


Drawing from the Roof of the World Goes Through the Ceiling at Davidson Auctions.

By Jane Raffan, on 12-Sep-2010

The 1931-32 Trans Asia Expedition known as 'Le Croisière Jaune' was touted as the first continuous overland journey between the Mediterranean and the East China Sea since the days of Marco Polo. The Silk Road journey was the third trans-continental effort funded by automobile magnate Andre Citroen, and Alexandre Jacovleff was the expedition's artist and ethnographer; producing an album of fifty paintings and drawings.

A lifetime later and in a land much further south, one of the portrait watercolors from this trip (Lot 62 ) vaulted to \$105,000. Described as 'An Ethnographic Study of a Northern Chinese Mother and Child' claimed a hammer price of \$90,000 (\$104,850 incl. BP) against a pre-sale estimate of \$10,000-20,000.

In a book titled 'Around the Roof of the World' the artist recorded that the Chinese believed a painter to be the 'embodiment of a lettered person', and that portraits cast incomparable spells over the people he encountered. Portraits are notoriously difficult to sell at auction, but the Davidson's result is likely more a product of a different journey: both the Chinese and the Russians are on collecting missions to reclaim patrimony.

Sale Referenced: [Australian & International Fine Art, Davidson Auctions, Sydney, 11/09/2010](#)

About The Author

Jane Raffan runs ArtiFacts, an Art Services Consultancy based in Sydney, with a specialist focus in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art. Jane is an accredited valuer in Aboriginal Art for the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program. She has over 20 years experience in the arts sector, working initially for the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and then over twelve years in the auction industry. www.artifacts.net.au.