

## **For Immediate Release**

February 23, 2007

Contact: Bendetta Roux

212.636.2680

[broux@christies.com](mailto:broux@christies.com)

## **MAJESTIC WOOD FIGURE OF THE ‘WATER-MOON’ GUANYIN HEADS CHRISTIE’S SALE OF CHINESE ART**

### **Important Chinese Snuff Bottles from the J&J Collection, Part IV Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art March 22, 2007**

**New York** – Concluding Christie’s Asian Art Sales on March 22 are two auctions devoted to Chinese art: *Important Chinese Snuff Bottles from the J&J Collection Part IV* and *Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art*. The fourth part of the fabulous J&J Collection continues on the high note set by the previous three sales. The specialized Chinese art sale highlights major areas of collecting including sculpture, ceramics, jades, textiles and archaic bronzes. The sale is expected to realize in excess of \$12 million.

### **Important Chinese Snuff Bottles from the J&J Collection, Part IV**

This series of sales has established its own tradition on the Asian Art Sales calendar: 88 exquisite snuff bottles from the renowned J&J Collection will once again offer delight and astonishment to the world’s snuff bottle-collecting community. Each one of these miniature treasures attests to the inventiveness and craftsmanship of the artists who made them, as well the refined and discerning taste of the extraordinary patrons – from the Emperors who originally commissioned them to today’s collectors who lovingly cherish them. Highlights of the sale include an extremely rare Beijing enamel ‘European subject’ snuff bottle decorated with European dandies from the Imperial Palace Workshops, Qianlong blue enamel mark and of the period, 1736-1780 (estimate: \$200,000-250,000), and a rare and fine Imperial enameled glass snuff bottle, Imperial Palace Workshops, Beijing, Qianlong mark and of the period, 1750-1795 (estimate: \$140,000-180,000).

## Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art

A superb and important wood seated figure of the 'Water-Moon' Guanyin, Song/Jin dynasty, 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: \$600,000-800,000) is the star lot of the sale. The bodhisattva is seated in 'royal ease' with eyes half-closed in meditation. The broad, corpulent deity is shown in princely guise, with an elaborate coiffure behind a crown and splendid jewelry and scarves, all suggestive of its regal heritage. From the Song/Yuan dynasty (13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century) dates a painted wood figure of a Guardian-King (estimate: \$350,000-450,000). This powerfully sculpted figure represents one of the four Celestial Kings of the Directions, the guardians of the four quarters of the world. The position of the right hand of this figure suggests that he originally held a sword, the attribute of Virudhaka, the Guardian King of the South.

In an unusually strong grouping of Buddhist bronze sculpture, the gilt-bronze seated figure of Buddha, Liao dynasty, 10<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: \$400,000-500,000) features prominently. The finely cast figure is shown seated in *dhyanasana* with hands held in the teaching gesture. With similar figures published in major exhibition and collection catalogues, the bronze is distinguished by the unusual un-gilded hairstyle arranged in intricately matted strands and spiral chignon. Also offered is a finely cast figure of Maitreya Buddha (estimate: \$150,000-200,000), showing a particularly sensitive treatment of the drapery and the proportions of the body. Maitreya Buddha governs two perfected worlds: Tushita Heaven, which he currently inhabits, and Ketumati, an ideal realm conducive to the pursuit of enlightenment where he will serve as the Teaching Buddha.

The ceramics section is highlighted by a superb, large Longquan celadon carved double-gourd vase, Ming dynasty, 15<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: \$400,000-500,000) from a private American collection. The double gourd is traditionally a very popular form for vases and ewers as it is associated with a number of different auspicious wishes. Symbolic of extensive progeny, good fortune and wealth, longevity and immortality, to Daoists the double gourds also reflect the harmony of heaven and earth as represented by the upper and lower bulbs of the vessel. The decoration on the vase, a dense design of leafy peony meander bearing large blossoms, reinforces the auspicious nature of the piece. Peonies are the most popular of all botanical motifs used in Chinese decorative arts and traditionally have been associated with royalty, hence its nickname 'the king of flowers' – the meandering band of peonies would read as 'May wealth and rank continue for ten thousand generations.'

Another highlight of the ceramics section is the large Ming-style blue and white moon flask, Qianlong seal mark and of the period (1736-1795) (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). The shape of these large Qianlong flasks is based on Ming dynasty fifteenth century prototypes which had a convex side that was decorated and a flat unglazed back with a countersunk medallion in the center. Also included are a blue and white dice bowl, *kang*, Xuande mark and of the period (1426-1435), a thickly

potted vessel painted with two five-clawed scaly dragons striding amidst clouds; a rare blue and white dragon dish, Yongzheng mark and of the period (1723-1735) (estimate: \$150,000-200,000), with the interior painted in deep cobalt blue with a ferocious horned five-clawed dragon shown full face and with wings spread; a Longquan celadon fluted pear-shaped vase, Song/Yuan dynasty, 12<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: \$100,000-150,000); and a blue and white dish, Xuande mark and of the period (estimate: \$150,000-180,000) heavily potted with shallow rounded sides and unusual in its large size and composite floral scroll decoration.

An extremely rare lot is the set of ten inscribed white jades, Song dynasty and later, formerly in the Collection of Stephen Junkunc III (estimate: \$400,000-600,000). The last time a group of such near-perfectly pure and translucent white jades with inscriptions appeared publicly was in the exhibition *Chinese Jades from Han to Ch'ing* at the Asia House Gallery in New York in 1980. This group of ten jades forms the largest single group known to date. The extremely fine inscriptions vary from bell-shaped and axe-shaped to the drum-shaped ring and the coin-knife shape.

**Some particularly fine examples** of archaic bronzes are included in a group of fifteen rare items offered from a Private Californian Collection. These objects were previously on loan and exhibited at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for the last 25 years. The ritual vessels of Bronze Age China have been a source of inspiration for artists in many media throughout succeeding dynasties. The powerful forms and decoration of these ancient vessels were copied, adapted and reinterpreted by later craftsmen to create objects which were revered in their own right and have been enthusiastically collected by generations of emperors and connoisseurs. Bronzes were among the first objects to be actively collected by Chinese rulers, starting as early as the Eastern Han dynasty (AD 25–220) and continuing to the Ming and Qing dynasties, finding favor in both court and literary circles. **Highlights of the collection** are a Yuan/Ming dynasty *zun* in the form of a tapir (estimate: \$80,000-120,000) and a 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century vessel in the form of a phoenix with a vase on its back (estimate: \$100,000-150,000). The decoration on both these figures – mostly abstract designs – exemplifies the superb quality of gold and silver inlay that can be seen on some of the best of these archaic vessels and the variety of ways in which it could be used by the most skilled craftsmen. Another variation in this group can be seen on an elegant 17<sup>th</sup> century *gu* vessel (estimate: \$35,000-45,000). The form has remained relatively faithful to the Bronze Age original, but the skilful use of gold highlights has produced a greater visual impact and richness of texture than appears on the ancient prototype.

The sale also includes a group of soapstone carvings rarely seen on the market, from the Estate of Charles V. Swain; a selection of rhinoceros horn cups and a superb selection of textiles, including an Imperial twelve-symbol embroidered silk gauze dragon robe, *jifu*, second half 19<sup>th</sup> century (estimate:

\$70,000-90,000) and a fourth-rank Imperial noblewoman's embroidered padded silk winter surcoat, *longgua*, late 19<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: \$40,000-60,000).

**Auction:** Important Chinese Snuff Bottles from the J&J Collection, Part IV

March 22 at 10 a.m.

Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art

March 22 at approx. 10.30 a.m. and 2 p.m.

**Viewing:** Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center, New York

### **About Christie's**

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2006 that totaled £2.51 billion / \$4.67 billion. This 36% increase over 2005 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 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, jewelry, photographs, collectibles, wine, cars and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including 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 markets such as China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Dubai, Mumbai and Russia. Christie's also offers its clients worldwide access to its sales through Christie's LIVE, its unique, real-time online bidding service.

# # #

*Images available on request*

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

More information about this sale 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.