

For Immediate Release

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***A PRIVATE COLLECTION OF IMPORTANT JADE CARVINGS
TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG SPRING SALE***

Important Jade Carvings from a Private Collection

26 April 2004

Hong Kong – The allure of jade has fascinated many aficionados over the centuries. A collection formed over the last twenty years by an Asian private collector, comprising over seventy pieces of jade carvings including a magnificent large washer carved of the finest white jade material, will be offered by Christie's Hong Kong this season. The auction of the Dexingshuwu collection will be held at the Marriott Hotel on 26th April 2004.

Jade is one of the most treasured materials in Chinese history; much admired for its colour, texture, and sensuous tactile quality. Traditionally, jade represents authority, nobility and spirituality. The material itself had been worked into symbolic weapons, decorative ornaments and ritual objects as early as the Neolithic period. A passage that has been attributed to Confucius written in the Book of Rites, Li Ji, expounded that the quality of the stone was a metaphor for human virtue and it largely remains true, even today.

One of the greatest admirers of jade was the Qianlong Emperor who amassed a collection of thousands of jade carvings, and composed copious volumes of poems and eulogies on the material. In fact, three of the highlights from the Dexingshuwu collection are from the Qianlong period. The first of these, a superbly carved large bowl is anticipated to set a record price for jade carvings sold at auction (Estimate on request), it is expected to fetch in excess of HK\$8,000,000/ US\$1,000,000. This unusually large circular bowl, measuring 31.7 cm. across the handles, is probably one of the largest known example of its kind in both private and public collections. The original rough boulder would have been of considerable size in order to hollow out a bowl of this remarkable dimension. In addition, the lapidaries would have wasted material a great deal of material to furnish the fantastic dragon-head handles,

particularly when each of a loop-handles suspend a loose circular ring which is carved integral to the vessel. The interior is worked in shallow relief to depict nandina berries (wannianqing), chrysanthemum and bamboo. These are auspicious symbols of everlasting Spring and purity. In this instance, the symbolism is echoed by the purity and lustrous quality of the flawless material.

White jade was also used for other decorative items during the Qianlong period, such as the fine pair of rectangular table-screens (estimate: HK\$1,200,000–1,800,000/ US\$160,000–230,000). Before entering the Dexingshuwu collection, these screens were in the possession of a American collector, Elizabeth Park Firestone, the wife of Firestone Tyre Company's past chairman. Beautifully mounted in carved zitan wood, one of these two screens amusingly portrays a scene of a foreigner observing boy attendants washing an elephant on a rocky embankment beside a flowing stream, and the other screen is decorated with a Buddhist lion at play with its cub. These decorative subjects are essentially Buddhist in nature but were popular topics for the Palace workshops.

Of a more serious nature is the highly important and extremely rare spinach-green jade book comprising ten tablets of rectangular form, dated to 1778 (estimate HK\$2,500,000–3,500,000/ US\$330,000–450,000). It was commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor in memory of his mother, Empress Xiaosheng (1693–1777). This jade book is one of a very few complete examples in public hands. According to Qing palace regulations, jade books of this type were presented to an empress, empress dowager or grand empress dowager, when she was appointed or honoured with a laudatory title. In the case, the honour was bestowed on Empress Xiaosheng, a daughter of the Niugulu clan of Manchu origin who was a Guifei (highest-ranking imperial concubine) of Emperor Yongzheng. She gave birth to Hongli (later to become Emperor Qianlong) on the 13th day of the 8th month of the 50th year of the Kangxi period (1711). Qianlong was very close to his birth mother: it is recorded that he routinely visited her every three days, attended her at a meal every five days, honoured her at feasts and celebrations, and gave her lavish gifts. Although it was unusual for a high ranking Court lady to venture outside the Palace, the Dowager Empress was known to have accompanied Qianlong on most of his many travels.

Traditional 'playthings' in appreciation of the tactile quality of jade are also offered in the Dexingshuwu collection. These treasures include a number of carving of animals, one such example is a white jade recumbent deer (estimate: HK\$450,000–550,000/ US\$59,000–71,000).

A small but selective group of scholars objects includes a pair of spinach-green jade scholar's seals (estimate: HK\$160,000-200,000)/ US\$21,000-26,000), bearing the seal chops: Biyan jingliang, 'Desire of the brush and ink' and Rensheng yile, 'For the pleasure in one's life' There is also a superb hardstone-embellished white jade ruyi (estimate: HK\$500,000-700,000/ US\$65,000-90,000) which is expected to generate a great deal of interest

Notes to Editors

Pre-sale Exhibitions:

<i>Singapore</i>	<i>2-3 April</i>	<i>Grand Hyatt Singapore</i>
<i>Shanghai</i>	<i>10-11 April</i>	<i>The Westin Shanghai</i>
<i>Beijing</i>	<i>13-14 April</i>	<i>The St Regis Beijing</i>
<i>Taipei</i>	<i>17-18 April</i>	<i>Fubon Life Insurance Building</i>
<i>Hong Kong</i>	<i>23-25 April</i>	<i>JW Marriott Hotel</i>

*Auction: Important Jade Carvings from a Private Collection, 26 April at 2:00 pm,
JW Marriott Hotel, Hong Kong*

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Images available on request

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com