

Contact: Victoria Cheung 852.2978.9919 vcheung@christies.com
Dick Lee 852.2978.9966 dlee@christies.com

For Immediate Release

17 May 2006

CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG TO OFFER RARE MODERN & CONTEMPORARY CHINESE PAINTINGS IN SPRING SALES



**Fine Modern & Contemporary Chinese Paintings
29 May 2006**

Hong Kong – Celebrating its 20th anniversary, Christie's Hong Kong will offer 419 exceptional works in the *Fine Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings* Spring auction on 29 May. Among the highlights are rare masterpieces by 19th and 20th Century artists including Qi Baishi, Zhang Daqian, Lin Fengmian and Wu Guanzhong. A selection of works from the private collection of Mr. Wu Shutong, the ex-Director of Chung Hwa Book Company, will also be featured.

Taking inspiration from the natural majesty of trees, Wu Guanzhong (Born in 1919) created from 1994 to 1995 a series of freestyle paintings which vividly depict the magnificence of densely criss-crossed tree trunks and their long intertwining branches. To denote the early spring air filtering through the trees, he liberally splashed dots of colour on the surface. *Forest*, the centerpiece of the sale (Lot 966, estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$774,200-1,032,300), is one of the most important works in this series to come to auction.

Christie's Hong Kong Limited
22nd Floor, Alexandra House
18 Chater Road
Central, Hong Kong
tel 852 2521 5396 fax 852 2845 2646
www.christies.com

CHRISTIE'S

Exceptional works by Wu Guanzhong on offer also include *Fishing Port* (Lot 834, estimate: HK\$1,800,000-2,200,000/ US\$232,300-283,900) and *The Southern Mountain Village* (Lot 830, estimate: HK\$500,000-600,000/ US\$64,500-77,400).

Two very rare albums by Qi Baishi (1863-1957) will be featured. After settling in Beijing in 1919, Qi started to incorporate new elements into his landscape painting. He abandoned traditional refined brushstrokes and substituted them with a more rugged brushwork in order to exude a primitive kind of beauty. Stripping away superfluous detail, he focused instead on the works' main subject. The landscape paintings created at this time are based mainly on memories of his travels to other Chinese provinces, and are reminiscent of the technique of Shitao, the Qing master. *Landscapes* (Lot 1074, estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$774,100-1,032,300), an album consisting of twelve leaves completed in 1921, is one of Qi's most outstanding landscape works. His depiction of distant mountains, old cottages, woodlands and empty bridges can be interpreted as a kind of solitary arrogance, while the artist's hopes for the future infuse the last leaf of the album, which shows a vigorously drawn maple forest. The bold red strokes of the trees are reflections of Qi's generosity and open-mindedness.

The other album by Qi Baishi offered in the sale illustrates one of his favourite subjects - insects. Qi once stated that "a good painting must be based on reality, both its form and expressions are essential". To make detailed sketches of insects, he even raised them at home so that he could observe them closely. His exquisite brushwork when depicting insects pared away irrelevant details, and focused on their postures to create vivid images. Such works were completed before his age of 60, while his eyesight and skill were still at their peak. In *Insects and Plants* (Lot 801, estimate: HK\$5,000,000-6,000,000/ US\$645,100-774,100), the skeleton of the insects like the moth, butterfly, dragonfly and grasshopper were delicately portrayed. This reflects the artist's aesthetic principle of form and expression.

Equally noteworthy in the sale are the highly sought-after works by Zhang Daqian (1899-1983). In *Tibetan Girl and Mastiff* (Lot 874, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$193,500-258,100), Zhang's brush techniques was used to stunning effect to define the contrasting textures of the girl's soft and gentle fur coat and the dog's dense and coarse hairs. In early 1940's, he spent years studying and recording the rock murals and statuary of the Dunhuang caves in Gansu province. It was during this time that he gained an insight into the culture and daily lives of the minority tribes in the region, which naturally became the theme of his works. In this exceptional work, a unique application of a black hue gives the dog's coat a thick and solid texture. This mastiff was actually one of the dogs he brought back from Tibet.

Zhang started to create his splashed ink and colour compositions in the early 1960s. He found that ink alone was not strong enough, and hence he experimented by mixing water and ink with colour in layers to give greater depth whilst outlining the shapes with the Chinese brush. He also used Western techniques to enrich the traditional appearance of his work. This resulted in an extraordinary and highly artistic effect seen in *Mist Clearing*

CHRISTIE'S

after the Rain (Lot 1017, estimate: HK\$3,500,000-4,500,000/ US\$451,600-580,645).

Harvest by Lin Fengmian(1900-1991) (Lot 768, estimate: HK\$2,500,000-3,000,000/ US\$322,600-387,100) features layers of dark tonal hues with a contrasting touch of bright yellow, demonstrating the artist's passion for life despite his age and reminiscent of Fauvism. Further highlights include *Opera Figures* (Lot 955, estimate: HK\$1,800,000-2,200,000/ US\$232,300-283,900) and *Still Life* (Lot 1079, estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000/ US\$129,000-193,500).

Huang Junbi(1898-1991), is particularly fond of depicting poetic scenes of the clouds. In *White Clouds and Mountain Streams* (Lot 825, estimate: HK\$400,000-600,000/ US\$23,200-28,400), the floating clouds emerge among the mountains and thereby a vaporous scene is created, as if in a fairyland, whilst the delicate brushstrokes in *Dog* vividly bring out the witty character of the artist's beloved pet (Lot 826, estimate: HK\$300,000-500,000/ US\$10,300-12,900).

A Private Collection of Mr Wu Shutong (Lot 901-935)

Mr Wu Shutong is the ex-Director of Chung Hwa Book Company. The Company, established in Shanghai in 1912, developed rapidly and set up branches in Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1950, Wu became the Director of the Hong Kong branch and moved to Hong Kong with his family.

Wu inherited his interest in Chinese art from his father, who was a keen collector. Through the publishing company, Wu came to know many Chinese painters and gradually amassed his collection. *Red Peony* (Lot 923, estimate: HK\$400,000-600,000/ US\$51,600-77,400) was acquired directly from Zhang Daqian. Zhang loved the work so much that he later tried to exchange this work with another one but it was of no avail. Another work, *Lady Worshipping* finished in 1941 (Lot 925, estimate: HK\$500,000-700,000/ US\$64,500-90,300), could be described as the earliest work of Zhang's Dunhuang series.

Pre-sale exhibitions:

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

Auction:

Fine Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings, 29 May 2006, 2:00pm
Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

#

CHRISTIE'S

Images available upon request

Visit Christie's at www.christies.com