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**For Immediate Release**

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**EXCEPTIONAL 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY CHINESE ART ON OFFER AT CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG SPRING SALE**



**20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Art  
28 May 2006**

In conjunction with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christie's Hong Kong, the *20th Century Chinese Art* auction to be held on 28 May will offer 160 superb and very rare works by some of the most celebrated modern Chinese masters. Estimated to realize in excess of HK\$100 million, the sale is destined to draw tremendous interest from international collectors.

The sale will offer works by masters such as Lin Fengmian, Wu Dayu, Chu Teh-Chun, Zao Wou-Ki and Wu Guanzhong, who were amongst the first group of painters who returned to China from overseas in the mid-1920s and spurred a highly influential wave of artistic reform in China.

Eric Chang, Senior Director of Modern & Contemporary Asian Pictures, Head of 20th Century Chinese Art said, "Christie's, the pioneer in this sale category, have always brought to the market a diversified range of

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# CHRISTIE'S

contemporary Asian art with the exceptional quality and rarity that are highly coveted by collectors worldwide. With the growth of the market at a particularly breathtaking speed in the past few years, the global interest in contemporary Chinese and Asian art today is considerable. In the forthcoming Spring sales, we will offer an array of exceptional works by some of the most celebrated Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian and Pakistani artists who have gained recognition and extensive exposure in the art scene in both Asia and the West.”

## **LIAO CHI-CH'UN (LIAO JICHUN, 1902–1976)**

Liao Chi-Ch'un was a master of colour, expressing rich emotion through simple hues and rearranging basic elements to create inventive imagery. Liao's colours reflect the Eastern origins of his art, in particular Chinese art, and his canvases acquired a bold, fervent quality through their use of deep, brilliant colour, often in primary palettes of reds or greens overlaid with other saturated hues.

Upon his return to Taiwan from abroad in 1962, Liao's work began to show marked stylistic changes—blocks of solid, even colour occupy greater space on his canvases, while pure blacks and whites borrowed from Chinese painting now move rhythmically through the compositions. Floral and garden paintings were genres dear to Liao Jichun, and by the late 1960s and early 70s he was a master of the special palette and brushwork that would become the hallmarks of his work. The fruits of this important period of transition to his mature style can be seen in *Garden* (Lot 200, estimate: HK\$6,000,000–10,000,000/ US\$769,200–1,282,000), a work which is unusual not only for its large size, but also as one of his most accomplished creations from this period.

## **SANYU (CHANG YU, 1901-1966)**

This *Flowers in a Bright Yellow Vase* (Lot 199, estimate: HK\$5,000,000-7,000,000/ US\$641,000-897,000) offered in the sale is not only an extremely rare large work by Sanyu from the 1940s, but also a perfect example of Sanyu's original outlook and it stands as the finest of his paintings in the still life genre. Subjects familiar to Chinese intellectuals became the vehicles for Sanyu's inner feelings and ideals, and his works often seem as much poetry as art, speaking in pure and moving voices with all the clarity of verse. Typically, Sanyu's subjects appear in clear outlines against spacious white backgrounds, and through choice of subject and the structuring of space, Sanyu's work entered the expansive realm of the imaginative, freehand style of Chinese painting.

This artist's comprehension of the Chinese spirit revealed itself even in his blending of eastern and western aesthetics, in which formal structures always leave room for stylistic freedom and a certain emotional reserve remains hidden within the seeming ardor of his work.

## **CHU TEH-CHUN (ZHU DEQUN, BORN IN 1920)**

*Rouge, La pluie de pétales sur le village, Blanc, Le nuage au-dessus de la maison No. 53* (Lot 182, estimate: HK\$4,000,000-6,000,000/US\$512,800-769,200) painted in 1960 is a rare and valuable work by Chu Teh-Chun exemplifying his early style. The strong, agile rhythms of the inky black lines that move across the canvas are reminiscent of the

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strong yet beautiful sword movements in Chinese martial arts, and remind one immediately of the suppleness of the cursive script in classical Chinese calligraphy.

This work stands out with a union of energy and spirit that is found in Chinese tradition. It is also a testament to Chu's ability to reach the lofty domain so admired by the Chinese literati painters – that of the "poem that resides in the painting". The painting blends together Western abstraction and an aesthetic derived by classical Chinese painters in the Song period, and beautifully melds poetry, painting, and artistic conception into one. The work is not only a continuation of Chinese painting traditions, but also one of the finest expressions of Chu's unique artistic perspective.

## **ZAO WOU-KI (ZHAO WUJI, BORN IN 1921)**

Beginning in 1955 to early 1960s, Zao Wou-ki began a series of superb and rare works inspired by ancient Chinese bronzes and oracle-bone inscriptions. On offer is *16.4.59* (Lot 229, estimate: HK\$3,000,000-4,000,000/ US\$384,600-512,800) painted in 1959, and *Peking Opera* (Lot 227, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$192,300-256,400) produced in 1956, which presents the visionary transformations of objects into symbols that dance across the canvas like musical notes. This strongly suggests the markings of oracle-bone inscriptions on ancient bronzes, and serves as signposts into the expansive spaces of the painting.

## **WU GUANZHONG (BORN IN 1919)**

For Wu Guanzhong, landscape clearly takes the centre-stage. *Peach Blossom*, painted in 1963, is one of the valuable examples (Lot 171, estimate: HK\$2,400,000-3,000,000/ US\$307,700-384,600). In the foreground, reds and whites are in juxtaposition with peach blossoms in full bloom, while the terraced fields are highlighted at the rear with white houses with black tile roofs, golden-yellow orchards, and the cerulean lake which adds to the tranquil and unique view of the Jiangnan region in China.

*Place de la Concorde*, completed in late 1980s, is an outstanding example of Wu Guanzhong's stylistic approach (Lot 177, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-2,500,000/ US\$256,400-320,500). In this very rare work, the only one of its kind he ever produced, the composition and its spaces are built up through lines whose calligraphic feel Wu transfers to the medium of oil, making it one of the finest and most unique examples of Wu Guanzhong's ethnic Chinese approach to oil painting.

## **WU DAYU (1903-1988)**

*Dancing of Flowers* is an exceedingly rare large-scale work by Wu Dayu (Lot 201, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,200,000/ US\$192,300-282,100). Wu's ingenious approach can be seen in both its brushwork and composition; and the adroit juxtaposition of realness and illusion, movement and stillness, and line and shape that coalesce into an overall blending of shape and colour. This painting, with a style that can be associated with the melody of

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a symphonic poem, is one of the most representative works by Wu. It is also a perfect blend of the artist's sophisticated skill and a reflection of his artistic thought.

## JU MING (ZHU MING, BORN IN 1938)

Ju Ming's sculptures have their roots in the Chinese tradition and seek to create a sculptural space that marries the spirit of its traditional painting and the ethnic characteristics of eastern culture. In 1981, a group of ten startling works of natural wood sculpture by Ju named the *Taiji for the Living World* were placed under the spotlight in an exhibition at the Max Hutchinson Gallery in New York. These sculptures were Ju Ming's earliest ones, and also the world's only sculptures on this theme. Each of these 10 large sculptures was individually distinct in pose and expression. On offer in the sale are two pieces from the *Taiji for the Living World* (Lot 209, estimate: HK\$5,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$641,000-1,026,000).

### Pre-sale exhibitions:

Singapore	14 & 15 April	Grand Hyatt Singapore
Jakarta	28 & 29 April	Christie's
Shanghai	10 & 11 May	The Westin Shanghai
Beijing	13 & 14 May	St. Regis Beijing
Taipei	20 & 21 May	Fubon Life Assurance Building
Hong Kong	26 & 27 May	Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

### Auction:

*20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Art*, 28 May 2006, 2 pm

Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

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*Images available upon request*

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