

Peter Petrou Collection Entices Bidders At Sworders

Auction Action In Essex, UK

ESSEX, UK — Veteran antiques dealer Peter Petrou's eye for fine antiques and objects resonated with buyers eager to pick up items from among decades of his acquisitions. At a dedicated auction of his collection on February 24 at Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers, bidding was competitive, especially for rare items. The auction went on to total \$594,663.

"The auction went with a real bang, achieving some fantastic results. The cross-cultural offering resulted in competitive bidding from around the globe, with buyers setting ungentlemanly early alarm clocks to ensure they

didn't miss out on this unique opportunity," said Sworders' director James Pickup. "Peter is well known, well respected and well liked, the buyer base included many old friends, some of whom had been eyeing lots from his collection for years."

"We were thrilled that the extensive bespoke marketing and PR campaign that we undertook on our clients behalf paid off, to share in a fantastic result with Peter was the culmination of a thoroughly enjoyable and collaborative process. Our approach of teaming expert knowledge across the business with a friendly and approachable

team is what led Peter to choose us, in what is a competitive marketplace, to handle his treasured collection, to reward that choice was our single objective," he added.

"Peter was, of course, well known to us as both a buyer and seller, having been a force in the marketplace for many years," Pickup said, explaining how the collection came to Sworders. "He was drawn in by the succession of successful single own sales that we have held for other clients in recent years, and was intrigued to see what we may be able to do for him. We provided a comprehensive proposal and

delivered it with a enthusiastic team...and we very pleased when we received the instruction, he and his team have been a joy to work with throughout and we hope to work with them again in the future."

The top lot was a a Greek marble funerary stele from the Hellenistic period, Second-First Century BCE, that attained \$33,000. Acquired in the 1970s, the naiskos-form piece was carved in high relief with a scene of a four figures in a boat on a stylized and undulating sea, accompanied by a Greek inscription referencing the Greek god Hermes. "The stele, like much of the collection held a magic concoction of ingredients that saw it hotly contested on the day," Pickup said. "Archeological romance, striking architectural presence, beautiful craftsmanship and a real human element, the inscription and sentiment reached across the centuries, and its poignancy resonated now just as it would have done in the Hellenistic period when it was carved."

Not Greek in origin but paying homage to ancient Greece and its traditions of theatrical masks was a highly polished red stone carved marble mask in the manner of Grand Tour carver Benedetto Boschetti. The dramatically carved rosso antico marble mask depicted a stylized Greek theatrical figure, having furrowed brow, open and bushy beard mouth. It took \$16,504.

The origins of offerings spanned the globe, and a standout was a large New Zealand carved kauri gum bust of Māori Chief Tamati Tamaiwhakanehua, circa 1860, that sold for \$20,847. The life-sized figure was carved out of semi-fossilized resin and had a moko tattoo to the face and stylized mana dress.

Leading a small but curated group of furniture was a Seven-

teenth Century Indo-Portuguese teak, rosewood, ebony and ivory contador cabinet from Goa, which brought \$19,110. The two-section piece featured 16 drawers in the upper half, each with an ivory handle and escutcheon. According to the catalog writeup, "Portuguese-Goan furniture emerged from the early Sixteenth Century within the colonial milieu of Goa, the administrative centre of the Portuguese Estado da Índia. Following the Portuguese conquest in 1510, European furniture forms were introduced into a region with sophisticated indigenous wood-working traditions and abundant tropical hardwoods, particularly teak, rosewood and ebony."

In a more modern vein was a circa 1955 Piero Fornasetti (Italian, 1913-1988) four-panel "Libreria" screen, with each section decorated in trompe l'oeil as bookshelves, that achieved \$13,898.

Several European lots also crossed the block to perform well, including a three-quarter length North European School, Seventeenth Century, portrait of a lady, traditionally identified as Christina, Queen of Sweden, that realized \$15,637, and an oil-on-canvas portrait by a follower of Gerard Seghers depicting Saint Sebastian and an angel at \$14,702. A circa 1900 Swiss Black Forest carved linden wood bench, with a bear cub among scrolling foliage on the back and two standing bear supports on each side, took \$12,162.

Rounding out the auction were several fine Chinese lots, including a pair of large Canton butterfly vases, Qing dynasty (1644-1911), at \$12,162, and a Chinese export gilt-brass automaton table clock, early to mid Nineteenth Century, probably Guangzhou workshops, at \$11,294.

Prices quoted include the buyer's premium as reported by the auction house and have been converted into USD based on the exchange rate on the day of the auction.

For information, www.sworders.co.uk.



This Seventeenth Century North European School portrait of a lady earned \$15,637.



The top lot of the auction was a Greek marble funerary stele, Hellenistic period, Second to First Century BCE, which attained \$33,000.



This pair of large Canton butterfly vases, Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Chinese, made \$12,162.



This Black Forest carved linden wood bench, Swiss, circa 1900, realized \$12,162.

Review by
Andrea Valluzzo, Editor
Photos Courtesy Sworders Fine
Art Auctioneers



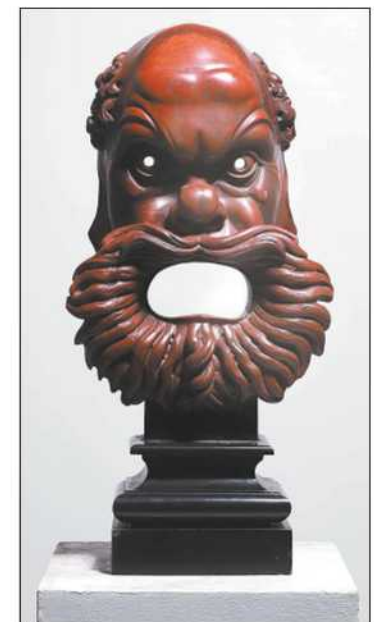
This Piero Fornasetti (Italian, 1913-1988) four-panel "Libreria" screen went out at \$13,898.



This Indo-Portuguese teak, rosewood, ebony and ivory contador cabinet, Goa, Seventeenth Century, took \$19,110.



This large carved kauri gum bust of Māori Chief Tamati Tamaiwhakanehua, New Zealand, circa 1860, sold for \$20,847.



In the manner of Benedetto Boschetti, this carved rosso antico marble mask brought \$16,504.