

The perfect gift...

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE



What not to miss at Asian Art in London this year

Matthew Wilcox

31 OCTOBER 2018



L18221_9WDYQ_3-3-1 Sotheby's (£70,000–£100,000)

SHARE

TWITTER

LINKEDIN

FACEBOOK

@ EMAIL

The global market for Asian art has gone from strength to strength in the past

year. In May Christie's achieved its highest ever total for a sale of contemporary Asian art, which reached just over \$128m. The sale's top lot, 14.12.59 by Zao Wou-Ki, more than doubled its estimate to fetch \$22.6m.

With London still the centre of the world's trade in Asian art, and the most internationally focused of all the world's art capitals, the city's dealers are set to reap the rewards of the ongoing boom in the field. Accordingly, this year, Asian Art in London (AAL; 1–10 November), the event dedicated to promoting London dealers and auction houses, is looking stronger than ever.

The ambitious programme includes the usual exciting range of symposia, lectures and seminars. Complementing these are a series of guided gallery hops. The exceptionally varied range of events coinciding with AAL even includes an intriguing exhibition devoted to North Korean art. More than 50 works owned by the Song family will be on display at the Mall Galleries in the show 'North Korea: Natural Beauty'. As the co-curator Teresa Song puts it, 'With this exhibition, we hope to bring to light the wealth of talent and diversity in North Korea through a non-political lens and in doing so, attract a new audience for and interest in the artistic and cultural landscape of the DPRK.'





Dhal Shield (late 18th century), Mewar (Udaipur), Rajasthan, India. Runjeet Singh (price on application)

In keeping with the broad approach of this year's edition of AAL, South Asia and South East Asia are well represented. Warwickshire-based Runjeet Singh will be presenting a show on Ryder Street: 'The Goddess: Arms and Armour of the Rajputs', a highlight of which will be a late 18th-century leather shield from Mewar in Rajasthan, painted with the royal insignia and four depictions of lions and tigers attacking animals on the circumference. At Peter Finer there are more arms from the subcontinent in the form of a Mughal dagger from the mid 17th century, and a scabbard from the 19th century. And at Asia House, look out for a performance by the singer-songwriter and Sarangi-player Amrit Kaur Lohia, titled 'Eternally Displaced: Soundscapes from India' (30 October).



Dagger (*khankjar*), mid 17th century, Mughal, India. Peter Finer (price on application)

Proof of AAL's ongoing appeal is the participation of overseas dealerships. New York-based Raquelle Azran Vietnamese Contemporary Fine Art is organising 'Indochine Scenes: Vietnamese and French Paintings from the 1900s', which will be on view at Guy Peppiatt/Stephen Ongpin Gallery in Mason's Yard. Azran says, 'It is intended to offer a glimpse into the fascinating world of Indochine, where French and Vietnamese artists forged the basis for contemporary Vietnamese fine art.' On show will be works by French *peintres voyageurs* (painter-travellers), and a selection of mid-century Vietnamese paintings, including works by artists such as Le Pho and Luu Cong Nhan.

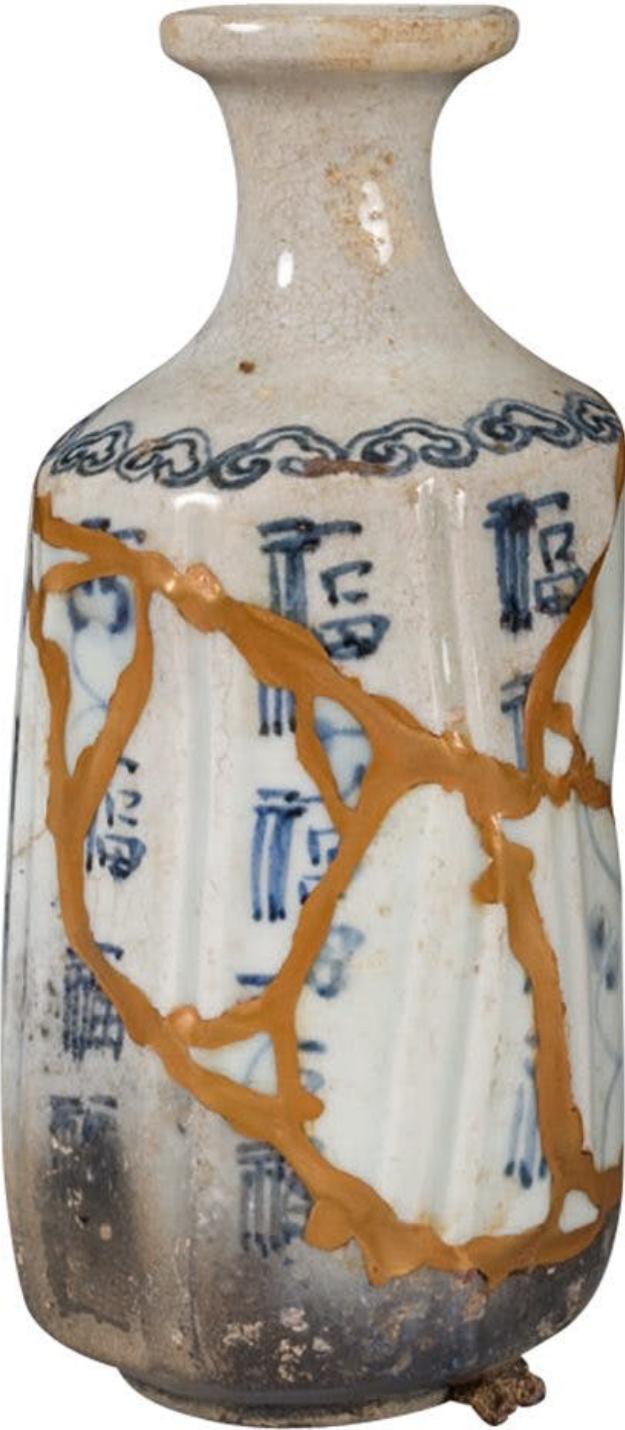
London's oldest Asian art dealership, Sydney L. Moss (founded in 1910) is putting on a playful Halloween-themed show, 'Devils, Demons and Bakemono', which delves into the dark side of Japanese folklore, presenting lacquer work, pipercases, *inro* and netsuke. Georgia Leach, a specialist at the dealer, says, 'We love folklore and telling stories here. This show gives us the

chance to showcase some of our stuff that the public never gets to see.'



Netsuke of a boy and a *sake* ghost (c. 1800), unsigned, Osaka. Sydney L. Moss (£27,500)

Basel-based gallery, Bachmann Eckenstein Japanese Art, run by Thomas Bachmann and Gabriel Eckenstein, will be sharing a space at Gallery 8 in Duke Street with two other dealers of Japanese art, Simon Pilling and Hanga Ten. Thomas Bachmann says, 'When AAL started 21 years ago we always planned to participate but, in the early years, it was a London-dealers-only event. After AAL opened up to overseas dealers, we thought "Let's do it.'" Highlights of the Bachmann Eckenstein exhibition, titled 'Japan Eccentrics', include an Edo period glazed ceramic sake flask. The flask has been repaired using the kintsugi technique in which patches, made from the sherds of another vessel, are grafted with lacquer to the shattered original.



Sake flask (tokkuri) (17th century), Japan. Bachmann Eckenstein Japanese Art (£4,500)

This year's event seems to offer further proof of a revival of interest in Japanese art. Sotheby's is testing the market with its 6 November sale of Fine Japanese Art – the house's first dedicated London auction of Japanese art in more than 10 years. The star lot of the Japanese sale is an exquisite 16th-century portable shrine, the hinged doors of which open to reveal an inner frame containing an oil painting of Christ (estimate £70,000–£100,000).



Portable shrine (16th century), Japan. Sotheby's (£70,000–£100,000)

Since Sotheby's closed its Japanese department in 2007, it has been Bonhams that has championed Japanese art in the auction world. Suzannah Yip, head of Japanese Art at Bonhams, says, 'The market for Japanese art is very strong in London. The quality of the workmanship is unmatched. It's one of the only areas of Asian art that is still really undervalued, with huge gaps between estimates and prices achieved. Conventional valuation doesn't reflect the intrinsic value of the craft.' On 6 November, Bonhams will be holding a sale called The Julius and Arlette Katchen Collection of Fine Netsuke: Part III. The sale dedicated to netsuke will be followed by the 8 November sale of Fine Japanese Art that will include a rare silver gilt sculpture of a dragon ascending Mount Fuji (estimate up to £50,000).

One of the reasons for London's primacy in the market for Asian art is its proximity to world-class centres of research. Coinciding with AAL, in Oxford this year, St Hugh's College will host an exhibition devoted to Michael Alphonsus Shen Fuzong, the first Chinese visitor to England known by name (8 October–14 December). It will look at the six weeks Shen spent in Oxford as the guest of Thomas Hyde, Bodley's Librarian, and includes Sir Godfrey Kneller's life-size portrait of Shen, which was commissioned by James II in 1687, and is still part of the Royal Collection.



Moonflask (bianhu) (1725–35), China. Christie's London (£1.2m–£1.5m)

Chinese art occupies its usual prominent place in proceedings. Christie's will be offering a selection of traditional Chinese artefacts at its sale of Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art on 6 November, which includes a superlative large, blue-and-white Ming-style moonflask (estimate £1.2m–£1.5m). And Bonhams will be offering The Ollivier Collection of Early Chinese Art, featuring a stunning bronze ritual tripod wine vessel from the Zhou Dynasty (estimated at £300,000–£500,000).



Ritual tripod wine vessel (Jia), early Western Zhou dynasty (c. 1046–771), China. Bonhams (£300,000–£500,000)

Jorge Welsh Works of Art, specialists in Chinese export porcelain and cross-cultural works of art from Africa, India, China and Japan, will be showing ‘Through Distant Eyes: Portraiture in Chinese Export Art’, which includes an exquisite Qing dynasty porcelain punch bowl bearing a portrait of Fanny Murray (c. 1765–70).

This year as buyers flock from around the world for Asian Art in London, the range and quality on offer confirms not only London’s passion for and expertise in Asian art, but also its continued place at the heart of the global art market.

Asian Art in London takes place at various venues from 1–10 November.

From the November issue of *Apollo*. Preview and subscribe [here](#).

Want stories like this in your inbox?

Sign up today to receive Apollo highlights direct to your inbox – and be the first to know about Apollo events, special offers, and what’s in the latest issue

Name *

Email *

- Apollo highlights – weekly comment and reviews, plus monthly previews of the print edition
- Apollo briefing – the week's top exhibition openings, art news and gossip
- Apollo news and special offers – send me special offers and announcements from Apollo

SIGN UP

There's never been a better time to subscribe to Apollo magazine. Start your subscription today with 3 issues for £10.

SHARE

 TWITTER

 FACEBOOK

 LINKEDIN

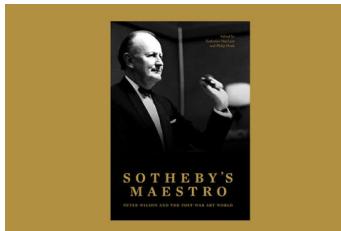
@ EMAIL

More to read



How is the market for Middle Eastern art faring?

The auctions of the Abraaj corporate collection offer plenty of food for thought



The mastermind behind the modern art market

A collection of short memoirs about the late Sotheby's chairman Peter Wilson portrays an enigmatic and highly influential figure



The widening market for Oceanic art

Once championed by the Surrealists, Oceanic art is now achieving top prices at auction and attracting an increasingly diverse collector base

Leave a comment

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment



Name *

Email *

POST COMMENT

THE APOLLO AWARDS 2018: PERSONALITY, ARTIST, MUSEUM OPENING,
EXHIBITION, DIGITAL INNOVATION, BOOK, ACQUISITION OF THE YEAR

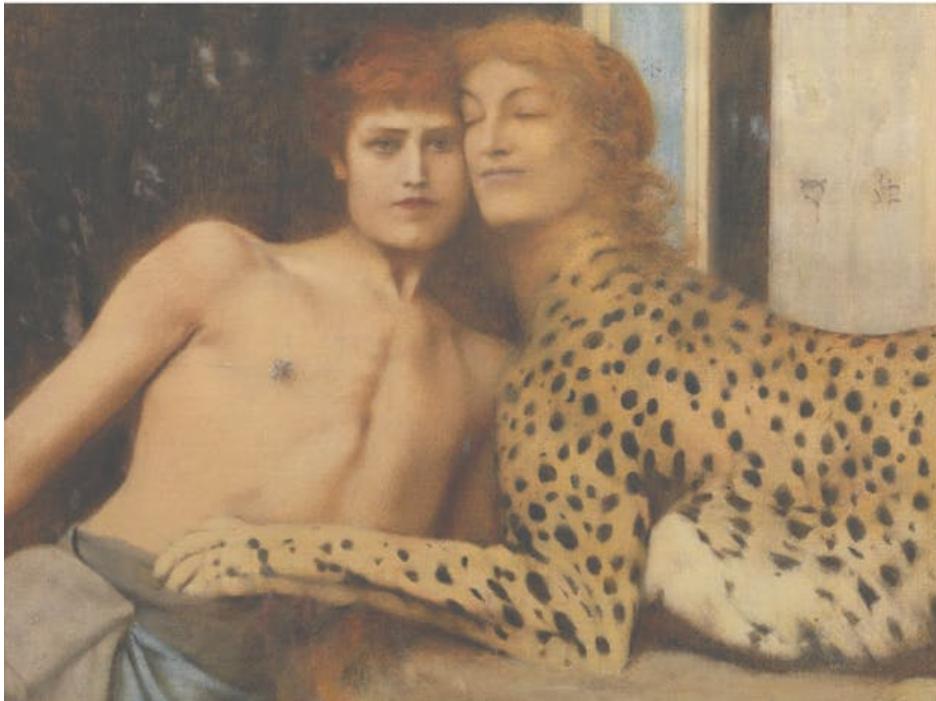
DECEMBER 2018 £6.95

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

SURREAL DEAL

THE WEIRD WORLD OF FERNAND KHnopff



SHARED HORIZONS:
LEAR AND TENNYSON

WHAT'S THE POINT
OF POLITICAL ART?

HOT POTS: FAIENCE
AT THE FRICK

HAROON MIRZA
TURNS UP THE VOLUME

Current Issue

December 2018

VIEW THIS ISSUE

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Follow us



Sign up to Apollo newsletters and special offers

Name *

Email *

- Apollo highlights – weekly comment and reviews, plus monthly previews of the print edition
- Apollo briefing – the week's top exhibition openings, art news and gossip
- Apollo news and special offers – send me special offers and announcements from Apollo

SIGN UP



In the news



The satirical world of contemporary art – from Banksy to broadcasting

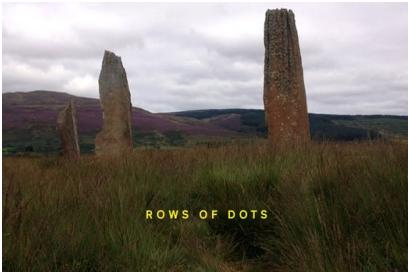
Artists and auction houses alike contribute to the comic excesses of their world – but are they in on the joke?



The oldest drawing in the world has been discovered – but is it art?

A 73,000-year-old fragment of stone marked with red lines raises questions about the nature of aesthetic experience

Most popular



How political is political art?

Daniel Trilling



Should paintings be conserved in public?

Apollo



How high-resolution photography is changing the way we look at art

Florence Hallett



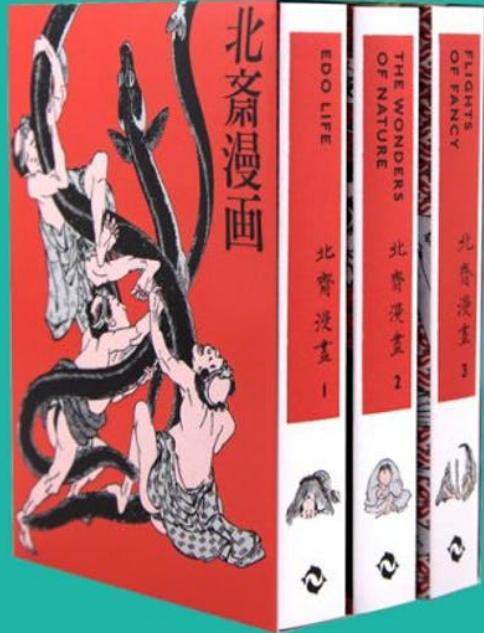
Acquisitions of the Month: November 2018

Apollo



Anish Kapoor reaches out-of-court settlement with the NRA

Art news daily



Book competition

Win a copy of Hokusai Manga (Thames & Hudson)

Podcast



The Apollo 40 under 40 podcast: Zoe Whitley

Gabrielle Schwarz talks to Zoe Whitley, curator of international art at Tate Modern, about different approaches to exhibition-making

Art news daily



Activist group stages protest at Whitney Museum

Art news daily: 10 December



Lothar Baumgarten (1944–2018)

Art news daily: 7 December



Anish Kapoor reaches out-of-court settlement with the NRA

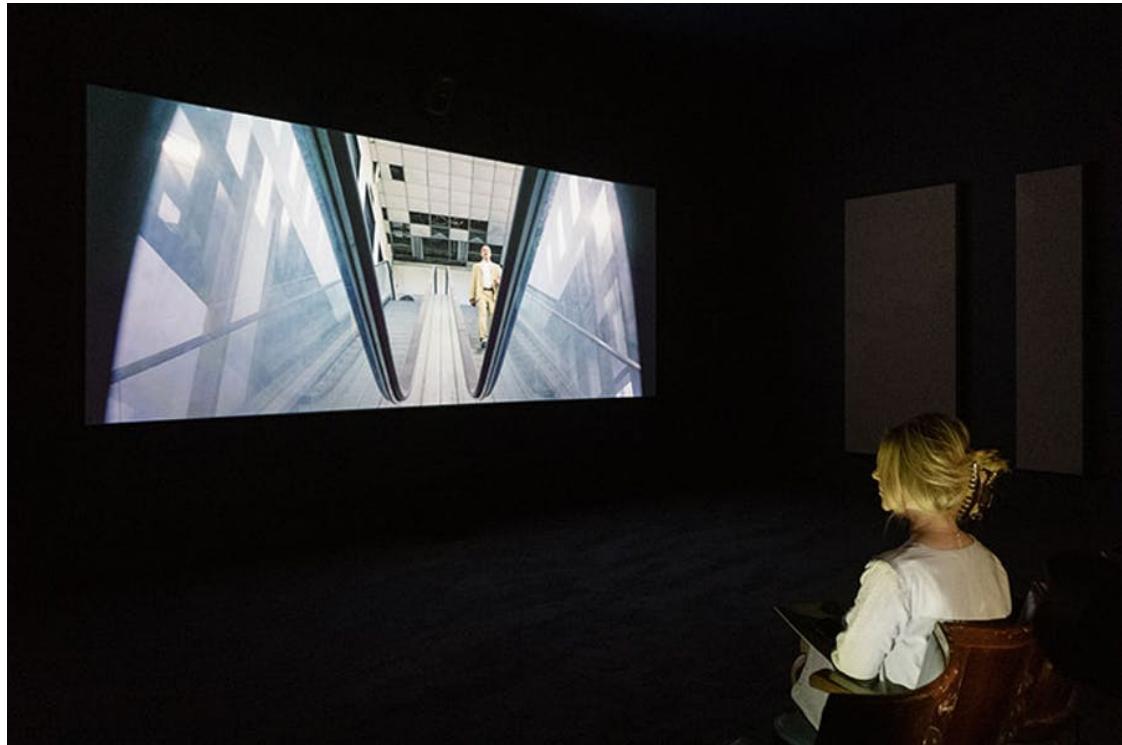
Art news daily: 6 December

Latest comment



Should paintings be conserved in public?

Rembrandt's Night Watch is set to be restored in front of visitors. Should we welcome the growing prevalence of public conservation?



How can museums make us pay proper attention to moving images?

As film and video art moves into the mainstream, curators have to find new ways to keep viewers hooked



The Benin Bronzes are not just virtuoso works of art – they record the kingdom's history

Benin City will soon have a permanent display of its court bronzes for the first time in over a century. What makes these artworks so extraordinary?



APOLLO
THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE



[About Apollo](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Contact us](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

© 2018 Apollo Magazine
22 Old Queen Street, London, SW1H 9HP

Site maintained by [Creode](#)

Plus a free book

[SUBSCRIBE NOW »](#)



APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

ART MARKET

The lustre and allure of Japanese lacquer

Emma Crichton-Miller

5 NOVEMBER 2018



Panel depicting lobsters (1888), signed Shibata Zeshin. Christie's, £662,500. Christie's Images Ltd 2018

SHARE

TWITTER

LINKEDIN

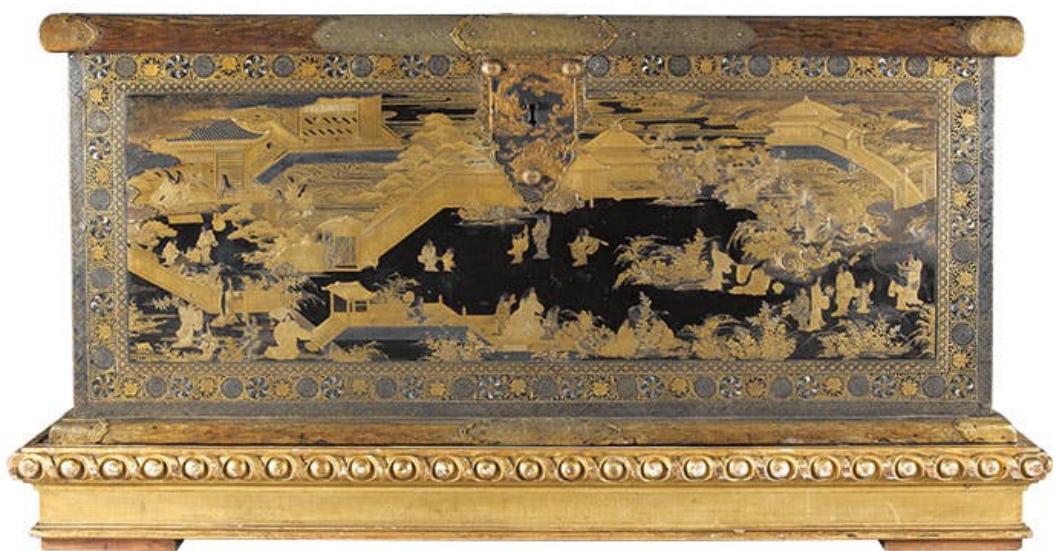
FACEBOOK

@ EMAIL

The use of lacquer in Japan can be traced back to the first millennium BC, the

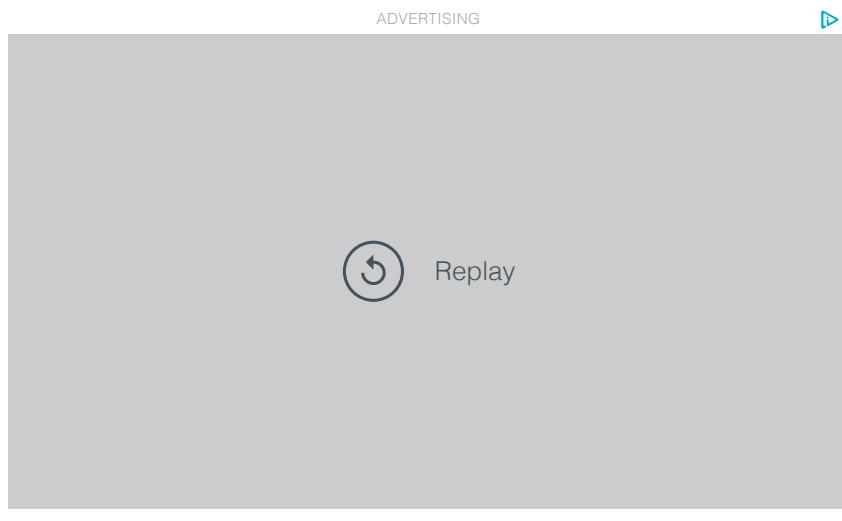
mid to late Jomon period. The time-consuming method of covering wooden objects with *urushi* (derived from the sap of the tree *Rhus vernicifera*) to make them lustrous and durable became, over millennia, a form of high art, inspiring works of great technical brilliance and artistic refinement. In certain periods Japanese lacquer has absorbed influences from China, Korea and elsewhere in Asia, including techniques of inlaying mother-of-pearl or sheet silver and gold, and painting using lacquer mixed with powdered silver and gold. Unique to Japan, however, has been the focus on a range of techniques based on the sprinkling of metal powders over designs drawn in damp lacquer. ‘Japanese lacquer is very different from Chinese lacquer,’ explains Tsumugi Shoji of Grace Tsumugi Fine Art, a leading specialist dealer based in London. ‘It is much more than a coating or covering for wood. We have this special word, *maki-e*, a kind of painting, to describe the art form.’ So impressed were the first Europeans to discover this distinctive tradition that they used the word ‘Japanning’ to describe all lacquering, ushering in the first phase of extensive European collecting of objects in a tradition that continues to this day.

A work that epitomises this period is a magnificent Japanese coffer, decorated in black, gold and silver lacquer using a wide variety of techniques, with lively views and scenes from Japanese myths, including *The Tale of Genji*. Sold at auction in July 2013 for a then record €7.31m, this exceptional piece from the early Edo period (1615–1868) is thought to be one of ten surviving high-status pieces commissioned from the Kyoto workshop of Kaomi Nagashige by the head of the Dutch East India Company’s office in Japan. The V&A owns a smaller companion piece and had long searched for this lost treasure, once in the collection of William Beckford, but could not match the Rijksmuseum’s winning bid. Sold by Philippe Rouillac at the Château de Cheverny, it represents a peak not just of Japanese lacquer workmanship, but also of the contemporary market for lacquer. Just as in the 16th and 17th centuries, these Namban pieces – made for export to the ‘southern barbarians’ of Europe – draw plenty of interest from collectors today. ‘There is a very strong collecting base in Western Europe,’ confirms Christie’s specialist Anastasia von Seibold, who cites a late 16th-century Momoyama-period portable Christian shrine (*seigan*), commissioned by the Portuguese Jesuits, which fetched £386,500 in 2015 at Christie’s London.



Chest (c. 1635–45), attributed to Koami workshop. Rouillac, €7.31m Courtesy Rouillac

Tamio Ikeda of Paris's Tanakaya gallery suggests that the art of lacquer 'reached its apogee in the 18th century', and that collectors both Japanese and European have also prized pieces from these earlier periods. 'Many appreciate particularly the Rimpa [paintings] of Ogata Korin (1658–1716) or Hon'ami Koetsu (1558–1637) and their followers, with their motifs from nature,' he says. More recently, there has been a shift in taste towards Japanese lacquer from the Meiji period (1868–1912), when the opening of Japan to the West stimulated a surge of flamboyant creativity and a new wave of collecting. The gallery has an extraordinarily fine Meiji-era chest with eight interior drawers, decorated with Shibayama lacquer and silver, inlaid with ivory, and mother-of-pearl, and signed Kougetsu.



inRead invented by Teads

Whereas individual artists were rarely acknowledged during the Edo period – there were schools of craftsmen working for the shogunate and noble families – during the Meiji certain individuals rose to fame. Shirayama Shosai (1853–1923) and Koda Shūetsu (1881–1933) were two, with the technically brilliant and innovative Shibata Zeshin (1807–91) highly sought-after by Western collectors. In 2014 Christie's London sold a fine, painterly panel by Zeshin featuring lobsters, dated 1888, for £662,500. Last year the Asian Art in London (AAL) prize for Best Artwork with an Auction House was awarded to Bonhams for an atmospheric 1877 work by Zeshin, a *roiro*, or black lacquer panel, decorated with bell crickets on grasses bejewelled with dew drops and set against a silver lacquer moon. Estimated at £150,000–£200,000, the work was sold privately, prior to the Misumi Collection Part III auction in November 2017, for an undisclosed sum. Another Zeshin panel, with the design of a farmhouse in the snow at Sano (1883), sold in the same sale for £842,500, a record for the artist. Bonhams specialist Suzannah Yip notes that while the market for lacquer has been generally steady since its decline in the 1990s following the collapse of the Japanese economy, 'the prices for lacquer were catapulted on to the world stage following the results witnessed from the Edward Wrangham collection, sold at Bonhams in 2010, when several pieces fetched six-figure sums.'

Suzuribako, or writing boxes, are popular objects, as are the *inrō*, small boxes fastened with netsuke and used to carry seals or medicines. For its AAL presentation, entitled 'Devils, Demons and Bakemono', Sydney L. Moss is showing an immaculate olive-green four-part *inrō* (1880–1900), with a demon *oni* depicted on one side, fleeing from Shoki, the demon-queller, on the other. 'In Japan people collect *inrō* alongside netsuke,' Tsumugi Shoji notes, 'but these have been separated in the West. However, today the netsuke market is quieter while the *inrō* market remains steady.' At Asian Art in London she is

showing a set comprising a lacquer *suzuribako* and a *ryoshibako* (document box). Dating from the Taisho period (c. 1920) and done by Koda Shûetsu (1881–1933), they are decorated in gold, silver, and red lacquer, and with Japanese flowers, plants, gulls and waves.



Four-case *inro* depicting the god Shoki (c. 1880–1900), Japan. Sydney L. Moss, Asian Art in London, £20,000.

London-based dealer Simon Pilling has made a speciality of the later period, 1912–44 (Taisho and early Showa), as well as contemporary examples. ‘There is a boldness and vitality that draws on a long tradition but resonates with universal contemporary values,’ he says. ‘Japanese art subjects often reflect on nature, and our relationship with the seasons. This increasingly resonates with Western clients.’ His exhibition for AAL, ‘Flora and Fable’, ‘focuses on the Japanese artistic tradition of symbolic plants’. He also has a spectacular, cosmetic box decorated with a dragon and a phoenix – ‘pure Japanese deco’ – from the Showa period, made by Itoi Joshin (1883–1964) between 1937 and 1944. In contrast to the collectors of the past, he says his younger clients are looking for outstanding single examples. With prices barely changed since Japan’s economic stagnation of the 1990s, ‘in absolute terms Japanese art is very keenly priced’, with lacquerware ‘particularly good value’.

Like Pilling, established London dealer Malcolm Fairley sources his pieces directly from Japan. At AAL he will show an unsigned, finely worked gold lacquer *suzuribako* with three *karako* (Chinese children) and a pine tree on a gold lacquer ground worked in *taka-maki-e* (Meiji period, c. 1890, £28,000). As is usual, the interior of the box is as beautifully worked as the exterior, with a cascading waterfall: ‘What you don’t see is as important as what you do see,’ Fairley comments.



Hinton. ‘There is a great number of collectors in Europe across Japanese prints, ceramics and lacquer. *Inro* have done particularly well in recent sales.’ Top lots in its November sale include a 16th-century lacquer Namban shrine from the Momoyama period (estimate £70,000–£100,000). But, Hinton says, ‘Early lacquer had its heyday in the 1970s and ’80s. Current taste prefers the spectacular pieces of the Meiji period.’ They are including a pair of elaborate gold-ground lacquer screens, featuring a whole range of techniques, from the early 20th century (estimate £500,000–£700,000). ‘There is still quite a lot of lacquer coming to the market,’ he says. Buy it while you can.

From the November 2018 issue of *Apollo*. Preview and subscribe [here](#).

Want stories like this in your inbox?

Sign up today to receive Apollo highlights direct to your inbox – and be the first to know about Apollo events, special offers, and what’s in the latest issue

Name *

Email *

- Apollo highlights – weekly comment and reviews, plus monthly previews of the print edition
- Apollo briefing – the week’s top exhibition openings, art news and gossip
- Apollo news and special offers – send me special offers and announcements from Apollo

SIGN UP

There's never been a better time to subscribe to Apollo magazine. Start your subscription today with 3 issues for £10.

SHARE

TWITTER

LINKEDIN

FACEBOOK

@ EMAIL

More to read



A closer look at the Chinese and Japanese masterpieces in the Royal Collection

More than 2,000 objects of porcelain, lacquer, jade, enamel and ivory have been catalogued, researched, conserved, and photographed



What not to miss at Asian Art in London this year

Highlights from this year's event prove that London remains a leading centre for Asian art worldwide



'There's something suspicious about painting' – an interview with Joe Bradley

The painter talks about his attachment to black and the three-dimensional quality of his canvases

Leave a comment

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment

Name *

Email *

POST COMMENT

THE APOLLO AWARDS 2018: PERSONALITY, ARTIST, MUSEUM OPENING,
EXHIBITION, DIGITAL INNOVATION, BOOK, ACQUISITION OF THE YEAR

DECEMBER 2018 £6.95

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

SURREAL DEAL

THE WEIRD WORLD OF FERNAND KHnopff



SHARED HORIZONS:
LEAR AND TENNYSON

WHAT'S THE POINT
OF POLITICAL ART?

HOT POTS: FAIENCE
AT THE FRICK

HAROON MIRZA
TURNS UP THE VOLUME

Current Issue

December 2018

[VIEW THIS ISSUE](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Follow us



**Sign up to Apollo
newsletters and
special offers**

Name *

Email *

- Apollo highlights – weekly comment and reviews, plus monthly previews of the print edition
- Apollo briefing – the week's top exhibition openings, art news and gossip
- Apollo news and special offers – send me special offers and announcements from Apollo

SIGN UP



In the news



The satirical world of contemporary art – from Banksy to broadcasting

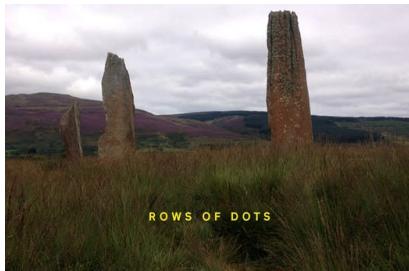
Artists and auction houses alike contribute to the comic excesses of their world – but are they in on the joke?



The oldest drawing in the world has been discovered – but is it art?

A 73,000-year-old fragment of stone marked with red lines raises questions about the nature of aesthetic experience

Most popular



How political is political art?

Daniel Trilling



Should paintings be conserved in public?

Apollo



How high-resolution photography is changing the way we look at art

Florence Hallett



Acquisitions of the Month: November 2018

Apollo

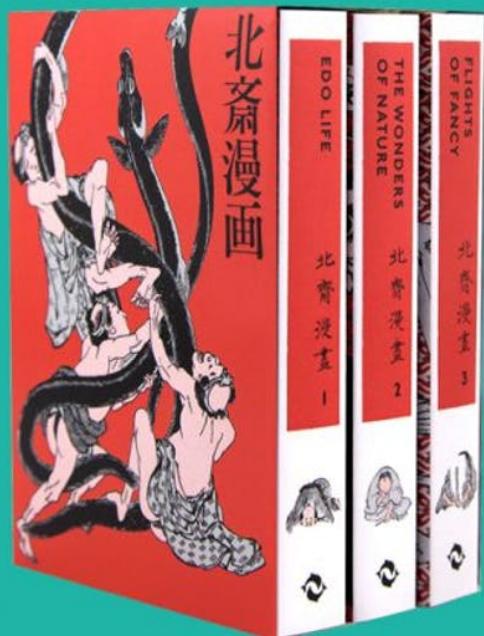


Anish Kapoor reaches out-of-court settlement with the NRA

Art news daily

Plus a free book

[SUBSCRIBE NOW »](#)



Book competition

Win a copy of *Hokusai Manga* (Thames & Hudson)

Podcast



The Apollo 40 under 40 podcast: Zoe Whitley

Gabrielle Schwarz talks to Zoe Whitley, curator of international art at Tate Modern, about different approaches to exhibition-making

Art news daily



Activist group stages protest at Whitney Museum

Art news daily: 10 December



Lothar Baumgarten (1944–2018)

Art news daily: 7 December



Anish Kapoor reaches out-of-court settlement with the NRA

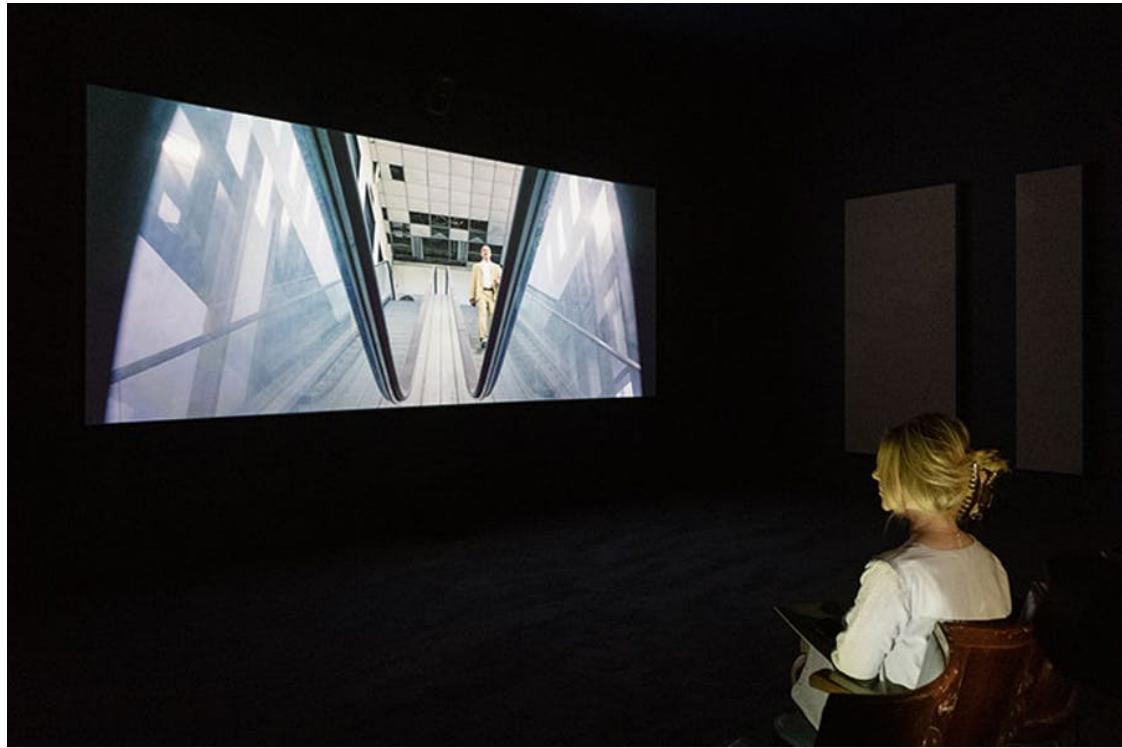
Art news daily: 6 December

Latest comment



Should paintings be conserved in public?

Rembrandt's Night Watch is set to be restored in front of visitors. Should we welcome the growing prevalence of public conservation?



How can museums make us pay proper attention to moving images?

As film and video art moves into the mainstream, curators have to find new ways to keep viewers hooked



The Benin Bronzes are not just virtuoso works of art – they record the kingdom's history

Benin City will soon have a permanent display of its court bronzes for the first time in over a century. What makes these artworks so extraordinary?

Plus a free book

SUBSCRIBE NOW »



MANTEGNA & BELLINI

Plus a free book

SUBSCRIBE NOW »



MANTEGNA & BELLINI

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE



[About Apollo](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Contact us](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

© 2018 Apollo Magazine
22 Old Queen Street, London, SW1H 9HP

Site maintained by [Creode](#)