

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 7, 2008

**Contact:**

Kate Swan Malin  
Yvonne So

+852 2978 9966  
+852 2978 9919

kmalin@christies.com  
yso@christies.com

Christie's Hong Kong Presents  
**Asian Contemporary Art**  
May 24-25

- **Largest and most-valuable sale of Asian Contemporary Art ever offered**
- **Leading Names in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian Contemporary Art highlight 2 days of sales**
- **417 works with a pre-sale estimate of HK\$320 million/US\$41million**
- **Series kicks off with the *inaugural Evening Sale of Asian Contemporary Art* – a first for the category worldwide**

***Asian Contemporary Art Sale***

*Christie's Hong Kong*

*Evening Sale - Saturday, May 24, 7:30 p.m.*

*Day Sale - Sunday, May 25, 1:30 p.m.*

**Hong Kong** – Christie's, the world's leading art business, will present a two-day series of sales devoted to Asian Contemporary Art on May 24 -25 in Hong Kong, opening with the first-ever Evening Sale for the category.

This sale falls on the heels of Christie's record-breaking sale of Asian Contemporary Art in November 2007\* and will offer unrivalled examples from leading Contemporary Art masters from China, Japan, Korea, India and throughout Asia, including works from artists such as Zeng Fanzhi, Yue Minjun, Zhang Xiaogang, Wang Guangyi, Hong Kyoung Tack, Kim Tschang Yeul, Yoyoi Kusama, Aida Makoto, Yasuyuki Nishio, and Hisashi Tenmyouya. Offering 417 works across two important days of sales, this is the largest and most valuable offer of Asian Contemporary Art ever presented.

**Chinese Contemporary Art**

Chinese contemporary artists display a myriad range of styles. **Yue Minjun's** work, with its vivid imagery and unique stylistic features, occupies a very special position in Contemporary Chinese art.

Standing as the pioneer extraordinaire of the Cynical Realism art movement, Yue Minjun is a cynic with a distinctively positive response to adversity: laughter. The now iconic grins that adorn the art of Yue Minjun – often self-portraits of the artist – have become synonymous with a mocking ridicule of contemporary society. Beyond the mockery and jokes, however, there lies a profound conviction; if one peels beneath the narcissistic layers, Yue Minjun’s artwork is steeped in history, religion, culture and Eastern philosophy. This season, Christie’s is proud to present collectors with several important works from the artist.



***Gweong-Gweong*** (illustrated left, estimate upon request) marks one of the most ground-breaking works from Yue Minjun and is largely considered to be one of his best early works. ‘Gweong Gweong’ references the Chinese language sound effects for jets, seen here dropping their cargo as they rise over Tian’anmen Square. China’s Gate of Heavenly Peace is the backdrop for this scene, with a small yet striking image of Mao. Hundreds of uniformed cheerleaders are

seen rushing the gates in joyous unison. High above, the jets are not dropping bombs, but the repeated images of Yue Minjun’s grinning self-image, seemingly unaware of their freefall. Despite the sardonic edge to this work, the overall impact is giddy – even celebratory. As such, Yue provides insights into the psychological ambiguities and strains felt by his generation, one in which soldiers are sent to fight wars they don't fully understand and citizens are forced to adopt superficially sunny dispositions whatever their circumstances. With an overt and powerful political message very rarely seen in Yue Minjun’s work, *Gweong-Gweong* stands among the most significant works from the artist to come to auction.

***Great Solidarity*** (illustrated right, estimate upon request) was created in 1992, a critical year for Yue Minjun as an artist. During the early nineties, societal changes forced Yue to move beyond his past successes and to comment on these changes directly through his artwork. With this work, Yue began to narrate personal experiences as he had not done in the past, and in doing so, established his trademark style of rows of repeated figures of his image, a theme he experimented with as a means to express tension and power – or more often, a *lack* of power.



***Big Swans*** (illustrated below, estimate: HK\$ 10,000,000 – 15,000,000 / US\$ 1,282,100 – 1,923,100), painted in 2003, is the most recent work by Yue Minjun offered in Christie’s Evening Sale of Asian Contemporary Art. An immediate striking feature of this artwork is the layout of the composition whereby Yue segregates his two ‘groups’ - flying swans on the one side and a row of his replicating

self on the other, both apparently sneering at the ludicrous aspects of the other. The four images of Yue snigger whilst pointing their fingers towards the swans in the childish way of imitating a gun. Lost tradition, nostalgia, aggression and Eastern symbolism are all bound within the inspirations of classical Chinese painting.



For many Chinese artists of the early avant-garde generation, the energy with which China has propelled itself into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a common theme. **Zeng Fanzhi's** interpretation of this unique social climate can best be seen in his famed *Mask* series. The series marked a turning point in his career where his conflicting emotions – such as humour and anxiety – commingle to reveal the

extremes of the 'new' urban life of 20th century China. Leading the Evening Sale of Asian Contemporary Art is his monumental *Mask Series 1996 No.6* (illustrated left, estimate: HK\$15-25 million/ US\$1,923,100 -3,205,100 ) announced earlier this year. This work is a rare example from the artist in that it depicts multiple figures incorporated into one composition, and is largely considered to mark the pinnacle in this celebrated series. Perceptibly part of an elite group, eight figures stand with arms linked in the apparently intimate poses of friends, wearing masks and the red bandanas of young patriots that serve as symbols of acceptance, contribution and belonging. But despite body language that suggests closeness, the eight are strangers to each other, reflecting the artist's desire to reveal our exterior masks and subconscious feelings present in his version of daily life.

The juxtaposition of imagery of Communist propaganda and modern consumer brand logos creates the innovative platform of expression adopted by **Wang Guangyi**. As a humorous critique to the socio-political environment of China, Wang combines the paradoxical ideologies of socialism and consumerism by depicting images of idealism and materialism. In '*Criticism Series – Ferrari*,' Wang toys with a car logo that is symbolic of wealth and luxury (illustrated right, estimate: HK\$6,000,000 – 8,000,000/US\$ 769,200 – 1,025,600). The numbers seen on all of the Criticism series reveal the thoughtful depth of the work: one number refers to a code required to create a body of work under the Communist regime, and the second to distribute it.



The aftermath of the cultural rebirth in China has propelled the name of **Zhang Xiaogang** to one of the leaders of Chinese contemporary painting. A member of the Southwest China Art Group, Zhang sought to reinvent Chinese painting by exploring Western techniques and traditions, and by taking a humanist and intuitive approach to his artistic compositions. *Bloodline: Big Family Series* and *Bloodline: Mother and Son* each present a most extraordinary and distinctive example of Zhang's



famed portrait series. These works are portraits in the traditional sense in that they are a representation of a likeness, but they are also subjective depictions of an individual's unique, innocent spirit. ***Bloodline: Mother and Son*** (illustrated left, estimate: HK\$ 10,000,000-15,000,000 / US\$ 1,282,100-1,923,100) is an immensely personal self-portrayal of the artist and his mother. Zhang was first taught to paint by his mother who, believing he would get into trouble if left un-stimulated,

encouraged Zhang to sketch scenes inspired by his favourite comic books. The family portrayal of two siblings in ***Bloodline: Big Family Series*** (estimate: HK\$12,000,000-15,000,000/ US\$ 1,538,500-1,923,100) epitomizes the *Big Family* sector of the *Bloodline* series. Once again, the subjects betray an emotional turmoil beneath their poised exterior, as their eyes - whilst superficially expressionless - hold a powerful, watery stare. Zhang has often commented at the difficulty with which he renders the eyes of his subjects, commenting that it is by far the longest portion of his creative process.

The large-scale composition '***Brothers***' best exemplifies the documentary edge to **Liu Xiaodong's** still-life subjects, quietly capturing moments in the lives of anonymous figures surviving – or trying to survive – in circumstances not entirely within their control (illustrated right, estimate: HK\$ 4,000,000 – 6,000,000 / US\$512,800 – 769,200). Liu's art does not focus on China's political climate explicitly – despite the fact he emerged from the watershed *Chinese Avant-Garde Exhibition* held in the National Art Gallery in the spring of 1989, an historic exhibition that signalled the official recognition of the diverse regional artistic movements that had thrived in China in the 1980s. Rather, Liu's paintings exemplify a neo-realist style, disregarding the romantic and the idealistic, and instead focusing on the psychological nature of his subjects captured in candid, intimate moments.



Among the leading examples in the Asian Contemporary Art Day Sale is ***Fairy in the Valley 2*** (estimate: HK\$4,000,000 – 6,000,000 / US\$512,800 – 769,200). Depicting a young boy resting on a rock, the seemingly dreamlike setting disguises its philosophical undertones: does the boy relax in a daydream, or is he so exhausted or numb he is about to slide into the depths of the water below? Such ambiguity is a recurrent theme to many of Liu's works, with the very character of his subjects resting in the hands of the viewer to decide.

### **Japanese Contemporary Art**

Japanese contemporary art embraces subcultures such as manga, anime, fantasy and technology of the post-war period as high art. Displaying an obsession with fantasy, these contemporary works address the fine balance between mass production, eroticism, science fiction, heritage and the identity of Japan as a nation. The market for Japanese Contemporary Art has seen an incredible explosion in



interest as of late, growing threefold from a total of HK\$12,522,000 in the Spring 2007 sale of Asian Contemporary Art to HK\$36,165,000 in the recent Fall 2007 sale. A total of 106 high caliber works of Japanese Contemporary Art will be offered this spring across the Evening and Day sales.



**Aida Makoto** stands as one of the most prominent figures in Japanese Contemporary art today and this season Christie's is proud to present ***Monument for Nothing*** (illustrated left, estimate: HK\$4,000,000 – 5,000,000 / US\$512,800 – 641,000). Extremely grand in scale and measuring 6 meters in height, with this work Makoto has constructed an edifice to honour 'nothing,' once again commenting on the emptiness of consumerism and nihilism. Here, the female protagonist appears heroic, carrying a sake barrel with ease on her shoulder. Though naked and standing before a scene of destruction, her muscular figure and gallant stance assert her indestructible power.

**Yayoi Kusama**, a key figure in the contemporary avant-garde movement in Japan, began creating work during the 1960s, showing great diversity and originality in conception, which greatly influenced conceptual art in the West during the 1970s and later. Perhaps her most unique contribution is her multimedia 'soft sculpture' style of painting. ***Petal*** is very representative of Kusama's ideas about media (illustrated right, estimate: HK\$ 2,500,000 – 3,500,000 / US\$ 320,500 – 448,700). In response to the brilliant colour of this painting composed primarily of simple white and red spots, the viewer's eye shifts between the flat spaces of painting and the three-dimensional spaces of sculpture. The work as a whole projects tremendous energy and tension while, in Eastern cultures, its brilliant reds and whites are strongly symbolic of absolute power and purity.



The development of animation has been intimately connected with contemporary art in Japan, exerting great influence in recent years. **Hisashi Tenmyouya's *RX-78-2 Kabuki-mono 2005 Version*** (illustrated left, estimate: HK\$ 1,000,000 – 2,000,000 / US\$ 128,000 – 256,400) is among the top Japanese Contemporary works offered in the Evening Sale, and melds traditional Japanese painting forms with images from animated cartoons. In Tenmyouya's work the traditional culture of Japan has been absorbed and projected with a new, contemporary face. This major work is among the best representations of the artist's work to date. In 2007 it was one of the very few works by contemporary artists chosen for inclusion in Japan's travelling Gundam exhibition. Also of note from the artist is ***Football*** (estimate: HK\$400,000 – 600,000 / US\$513,000 – 769,000), one of the many Japanese contemporary art offerings presented in the Day Sale of Asian Contemporary Art.

### Korean Contemporary Art

Artists from Korea are known for their exceptional technical abilities, a skill most clearly expressed in hyper-realism, and for their innovative experimentation with materials. Korea possesses a rich cultural history that has resulted in a unique approach to art that embraces revolutionary and contemporary practices while retaining a connection to traditional heritage. This market too as been experiencing growing interest from collectors throughout Asia and beyond, and this season, Christie's is offering a series of the most cutting-edge works from the region.



Among the top lots is **Hong Kyung Tack's *Library II*** (*illustrated left*, estimate: HK\$2,000,000 – 4,000,000 / US\$256,400 – 512,800), a dizzying work of flamboyant colors that upon closer inspection reveals the artist's contemplation on religion and pop culture. His technical proficiency and shrewd dexterity in painting enables him to create an almost synthetic surface to the work. Religious icons, including an image of the Crucifixion of Jesus, white doves, and countless colorful books, amass to create a shrine that toes the line between kitschy arrangement and religions devotion.

From **Chun Kwang Young** comes ***Aggregation 06-AP016*** (*illustrated right*, estimate: HK\$800,000 – 1,200,000 / US\$102,600 – 153,800), a work that shows the artist's impressive attentiveness to the technical process. Inspired by the Korean Monochromatic Art movement that formed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chun deftly creates an intriguing texturing of the plane with minute assemblages of tightly woven mulberry paper into an abstract composition. The use of mulberry paper was a conscious one on the part of the artist: its extreme durability has made it an essential material in daily and cultural life in Korea. The work's dynamic texture is saturated in monochrome, creating a sculptural landscape that though cutting-edge consciously integrates traditional elements of Korean culture.



### Indian Contemporary Art

Contemporary Indian art is at once autobiographical and at times phantasmagorical, yet an overriding theme to their distinctive style is the addressing of national and philosophical concerns: social reality, traditional gender roles, empowerment and relationships. The Indian modern and contemporary art category has also grown exponentially. Increasing global demand is seen in every one of Christie's sales in New York, London and Hong Kong. Since launching Modern and Contemporary Indian Art sales in New York 2000, worldwide sales in this category at Christie's have grown from US\$656,000 to US\$36 million in 2007.

Among the highlights is **Jitish Kallat's *Rickshawpolis 9***, a cacophonous rendition of the artist's urban environment in Mumbai, which is meant to convey pure sensory overload (*illustrated below*, estimate: HK\$ 500,000 – 700,000 / US\$ 64,100-89,700). The rickshaw in Kallat's title symbolizes the



old India. Though in the new 21st-century order, with a rapidly changing India marked by rampant consumerism, environmental decay and over-crowding, these ubiquitous vehicles compete with buses, trucks, people, cows and cars in an ever-growing swell of traffic. The exhaust fumes, the congestion, the daily bumps and accidents render urban life dysfunctional, even as the population swells with more arrivals from the countryside. The painting *Rickshawpolis 9* is mounted on bronze sculptures, re-creations of gargoyles from Mumbai's Victoria Terminus train station. These humorous gargoyles symbolize the bystander or the artist himself, a daily witness to this constant clamor of the streets of Mumbai.

**Pre-sale Exhibitions:**

Singapore	St. Regis Hotel	May 10-11
Taipei	Fubon Life Assurance Building	May 17-18
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre	May 22 - 24

**Auction:**

<i>Asian Contemporary Art Evening Sale</i>	May 24, 7:30 pm
<i>Asian Contemporary Art Day Sale</i>	May 25, 1:30 pm
Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre	

**High-resolution images, lot information and highlights of the Christie's 2008 Hong Kong Asian Contemporary Art sales can be downloaded from the following link:**

<http://cshk.myftp.org/Asian%20Contemporary%20Art/>

**Notes to Editors:**

- Christie's landmark sale of *Asian Contemporary Art* on November 25, 2007 totalled HK\$ 467,178,500 /US\$60,079,155, **a record total for any sale of Asian contemporary art.**
- **Christie's holds the record for any Asian Contemporary work of art:** Cai Guo-Qiang's *Set of Fourteen Drawings for Asia-Pacific Cooperation*, US\$9,548,229 (Christie's Hong Kong, November 25, 2007). A total of 25 world auction records were established in this sale.

**About Christie's**

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2007 that totalled £3.1 billion/US\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from US\$200 to over US\$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai. In Asia Pacific, Christie's has 10 offices: Hong Kong, which also functions as a regional hub, Taipei, Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Singapore, Sydney and Seoul.

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium*

###