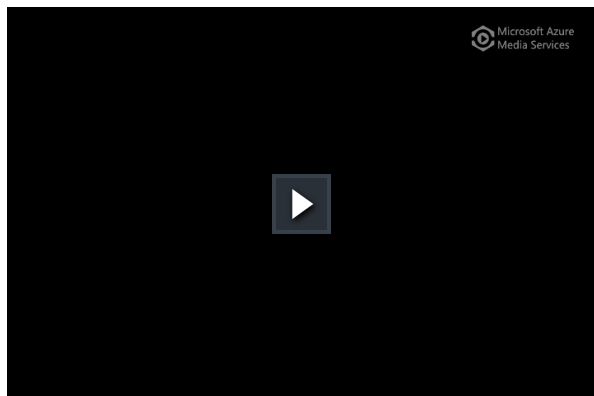
Following the result the vendor said: "I am ecstatic, what a result, it's all for my young daughter."

## Sworders auction house record

A spokesperson from Sworders added: "This has been the perfect auction story: a bargain find, a culturally important and beautiful work of art and a life changing sum of money for the vendor.

"It's the most expensive item Sworders have sold in its 230-year-plus history."

The 8in (19cm) high pear-shaped wall pocket with ruyi handles and a yellow sgraffito ground is inscribed with a poem praising incense alongside a *yuti* mark and two iron-red seal marks reading *Qianlong chen han* ('the Qianlong Emperor's own mark') and *Weijing weiyi* ('be precise, be undivided').



## Favourite vessel

Wall vases were one of Qianlong's favourite porcelain vessels. There are 320 in the Palace Museum (138 of them are inscribed with poems by the emperor) with this vase identical to another pair in the collection, save their differing texts. The choice of poem (written by the art and culture-obsessed emperor prior to his accession) helps date this vase to the 1740s.

According to Zaoban Chu Gezuo Chengzuo Huoji Qingdang (The Archives of the Imperial Workshops), in 1742 the emperor commissioned Tang Ying (1682-1756), head of the Jingdezhen imperial kilns, to produce porcelains inscribed with poems he had written as Heshuo Bao Qinwang (Prince Bao of the First Rank) that had been published in 1737 as *Yuzhi leshantang quanji dingben* [Definitive Edition of the Complete Works by His Majesty from the Hall of Pleasure in Goodness]. A decree of 1752 instructed Tang Ying to use only poems composed after his accession in 1735.

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