

A Set of Ten Archaistic Bronze Vessels.

The Ding vessel served an important role in ancient China, indicating an individual's position in the government's hierarchy and coming to symbolize state power itself. We are proud to offer three Ding vessels amongst other ritual bronzes in a collection from the Dutchy of Western Zhou, a state formed from the remnants of China's longest-lasting royal dynasty. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer A

Set of Ten Archaistic Bronze Vessels (\$20/30,000) for sale in our Summer Fine Sale, held on Monday, June 17th.

These bronze vessels originated in the Warring State period, approximately from 475 to 221 BCE, during which China transitioned from its ancient power structures to the systems of imperial rule which would last until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912. The Warring State period



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originates in the gradual loss of power of the Zhou dynasty, a royal family founded in 1046 BCE (around the time of the biblical King David), who maintained military control over ancient China through a feudal patronage system. This system began to degrade as the Zhou kings gradually lost control of their dukes and lords and by 403 BCE the court recognized the dukes of Han, Zhao, and Wei as kings of their respective lands. Freed from royal tutelage these new states began a series of armed conflicts in 383 BCE. This ignited a centuries-long power struggle that was eventually won by the Qin, an eastern state centered around modern-day Xi'an, which established the first

Chinese empire in 221 BCE. While the Qin state only lasted fifteen years, its unification project, including creating standardized writing, currency, and government administration, was continued by its successors and marks the beginning of the concept of a unified China.

These bronze vessels come from a small, short-lived state within the Warring States Period, the Western Zhou. Western Zhou was a small Chinese duchy established by the prince of the Zhou dynasty in 440 BCE and served as a consolation prize for the younger siblings of Zhou kings. Its capital, located in modern-day Luoyang at the intersection of the Luo and Yi



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rivers, was considered to be the geographical center of China since the late Neolithic period, making it a location with considerable cultural significance, even as it lacked military or economic power. The dutchy was split in 367 BCE and the two parts soon began fighting against each other, highlighting the extent of the decline of the Zhou kings, who could not control their younger family members from warring and even occupying crown land. After the last king of the Zhou dynasty plotted with neighboring states to attack the Qin, the Dutchy of Western Zhou was defeated and annexed by the Qin in 256 BCE. After capturing the Luoyang and symbols of the Mandate of Heaven, the Qin turned their attention to the other

members of the Seven Warring States, moving towards the sea until the last state was conquered in 221 BCE.

The Ding vessel, usually a round cauldron with two handles and three legs, is an ancient part of Chinese culture and an enduring symbol of power. While the form originated as an ordinary ceramic cooking and serving vessel in Neolithic China, its use in religious ceremonies led to metal becoming the predominant material of choice. As religious ceremonies were at the time exercises of state power, eventually the Ding came to represent the power to rule itself. To this day, the Chinese expression “asking about the Ding,” symbolizes the quest for power, similar to the way the English word



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“seeking the crown” can be used. During the Zhou period, the number of Ding vessels a person was buried with symbolized their importance and place in the royal hierarchy, kings were buried with nine, lords with seven, ministers with five, and civil servants with either three or one. This lot featured in the Summer Fine Sale includes three tripod Ding censurs, each flanked by two upright loop handles.

The lot also includes a pair of Hu vessels, each flanked by a pair of stylized dragon handles to the shoulders. The Hu vessel is typically a pear-shaped container for wine, typically with a longer neck than the similar Yu. Hu vessels were developed during the Shang period, approximately 1600-1045 BCE, which directly preceded the Zhou Period. The Shang placed significant importance on wine within their ritual practices, and many graves from the

period feature multiple Hu vessels. In contrast to the Ding, the Hu lost much of its religious significance by the time of the Western Zhou Dynasty, as the Zhou placed much less emphasis on wine in religious ceremonies. This meant that the vessels were adapted for personal use, eventually incorporating experimental designs and ornamentation that may have been discouraged if the vessels were required for official religious use.

Finally, this lot includes three food vessels in the Gui and Yu forms. Like the Ding, these vessels were adapted for religious use from ancient forms of domestic pottery. Popular in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, these vessels feature a circular bowl with gently curving walls. Cast in metal, usually bronze, these vessels were used to hold offerings for ancestral tombs. The Gui held food, typically grain (meat

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was reserved for the Ding), while the Yu was used to hold liquid and thus featured a lid. Also included in this lot, is a dish-form tripod vessel, flanked by a pair of loop handles to the rim. A Set of Ten Archaistic Bronze Vessels (\$20/30,000) will be offered in Michaan's Auctions Summer Fine Sale on Monday, June 17th. This sale features an incredible selection, full of the season's most esteemed items. The sale is headlined by historically important works in the Asian Art Department, exquisite jewelry in the desirable Art-Deco style, and important works from notable American and European modernist artists. Also featured are fine examples of Persian carpets, sterling silver dishware, and an extremely rare book by an icon of American poetry.

Also on June 17th, (Michaan's Auctions will be presenting an initial selection from the vast estate of the

notable New York artist and antiques dealer, Vito Giallo, who is finally offering the most treasured items from his Madison Avenue store, in a special auction preceding our Summer Fine Sale. This collection, titled "Chapter I" to commemorate the recent publishing of Vito Giallo's memoir, features exceptional pieces across every department, headlined by bronzes and painted works in the Fine Art Department, as well as impressive collections of Silver & Objects de Vertu. Also included are important collectibles, quality decorations, and admirable pieces in glass.

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