

Immediate Release

11 October 2004

EXCEPTIONAL CLASSICAL PAINTINGS AND CALLIGRAPHY TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG FALL SALE

Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy

Dragon & Phoenix – 800 Years of Patronage

31 October & 1 November 2004

Hong Kong - Christie's Hong Kong will be offering an exceptional array of 173 fine classical Chinese paintings by esteemed masters from the 10th to 19th century at its autumn sale on 31 October at the JW Marriott Hotel. Included a spectacular group of 24 pieces of classical paintings and calligraphies to be sold in the sale of *Dragon & Phoenix – 800 Years of Patronage* on 1 November.

The highlight is a handscroll, *Scholar with Crane under Pine Trees*, by the Southern Song artist Ma Lin (active ca.1180-after 1256). In typical Southern Song fashion, the painting depicts a scholar in his garden with a crane, looking out across water to a distant shore. Even in the handscroll format, Ma was able to compose a scene with an empty void and asks the viewer to use his imagination to complete the scene. The patterns of the waves are reminiscent of the set of paintings of waves by his father Ma Yuan, now housed in the Shanghai Museum. This painting carries the famous half seal of the Hongwu emperor (r.1368-1398), signifying that it was once in the Ming Imperial collection (estimate: HK\$3,200,000-4,000,000/US\$412,900-516,100).

Depicting the famous Northern Song literary gathering in the West Villa, Tang Yin (1470-1553) displays his excellence in both landscape and figure paintings. Important giants such as

Su Shi (1036-1101) and Huang Tingjian (1045-1105) are seen seated in Wang Shen's garden known as the West Villa, while Mi Fu (1051-1107) is about to inscribe on a stone tablet. The scroll carries a colophon of the Ode to the *Gathering at the West Villa*, written in running script by Shen Quan (1624-1684). It was previously in the collection of Wu Hufan (1894-1968), who gave this to his nephew, the painter Zhu Meicun (1911-?) (estimate: HK\$2,400,000-2,800,000/ US\$309,700-361,300).

Following literary traditions, Tang Yin's teacher Shen Zhou (1427-1509) painted a languid landscape while at his own home, Youzhu Villa, and dedicated this painting to Wu Kuan (1435-1504). Wu Kuan was not only an important collector and connoisseur of the mid-Ming but good friend to both Shen and Tang. Shen Zhou's inscription makes fun of his own efforts at painting, and also alludes to important friendships (estimate: HK\$120,000-150,000/ US\$15,500-19,400). Another important painting from the Wu school is the massively long hanging scroll of *Travelling Amidst Mountains and Streams* by Xie Shichen (1487-1567). The scroll measures over 3 metres long, with a waterfall pouring down from a great height, moistening the surrounding landscapes (estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,200,000/ US\$129,000-154,800)

Two important paintings by the other Ming master Qiu Ying (circa 1495-1552), *Immortals playing Chess* (estimate: HK\$3,200,000-4,000,000/ US\$412,900-516,100) and *Spring River* (estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000/ US\$258,100-387,100) are perfect examples of Qiu's consummate skills. The immortals with perfect complexion inhabit a fantastic but almost two dimensional world of bright blues and greens in the early Tang style, enlivened by intricate willow trees. In *Spring River*, the scholar gentleman looks wistfully at the river outside his window, engrossed in his own reverie. In these two paintings, Qiu Ying shows that not only was he a brilliant master in controlling the brush with the ability to paint as finely as he wanted, but that his palette ranged from the brightest to the subtly subdued, always in perfect harmony. Both scrolls carry with them each an inscription by Wen Zhengming (1470-1559), a contemporary and friend of Qiu Ying. *Immortals Playing Chess* was in the Qing Imperial collection, recorded in the *Shiqu Baoji* (Catalogue of Paintings and Calligraphy in the Qing Imperial Collection), and carries a full set of five collector's seals of

Emperor Qianlong (r.1736-1795), as well as collectors' seals of Emperors Jiaqing (r.1796-1820) and Xuantong (r. 1909-1911).

Hongren (1610-1663) recorded a country outing with his friend in the handscroll *Mount Lianhua* (estimate: HK\$1,000,000- 1,500,000/ US\$129,000-193,500). The inscription on the painting by the artist describes the journey, and the fantastic landscape he and his friend travelled through. Using ink only, the landscape comes alive as the viewer's eye travel through the myriad strange peaks and crevices of Huang Shan. Judging from the calligraphy and use of brush, this is most probably an early work by the artist. The other monk painter of the early Qing, Shitao (1642-1707) also painted a landscape, but this one is very small in size. Using light colours and a moist brush, it is not so much the landscape itself but the atmosphere that draws the attention of the viewer (estimate: HK\$100,000-120,000/ US\$12,900-15,500). There is the long handscroll of *Birds* by the Qing court artist Yu Sheng (18th century) after the Five Dynasties master Huang Jucai. The scroll describes a great variety of birds and flowers, all painted in brilliant bright colours (estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,200,000/ US\$129,000-154,800).

Of the calligraphy pieces, perhaps the most interesting is the handscroll of *Poems to Plum Blossoms* attributed to the Song master Lin Bu (967-1028). The scroll comprises thirty poems, composed by Lin Bu whose love of plum blossoms was legendary (estimate: HK\$800,000-1,000,000/ US\$103,200-129,000). This scroll was in the collection of Liang Qingbiao (1620-1691) of the early Qing, as well as Pei Jingfu (1854-1926). It also carries colophons by various important scholars, calligraphers, collectors and connoisseurs of the Ming and Qing. Wen Zhengming and Wang Chong (1494-1533) belonged to the same elite circle of literary friends as Shen Zhou, Tang Yin and Qiu Ying. Wang's album of *Sunzi's Book on Warfare* was written in small standard calligraphy with great care and attention, and although Wen Zhengming's handscroll of *Scenes of Xishan* was written in running cursive script calligraphy, the same care and attention can be seen in the sweeping movements of the brush (estimate: HK\$400,000-600,000/ US\$51,600-77,400).

Dong Qichang's scroll of calligraphy after ancient masters in his set of ten *Xibong Tang* scrolls is also of interest (estimate: HK\$400,000-500,000/ US\$51,600-64,500). Unlike the

previous nine scrolls in this set, Dong did not write in the style of other earlier masters in this scroll. Instead, this is Dong's own discourse on calligraphy and his comments on masters of the past. It was previously in the collection of Wang Shimin (1592-1680), and it is believed that the ten scrolls were as a gift from Dong to Wang. This, as with the other nine scrolls, was previously in the collection of Wu Hufan. Also of the late Ming are several pieces of calligraphy by prominent calligraphers, many of them copying the style of ancient masters. Huang Daozhou (1585-1646) and Wang Duo (1592-1652) both based their calligraphy hanging scrolls in the style of Wang Xizhi (321-379) (estimate of Huang Daozhou's: HK\$60,000-80,000/ US\$7,700-10,300), (estimate of Wang Duo's : HK\$150,000-200,000/ US\$19,400-25,800); while Fu Shan (1605-1690) based his on Wang Xiangzhi (344-386) (estimate: HK\$300,000-400,000/ US\$38,700-51,600). Bada Shanren (1626-1705), Jin Nong (1687-1763) and Zheng Xie (1693-1765) were all looking back at antiquity when they wrote their respective pieces; Bada in his own style but quoting Su Shi(estimate: HK\$200,000-250,000/ US\$25,800-32,300), Jin Nong after calligraphy from a Northern Zhou (6th century) stele(estimate: HK\$120,000-150,000/ US\$15,500-19,400), and Zheng Xie writing an excerpt from the Tang monk calligrapher Huaisu's autobiography(estimate: HK\$120,000-1250000/ US\$15,500-19,400).

Twenty-four pieces of paintings and calligraphers are included in the sale: ***Dragon & Phoenix – 800 Years of Patronage***. The handscroll previously attributed to the Northern Song Emperor Huizong is yet another piece whose theme is closely linked with history and the lessons it teaches us (estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000/ US\$258,100-387,100). The inscription on the painting by Huizong states that he painted this copying a Tang original which depicted the Tang emperor Ming admonishing his son. This painting has impeccable provenance, carrying colophons and collector seals of collectors from the Southern Song onwards, and having been in the Qing Imperial collection. It retains its original Qing court mounting and outer brocade wrap, and has been recorded in the *Shiqu Baoji*. Emperor Qianlong not only inscribed a poem on the painting but also placed thirteen of his collector's seals on the painting, signifying his enthusiasm for it and also the importance with which this was regarded.

Before the Qianlong Emperor enlarged the massive Qing collection, his grandfather the Kangxi emperor was setting examples for state ceremonies such as birthday celebrations for

future generations. The woodblock-print of Emperor Kangxi's birthday celebrations measures over 25 metres long. It describes the parade that went through almost the entire city of Beijing, and how everyone was out to decorate the streets and celebrate in honour of their emperor's sixtieth birthday. This print was made by the master painter Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715) and his cousin Wang Yiqing (17th-18th century) (estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,200,000/ US\$129,000-154,800).

The Qianlong emperor obviously looked to his youth when he commanded the court artist Yao Wenhan (18th century) to paint the handscroll Emperor Qianlong Appraising Horses in Spring (estimate on request). This is a copy after another painting by Lang Shining and Tang Dai, with a similar title and very close in composition, now housed in the Yurikan Museum in Japan. In the present scroll, Qianlong is in his middle years as opposed to the earlier one in which he had only ascended to the throne for a few years and in his early thirties. The present scroll retains all its original Qing mounting, wrapping, and comes in its original specially made fitted *zitan* wood box carved with a dragons amongst clouds pattern.

Pre-sale Exhibitions:

Taipei	16 – 17 October	Fubon Life Assurance Building
Shanghai	20 – 21 October	Portman Ritz-Carlton Hotel
Beijing	23 – 24 October	The St. Regis Beijing
Hong Kong	29 – 30 October	JW Marriott Hotel

Auctions:

Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy , 31 October at 12:30 pm
Dragon and Phoenix – 800 Years of Patronage (including 24 pieces of classical Chinese paintings and calligraphies), 1 November at 10:00am
JW Marriott Hotel, Hong Kong

More information about Christie's sales of Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy and Dragon & Phoenix – 800 Years of Patronage can be found on 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 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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