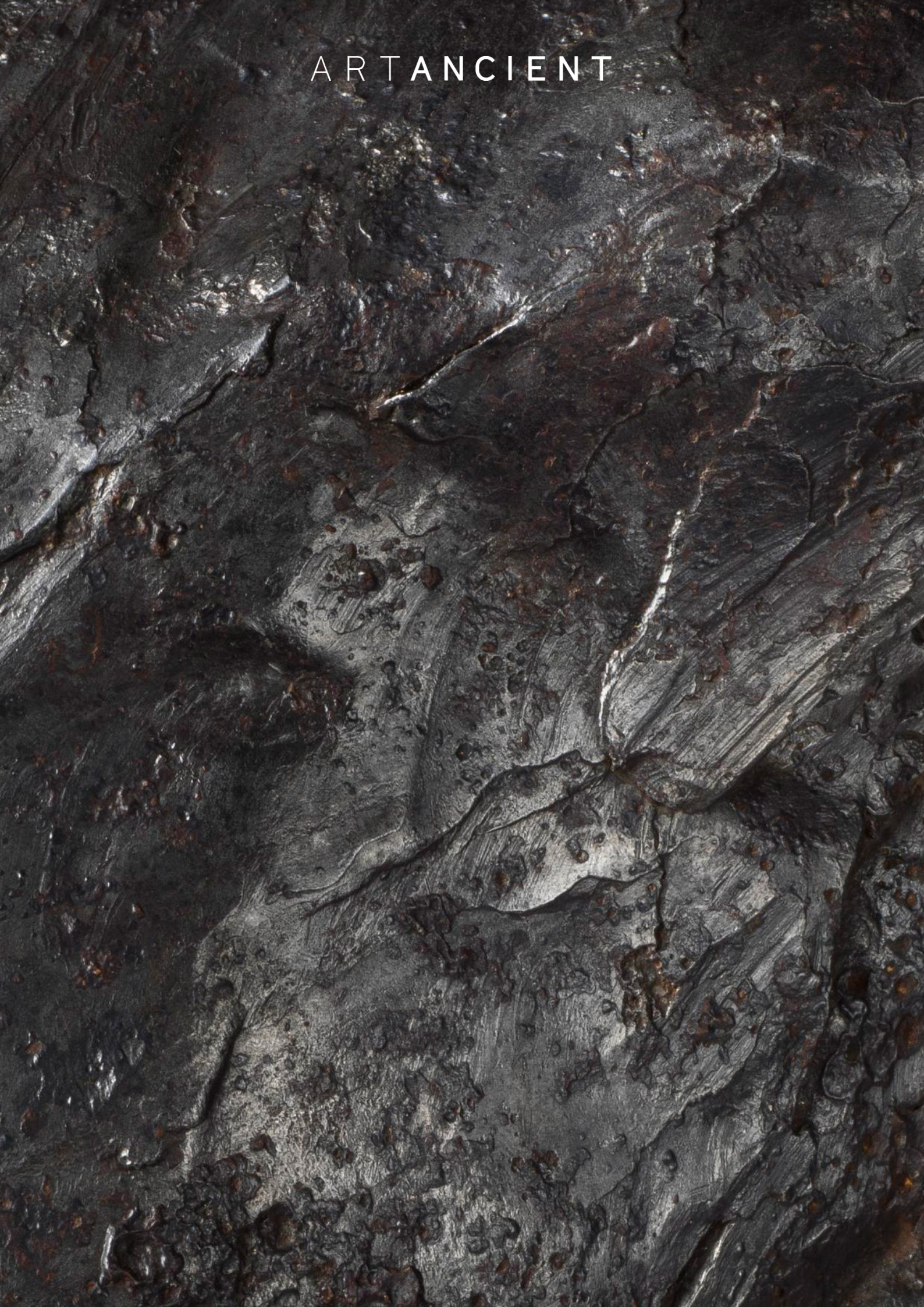


ART ANCIENT



## SIKHOTE-ALIN SHRAPNEL

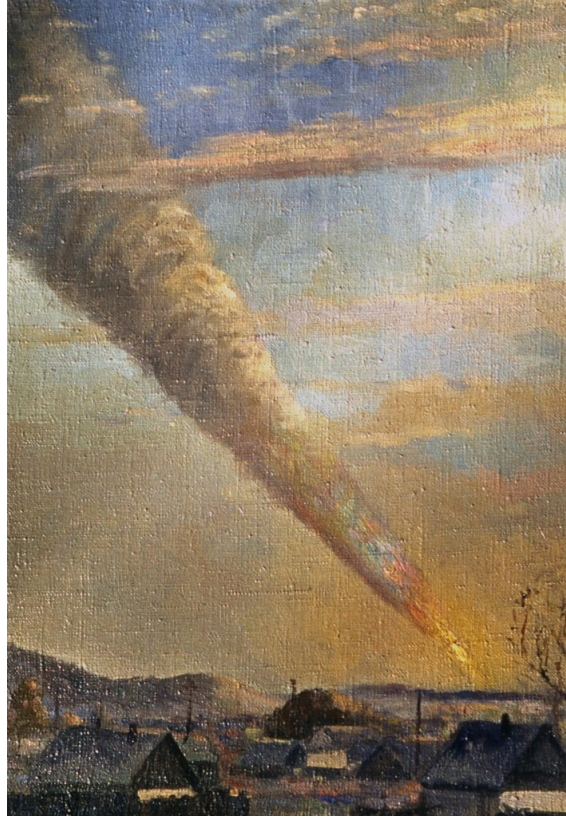
Iron, Coarsest Octahedrite - IIAB  
Circa 4.5 billion years before present  
Impact date: 12 February 1947, 10:30 am  
Height: 11 inches  
Weight: 6 kg

## PROVENANCE

Discovered in Maritime Territory, Siberia, Russia (46° 9' N, 134° 39' E).

An exceptionally sculptural artefact from the largest witnessed meteorite shower in recorded history.





### **A Messenger from Space**

On the morning of 12 February 1947, an enormous iron meteor passed through the Earth's atmosphere. Exploding over the Sikhote-Alin mountains in South-eastern Russia, it created a fireball that burnt brighter than the sun. Eyewitnesses described the impact as a terrifying spectacle, accompanied by explosions and shock waves and leaving an enormous smoke trail through the sky. This event proved in fact to be largest meteorite shower in recorded history. P.J. Medvedev, an artist who witnessed the fall as he was sitting at his window sketching, immortalised the event for posterity in a now famous painting (Figs. 1 & 2).

This present example is an extremely aesthetic shrapnel specimen of the Sikhote-Alin meteorite, that was torn apart from the main body during atmospheric entry. This powerful explosion produced a fragment of wonderfully scarred and sculptural appearance, with torn and jagged edges and delicate flow lines, symbolic of its extraterrestrial origins.

As fascinating messengers from space, meteorites are immensely important to scientific research today. Not only do they carry the building blocks of our solar system, but they have even changed the course of evolution itself. While advancing planetary science, meteorites are also imbued with an ethereal quality, deriving from their beauty and otherworldly origins. Formed over billions of years, and perfected by the intense heat of atmospheric entry, they are entirely natural sculptures, symbolic of the incredible forces of our universe.



1 P. J. Medvedev, Eyewitness painting of the Sikhote-Alin event, 1947.



'This chunk of twisted metal shows the extreme force of the low altitude air burst which exploded the main mass, causing shockwaves which collapsed chimneys, shattered windows and uprooted trees. Sonic booms were heard more than 300 kilometres away and a 33-kilometre long smoke trail persisted in the sky for several hours.'

Dr Alan E. Rubin, PhD Department of Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences, UCLA