

Sotheby's

Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from The Edward

Hong Kong | 08 Apr 2011, 10:00 AM | HK0370



LOT 2701

A SMALL BIRD-FORM RHINOCEROS HORN CUP 17TH CENTURY

carved as a shallow peach-shaped cup curving to form the body of a bird in flight, the rim set with a high-relief bird head, the back of the head extending onto the interior, the mouth of the bird grasping a sprig of lotus flowers attached to three lotus pads forming the feet of the cup, the body of the bird finely picked out with low-relief raised lines forming the feathers, the horn with a smooth, dark-brown patina
width 8 cm., 3 1/4 in.

ESTIMATE 400,000-600,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 1,340,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in Hong Kong, 1960) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R16.
Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc16.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 173.

CATALOGUE NOTE

Carved from the whole of a small Sumatran rhinoceros horn into an exquisite and gem-like miniature cup, this is a fine and rare example of a bird-form vessel. The bird is depicted in a stylised fashion with curling feathers and with its crest peering over the lip of the interior of the vessel. Although not immediately identifiable, judging from its size, shape and crest it may be a quail which was one of the favourite birds in the repertoire of Chinese painters, potters and carvers. The quail represents harmony and peace as it bears the character *an* in its name, a pun for the word 'peace' (*ping'an*).

The maker of this cup has skilfully used his material and made the bird's head form the handle while the natural shape of the lip of the horn has been fashioned into the rise of the animal's wings as if it is about to lift off. Furthermore, the feathers on the wings gently follow the horn's natural curvature, allowing the artisan to retain the original form of his material as much as possible. The use of the horn of a Sumatran rhinoceros is intentional, as it is much more curved back than those of its other two Asiatic cousins, the Indian and Javan rhinoceros. Its stem is also more slender and in cross-section is found to be more circular allowing the fashioning of a perfect cup in the form of this quaint and auspicious bird.

For examples of bird-form vessels, see one with its long tail feathers curved down to form the cup's handle, and its back hollowed out to provide a cavity for liquid to be poured out through the beak, from the collection of the Harvard University Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, published in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 174. Compare also a smaller cup fashioned as a recumbent phoenix with the bird's beak forming the handle, from the collection of Thomas Fok, included *ibid.*, pl. 177.

Bird-form cups are known from as early as the Han dynasty when they were made in lacquer, a highly prized material at the time; see a cup in the Yangzhou Museum, Jiangsu province, illustrated in *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, vol. 3, Fujian, 1998, pl. 275.

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LOT 2702

A RARE 'PINE AND RABBIT' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP 17TH CENTURY

carved in high relief and openwork with two gnarled pine trees with branches wrapped around the sides, set with a rabbit crouched beneath a full moon and wispy clouds overhead, the interior mouth carved with branches overhanging the lip, the horn of rich chestnut patina

width 15.5 cm., 6 1/8 in.

ESTIMATE 1,200,000-1,500,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 3,620,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

John Sparks, London, 1978.

Collections of Edward T. Chow and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc30.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 170.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This cup is finely carved and the modelling, especially that of the hare gazing up at the moon which is half hidden behind swirling night clouds, is imbued with elegance and vitality. Edward Chow refers to it in his notes as *diaogong canglao*, *wanzheng wu shang*, *diaogong huayi xi shao* ('the carving has age, it is in perfect condition with no damage, the design is poetic and sparse').

The hare seen on this cup is gazing up at the moon which is half hidden behind the night clouds. The theme depicted here is likely to be associated with the God of Moon, Yuelao, or with the hare's relationship with the moon. According to ancient legends, the hare lived on the moon with Chang'e, the Goddess of the Moon, spending its days mixing the elixir of life in a mortar to make the pill of immortality so that Chang'e could return to earth to see her lover. There was also a belief that the hare is impregnated through gazing at the moon, suggesting that vessels decorated with this motif were made as marital gifts with the wish for many descendants.

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LOT 2703

A RETICULATED STEM 'LOTUS LEAF' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP 17TH CENTURY

the highly polished amber and black coloured conically shaped horn carved in the form of a furling lotus leaf forming the cup, with subtle veining on both the interior and exterior, wrapped on the exterior with high-relief lotus flowers, with further lotus leaves and reeds all issuing from long thin intertwining reticulated stalks tapering to a point, the base detailed with the small holes of cut stalks, the rim of the interior set with a water weed and a small floret to one end, wooden stand
height 17 cm., 6 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE 900,000-1,200,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 4,820,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in London, 1968) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R12.
Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc12.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 96.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This cup belongs to the well known group of vessels in the form of a large lotus leaf with buds, blossoms and smaller leaves born on slender long stalks. It is carved in openwork that shows the original conical shape of the material. The craftsman has skilfully made use of the entire length of the horn with the solid tip transformed into the stems of the plant. Jan Chapman in *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, pp. 72-73, notes that the hollow cavity of an Asian horn is the natural shape of a leaf, and both the inner and outer surfaces can be engraved to show the typical vein markings.

Purchased in 1968, Edward Chow describes this cup as *shengdong ziran* ('lyrical and picturesque') with the foliage rendered in a vivid and naturalistic fashion. He further notes that the carver has made the vessel with great care and has produced a masterpiece.

The inspiration for cups of this type may have come from one of the earliest carvings known from the Qing Court collection, which also uses the entire horn: a cup in the form of a mallow-flower, attributed to the early Ming dynasty and illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 109.

For related lotus leaf cups where the original shape of the horn has been skilfully preserved see one, in the collection of Mr. Michel de Selys Longchamps, included in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 95; and another, in the collection of Dora Wang, exhibited at the Sackler Museum in Washington D.C. and illustrated in the *World Journal (Shijie Zhou Kan)*, no. 852, 2000, p. 12. Compare also two fine cups of this type sold in our London rooms, 31st October 1986, lot 175, and 27th October 1989, lot 186.

Whole horns were also used for making a completely different type of vessel. They were fashioned to represent a large lotus leaf with a long stalk, but by bending the tip of the horn upward a sprout was created for a water dropper. For examples of water droppers, see one published in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings, op.cit.*, pl. 115; another included in *The Palace Museum Collection of Elite Carvings*, Beijing, 2004, pl. 207; and a third from the collection of Arthur M. Sackler, illustrated in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 100, together with a cup in the Shanghai Museum, pl. 101.

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LOT 2704

A SMALL 'CHILONG AND LOTUS' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP 17TH CENTURY

the triangular shaped cup formed from a furling lotus leaf with incised veins set with three high-relief chilong emerging from the swirling waters skirting the foot and scuttling around the exterior, the interior incised with further veining, the horn of dark brown tone width 9.5 cm., 3 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE 300,000-400,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 1,160,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collection of George Hendley, New York.

Sotheby's New York, 17th April 1985, lot 135.

Collection of Franklin Chow.

CATALOGUE NOTE

The low and rounded mound shape of the cup indicates that it was made using the horn from a Sumatran rhinoceros. Judging from the size of the vessel, the carver has used an entire posterior horn. The rounded base of the cup is incised with waves that rise and swell from below. Three animated dragons are depicted sporting in the waves. See a related cup in the form of a folding lotus leaf carved with dragons of various sizes, some amongst waves depicted around the base of the vessel, formerly in the Arthur M. Sackler collection, illustrated in Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 47; and another cup of similar shape, in the collection of Harvard University Art Museums, depicting divine creatures amongst waves rising up from the base, *ibid.*, pl. 37.

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LOT 2705

AN EXTREMELY RARE LARGE RHINOCEROS HORN ARCHAISTIC GUANG VESSEL BY YOU YILIANG

17TH CENTURY

THIS IS A PREMIUM LOT. CLIENTS WHO WISH TO BID ON PREMIUM LOTS ARE REQUESTED TO COMPLETE THE PREMIUM LOT PRE-REGISTRATION 3 WORKING DAYS PRIOR TO THE SALE. BIDnow ONLINE BIDDING SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE.

masterfully carved in the form of an archaistic bronze guang vessel with a body of flaring rectangular section set with a channelled spout opposite a 'D'-shaped handle, the body finely carved in low relief with a wide register of taotie masks on a leiwen ground, supported on a tall foot of square section similarly decorated, the austere form interrupted by five playful chilong carved in reticulated high relief, nimbly clambering on the rim, handle and beneath the spout, the base with a four-character mark of the carver You Yiliang (You Yiliang zuo, 'Made by You Yiliang'), the horn of rich amber patina, wood stand width 18.5 cm., 7 1/4 in.

ESTIMATE ♦12,000,000-15,000,000 **HKD**

Lot Sold: 18,580,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in Hong Kong, 1966) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R18.
Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc18.

LITERATURE

Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999. pl. 158.

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 28.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This cup belongs to a well known group of rhinoceros horn vessels fashioned in the form of the archaic bronze *guang*. Although a number of related examples are known from important museums and private collections, the present cup stands out for its impressive large size and for bearing the carver's mark in seal script *You Yiliang zuo* (Made by You Yiliang) on its base. This is the only carving known by You Yiliang, who worked in the 17th century (See Chapman, *op.cit.*, p. 140). It is also unusual to find *chilong* carved below the spout of the vessel, making this example unique amongst cups of this type.

Edward Chow in his notes praises the workmanship and the quality of the material which he describes as *touming hupo se* ('translucent amber colour') and concludes with the words : *xuyao baoer cang zhi ye* ('to be kept and treasured').

Archaistic forms and decorative motifs were favoured by the nobility who were keen collectors of ancient artefacts. The fashion of archaism in the Song dynasty resulted in the production of pattern manuals and books which were widely copied. Carvers and artists were able to transfer the ritual heritage of bronze forms to mediums such as rhinoceros horn, ceramics and jade.

For related *guang* form cups see four examples, from the Qing Court collection and still in Beijing, illustrated in *The Palace Museum Collection of Elite Carvings*, Beijing, 2004, pls. 216-219; and another of closely related shape and decoration but lacking the *chilong* below the spout, published in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 134, similarly bearing the carver's mark on the base in seal script that reads *Hu Xingyue zuo* ('made by Hu Xingyue'). Compare also a cup in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, included in Jan Chapman, 'The Chester Beatty Collection of Chinese Carved Rhinoceros Horn Cups', *Arts of Asia*, May-June 1982, p. 83, pl. 23; and another sold at Christie's London, 16th April 1985, lot 354, with a band of *taotie* and *leiwen* below a keyfret border on the exterior and with two *chilong* clutching and peering over the rim above a double bracket handle, closely related to that seen on this vessel.

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LOT 2706
A PLAIN RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP
17TH CENTURY

the rich honey-tone horn with a flaring rim tapering to a black oval foot, the natural nodules along the lip of the horn and groove to one side left uncarved, the interior left plain with a broad rim, the surface with a rich golden brown smooth patina
width 17 cm., 6 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE 600,000-800,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 3,860,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Christie's London, 15th June 1987, lot 274.

Collection of Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc50.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 65.

CATALOGUE NOTE

The only undecorated cup in this collection, this vessel exhibits a commanding presence with its simple organic form. It is carved from an impressive and beautiful Great Indian rhinoceros horn as indicated by the groove which can be seen on one side of the body and by the nodules that are clustered around the lip.

It is more common to find rhinoceros horn vessels that have been carved with designs rather than those left completely undecorated, with the material's original form and natural colour retained. The carver has highlighted the quality of his material in the most elegant fashion, even working around the nodules at the lip which occur naturally. The rich honey tone of the horn also makes this piece stand out.

There are only three plain vessels out of a total of 219 in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, of which one is illustrated in Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, p. 146, pl. 170. See another plain cup included in Soame Jenyns, 'The Chinese Rhinoceros and Chinese Carvings in Rhinoceros Horn', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 29, 1954-1955, pl. 24A, fig. 1; and a third example, in the British Museum, London, published in Derek Gillman, 'A Source of Rhinoceros Horn Cups in the Late Ming Dynasty', *Oriental Art*, December 1984, fig.3.

A number of undecorated cups have been sold at auction: for example, one from the collections of Nils Nessim and Gerard Arnhold, was sold in our London rooms, 26th February 1982, lot 335; another was sold in these rooms, 18th May 1988, lot 320; and a third vessel was sold at Christie's London, 15th December 1980, lot 42.

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LOT 2707

A 'LOTUS LEAF AND DRAGONS' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP 17TH CENTURY

the amber and black-toned broad shallow cup carved in the form of a furlled lotus leaf with fine veins, resting on a short curled stem, further carved with five playful high-relief chilong clambering along the interior and exterior, two of the dragons forming the openwork handle on one side, the head of one peeking over the rim coming face to face with a smaller dragon on the interior, inscribed on the interior with Boya Shiling jingke ('Shiling respectfully presents "Boya" [this cup] to his guests'), the patina smoothly polished width 19.3 cm., 7 5/8 in.

ESTIMATE 1,500,000-2,000,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 6,620,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Christie's London, 8th April 1981, lot 19.

Collection of Franklin Chow (purchased in Switzerland, 1985).

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc61.

LITERATURE

Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999. pl. 126.

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 24.

CATALOGUE NOTE

In the form of a curled lotus leaf with distinct veins inside and out, this cup is exquisite for its pleasing form, finely carved *chilong* decoration and the high level of finish, noticeable especially on the base, that reflect the carver's attention to every detail. The vessel bears a six-character inscription which runs parallel to the lip edge on the interior. It reads and may be translated as follows:

Bo Ya shiling jingke.

Shiling respectfully presents "Boya" [this cup] to his guests.

It is possible that Shiling is the owner's name and that Boya is the name of the cup.

The handle of this cup is fashioned in the form of a large *chilong* clutching the mouth of the rim. Its modelling is imbued with elegance and vitality. A number of smaller *chilong* can be found on both the interior and exterior of the vessel, all expertly fashioned to appear lively and spirited and bringing strength and movement to the vessel.

While this cup stands out for its large size, its base is especially noteworthy. The stalk of the lotus leaf is made into a ring forming a foot for the cup. Chapman, *ibid.*, pp. 94-95, illustrates a cup in the Museum voor Volkenkunde, Rotterdam, pl. 83, that also uses the stems of the lotus plant to provide the base and the handle.

Chilong can be found on a lotus-leaf form cup, in the collection of Thomas Fok, illustrated in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 3; on another sold in our London rooms, 13th July 2005, lot 104; and on a cup sold in our New York rooms, 30th March 2006, lot 132.

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LOT 2708

**A RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP WITH A SCHOLAR
MING DYNASTY, 16TH / 17TH CENTURY**

the well-polished small cup of warm amber tone, carved in high relief with the scholar Dongfang Shuo wearing long flowing robes holding a sprig of peaches, followed by an attendant on the other side of the cup surrounded by over sized peach blossoms, the back of the horn carved with a gnarled peach tree with branches extending over the rim onto the interior, wooden stand

height 10 cm., 4 in.

ESTIMATE 700,000-900,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 2,300,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Spink & Son, London, 1978.

Collections of Edward T. Chow and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R9.
Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc9.

LITERATURE

Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999. pl. 265.

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 78.

CATALOGUE NOTE

Purchased by Edward Chow in 1978, this cup attracted his attention for its beautiful light honey colouration and for the unassuming simplicity of the design that is full of auspicious connotation. Chow identifies the main figure as the Han dynasty Daoist scholar-official and court jester to Emperor Wu, Dongfang Shuo, who is accompanied by a young servant boy. The scene depicted here is the story of Dongfang Shuo stealing the peaches of eternal life from Xiwangmu (Queen Mother of the West). Dongfang is shown clutching a fruiting branch over his shoulder and looking to his side as if concerned that he may be followed. The carver has brought his subject to life by giving movement to his robe as if swept by the wind. Ironically, with this act Dongfang was able to attain immortality and became a popular figure and was frequently depicted on artefacts displayed at birthday celebrations or made as gifts. For example, see a beautiful Ming period tapestry depicting Dongfang Shuo standing by a peach tree clutching a single large peach in his hands, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, included in the museum's official website.

The present cup is unusual for its bold yet minimalist carving of just two figures and a fruit-laden peach tree. The simple design suggests that the cup is amongst one of the earliest examples known, before it became fashionable to cover vessels with complex and intricate decorations. The flawless beauty of the material is enhanced by this perfect design. While no other similar example appears to be recorded, the Eight Daoist Immortals can be found carved around the exterior of a cup in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, included in Jan Chapman, 'The Chester Beatty Collection of Chinese Carved Rhinoceros Horn Cups', *Arts of Asia*, May-June 1982, p. 83, pl. 20. Another cup depicting the Eight Immortals, each bearing an attribute, from the collection of Thomas Fok, is published in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 82.

The beautiful translucent light colouration and the 'orange peel' surface of this cup is remarked by Chow in his notes. This type of surface is often compared to the texture of a fine doeskin glove when it is stretched over the hand. Chapman in *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, *op.cit.*, p. 60, suggests that the yellow and honey colours are probably the result of the natural ageing process of the horn and some of the earliest known carvings are described as being yellow in colour. Vessels of this colouration are almost invariably associated with the best quality carvings.

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LOT 2709

A 'LOTUS LEAF AND CHILONG' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP 17TH CENTURY

the dark amber-coloured horn carved in the form of a finely veined furled lotus leaf with one large dragon and five smaller chilong clambering around the vessel on the interior and exterior, the playful dragons all carved in high relief and openwork depicted in various contorted positions, the largest dragon forming the handle beneath a smaller lotus pad on the rim while two peer over the rim at a smaller dragon on the interior, the exterior further set with a small snail slithering down the side, all supported on a band of waves crashing against the foot, the surface with a smooth patina
width 19 cm., 7 1/2 in.

ESTIMATE 3,000,000-5,000,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 6,620,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's Hong Kong, 20th November 1985, lot 269.
Collection of Franklin Chow.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This cup features an unusually wide mouth, rich translucent honey-tone colouration and fine carving of numerous entwined large and small *chilong* on the body and under the lip. The strong veining of the lotus leaf, which is carried out on both the interior and the exterior of the vessel is also worth noting. While the design is well known from vessels of this type, the carver has added an original and humorous touch to his work: a small climbing snail placed just below the spout. While the *chilong* represent action, as do the waves depicted with a prominent spume around the base, the snail brings a sense of natural calmness.

The *chilong* is possibly one of the most important and widely used animals in the horn carvers' repertoire. They are most frequently depicted on carvings in the archaistic style; for example see a cup in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, illustrated in Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, p. 178, pl. 234, where the author notes the importance of dragons in animal carvings. The dragon represents the emperor himself, but also acts as the beneficent 'bringer of rain' (Chapman, *ibid.*, p. 178).

For lotus leaf form vessels carved with *chilong* see one from the collection of Thomas Fok included in Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, p. 50, pl. 3, where the author notes that this type of decorative style is reminiscent of the jade waterpots of the Southern Song dynasty. The Fok cup was subsequently sold at Christie's Hong Kong, 27th May 2008, lot 1718. Another related lotus leaf form cup carved in low relief with *chilong*, the base in the form of a well-defined whirlpool and the handle carved with a dragon, from the collection of Dr. Ip Yee, is illustrated in Dr. Ip Yee, 'Chinese Rhinoceros Horn Carvings', *International Asian Antiques Fair*, Hong Kong, 1982, p. 33, pl. 24. See further two cups sold in our London rooms, 13th May 2009, lot 75, and 13th June 2005, lot 104; and one sold at Christie's London, 7th November 2006, lot 48.

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LOT 2710 A RHINOCEROS HORN 'JUE' LIBATION CUP 17TH CENTURY

carved in the form of the archaic bronze drinking vessel, jue, with a deep U-shaped body flaring at the rim, one side carved with a channelled spout opposite an extended rim tapering to a point, the exterior carved in low relief with a wide register of archaistic taotie masks on a leiwen ground divided into sections by vertical flanges, set below the rim with a band of three chilong writhing in and out of clouds, one side set with a thin openwork handle issuing from the mouth of a taotie mask, all supported on three splayed blade legs, the horn of auburn tone with an attractive patina
width 11 cm., 4 3/8 in.

ESTIMATE 200,000-300,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 2,420,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collection of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.
Sotheby's Los Angeles, 20th October 1974, lot 129.

Sotheby's Los Angeles, 23rd October 1980, lot 1698.

Sotheby's Hong Kong, 20th May 1981, lot 904.

Christie's London, 17th December 1981, lot 369.

Collection of Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc52.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 8.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This cup, in the form of the well known bronze ritual vessel *jue*, exhibits archaistic elegance and a high level of skill exercised by the carver, who used the complex technique of bending different sections of the split horn upwards to form the splayed legs. The result is a fine example that belongs to a small and specialized group of rhinoceros horn carvings. It is after a rare type of *jue* that was made without the two capped posts on the rim; such as the Shang dynasty example in the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo, illustrated in *Ancient Chinese Arts in the Idemitsu Collection*, Tokyo, 1989, pl. 36.

Whilst the vessel's form makes a reference to the past, the carver has added a contemporaneous design in the form of two confronting dragons amongst foliage and a third full-faced one amongst *lingzhi* fungus, all carved on the vessel's flaring rim.

Compare a rhinoceros horn *jue* decorated with the *taotie* design illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 205, together with a four-legged *ding* form cup, pl. 206, and a tripod *ding* vessel, pl. 207. Another *jue* of similar size to the present example but with a wider rim, from the collection of H. G. Beasley, was sold in these rooms 22nd May 1984, lot 263; and one with two capped posts was also sold in these rooms, 19th November 1986, lot 334.

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LOT 2711

A RARE AND EXCEPTIONALLY CARVED RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP, BY XING CHENG

MING DYNASTY, DATED TO 1639

THIS IS A PREMIUM LOT. CLIENTS WHO WISH TO BID ON PREMIUM LOTS ARE REQUESTED TO COMPLETE THE PREMIUM LOT PRE-REGISTRATION 3 WORKING DAYS PRIOR TO THE SALE. BIDnow ONLINE BIDDING SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE.

the gently flaring sides intricately carved in various levels of relief around the exterior, depicting on one side with two figures in a boat navigating down a swift river, a thatched fence and a brick wall on either side of the riverbank, and lofty trees, the reverse with two further figures upstream passing thatched huts and jagged cliffs, along one promontory a scholar and his attendant view the riverscape, inscribed to one side with Jimao xiari Moling Xing Cheng zhi ('Made by Xing Cheng of Moling on a summer day in the jimao year' corresponding to 1639), the interior carved with a reticulated high-relief pine tree growing from the side, the horn of rich chestnut tone width 17.5 cm., 6 7/8 in.

ESTIMATE 8,000,000-12,000,000 **HKD**

Lot Sold: 14,100,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

John Sparks, London, 1959.

Collections of Edward T. Chow and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R5.

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc5.

LITERATURE

Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999. pl. 153.

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 145.

CATALOGUE NOTE

Amongst rhinoceros horn carvings, those bearing an inscription are rare, but even more exceptional, and of invaluable historical importance, are those that provide the carver's name as well as a date of when the vessel was made. The nine-character inscription rendered on the face of a rock on the present vessel reads and may be translated as follows:

Jimao xiari Moling Xing Cheng zhi.

'Made by Xing Cheng of Moling on a summer day in the jimao year (corresponding to 1639)'.

This inscription records the carver's name, Xing Cheng, and dates the vessel to 1639. It also provides an additional information: the place name 'Moling' which may be interpreted as the location where Xing Cheng worked and where the vessel was produced or the town where Xing Cheng came from. Moling was the name used for present day Nanjing during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Although no other carving signed by Xing Cheng appears to be recorded, it is suggested that he was possibly a pupil of the 17th century master carver Zhou Wenshu, a native of Moling (See Chapman, *op.cit.*, p. 138). Edward Chow in his notes on this cup remarks that the vessel is in the style of Zhou Wenshu. He further mentions that the best rhinoceros horn carvers at the time came from Moling. Zhou's habit of incising an inscription on a rock surface near the lip of the cup, as seen on another vessel from the collection of Franklin Chow and illustrated in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 130, is repeated here. In fact, the script used for the inscription on the two cups is identical.

For examples of carvings by Zhou see a cup decorated with a rocky landscape and pine trees, the rock face of the cliff incised in seal script with the three characters *Wenshu zhi* (made by Wenshu), from the collection of Harvard University Art Museums, included in Fok, *ibid.*, pl. 131. Another vessel, in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, carved with a landscape and signed and dated by Zhou, is published in Jan Chapman, 'The Chester Beatty Collection of

Chinese Carved Rhinoceros Horn Cups', *Arts of Asia*, May-June 1982, p. 78, pl. 16.

Artisans and craftsmen in China rarely signed their work unless they were commissioned to do so or felt that it was amongst, or indeed, their very best. While the inscription makes this vessel special, it is beautifully carved and a masterpiece in its own right. Edward Chow started his rhinoceros horn collection with this cup which he purchased from the renowned London dealer John Sparks in 1959. It was the exceptional workmanship, described by him as *jingsu you li* (extremely fine and forceful) that caught his eye. The landscape, inspired by the idyllic setting on the southern bank of the Yangtze River in Hubei province known as *Chibi* (Red Cliff) and made memorable by the Song poet, Su Dongpo (1037-1101), in his work titled *Chibi fu* (Ode on the Red Cliff), is skilfully rendered. Xing Cheng has treated his material as if painting on a hand-scroll - the rich landscape unfolds to the viewer as the cup is turned. Worked in high relief, the rock formations and trees appear three-dimensional. In fact, the rhinoceros horn is an ideal material for using carving and cutting techniques that best reproduce the natural likeness of the myriad indentations and the uneven surface of the stunning cliffs of Chibi. Chow remarked that he was *shen xing shen wei* ('extremely honoured and delighted' to own this cup.

For rhinoceros horn carvings depicting the landscape of Chibi see one in the collection of His Majesty King Gustaf VI Adolf of Sweden, included in Bo Gyllensvard, 'Two Yuan silver cups and their importance for dating of some carvings in wood and rhinoceros horn', *The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. Bulletin No. 43*, Stockholm, 1971, pl. 7; and another illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 128, attributed to the late Ming dynasty. See also a cup from the collection of Thomas Fok, published in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 162, and later sold at Christie's Hong Kong, 31st May 2010, lot 1818.

Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from The Edward Hong Kong | 08 Apr 2011, 10:00 AM | HK0370



LOT 2712
A SMALL 'PINE' RHINOCEROS LIBATION CUP
17TH CENTURY

the wide shallow cup of irregular form carved on the exterior with a reticulated pine tree handle with branches extending over the rim and onto the interior, the surface further textured with low-relief ovals resembling the bark of the tree, resting on a flat base, the patina of smooth golden amber tone, wooden stand
width 12.5 cm., 4 7/8 in.

ESTIMATE 400,000-600,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 2,060,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in London, 1963) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc21.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 121.

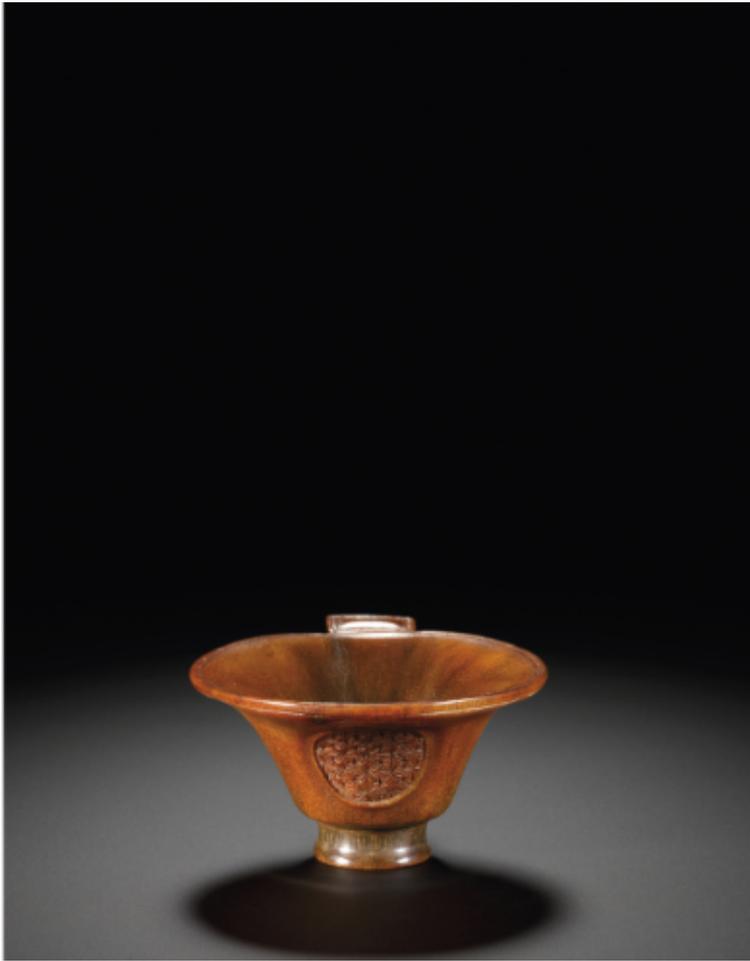
CATALOGUE NOTE

Fashioned in the form of the bark of the pine tree with its characteristic scales and nodules, the present exquisitely carved cup is in the taste of the Chinese scholar-literati. The craftsman has formed the handle to represent a pine branch which climbs over the lip of the cup. Rarely seen on designs of this type is the small pine cone visible inside the well. The pine needles are meticulously rendered, consistent with the naturalistic detail of the whole piece.

The subject matter of the pine tree was much favoured by the literati who saw it as the symbol of their unyielding character. The rugged pine represents venerability and is an important symbol of longevity. While there are many pine-decorated rhinoceros horn cups, the present example is an especially fine one. For further cups in this group see one in the British Museum, London, included in Derek Gillman, 'A Source of Rhinoceros Horn Cups in the Late Ming Dynasty', *Orientalism*, December 1984, p. 12, fig. 4; another from the collection of Dr. Ip Yee, published in Dr. Ip Yee, 'Chinese Rhinoceros Horn Carvings', *International Asian Antiques Fair*, Hong Kong, 1982, p. 40, pl. 38; and one with a strongly modelled pine tree with a gnarled and twisted trunk rising to form the handle, from the collection of Thomas Fok, illustrated in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 160.

Cups of this type have been sold at auction; for example see one, from the estate of Nils Nessim, Stockholm, sold in our New York rooms, 27th February 1981, lot 320; and a cup sold in these rooms, 23rd May 1978, lot 84.

Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from The Edward
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LOT 2713
A SMALL RHINOCEROS HORN CUP WITH A HANDLE
MING DYNASTY, 16TH CENTURY

elegantly carved of conical form, the surface left plain save for a circular diaper ground beneath the rim on one side, opposite the delicate tapered handle issuing from a rectangular tab on the rim, supported on a short waisted circular foot with a concave base, the highly polished patina of golden-amber tone
width 10 cm., 4 in.

ESTIMATE 180,000-250,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 1,820,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in London, 1968) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc24.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This miniature cup is both delightful and elegant. It embodies what was considered to be in the 'scholar's taste' during the Ming dynasty. The low foot supports a plain and elegantly curved body decorated with a single round cartouche containing the 'earth' diaper. The handle, also left plain, complements the overall form of the vessel with its pleasing curvature. The modelling of the cup is imbued with grace and vitality. In his notes Edward Chow comments on its beauty and says, '*kexi de zhi* (I am very happy to have it)'.

Attributed to the 16th century, this cup is one of the earliest examples in the collection. It was made when rhinoceros horn was rare and considered highly valuable by the Ming court. In fact, during the early Ming dynasty the craft of horn carving was exclusively controlled by the imperial court. Artisans produced pieces that enhanced the material so that it could be fully appreciated. It was only later, when there was an increase in the supply of horn that more intricately carved designs started appearing with emphasis on skill and technique rather than on the material.

The 'earth' diaper is discussed by Jan Chapman in *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, p. 149, where she illustrates a cup from the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, pl.175. See also a cup, from the Sloane collection and now in the British Museum, London, published in Soame Jenyns, 'The Chinese Rhinoceros and Chinese Carvings in Rhinoceros Horn', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society*, 1954-55, pl. 24, fig. A1; and one in the Gerard Levy Collection, Paris, included in Chapman, *op.cit.*, pl. 195, with two roundels containing the 'earth' diaper as its only decoration. This motif continued to be used on later vessels, however, in almost all cases, covering large areas of the body and serving as the main decorative design; see for example a *guang* form cup illustrated in *The Palace Museum Collection of Elite Carvings*, Beijing, 2004, pl. 216, attributed to the Qing dynasty, together with another vessel, pl. 221, also of the mid-Qing period.

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LOT 2714

**A FIGURAL LANDSCAPE RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP
QING DYNASTY, 17TH / 18TH CENTURY**

the tall horn carved on the exterior with a continuous landscape with three figures in front of a walled compound along the banks of a turbulent body of water looking at a dragon on the opposite side, the opposite bank with trees and small huts all partially concealed by wispy clouds, one end of the horn set with a openwork handle formed by the trunk of a pine tree and the body of a climbing dragon twisting his way through the cliffs and clouds and breaking through to the interior of the cup, the horn of auburn tone
width 15 cm., 6 in.

ESTIMATE 800,000-1,200,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 8,420,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collection of Franklin Chow (purchased in Munich, 1978).

CATALOGUE NOTE

Although rhinoceros horn cups decorated with figures in a landscape are readily found, the present vessel is distinctive for its carving of a large, ferocious scaly dragon forming the handle. The combination of figural landscape and dragon motif makes this vessel unique with no other similar example recorded. The huge mythical animal is depicted climbing up the side of the cup and is peering over the lip. In the continuous landscape scene of rocks, water, trees, pavilions seen through swirling clouds there are three figures: a young boy accompanied by two elderly gentlemen both pointing to the dragon. The dragon in this design is a reference to the well known story of the old dragon teaching its young (*canglong jiaozhi*); a story that came to represent the elderly official teaching his son how to succeed him and his wish for his boy to carry on his official position for generations to come.

Acquired in 1978, this cup was Franklin Chow's first addition to the Chow collection of horn carvings. The carving is meticulously executed, even the base is fashioned after the surface of a rock. The dragon brings a sense of surprise and vitality to the modelling which is imbued with elegance. The carver has skilfully undertaken the technical challenge of weaving the body of the dragon in and out between the pine tree and the clouds. It is an exceptionally fine cup with a charming subject matter – perhaps made as a gift from father to son.

Large scaly dragons are commonly depicted amongst waves, a reference to one passing the civil service examination when the carp, swimming upstream, transforms into a dragon. For examples of carvings with the 'dragon and wave' design see a cup with a vigorous scaly dragon carved as the handle, in the collection of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, included in Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, pl. 234. Another vessel depicting a dragon weaving in and out of a pine tree trunk, not dissimilar to that seen on this piece, in the collection of Dora Wong, is also published *ibid.*, pl. 235.

For examples of vessels decorated with a figural landscape see four illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pls 145-148, from the Qing Court collection and all attributed to the early Qing period.

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LOT 2715

A 'LOTUS LEAF' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP 17TH CENTURY

the well-polished horn of chestnut tone, carved in low relief around the exterior of the shallow wide-mouth cup with the fine veins of a furled lotus leaf, enveloped by two thin reeds, the openwork handle on one side with three intertwining stalks tied together by the tips of the reeds and extending to the base, resting on two small lotus bud feet, the interior left plain save for the subtle wavy contours imitating a leaf's natural shape, wooden stand width 15 cm., 5 7/8 in.

ESTIMATE 1,200,000-1,500,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 4,820,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in Hong Kong, 1972) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc11.

CATALOGUE NOTE

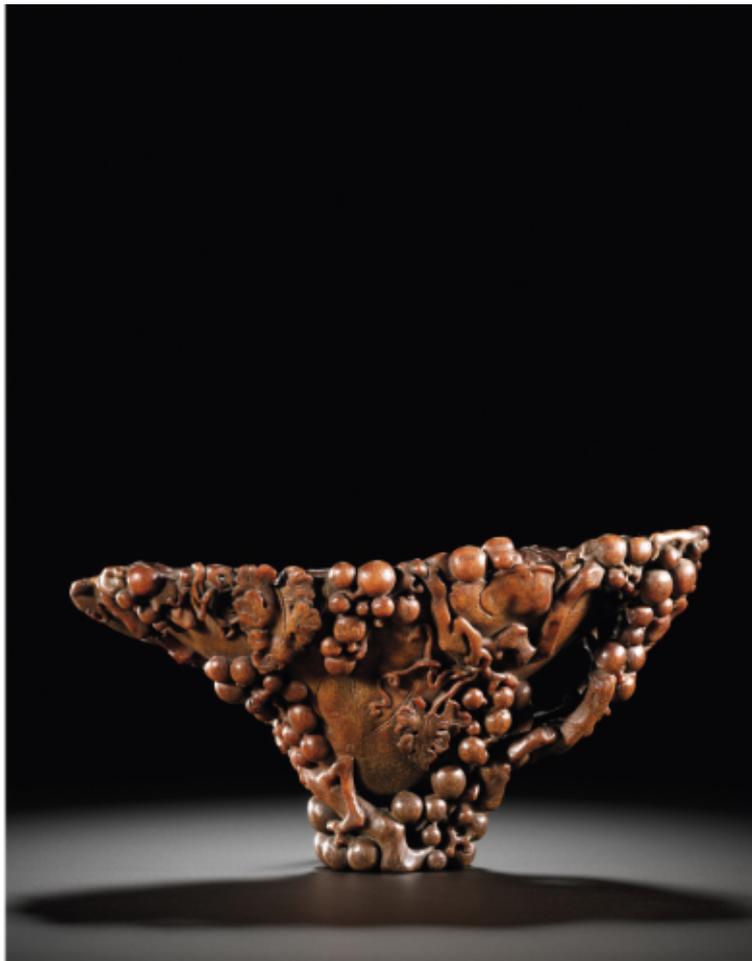
This cup is a superb example of what is possibly one of the most popular decorative themes in the rhinoceros horn carver's repertoire – the lotus leaf and flower. While it displays characteristic elements seen on cups of this design, such as the veining on the exterior of the leaf, the lotus stems and buds, this vessel stands out for the unusual fashioning of its foot which is in the form of three entwining stalks. The carver has created an openwork design by binding the stalks together with the millet grass. While stalks are frequently made into a ring-base for the vessel, this carver has created an original design. Nature was also on the forefront of the carver's mind when rendering the veins of the leaf which he has outlined in low relief rather than simply incising them.

The millet grass that binds the lotus leaf and the stems is important for a number of reasons; it gives the design a sense of strength; and the combination of the lotus leaf and millet grass together form the visual pun *hehe* (harmony) that expresses the wish for 'living in harmony year after year'. The lotus itself is the symbol of purity and uncontaminated beauty, and is associated with the pure and virtuous character of the gentry and scholar-literati. Edward Chow in his notes describes the cup as *kei ji zhi* ('beautiful and adorable') and praises the skills of the carver for producing a delicate piece which he found unusual for its time. He also mentions that the cup is 'in the style of Cheng and Hong (*you Cheng Hong zuo feng*)'. Cheng Hong represents the period between the Chenghua and Hongzhi reigns of the Ming dynasty, suggesting a strong Ming period influence on the decoration.

Although no other similar example appears to be recorded, a cup from the Murray bequest and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, illustrated in Craig Clunas, *Chinese Carving*, London, 1996, fig. 31, uses two intertwining stems to form the base that extend upwards to become the handle of the vessel. Another related cup is published in Dr. Ip Yee, 'Notes on a collection of Chinese rhinoceros horn carvings', *International Asian Antiques Fair*, Hong Kong, 1982, p. 35, pl. 28; and a third, in the form of a large lotus leaf carved with the lotus stalks and millet grass tied together by a ribbon, from the collection of Thomas Fok, is included in Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 97.

Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from The Edward

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LOT 2716

**A VERY RARE 'GRAPE VINE' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP, SIGNED ZI ZHEN
17TH CENTURY**

THIS IS A PREMIUM LOT. CLIENTS WHO WISH TO BID ON PREMIUM LOTS ARE REQUESTED TO COMPLETE THE PREMIUM LOT PRE-REGISTRATION 3 WORKING DAYS PRIOR TO THE SALE. BIDnow ONLINE BIDDING SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE.

the broad shallow cup formed by a furled grape leaf, finely carved on the exterior in high relief with plump grapes growing from vines and curling tendrils extending down from the sides, the handle formed by gnarled twisted vines, all resting on a bed of grapes forming the foot, the interior incised with the fine veins of the leaf, signed on the exterior in low relief Zi Zhen, the horn of rich auburn tone
width 19 cm., 7 1/2 in.

ESTIMATE ♦6,000,000-8,000,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 8,420,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's New York, 10/11th April 1986, lot 294.

Collection of Franklin Chow.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 107.

CATALOGUE NOTE

The two-character inscription in seal script, set between grape vines on the front, reads Zi Zhen. Bao Yanli, Deputy Director and Research Associate at the Shanghai Museum believes that the inscription was made by the carver. It may be the carver's name or his style name (*zi*). Although there is no record of Zi Zhen, a lotus form washer carved with a single crab, in the Shanghai Museum, bears the same two character signature.

This magnificent piece, fashioned as a large grape leaf with finely rendered veins and richly laden with large succulent grapes is a quirky example of a small group of rhinoceros horn carvings decorated with the fruit design. The cup is elegantly shaped and expertly fashioned; even the lip of the vessel is frilled in the form of a grape leaf with the fruit rendered in high relief bulging over the exterior of the surface. The exceptional quality and size of the material is also noteworthy.

The fruiting grapevine as a subject was especially popular in the Ming dynasty, and was frequently painted on early Ming blue and white wares such as the dish recovered from the waste heaps of the Ming Imperial kilns at Jingdezhen included in the exhibition *Imperial Hongwu and Yongle Porcelain Excavated at Jingdezhen*, Chang Foundation, Taipei, 1996, pl. 44. Grapes are also depicted with squirrels forming a popular motif that represent the wish for many children and ceaseless generations of sons and grandsons (*songshu putao*).

For related pieces, see a rhinoceros horn cup decorated with grape branches, leaves and fruit, in the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich, illustrated in Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, pl. 222; another in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, illustrated in Jan Chapman, 'Rhinoceros Horn Carvings and their Buffalo Horn Imitations', *Orientalism*, January 1988, p. 41, fig.1; and a third example carved with the 'Grape and Squirrel' theme, included in the exhibition *One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion*, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R13, from the collection of Edward Chow. Two cups decorated with grapes, from the Qing Court collection and still in Beijing, are published in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pls.114 and 130, the latter made by using a whole horn. Compare also a grape vine cup in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, published in Craig Clunas, *Chinese Carving*, London, 1996, fig. 35; one sold at Christie's New York, 22nd March 2007, lot 154; and one from the Estate of Cyrus Jasperse, sold in our New York rooms, 13th June 1979, lot 133.

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LOT 2717

A 'PINE AND MAPLE' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP QING DYNASTY, KANGXI PERIOD

the conical horn of auburn tone and a smooth patina, carved with a handle to one side formed by the reticulated trunks of a pine tree and a dead tree trunk wrapped with hanging vines, their branches extending around the side of the vessel, set opposite a small waterfall and an arched bridge between two cliffs, the sides further carved with lush maple trees growing on the banks, the interior left plain, the foot inscribed in relief in xingshu (running script) with a six-character poem zai hu shan shui zhi jian ('It is all between the mountains and steams')

width 14 cm., 5 1/2 in.

ESTIMATE 700,000-900,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 5,060,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's Hong Kong, 20th May 1986, 174.

Collection of Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc56.

CATALOGUE NOTE

The exceptional quality of the carving of this cup continues with the beautiful calligraphy written in *xingshu* script on the base. It reads and may be translated as follows:

Zai hu shan shui zhi jian.

It is all between the mountains and the streams.

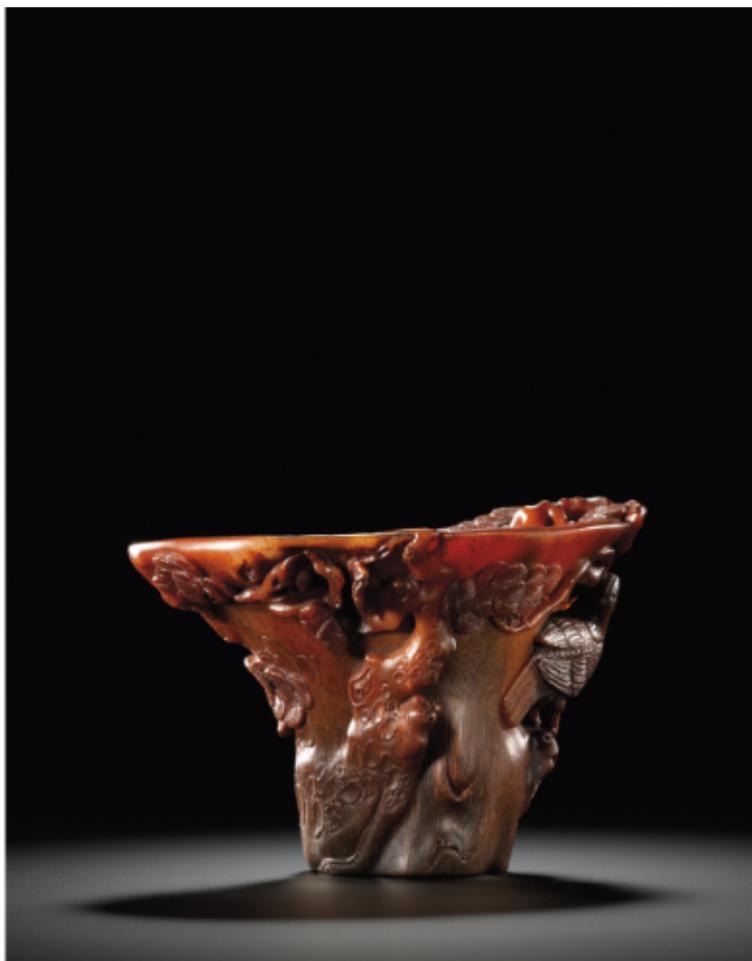
This famous quote is from the work of the Northern Song dynasty statesman, historian, writer and poet Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) titled *Zui Weng Ting Ji* (The Record of the Pavilion of the Old Drunkard). Ouyang wrote this essay in 1046 when he was appointed *taishou* (Grand Warden) at Chuzhou in Anhui province. In it he describes the picturesque and natural beauty of Chuzhou and portrays the simple life of its peasant folk. However, Ouyang was bitterly disappointed and frustrated at being sent there as he felt that his talent was not recognized. In Chuzhou he spent his days drinking and became famous for entertaining his guests and getting drunk in a pavilion built by a Buddhist priest, which he named *Zui Weng Ting* (Pavilion of the Old Drunkard) after himself.

The superb carving of this cup is reminiscent of the work of the master carver Zhou Wenshu. The whole exterior is modelled as a cliff face with the roots of several pine trees emerging from crevices in the rock. The handle is fashioned in the form of two pines whose main branches stretch over the sides of the cup and are festooned with vines. For examples of carvings by Zhou see a cup decorated with a rocky landscape and pine trees, the rock face of the cliff incised in seal script with the three characters *Wenshu zhi* (made by Wenshu), from the collection of Harvard University Art Museums, included in Fok, *ibid.*, pl. 131. Another vessel, in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, carved with a landscape and signed and dated by Zhou, is published in Jan Chapman, 'The Chester Beatty Collection of Chinese Carved Rhinoceros Horn Cups', *Arts of Asia*, May-June 1982, p. 78, pl. 16.

Compare also a cup from the collection of Kenyon V. Painter, Cleveland, carved with pine, paulownia and flowering trees scattered across mountain cliffs and high rocks, sold in our New York rooms, 19th March 2007, lot 380; and another, from the Estate of Nils Nessim, Stockholm, sold at Christie's New York, 25th March 2010, lot 819, depicting trees amidst rock formations. A third cup carved in high relief with a tree-strewn landscape, the handle formed by the stout branches of a pine tree, sold at Christie's Paris, 15th June 2005, lot 231, and again at Christie's Hong Kong, 27th May 2008, lot 1707.

Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from The Edward

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LOT 2718

A RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP WITH HAWKS QING DYNASTY, 18TH CENTURY

the maroon coloured conical horn carved as a pine tree trunk with two high-relief birds on the back of the horn, one hawk standing on a pine branch, the second bird depicted in flight with wings outstretched and feet drawn towards the body set at the rim, the gnarled pine branches wrapped around the trunk and extending over the rim onto the interior, the surface further lightly carved with patches of pine bark
width 16 cm., 6 1/4 in.

ESTIMATE 1,500,000-2,500,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 5,420,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Spink & Son, London, 1978.

Collections of Edward T. Chow and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R15.
Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc15.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 169.

CATALOGUE NOTE

The carving of this vessel is especially fine with the two hawks strategically placed to take advantage of the material's organic form and fibrous inclusions. The natural groove running down the long curve of the horn is particularly deep. The pair of hawks are described by Edward Chow in his notes as *you li* ('strong'). The artist has successfully transferred the image of the hawk, well known from Tang dynasty mural paintings, into a three-dimensional composition. See a Tang painting depicting a hunting scene, from the west mural in the second tunnel of the tomb of Prince Yide in Qian, Shaanxi province, illustrated in *Sekai bijutsu taizenshu: Toyo hen*, vol. 4, Tokyo, 1997, p. 31. Bird of prey such as hawks and eagles (*ying*) represent the hero in Chinese art as its name is homophonous with the character for hero (*yingxiong*). A flying hawk conveys the wish for attaining a journey of ten thousand miles (*pengcheng wanli*) and the wish for a long and successful career.

Rhinoceros horn vessels bearing the design of birds are rare, although a cup deeply carved with a bird of prey, possibly a hawk, swooping down against a background of waves, in the Chester Beatty collection is included in Jan Chapman, 'The Chester Beatty Collection of Chinese Carved Rhinoceros Horn Cups', *Arts of Asia*, May-June 1982, p. 78, fig. 13. Another cup, carved with a richly plumed hawk perched on one of the branches while, on the opposite side, another swoops down in flight, was offered in our New York rooms, 30th March 2006, lot 135. A third example depicting a pair of doves, flying above jagged rockwork, was sold in our London rooms, 13th July 2005, lot 108. See also a cup carved with a design of mandarin duck and lotus, bearing the seal of the late Ming period master carver You Kan, formerly in the collection of Dr. Ip Yee and now in the Palace Museum, Beijing, illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 127.

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LOT 2719

AN IMPERIAL OUTSTANDING RHINOCEROS HORN 'DRAGON' BOWL MING&NBSP;DYNASTY, 16TH / 17TH CENTURY

THIS IS A PREMIUM LOT. CLIENTS WHO WISH TO BID ON PREMIUM LOTS ARE REQUESTED TO COMPLETE THE PREMIUM LOT PRE-REGISTRATION 3 WORKING DAYS PRIOR TO THE SALE. BIDnow ONLINE BIDDING SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE.

carved from a perfectly circular section of horn with rounded sides rising to an everted lip and tapering to a flat base, deftly carved in varying levels of relief around the exterior with one large scaly five-clawed dragon with a bifurcated tail and four smaller chilong, all clambering around a formal archaistic ground with a band of leiwen and taotie animal masks, set between upright and pendent lappets and cicadas below the rim and skirting the foot, the mouthrim encircled by a keyfret band and abstract zoomorphic patterns around the mouth, the dragons all playfully rendered with animated contorted poses, the fifth chilong hiding on the base in low relief, the well-hollowed interior left plain, the smooth patina of warm honey tone, stand width 16.5 cm., 6 1/2 in.

ESTIMATE ♦18,000,000-25,000,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's London, 12th December 1978, lot 257.
Collections of Edward T. Chow and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R19.

LITERATURE

Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, pl. 189.
Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 6.

CATALOGUE NOTE

Praised as the 'Champion of rhinoceros horns' (*ke cheng xijiao zhi Guan*) by Edward Chow, the present bowl is a *tour de force* within rhinoceros horn carving with no comparable example recorded. Acquired in 1978, this bowl is amongst the most important vessels in the collection. Chow mentions in his notes that in his fifty years' experience with antiques it is the first time that he has seen such an extraordinary piece. He writes, '*Xing shen xing shen ye. Zhi ke yu, bu ke qiu, laotian zhi ci ye.*' ('How lucky, how happy I am! One can only find such an object by chance. It is the gift of God.')

Exquisitely fashioned in high relief with a large animated scaly dragon chasing four smaller ones around the vessel, against a background of archaic motifs carved in low relief, it represents the work of a master carver possibly employed by the Ming court or commissioned to make it as a tribute item for the court. It is known that from the early Ming dynasty the craft of horn carving was exclusively controlled by the imperial court which would have commissioned a bowl of this type for the emperor and his family.

The bowl is special for a number of reasons. It is impressive for its exceptionally large size. The only horn type that is of sufficient size and shape to make such a striking vessel is that of the Black African rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*). This horn species is also the only one that is virtually circular in shape and has almost straight sides at the well end which is important for achieving the correct shape. (See Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, p. 90).

While rhinoceros horn bowls are rare, two of the earliest examples recorded are in the collection of the Shoso-in Repository at Nara, Japan, illustrated in *ibid.*, pp. 87-88, pls. 66 and 67, both undecorated with a diameter of 10 cm and 15.5 cm respectively. Another plain bowl of very similar size and form to the present piece, attributed to the late Ming dynasty, from the Qing court collection and still in Beijing, is illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 123. The Palace Museum bowl shares a distinct feature with the bowl in this collection, the thick overhanging lip which in this case is decorated with the keyfret pattern on the side and stylised dragon motif on the top. See a smaller plain conical form bowl (diameter 15 cm.) with a keyfret pattern around the rim, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, included in Craig Clunas, *Chinese Carving*, London, 1996, fig. 29; and one in the collection of Harvard University Art Museums, decorated with a single stylized dragon band, illustrated in Fok, *op.cit.*, pl. 10. Compare another Ming bowl in the form of a large lotus flower, included in a number of distinguished collections such as those of Hoqua, William Couper, Leo D. Arons, Eskenazi London, and The Water, Pine, Stone Retreat Collection, sold in these rooms, 8th October 2010, lot 2242.

The exquisite craftsmanship and decoration make this bowl special and unique. The high level of quality achieved and

the dauntingly laborious production process are typical of manufacture for imperial use. The carving of the mythical beasts is three dimensional, not dissimilar to that seen on stone stele of the Ming dynasty. For example, see a relief carving of a dragon on a ceremonial archway (*pai lou*) base in the tomb of the Ming emperor Hongxi (d. 1425), Beijing, illustrated in Ann Paludan, *The Chinese Spirit Road*, New Haven, 1991, pl. 221. The cicada motif on the bowl is also comparable to that carved on the base of another stone ceremonial archway bearing a large *qilin*, in the Valley of the Ming Tombs, Beijing, also illustrated *ibid.*, pl. 220.

The carving of this bowl is similar to that seen on contemporary lacquer vessels where the design is fashioned through several distinct layers. On this bowl, the *chilong* are fashioned on an archaic background, much of which is carved against another layer of *leiwen* (keyfret) ground. For a related effect see a Jiajing mark and period lacquer bowl of similar deep rounded form, carved with a writhing dragon and a soaring phoenix amid peonies, sold in these rooms, 2nd May 2005, lot 627. A Xuande lacquer dish carved in high relief with *chilong* amidst waves and *ruyi*-clouds, in the Palace Museum, Beijing, and published in *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, vol.5, Fuzhou, 1995, pl. 42, may have also served as inspiration in its rendition of the dragons and *ruyi*-clouds against a star-pattern diaper-ground. This style of deep carving is also evident on an imperial Ming rosewood brushpot bearing nine hornless dragons chasing each other around the vessel, also in the Palace Museum, included *Sekai Bijutsu Daizenshu*. Toyohen, vol. 8, Tokyo, 1999, pl. 203.

Another distinctive feature of this bowl is its particularly beautiful shade of golden honey colour which is associated with pieces made in the Ming dynasty. This is a sign of the natural aging process of the material as well as being the result of extensive polishing to a high sheen. In its original state rhinoceros horn is a dark grey colour, frequently with a black core to the horn which extends upwards from the point to the well.

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LOT 2720

A FIGURAL RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP QING DYNASTY, 17TH&NBSP; / 18TH CENTURY

the amber and black toned horn carved with the scene of King Wen of Zhou inviting the retired scholar Jiang Ziya to return to official duties, the scholar seen opposite the handle seated beneath a willow tree fishing on the banks of the a river with the king standing next to him, behind a rock an attendant stands holding a large fan, on the opposite side a canopy and fan float above the clouds, the handle formed by openwork paulownia and pine trees intertwined with a large rocky outcrop, the pine tree extending over the lip and on to the interior

width 15.2 cm., 6 in.

ESTIMATE 700,000-900,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 4,340,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Christie's London, 8th June 1987, lot 129.

EXHIBITED

Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc49.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 161.

CATALOGUE NOTE

The deep and fluid fashioning of three figures in a rocky landscape makes this vessel an especially fine example amongst figural landscape carvings. The story depicted on the vessel is that of the legend of Jiang Ziya, also known as Taigong Wang (The Great Duke's Hope), who was called upon by King Wen of the Zhou dynasty to serve as his prime minister. The scene on the cup shows King Wen's encounter with Jiang who is seated on the bank of the river Wei fishing. Following this meeting Jiang was invited to the king's court where he served two generations of Zhou rulers and became one of China's greatest military strategists. While the two figures on the cup are depicted as scholars, reference to their identity, especially to that of the emperor, is made by the third figure hiding behind a rock holding the king's fan. Another fan can be seen in the background next to a half concealed imperial canopy. Both the fan and the canopy are associated with royalty. The image carved on this cup has many Confucian connotations, making it a suitable gift to a scholar or official.

For examples of rhinoceros horn carvings with historical figures see one in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, carved with the figure of Wei Shu Xiang, included in Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, pl. 286; and another, depicting the poet Li Bai, formerly in the collection of Dr. Ip Yee and now in the Palace Museum, Beijing, published *ibid.*, pl. 288.

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LOT 2721

A SMALL FIGURAL RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP MING DYNASTY, 16TH CENTURY

the honey-toned round cup carved on the exterior with three boys navigating along the edge of a rocky cliff, one of the boys depicted grasping the openwork trunk of a flowering tree with one hand while finding his footing along the narrow ridge and holding a leaf with his free hand, on the other side two boys brace each other on the edge of a rocky path, further along peonies spring from the rocks, the interior lightly carved with the jagged edges of the cliff

width 11.5 cm., 4 1/2 in.

ESTIMATE 500,000-700,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 4,220,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's New York, 25th September 1986, lot 274.

Collection of Franklin Chow.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 158.

CATALOGUE NOTE

Finely carved with an image of children at play, a design sporadically seen on rhinoceros horn vessels, this bowl is appealing for its deep carving and weighty form, possibly intended to contain water for the scholar's table where it would have been placed together with his other materials for writing and painting. The light honey tone, which is the natural colouration of the vessel is especially pleasing, and suggests an early attribution. Jan Chapman in *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China, op.cit.*, p. 60, notes that the yellow and honey colours are thought to be the result of the natural ageing process of the horn and some of the earliest known carvings are described as being yellow in colour. Vessels of this light tone are almost invariably associated with the best quality carvings. The exceptional finish of the base, in the form of a smooth rock, is also worth noting. Although the base is not exposed, the carver has nevertheless fashioned it with great care, displaying the high level of attention paid to every detail.

The inspiration for the design is possibly from slightly earlier, Chinghua period (1463-1487), *doucai* cups painted with boys at play in a rocky garden setting, as seen on a cup included in the *Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Ch'eng-hua Porcelain Ware*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2003, cat. no. 139.

Compare also a cup depicting playing children, sold in these rooms, 20th November 1984, lot 526; and another from the collection of George Headley, sold at Christie's New York, 1st December 1983, lot 715.

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LOT 2722

A LARGE RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP WITH CRANES 17TH CENTURY

finely carved on the exterior with tall crane standing beneath a lofty pine along the banks of a turbulent sea with waves crashing over rocks, the reverse with a second crane swooping down over the water before jagged cliffs, the openwork handle formed by the trunks of a pine tree and peach tree, the branches all intertwined with hanging vines extending over the mouth and on to the interior, with further lingzhi and orchids springing out from the sides of the cliffs, all set between wispy clouds around the mouth and swirling waves on the base, the horn of chocolate-brown tone and a smooth patina
width 20.1 cm., 7 7/8 in.

ESTIMATE 1,800,000-2,500,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 7,220,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Spink & Son, London, 1978.

LITERATURE

Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 144.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This finely modelled and exquisitely rendered cup is full of auspicious symbolism. Cranes are generally associated with Shou Lao, the God of Immortality, who is often depicted riding on the back of a crane. The vigorously modelled pine tree that rises to the rim of the vessel also symbolizes longevity, as the pine is evergreen and is known to live for a long time. The design further includes the *lingzhi* fungus with the auspicious herb *lancao* growing on the cliff, all representing the wish for an eternal life. There is also a seasonal reference to spring through the flower – orchid – seen depicted below the spout. Cups of this design were made as birthday gifts or for special celebratory occasions. The vessel is also special for its magnificent size, being one of the largest in the collection.

A cup decorated in low relief with a pair of cranes, parrots and phoenix, against a rocky background, in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, is illustrated in Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, pl. 253. See another cup sold at Christie's New York, 19th September 2007, lot 3, carved with two cranes, one standing and one soaring in the air.

The animated and high-crested waves around the base are reminiscent of those carved on a lotus form vessel, the lower portion of the body decorated with a dragon emerging from highly stylized tumultuous waves, from the collection of Dr. Ip Yee, included in 'Chinese Rhinoceros Horn Carvings', *International Asian Antiques Fair*, Hong Kong, 1982, pl. 25. Another cup decorated with waves and bats, from the Qing Court collection and still in Beijing, is published in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Carvings*, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 149.

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LOT 2723

A DOUBLE-HANDLED RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP QING DYNASTY, 17TH / 18TH CENTURY

highly polished of amber tone, the conical cup carved in openwork with two gnarled prunus branches set on opposite sides, the branches extending over the lip of the cup and wrapping along wall of the exterior over the finely carved low-relief archaistic bands, all set between a leiwen border at the mouth and around the tall hollow foot ring, the interior rim pared down slightly thinner than the interior central well, wooden stand width 12 cm., 4 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE 800,000-1,200,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 2,660,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in Hong Kong, 1963) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

One Man's Taste. Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion, Galleries of the Baur Collection, Geneva, 1988, cat. no. R17.
Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc17.

LITERATURE

Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999. pl. 79.

CATALOGUE NOTE

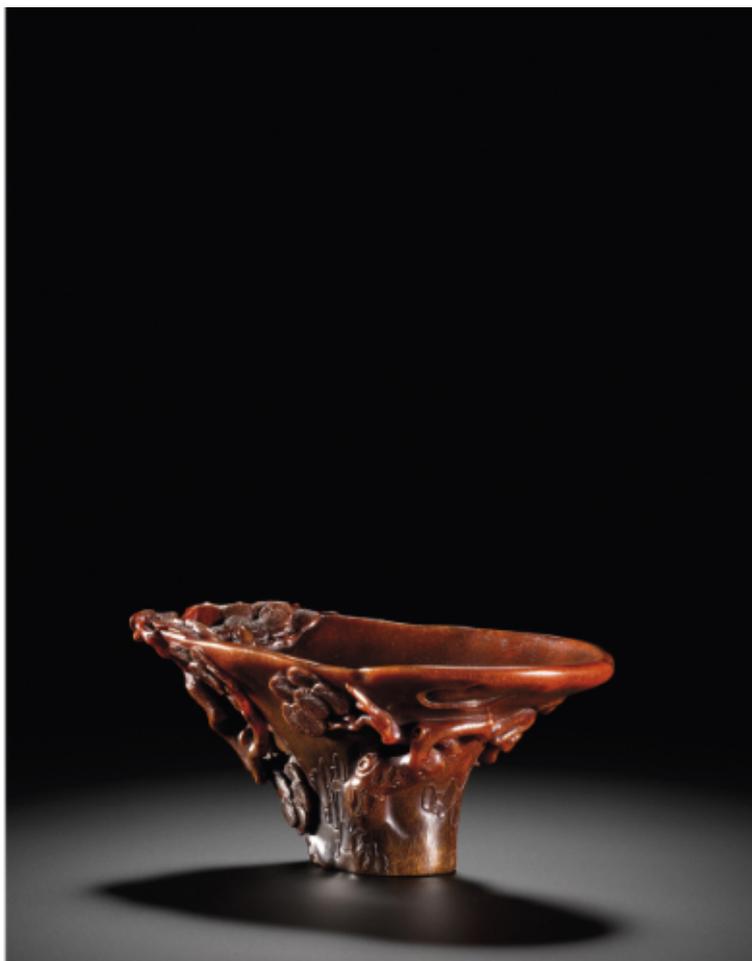
Carved from the solid part of an Asian horn, the present cup is unusual for its form and the blending of two distinct types of decorative styles: bronze-archaism and floral designs. It is rare to find double-handed rhinoceros horn cups, although an undecorated example, in the collection of Dora Wong, is published in Thomas Fok, *Connoisseurship of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Hong Kong, 1999, pl. 48. See another plain quatrefoil form cup with two handles sold at Christie's London, 13th December 1976, lot 8, and again, in these rooms, 22nd May 1979, lot 291.

While the shape of this vessel is based on a bronze prototype, and hence, fittingly carved with an archaistic design of stylized dragons and *taotie* mask in low relief, the two handles are the craftsman's innovative contribution to the design. The prunus branches are not only pleasing to the eye but bring a sense of 'softness' to the shape. The overall effect is a highly decorative and masterly carved contemporaneous vessel with the much favoured archaistic touch.

Chapman lists a number of carvings that fit into the 'archaistic-combination' category which she describes as a small group of vessels predominantly archaistic in shape but decorated with flora and fauna elements combined with those of an archaistic character; see two examples in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, included in Chapman, *op.cit.*, pl. 194 and pl. 196, and one in the Gerard Levy collection in Paris, *ibid.*, pl. 195.

The light translucent colouration and the small delicate size of the cup are also worth noting. Edward Chow in his notes describes the vessel as *jiaose danhuang touming, zuke bawan ye* ('the horn is of light yellow colouration and is transparent, can be held as a 'plaything' by its foot').

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LOT 2724

A 'PINE' RHINOCEROS HORN LIBATION CUP QING DYNASTY, 18TH CENTURY

the well-polished horn of auburn tone, carved as a wide shallow cup tapering to a small flat foot, carved on the exterior to one side with a reticulated gnarled pine tree handle with branches wrapping the sides of the entire cup, and with one branch extending over the rim onto the interior, the surface further textured with shallow oval patches representing tree bark, wooden stand

width 16.5 cm., 6 1/2 in.

ESTIMATE 500,000-700,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 3,380,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collections of Edward T. Chow (purchased in London, 1961) and Franklin Chow.

EXHIBITED

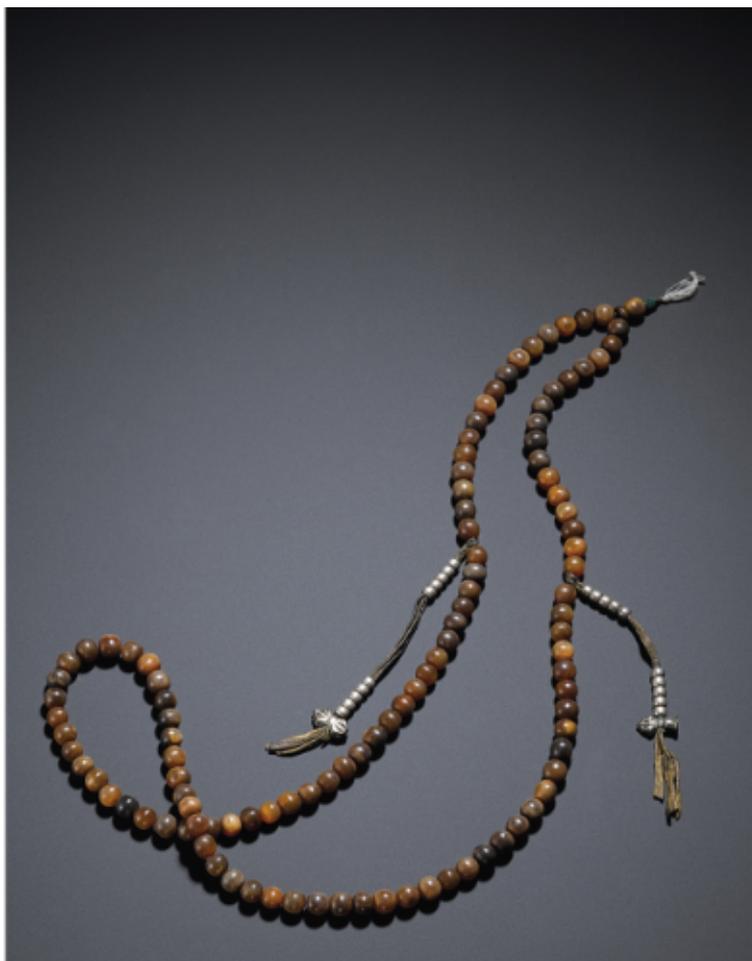
Craving for Carvings: Rhinoceros Horn from the Chow Collection, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore, 2003, cat. no. fc29.

CATALOGUE NOTE

One of the early acquisitions for his collection, Edward Chow describes this cup as *diao ke shi fen cang lao ke ai* ('the carving is of age and is extremely adorable') and attributes it to the early Qing period. The exterior surface of the vessel is carved with the scales of the bark of a mature pine tree. It shows the high level of care and skill of its maker. Objects decorated with pine tree were invariably made for the scholar-literati who appreciated the vessel not only for its form but for what the pine tree symbolizes: longevity.

For examples of rhinoceros horn cups decorated with the pine motif see one in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, included in Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, 1999, pl. 229, where the craftsman has used both a plain background and a small area of bark background against which a life-like pine branch with numerous needles is portrayed. Compare also a cup from the collection of Dr. Ip Yee, published in 'Chinese Rhinoceros Horn Carvings', *International Asian Antiques Fair*, Hong Kong, 1982, pl. 38; another sold at Christie's New York, 25th March 2010, lot 819, from the estate of Nils Nessim, Stockholm; and one sold at Christie's London, 12th May 2009, lot 29.

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LOT 2725

A STRAND OF RHINOCEROS HORN TIBETAN ROSARY BEADS QING DYNASTY, 19TH CENTURY

consisting of 108 circular beads plus an extra bead at the end of the string tied to a malachite fitting, the strand divided into sections by two short leather strings attached, each strung with ten silver beads, one terminating with a silver vajra and the other with a bell, the beads of similar diameter and varying tones of amber colour
120 cm., 47 in.

ESTIMATE 90,000-120,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 800,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collection of Franklin Chow (purchased in London, 1990).

CATALOGUE NOTE

Prayer beads or rosaries were introduced into Buddhism from Hinduism. Worn by priests and devotees alike, they were primarily used in the esoteric Buddhist rituals. They are also the attributes of certain deities such as Avalokitesvara, the Deity of Compassion, and Buddha Amitabha. Traditionally, rosaries have 108 beads that represent the 108 human passions that Avalokitesvara is believed to have assumed when telling the beads. The rosary also allows worshippers to repeat Buddha's name one-hundred times with the extra eight beads there to help if there was an omission made in the counting.

The prayer bead is made with a string that passes through a large central bead and two smaller beads before it is knotted. The three additional beads keep the rest in place and are significant to the worshipper as they signal the completion of a cycle of telling. Additionally the three beads symbolize the three jewels of Buddhism, the Buddha, the *dharma* that is the Buddha's teachings and the *sangha* which represents the monastic order. There is also a hidden string that passes through the beads. This string represents the penetrating power of all of the Buddhas. (See Meher McArthur, *Reading Buddhist Art*, London, 2002, pp. 152-153).

Prayer beads were made in a variety of materials, most commonly wood from the Bodhi tree; those carved in rhinoceros horn are rare. Each individual bead would have been made from the carver's stock as horn itself was expensive and none could be wasted. All the beads are different, the various colours indicating that they came from different horns and from all parts of the horn; the darkest beads from the solid tip end and the palest from the base of the horn.

See a Tibetan prayer bead made of coral, in the Potala Palace collection, included in the exhibition, *Treasures from Snow Mountains. Gems of Tibetan Cultural Relics*, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai, 2001, pl. 77; two rosaries, one of iron in the form of 108 skulls and the other fashioned in amber, published in *Masterpieces of Chinese Tibetan Buddhist Altar Fittings in the National Palace Museum*, Taipei, 1971, pls. 7-8; and one made of human-bone, from the Qing Court collection, illustrated in *Cultural Relics of Tibetan Buddhism Collected in the Qing Palace*, Beijing, 1992, pl. 141.

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LOT 2726

A RHINOCEROS HORN OPIUM PIPE QING DYNASTY, 18TH CENTURY

the long cylindrical tube formed from a two straight pieces of horn forming the 'stem', carved with a small squirrel and grapes in relief below the silver mounted 'saddle' finely inlaid in silver wire with a dense design of poppies, leaves, deer, vases and coins, the coin with a cyclical date yi zhou (corresponding to 1745), with traces of blue and green enamelling remaining within the wires, further set with an upright short circular 'coin' shaped neck for attaching to the bowl, fitted on each end with ivory mounts, the ivory mouthpiece pierced at the top with a small hole, the the horn of warm brown tone and a smooth patina

61 cm., 24 in.,

ESTIMATE 120,000-150,000 HKD

Lot Sold: 1,340,000 HKD

PROVENANCE

Collection of Franklin Chow (purchased in London, 1990).

CATALOGUE NOTE

Fashioned using the length of a large rhinoceros horn, this pipe is an unusual example of a collaboration between a horn carver and a silversmith. The end of the pipe is made of ivory, while the working part of the opium pipe is made of a silver alloy. Pipes of this type were more commonly carved from bamboo; the present example, fashioned from this expensive material must have belonged to a member of the gentry.