



OBJECT LESSONS

A long-forgotten painting in a warehouse in Canada, some boxing ring seating and a ceramic work evoking ancient African sculpture are among the highlights this month



Sanyu, Nu Rose sur Tissus Chinois (around 1930)
Modern Art Evening Sale, Sotheby's, Hong Kong, 5 October
Estimate: HK\$35m-HK\$45m

↑ The Chinese-French artist Sanyu began painting nudes in oil in the 1930s, finishing just 19 in total. This work, making its debut on the block, is one of just seven nudes from the period to come to auction in the past four decades. Sanyu travelled to France in 1920 to study at the Ecole de Paris under a government-sponsored programme for artists, where he spent the remainder of his life. The painting "pays homage to the tradition of classical Western masterpieces in Sanyu's distinctive style", says Felix Kwok, Sotheby's head of sale for Modern and Asian art, who adds that the artist's oil paintings "are very rare and competition for his work in the secondary market always comes up with a very strong result—it's a trophy piece among collectors". **G.A.I.**



Thomas Hart Benton, Whiskey Barrels (1945)
American and European Art, Hindman, Chicago, 17 October
Estimate: \$600,000-\$800,000

← Thomas Hart Benton's social realist paintings were formative for the Regionalism movement in American art during the 1920s and 30s. The avid Leftist cashed in on some capitalist dollars, however, when he took commissions for big brands like American Tobacco and Esso. *Whiskey Barrels*, created for the Peoria, Illinois-based Hiram Walker liquor company—once the largest distillery in the world—was reproduced as a full-page ad in *Life* magazine, promoting Imperial Whiskey (now Maker's Mark), the first whiskey to pioneer the barrel-ageing technique. The painting was stored and forgotten until it was recovered in a Canadian warehouse in the 1980s. Since then, it has hung in the Maker's Mark Kentucky distillery board room. **M.C.**



Elizabeth Catlett, Seated Woman (1962)
African-American Fine Art, Swann Auction Galleries, New York, 8 October
Estimate: \$100,000-\$150,000

← The earliest wood sculpture by the African American artist Elizabeth Catlett to surface at auction, *Seated Woman* (1962) was produced in a pivotal year: she obtained Mexican citizenship and was deemed an "undesirable alien" in her home country of the US; had her first solo exhibition in Mexico; and won the Tlatelco prize in Mexico's first sculpture biennial for the work *Figura* (1962). Its provenance is defined by firsts, too, as it is consigned by Michigan congressman George Crockett Jr—known for founding one of the first racially integrated law firms in the US—and his wife, Ethelene Crockett, the first African-American woman obstetrician in Michigan and the first woman to be president of the American Lung Association. Swann achieved the record for Catlett in 2009 with the large-scale sculpture *Homage to My Young Black Sisters* (1968), which fetched \$288,000. **G.A.I.**



Chinese head of a Buddha, Liao Dynasty (907-1125)

Rasti Chinese Art at Fine Art Asia, Hong Kong, 4-7 October
Around \$80,000

↑ This little Buddha head is unusual in that it is carved in a mottled grey jade—they are nearly always bronze. Although only 6.4cm tall, the elongated head has "a powerful physical presence comparable to Liao-period gold and silver funerary masks, with the details of the eyes, nose and mouth being typical", says Rasti Chinese Art founder Nader Rasti. At the time, China was ruled by the nomadic proto-Mongol Qidan (Khitan) people and this head, with its "pendulous earlobes", is influenced by this culture. **A.B.**

Ubuñji Kidokoro, bamboo armchair (1937)

WA Design at PAD London, 30 September-6 October
£22,000

↓ Japanese-French Modern design represents a minimal, purest aesthetic, as typified by this bamboo chair by the Japanese designer Ubuñji Kidokoro. The clean lines and cantilevered form of Kidokoro's chair were to influence the French designer Charlotte Perriand's bentwood *chaise longue* design. Kidokoro's bentwood creation was itself influenced by European design—that of Alvar Aalto's cantilevered "31" armchair (1931). **A.B.**



E/AB FAIR

40 exhibitors of contemporary prints, multiples, and artists' books