

CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG

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Media Contacts:

Kate Swan Malin (Hong Kong)
Gillian Leung (Hong Kong)
Belinda Chen (Beijing)

+852 2978 9966
+852 2978 6736
+8610 6500 6517

kmalin@christies.com
gleung@christies.com
bchen@christies.com

Prominent Collections & Rare Masterpieces Highlight Christie's Hong Kong Sales of Chinese Works of Art This Autumn Season

Hong Kong – Christie's Autumn auctions of *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* will be held on 1 December at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre. Showcasing fine and rare works across a number of collecting categories including ceramics, jades, lacquer, and Classical furniture, these sales will present over 200 works valued in the region of HK\$260million (US\$33million). With a strong focus on items sourced from famed collections and with impressive provenance, this sale will present fresh-to-the-market pieces that are in some cases being offered at auction for the first time ever. Among the stand-out collections offered are two highly anticipated sales: Part II of the Lee Family's collection of important lacquer, and a selection of rare classical Chinese furniture from the collection of Mimi and Raymond Hung. Both sales promise to be landmark events for collectors as each offers a singular opportunity to acquire museum-quality works that are exceedingly rare on today's market.

Recent sales of Chinese Works of Art in New York, London and Hong Kong have continued to draw strong results, record prices, and increased international interest, buoyed in great part by collectors from Greater China. Indeed, each of Christie's sales of Chinese Works of Art in New York and Hong Kong this year saw record participation from buyers from Mainland China, a trend that is looking to continue in the Autumn season ahead.

MASTERY OF THE MING: TWO HIGHLY RARE EARLY MING VASES LEAD CERAMICS OFFERINGS



Two extremely rare bottle vases from the early Ming period will be among the leading highlights in Christie's sale of *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* in Hong Kong on 1 December. It is highly unusual to see two bottle vases that were produced within a relatively short timeframe of one another being offered in the same auction, and as such this sale marks an unusual and notable opportunity for collectors. Although of the same pear-shape, the artistry and style of their periods - the father and son reigns of the Hongwu (1368-1398) and the Yongle (1403-1424) periods - are very distinctive, and set the tone for blue and white ceramics that followed later during the Ming dynasty. These two incredible masterworks offer all of the essential elements that collectors today are looking for: impeccable provenance, extreme rarity, and unrivaled quality. Indeed, this sale marks an opportunity for collectors as rare as the works of art themselves.

From an Important Asian Collection comes a highly important and exceedingly rare Early Ming underglaze-blue pear-shaped bottle vase from the Hongwu period (1368-1398)

that is expected to fetch in excess of HK\$18 million (US\$2.3million) (*image above*). Blue and white porcelains from this period are extremely rare, likely due to the scarcity of important cobalt as foreign trade during the Hongwu period was strictly regulated. In view of this, even during the early Ming period, blue and white wares such as this would have been exceedingly costly commodities. This magnificent vase, generously painted with such a rich cobalt-blue, appears to be of a small group of vases with limited examples in the Beijing Palace Museum and National Palace Museum. In excellent condition, its importance and rarity can only be compared to the Hongwu copper-red bottle vase that was sold at Christie's Hong Kong to Steve Wynn in May 2006 which set a world record price for a Ming copper-red ceramic.



From the Yongle period (1403-1424) comes an extremely rare Early Ming underglaze-blue pear-shaped bottle vase once in the collection of famed Shanghainese dealer and collector Edward T. Chow (1910-1980). Exquisitely painted with large blooms of Indian lotus flowers, this important work of art is a rare example of the maturity in blue and white ceramics of the Ming period. With only one other known example in the National Palace Museum, this masterpiece is expected to be among the most sought-after this season and is estimated at HK\$8,000,000-12,000,000 (US\$1,020,000-1,540,000).



A selection important ceramics from a Distinguished Private Collection will also be offered, including a rare underglaze-red and blue-decorated "apple form" water pot and imperial stand with the Kangxi six-character mark and of the period (1662-1722) (estimate: HK\$4,000,000-6,000,000/US\$520,000-780,000). When the Kangxi Emperor came to the throne he immediately began

to show an interest in the production of imperial porcelain. As a result, potters during the Kangxi reign experimented with new styles and one of the most successful of these was that of painting formal designs using very fine outlines such as those exhibited on the present lot. Firing underglaze copper-red is very difficult, requiring the precise control of heat, kiln atmosphere and air circulation in the kiln, as well as the careful preparation of the copper pigment itself. Also of note from this same private collection is a superb Ming-style blue and white *meiping* vase from the Yongzheng period (1723-1735) that is exceptional for its extremely fine painting, small size and delicate potting with thin sides (estimate: HK\$4,800,000-6,500,000/US\$620,000-840,000). Compared with other Yongzheng-period vases of this shape, the present example is especially striking for its broad shoulders, so that the top of the body is almost flat, unlike the sloping shape that is more often seen. The remarkably fine quality of painting is further enhanced by the unusual choice of design with 8 auspicious fruiting sprays, around the body.



CHINESE LACQUER FROM THE LEE FAMILY COLLECTION, PART II: A LANDMARK SALE OF THE FINEST LACQUER WARES IN PRIVATE HANDS

Christie's is pleased to present *Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee Family Collection, Part II*, an outstanding single-owner collection of exceptional lacquer wares that stands as the finest in private hands. *Part I* of this famed collection, sold at Christie's Hong Kong in December 2008, was a landmark sale for this collecting category, setting a number of world records for Chinese lacquer. The 37 carvings in *Part II* are expected to sell for in excess of HK\$60,000,000 (US\$7,600,000).

The Lee Family Collection is undoubtedly the finest group of Chinese lacquers from the Song to the Ming dynasties ever to appear on the international market. With exceptional examples from the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, a great variety of forms, periods and motifs

are represented in the collection. **The group is one of the most studied, published and exhibited collections of lacquer in private hands.** Today, lacquer is a category that provides ample opportunities for both seasoned and new collectors. Compared to the markets for more widely-collected categories such as ceramics and jades, the market for lacquer is still developing with collectors, allowing one to acquire a museum-quality work often at a very approachable price point. The works offered in the Lee Family Collection cater to collectors of all levels, with estimates beginning at HK\$60,000 and ranging upwards to HK\$20million.



Leading the Lee collection is **an outstanding and extremely rare Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) mother-of-pearl inlaid octagonal box and cover that is poised to set a record and sell for over HK\$20,000,000 (US\$2,600,000).** This box belongs to a very rare group of Yuan period mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer wares that are inscribed with either the name of the craftsmen or a cyclical date and this is almost certainly the largest and finest example within this group.

Despite its large size, this exquisite work of art features superbly fine details including minutely depicted birds and insects hidden among the rocks and branches of the pine tree, making it as beautiful as it is rare.

Another leading highlight is **a magnificent carved cinnabar lacquer square tray depicting figures in a landscape from the Ming dynasty Hongwu period (1368-1398).** Superbly carved and featuring horsemen and figures at leisure in terraced pavilions within a mountainous landscape, this exquisite tray was formerly in the collection of Sir John Figgess and was exhibited in the 1973 British Museum exhibition, *Chinese and Associated Lacquer from the Garner Collection*. It is among the most valuable works offered in the sale and is valued between HK\$10,000,000-15,000,000 (US\$1,300,000-1,950,000).



More information on *Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee Family Collection* is available [here](#).

THE MIMI AND RAYMOND HUNG COLLECTION OF CHINESE CLASSICAL FURNITURE: SHOWCASING THE VERY BEST IN LATE MING AND EARLY QING DESIGN

A selection of important Chinese Classical furniture from the well-known collection of Mimi and Raymond Hung of Hong Kong will be among the star attractions this season. Showcasing the very best in sixteenth to mid-eighteenth century furniture-making and design in China, this collection of 13 superb works is valued at over HK\$20,000,000 (US\$2,500,000). Top examples of Chinese classical furniture from the Ming and Qing dynasties are highly prized – and today are incredibly scarce. **This sale is the finest of its calibre to be offered in Asia, and as such it promises to be a landmark event for collectors in this category.**

Over several decades, Mimi and Raymond Hung have brought together what is likely the world's largest collection of fine Ming and early Qing furniture. The selection offered for sale on December 1 includes a variety of classic forms including chairs, tables, daybeds and cabinets - all handcrafted by highly skilled artisans for the era's most sophisticated and aristocratic classes. Capturing the refined aesthetic of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, **this sale will offer some of the finest examples of Chinese classical furniture ever seen on the auction market – many of which will be offered for the first time** - making this an important opportunity for collectors in this fast-growing category.

Among the leading highlights in this selection is a very rare pair of *huangbuali* and burl wood continuous yoke-back armchairs from the Yongzheng period (1723-1735) (estimate: HK\$1,800,000-3,000,000 /



US\$235,000 – 390,000). These extremely comfortable chairs are a testament to the furniture makers' primary concern for function as well as form. The best examples of Ming and Qing chairs and beds are designed above all to be of the utmost comfort. The term given to these chairs by Beijing craftsmen was *nanguanmaoyi*, literally meaning 'southern official's hat chair,' as their shape is reminiscent of the court official's winged hat. Comfortable, elegant, and somewhat less formal than tall yoke-back chairs with extended arm and top rails, this form was very popular during the Ming dynasty and variations on it continued to be made throughout most of the Qing period.



Also of note is a *huanghuali* tall bookcase from the Qianlong period (1736-1795) (estimate: HK\$1,800,000-3,000,000/US\$235,000–390,000), an incredibly rare example of Chinese classical furniture as display or bookcases were extremely unusual in China during this period. The current bookcase is a superb example of the more ornate style of this type of furniture. The rhythmic variation of the decorative motifs provides balance and order and is clearly the product of a supremely confident and masterly cabinetmaker.

More information on *The Mimi and Raymond Hung Collection* is available [here](#)

THE HUGO TUTEIN NOLTHENIUS WHITE JADE WATER BUFFALO

Leading the jades offered this season is a superb white jade buffalo from the Qianlong period (1736-1795) formerly in the collection of the famous Dutch industrialist and collector Hugo Tutein Nolthenius (1863-1944). Acquired by his nephew William after Hugo Tutein Nolthenius' death in 1944, this work has since passed to the current owner by descent and is now being offered for the first time ever at auction. Of impressive size, and boasting an extraordinary naturalness of form and extremely fine quality carving, this work is expected to fetch in excess of HK\$15 million (US\$1.92million).

Jade buffalo have traditionally been greatly prized in China and are known to have been treasured by the imperial family. This magnificent jade buffalo is remarkable not only for its size and the excellence of its carving, but for the white jade from which it has been made. While several large green jade buffalo are known, large white jade buffalo are exceedingly rare, making the appearance of this work on the market an extraordinary opportunity for collectors. Exhibited in Amsterdam on multiple occasions including at the Rijksmuseum, and published in a number of important catalogs, this work is among the most important white jades carvings to ever be offered on the market.

Images Available Upon Request

For more information in English and Chinese about Christie's Hong Kong Fall 2009 Season Highlights go to www.christies.com/chinese

Auction:	Tuesday, 1 December
<i>Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee Family Collection</i>	10am
<i>Important Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art, including Chinese Furniture</i>	11am
Viewing:	
Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	Friday, 27 November - Monday, 30 November

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2008 that totalled £2.8 billion/\$5.1 billion. For the first half of 2009, art sales totalled £1.2 billion/\$1.8 billion. 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 450 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the Middle East, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.