

KASMIN

EYE OF A
CONNOISSEUR

OLIVER
FORGE | BRENDAN
LYNCH





KASMIN

EYE OF A CONNOISSEUR

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*Front cover and inside back cover: Photography by © Lucinda Douglas-Menzies, 2026
Opposite: John Kasmin's 'cabinet in the dining room'. Photography by Phil Engelhardt for Scenery*

INTRODUCTION



“... not a collector in the sense a stamp enthusiast might be ... rather, he is driven by a visual and tactile excitement ...”

*John Kasmin by Ida Kar, 1959.
© National Portrait Gallery, London*

Picture the propulsion, precision and intensity of a hummingbird drilling for nectar from its chosen bloom and you capture something of Kasmin. His lifelong hunger to be nourished by beautiful, meaningful objects has been powered by rare energy, buoyancy and exuberance matched with professional acumen. Small in stature and light on his feet, he has something of the bird's cladding as well. On the August day I went to see him about this article, he – aged 91 – had a few hours earlier been stopped by a complete stranger at Oxford Circus to tell him he looked wonderful and to thank him for his choice of clothes: “You can't say I lit up the street, but I provided a touch bordering on gaudy”. The trousers he had on had been made with material bought in Berwick Street market decades ago.

Earlier in the summer when we met, he wore trousers of an unusual green, purchased on an island in Burma. These were cotton, but he has several garments from the same source spun from lotus stalks. The cotton pair were sewn by a tailor in Hong Kong he frequented over twenty years when visiting a niece based there, usually at the beginning or end of the trips they made to places associated with his collection of antiquities. There is little about Kasmin that is not exact. He still lives with a Wilton carpet dyed in 1970 specially for him the colour of “the underside of a field mushroom”. A room in his house is painted green-gold, a delicate hue associated with his close friend, adventurer and former Sotheby's employee, Bruce Chatwin: “I tried to describe [the colour] in silk and textiles to Bruce and he actually mixed the colour for me”.

The Kasmin gallery remains an art world touchstone despite having closed in 1972 after just under ten active years. It was famous for being the first commercial space in this country designed for showing huge (by British standards then) paintings Kasmin had fallen in love with – works by American artists Morris Louis, Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland among them – and for finding them buyers. Within the façade of a conventional building at 118 New Bond Street, architects Ahrends, Burton & Koralek and Kasmin created an open interior with sophisticated lighting and a special Pirelli rubber floor, all quite new in London at the time.

Kasmin is well-known for having recognised David Hockney's exceptional qualities when the painter was still a Royal College of Art student at a time before Kasmin had his own space and was an employee of the Marlborough gallery. Marlborough thought Hockney's work incredibly scruffy and refused to have it seen there, a spur to Kasmin's determination to open his own enterprise. Endlessly credited with kick-starting Hockney's career, Kasmin is much prouder of being the only dealer willing to take on Anthony Caro when the sculptor moved from making small bronzes to welding enormous steel pieces for which there was no known market.

Less familiar is Kasmin's eye for and delight in antiquities and tribal art. Not having previously travelled further than Wales, aged 17 in 1952, John Kaye left the Oxford of his childhood partly to escape his father and in a spirit of adventure secured passage on a ship to Australia with New Zealand the ultimate goal. For many years under 'Occupation' his passport read 'Poet' and, in creating a new life, he chose a fresh title for himself, the name he is known by now. Extremely low on funds, his earliest collection was of leaves, pinned to the wall of his rented room, reminders of trees in places he had visited, but a more formal awakening came from thrilling to Oceanic art in the Wellington Museum and an acquaintance with curator, Terence Barrow.

Back in London in 1956, Kasmin was employed by Victor Musgrave's impoverished Gallery One in Soho, partly as assistant to Musgrave's wife, photographer Ida Kar. Through the couple he met Herbert Rieser, dealer in African art renowned for his collection of native wood spoons. Kasmin remembers being excited around this time by artist Josef Herman's collection of Ibejis and by antiquities owned

by Jacob Epstein, and set about educating himself in the British Museum, helped by an introduction to a curator in the African and Oceanic department and through conversations with further experts he encountered. When the time came to run away from Gallery One, his wanderings across Europe encompassed the Etruscan tombs he had longed to see since reading D.H. Lawrence's Sea and Sardinia as a schoolboy.

In the 1980s Kasmin became disillusioned with the art market as it became increasingly about investment and money than truly loving paintings, and began to take refuge in Alistair McAlpine's showrooms, sitting side by side with artist Sidney Nolan sipping 100-year old whisky and every now and then purchasing tribal art and antiquities. Hermione Waterfield, David Attenborough, Robert and Lisa Sainsbury and – towards the end of the respected dealer's life – John Hewett have numbered among the experts and fellow collectors with whom Kasmin has sharpened his knowledge and relished conversation.

Kasmin is not a collector in the sense a stamp enthusiast might be, seeking to own a coherent body of works, anxious to fill in the gaps where empty squares lie. Rather, he is driven by a visual and tactile excitement, and the objects he buys – he is still doing it – are integrated into his living arrangements to provide maximum joy on a daily basis. Many have both autobiographical and friendship associations. They include finds discovered in antique shops on jaunts with painter Howard Hodgkin who told him “Spa towns are always a good thing because that's where chaps who ran the Empire wanted to retire”. Anthony Caro longed so much for a Pentelic marble hand Kasmin won't part with – “as I hold it, I think I'm with a Greek lady of a divine order,” Kasmin says, laughing but nevertheless half meaning it – that Kasmin loaned it to Caro for a year, strictly on condition of its return.

For thirty years Kasmin has dined opposite a Tang head of a Lohan, and this he is keeping. He may well be sipping tea with him as you read this catalogue.

Cathy Courtney

Writer and oral historian, interviewer for National Life Stories at the British Library and former Project Director for Artists' Lives and Architects' Lives



**1. FRAGMENTARY MARBLE 'STAR-GAZER' IDOL
ANATOLIA, EARLY BRONZE AGE, CIRCA 2700–2100 B.C.**

Of highly stylised form, the oval head with two small ears and long ridge indicating the nose, with short neck and rounded shoulders, deep grooves at the back delineating the arms
Height 4.5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, UK, 1970s-80s
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, pre-2017
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2017-26

Compare J. Thimme, *Kunst und Kultur der Kykladeninseln im 3. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* Karlsruhe, 1976, no. 563, p. 403.



**2. PINK CALCITE BULL PENDANT
MESOPOTAMIA, LATE URUK-JEMDET NASR PERIOD
CIRCA 3200–3000 B.C.**

The stylised animal recumbent with legs tucked beneath its body, the head facing on, the eyes inlaid with ?shell, the tail curled over its rump, pierced vertically
Length 5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Jean-Alain Mariaud de Serres (1920-99): Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 1st October 2000, lot 67
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2000-03
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2003-26

3. PINK CALCITE SPOUTED BASIN
SYRIA, CIRCA 3000-2000 B.C.

Of circular form with flattened base, straight sides and flat-topped rim, with a short tapering spout with a drilled circular hole on one side
Diameter 21.8 cm.; total width 27.8 cm.

PROVENANCE
Private collection, Europe: Sotheby's, New York, 13 June 2002, lot 3
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2002-03
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2003-26





**4. CHLORITE VESSEL WITH TWO BULLS
PROBABLY MESOPOTAMIA
EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD, CIRCA 2600–2200 B.C.**

Carved with two bulls one behind the other, against a background of overlapping scallops indicating mountains and wavy lines suggesting a river, their bodies with limestone inlays
Height 13 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art market, Dubai, July 2002
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2002–26

This vessel relates to the so-called "Intercultural Style" of carved chlorite objects consisting largely of vessels and "weights" decorated in low relief with figural and geometric designs. The area of production and distribution was vast, stretching from the Euphrates and Indus rivers and between the Oxus and the Persian Gulf. Important examples were found in Tepe Yahya (south-east Iran) and Tarut in the Persian Gulf.

For a closely related example in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. no. 2014.717), see J. Aruz (ed.), *Art of the First Cities, The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus*, New York, 2003, exhibition catalogue, no. 226, p. 330.





5. BRONZE BOUND CAPTIVE
ROMANO-BRITISH, SECOND-THIRD CENTURY A.D.

In the form of a seated male figure, his knees drawn up to his elbows, his neck, wrists and ankles bound together by a rope, the hair stylised, the eyes beady and with beak-like nose
Height 3.5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, UK, acquired in 1989
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, circa 2005-08
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2008-26

See R. Jackson, "Roman Bound Captives: Symbols of Slavery?" in N. Crummy (ed.), *Image, Craft and the Classical World. Essays in honour of Donald Bailey and Catherine Johns* (Monogr. Instrumentum 29), Montagnac, 2005, pp. 143-156, for a comment on their function and for similar existing examples.



6. BRONZE FINIAL
GREECE, GEOMETRIC PERIOD, CIRCA EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

In the form of a stylised monkey seated on its haunches, elbows resting on his knees, with a triangular head, with fine engraved decoration, the shaft with four columns of disc-shaped studs, six in each
Height 8 cm.

PROVENANCE

Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26



This example and its fine engraved decoration is closely related to a specimen, formerly in the Stathatos Collection and now in the Benaki Museum, Athens, described as the 'Potidaea' type as analysed in J. Bouzek, *Graeco-Macedonian Bronzes*, Prague, 1973, fig. 23.4 p.78 & 83. See M. Comstock and C. Vermeule, *Greek, Etruscan and Roman Bronzes in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston, 1971, p. 15, no. 13; and for one in the Bernoulli Collection, Basel, see K. Schefold, *Meisterwerke griechischer Kunst*, Basel, 1960, p. 128, no. 50.



**7. BRONZE AXE-HEAD
CAUCASIA, KOBAN CULTURE
NINTH-EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.**

With elliptical shaft-hole and crescentic blade decorated with incised circles and rope-pattern bordered by linear motifs, the shaft hole with three hatched ribs with rope motifs and tasselled end
Length 17 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art market, Europe: Christie's, London, 5 October 2000, lot 188

Art market, London, 2000-08

Rupert Wace Ltd., London, October 2008

J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2008-26

Koban Culture is a late Bronze Age–Iron Age culture (circa 1100–300 B.C.) from northern-central Caucasus named after the village (Koban) excavated in 1869, which yielded distinctive bronze artefacts.

For a related example in the collection of George Ortiz (1927–2013), see *In Pursuit of the Absolute. Art of the Ancient World from the George Ortiz Collection*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1994, no. 211. See also Y.V. Domansky, *Avant les Scythes, préhistoire de l'art en U.R.S.S.*, Paris, 1979, no. 143, p. 158; where the author suggests that as well as being weapons they could also hold cultural significance as symbols of power.





**8. MALE BRONZE FIGURE
ITALIC, REPUTEDLY FROM SUSA, PIEDMONT
CIRCA FIFTH CENTURY B.C.**

Possibly an athlete, standing nude, in the form of a herm, with long narrow torso, wearing a close-fitting cap, a fringe of his hair around the edge, with prominent ears, aquiline nose, and large eyes below an accentuated brow, with well-defined anatomical details
Height 12 cm.

PROVENANCE

J.J. Klejman (1909-94), New York, 1961
Mozes S. Schupf Foundation: Sotheby's, New York, 8 June 1994, lot 262
Private collection, New York: Christie's, New York, 9 June 2001, lot 375
Private collection, USA, 2001-17
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2017-18
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2018-2026

For a related example of an athlete in the National Etruscan Museum, in Chiusi, see E. Richardson, *Etruscan Votive Bronzes. Geometric, Orientalizing, Archaic*, Mainz, 1983, p.209, no.1, figs.484-5.

KASMIN SAYS

"...it's a very beautiful face, and the lines of the body are curious and attractive, a very beautiful surface to the whole piece..."





**9. GLAZED 'SGRAFITTO' POTTERY BOWL
BYZANTINE, CIRCA TWELFTH CENTURY A.D.**

Of deep form, on a foot-ring, the inside, creamy-green glazed and, incised with a stylised bird with long beak, thin legs and tail, surrounded by three wavy lines and three stylised floral motifs, the exterior with encrustation, possibly from sea-water
Diameter 25.7 cm.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Japan, late 1960s-70s; Christie's, London, 25 April 2001, lot 204 (part)
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, May 2003
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2003-26

"Sgraffito" is the technique of decorating redware pottery by scratching through a layer of white slip before firing. This type of ceramic had its origins in Cyprus and was used every day, often with geometric and decorative symbols including birds, fish and humans as well as animals, as in this example.

See D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, *Byzantine Glazed Ceramics, The Art of Sgraffito*, Athens, 1999, p. 53, no. 42 and p. 145, nos. 164-165.

Sold with a Thermoluminescence Test certificate from Oxford Authentication, no. N117j80, verifying its authenticity, dated 25 September 2017.



**10. GLAZED 'SGRAFITTO' POTTERY DISH
BYZANTINE, CIRCA TWELFTH CENTURY A.D.**

Of shallow form, the inside incised with a leopard and fronds
Diameter 19 cm.

PROVENANCE

William Bowmore (1901-2008), Australia
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, December 2008
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2008-26

For an example of a bowl with a cheetah, see H.C. Evans and W.D. Wilson (ed.), *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1271*, exhibition catalogue, New York, 1997, no. 186.

Sold with a Thermoluminescence Test certificate from Oxford Authentication, no. N117j81, verifying its authenticity, dated 25 September 2017.



11. COLOURLESS GLASS JAR
ROMAN, POSSIBLY COLOGNE, THIRD-FOURTH
CENTURY A.D.
 Of rounded form, on a base-ring with carinated shoulders
 and wide flaring rim, some weathering
 Height 8 cm.

PROVENANCE
 Private collection, Germany, pre-2011
 Rupert Wace Ltd., London, December 2011
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2011-26

For a similar sized jar, also from Cologne, see F.
 Fremersdorf, *Die Denkmaler des Romischen Koln, Das*
Naturfarbene Sogenannte Blaugrune Glas in Koln, vol. 4,
 Cologne, 1958, p. 25, pl. 16.



12. GUN-METAL GREY POTTERY
INDENTED BEAKER
ROMANO-BRITISH, THIRD-FOURTH CENTURY A.D

The body with eight pinched indentations, tapering to a
 flat circular base
 Height 10.5 cm.

PROVENANCE
 Art market, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham, UK, 1980s
 Bonhams, 28 October 2004, lot 232
 Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2004-08
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2008-2026

See R.J. Charleston, *Roman Pottery*, London, (nd), p.35,
 nos. 68 and 69

KASMIN SAYS
"..you can hardly say Roman things look contemporary
to the Romans because they did, but it looks contemporary
to us too.."



**13. LIMESTONE HEAD OF A GROTESQUE
ALEXANDRIAN, CIRCA FIRST CENTURY B.C.**

With contorted features, the grotesque is bald-headed with large bulging eyes and protruding brows, the eyes inlaid with blue glass, with large bent nose and lop-sided mouth with lolling tongue
Height 6 cm.

PROVENANCE

Nicholas Embiricos (1920-2011), London, 1950-60s;
Christie's, London, 25 April 2001, lot 251
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26

Examples of similar terracotta heads of grotesques can be seen in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 28.168.2) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (inv. no. T.403).



**14. MARBLE MALE HEAD
ROMANO-EGYPTIAN, POSSIBLY FROM
ANTINOOPOLIS, MID-FIRST CENTURY A.D.**

Height 4.8 cm.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Netherlands
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, pre-1996
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1996-2026



**15. MARBLE HEAD OF A YOUNG WOMAN
HELLENISTIC, THIRD-FIRST CENTURY B.C.**

With slender neck and head turned slightly to the left, the features well-defined, the hair worn in a "melon" coiffure with thick plaited tresses gathered in to a braid in a thick circle around the top of the head
Height 8.4 cm.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, UK, prior to 1983
Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2006-08
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2008-26

EXHIBITED

Rupert Wace Ltd., *In our Own Image. Gods and Mortals in Ancient Art*, London, exhibition catalogue, 2008, no. 17

For a larger marble female head, with similar hairstyle, now in the Getty Villa, Malibu (acc. no. 73.AA.29), see A. Stewart, *Faces of Power. Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics*, Oxford, 1993, no. 3, figs. 155-159. A similar-sized head can be seen in The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (acc. no. 23.137).

KASMIN SAYS

"...this is one of the most beautiful things I ever bought, I'd like to have been able to buy more things like this..."





16. BRONZE CEREMONIAL DAGGER
VIETNAM, DONG SON, CIRCA 500 B.C. – 300 A.D.

The leaf-shaped blade tapering to a point, the hilt in the form of a standing figure wearing large disc earrings suspended from pendulous ear-lobes
 25 cm.

PROVENANCE

Edward O'Neill, Elegant House, Hong Kong, 1996
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1996-2026

A closely related example, formerly in the Samuel Eilenberg collection, is in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. no. 2001.433.350)



17. PAIR OF BRONZE REPOUSSÉ CHARIOT FINIALS
CHINA, HAN DYNASTY, SECOND CENTURY B.C. – SECOND CENTURY A.D.

Each formed of three boars, one on top of the other, cast in two halves, two holes for attachment at the back
 Height 14.5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Galaxia Art Company, Hong Kong, 1996
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1996-2026

EXHIBITED

Oliver Hoare, *Every Object Tells a Story*, London, 2017, exhibition catalogue, London, 2017, no. 121

For a similar example, now in the Richard and Carole Cocks Art Museum, Miami University, Ohio (inv. no. 2015.2.11) and formerly in the C.T. Loo collection, Paris, see A. Salmony, *Sino-Siberian Art in the Collection of C.T. Loo*, Paris, 1933, p. 33, no. 2, pl. VII, where it is described as "mating pigs".

KASMIN SAYS

"...an example of creating forms in bronze, unexpected, unlikely, and fascinating..."



**18. TWO ORDOS GILT-BRONZE OPENWORK
BELT-PLAQUES**
CHINA OR CENTRAL ASIA, HAN DYNASTY, SECOND
CENTURY B.C. – SECOND CENTURY A.D.

Each depicting a horned buffalo, their heads thrust forward, with curving horns and thick mane, herring-bone border, each with two loops for attachment in relief on the back, one with curved border to receive a belt-hook
3.2 by 4.2 cm; 3.2 by 4.5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art Market, Hong Kong, 2000
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2000-26

EXHIBITED

Finch & Co, *Myth & Memory*, exhibition catalogue, London, 2017, no.121.



19. BRONZE 'ANIMAL STYLE' BELT HOOK
CHINA OR CENTRAL ASIA
CIRCA THIRD-SECOND CENTURY B.C.

In the form of a stylised striding tiger, his injured left forepaw thrust forward, his right holding a sword, with incised decoration and scroll-ended tail, the reverse with a plug and hook for attachment
Length 12 cm.

PROVENANCE

Huw Peters, London
Eskenazi Gallery, London, 2003
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2003-26

For an almost identical example see B. Karlgren, *"Chinese Agraffes in Two Swedish Collections"* in Bulletin no.38, Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, 1966, p.141, no. P.1.



20. DIAN CULTURE BRONZE BELT PLAQUE
CHINA, YUNNAN, CIRCA SECOND CENTURY B.C. –
FIRST CENTURY A.D.

Of rectangular form with raised central spine, the striated borders gathered in five twin spiralling scrolls above and below
10.5 by 5.2 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art Market, Hong Kong, 1996
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1996–2026



**21. ORDOS BRONZE BELT BUCKLE IN THE
FORM OF A RECUMBENT HORSE**
CHINA OR CENTRAL ASIA, HAN DYNASTY,
CIRCA 200 B.C. – 200 A.D.

Depicting a stout reclining horse feeding, his legs folded under him to show the underside of the triangular hooves, with geometric mane and plaited tail
11.5 by 6.5 cm., (in fitted box)

PROVENANCE

Art Market, Hong Kong, 2004
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2004–26

An almost identical buckle, made from silver, is in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc.no.1985.214.78).



22. ORDOS BONE DRAGON-FACE BELT-HOOK
CHINA OR CENTRAL ASIA
FIFTH – THIRD CENTURY B.C.

Of oval form carved in low relief with clenched teeth and bulging eyes, scrolls on the face and back of the head, the hook in the form of a further dragon head (defaced), an oval protrusion on the back for attachment
 Length 5,5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art Market, Hong Kong, 2005
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2005-26



23. BRONZE FINIAL IN THE FORM
OF A HEDGEHOG
CHINA, ZHOU DYNASTY, WARRING STATES
FOURTH-THIRD CENTURY B.C.

Hollow, standing with his back arched, clawed feet closely together and with large ears, his spines individually applied inscribed in red ink with the loan number: L.65.12.2

Height 2,5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Ernest Erickson (1893-1983), New York
 Sotheby's, New York, 6 December 1989, lot 29
 Private collection, UK, 1989-2002
 Rupert Wace Ltd., London, 2002-07
 J. Kasmin Collection, London 2007-2026

ON LOAN

Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, 1965 (L.65.12.2)

For a similar example, formerly in the C.T. Loo collection, Paris, see A. Salmony, *Sino-Siberian Art in the Collection of C.T. Loo*, Paris, 1933, p. 33, no. 1, pl. VII.

KASMIN SAYS

"...to get this one was a particular thrill, it was the only one of its sort that I was ever offered..."



24. SMALL ABBASID POLYCHROME LUSTRE POTTERY BOWL
IRAQ, NINTH-TENTH CENTURY

Of deep form with everted rim, painted in dark and pale brown lustre on a cream slip, with a large twelve-petalled flower-head surrounding a medallion of triangle and dot motifs
Diameter 15 cm.

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 1999
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1999-2026

For similar decoration on tiles of 862-63 A.D. *in situ* at the Great Mosque of Quairawan, Tunisia, see V. Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, London, 1995, pp.28-9, no.14.



25. FRAGMENTARY SAMANID POTTERY BOWL WITH POPPIES
PERSIA OR TRANSOXIANA, NINTH-TENTH CENTURY

On a low indented foot with flaring sides, painted on a cream slip with quatrefoil orange poppy heads with dotted black borders
Diameter 23 cm.

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 2004
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2004-26



**26. SAMANID POTTERY BOWL
WITH FISH MOTIFS
TRANSOXIANA
NINTH-TENTH CENTURY**

On a low flat foot with flaring sides,
painted in brown on a cream slip with
four speckled half-fish below the rim
Diameter 16.5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, circa 1999
J. Kasmin Collection, London,
circa 1999-26



**27. SAMANID POTTERY BOWL
TRANSOXIANA
NINTH-TENTH CENTURY**

Of shallow form on a low flat foot,
painted on a cream slip in brown with
four triple dentate motifs just below
the rim
Diameter 15.6 cm.

PROVENANCE

Cohen, Tehran, 1964
Heidi Vollmoeller (1916–2004), Zurich:
Christie's, London, 30 April 2004, lot 9
Yacob Gallery, London, 2004
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2004-26



**28. POTTERY BOWL WITH BOLD GEOMETRIC DESIGN
PERSIA, PROBABLY NISHAPUR , NINTH-TENTH CENTURY**

Of shallow rounded form with inward-sloping rim, painted
on a cream slip with interlocking scrolls in thick brown
outline, fine spirals and pale yellow ground, linear motifs in
the interstices
Diameter 19 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art Market, 2000
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2000-26

Classified by Charles Wilkinson as "yellow-staining black
ware", see C.K. Wilkinson, *Nishapur: Pottery of the Early
Islamic Period*, New York, 1973-4, pp.213ff



**29. ABBASID LUSTRE POTTERY BOWL
IRAQ, CIRCA NINTH CENTURY**

Of deep form with everted rim, painted in dark brown with an irregular design of five medallions of pale yellow-leaved plants on a cream slip ground; yellow leaf shapes painted around the sides
Diameter 19 cm.

An unusual and dynamic scheme of decoration.

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 2002
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2002-26

KASMIN SAYS

"...a highly successful example of something you don't often see, foliage..."



**30. SMALL POTTERY BOWL
PROBABLY SAMARKAND, NINTH-TENTH CENTURY**

Of conical form on a low foot, painted in brown and dark rust red on a cream slip with elegant *kufic* and abstract dotted motifs, the rim with chocolate brown saw-edge border
Diameter 14 cm.

INSCRIPTIONS

A suggested reading:
May all that is eaten from this...[bowl] be wholesome

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26
A famous bowl in the Freer-Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C., is closely related in terms of palette, calligraphy and scheme of decoration. Instead of Nishapur, it has now been ascribed to Samarkand, see J. Ilyasov, "A celebrated bowl in the Freer Gallery": Nishapur, Samarqand or Tashkent? In 'Tribus: Jahrbuch des Linden-Museums', no.65, Stuttgart, 2016, pp.156-76.

KASMIN SAYS

"...there are touches in this that you'd expect to see in a Picasso, all these little dots and shapes..."



**31. ABBASID POTTERY BOWL FRAGMENT
WITH KUFIC
IRAQ, NINTH-TENTH CENTURY**

Of shallow form with everted rim, painted with three lines of *kufic* on a cream slip ground, the remaining part of the bowl made up in perspex
Diameter 19.5 cm.

INSCRIPTIONS

baraka li-sahibihi 'amal abi ...
"Blessing for its owner. The work of Abu ..."

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 2004
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2004-26



**32. ABBASID POTTERY BOWL WITH KUFIC
IRAQ, NINTH-TENTH CENTURY**

Of deep form with everted rim, painted in cream slip with a single line of *kufic* in cobalt
Diameter 21.6 cm.

INSCRIPTIONS

baraka min [allah?]
"Blessing from [God?]"

PROVENANCE

Irène Momtaz, London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26



**33. FRAGMENTARY KASHAN LUSTRE POTTERY BOWL WITH SEATED COUPLE
PERSIA, THIRTEENTH CENTURY**

Of deep rounded form on a low foot, each of the figures in the central medallion leaning towards the other, wearing elaborate scrolling foliate robes and plaited hair, each moon-faced, on a dense ground of split palmettes, the border below the rim with fragments of *naskh*
Diameter 19.7 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art Market 2002
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2002-26

The devastating Mongol invasions of Iran and Mesopotamia (1219-58), instigated by Genghis Khan, led to the establishment of a Mongol Ilkhanate in Iran. In the course of the thirteenth century Mongol influences began to be discernible in Persian art and the lustres of the thirteenth century often illustrate this.

Here the distinctive 'moon' faces illustrate Mongol influence and in the broader Islamic world this came to represent an idealised beauty.



**34. SMALL FRAGMENTARY POTTERY BOWL WITH KUFIC
NISHAPUR OR SAMARKAND, NINTH-TENTH CENTURY**

Of deep form on a low foot-ring with flaring sides, concentric circles incised on the back of the foot, painted with four chocolate brown *kufic* phrases on a cream slip ground
Diameter 13 cm.

Inscriptions

kul haniyan mariyan tayyiban
"Eat healthily, wholesomely and well"

PROVENANCE

Mansour Gallery, London, 2000
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2000-26

A small but finely-potted example of Nishapur or Samarkand pottery, the slender chocolate-brown *kufic* inscriptions are also of the highest quality.

KASMIN SAYS

"...when I started collecting Islamic pottery, what attracted me was their characters and lettering, this is a wonderfully rich display of Kufic lettering..."



35. KASHAN POTTERY OCTAGONAL TILE PERSIA, CIRCA THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Painted on a cream slip in lustre, turquoise and cobalt with a central foliate motif of quatrefoil form, surrounded by a border of *kufic* on a lustre ground, the perimeter with lines of *nashk*
Width 19.1 cm.

INSCRIPTIONS

Central composition:

Invocations to glory, good fortune, healing and power.

Outer border:

Repeating invocations to God which appear to be part of a prayer known as "the Prayer of Umm Dawud".

PROVENANCE

Simon Ray, London, 2003, catalogue no.11
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2003-26

The "Act of Umm Dawud" is the most important act for the middle of the month of *rajab*, the seventh month, one of four sacred months of the Islamic (Hijri) calendar. Rituals such as fasting for three days, reciting of certain verses from the Qur'an and performing ablutions and prayer are obligatory before the Act can be commenced.

The octagonal tile is known in Iran since the ninth century and was often used to decorate the walls of shrines. Many such lustre tiles survive, a number of which are signed and dated to the thirteenth century, see V. Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, London, 1995, pp.36, no.21 and 51, nos. 43 & 44. This tile however, is of a more unusual type being painted not only in lustre but also in both turquoise and cobalt.



36. TIMURID CUERDA SECA POTTERY HEXAGONAL TILE CENTRAL ASIA, FIFTEENTH-SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Of convex form, painted with geometric and foliate motifs on a cobalt ground in underglaze green, white, turquoise, gold and brown
30 by 26 cm.

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, 2001-26

For similar examples in the British Museum, see V. Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, London, 1995, p. 69, nos. 63-64.



37. KASHAN TURQUOISE-GLAZED IRIDESCENT POTTERY FLASK PERSIA, TWELFTH-THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The globular body standing on a low foot with flaring neck and fluted cup-shaped mouth, with moulded decoration around the body comprising a band of *nashk* interrupted by two adorsed birds and stylised calligraphy
Height 28.3 cm.

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26

KASMIN SAYS

"...it's such an elegant form and so fragile at the top and solid in the bowl..."



38. LARGE NISHAPUR POTTERY BOWL INSCRIBED IN KUFIC
PERSIA, NINTH-TENTH CENTURY

On a shallow foot with flaring sides, painted in a cream slip with a continuous band of chocolate brown *kufic*
 Diameter: 26,5 cm.

INSCRIPTIONS

The inscription reads (re-inscribed in one place):
wa-qala al-haya' [shu'ba] min al-iman
 "And he (ie.the Prophet) said, "Modesty is a branch of belief"

PROVENANCE

Yacob Gallery, London, 2001
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26





**39. GANDHARA MOTTLED REDDISH STONE
COSMETIC PALETTE
NORTHERN PAKISTAN, THIRD-FOURTH CENTURY A.D.**

Of shallow form divided into two parts, the lower undecorated, the upper with two seated lovers, dressed in turbans and pleated robes, a standing female attendant to the left
Diameter 9 cm.

PROVENANCE

Art Market, 2002
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2002-26

For nine other examples in the National Museum of Pakistan and the Archaeological Museum, Taxila, see *The Exhibition of Gandhara Art of Pakistan*, Tokyo, 1984, pp.83-85, nos.v1-v9 and pp.232-3.

**40. GANDHARA STUCCO HEAD OF A
DOUBLE-FACED DEMON OF MARA
PAKISTAN, FIFTH-SIXTH CENTURY A.D.**

Probably from a relief, with demonic eyes and swept-back hair, remains of red and black paint
Height 11 cm.

PROVENANCE

Shirley Day, London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26

The story of the attack by the 'demons of Mara' on Gautama Buddha, as he meditated under a tree waiting to achieve enlightenment, was popular in Gandharan art. Mara and his grotesque demons attacked Buddha in a vain attempt to prevent him reaching enlightenment. Many fragments in both stucco and schist survive, see H. Ingholt, *Gandharan Art in Pakistan*, New York, 1957, nos.61-66.





**41. SWAT VALLEY(?) GILT METAL REPOUSSÉ
NECKLACE AND A PAIR OF EARRINGS
PAKISTAN**

The necklace with a single row of fluted spherical beads;
the earrings each with an arched convex panel with a
human head wearing granulated jewellery, with four
suspended rosettes fringed with four palmettes
Earrings: length 8 cm.
Necklace: length 44 cm.

PROVENANCE
Art Market, London, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26

**42. TWO 'COPPER HOARD CULTURE'
COPPER WEAPONS
NORTHERN INDIA, CIRCA 1000 B.C.**

Comprising an adze and a harpoon spear
Spear length 29 cm.; adze length 18.5 cm.

PROVENANCE
Marvin Chasen, London, circa 2005
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2005-26

For six examples of the type, in the Norton Simon
Museum of Art, USA, see P. Pal, *Art from the Indian
Subcontinent*, vol.1, Pasadena, 2003, pp.36-39, nos.1-5.
For related examples in the National Museum, New Delhi,
see P. Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C. - 1300
A.D.*, Washington D.C., 1985, no.7, p.22.

According to Dr. Pratapaditya Pal, "large quantities of
similar artefacts have been found in a wide range of
north-central India, stretching from Harayana in the west
to the borders of Bihar and West Bengal in the east" (Pal,
op.cit., p.36)



**43. PALA SILVER-INLAID BRONZE FIGURE OF THE BODHISATTVA VAJRASATTVA
BENGAL OR BIHAR, CIRCA TWELFTH CENTURY A.D.**

Seated in *rajlalitasana* on a disc base, his right hand holding an upright *vajra*, his left holding the stem of a *padma* flowering at his shoulder and supporting a *ghanta*, his eyes, speckled *dhoti*, necklaces and *urna* silver-inlaid, a three-leaved crown in front of his domed chignon
Height 6.4 cm. (fitted bronze stand)

PROVENANCE

Shirley Day, London, 1995

J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1995-2026

The Buddhist Pala dynasty ruled a large part of north-east India, including Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, from the eighth to the twelfth century. It is considered one of the "golden eras" of Bengali history, an effective army and navy, astute diplomats and military conquerors creating peace and prosperity. This led to outstanding architecture, as witnessed by the many Pala temples constructed and the superb works of art created to furnish them. Its

conquest by the Hindu Sena dynasty in the second half of the twelfth century marked the end of the last Buddhist imperial power in India.

Pala bronzes are rare and this small but superb example shows all the signs of Pala craftsmanship at its best. The accurate modelling of the human body, the intensity of the distinctively Pala face, the naturalistic treatment of the lotus flowering at the right shoulder, the beaded jewellery, disc earrings, three-leaf crown, domed chignon and, not least, the selective inlaying with silver are all hallmarks of the highest level of production.

For related Pala bronzes, see J. Van Alphen, *Cast for Eternity: Bronze Masterworks from India and the Himalayas in Belgian and Dutch Collections*, Antwerp, 2005, pp.80-86; J.C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: the Art of Pala India*, Washington D.C., 1991, pl.49 and U. von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, Hong Kong, 1981, pl.68D.



44. BRONZE FIGURE OF A NATURE SPIRIT (YAKSHA)
INDIA, PROBABLY MAHARASHTRA OR MADHYA PRADESH.
SHUNGA PERIOD, SECOND – FIRST CENTURY B.C.

Standing in *tribhanga*, wearing a knee-length horizontally pleated *dhoti*, a vertically pleated sash covering his left thigh, his right hand on his hip, his raised left holding his beaded necklace, wearing large earrings and bracelets, his pleated turban plumed, flat and unmodelled behind
Height 11 cm.

PROVENANCE

Terence McInerney, New York, 2001
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2001-26

Early Indian bronzes of this type are rare and those that survive tend to be small in size. Known examples include a female figure in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, see J. Harle and A. Topsfield, *Indian Art in the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford, 1987, no.9. Also see P.K. Agrawala, *Early Indian Bronzes*, Varanasi, 1977, figs. 137, 165-66, 178-80.





**45. KASHMIR BRONZE SEATED FIGURE OF THE BODHISATTVA PADMAPANI
INDIA, CIRCA 800 A.D.**

Seated on a rocky mound with a kneeling devotee in relief, his left foot supported by a lotus in relief, his right hand (missing) raised, his left on his hip, wearing a short *dhoti* with pleated sashes draped over his thighs, his upper torso nude except for a pendant, wearing large foliate armlets, earrings and an elaborate three-leaf crown in front of his domed chignon, tresses of hair resting on his shoulders, flat and unmodelled behind apart from the hair
Height 8.7 cm.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, U.K.
Jeremy Knowles, London, 2008
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2008-26

The stance of this image gives it away as an image of Padmapani, the missing right hand would normally be touching the shoulder and a small hole in his left hand and another at the shoulder confirm the original presence of a lotus held by the stem and flowering at the shoulder. For a seated figure of Padmapani, dating from the seventh-eighth century, in the Rockefeller Collection, New York, see P. Pal, , *Bronzes of Kashmir*, Graz, 1975, pp.134-5, no.45.

The image is powerfully modelled for its size and is in the early style of Kashmir bronze sculpture. It is distinctive for its throne in the form of geometricised rocks. Another Kashmir bronze figure, of Vajrasattva, dating from the eighth century, formerly in the Pan-Asian Collection, New York, has a related throne, described by Dr. Pratypaditya Pal as "tiers of jagged and contorted rock formations" (*op. cit.*, p. 162, no.59).

KASMIN SAYS

"...a particularly fine casting, a rich a good example..."



**46. MAMLUK LEATHER FRAGMENT FROM A BOOK BINDING
EGYPT, FOURTEENTH CENTURY**

Length 23 cm.

INSCRIPTIONS

'izz li-mawlana al-malik al-mansur abi'l-ma'ali muhammad
'azza nasruhu
"Glory to our lord al-Malik al-Mansur Abu'l-Ma Ali
Muhammad, may his victory be glorious"

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's, London, 24 October 2007, lot 170 (*part lot*)
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2007-26

EXHIBITED

Finch and Co., *Myth & Memory*, London, 2020, exhibition catalogue 34, no.14

In view of the brevity of Al-Mansur Muhammad's reign, two years, inscriptions datable to his reign are rare. Al-Mansur Salah ad-Din Muhammad ibn Hajji ibn Muhammad ibn Qalawun (1347/48-1398 A.D.), better known as al-Mansur Muhammad, was made Mamluk sultan aged fourteen, effective rule being in the hands of two regents. He ruled from 1361 until he was deposed in 1363, dying five years later at the age of fifty-one.

47. FINE SAFAVID PIERCED STEEL MEDALLION
PERSIA, SEVENTEENTH OR EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Of quatrefoil form, pierced with a cusped medallion of *naskh* against a fine spiral of foliate tendrils, the borders pierced with a row of continuous reciprocal palmettes. Diameter 14.2 cm.

INSCRIPTIONS

ya mab'ud
"O [the] worshipped!"

PROVENANCE

Christie's, London, 17 April 2007, lot 120a
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2007-26

The most famous group of such medallions, door fittings formerly in the Harari Collection, is said to be from the Dar-i Imam in Isfahan and was published by A.U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, Oxford, 1938, pl.1389.

A medallion similar to this, from the collection of Professor Ehsan Yarshater, was sold at Christie's, London, 20 April 1999, lot 63. Another is in the David Collection, Copenhagen, see K. von Folsach, *Islamic Art: The David Collection*, Copenhagen, 1990, p.208, no.349. Two further panels were sold at Sotheby's, London, 22 October 1992, lot 179.



**48. LARGE KUSHAN MOTTLED RED SANDSTONE FRAGMENT
DEPICTING A NATURE SPIRIT (YAKSHI)
INDIA, MATHURA, SECOND-THIRD CENTURY A.D.**

Standing in slight *tribhanga*, wearing a diaphanous *dhoti* with a beaded gem-set girdle on the hips and abdomen, a long thickly knotted double sash projecting from the left hip
Height 47 cm.

PROVENANCE

Spink & Son, London, 1991-2
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1992-2026

The *yakshi* is a female nature spirit common to the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain religions in early Indian art and was ubiquitous in the Sunga, Kushan and Gupta periods. For the type see S.P. Gupta, *Kushana Sculptures from Sanghol: a Recent Discovery*, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 46, no.5.14, p.53, no.6.3, 61, 75, no.14 and p.78, no.16B. Also see P. Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C. – 1300 A.D.*, Washington D.C., 1985, p.56, no.10, for a *yakshi* donning a garland, from Mathura, second century A.D., in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.





49. POTTERY LONG-HANDLED VESSEL
CHINA, SHANG DYNASTY, CIRCA 1400 B.C.

Of squat circular form with sloping rim and projecting scroll-ended handle, four rows of indentations around the sides, the underside with a pattern of overlapping concentric hexagons
 Width including handle: 22.5 cm

PROVENANCE

Art Market, Hong Kong, 1997
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1997-2026

Sold with a Thermoluminescence Test certificate from Oxford Authenticity, no. C125p55, verifying its authenticity, dated 7 October 2025.



50. PHOSPHATIC-SPLASHED TWIN-HANDLED POTTERY JAR
CHINA, HENAN, JIA COUNTRY, HUANGDAO KILNS
TANG DYNASTY, EIGHTH-NINTH CENTURY

Height 25 cm.

PROVENANCE

K.Y.Ng, K.Y. Gallery, Hong Kong, 2004
 J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2004-26

**51. STONE MORTAR IN THE FORM OF A TURTLE (KATO)
NEW GEORGIA ISLAND
SOLOMON ISLANDS, CIRCA 1900**

Length 36 cm.

PROVENANCE

Kevin Conru, Brussels, 2006

J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2009-26

Sea turtles have historic cultural, spiritual and artistic significance in the Solomon Islands. These volcanic stone mortars were carved from river boulders and used for the grinding of nuts and food.





52. MAYAN HORSE-SHOE SHAPED 'ECCENTRIC' FLINT
HONDURAS, CIRCA 600-900 A.D.

Width 23.2 cm.

PROVENANCE

Maurice Braham (1938-2022), London, 1991
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 1991-2026

EXHIBITED

Oliver Hoare, London, *Every Object Tells a Story*, exhibition catalogue, 6 May – 26 June 2015, no.18, p.31 (*unillustrated*)

Flints and obsidian were worked by the Mayans into many shapes including geometric, animal and human and were called "eccentrics". For a discussion of such flints, see J.E. Clark, F.W. Nelson, G.L. Titmus, "Flint Effigy Eccentrics" in J. Pillsbury et al (ed.) *Ancient Maya Art at Dumbarton Oaks*, Washington D.C., 2012, pp.274-281.

"Eccentric" flints were highly prized ritual objects, usually made in specific numbers of sets as dedicatory offerings for sacred building and monuments. The Maya believed obsidian and flint were the incarnation of lightening as it struck the ground, the raw material was thus imbued with sacred power fit for the intricate workmanship of percussion flaking to create abstract and figural forms. Obsidian was procured only from the volcanic regions and thus a valued trade item.

KASMIN SAYS

"...it's a fantastic form, the idea of making this is still, to me, inexplicable..."



53. **WOOD HYENA MASK (*SURUKUW*)**
BAMANA, MALI

Height 41 cm.

The hollow mask pierced along the rim for attachment, the long nose with domed forehead and pointed ears

PROVENANCE

Jean-Paul Agogu , Paris
Private collection, Portugal
Galerie Albert Loeb, Paris, 2012
J. Kasmin Collection, London, 2012-26

EXHIBITED

Chapelle de la Visitation, Amiens, "Arts et Peuples de Mali,
14-26 October 1994, no. 24
Finch & Co., *Myth & Memory*, exhibition catalogue, 2020,
no. 39

PUBLISHED

F. Ndiaye, *Arts et Peuples du Mali*, exhibition catalogue,
Amiens, 1994, p. 60, no. 75

These impressive, yet menacing hyena masks (*surukuw*) were worn in *kore*, a male initiation ceremony undertaken by teenage boys in order to progress to adulthood.

With their contemporary, stylised form, masks such as this example were prized possessions of European collectors of African Art of the mid-twentieth century. Similar examples can be found in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, (acc.no.1979.206.162) and Princeton University Art Museum (acc.no.1998-913).



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