

For Immediate Release

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A RARE AND EXQUISITE BLUE AND WHITE FISH JAR LEADS CHRISTIE'S JUNE CHINESE CERAMICS SALE



A Magnificent and Rare Yuan Dynasty Blue and White Fish Jar
Yuan Dynasty (AD 1279-1368)
Estimate on request

Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art including Export Art
Christie's King Street
11 July 2006

London – Following the record sales of Chinese ceramics and works of art in Hong Kong this May, Christie's London Asian Art Week will offer *Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art including Export Art* on 11 July 2006. Among a number of exquisite and rare objects, are a magnificent Yuan 14th century blue and white fish jar, a Qianlong Imperial blue and white 'Nine Dragon' vase and a Qianlong Imperial inscribed embroidery hanging scroll.

The highlight is a magnificent and rare blue and white fish jar, Yuan Dynasty (AD 1279-1368), mid-14th century (estimate on request). Large Yuan jars decorated with such skillfully rendered fish in such a brilliant sapphire blue are very rare. The main decorative band depicts four fish swimming among lotus and other aquatic plants. The decoration has been beautifully arranged to achieve a richly-textured,

perfectly balanced composition, full of movement. The decoration of naturalistic fish and aquatic plants clearly shows the influence of paintings on silk and paper from the Southern Song (AD 1127-1279) and Yuan dynasties. The specific fish chosen for the decoration on Yuan jars of this type provided an auspicious message, and was to have a significant influence on imperial porcelain of succeeding periods

A very rare Imperial blue and white 'Nine Dragon' vase, Qianlong period (AD 1736-95) (estimate: £300,000-400,000) is also offered. This exceptionally rare vase appears to be one of only two known examples identical in size, shape and design. The other vase is in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. The closeness in every detail of the current vase and that in the National Palace Museum example suggests that they were probably made as a pair. Decorating the vase are nine coiling dragons clasping *lingzhi* fungus. The number nine is symbolic of the greatest positive energy and was reserved for use by the emperor, hence the choice of nine dragons and nine petals around the mouth rim of the vase. The distinctive lappet-shape of the mouth rim on the vase appears to be a Qianlong period innovation and was rarely attempted by potters, almost certainly because of the difficulties in firing such a form.

The sale also features a rare and important, large Imperial inscribed embroidered hanging scroll, Qianlong (1736-95) (estimate: £250,000-350,000) depicting Laozi riding a water buffalo and embellished with inscriptions and seals. The Qianlong emperor appears to have been especially fond of an earlier Song dynasty embroidery (now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei) and ordered this magnificent copy. The quality of the embroidery on silk satin is exceptional and suggests that it was made in one of the Imperial workshops. In addition, there is an extremely rare and important Tang Dynasty painting on silk, 7th-9th century (estimate: £80,000-120,000), from the collection of Fred H. Andrews. The rectangular painting depicts a beautifully painted Bodhisattva standing on a lotus pedestal beneath a canopy. It would have formed the main part of a Buddhist banner, which would have been either hung in temples or carried on poles. Fred Andrews worked with Sir Aurel Stein on the material excavated along the Silk Road. Among other publications Andrews was the author of the ground-breaking paper 'Ancient Chinese Figured Silks Excavated by Sir Aurel Stein at Ruined Sites of Central Asia'.

Another highlight is a very rare and fine rhinoceros horn 'Dragon' libation cup, Kangxi (1662-1722) signed by You Kan (estimate: £40,000-60,000). Writhing over the entire surface are three finely carved dragons. It is possible that You Kan was the famous carver, known as You Bei, who was drafted to work in the Imperial ateliers. A signed cup by him forms part of the Beijing Palace Museum collection. It is possible that this example is an Imperial piece. Also from the same period, is a superb and beautifully executed large twelve panel Coromandel lacquer screen, Kangxi (1662-1722) (estimate: £60,000-80,000), which displays on the front in vibrant colours an elaborate court scene while on the reverse are unusual fan-shaped and rectangular panels embellished with poetic inscriptions.

Among the wonderful selection of export art included in the sale is a rare export lacquer chair, *circa* 1720-30 (estimate: £8,000-12,000) which incorporates a mixture of features from both Queen Anne and George I chairs. Here the black lacquer wood frame is decorated in red and gilt with floral motifs. A set of eight Chinese export lacquer chairs of similar form were made for Warwick Castle, one of which can now be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London.

A colourful collection of 19th century kingfisher feather jewellery and hair ornaments feature in the sale, including a kingfisher feather jewel-encrusted court headdress, *Dianzi*, (estimate: £7,000-9,000), a stunning kingfisher feather and silk embroidered headdress (estimate: £500-700), and a group of kingfisher feather and hardstone hairpins, some spring-mounted (estimate: £1,500-2,000).

Chinese Textiles

Thursday 13th July, 2pm

Christie's South Kensington, 85 Old Brompton Road, SW7 3LD

Comprising 230 lots, this sale includes an anonymous private collection of 80 lots. Spanning rank badges, textiles (including chair covers and large hangings) and robes, there are also several Imperial robes to choose from, both cut and un-cut. Highlights include a formal court robe (Chao'fu) of the kind required for the most formal court celebrations, mid 19th century (estimate: £2,000-3,000) and a pair of First Civil Rank Crane badges (estimate: £2,000-4,000) for the highest ranked Mandarins in court. These would have denoted rank on coats worn over formal dragon robes.

Chinese Works of Art

Friday 14th July, 10.30am and 2pm

Christie's South Kensington, 85 Old Brompton Road, SW7 3LD

This sale offers over 400 lots of Chinese porcelain, paintings and works of art. There are fine examples of Ming and Qing mark and period porcelain, and some delicate and highly decorative reverse glass paintings and scrolls. Further highlights include examples include a rare pair of *famille rose*, lime green ground bottle vases and covers from the Qianlong Period (estimate: £10,000-15,000), a black lacquer six-legged stand from the Song/Yuan dynasty (estimate: £6,000-8,000) and a Tibetan gilt bronze model of Chakrasamvara and consort, 18th century, (estimate: £8,000-12,000)

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Images available on request

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Notes to Editors

CHRISTIE'S ASIAN ART WEEK

Sales Dates:

11 July 2006 – Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art including Export Art, King Street

12 July 2006 – Japanese Art and Design, King Street

13 July 2006 – Chinese Textiles, South Kensington

14 July 2006 – Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, South Kensington

Christie's are the world's leading auction house in the field of Asian Art. Sales in 2005 increased x to £xx million (\$ x million). The most expensive work of art sold in 2005 also became the most expensive work of Asian art ever sold when an exceptionally rare and important blue and white jar, Yuan Dynasty, 14th century, realized £15,688,0090 (\$27,679,100) in London in July 2005. The most recent sales at Christie's Hong Kong in May 2006 achieved the highest total ever in this sale category realizing £23,198,826 (US\$43,083,534/HK\$331,411,800).

Christie's Education

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From September 2007, Christie's Education will offer a new full-time Master's qualification dedicated exclusively to Chinese art and culture. The new degree is designed for post-graduate students who wish to gain a thorough knowledge of Chinese art and culture. No prior knowledge of the culture and language of China is required.

Christie's Education M. Litt Programmes, accredited by the University of Glasgow, have an international reputation for their innovative approaches to study and the professional success of their alumni.

For further details, please contact: Christie's Education on 020 77665 4350 or education@christie's.com