

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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Press Contact: Victoria Cheung
Tony Chan

852.2978.9919
852.2978.6718

vcheung@christies.com
tchan@christies.com

**CONTEMPORARY CHINESE, KOREAN, JAPANESE AND INDIAN ART
TO SHINE AT CHRISTIE'S AUTUMN SALE IN HONG KONG**



Fountain



Rocket to the Sky



Heavenly Ladder



Ode to Joy



Great Dragon



Red Lanterns

Cai Guo-Qiang (Born in 1957)
Set of Fourteen Drawings for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Project
Gunpowder on paper (14 works in total)
Executed in 2002
Estimate: HK\$28,000,000-36,000,000 (US\$3,589,700-4,615,400)

**Asian Contemporary Art
25 November 2007**

Hong Kong - Following on the tremendous success of the sale in May which totaled HK\$274 million (US\$35.6 million), the forthcoming *Asian Contemporary Art* sale to take place on 25 November will offer 327 spectacular and highly-coveted works by some of the most celebrated contemporary artists in Asia.

Christie's Hong Kong Limited
2203-5 Alexandra House, 16-20 Chater Road
Central, Hong Kong
tel 852 2521 5396 fax 852 2845 2646
www.christies.com

The sale showcases the great variety and diversity of Asian contemporary art, ranging from paintings and mixed media to sculptures and photography created in different forms, media and styles. It promises to be the most exciting contemporary art auction ever presented in Asia and is destined to appeal to collectors from around the world.

Cai Guo-Qiang (Born in 1957)

Invented by ancient China, fireworks have always possessed an unmatched symbolic significance. They are violent but beautiful, mystical yet with mass appeal, and produce a visual excitement that suggests the elusive power of the universe. Through setting off fire and explosions, Cai's more than a decade-long period of creative experimentation has produced new vocabularies and forms, particularly in his large-scale projects as exemplified by *Set of Fourteen Drawings for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Project*, executed in 2002 (Estimate: HK\$28,000,000-36,000,000/ US\$3,589,700-4,615,400, Lot 487).

These 14 large gunpowder screens were created by Cai soon after he orchestrated a spectacular 20-minute fireworks show on 20 October 2001 during the APEC meetings in Shanghai. A total of 26,000 fireworks were used in this APEC Cityscape Fireworks project, spreading across a 360-degree field of vision stretching over 1800 meters in Shanghai. It marked the first time a contemporary Chinese artist had displayed the broad vision and hopes of the Chinese people through such a large-scale outdoor project which received unanimous acclaim both in China and abroad. Upon Cai's return to his hometown Chuanzhou, he started to make sketches of the event, capturing the impressive energy of that night and displaying them in the highest level of beauty and artistry.

This set of stunning drawings provides a complete retrospective of the creative path and concepts the artist developed over the past 20 years, and represents one of the peak moments of his career. In *Ode to Joy*, Cai uses abstract, geometric forms to sketch out the 23 buildings along the Bund in Shanghai and the scenes of celebration in an incisive and vigorous style.

In *Great Dragon*, Cai calls for a re-examination of the concept of the dragon which has long been a symbol of power and supernatural strength in Chinese culture. The dragon form in this drawing was created by a hemp rope some six meters long which was weighted down with stones on a paper base permeated with gunpowder. A dramatic effect was created with the giant dragon spreading out in flight through heaven.

Further drawings in the set include *Gift from the Heavens*, in which the romance and grandeur of Chinese culture is well presented, *Bright Pearl Shines on the Orient*, *Red Carpet* and *Fountain*. Two spectacular pieces, *Heavenly Ladder* and *Rocket to the Sky* reflect upon Cai's experimentations using themes of the universe and extraterrestrial beings.

Yue Minjun (Born in 1962)

In late 1990, a new community of avant-garde artists began to form in the outskirts of Beijing, in the area surrounding Yuan Ming Yuan, the old Imperial Summer Palace. Painted during Yue Minjun's formative years at Yuan Ming Yuan, *Big Ear* (Estimate: HK\$5,500,000-7,000,000/ US\$705,100-897,400, Lot 455) is a rare, large-scale work. The painting exemplifies the artist's approach to composition and color that would eventually establish the premise for his later iconic series of satirical self-portraits.



The notion of inserting an image of the self in an anti-heroic painting was in and of itself a radical deviation in the Chinese tradition of oil paintings under communism. In *Big Ear*, Yue, the figure in grey, has painted himself into this large-scale canvas. For the artist to boldly position himself in the center of the composition was a radical and liberating gesture. The composition suggests a snapshot taken spontaneously, or an assortment of image-memories collaged together. The figures are disproportioned, mildly distorted, and do not appear to be engaged with each other or any particular situation. Their smiling faces and jovial exteriors are at odds with the discomfort, disorientation and claustrophobia of the composition, a mood that perfectly reflects Yue's perception of the cultural climate at the time.

A year after the completion of *Big Ear*, Yue created *Red Boat* (Estimate: HK\$4,000,000-6,000,000/ US\$512,800-769,200, Lot 457). The title is an apparent reference to the *Ship of Fools*, the well-known allegory found in Western literature and paintings. The story describes humans as empty vessels, passengers on a ship who neither know nor care about their destination. Yue reinterprets this by creating his self-images as an ironic response to the power of mass-produced "idols" to affect mainstream behavior. Yue's six clones are identically dressed, down to the creases in their pants; they stand at military attention but are ironically lodged perpendicularly across a red row boat, lost at sea.



Yue Minjun's exceptional installation of fifteen separate paintings, *Life* (Estimate: HK\$7,000,000-9,000,000/ US\$897,400-1,153,800, Lot 456) was first exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1999. Each painting depicts Yue's self-image in different, contorted and absurdist positions, contortions that represent the artist's attempts to re-shape the human figure so as to mimic



individual written ideograms from the Chinese written language. The angular and curved body parts reflect the essence of the dots, lines, and curvature strokes that form the basic components of any Chinese character.

What is most striking about each pose is the aura of submission and isolation inherent to each canvas. The laughing figure is exaggerated to such an extent that it becomes clear that the hilarity verges on a kind of madness, its source unrelated to the reality of one's circumstances. By equating the human body with language itself, Yue renders the body both a signifier of meaning and a medium subject to manipulation and control.

Zhang Xiaogang (Born in 1958)

Painted in 1985, *A Woman with Sheep* (Estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$192,300-256,400, Lot 460) is a solemn ambiguous portrait of a Madonna-like figure protecting the animal in her arms. The figures appear in a barren landscape, and what appears to be a snake passes unnoticed to the left of the woman. Both the woman and sheep emanate innocence and inner tranquility, in which a mournful introspective quality shines through. These biblical references mark the sheep as a potential sacrificial victim, and the seated figure appears in fact to be almost hiding or suppressing the sheep, as if to protect it from the world. This symbolic relationship between the mother-figure and the sheep-as-child figure presages the themes that Zhang would later develop in his iconic *Bloodlines: Big Family Series*.

Portrait in Yellow, painted in 1993 by Zhang Xiaogang (Estimate: HK\$8,000,000-10,000,000/ US\$1,025,600-1,282,100, Lot 463), is part of a series where Zhang produces intimate portraits of family and friends. Zhang painted only seven portraits in this pivotal series, and they all included portraits of friends and relatives. In this case, the figure portrayed is Ye Yongqing, a fellow artist and member of the Southwest China Art Group.



The use of yellow marks the beginning of Zhang's exploration of a monochromatic palette to metaphorically represent his subject's purity. The patch of light hitting Ye's face is a precursor to the patches of discoloration seen on the faces in the later *Bloodline Series*, symbolically representing an external trauma that has taken route in the subject as if a part of his flesh.

Set against a stark room with only a bed and television set, Zhang's red "bloodline" is literally a conduit as it travels from the socket through the ears of Ye and finally reaching the pulsating heart on the bed, reflecting the artist's growing concern with the relationship between the individual and society. Already in this painting, Zhang uses certain compositional elements to set the figure apart from reality and into the imaginary room that exists only in the artist's mind.

Zeng Fanzhi (Born in 1964)

Having arrived in Beijing in the early 1990s, Zeng was struck by the anxiety and alienation felt by China's emerging cosmopolitan elite. He soon began his iconic *Mask* series, through which the artist questions the ironic gap between public and private truth, and the honesty of expression in modern Chinese society.

Mask Series 1995 No. 8 (Estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000/ US\$128,200-192,300, Lot 514) is an early and extremely rare example from the series, one of Zeng's few masked female figures, and a portrait of the artist's own wife. The sincerity of her gestures subtly conflicts with the brutality of her over-sized hands and the inconsistent light sources depicted within the painting.

In *Mask 1995 No. 3*, (Estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000/ US\$256,400-384,600, Lot 453), the figure's calmly composed hands are disproportionately large and lugubrious; his steely eyes reveal nothing behind the marionette-like façade. By exaggerating these minimal attributes, Zeng reveals the human frailty of the figure, rendering him somewhat strained, aloof, and alone.

Zeng's works are fundamentally about the distance between people. This is evident in *The Mask – Five Faces* (Estimate: HK\$4,000,000-5,000,000/ US\$512,800-641,000, Lot 451), one of the artist's few group portraits. The group portrait aspect of the composition, the theatrical arrangement of the space, and the array of masked expressions, create the effect of characters performing on the stage.



The feeling of doubt and uncertainty is also present in *Mask Series 1999 No. 6* (Estimate: HK\$3,000,000-4,000,000/ US\$384,600-512,800, Lot 450), a self portrait of the artist. He is dressed exquisitely yet somberly, while his posture is stiff but his gaze confronts the viewer directly. The work is full of longing and loss, aspirations and dread. Despite his meticulous self-presentation, his massive hands once again betray a human clumsiness and vulnerability that can never be fully suppressed.

JAPANESE CONTEMPORARY ART:

Aya Takano (Born in 1976)

Works by Aya Takano capture the essence of Japanese contemporary art which is distinguished for its embrace of popular culture and its reflection of a new generation of psychology and way of life. Takano's

style and subject matter poignantly portray a universe that resonates with people's sense of identification and need for an alternative reality.

In Japanese pop culture, all things cute with extreme idealized childlike traits are summarized as 'Kawaii' and Takano's saccharine illustrations of her imagination are clearly highly driven by this culture. The semi-nude and nude girls in her works symbolize an incredibly unperturbed fantastical world. The palette of purple, pink, yellow and orange with its undeveloped pencil outline sweetens her character's childlike adorability as illustrated in *Fallin' Manma-Air*, painted in 2000 (Estimate: HK\$200,000-300,000/ US\$25,600-38,500, Lot 526).



In her later work entitled *September* created in 2002, Takano approached her subject in a different manner, suggesting the softness of the girl through the metamorphosis of the body into a traditional landscape (Estimate: HK\$100,000-150,000/ US\$12,800-19,200, Lot 525). The strange position of the girl emphasizes the nature of the body, thus the pure spirits of Takano's characters. Since the disintegration of the spiritual by technology and consumerism has led to a separation of body and soul, life is largely experienced through the physical and sensual, with a strong focus on the self.

Korehiko Hino (born in 1976)



In the works by Korehiko Hino, the sitter's awkwardly crouching pose and bewildered eyes often are the first things to catch the viewer's attention. The sealed-in background reflects the intense suffocation and anxiety of Japanese society caused by an explosion of information. On offer is *Boredom & Snorting* (Estimate: HK\$300,000-400,000/ US\$38,500-51,300, Lot 524, illustrated right)

and *Is It a Dream* (Estimate: HK\$ 90,000-150,000/ US\$11,500-19,200, Lot 523). In particular, the strabismic eyesight of the sitter indicates the restlessness caused by individual's effort to catch up with an ever-changing society. The pale skin color translucently echoes the background palette of the disoriented environment.

Satoshi Watanabe (Born in 1967)

In contemporary visual culture, the colors of television and the Internet are created through individual dots or pixels, like tiny atoms and this entity has become Watanabe's basic unit of creation. The



collection of dots reveals Watanabe's labor-intensive reproduction and refers to the mass production of media images whereby collective consumption becomes a central theme in his oeuvre. A museum

represents a collection of art but in reverse, but in Watanabe's work, the museum is captured as art, as an entity that awaits being collected. Museums conserve and preserve cultural entities in the same way that a painting conserves and preserves an image. This play between the various forms of 'collecting' with the idea of 'consumption', is apparent in *Museum Series - Le Musée du Louvre* (Estimate: HK\$250,000-350,000/ US\$32,100-44,900, Lot 497) and *Museum Series - Tate Modern* (Estimate: HK\$200,000-300,000/ US\$25,600-38,500, Lot 498).

KOREAN CONTEMPROARY ART:

Kim Dong Yoo (Born in 1965)

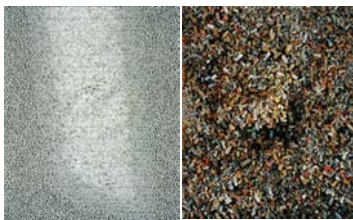
Just like Watanabe is fascinated by the miniscule pixel dots of color, Kim is equally interested by the new developments that modern visual culture has undergone with the introduction of television and internet imagery and for which the pixel has almost become a universal sign. Kim's painterly pixilation creates dual portraitures, pulling viewers in for close inspection and pushing them out again for full perception at the same time. The artist's way of reproducing icons in his paintings is reminiscent of the distinctive aesthetics of Chuck Close and Andy Warhol's work. Kim zooms in on society's tendency to iconize and obsess over idols, and consequently reproducing them into consumable visual symbols. Offered is *Marilyn Monroe* (Estimate: HK\$280,000-360,000/ US\$35,900-46,200, Lot 479) and *Van Gogh's Sunflower* (Estimate: HK\$550,000-750,000/ US\$70,500-96,200, Lot 480).

Hong Kyong Tack (Born in 1968)

The striking manipulation of composition and color in Hong Kyong Tack's work shouts for attention. The crowded asymmetrical composition of *Pencils* (Estimate: HK\$180,000-260,000/ US\$23,100-33,300, Lot 494) presents a very clever visual enigma created by the direction of the pens. The arbitrary positioning of the tip of the pen with the end of the pen offers a view that is not clear on whether the collection of pens is draining into the center of the canvas or flooding out of the canvas. The artist's exquisite placement of variation among repetition allows him to exploit the flatness of the space in a mathematically inspired manner which generates quirks of perception and perspective.



Chun Kwang Young (Born in 1944)



The impressive embellishment of triangular assemblages wrapped in Korean mulberry paper unveils Chun Kwang Young's great craftsmanship. Experimenting between the two-dimensional contour and illusionism, Chun layers triangular units for actual depth with his profundity in the exhilarating relationship between light and object. *Aggregation 98-S101 & Aggregation D00-50S* (Estimate: HK\$1,000,000-2,000,000/ US\$128,200-256,400, Lot 504) evokes the peculiarity of prisms

by dispersion of light into a color spectrum. It changes the direction of a beam of light via refraction. Depending on the angle at which the light hits the surface, it bends at a certain degree of light that passes through the prism. Herewith, the assortment of different sizes and colors nourishes the interaction and reflections of light Chun's relief receive and refract, enhancing the particularly sculptural effect of this oeuvre.

Paik Nam June (1932 - 2006)

In the late 1950s, Paik expressed great interest in new technology and the possibilities of transforming the television into an artistic instrument.



The *Wright Brothers*, executed in 1995 (Estimate: HK\$2,000,000-2,800,000/ US\$256,400-359,000, Lot 488) emanates a sense of nostalgia and history for vintage television sets. Paik's virtuoso in technological enthusiasm possibly parallels the Wright brothers' fervency in the belief that man could fly. The television monitors in

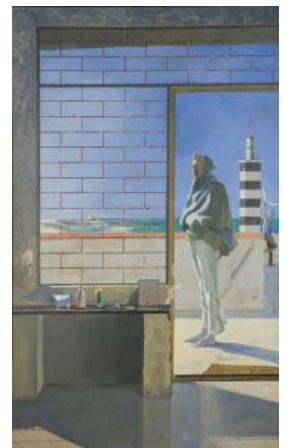
this work are spawned into the form of an airplane through expressive metamorphosis, resembling the first aircraft invented by the Wright brothers.

Employing classic wooden framed televisions and bicycle wheels, Paik mimics the construction materials used for The Wright Flyer I, built by the Wright Brothers in 1903. In this creation, he conveys the power of television in transforming society, which was not dissimilar to the way in which the development of aircraft changed the level of interaction between countries. Both inventions permitted the emergence of cultures and new cognition for further exploration.

INDIAN CONTEMPORARY ART:

Atul Dodiya (Born in 1959)

Regarded as one of the leading artists of his generation, Dodiya has become a widely recognized figurehead in South Asian contemporary art influencing many of the country's burgeoning younger artists. Born and still residing in Mumbai, the culture and history of India play an important role in shaping the barrage of images which informs his works. Starting his career with a deadpan realist style, Dodiya moved away from the literal in the mid-90s towards the fragmented and multilayered techniques which now dominate his oeuvre. Presented in the sale is *Lodging in Somnath* (Estimate: HK\$1,200,000-1,600,000/ US\$ 153,800 – 205,100, Lot 454), an excellent example of the straightforward style which defined his oeuvre in the 1980s. *Lodging in Somnath* is from an important series in which the artist focused on the simultaneous depiction of the



interior and exterior of a given space, often taking cues from the flat candy colored pop of David Hockney. Dodiya subtle and crisp treatment of the play of shadow and light is beautifully reminiscent of the magical interiors of the 17th century Dutch Master Johannes Vermeer.

N.S. Harsha (Born in 1969)

N.S. Harsha is represented in the sale with *Mass Marriage* (Estimate: HK\$1,200,000- 1,600,000/ US\$153,800-205,100, Lot 481). He has a keen interest in structure and spatial organization which often forms the base of his pictorial narratives while the interactions between his figures reflect greater issues of religion, globalization and the clichés present in Indian everyday life. Through his unique and eclectic style as well as the choice of symbols he depicts, Harsha captures the dichotomy between the traditional and the contemporary, the eastern and the western



Subodh Gupta (Born in 1964)

Gupta is represented in the sale with *Untitled*, painted in 2006 (Estimate: HK\$600,000-900,000/ US\$76,900-115,400, Lot 502). In this work, Subodh Gupta casts traditional elements of Indian culture in contemporary media and contexts, constantly referencing the idiosyncrasies of his life in Delhi. Familiar



with both the rural and urban strata of Indian society, the stainless steel containers in the present work are a ubiquitous element in the trousseau of newly married women and a staple of many Indian homes. Predominantly, however, these quotidian vessels are used by middle-class Indians as dishes and cooking implements in place of the porcelain china used in upper-class Western cultures. They are also objects of desire for the less well-to-do. The

artist has an uncanny ability to identify those icons of Indian culture that possess innate dichotomies suggesting both the traditional and modern, the rural and urban, the wealthy and the impoverished.

Pre-sale exhibitions:

Jakarta	Christie's Jakarta	21 -23 September
Moscow	Pavlovsk Library	16 - 21 October
Singapore	Grand Hyatt Singapore	19 – 20 October
Mumbai	Christie's Mumbai	24 – 27 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:

Asian Contemporary Art, 25 November at 4:00 pm

Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention and 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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