

# Press release: 'UNIQUE' 18TH CENTURY WATERCOLOUR PAINTING AT RISK OF EXPORT

- Miniature painting deemed to be of significant cultural interest
- Artwork depicts a traditional musical performance in mid-18th century Northern India

A 'unique' watercolour painting depicting a traditional musical performance in mid-18th century Northern India is at risk of export unless a UK buyer is found for the £550,000 piece.

'Trumpeters' by Nainsukh of Guler (1710-1778) has been blocked from export by Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, to provide an opportunity to keep it in the UK.

The delicate miniature, described by experts as of a 'rarely found calibre', shows seven village musicians on a terrace, striking differing poses and faces, while energetically blowing the exceptionally long Pahari horns called Turhi, in the hill region of Northern India. It is a fine example of Nainsukh of Guler's trademark gift of detailed observation and complex directional composition.

The artist is considered to be one of the most acclaimed of the Pahari (Hills) movement, which were a major and popular genre of Indian miniature painting during the period. Some of his other works are exhibited in public collections in the UK, including the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum.

The miniature is an example of the colour and light of India which inspired its first owner, renowned artist Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981), whose works have been exhibited in world leading galleries including the Tate.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism said:

Nainsukh's artistic influence has been felt around the world for generations and this piece demonstrates the outstanding aesthetic importance of his work.

I hope that this piece can be kept in the UK, not only for its beauty, but to help further the study of Indian art and history.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest member Peter Barber said:

Nainsukh of Guler's beautiful miniature of musicians is a masterpiece unparalleled in North Indian art. But the exuberant

gestures and puffed-out cheeks of the trumpeters bear a remarkable resemblance to the trumpeters depicted some 300 years earlier by the Italian Renaissance artist Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506) in his series of paintings, now in Hampton Court, showing the Triumph of Caesar. These paintings were repeatedly reproduced as prints over the coming centuries, initially by Mantegna himself. Did Nainsukh see, and was he influenced, by the prints when preparing this watercolour?

The export bar offers a British gallery, museum or library the opportunity to acquire this painting. Like the Mantegnas, it would then remain, and be enjoyed, in this country and the connections between two great works of Asian and European arts could be further investigated”.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#), administered by The Arts Council. They made their recommendation on the grounds that the painting is of outstanding aesthetic importance and of significant use in the study of Indian history.

The decision on the export licence application for the painting will be deferred until 15 February 2019. This may be extended until 15 May 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £550,000.

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the artwork should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

**ENDS**

## **Notes to editors**

- Brief description of the item: Indian miniature painting of a group of seven trumpeters. Opaque watercolour on paper, 16.3 x 23.7c. By Nainsukh of Guler (1710-1778) circa 1735-1740.
- In the event of a UK sale, VAT would not be payable on this item.
- The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
- The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and

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