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CHRISTIE'S ASIAN CONTEMPORARY ART SALE FEATURES EXCEPTIONAL CONTEMPORARY CHINESE, KOREAN, JAPANESE, INDIAN & PAKISTANI ART



Asian Contemporary Art

28 May 2006

Following the tremendous success of Christie's inaugural sale devoted solely to Asian contemporary art held in Hong Kong last November, and to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Christie's Hong Kong, the forthcoming *Asian Contemporary Art* sale to take place on 28 May will offer 160 exceptional and highly-coveted works by some of the most celebrated contemporary Asian artists, and is expected to fetch in excess of HK\$25 million. Of particular note, contemporary Indian and Pakistani art will also be included in this sale for the first time.

Ranging from paintings, mixed media to sculpture, the exceptional works brought to the centre-stage are expected to generate furious bidding amongst collectors worldwide. A special selection of contemporary Southeast Asian art will also be offered in the *Modern & Contemporary Southeast Asian Art* sale to be held on the same day (*separate release available*).

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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 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."

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART SECTION:

The 1980's saw Chinese artists developing a keen interest in political subjects as well as a growing curiosity in and analysis of ideas based in Western cultures. In the 1990's, the powerful forces of the market economy reinforced this trend, driving artists to shift their attention towards a new national consciousness and stronger concern with world culture.

Cai Guo Qiang (born in 1957)

The centerpiece of the sale is *Drawing for Man, Eagle and Eye in the Sky: Eagles Watching Man Kite* (Lot 347, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000/ US\$256,400-384,600) by Cai Guo Qiang. Cai's works include explosive events, gunpowder paintings, performances and installations, that reveal one of the most original viewpoints in the contemporary creative world. The piece on offer, of an exceptionally large size, was executed in 2003 at the Egyptian town of Siwa near the Libyan border. Together with 600 local students, Cai carried out a project of soaring hundreds of kites simultaneously into the clear sky, symbolizing that art could bridge the gap between individuals, genders, earth and sky, and different cultures. The human-shaped kites and the eagles beneath gaze at each other, creating a strong visual metaphor which alludes to man's once unachievable dream of flying. Originally denizens of the sky, the eagles now view the world from a human perspective. Through this spectacular work, Cai re-examines man's intimate relationship with nature and at the same time, projects the innocent and childlike imagination of human beings.

Yue Minjun (born in 1962)

Yue's art is translated into a critique of modern society through the unrivalled use of aesthetic elements such as beauty, nobility, and poetic sentiments. The directness and immediacy of the work come from the artist's sense of helplessness about the current social environment. *Enchanted Spring* (Lot 334, estimate: HK\$600,000-800,000/ US\$76,900-102,600) is a forceful work produced in 1995, which has served as a conceptual point of origin for Yue's later creative work. It stands out among other works of the same period in terms of uniqueness of concept and mode of composition.

Wang Guangyi (born in 1957)

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The sale will offer *ROLEX* (Lot 336, estimate: HK\$400,000-600,000/ US\$51,300-76,900), one of the iconic works by Wang Guangyi, one of the leading figures of the Chinese Pop Art movement. The work is about a clash between Western culture and Socialist ideology. It also represents a disparaging commentary on the pervasive influence of Western materialism on Chinese society.

Yang Shaobin (born in 1963)

Yang Shaobin's work is an indictment of violence. Iron will, the evil of human nature, and the weakness of human body are the core themes of his art. *The wrong place - No. 1* (Lot 339, estimate: HK\$350,000-450,000/US\$44,900-57,700), painted by the artist from 2002 to 2003, will be featured in the sale.

Zhang Xiaogang (born in 1958)

Amnesia and Memory: Boy, is one of the most significant works by Zhang Xiaogang ever to appear at auction (Lot 338, estimate: HK\$200,000-300,000/US\$25,600-38,500). The major elements in Zhang's works came directly from private collections of old family photos, and from the charcoal drawings one sees on the streets throughout China. To Zhang, old photos and charcoal are a pictorial language, embodying things with which he is familiar but to which he may not even have spared a glance – for instance, traditional and aesthetic preferences of the Chinese such as obfuscation of individuality and emphasis on collectivity.

Zeng Fanzhi (Zang Fanzhi, born in 1964)

I am Dad by Zeng Fanzhi (Lot 341, estimate: HK\$40,000-80,000/ US\$5,100-10,300) is another excellent work in the sale. A turning point in Zeng's artistic career came with the creation of his *Mask* series, in which the drastically conflicting emotions like humour and anxiety mingle to reveal extreme emotion, and experience in urban life. Masks and faces provide the points of entry into Zeng's revisions of daily life experiences. He deliberately restrains his expert grasp of expressionist techniques.

CONTEMPORARY KOREAN ART SECTION:

Paik Nam June (1932-2006)

Another masterpiece of the sale is *Enlightenment 78 RPMs* by Paik Nam June (Lot 346, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000/US\$256,000-384,600), a forerunner in creating media art history. To Paik, the television represented the media's role in connecting different cultures, and his early exhibitions in the 1960s already featured the television set as an iconic artistic element. The work on offer is one of the most representative pieces in this series that puts together the television set and the Buddha icon. Its significance lies in its added dimension of the gramophone, which provides an implication of music's universal and meditative power.

Important themes of the collision and coexistence of cross-cultural and historical references have blossomed into full maturity, as the Buddha meditates peacefully on the Western gramophone, whilst the television is snugly

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enclosed within traditional furniture of Eastern design. All elements coexist harmoniously, a testimony to the brave new world that human beings have struggled to adapt to from the beginning.

Noh Sang Kyoon (born in 1958)

For Noh Sang-Kyoon, the use of sequins was inspired by a fascination with fish. In Korean culture, fish are regarded as messengers between men and gods. The glitter of fish scales suggests the spiritual light of heaven, and Noh's fondness for fish appears in the lustrous sequins that he used as a creative medium in his works.

For the Worshippers - Buddha (Lot 416, estimate: HK\$250,000-350,000/ US\$32,100-44,900) is an exemplary work by Noh. Buddhist statuary, peaceful and stately, is a deeply rooted part of the Eastern aesthetic tradition, and Noh's use of black in this piece retains the dignity and reserve associated with images of Buddha, but with a numinous atmosphere implied by the sequined textures. Noh's *Tears V* (Lot 417, estimate: HK\$250,000-350,000/ US\$32,100-44,900) will also be offered. Tears in religion imbue a very human aspect to the notion of God. The movement of the tears on the canvas enhances the sense of mobility in the work, bridging the gap between finite man and the infinite higher order

Choi So Young (born in 1980)

Kwang-abn Bridge by Choi So Young (Lot 359, estimate: HK\$200,000-280,000/ US\$25,600-35,900) is the artist's largest piece to date, making it a rare and magnificent work of art. The use of jeans to portray a landscape grows out of the artist's childhood experiences. She used to wear handed-down jeans from her sister, hence jeans gave her a feeling of warmth and belonging.

Bae Joonsong (born in 1967)

Bae is an important Korean contemporary photographic artist. His completely new type of work combines photography with painting. The work is interactive and requires the viewer's participation. Bae paints Western style costumes on a transparent vinyl film, which is then attached to a photograph. The photograph is usually of a Korean nude model standing in different settings, and the vinyl costumes are positioned to clothe the model. The vinyl can also be lifted to reveal the model beneath. On offer in this sale is Bae's *The costume of Painter- W House 051121* (Lot 392, Estimate: HK\$90,000-150,000/ US\$11,500-19,200).

CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE ART SECTION:

Ikki Miyake (born in 1973)

Ikki Miyake's works applies Western sculptural forms while exploring an Eastern standard of beauty, as illustrated in *Suashi-Kotoba (fascination of legs)* (Lot 376, estimate: HK\$80,000-120,000/ US\$10,300-15,400). Exaggerating the subtle grace and delicate lines unique to the Asian female body, Miyake also focuses on a particular part of the body. The artist's choice of medium poignantly expresses such a perspective, for he works with *Kiso-binoki* cypress and *torreya*, woods distinct for their fine texture and supple quality. *Torreya* is an

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aromatic wood used often to carve Buddhist images during the early Heian Era (794-1185) and its scarcity adds to the precious and spiritual nature of Miyake's sculptures.

Takanobu Kobayashi (born in 1960)

Sunbather 5 (Lot 406, estimate: HK\$80,000-120,000/ US\$10,300-15,400). The clean and uncluttered compositions of the work reflect Kobayashi's peaceful and Zen-like state of mind. Kobayashi's paintings mainly depict still life and simple interior and outdoor scenery. Its use of muted colours enhances the sense of tranquillity. The subtle variations of light reflecting off different surfaces add to the atmosphere a prevailing sense of warmth and contentment.

Hiroshi Kobayashi (born in 1967)

Dead beat (Lot 364, estimate: HK\$80,000-120,000/ US\$10,300-15,400). The adorable toys depicted in Kobayashi's works possess a playful, rambunctious energy. The paintings' monotonous render them similar to the sepia nature of old photographs, thereby bringing back a nostalgic longing for lost youth. It is a mischievous defiance against the complexities of the adult world, capturing viewers in the subjects' nonsensical games of attempting to stall time, and distracting us from the process of growing up. Upon close inspection, viewers discover the visual topographic style of modern digital images that Kobayashi employs in painting his subjects, a breakthrough approach which wondrously imbues the lifeless toys with much warmth and presence.

Satoshi Furui (born in 1959)

On offer is *Mushroom Cloud #1005 / Teapot Met* (Lot 426, estimate: HK\$50,000-70,000/ US\$6,400-9,000) by Satoshi Furui, painted in 2006. In his 1998 solo exhibition, the artist featured 15 paintings of nuclear detonations, and an essay arguing whether the last 100 years could be described as "the century without God." The dreamlike unreality of his works speaks, perhaps, of man's insatiable hunger for power and the chaotic consequences that result. Viewers are struck by the sheer beauty of the nuclear explosions, yet are simultaneously inclined to reject their existence, simply because it is hard to accept why something destructive could also be so beautiful. It is this dual state of mind that fuels the works with such surrealism.

CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART SECTION:

Atul Dodiya (born in 1959)

Devoured Darkness Series (Lot 475, estimate: HK\$620,000-775,000/ US\$80,000-100,000). Dodiya address both freedom and fear in this suite of works entitled *Devoured Darkness*. He suggests that in being an artist – whether a poet, a painter, sculptor or musician – one is provided with immense freedom, a veritable *tabula rasa*, in creating art. In this work, the gallows becomes the obvious and literal symbol of fear while the mirror assumes its place as an object of introspection and self-reflection. However, the three elements, mirror, gallows and painting, take

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on a new significance in their juxtaposition commenting not only on fear and freedom but on surface and media in shaping these ideas.

Anju Dodiya (born in 1964)

In *The Site* (Lot 467, estimate: HK\$380,000-545,000/ US\$48,900-70,000), one of Dodiya's first mattress paintings, the protagonist is decidedly androgynous. Pattern and paint collide as the decorative upholstery is carefully manipulated through the precise application of paint, the texture of the fabric giving the surface pigment the feel of impasto. Elements of the pattern underneath are wittily incorporated into the final composition. Paired with a ruffled collar, the diamond pattern in the bottom third cleverly references the Western tradition of harlequins and fools in art and literature, exemplified by Pablo Picasso and William Shakespeare. The artist is recast as a modern day fool, a figure of fantasy and comedy that speaks in riddles but often gets closer to the truth.

Subodh Gupta (born in 1964)

Idol Thief (7) (Lot 368, estimate: HK\$240,000-390,000/ US\$30,800-50,000) by Subodh Gupta is a further highlight. The artist draws heavily from his autobiography in his work. He casts traditional elements of Indian culture in contemporary media and contexts, constantly referencing the idiosyncrasies of his life in Delhi. Often playing upon the stark contrasts found between rural impoverished India, Gupta pits these two dissonant environments against each other using wit and meticulous execution in shaping his art. He skillfully uses clichés like the cow and its dung or the stainless steel utensils of a typical kitchen, to comment on larger social ills such as: discrimination, caste politics, globalization, industrialization and religion.

Pre-sale exhibitions:

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

Auction:

Asian Contemporary Art, 28 May 2006, 5:00pm
Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

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Images available upon request

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