

*For Immediate Release*  
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**EXCEPTIONAL IMPERIAL CHINESE CERAMICS, ENAMELS AND  
GLASS WARES TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG**

*Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art*  
*27 October 2003*

*Hong Kong – Post SARS, Christie's Hong Kong is back on schedule with their Fall auction of Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art sale, to take place at the usual venue at the Marriott Hotel on 27 October 2003.*

*Following spectacular results in July, the main attractions this Fall will be a selection of important masterworks, the majority of which are from Asian private collections. These include ceramics from the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties; a select group of Qing Imperial Beijing enamel wares; and a collection of glass wares dating between 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the highlights this season is a highly important blue and white 'dragon' jar, guan, from the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) (Estimate on Request). Painted in cobalt of brilliant sapphire-blue tones, the dragons are rendered as the principal decorative theme around the generously wide body. These mythical creatures with their long snouts and elongated scaly bodies are expertly painted in such a manner that the dragons convey a sense of rhythmic movements as they contentedly stride in pursuit of 'flaming pearls'.*

*Since dragons are associated with Imperial power, their imagery prevailed into the Ming period and can be seen on the exterior of an early Ming dynasty dish, dated to the Yongle period (1403-1425) which is one of the Ming ceramic highlights (estimate: HK\$1,600,000-2,200,000/ US\$210,000-280,000). By the Qing dynasty, the dragon still maintained its importance among Imperial wares, such as the large globular vase of superb quality, known as a tianqiuping, which is probably one of the best of its kind from the Qianlong period (1736-1795), (estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/*

US\$770,000–1,000,000). The Qing-type dragon is equally powerfully portrayed, although when compared to the Yuan dynasty dragon it has shed its long forelock, the nose is now shortened and more pointed, the jaw-line squared, and the horns are more stag-like.

Among the highlights are two other large globular vases, *tianqiuping*, from the Qianlong period (1736–1795) which are also of excellent quality. The first is a celadon glaze vase with moulded archaistic design in imitation of early ritual bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties (estimate: HK\$4,000,000–6,000,000/ US\$520,000–770,000) and an auspicious ‘Nine Peaches’ vase decorated in the famille rose palette (estimate: HK\$5,000,000–7,000,000/ US\$640,000–900,000). Auspicious imagery is a predominant theme throughout Chinese decorative art, and was particularly pertinent in the early Qing dynasty. It is not surprising to find painting of peaches on ceramics and works of art as the fruit is symbolic of longevity, and has long been associated with the legendary mythical peaches grown in the Daoist Western Paradise where, once eaten, they impart the power of immortality. The fruiting peach branches finely painted on the Qianlong vase mounts to a total of nine, *jiu*, which is again provides the homophone for ‘eternity’. Another favourable form of symbolism is created by a beautifully painted famille rose ‘Peaches and Bats’ dish, from the Yongzheng period (1723–1735), where the five iron-red bats provides the rebus, *Wufu*, or the ‘Five Blessings’, these being longevity, health, wealth, love of virtue, and to live out one’s allocated life span (Estimate on Request). Peaches are also found on the bases of a pair of Imperial Beijing enamelled yellow-ground vases (estimate: HK\$3,000,000–4,000,000/ US\$390,000–510,000), where the Yongzheng reign marks are written on the fruit themselves.

These vases are part of a group of metalwork on offer that were made by Imperial ateliers employed under the auspices of the *Zaobanchu*, the Imperial workshops. These workshops were first set up by Emperor Kangxi (1662–1722), and were located in the palace precincts within the Forbidden City. The Kangxi emperor had a great admiration for European painted enamels and was determined that Chinese workshops should learn to make them. The blue-ground bowl decorated with scrolling peony flowers offered in the sale is an example of the finest quality work produced in the Kangxi period (estimate: HK\$700,000–800,000/ US\$90,000–100,000). Similar to other works of imperial commission, the base of the bowl is inscribed with four characters, Kangxi Yuzhi, ‘By Imperial Command of the Kangxi Emperor’. This form of enamelling continued with great verve in the

*Yongzheng and Qianlong period, as represented by the wine-pot (estimate: HK\$4,000,000–7,000,000/ US\$520,000–900,000) which took its novel shape from pouring vessels that were popular in Europe at the time. Another innovative shape is the mello-form box and cover from the Qianlong period, enamelled with flowers on a pale lavender-blue ground (estimate: HK\$400,000–600,000/ US\$52,000–77,000). Equally inventive is the Chinese interpretation of European portraits as can be seen enamelled on a pair of boxes of the Qianlong period (estimate: HK\$3,500,000–4,500,000/ US\$450,000–580,000). The painting style of the subjects with distinctive flesh tones and the use of chiaroscuro is noticeably influenced by European oil paintings.*

*Other fascinating works of art include a collection of Qing dynasty glass vessels. Chinese glass wares were produced as early as the Zhou dynasty (1100–256 BC) but throughout Chinese history, glass itself never enjoyed the same popularity as jade and bamboo carvings. However, during the early Qing dynasty, glass-making was given much fillip by Emperor Kangxi, whose interest lay both in the beauty of glass vessels and the utility of glass for scientific instruments. In 1696, the Emperor appointed German Jesuit missionary, Kilian Stumpf, to supervise the establish the Imperial glass workshops with the help of craftsmen drafted from glass-making centres in Yanshan and Guangzhou. The transparent glass bowl etched with a pair of birds in flight among berries growing from leafy vines, from the Yongzheng period, is an example of the German glass engraving technique that Stumpf contributed to the Chinese glass-making tradition (estimate: HK\$350,000–450,000/ US\$45,000–58,000). The Qing Court, nonetheless, retained an interest in traditional decorative forms such as the carved ruby-red glass brushwasher (estimate: HK\$300,000–400,000/ US\$39,000–51,000); and the red-glass overlay bottle vase, carved through the red layer to a snowstorm-ground, depicting chilong (single horn dragons) clambering above swirling waves (estimate: HK\$250,000–350,000/ US\$32,000–45,000).*

*Mythical chi dragons can also be seen on a large soapstone seal that once belonged to Prince Yun'mi (estimate: HK\$300,000–400,00/ US\$39,000–51,000), the twenty-fourth and youngest son of Emperor Kangxi. The seal chop bears the four-character mark 'Xian Qin Wang Bao', an official title that was given by the Prince's brother, the Emperor Yongzheng, in 1733. Other notable carvings from the sale include an exceptionally fine bamboo brushpot carved with composite scenes of figures in landscape scenes (estimate: HK\$500,000–700,000/ US\$64,000–90,000) dating to the*

*17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century; and a finely carved imperial inscribed white jade mountain boulder of the Qianlong period (estimate: HK\$3,500,000–4,500,000/ US\$450,000–580,000).*

*Pre-sale Exhibitions:*

<i>Shanghai</i>	<i>9 - 10 October</i>	<i>Portman Ritz-Carlton</i>
<i>Beijing</i>	<i>12 - 13 October</i>	<i>The St. Rigis Beijing</i>
<i>Taipei</i>	<i>18 - 19 October</i>	<i>Taipei Metro</i>
<i>Hong Kong</i>	<i>24 - 26 October</i>	<i>JW Marriott Hotel</i>

*Auction:*

*Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, 27 October at 10:30 am & 2:00 pm,  
JW Marriott Hotel, Hong Kong*

*More information about Christie's Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art Sale can be found on [www.christies.com](http://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](http://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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*Images available on request*

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