

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **THE FINE ART OF THE SWORD**

### **Important Swords from the Museum of Japanese Sword Fittings, Part II**

#### **Japanese and Korean Art**

**March 29, 2005**

**New York** – On March 29, Christie's New York will offer Japanese and Korean art with a focus on several private consignments. The day will start with a group of 56 lots from the Museum of Japanese Sword Fittings and this auction will be immediately followed by the general sale of *Japanese and Korean Art*. Highlighted collections are Property from the Collection of Governor and Mrs. Nelson A. Rockefeller and Paintings from the Estate of Robert O. Muller.

### **Important Swords from the Museum of Japanese Sword Fittings, Part II**

The Museum of Japanese Sword Fittings was founded in 1994 and dedicated to the preservation and study of sword fittings. Many swords of its collection have authentication inscriptions dating from as early as the Edo and Meiji periods. The swords in the sale date from the Kamakura period (1185-1333) through 1985. There are both signed and unsigned blades of the finest quality and importance by some of Japan's greatest sword smiths. Highlights include a Bungo *Ko-Tachi*, early Kamakura period (13<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$50,000-70,000) and an Edo period *Katana* (late 17<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$15,000-20,000). Christie's London offered Part I of the collection in November last year, totaling just above \$3 million.

### **Property from the Collection of Governor and Mrs. Nelson A. Rockefeller**

The sale will offer a good group of Japanese material belonging to Governor and Mrs. Rockefeller. The couple had a wide interest for Japanese culture and among the featured works of art are inro, sword fittings, ceramics and paintings. Noteworthy is a four-case lacquer inro from the Edo period (18<sup>th</sup> century), sealed 'Shiomi Masanari' (estimate: \$5,000-7,000). This precious object is decorated

with a continuous design of dragonflies, their eyes variously inlaid with mother-of-pearl, malachite and agate against a ground of silver lacquer. Also part of the Rockefeller collection is a Nabeshima ware porcelain dish, Okawachi, Edo period (late 17<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$25,000-35,000), the interior painted in dark lines and pale washes of underglaze blue. A fascinating art work is the miniature album of lacquer paintings by Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891) (estimate: \$20,000-30,000). Comprising 18 paintings mounted as an accordion album, each painting is executed in lacquer on paper.

### **Paintings from the Estate of Robert O. Muller**

Robert O. Muller, great-grandson of one of the Pfizer founders, returned from his Japanese honeymoon in 1940 with tens of thousands of Japanese prints and this marked the beginning of his career as a savvy dealer and a noted connoisseur. In the 1980's he became equally fascinated by the paintings executed by some of the Japanese print makers he collected and this took him on a completely new collecting odyssey. Upon his death two years ago, his prints and archives were bequeathed to the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington. From his painting collection, the sale will offer 36 works including Yamamoto Baiitsu's (1783-1856) *Wagtails, rock and bamboo*, 1847 (estimate: \$5,000-7,000) and *Waterfall*, a hanging scroll by Kiski Ganku (1756-1838) (estimate: \$6,000-8,000).

### **Various Properties**

The front cover of the sale catalogue illustrates a detail from the pair of six-panel screens executed by Taniguchi Fumie (b. 1910), *Spreading out on the high fields*, 1937 (estimate: \$20,000-30,000). The screens embody the expansive optimism of the culture of interwar Japan and show three women enjoying a hike on a spring day and resting high on a hillside. The artist – herself a woman – celebrates the self-assured and chic ‘modern girl,’ this ‘liberated’ figure who challenged conventions and constraints and ultimately paved the way to female empowerment. The pair of screens once belonged to the collection of the now-closed Meguro Gajoen Museum in Tokyo. Another beautiful screen is *Maple leaves floating on the Tatsuta river* (estimate: \$50,000-70,000), comprising six panels and executed by an anonymous early 17<sup>th</sup> century artist.

The sale will further include a group of arms, armor and sword fittings, highlighted by a splendid black and purple suit of armor for a woman, Edo period (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$5,000-7,000). The print section will include most of the famous printmakers and their well-known works such as Hokusai's *In the well of the great wave off Kanagawa* (estimate: \$25,000-35,000) and Hiroshige's *Fireworks, Ryogoku*, from the famed series *One hundred views of famous places of Edo* (estimate: \$3,000-4,000). In addition prints by Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847-1915) will be featured.

## Korean Art

The Korean section presents a very elegant and gracious ensemble of white porcelain, lacquer pieces, scrolls and modern paintings. One of the outstanding pieces in the group of white porcelain is a square porcelain bottle from the Choson period (early 19<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$120,000-140,000), decorated with a transparent glaze of distinct blue. Also part of this group is a porcelain flask, Choson period (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$80,000-100,000) and a very unusual ink stone, Choson period (19<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$10,000-12,000) showing a rendering of a tortoise on one side and a gate on the reverse.

In the category of blue and white porcelain, the sale features a remarkable blue and white porcelain jar, Choson period (second half 18<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$100,000-120,000). The decoration in underglaze-blue shows four large sprays of flowers separated by flying insects.

Beautiful and rare is the mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer tray, Choson period (19<sup>th</sup> century) (estimate: \$5,000-7,000). Lacquer objects rarely make an appearance in the Korean art sales and this exquisitely decorated tray is a true jewel. The interior depicts two confronted dragons that are chasing the flaming pearl amongst clouds whereas the outside is subtly decorated with eight auspicious characters.

The Korean section also offers a very noteworthy group of paintings, focusing on classical works as well as modern painters. Among the modern works feature *Life Korea*, a Cornell-like collage by Ko Younghoon (b.1952) (estimate: \$12,000-15,000); *Untitled*, an incised fresco mounted as a four-panel folding screen, by the female artist Jin Youngsun (b. 1945) (estimate: \$5,000-7,000) and Kim Tchah-sup's (b.1940) *PI's window* (estimate: \$20,000-30,000), a painting executed in acrylic and Chinese ink on canvas in which the artist depicts a field of stones in the Pristine Rangeley Lakes region, Maine. In his recent work Tchah-sup has been exploring the relationship between the natural world and the transcendental number (pi).

**Auction:** Important Swords from the Museum of  
Japanese Sword Fittings, Part II

March 29 at 10 a.m.

Japanese and Korean Art

March 29 at approx. 11 a.m.,  
2 p.m. and approx. 5.30 p.m.

**Viewing:** Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center    March 23 - 28

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*Images available on request*

*Visit Christie's Web site at [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)*

More information about Christie's sale of *Important Swords from the Museum of Japanese Sword Fittings, Part II* and *Japanese and Korean Art* can be found on [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com) provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.