

ARTnews

Thomas Kaplan's Rembrandt Lion Drawing Sells for \$17.8 M. at Sotheby's



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Rembrandt van Rijn's Young Lion Resting (circa 1638-42).
SOTHEBY'S

After a world tour that saw **Rembrandt** van Rijn's *Young Lion Resting* (ca. 1638–42) travel to Paris, Abu Dhabi, Tokyo, and New York, the drawing finally sold for a record \$17.9 million on Wednesday (all quoted prices include fees). That's the highest price ever paid for a drawing by the Dutch master.

While the result fell short of the overall work-on-paper auction record—\$48 million for Raphael's *Head of an Apostle* (ca. 1519)—it far surpassed the previous Rembrandt drawing record of \$3.7 million for *Windmill de Smeerpot, Amsterdam* (ca. 1649–52). All proceeds from *Young Lion Resting* will go to Panthera, the wild cat conservation charity founded by the work's co-seller, American French precious metals mogul **Thomas Kaplan**.

The sale was part of Sotheby's "Master Works on Paper from Five Centuries" auction in New York, which totaled \$19.8 million, the house's highest-ever result for a sale of Old Master drawings.

Young Lion Resting was offered from the Leiden Collection, a 220-strong trove of 17th-century Dutch Golden Age art that Kaplan and his wife, Daphne, have collected over the past 20 years. It includes the world's largest private holding of Rembrandt paintings—17 of them, to be exact—and the only Vermeer in private hands. The couple would need only five more Rembrandts to match the Rijksmuseum's holdings.

"Wednesday night was a moment of preternatural symmetry on so many levels," Kaplan told *ARTnews*. "Rembrandt's 400-year-old drawing of a lion has now been transformed into a lifeline for its contemporary counterparts. How poetic. And to see this exquisite work, the very first by the master that my wife Daphne and I ever acquired, achieve such a historic result is certainly most gratifying."

“We are celebrating Panthera’s 20th anniversary this year,” he added. “Along with our partner in wildlife conservation, the organization’s board chair and co-owner of the drawing, Jon Ayers, we are thrilled that every dollar from the proceeds will support science-directed conservation work in the field. This massively catalytic event—both financially and in terms of advocacy—will allow Panthera to scale its most effective initiatives across roughly 40 countries.”

Gregory Rubinstein, Sotheby’s head of Old Master drawings, told *ARTnews* that the result “cements Rembrandt’s place among the kings of drawings.”

Also on Wednesday, Sotheby’s sold Diane A. Nixon’s collection of drawings, realizing \$10.8 million against a high estimate of \$7.7 million.

When Kaplan previewed *Young Lion Resting* at Sotheby’s Paris last November, he told *ARTnews* his family doesn’t “live with any of our Rembrandts” because “we’re not interested in material things, nor the social side of collecting.” This explains why the Kaplans remained anonymous for some time when lending the works—now numbering 80—from the Leiden Collection to institutions including the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, the National Museum of China, and the Louvre. The couple stepped out of the shadows for this sale to further Panthera’s mission and to make the Rembrandt collection more publicly accessible, “because our mission was for them to be seen.”