

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

佳士得香港有限公司

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CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG TO OFFER IMPORTANT CHINESE CERAMICS AND WORKS OF ART IN THE AUTUMN AUCTIONS



Important Chinese Ceramics

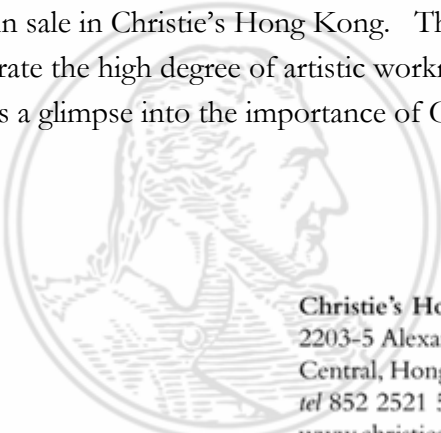
28 November 2005

Important Chinese Works of Art

28-29 November 2005

Hong Kong – An exceptional selection of important Chinese ceramics and works of art will be offered at Christie's Hong Kong Autumn auctions on 28 and 29 November 2005.

Pola Antebi, Senior Vice President and Head of the Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art Department at Christie's said: "Following the success of the sale of the Yuan dynasty blue and white *Guigu* jar which sold for over £15.6 million at Christie's London this summer that established the world records for both Chinese and Asian work of art, we are thrilled to be offering a closely related example in the *Important Chinese Ceramics* Autumn sale in Christie's Hong Kong. These narrative jars are extremely important, not only do they illustrate the high degree of artistic workmanship attained in the mid 14th century but they also provide us a glimpse into the importance of Chinese culture when Mongol rule was waning."



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The exceptionally rare and important Yuan blue and white jar (circa 1350) to be offered in Hong Kong is one of only eight Yuan period jars decorated with narrative scenes known to exist (Lot 1403, Estimate on request). Similar to the jar sold in London on which two characters *Guigu* were inscribed, this very rare jar has a three-character inscription, '*Jin Xiang Ting*' (Pavilion of Fragrant Brocades) above the entrance of a pavilion. Formerly from the British Rail Pension Fund, the '*Jinxiang Ting*' jar is exquisitely painted in vibrant sapphire-blue tones rendering a panoramic garden landscape scene, detailed with groups of standing figures on either side of a lone pavilion. Using the exterior of the jar as a canvas, the details are impressive.

Art historians have identified this jar as depicting a love story inspired by woodblock prints and popularized by *zaju* dramas, told through songs, poetic dialogue, dance and stage action that developed during the Yuan period. The story is set in the Tang dynasty and its title is known as "*Meng Yuemei xie ben Jinxiang Ting*", or 'Meng Yuemei writes her regrets in the Pavilion of Fragrant Brocades'. Miss Meng is portrayed on the jar as a tall willowy figure standing beside her maid who is pointing in the direction of a scholar in the distance. This figure is Scholar Chen with whom Meng Yuemei falls in love and the couple pledge to marry. However, Yuemei's father finds out about the proposed marriage and separates the couple by sending Chen to the capital to take his *jinsi* degree. Chen succeeds but falls foul of the wicked General An Lushan. Chen was demoted and sent to a post far away in Shanxi province. In the meantime, Meng Yuemei's father also incurs the wrath of General An Lushan and was forcibly embroiled in the notorious An Lushan Rebellion. The Meng family members are captured by the rebels, and Yuemei is sold into the household of the famous General Gu to be a singer and entertainer. The story ends when the kind and sympathetic General Gu sends Yuemei back to Scholar Chen so that the two will finally be able to marry.

A magnificent pair of Imperial famille rose 'quail' dishes bearing the Yongzheng reign marks (1723-1735) (lot 1348, Estimate on request) will generate much excitement among international collectors. Of impeccable quality, condition and provenance, rarely are Chinese ceramics of this calibre offered for sale. The pair of dishes is expected to sell well above the HK\$80 million/US\$10 million unpublished estimate and set a world record price for Yongzheng period ceramics, a period of time where the most refined ceramics of the Qing dynasty were produced.

Only one other Yongzheng dish of this design is known to exist. Until 1971, these 'quail' dishes on offer were in the collection of the American Barbara Hutton, at one time among the richest women in the world; she was known for her remarkable eye and impeccable taste for quality. Barbara Hutton amassed a large collection of important ceramics which, including these dishes, were exhibited in Honolulu in 1956-7. These dishes are superbly enamelled: each depicting a pair of quails on verdant ground amidst a background of jagged rocks, narcissus flowers and a flowering prunus

tree. The imagery heralds a wish for eternal Spring, as represented by prunus flowers, and the homonym 'An' for the word 'quails' augments a desire for Peace.

Symbolism became an art form by the Qing dynasty, and this is strongly reflected in Imperial polychrome ceramics of the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods. A consummate example is the famille rose 'peaches and bats' bowl formerly from the Edward T. Chow Collection (Lot 1345, estimate: HK\$8,000,000-10,000,000/ US\$1,100,000-1,300,000). Bearing a Yongzheng reign mark, this bowl is extremely rare as it is the only example with all five peaches growing on a tree on the exterior, providing an image of abundance whilst naturalistically leaving the prunus tree to extend its branches into the interior of the bowl. Peaches are symbolic of longevity as cultivated by the Daoist story of Xiwangmu, Queen Mother of the Western Paradise; immortality was bestowed on those who ate her peaches with magical properties. The five bats are signs of the 'Five Blessings': longevity, health, wealth, love of virtue and a peaceful death.

The sale will also offer a famille rose Qianlong dish decorated with the same theme which provides an interesting opportunity for comparative study (Lot 1346, estimate: HK\$3,000,000-4,000,000/ US\$390,000-510,000). Decorated with five bats and eight peaches, the dish is an example of the progression and continuation of enamel styles in the first half of the 18th century.

Undoubtedly, by the Qianlong period, tradition and innovations that prevailed resulted in spectacular pieces such as the extremely rare gilt-decorated copper-red glazed bottle vase from the estate of Ruth P. Phillips (Lot 1313, estimate: HK\$4,000,000-5,000,000/ US\$520,000-650,000). The bottle vase is boldly painted with gilt on the gently rounded body rendering a perfectly balanced bouquet of flowers on one side and Qianlong's own poem on the other.

The *Important Chinese Works of Art* sale will feature an array of rare and exquisite Chinese works of art. Amongst the highlights is a Yuan dynasty carved cinnabar lacquer dish incised with the maker's name, Yang Mao Zao (Lot 1529, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000/ US\$260,000-380,000). The provenance of this dish can be traced back to the Otani Family who ran the Buddhist Nishihonganji West Temple in Kyoto. The family sold the lacquer dish in an auction in 1913. This dish is superbly carved on the interior with a dense pattern of lotus flowers interspersed with large lotus leaves providing a lotus pond vignette. The design is an interesting contrast to the carved lacquer wares of the early Ming period when figures and landscape scenes were popular, such as the Yongle mark and period box and cover (1403-1425) (Lot 1537, estimate: HK\$1,800,000-2,200,000/ US\$240,000-280,000). The upper surface is influenced by paintings of the Southern Song period (1127-1279) as it portrays a scholar standing on a terrace as if admiring the surrounding scenery.

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This landscape tradition continued into the Qing dynasty, and is seen on an Imperial glass cup delicately enamelled with a continuous miniature landscape scene all against a milky-white glass background which effectively gives it a misty atmosphere (Lot 1567, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$200,000-260,000). The use and choice of materials were carefully thought out by Qing period artisans working in the Imperial workshops. The Qianlong period white jade covered bowl for example is expertly worked to show the translucency of its flawless material (Lot 1645, estimate: HK\$4,000,000-6,000,000/ US\$520,000-770,000). The practice in selecting the best material obviously carried on into the late Qing/Republic period as seen by the magnificent emerald-green jadeite censer and cover carved in archaic style in imitation of early bronzes (Lot 1646, estimate: HK\$10,000,000-12,000,000/ US\$1,300,000-1,500,000). This censer from a private collection is among the finest examples ever offered at auctions.

Pre-sale Exhibitions:

Beijing	St. Regis Beijing	5–6 November
Shanghai	The Westin Shanghai	8–9 November
Taipei	Fubon Life Assurance Building	19–20 November
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	25–28 November

Auctions:

Important Chinese Ceramics

28 October at 5:00pm

Important Chinese Works of Art

Part I, 28 October at 7:30pm

Part II, 29 October at 9:00am

Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

More information about Christie's sales of Important Chinese Ceramics and Important Chinese Works of Art can be found on 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. 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 upon request
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