

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S
佳士得香港有限公司

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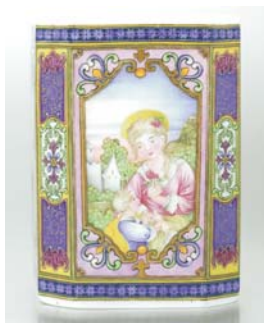
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EAST MEETS WEST, ARTISTRY MEETS CREATIVITY –

**CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG TO OFFER CHINESE WORKS OF ART
INSPIRED BY THE WEST ALONGSIDE IMPORTANT CERAMICS**

Reflections: Chinese Art Inspired by the West
Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art
27 November 2007



A magnificent Imperial Beijing enamel glass brushpot
Qianlong mark and of the period (1736-1795)
8.6 cm high
Expected to realize in excess of HK\$30 million/ US\$3.85 million

Hong Kong – Christie's Hong Kong is proud to present to art collectors and connoisseurs from around the world, for the first time ever, a special sale devoted to Chinese works of art that were inspired by the West. On 27 November 2007, fifteen unparalleled creations that blend the essence of Chinese artistry and innovative Western conceptions - encompassing their subject matter, design, motif or shape - will be offered in the *Reflections: Chinese Art Inspired by the West* alongside over 200 pieces of *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* that are altogether expected to realize in excess of HK\$300 million/ US\$38 million.

While China has been a world leader in so many branches of the arts, Chinese craftsmen have not been immune to influences from other cultures. In some cases, art objects entered China from abroad and aspects of their design caught the imagination of Chinese patrons. Chinese craftsmen were then willing to adapt the foreign designs, forms, or technology for inclusion in their own repertoire. In other cases

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Chinese craftsmen were initially required to produce items that would appeal to patrons overseas, in order to help the export trade, and some aspects of foreign taste were gradually absorbed. There was also the influence of foreign artists and craftsmen who came to China, who then inspired their Chinese colleagues, and were themselves impressed by Chinese artists in return. The greater part of this artistic interaction was between China and the countries to the west of her borders, and it is this cultural exchange – particularly with the Islamic west and with Europe – that provides the focus of attention in this special sale.

Taking the centre-stage is a magnificent Imperial Beijing enamel glass brushpot, Qianlong mark and of the period (1736-1795), expected to realize in excess of HK\$30 million/ US\$3.85 million (Lot 1665). It is one of the finest and rarest examples of enamels on glass made for the Qianlong Emperor; and **the only perfect glass brushpot of this form and decoration known to exist**. Early Qianlong Palace enamels on glass were characterized by high artistic qualities combined with perfect technical control. The translucent milk-white glass ground of the present lot is superbly enamelled on each side with a different European ‘mother-and-child’ scene, while Western castellated residences and architecture, mountainous landscapes and trees are meticulously depicted in the background.

Another intriguing piece is an extremely rare Imperial paste-embellished watch-inset *ruyi* from the Qianlong period (Estimate: HK\$5,000,000-6,000,000/ US\$640,000-770,000, Lot 1672). In the 18th Century Qing dynasty, European clocks and timepieces were imported to Guangzhou where craftsmen emulated foreign techniques to create highly ornate and accurate timepieces, as well as small novelty clock-set items selected as tributes to the Qing court. The present lot, in the *ruyi* form, is believed to be amongst these treasures. *Ruyi* was regarded as an auspicious emblem meaning ‘as one desires’. Sceptres of this elegant S-shaped form would have been commissioned by or presented to Qing emperors to commemorate birthday and as New Year presents. Based on its sumptuous design, this *ruyi* was most probably presented to the Qing court as a gift.



Also on offer is a very rare enamel and gilt-decorated figure of a ‘foreigner’ from the Qing dynasty, dated to the early 18th Century (Estimate: HK\$5,000,000-7,000,000/ US\$640,000-900,000, Lot 1666). The interesting figure, with a caricatured face and rounded eyes, is well-modelled standing astride and its arms outstretched in a hospitable gesture. The hat it wears is embellished by lilac and turquoise enamels, while the surcoat and boots are all finely chased and gilt-decorated. This particular type of dress is likely to be inspired by Venetian costume, and both the facial expression and the clothes bear a resemblance to those of Pulcinella, a figure central to the Italian comedy that was most popular in the 1720s.

A selection of blue and white vessels from early Ming dynasty that combine elegance and exceptional artistry will be featured. Among them is an important blue and white moonflask, *bianbu* from Yongle period (1403-1424), expected to fetch over HK\$20 million/ US\$2.5 million (Lot 1664). During the Yongle period, the fascination for Islamic shapes and design was a unique influence on blue and white porcelains produced for the Emperor. Among the most popular of shapes were moonflasks of various forms. The decoration on this flask is the most sinicised of all the decorative schemes seen on flasks of this shape. Nevertheless, in the structure of the floral decoration seen on its flattened sides, the influence of western designs such as the 'tree of life' can be observed. Thus the moonflask appears unique for its type of floral decoration.



Another unusual decorative motif is the depiction of bunches of grapes growing on leafy vines as can be seen on an extremely rare blue and white ewer dated to the Ming dynasty Yongle period (1403-1424) (Estimate: HK\$7,000,000-9,000,000/ US\$900,000-1,200,000, Lot 1662). Not only was its shape taken from Middle Eastern metalwork, imitating its elegantly arched handle and graceful spout, the fruit itself was 'foreign' to China. Grapes are among the plants that are recorded as having been brought to China from Central Asia by Zhang Qian, a returning envoy of Emperor Wudi in 128 BC. Grapes were eaten fresh, as well as dried in the form of raisins, but they do not seem to have been widely used to make wine until the Tang dynasty. By the early 15th century, however, many different varieties of grapes were grown in China. The present ewer on offer is the only known example in its choice of the grape motif, since known ewers of this period were decorated with loquats, peaches and pomegranates.



Further highlights include a magnificent early Ming blue and white foliated-rim 'grapes' dish from the Yongle period as well (Estimate: HK\$5,000,000-7,000,000/ US\$640,000-900,000, Lot 1661). Its interior is exquisitely painted in deep cobalt-blue with three bunches of grapes growing from a vine with large furled leaves. The exterior sides with further floral sprays in the moulded panels including morning glory, lotus, peony and chrysanthemum.

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The *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* sale will include a myriad of superb and rare Chinese porcelain and works of art from various important collectors. A focal piece is a magnificent and large bronze figure of Guanyin from the 14th Century, late Yuan-early Ming dynasty, expected to fetch over HK\$30 million/ US\$3.85 million (Lot 1803). This majestic figure is superbly cast seated in *dhyanasana* with hands held in front of the chest in *namascara mudra*, a gesture of offering and veneration. It is richly adorned with beaded jewels and crowned with a diadem incorporating the Amitabha Buddha. But the most striking aspect is the treatment of the garments, both in their sculptural form and in the choice of decorative motifs. Despite the large size, the folds of the shawl and the dhoti are finely rendered to suggest the thinness of the material, providing an element of naturalism and fluidity.

This magnificent figure was undoubtedly a very special commission by an extremely wealthy donor. The enormous size, larger than life size and measuring 43 1/4 in. high, is rarely seen in Chinese Buddhist bronze images. Given an estimated weight of nearly 400 kg, the casting of the figure would have been a remarkable technical feat with no expense spared in sourcing the huge amount of raw material that was needed.

Another highlight is a magnificent Ming blue and white 'Boys' jar of the Jiajing period (1522-1566) formerly in the J.M. Hu Family collection. Large imperial jars of this design complete with their covers are very rare. The theme of 'children at play' or 'a hundred boys' is a symbolic of progeny and fulfillment of the Confucian ideal in the education, and advancement of sons. The present jar is exquisitely painted in underglaze-blue of brilliant deep purplish tone with a continuous garden landscape scene of 16 boys in various lively pursuits, including one who is impersonating the school master, seated on a high-backed chair in front of a baby crawling towards a book and another boy pulling on strings attached to a toy cart on the ground. In the further distance, three boys are clustered around the square table watching over a jar, probably containing fighting crickets. This jar is expected to realize in excess of HK\$30 million/ US\$3.85 million in the sale (Lot 1738).



Equally captivating is a blue and white massive 'dragon' vase, *tianqiu ping*, Qianlong sealmark and of the period (Estimate: HK\$9,000,000-12,000,000/ US\$1,200,000-1,500,000, Lot 1688). The dragon motif is one of the most important Chinese ceramic decorative repertoires symbolizing Imperial power. The spherical body of the present lot is splendidly painted with vivid purple-blue cobalt tones to depict a striding five-clawed dragon that has a face with pronounced eyes and ferocious expression. In fact, the extraordinary expression and stance of the dragon rendered on such a massive spherical body

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would have been remarkably difficult to achieve, and globular vases of such size are therefore exceedingly rare.

Pre-sale exhibitions:

New York	Christie's New York	14 – 18 September
Shanghai	Four Seasons Hotel, Shanghai	3 – 4 November
Beijing	Sofitel Wanda Beijing	7 – 9 November
Taipei	Fubon Life Assurance Building	17 – 18 November
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	22 – 26 November

Auction:

Reflections: Chinese Art Inspired by West	27 November 2007, 2:00 pm
Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art	27 November 2007, 2:30 pm
Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	

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About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2006 that totalled £2.51 billion / US\$4.67 billion. Worldwide sales for the first half of 2007 totalled £1.63 billion / US\$3.25 billion, an increase of 32% by £ and 45% by US\$ from the same period last year and highest half year sales ever in art market history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service, and international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from US\$200 to over US\$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging markets such as China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Dubai, Mumbai and Russia. Christie's also offers its clients worldwide access to its sales through Christie's LIVE™, its unique, real-time online bidding service.

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