

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 16, 2009

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RARE WORKS FROM THE MASTERS LEAD CHRISTIE'S FALL 2009 FINE CHINESE CLASSICAL PAINTINGS AND CALLIGRAPHY & MODERN CHINESE PAINTINGS SALES

Hong Kong – Christie's Hong Kong will hold its Autumn sale of *Fine Chinese Modern Paintings* and *Fine Chinese Classical Paintings and Calligraphy* on November 29 at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, showcasing over 320 rare and exceptional works from the masters, valued in excess of HK\$180 million (US\$23.2 million).

Steeped in philosophy, religion and literature, Chinese paintings are unique in fusing poetry, calligraphy and art throughout the ages. The *Fine Classical Paintings & Calligraphy* sale will feature important works by artists active before the late Qing Dynasty (19th Century), including Ming Dynasty painters and calligraphers such as **Dong Qichang**, **Wen Zhengming**, **Wang Duo** and **Gong Xian**; and important Qing artists such as **Hua Yan**, **Jin Nong**, and also artists of the Qing Imperial court. The *Fine Chinese Modern Paintings* sale will present a body of magnificent works by renowned 19th and 20th Century masters such as **Xu Beihong**, **Qi Baishi**, **Zhang Daqian**, **Lin Fengmian**, **Pu Ru**, **Fu Baoshi** among others. Showcasing a wide range of works by artists of different styles and schools, this sale caters to the variety of palettes of today's discerning collectors.

AESTHETIC IDEALS IN THE WORLD OF CLASSICAL INK PAINTINGS & CALLIGRAPHY

Fine Classical Chinese Paintings

29 November 2009, 3pm

Various Works by Masters from the Song and Yuan Dynasties 宋元掇英 (11th to 14th Century)



The range of subject matter is broad and the style varied in the *Eight album leaves* (ink and color on silk, estimate: HK\$5,000,000-6,000,000/ US\$645,200-774,200) by **Masters from the Song and Yuan Dynasties** presented at this sale. Whether depicting snowy peaks, expansive skies, elegant flowers and birds, or lyrical landscapes, the images teem with life without being overwhelming, while beneath the

simplicity lies a deep poetic meaning and artistic sophistication that appeals to the sense and sensibility of the viewer.

The flowers and birds are brought to life in the magnificent beauty of the landscape and forests. Through the artist's exquisite brushwork and refined composition, simple things in Nature take on a broader significance as symbols of visionary ideals and evoke strong feelings in the viewer. Paintings in the Song period show how artists are particularly skilful in composition and developing the characteristic of an object to creatively develop moving naturalistic scenes that are free from traditional stylistic constraints.

Hua Yan 华昉 (1682-1756)

Hua Yan (1682-1756), also known as Qiu Yue, was a famous poet and artist in the Qing period. A skilful artist painting a variety of subjects, such as landscapes, flowers, figures and wildlife, Hua Yan's style advocated natural realism and individual expression, similar to the style of the 'Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou' - a group of Qing painters known for rejecting orthodox ideas about painting in favor of a style

deemed expressive and individualistic. Hua was equally talented and knowledgeable in a broad range of literature and art subjects at the time. Successfully infusing poetry, calligraphy and the *zhuān* (篆) script into his paintings, Hua works are meticulous and delicate, flexing broad and thin strokes effectively to create works of simplistic beauty and a true-to-life realism.

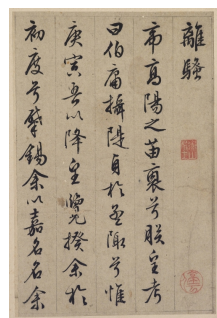
The work presented in this sale – ***Lotus Pond*** (ink and colour on silk, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000 /US\$258,100-387,100) - is one of Hua Yan's finest large-scale floral works. In this painting, the pure white of the lotus amid a sea of green leaves in a full pond amply demonstrate the skill and delicacy of the artist in depicting texture, light and detail. Added to this is a couplet from Song philosopher Zhou Dunyi's famous 'In Praise of the Lotus', injecting a deeper dimension to the image.



One of the eight auspicious symbols of Buddhist teaching, the lotus blossom is an analogy of the sublime man – a symbol of the man who lives in virtue, truth and justice despite living in a sullied environment. The inscription supporting this work is a famous poem on the symbolism and poignancy of the lotus flower, which “emerges from dirt yet blossoming in purity, freshness and beauty,” while its stalk is pliant but strong. In Buddhist teachings, the lotus symbolizes purification of the body, speech and mind, eventually reaching full enlightenment when the flower reaches full bloom.

Wen Zhengming 文征明(1470—1559)

Wen Zhengming (1470-1559), a leading figure of the Wu School of scholar-artists, was considered one of the four masters of the Ming period (1368-1644). Along with his teacher, famed painter, Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming's expertise permeated through his poetry, calligraphy, literature and art. With a unique style that is his own, Wen's artistry can be seen in different works, whether it is landscape, figure, floral or bamboo paintings. Often choosing to paint subjects of great simplicity, like a single tree or rock, his work conveys a feeling of strength through isolation, which often reflected his discontent with official life. Many of his works also celebrate the contexts of elite social life for which they were created.



The ink on paper work featured in this sale is ***an album of 49 leaves, Calligraphy in Running Script*** (estimate: HK\$1.5-2 million/US\$193,500-258,100), a remarkable work created by Wen when he was 86 years old. With a flowing brush, he combines the essence of calligraphic art throughout the ages with his own creative style, to copy the 'Li Sao', a poem by Qu Yuan (304 BC - 278 BC) composed during Warring States Period. With great elegance and vitality yet with a remarkably steady rhythm, his script exudes the grandeur typical during the height of calligraphic art development in the Jin and Tang Dynasties, making him first among equals during the Ming period.

Fa Ruozhen 法若真 (1613-1696)

Among the many accomplished poet-artists in Classical times, many expressed their artistic ideals through calligraphy and left behind truly superb works for posterity – **Fa Ruozhen** is one such poet-artist. Fa Ruozhen came from Jiaozhou (modern-day Jiao Xian) in Shandong Province. As a painter and government official in Anhui, Fa was active mostly in Anhui and was often loosely associated with the Anhui School in the early Qing period (1644-1911). As a scholar, his literary skills were recognized, but he is revered for his paintings and calligraphy and his highly original style. His uninhibited, fluid strokes often depicted misty landscapes that were magical yet natural, creating a unique aesthetic of his own. As the 19th-century text *Tongyin lun hua* ('Discourses on painting in the shade of the paulownia tree') noted, Fa 'followed a path of his own.'



A highlight in this sale, ***Autumn Landscape*** (hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, estimate: HK\$1,000,000–1,500,000/US\$129,000-193,500) is a work that conveys the grandeur of the mountains among the clouds. Strong, spirited strokes depict the rich texture of the rocks. This solidity is contrasted against the lightness of the clouds, mist and rain that hover across the mountains.

Nonetheless, despite the vast landscape, Fa's meticulous details are achieved through lively and precise movements of the brush that depict details of the rocks, trees and leaves brushing against the Autumn wind. This refreshing perspective of macro view and micro detailing established Fa as one of the progressive and innovative painters in his time. The inscription on the lower right of this Autumn Landscape reads: "Huangshan Laoren (old gentleman from Huang Shan mountain) in his 72nd year, in mid-autumn of the year Jiazi (1684)." **As many of Fa Ruozhen's works are in institutions such as the Palace Museum and the Shanghai Museum, this rare opportunity for private collectors to acquire a work from this master is a chance not to be missed.**

THE ESSENCE OF NATURE IN ART

Fine Modern Chinese Paintings

29 November 2009, 9:30am

Fine Chinese Modern Paintings presents works by masters from the late Qing period to the present day, including **Zhang Daqian**, **Qi Baishi**, **Fu Baoshi**, **Xu Beihong**, and **Li Keran**. The dynamic range of styles - ranging from the Lingnan, Shanghai to Jinjing schools - fully illustrates the breadth and depth of modern Chinese paintings. The sale offers a rare opportunity for collectors to acquire works created during this age of phenomenal change.

Fu Baoshi 傅抱石 (1904-1965)

Credited with revolutionizing Chinese ink painting, **Fu Baoshi** is considered one of the most important Chinese artists of the last century. Travelling all over China to observe and experience the country's amazing landscapes, Fu built on traditional foundations to add his own innovative brushwork, use of color and subjective perspective in aesthetic composition to create stunning landscape paintings, like his Ming period predecessor Shi Tao, whom he greatly admired.



Works from one of his artistic peaks in the '30s to mid '40s while he was Chongqing, have always been much sought-after by collectors, for it was at this time that he started to experiment with new techniques that began to break from traditional controlled and restrained brushwork. This 1944 masterpiece, *Landscape Inspired by Dufu's Poetic Sentiments* (ink and colour on paper, one collector's seal, *estimate on request*), is an exceptionally large and iconic work that promises to be a highlight of the sale.

Fu's artistic philosophy of "painting with bold strokes and refining with details" can be demonstrated amply in this painting. A visual interpretation of the poetry of renowned Tang Dynasty poet Dufu, this work sees Fu's deliberate use of freestyle, almost impressionistic strokes and washes as well as a clever use of white space and perspective to depict a myriad of elements in a landscape – from the mountains and pines, the clouds and streams to the simple huts where hermit-scholars roamed. The result captures the essence of a landscape that is grand but never overwhelming, natural but awe-inspiring, sweeping but full of Nature's intricate details.

Qi Baishi 齐白石 (1863-1957)

Recognized as one of the greatest Chinese artists from the 20th Century, **Qi Baishi** is known for his consummate skill in infusing the essence of traditional Chinese paintings into the art of a contemporary milieu to create a refreshing interpretation of life and Nature. Known for painting familiar genres of birds and flowers, insects and grasses, figures and landscapes, Qi Baishi was recognized not only for his meticulous detailing and contemplative mood, but more importantly for his unique style that is fresh and spontaneous, as he had once said himself: "artistic excellence lies between likeness and unlikeness." Together with his Southern contemporary Wu Changshuo (1844-1927), Qi and Wu were a pair of influential artists at the time, known as "Wu from the South and Qi from the North."



The landscape paintings of Qi express his confidence in, and understanding of his own artistic creativity. His *Spring Landscape* (hanging scroll, ink on paper, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$193,500-258,100) is exemplary. Painted in 1922, this is a striking work from a crucial period of Qi's artistic development. Just over 50 years old at the time, Qi had moved to Beijing. In this new environment, he started to follow the style of Wu Changshuo and his subject matter turned to daily details in life, such as flowers, fruits, vines, and insects, all depicted with his trademark humor and vivacity. Hence a landscape work such as *Spring Landscape* from the early 1920's is indeed a rare and exciting find. This work was formerly in the collection of Dr. Alfred E. Mirsky, and was sold at Christie's Hong Kong in May 2006 for the benefit of the graduate student program of the Rockefeller University in the US. At the top right corner of the painting is a seven-character poem composed by the artist, revealing the impressive literary talent that Qi also had as a poet and a calligrapher.



Another highlight from Qi Baishi is *Four Seasons* (a set of four hanging scrolls, ink and colour on paper, estimate: HK\$5,000,000-7,000,000/ US\$645,200-903,200). Dated to the 1920s, this set of paintings is a tour de force resulting from the artist's late-year transformation when he turned his back on the great literati painting tradition and reproduced landscapes in the perspective of a humble farmer. Unlike what was happening in the West, Qi's transformation consisted in the blending of traditional techniques with innovative conception. In the process, popular tastes were assimilated as the artist responded to the changes in society to

result in refreshingly interesting compositions.

In the paintings, the distinct character of the four seasons is aptly captured with dynamic and unaffected brushstrokes. The contrast between bright red and dark ink echoes that between the expressive and the meticulous rendering. More than what meets the eyes, if the viewer delves deep beneath the painting surface, he will surely be able to sense the painter's nostalgia for the natural scenes associated with his own childhood.

Zhang Daqian 张大千(1899-1983)

Zhang Daqian was one of the best-known and most prodigious Chinese artists of the 20th century. Born in a family of artists in Sichuan, China, he studied textile dyeing techniques in Kyoto, Japan before returning to establish a successful artistic career in Shanghai. Beginning his studies of classical Chinese painters such as Shitao and Bada Shanren, Zhang was deeply influenced by the sumptuous splendor of the art of the Tang Dynasty. After extensive travels in Europe and America, where he came into contact with the contemporary art movement in the West, he created a unique splashed-ink and splashed-color style, expanding the potential of plane surfaces and coloration. In his later years, he combined splashed ink and splashed color with the masterly texture strokes and liberation of his early years to form a new synthesis. Hovering between concrete and abstract, reveling in freedom and unpredictability, his work created a whole new style of modern Chinese painting that influenced his successors.



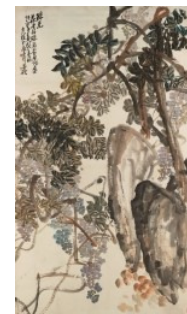
Among the highlights in this sale is his *Journey to Highway Hengguan* (hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, estimate: HK\$2,000,000 – 3,000,000/US\$259,200 – 388,800), a fine example of the integration of Western artistic expression with the restrained nature of Chinese landscape painting. The heroic strength of the mountains comes alive amid the hues of grey and blue, conveying the artist's deep appreciation of Nature. At once abstract and realistic, Zhang's acclaimed splashed ink technique creates an abstract illusion of spatial depth. Deep with poetic meaning, this seminal work from Zhang's later years is sure to attract great attention among collectors.

Wu Changshuo 吴昌硕(1844-1927)

Wu Changshuo was born in Zhejiang from a scholarly family and for a time toward the end of the Qing he served as an official in Liaoning. He settled in Suzhou in his twenties. Initially, he devoted himself to

poetry and calligraphy with a strong interest in early scripts. Only later did he consider himself a painter associated with the Shanghai school of artists. As a painter, he was noted for helping to rejuvenate the art of painting flowers and birds, strongly influencing contemporaries of his time and artists after him, such as Fu Baoshi, Li Keran and Huang Binhong. Also accomplished as a seal-carver, his artistic skills extended beyond paintings to calligraphy and ancient letters. Individualistic and expressive, rich in color and movement, his style resembles those associated with literati painting.

This sale presents Wu's ***Wisteria and Rock*** (hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000/ US\$129,000-193,500), a work created in the early 1900s. Underneath the seemingly random scene lie rhythmic strokes that are flowing and expressive, creating layers of color and light. The visually dense composition, rich in color and movement, conveys the unique combination of strength and delicacy that is characteristic of Chinese paintings. As a forerunner of technical innovations and progressive artistic philosophy, a work from this modern master is much in demand among collectors.



Xu Beihong 徐悲鸿 (1895-1953)

Xu Beihong was one of the most important artists shaping Chinese art and its education in the 20th century. Deeply influenced by Western artistic technique and philosophy from his studies in France and travels in Europe, he combined Chinese ink and brush techniques with Western perspective and composition methods. A versatile painter equally skilled in Chinese ink and Western oil media, he integrated firm and bold brushstrokes with precise delineation of form.



His ***Eagle*** (hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, estimate: HK\$700,000 - 900,000 / US\$90,300-116,100) shows an eagle in flight, with its wings spread wide and eyes focused on its target. Contrasting the weighted, deliberate strokes of the eagle is the lightness of the grassland below. Precise in perspective and proportion and detailed in its depiction of the eagle's anatomy, the scene is rich with a sense of motion and expansiveness that Chinese paintings convey through varying brushstrokes. The overall effect is a harmonious blend of Western realism and an ethereal quality seen in Chinese paintings.

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****Images Available Upon Request****

For more information in English and Chinese about Christie's Hong Kong Fall 2009 Season Highlights go to www.christies.com/chinese

Auction

Fine Modern Chinese Paintings

Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy

Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

Sunday, 29 November, 9.30am

Sunday, 29 November, 3pm

Viewing

Taipei

Fubon Insurance Building

November 21-22, 10:30am-6:30pm

Hong Kong

Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

November 27-28, 2009, 10:30am-6pm

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