

For Immediate Release

31 October 2007

Press Contact: Victoria Cheung 852.2978.9919 vcheung@christies.com
Tony Chan 852.2978.6718 tchan@christies.com

**EXCEPTIONAL CHINESE 20th CENTURY ART ON OFFER
AT CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG AUTUMN SALE**

Chinese 20th Century Art
25 November 2007

Hong Kong - An unparalleled array of works by some of the most celebrated modern Chinese masters including Zao Wou-Ki, Chen Cheng-Po, Sanyu and Liao Chi-Chun will be presented in the Christie's *Chinese 20th Century Art* sale on 25 November at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Chen Cheng-Po (Chen Chenbo, 1895-1947)



Danshui at Sunset, painted in 1935, is a compelling and iconic work representative of Chen's paintings in the Danshui series (Estimate on request, Lot 216). Among the five known oils by Chen that explored the theme of Danshui, the present work stands out because of its unique approach to composition and choice of palette.

Over the years, the distinctive culture, rich history and picturesque natural setting of Danshui in Taiwan have provided inspiration to many artists. The creative energy that Chen expended on the Danshui subject is perfectly illustrated in *Danshui at Sunset* through his very skillful handling of color and depiction of the subject matter.

Under Chen's sensual and vibrant brushstrokes, the red-tiled roofs, meandering lanes and alleyways and people strolling along the right bank of Danshui all become vibrant and alive. Also, with the combination of multiple perspectives, Chen guides the viewer's gaze from a high vantage point through to the river and the distant ocean, creating a harmonic yet rhythmic composition. He also broadens the foreground horizontally, which adds even greater breadth and depth to the work and creates a theatre-like effect.

Zao Wou-Ki (Zhao Wuji, born in 1921)

Zao began to produce abstract works around 1954, employing symbols and motifs with a mysterious eastern ambiance that suggests ancient oracle-bone inscriptions or the patterns on bronze tripods. His symbolic motifs were later replaced by large areas of color applied with free brushwork. During that period, Zao created a number of exceptional works on the theme of the four elements: earth, air, fire and water.

Et la terre était sans forme, painted in 1956-57, belongs to the earth segment of this series (Estimate: HK\$15,000,000-20,000,000/ US\$1,923,100-2,564,100, Lot 211). In this masterpiece, he uses five fundamental colors – blue, red, yellow, white, and black – to express the appearance of the primal earth: blue-green symbolizing woods, red representing blood, yellow standing for earth, black and white resembling day and night.



Zao's works are strongly influenced by Chinese culture, as expressed in his emphasis on harmony and the natural movements of clouds and flowing water. This masterly brushwork style is well illustrated in two works, *8.2.72* (Estimate: HK\$4,000,000-6,000,000/ US\$512,800-769,200, Lot 215) and *17.4.64* (Estimate: HK\$7,000,000-9,000,000/ US\$897,400-1,153,800, Lot 212). The swift and intense applications of color

reminiscent of the vigorous strokes of classical Chinese landscape painting are clearly recognizable. The composition of *8.2.72* is formed entirely by lines and washes of color as in traditional Chinese paintings. It features vigorous brushwork and thick colours resembling the concentration of black ink. *17.4.64* is a powerful depiction of the lofty mountains and broad rivers.

Liao Chi-Chun (Liao Jichun, 1902–1976)

Liao Chi-Chun was a master of colour, who expressed rich emotion through simple hues and rearranging basic elements. Liao's colours reflect the Eastern origins of his art, in particular Chinese art, and his canvases acquired a bold, fervent quality through their use of deep, brilliant colour, often in primary palettes of reds or greens overlaid with other saturated hues.

Beside the Window, (Estimate: HK\$9,000,000-12,000,000/ US\$1,153,800-1,538,400, Lot 220) represents a significant turning point in Liao's work in the 1960s as he moved from symbolic primary colors to fresher tones with pure blacks and whites that enhance a sense of depth and the penetration of light.



In the present work, Liao skillfully arranged the compositional elements and colors in the foreground and middle ground. In the foreground, the slanting lines of a piece of linen on the reclining chair carry the viewer's eye toward the low table in the middle distance where the cat is sleeping. The blooming flowers on the table evoke a pleasing harmony with the garden in the distance and the bright pastel yellow garden path that glows in the afternoon sun.

Chu Teh Chun (Zhu Dequn, Born in 1920)

A selection of superb works by Chu Teh-Chun from different periods of his artistic creativity is also featured. In 1955, Chu went to Paris to embark on his artistic career in Europe. He immediately starts adding elements from western art to his own work. On offer are two of his important early works - N° 179: *La lumière du dedans* (Estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000/ US\$128,200-192,300, Lot 231), and *Profond Aujourd'hui* (Estimate: HK\$1,000,000-2,000,000/ US\$128,200-256,400, Lot 230) (illustrated right).



In 1965, Chu scaled Mount Blanc and was deeply impressed with the majestic vistas of the Alps, which became a source of inspiration for series of oils in whitish palettes which he executed upon his return. *Écritures*, painted in 1981 (Estimate: HK\$800,000-1,000,000/ US\$102,600-128,200, Lot 233) recreated his impressions of this world of ice and snow.

16 mars 1979 (Estimate: HK\$1,200,000-2,000,000/ US\$153,800-256,400, Lot 280) produced in the late '70s is an excellent example of Chu's typically agile brushwork. By matching his strokes with blocks of white or other light hues, he created the elegant flowing quality of clouds and rushing waters.

In the 1980s, Chu entered a world full of energy, speed and color. In *Un éclair de lumière* (Estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000/ US\$128,200-192,300, Lot 232), the artist's brush sweeps boldly and freely over the canvas, spreading beautiful color across it to create a strong visual impact. Chu's art tended toward an even more formless expression in the 1990s as illustrated in *Dialectique de la nature* (Estimate: HK\$1,600,000-2,400,000/ US\$205,100-307,700, Lot 235) and *Orchestra* (Estimate: HK\$400,000-600,000/ US\$51,300-76,900, Lot 279).

Sanyu (Chang Yu, 1901-1966)

Two stunning floral still-lives by Sanyu from the personal collection of Henri-Pierre Roché (1879- 1959) are further highlights. Roché, an art collector and dealer in Paris, spoke highly of Sanyu's talent and displayed works by Sanyu in his house alongside those of Matisse and other outstanding artists. Between 1929 and 1932, he had amassed over 111 paintings and 600 drawings by Sanyu.

Chrysanthemums with Green Leaves (Estimate: HK\$8,000,000 – 12,000,000/ US\$1,025,600-1,538,500, Lot 217) dated 1929, is one of Sanyu's remarkable early works. The outlines of the vase emerge gently in light gray lines that incarnate the elegance of the flowers, creating a special charm, all of its own.





In *Wild Chrysanthemums in a White Baluster Vase* (Estimate: HK\$4,500,000- 5,500,000/ US\$576,900-705,100, Lot 218), painted in the 1930s, Sanyu transformed Western influences into the personal features of his art, fully demonstrating his mature individual style. The leaves, in deep, inky black, highlight the delicateness of the chrysanthemums, while the striking white vase creates a prominent though contrast.

Wu Guanzhong (Born in 1919)

Master Wu Guanzhong is represented in this season's sale by his monumental work, *The Spring at Lijiang* (Estimate: HK\$2,500,000-3,500,000/ US\$320,500- 448,700, Lot 226). Painted circa 1970s, it is the original design sketch for an inlaid porcelain mural in the new Beijing Grand Hotel. The artist employs a subtle gray palette to depict the scenery of the Xiangbishan (Elephant Hill) in Guilin. The large size of the work expresses the grandeur of rows of mountains and juxtaposes Wu's skillful brushwork with use of oil. In 2002, the mural created from this original work was unfortunately demolished during the renovation of the hotel, leaving only this sketch as a silent witness to the passing tides of history.



By the 1960s and 1970s, Wu Guanzhong had produced a series of strikingly beautiful oils that are expressive of the Chinese aesthetic, which brought his career to its first great creative peak. *Early Spring by the River* (estimate: 2,500,000, 3,000,000/ US\$320,500-448,700, Lot 227) features a concise composition with a strong sense of layered depth, while the trunks are presented with the incisiveness of an ink work. The composition of *Azalea* (estimate: HK\$1,800,000-2,000,000/ US\$230,000-333,300, Lot 225) features a traditional tripartite while areas of dense detail and solid form are counterweighted by openness and space.

Ju Ming (Zhu Ming, born in 1938)



A selection of impressive sculptures from Ju Ming's highly acclaimed *Taiji* series are placed in the limelight. Taiji is a Chinese physical practice that underlines natural harmony to encourage balance between the body and mind. To Ju Ming, the spirit of his art and Taiji both have the same essence in that they strive to achieve an ideal expression of the union of man and nature.

Taiji Series - Sparring (HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$192,300-256,400, Lot 245), *Taiji Series – Push Hand* (HK\$3,500,000-4,500,000/ US\$448,700-576,900, Lot 290) are important examples from this series that evoke Yin & Yang, peace & harmony.

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A further highlight is an extraordinary large work *Taiji Arch* (HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$769,200-1,025,600, Lot 240). It possesses a captivating sense of motion, with its minimalist techniques that seems to finish the work in one breath. Each face of the work presents lines in curving motion, so that from any angle the viewer sees different blocks that echo and resonate with each other within the flowing motion of the whole.

Also included are two wooden sculptures, *Taiji Series* (HK\$8,000,000-12,000,000/ US\$1,025,600-1,538,500, Lot 241), and *Guan Gong* (HK\$8,000,000-10,000,000/ US\$1,025,600-1,282,100, Lot 242). These magnificent works provide us with a special revelation of Ju's sculptural vocabulary and its unique power and energy. Rather than representing specific individual forms or shapes, they embody a kind of metaphysical power and spiritual response.

Wang Huaiqing (Born in 1944)

In 1987, Wang was invited to the US by Oklahoma City University, where he remained for a period of two years. His subsequent contact with American abstract expressionist trends would become an important influence on his later deconstruction of the forms of antique Chinese furniture and architecture. The Chinese ancient architecture simply held an irresistible attraction for him, and the unique lines and spaces of its buildings and antique furniture styles provided him with endless creative stimulation.

In 1991, Wang began a series of paintings using Ming-style furniture as subject matter. In *Half Table, Half Chair* (Estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,200,000/ US\$128,200-153,800, Lot 204) and *Chairs in the Mirror* (Estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$192,300-256,400, Lot 202), he creates a powerful expansion of space within the painting by using three interconnected rectangles and lines to divide the space in a way that breaks through traditional, clichéd compositional layout



Pre-sale exhibitions:

Jakarta	Christie's Jakarta	21 – 23 September
Moscow	Pavlovsk Library	16 - 21 October
Singapore	Grand Hyatt Singapore	19 – 20 October
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 – 24 November

Auction:

Chinese 20th Century Art, 25 November at 1:00 pm
Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

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About Christie's

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