



Silver & Objects of Vertu (22 June 2022)

Wed, 22nd Jun 2022

Viewing:

Viewing at Chiswick Auctions Barley Mow, 10 Barley Mow Passage, W4 4PH:

Thurs 16 June - 10am to 9pm - extended hours

Fri 17 June - 10am to 4.30pm

Sat 18 June - 10am to 4pm

Mon 20 June - 10am to 4.30pm

Tues 21 June - 10am to 3pm

No viewing on days of sale

Lot 140

Estimate: £4000 - £6000 + Fees

A fine late 19th century Anglo – Indian unmarked silver butter dish on stand, Cutch, Bhuj circa 1870 attributed to Oomersi Mawji (active 1860-90)

A fine late 19th century Anglo – Indian unmarked silver butter dish on stand, Cutch, Bhuj circa 1870 attributed to Oomersi Mawji (active 1860-90)

Raj period. The dish of hemispherical form upon a collet foot, with cast and applied twin handles formed as elephant's heads. The domed pull off lid surmounted by a detachable cast finial formed as a sitting monkey with tail behind, a Bonnet macaque holding a mango. The stand of circular form with a broad rim. Chased decoration of foliate scrolls and rosettes, between borders of stylised acanthus leaves. The lid and the base with a vacant shield shape cartouche. Fitted with a removable blue glass liner. Traces of gilding. (3)

Diameter – 11.2 cm / 4.4 inches

Weight – 772 grams / 24.82 oz

Oomersi Mawji – Master Silversmith

Of all the Indian silver producing artisans in India, one name stands out as associated with pieces of the very finest quality: Oomersi Mawji. Pieces by this accomplished master began to appear circa 1860 and they continued to be produced by his sons and grandsons well into the twentieth century.

There is no doubt that Oomersi Mawji was one of the most gifted silversmiths working anywhere in the world during his lifetime. His understanding of form, proportion and decoration, his willingness to devote extra labour to a piece to truly perfect it to world-class standards, and his use of an extremely high grade of silver (often 98 per cent pure) combine to lend even the most mundane objects an aura of grandeur, placing this artist in the ranks of the finest craftsmen. The standards of quality, workmanship, and design, often enhanced with a little humour (the monkey finial in this instance) were passed to the artist's progeny and characterise their work as well.

With its sensuous forms and intricate ornament, the work of Oomersi Mawji has enormous appeal. Every painstaking detail covering almost the whole surface of each object is an element drawn from nature. Sinuous plants coil and wind in infinite undulating, swirling patterns through which emerge stylised poppies, which curl and twist to reveal every stage of

flowering.

The dish and stand showcased here serves to illustrate many of the characteristics of the best Cutch workmanship. Here, the fine casting of the elephant head handles, whose incorporation into the design empathises the three-dimensional aspect of the decoration of this piece. The rather bored looking monkey finial only adds to its visual appeal.

Wynyard Wilkinson

9 June 2022