

For Immediate Release

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**THE CHAI SIAN KWAN COLLECTION OF IMPORTANT PAINTINGS
BY ZHANG DAQIAN LEADS CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG SPRING SALE OF
MODERN CHINESE PAINTINGS**

Fine Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings

25 April 2004

Hong Kong – Christie's sale of Fine Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings on 25 April in Hong Kong will offer an exciting selection of works by leading 20th century artists. The sale will include fifteen important paintings by Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) from the collection of Chai Sian Kwan, one of the finest collections of modern Chinese paintings to be assembled.

Among the highlights from the Chai Sian Kwan Collection is a stunning work depicting the Vimalakirti in the Dunhuang Caves (estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000/ US\$129,000-193,500). Zhang was exhilarated by his first viewing of the Dunhuang Caves frescoes in 1940. He returned in 1941 with students and provisions for a long period of studying and copying the frescoes in wretched weather and surroundings. The scenes in Cave 103 engaged his imagination most deeply. The scroll offered in the sale shows Vimalakirti, a famous Buddhist of great intelligence and wit who lived at the time of the Gautama Buddha. Once when Vimalakirti was pleading illness at home, the Buddha dispatched the Bodhisattva Manjushri for a visit. The battle of wits between Vimalakirti and Manjushri contained a dramatic element that Zhang presents most vividly. Seated in a relaxed pose but with furled brow, the creased lines of Vimalakirti's forehead reveal his habit of penetrating thought; while Manjushri maintains a bearing of greater poise and dignity. This enriching period at Dunhuang proved a strong influence in his later work.

Also included in the collection are two handscrolls, Peach Blossoms (estimated at HK\$400,000-600,000/ US\$51,600-77,400) executed by Zhang and another famous Beijing artist, Pu Ru (1896-1963) (grandson of the Emperor Daoguang). Zhang and Pu were known as 'the Southern Zhang

and Northern Pu', and the paintings depicted the residence of the collector who commissioned these works.

After the revolution of 1949 Zhang left China, passing through lands as diverse as India and Argentina and settling in Brazil. Later Zhang travelled to Japan, the U.S.A. and Europe where new trends of abstract expressionism emerged. He developed a strikingly original splashed-ink technique, allowing colours to flow freely on the painting's surface for a supple and natural feel. Viewing the Waterfall (HK\$3,500,000–4,500,000/ US\$451,600–581,000) is the most outstanding work with vital creativity and masterly technique made in this period.

In Brazil, Zhang established his ideal home, the Garden of the Eight Virtues. He dug ponds, planted groves of trees and assembled exotic plants and animals from distant locales. He settled into a period of serious work, in which the surrounding scenes became the subjects of many of his works. Two important self-portraits painted by Zhang in Brazil are offered in the sale, showing Zhang with a St. Bernard dog that he acquired in Switzerland. The fur, nose, mouth and forehead of the dog are vividly and meticulously depicted. One of these is the draft of the portrait (estimate: HK\$500,000–700,000/ US\$64,500–90,300) while the portrait is estimated at HK\$2,000,000–3,000,000/ US\$258,100–387,100). The splashing of colour in the background is one of Zhang's first works using this technique.

Also offered is a collection from a private Asian collector who is currently living in the U.S.A. While forming his collection, he made friends with several artists so many of the nineteen paintings to be offered were purchased directly from the artists such as Ding Yanyong, Zhao Shao'ang, and Landscape in Splashed Colour by Zhang Daqian (estimate: HK\$450,000–550,000/ US\$58,100–71,000).

The skill of splashed colour was in its mature stage when Zhang Daqian created the painting Vaporous Valley Amidst Verdant Mountain (HK\$3,500,000–4,500,000/ US\$451,600–581,000) in 1978. The use and control of layers of inks and colours, results in the degree of brightness appeared in the different sides of the mountain, proves the extraordinary ability and talent of this master of modern Chinese paintings.

The Spring sale also includes a valuable handscroll, Vegetables by Wu Hufan (1894–1968) (estimate: HK\$1,500,000–2,000,000/ US\$193,500–258,100). This was painted in 1958 in the style of Shen Zhou of the Ming Dynasty who was famous in depicting various kind of fruits and vegetables. Wu's students and followers treasure this piece though finally he gave it to his niece who cleverly hide it in a safe place during the Cultural Revolution to avoid being destroyed.

Further highlights include Studio in the Grove by Chen Shaomei (1909–1954) (HK\$40,000–50,000/ US\$5,200–6,500), Houses in the Forest by Lin Fengmian (1900–1991) (estimate: HK\$200,000–250,000/US\$25,800–32,300), and Home Village by Wu Guanzhong (born 1919) (estimate: HK\$400,000–550,000/ US\$51,600–71,000).

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 Assurance Building</i>
<i>Hong Kong</i>	<i>23 – 24 April</i>	<i>JW Marriott Hotel</i>

Auction: Fine Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings, 25 April at 10:00 am, JW Marriott Hotel, Hong Kong

More information about Christie's sale of Fine Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings can be found on 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 provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.

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