

FINE ART CONNOISSEUR

Rembrandt Drawing “Roars” to \$17.9 Million at Auction



Rembrandt van Rijn, "Young Lion Resting," ca. 1638-42, black chalk, white chalk heightening, and gray wash, on brown laid paper, 11.5 x 15 cm; Image courtesy The Leiden Collection

The Leiden Collection and Panthera today are celebrating the landmark sale of Rembrandt van Rijn's "Young Lion Resting" for \$17,860,000 at Sotheby's "Master Works on Paper from Five Centuries" auction in New York.

More from Sotheby's:

This historic event represents a “full-circle” moment for the masterpiece — originally the first work of art by Rembrandt acquired by Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan and his wife Daphne Recanati Kaplan, all proceeds from its sale will be donated to Panthera and employed to secure the future of the very species the drawing so vividly depicts.

Panthera was co-founded in 2006 by the Kaplans and the late renowned wildlife biologist Dr. Alan Rabinowitz. Now chaired by the drawing's co-owner, philanthropist and wild cat conservationist Jon Ayers, it is the only organization of its kind exclusively devoted to the protection of the world's 40 species of wild cats and their ecosystems.

Celebrating its 20th Anniversary this year, Panthera will use the funds generated to support science-directed initiatives fostering human-wild cat coexistence and critical landscapes protection in some 40 countries across four continents. The organization's proven conservation models and award-winning programs will be scaled globally, rooted in local partnerships and traditional knowledge, and implemented to combat wild cats' greatest threats — from poaching for the illegal wildlife trade and conflict with communities to habitat loss.

Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, co-founder of both The Leiden Collection and Panthera, said: “To see this masterpiece, which began our journey with collecting Rembrandt some twenty years ago, now provide the resources to protect big cats around the world is a deeply moving moment of symmetry for us. Uniting art and wildlife, this sale marking the 20th Anniversary of Panthera was meant to transform cultural heritage into conservation action. Its incredibly successful outcome evinces both the enduring power of the Master and the crucial importance of safeguarding biodiversity for future generations.”

“The pulse of life that Rembrandt captured in this lion’s gaze continues to beat today through our conservation field programs,” said Jon Ayers, Board Chair of Panthera and co-owner of the work. “This sale provides Panthera with critical resources to combat poaching and habitat loss globally, ensuring that the majesty Rembrandt admired in the 17th century survives well into the 21st and beyond.”

Prior to auction, Panthera, The Leiden Collection, and Sotheby’s unveiled **“Young Lion Vanished”** as a visual warning and a statement in conservation — replacing Rembrandt’s lion with empty space to reflect the accelerating loss of lions across Africa. While lions have undergone a catastrophic range reduction of 95 percent over the last century, with only about 24,000 lions remaining, down from an estimated 200,000, Panthera’s recent, replicable success stories have demonstrated that the recovery of lion populations is possible.

“Young Lion Resting” encapsulates Rembrandt’s preternatural skill as a draftsman. To convey the animal’s languid power, he juxtaposed loose, confident strokes, seen in the modeling of the lion’s paws, with the controlled shading that brings its gaze to life. The sheet is also an incredible rarity. Only six drawings of lions by Rembrandt are currently known, with two being held at the British Museum and one in each of the collections of the Louvre in Paris, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. “Young Lion Resting” is also the first to come to the market in a century. The \$17.9 million result places this exquisite work among the most significant Old Master drawings ever sold at auction and sets a new record for a drawing by Rembrandt, surpassing the artist’s previous auction record for a work on paper of \$3.7 million in 2000.