

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

佳士得香港有限公司

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**CHRISTIE'S TO PRESENT EXCEPTIONAL SOUTHEAST ASIAN
MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART IN AUTUMN AUCTION**

**Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art
25 November 2007**

Hong Kong - A superb selection of paintings by Southeast Asian masters and contemporary artists will be offered at Christie's *Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art* sale on 25 November 2007 in Hong Kong.

The Southeast Asian region is a mosaic of cultural groups and is energized with the influence of its neighbours. The works offered in the sale are of a correspondingly diverse visual aesthetic, representative of the myriad cultures within the region. The auction promises to be a visual feast celebrating the vivacious style and dynamics of the art of the region.

Taking centre-stage is *Market scene* by Rudolf Bonnet (The Netherlands 1895-1978) (Estimate: HK\$3,200,000-4,000,000/ US\$410,300-512,800). Making its first appearance at auction, this outstanding work was once housed in a Chinese restaurant in Germany, where it had been since the late 1960s. Bonnet's elegant portraits of Balinese people are both an artistic and historical document of an island nation described by anthropologists as a 'living museum'. Bonnet combined grace and beauty with an intent to portray for eternity the people in their noblest form. Having spent some time in Florence, where he is known to have painted incessantly, the influence of the Italian masters is evident in his works and which accentuate the grandeur and elegance of his sitters.



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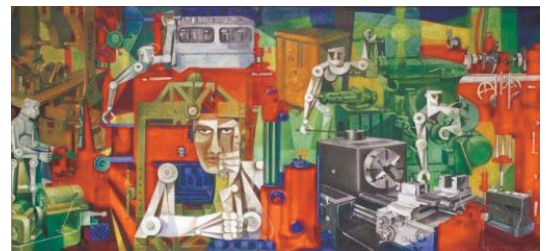
Market Scene, circa 1948 contains all the quintessential elements of a work by Bonnet. The beautiful people and breathtaking scenery serve to elevate the otherwise mundane scene of daily life to a level of a ceremony, set amid the Balinese landscape. Bonnet's perfectly delineated figures are impeccably arranged as though they were performers on a grand stage. This theatrical mood befits the lofty aspirations of the artist, who strove to ensure a true record of the people was 'preserved in its classical state'.

Another superb creation by Bonnet on offer is *Bali life* (HK\$800,000-1,200,000/ US\$102,600-153,800), an elegant and captivating pastel on paper work. A preparatory study for a mural, *Bali life* stands out as a very detailed drawing imbued with grace and sophistication.



Also included in the sale is a significant painting, *Women with offerings* by Adrien-Jean Le Mayeur de Merprès (Belgium 1880-1958) (Estimate: HK\$3,200,000-4,800,000/ US\$410,300-615,400). True to the spirit of a painter-traveller, the artist's life was punctuated with frequent sojourns in foreign lands. And true to the spirit of impressionism, was the artist's constant and dedicated pursuit of sunlight and inspiration. Bali was to become a rich stimulant for Le Mayeur, and he devoted himself to the task of depicting his immediate surroundings: the Balinese people, the luxuriant flora, the beach and the sea, all bathed in exuberant sunlight.

Equally captivating is *Machinery* by Vicente Silva Manansala (The Philippines 1910-1981) (Estimate: HK\$800,000-1,200,000/ US\$102,600-153,800). Of all the post-war artists in the Philippines who have exerted their influence on the way later artists define their artistic roles, Vicente Manansala is undoubtedly one of the most important. Cubism forms the backbone of Manansala's works, but he projected his own unique talent onto the canvas. What results is a compelling amalgamation of Cubist elements and realism. He never compromised on the lucid recognition of his subject matter.



It is no doubt that cubism freed Manansala's vision from the genre tradition of direct transcription of nature as well as the supremacy of emotion in Abstract-Expressionism. It provided the artist with a visual

idiom to continue working in the figurative mode, articulating new ways of recording the Filipino images. In fact, in his works, the viewer is never hesitant towards what greets his eye. Yet forms such as the garments on his ever recognisable figures are always rendered with a mosaic of geometry and semi- abstraction. This distortion of familiar figures lends a touch of modernity to Manasala's work and creates an ongoing dialogue between the canvas and the spectator.

Another prized offering in the sale is *Erenos* by Fernando Zobel (The Philippines 1924-1984) (Estimate: HK\$280,000-380,000/ US\$35,900-48,700) which is one of the finest works from the artist's celebrated *Saeta* phase. *Saeta* is the Spanish word for arrow and also the name for a genre of usually sad and dramatic Flamenco song. One can see the affinity between the name and the works in this series as its core expression is essentially linear, invoking the movement, the speed and the rhythm of a shooting arrow.



It is noteworthy that Zobel's started to learn Chinese calligraphy in the 1950s and therefore his works embody the elements of Chinese calligraphy with the pauses and rhythms, or musical meter, of that art form. The essence of his works is a fleeting moment, expressed metaphorically by the use of line - the movement of leaves, grasses, trees, birds, and people. In the present work, the lines are elegantly arranged, at times sleek and light; and at others the lines are gathered and blotched to form a dark space on the canvas surface that is suggestive of the mysterious and the profound.

CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART

The sale also features works by contemporary Southeast Asian artists, who have attracted great attention in the world auction market. These artists constantly explore and create their own unique visual vocabulary across disciplines, challenging aesthetic principles, making for an interesting comparison with their counterparts in other parts of Asia.

Catching viewers' attention is *Juling (Cross-eyed)* by I Nyoman Masriadi (b. Indonesia 1973) (Estimate: HK\$65,000-95,000/ US\$8,300-12,200). Masriadi's bloated figures are in part stylised and in part caricature-like that together become a signature style for the artist. They are an integral part of his artistic idiom - rich in meaning and expression - that make an impression for a first timer as well as a keen observer. The figures could be men or women, who are wearing a mock facial expression that fuses a disturbing look and a faint, sinister smile. With these protagonists, Masriadi addresses the issues of tradition versus modernity, the fast pace of development in countries like Indonesia, and the commercialization of all aspects of city life, while the artist probes deeper into human nature and cultural issues.



Cross-eyed is especially rich and evocative with its busy, close-up composition of several figures staring into their mobile phones. The title forms part of this narration, in which Masriadi portrays a community bonded by a common obsession with the modern technology, which has infiltrated all aspects of cosmopolitan living. Just like a novel, one can almost 'read' the puns in this visual expression – the cross-eyed faces of every individual as they gaze intensely into the small screen in their palms – oblivious to one another's existence and yet in dire need of 'staying in touch'.

Of particular interest is *Ambition* by Redy Rahadian (b. Indonesia 1973) (Estimate: HK\$20,000-30,000/ US\$2,600-3,800). As a very young sculptor, Redy has shown great maturity towards a full three-dimensional conception of form. The little stick-like figure is the quintessential subject in Redy's sculptural work. This figure is always doing various acts in the work, be it moving the weight in the present work or doing balancing act in another. This attenuated, stick-like figure is always full of vigor and always caught in some sort of an action. Redy cleverly contrasts the smallness of the figure against the volume of the block, which the protagonist is trying to lift.



Allowing the sculpture to tilt slightly, Redy created an intriguing sense of space between the three-dimensional work and its environs. In fact, he creates an inescapable dichotomy for a viewer to contemplate the subtle relationships between mass and space, the position of volumes, the contrast between heaviness and a lightness of being and the juxtaposition of the apparent and obscurity. Curiously, the massive volume of the work is curtailed by the slight tilt and Redy successfully imbues a sense of nimbleness to the work with the spirited presence of the little figure.

Further highlight includes *The fragment and the sublime 11* by Natee Utarit (b. Thailand 1970) (Estimate: HK\$100,000-200,000/ US\$12,800-25,600). Natee choose to deconstruct and fragment conventional imagery in order to build a new world order which makes sense of the complexity of contemporary society. In this aspect, the images of Venus and still life are the rudimentary vocabulary of classical Western Art and which are objects of no relevance in the contemporary context but rich with references to antiquity. Responding to an almost ironic context, Natee created a series which is as old as it is new, as fragmentary as it is integral, and that allows the artist to expound the complexity of the contemporary world.



To deconstruct a classical image, Natee assumed complete authorship of his novel image, whilst retaining culture references to the older images. This is not a radical anti-establishment graffiti but a re-construction of the fragments, both in the emotional and formal sense, in search of a new order that is relevant to the

present whilst retaining a strange, almost ironic archaic poetry as one recognizes the fragmented classics. A tension is inevitably created between the classic and the contemporary and tension that renders this work so very compelling.



Also on offer in the Contemporary section is a six-colour silkscreen and lithograph, *Jackie Deconstructed* by Russel Wong (b. Singapore 1961). Russel is a highly successful commercial photographer, mostly noted for his celebrity shots with Jackie Chan, Joan Chan and Richard Gere and his projects for films such as 'House of Flying Daggers' and 'Lust, Caution'. However, he has been trying to cross the line from commercial to fine photography which is a direct result of his insatiable quest for self-expression and inspiration from nature. In Russel's works, he intends to raise the question of "when does a photograph stop being a photograph and become a painting".

Pre-sale exhibitions:

Singapore	Grand Hyatt Singapore	19-20 October
Mumbai	Christie's Mumbai	24-27 October
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	22-24 November

Auction:

Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art, 25 November at 10:00 am
Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

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About Christie's

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