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Rare Rembrandt Drawing Nets Record-Smashing \$18 Million at Auction

The 17th-century drawing is now Rembrandt's most valuable work on paper.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Young Lion Resting*, (ca. 1638–42). Black chalk, white chalk heightening, and gray wash, on brown laid paper, 11.5 × 15 cm. Image courtesy of The Leiden Collection.

by **Verity Babbs** • February 4, 2026 • [Share This Article](#)

A Rembrandt drawing of a young lion has become artist's most valuable work on paper to sell at auction after it realized a breathtaking \$18 million at Sotheby's New York on February 4.

The work, *Young Lion Resting* (ca. 1638–43), which carried a \$15 million to \$20 million estimate, smashed Rembrandt's \$3.7 million auction record for a drawing. Ahead of the sale, it went on view Paris, London, Abu Dhabi, Hong Kong, and Diriyah, as Sotheby's deepens its presence in Saudi Arabia after staging its first-ever auction in the country last year.

"This extraordinary drawing has captured the hearts of everyone who has seen it—a true testament to Rembrandt's genius and ability to breathe life into the spirit of this magnificent creature," Gregory Rubinstein, the auction house's head of old master drawings, said in a statement.

Believed to have been drawn from life by Rembrandt, the work comes from the collection of Thomas S. Kaplan and Daphne Recanati Kaplan, who own the world's largest private collection of Rembrandt works—17 paintings, just five fewer than the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. In total, the Kaplans hold around 220 works by Dutch Masters in their so-called Leiden Collection, named after Rembrandt's birthplace. *Young Lion Resting* was their first Rembrandt acquisition, purchased through the New York dealers John and Paul Herring in 2005.



Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, *Young Lion Resting* (ca. 1638–42). Courtesy of Sotheby's.

The Kaplans are venturesome collectors. In September, Kaplan revealed plans in September to fractionalize his Leiden Collection and launch it as an IPO, with the aim of democratizing access to 17th-century Dutch masterpieces by allowing investors to own portions of the collection.

The lion drawing is co-owned by Jonathan Ayers, the chairman of the board of Panthera, a New York-based wild cat conservation charity co-founded by the Kaplans, which will be the recipient of the proceeds raised through its sale.

“To see this masterpiece, which began our journey with collecting Rembrandt some 20 years ago, now provide the resources to protect big cats around the world is a deeply moving moment of symmetry for us,” Thomas Kaplan noted in a statement. “Its incredibly successful outcome evinces both the enduring power of the master and the crucial importance of safeguarding biodiversity for future generations.”

The artwork's Saudi Arabian detour in January, where it was briefly view at Diriyah's Bujairi Terrace, came at a "fitting moment" according to Rubenstein, as Panthera is currently supporting initiatives to reintroduce critically endangered native leopards to AlUla, the ancient Arabian desert in the kingdom's Medina province.

"To see *Young Lion Resting* achieve a record-breaking price is remarkable," Rubenstein added, "and especially poignant as its legacy will now live on, supporting Panthera in the vital protection of living wild cats across the globe."

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