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## A Late Tang Dynasty Sculpture Bought at a Missouri Garage Sale for Less Than \$100 Just Sold for \$2.1 Million at Sotheby's

The owner first suspected the bronze deity might be worth more than she paid for after taking it on the 'Antiques Roadshow.'

**Sarah Cascone**, March 22, 2019



This gilt-bronze figure of the Chinese Buddhist deity Cintamanicakra Avalokiteshvara, dating to the late Tang Dynasty, sold for \$2.1 million. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

When a woman picked up a Buddhist sculpture at a garage sale in Missouri for less than \$100 she had no idea what she was buying until she took it on the *Antiques Roadshow* in St. Louis some 20 years later.

“It’s likely that the quality would indicate that it’s an imperial piece,” *Roadshow* expert Robert Waterhouse told her. “A very conservative retail price would be \$100,000–125,000.”

But the gilt-bronze figure of a Chinese Buddhist deity from the late Tang Dynasty sold at Sotheby’s New York this week for a full \$2.1 million.

The owner responded in disbelief. She recalled buying the work at a garage sale at the home of Trezevant Branam Winfrey, a Kirkwood, Missouri, collector who died in 1999.

“The dealers had been there for two days before, so I thought that everything good would be gone, but when I saw this I thought it was so beautiful, I just grabbed it,” the owner said during her television appearance, admitting she almost skipped the errand because she was hosting 15 friends for lunch that afternoon.

Newly identified as a valuable antiquity, the sculpture headed to Sotheby’s, where it incited a seven-minute bidding battle at Wednesday’s “Important Chinese Art” sale, charging past the pre-sale estimate of \$60,000–80,000. The final purchase price is roughly 20,000 times what the lucky owner initially paid.

The statue depicts the god Cintamanicakra Avalokiteshvara, a rare form of one of Chinese Buddhism’s most important and widely worshiped deities. The six-armed figure holds various symbolic objects, including a dharma wheel, a lotus stem, and a *cintamani* wish-granting jewel.



A complete set of the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment by the Qianlong Emperor, which sold at Sotheby's "Important Chinese Art" auction for \$2.7 million on a high estimate of just \$500,000.

Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

The piece is one of the highlights of this week's Asia Week auctions, which run through March 24. Other top lots from the Chinese sale include a rare complete set of the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment by the Qianlong Emperor, which sold for \$2.7 million on a high estimate of just \$500,000, and the \$2.1 million Rare White Jade 'Imperial Procession' Brushpot, one of a sold-out group of jade carvings from the Art Institute of Chicago that collectively fetched \$3.2 million.