

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Sally Philipsen

(1879 – 1936)

*Portrait of the Chinese
craftsman and dwarf Tjong
Fu'hk Wong Waih*

1904

oil on canvas

130 x 98 cm.;

51 1/8 x 38 5/8 in.

signed and dated: *Sally Philipsen 1904*

Provenance

Acquired by a private collection in 2017;
From whom acquired by the present owners in 2020.

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



LONDON

NEW YORK

MADRID

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

This powerful yet delicate portrait depicting a Chinese craftsman is an excellent example from Sally Nikolaj Philipsen's early period. The painting portrays the dwarf Tjong Fu'hk Wong Waih, who had been invited to the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen for the Chinese exhibition in 1904 to demonstrate his expertise in the art of making silk paper lanterns. The laborious and precise nature of Waih's work is mirrored effectively in the meticulously realised ornaments and evocative lighting in Philipsen's oil painting. The ochre colour palette, including Waih's yellow waist coat and the red tablecloth, blends effortlessly with the darker shadows of the room, which are executed arguably most skilfully by way of the 'Rembrandt patch' on the left side of the old man's face. Indeed, Philipsen started out as a portraitist whose early style was heavily influenced by the Dutch master, which is further evidenced here in the tactile and pronounced brushstrokes.

Little is known about Philipsen outside of his native country. Within the Nordics, however, the painter had a well-known career trajectory, which began at the technical school in Copenhagen where he was a pupil of H. Grønvold, followed by an education at the Royal Academy of Arts under Frants Henningsen and Otto Bache. Yet it was his transformative stay in Paris in 1910 that marked a turning point in Philipsen's career. There, profoundly influenced by the French Masters he encountered during his travels, his work took an Impressionist turn, which would come to define his artistic *oeuvre* until his passing in 1936.

More known for his Impressionist and Modernist paintings, although the present work is an excellent reminder of Philipsen's classical mastery, the Dane left an artistic imprint not only in Copenhagen but also in the picturesque harbour village of Dragør, where he resided from 1919 to 1936. During this time, he shared a home with fellow artist Sven Schou near the scenic Mariager Fjord. This attractive location, with its natural beauty and exceptional lighting, drew to it a cadre of artists, including Einar Olsen, Henrik Schouboe, Aage Lønborg-Jensen, and Lauritz Mikkelsen, who all lived together and frequently collaborated during the extended summer periods.

Beyond his own output, Philipsen was a passionate collector. His travels yielded a treasure trove of art, including pieces by notable artists such as Fridolin Johansen, Albert Gottschalk,

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

and Th. Philipsen. Additionally, his collection featured an array of works by French masters, as well as a substantial assortment of Chinese and African antiques.