

Galerie Hioco

Exceptional and monumental Buddha head (P685)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- It is truly spectacular! Its monumentality, its unique presence left us speechless.
- Its superb gilding, which emphasizes the features of the face and accentuates the extremely precious character of this fabulous artwork.
- The timeless serenity that radiates from this majestic and imposing face with atypical features.

I. Detailed description

Monumental Buddha head (P685)

Gilded copper alloy

Thailand

Circa 16th century, Ayutthayā style (1350-1767)

H. 46 cm or 18 1/8 in

A radiant representation of the Blessed One

This spectacular head, imposing and striking, is that of a monumental Buddha who must have been the object of a particularly important cult. The Blessed One is immediately identifiable by two prominent iconographic features: his cranial protuberance (or *uṣṇīṣa*) embedded in his hair composed of a multitude of regular small curls, and his extraordinarily distended earlobes, signs of the princely past and the heavy jewelry that Siddhārtha was wearing before he became Buddha.

This head must have belonged to the sculpture of a seated Buddha, sketching the gesture of “Calling the Earth to witness” (*bhūmisparśa mudrā*), a fundamental moment in Buddhism as it corresponds to the Awakening of the Blessed One.

An exceptional witness to a prosperous kingdom

In 1350, a prince of U Thong founded Ayutthayā, took the name of Rāmathibodi 1 and unified Thailand, then called Siam. Ayutthayā will remain the capital until it is captured by the Burmese in 1767. This long period saw the development of a rich, stylistically very varied art, mixing with an infinite variety the aesthetics of the various previous Thai schools. This majestic head perpetuates here, yet modifies, the common features of the Sukhothai style. Thus, we find the arched eyebrows that continue in the extension of the nose, the heavy eyelids over almost closed eyes and the hair in tight, well-defined curls. However, the face here is more elongated and its features more geometric.

A certain tendency to be more decorative is visible in Ayutthayā art from the very beginning and this Buddha, with its exceptional presence, its regular features, its superb patina and its beautiful remains of gilding, is a quite remarkable example. It beautifully reflects the sense of prosperity and strength of the Ayutthayā kingdom.

II. Image of the piece – front view



III. Image of the piece – left three-quarter view



IV. Image of the piece – left profile view



V. Image of the piece – right profile view



VI. Image of the piece – right three-quarter view

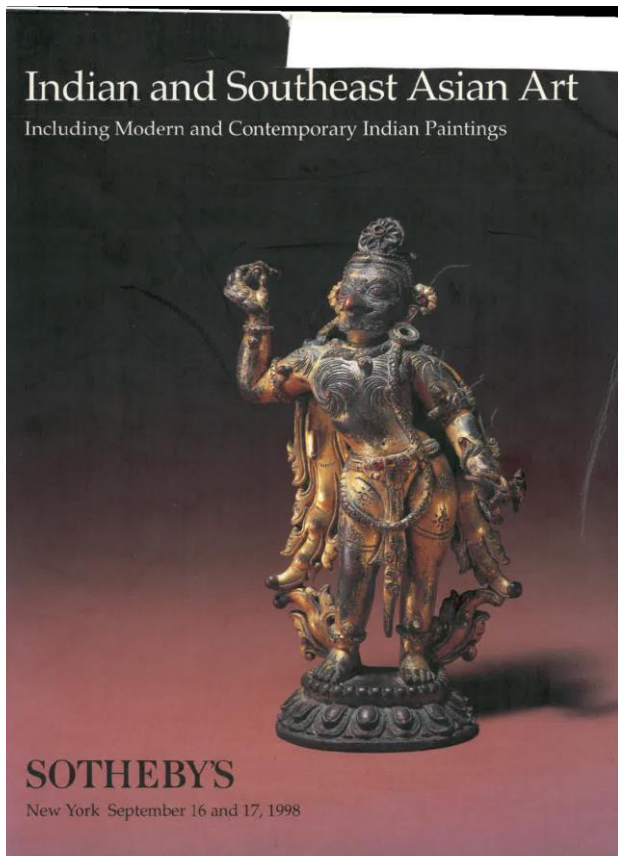


VII. Provenance: in all transparency!

. This piece comes from a private American collection and was sold in New York at Sotheby's in 1998 (see catalog reproduction below).

. We are always very cautious and diligent about the provenance of the artworks we offer. Ensuring the seriousness and reliability of the information given by the former owners is one of our priorities and we then guarantee this origin by engaging our responsibility.

. In order to reinforce this guarantee, we systematically verify that these artworks have not been registered as missing or stolen. As Interpol has granted us the right to directly consult their database of stolen or reported items, we verify by ourselves and issue a certificate attesting to this.



56 A Thai gilt-bronze head of Buddha, Ayutthia style circa 16th century height 17 3/4 in. (45.1 cm.) \$25,000-35,000

his oval face with contemplative expression arched eyebrows in relief, heavy-lidded downcast eyes recessed for inlay, straight nose, and slightly smiling mouth with outlined lips, concentric beauty lines incised around his neck, his hair arranged in rows of spiral curls, the domed usnisa pierced for insertion of a separately-cast finial

VIII. Condition report: our scientific approach

This monumental Buddha head is made of a copper alloy, dated to around the 16th century and measures 46 cm in height (or 18 ⅞ in). Apart from the loss of the flame at the top of the skull and the irregular break at the neck, the artwork is in a good condition. Only small and rare asperities are visible on the surface of the sculpture. The gilding is preserved on a large part of the face, the ears and the neck. Rare traces of red lacquer have been preserved in some places, notably at the base of the neck or the ends of the hair curls. No restoration has been detected.

Please note that since we are not conservators or restorers, it must be understood that any condition report we made is a subjective qualified opinion, even if we do our best efforts. Prospective buyers should inspect the piece to satisfy themselves as to condition.

X. Comparable artwork – Chiang Mai

A monumental Buddha, in gilded bronze, dated 1492 and located at the Wat Pra Sing Luang in Chiang Mai, Thailand (published in *L'Art Bouddhique* by Gilles Béguin, p.183, fig. 22).



XI. Our guarantees: for a serene acquisition!

- More photos will be sent to you on request.
- In case of purchase, we will establish an invoice that you can pay by bank transfer.
- You will receive our certificate of authenticity with the photo of the artwork, its detailed description and the mention of the provenance.
- We will define together the shipping modalities and we will take care of all customs formalities if you live outside of France.
- If you do not like the piece, we give you the possibility to return it to us and we will assist you with the resulting terms and conditions.