



Asian Arts (1702)

April 8, 2021 EST, Freeman's

Lot 89

Estimate: \$8000 - \$12000 (plus Buyer's Premium)

**A Chinese carved white jade "Boys" vase and cover
Qing Dynasty, 18th/early 19th Century**

Of flattened globular form, the vase flanked by two boys at play, with elaborately carved flowers and stems to one broad side and two more boys carved to the cover; a linked chain originally joining the vase and cover joined at one end to a flower stem, the stone of a very even translucent white tone with scattered minor veins and inclusions, with an old ink-inscribed label to the underside and carved wood stand.

H: 6 1/4 in. (without stand)

Provenance: Property formerly in the Collection of Eldridge Reeves Fenimore Johnson (1899-1986)
Thence by descent in the family.

NOTE: E. R. F. Johnson was a noted explorer, yachtsman and researcher. He was a pioneer in the development of underwater photography and had close ties with the University of Pennsylvania, where a collection of his photographs are preserved. His father was Eldridge Reeves Johnson (1867-1945), the founder of the Victor Talking Machine Company, later RCA. It is very possible this may have been originally acquired by the elder E. R. Johnson, given that he gave Chinese works of art to the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1920 and 1927, including the large crystal ball said to have belonged to the Dowager Empress Cixi, the pair of carved stone reliefs of the favorite horses of the Tang Emperor Taizong, and numerous jade and coral carvings.

NOTE: The motif of boys clambering over the surface of vases was particularly popular during the Qianlong and following periods, with examples known in porcelain and jade. The treatment of boys in combination with fully blown flowers, likely peonies, is unusual.

The treatment of the flowers is similar to pieced censers and covers dating to the Qianlong period, such as the example from the Qing Court Collections in the Palace Museum, Beijing, illustrated in, "Zhongguo Yu Qi Quan Ji", Hebei, 1997, Vol. 6, no. 80. See also the 18th century example illustrated in Roger Keverne et al, "Jade", London, 1991, p. 176, no. 122, and the 18th century example, formerly in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art, illustrated in Robert Kleiner, "Chinese Jades from the Collection of Alan and Simone Hartman", Hong Kong 1996. The use of the peony, together with playful boys and the vase (a rebus for "Peace"), connote wishes for wealth, honor, nobility and prosperity.

For other examples of 18th century white jade "Boys and Vases" groups, see the white jade vase of pomegranate-form with three boys, sold at Sotheby's London, May 15, 2013, lot 56. See also a "Hehe Erxian vase, 4 1/4" high, sold at Sotheby's London, May 11, 2016, lot 104, and a 6" high vase with two boys, sold Christie's London, November 7, 2016, lot 170.