



137 (one of fourteen)

ETCHINGS

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THE CONQUESTS OF THE QIANLONG EMPEROR: FOURTEEN PLATES

AFTER PAINTINGS BY CASTIGLIONE *ET AL.*, 1765-6

Etchings, 1769-74, from the set commemorating the Emperor's military victories, including dramatic battle scenes in mountainous landscapes and on riverbanks, attacks on military encampments, and ceremonies of surrender in the field and in the Imperial Palace, each with attributions to artist and engraver, some with tears and edges restored; including separate numbered descriptive labels in French

averaging 567 x 937mm.

(14)

The original set of sixteen etchings was commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor on July 13, 1765 for the Central Hall of the Imperial Palace in Beijing. The resident Jesuit artists, Jean-Denis Attiret, Ignatius Sichelbarth, and Jean Damascène, under the direction of Giuseppe Castiglione, were instructed to prepare the drawings, which were subsequently sent to Paris, where the etchings were executed by Charles-Nicolas Cochin and his assistants at the Académie Royale at the Court of Louis XVI. This commission was deemed to be of utmost importance, as it potentially offered France a means of leaving a favourable impression with the Emperor and thus gaining advantages in view of commerce and missionary work, over the Dutch, Portuguese and English. The Emperor had commissioned a hundred copies only; however, to ensure the safe receipt of at least one hundred copies in China, an edition of 200 copies was actually printed. To reduce the risk of loss at sea they were distributed on two ships in lots of 100 impressions each, and returned to China in three shipments. The entire edition was received in China by 1775 for which the Compagnie Française des Indes in Canton was paid the sum of 240,000 livres. Only a very limited number of extra copies was printed for the French King, his ministers and some members of the court and the greatest precaution was taken that no copies remained with the engravers or printers to ensure exclusivity to the Chinese Emperor.

Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens has documented the set in a monograph entitled *Gravures des Conquêtes de l'Empereur de Chine K'ien-long au Musée Guimet*, 1969. His numbers and transcriptions are recorded on the labels which are included in this lot

£35,000-40,000

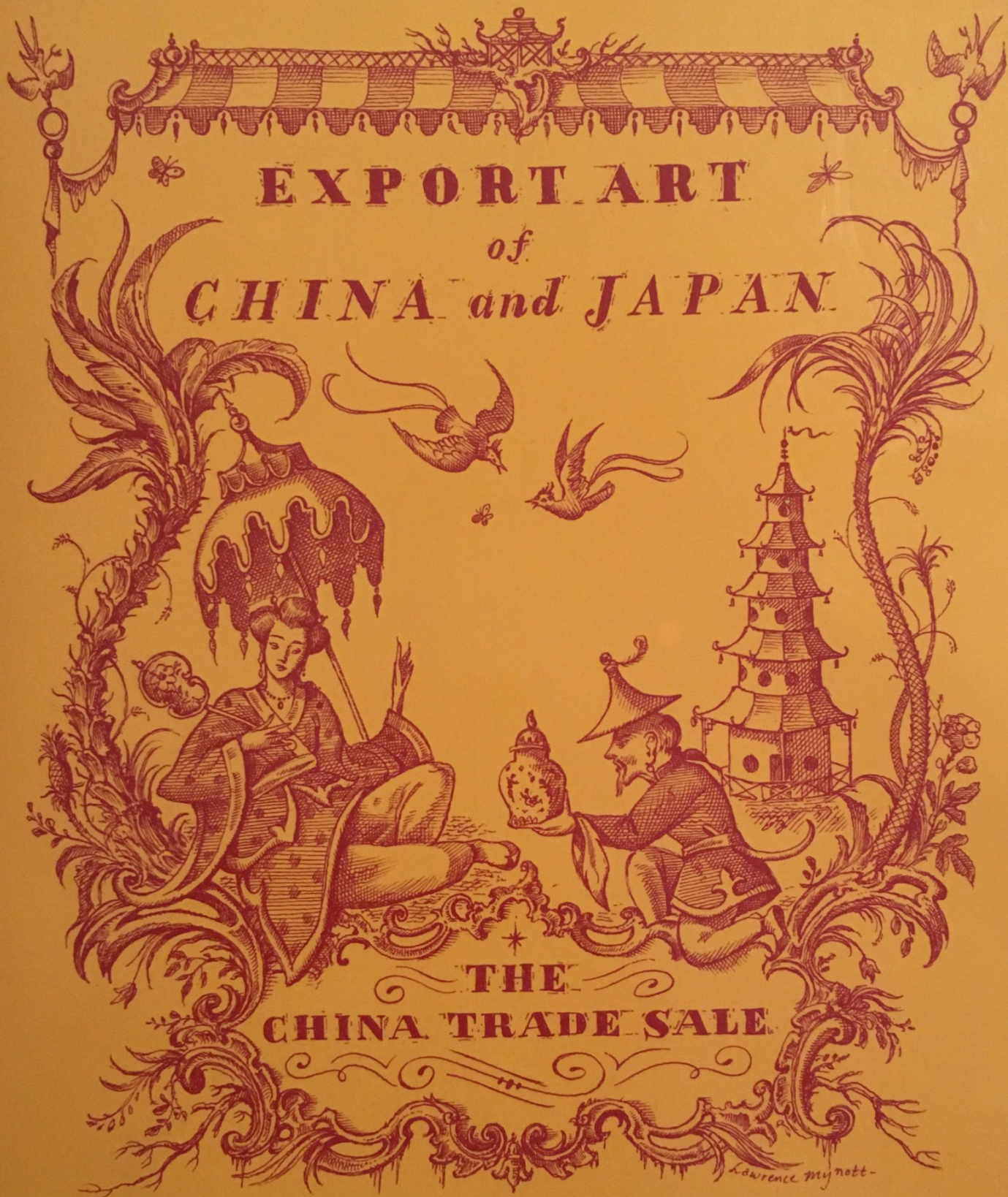
US\$58,000-65,000



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CHRISTIE'S
LONDON