

Press Release

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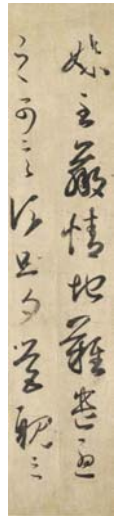
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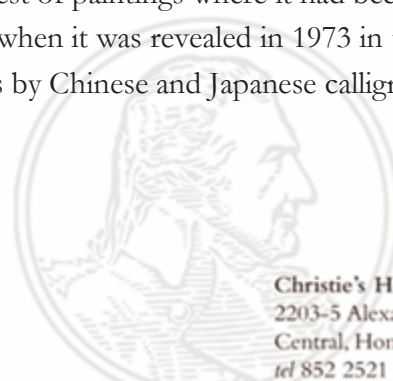
Fine Chinese Classical Paintings and Calligraphy
November 26, 2007

Hong Kong - A tracing copy of the original calligraphy by Wang Xizhi (321-379), the greatest calligrapher in Chinese history, leads the *Fine Chinese Classical Paintings and Calligraphy* sale on 26 November alongside exceptional works by esteemed Chinese masters.

Mei Zhi Tie is a tracing copy from the Tang Dynasty (7th-8th Century) of calligraphy originally inscribed by Wang Xizhi (321-379) (estimate on request, Lot 888). Wang of the Eastern Jin dynasty was born of nobility and he was described as being elegant, erudite, artistic and romantic – he was an exceptional individual about whom many interesting anecdotes have been passed down to this day. Wang Xizhi's writing is majestic with sublime and abstract brushstrokes. The force in his calligraphy is as “airy as a floating cloud and as agile as an alert dragon”. Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty (r. 627-650), was a passionate collector of Wang Xizhi's works. During Emperor Taizong's reign, Wang was named the greatest calligrapher in Chinese history and the "Sage of Calligraphy." This master calligrapher went on to become the focal point for calligraphic studies and research in subsequent eras of Chinese history.



The *Mei Zhi Tie* is a Tang-dynasty (7th – 8th century) copy of Wang's original calligraphy. No actual works by the master survive and thus this very early and skilful copy is an extremely rare find. A private Japanese collector uncovered it by chance in a chest of paintings where it had been stored for decades. This work later made a sensational appearance when it was revealed in 1973 in the “Showa Lan Ting Exhibition” in Japan featuring important works by Chinese and Japanese calligraphers.



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Wang Xizhi's calligraphy is highly coveted and considered irreplaceable because of its rarity and exquisite technique. This painting is considered as a cultural artifact and its appearance is expected to cause a sensation in the sale.

Other Highlights

The sale also features 180 lots by prominent Chinese artists including Dong Qichang, Wang Hui, Shen Zhou and Tang Yin.



A notable piece is an album of eight leaves of calligraphy and paintings by Dong Qichang (1555-1636) (estimate: HK\$8,000,000-10,000,000/ US\$1,032,300-1,290,300, Lot 853). This album was a part of imperial collection of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Though the album itself is small in size, the penmanship and illustrations by Dong Qichang are vibrant and extremely fine. Dong succeeded in depicting mist floating among trees and mountains with light layers of ink strokes. His calligraphy is similarly polished and elegant. It is not surprising that Qianlong, the emperor of the Qing dynasty, expressed his admiration through inscriptions found on every page of the album. So great was the emperor's love for this album that in the autumn of 1771, the emperor himself made a copy of Dong Qichang's work.

Landscapes and Calligraphy is an album of twelve leaves of ink on paper by Shitao (1642-1707) (estimate: HK\$5,000,000-6,000,000/ US\$645,100-774,100, Lot 909). The gentle brushstrokes brilliantly emulate the mist in the valley to create a tranquil landscape. Shitao's work has always been highly sought after in the art market and this album is likely to elicit considerable excitement among art collectors.



Imperial Expedition is a superb work by Wang Hui (1632-1717) and Yu Zhiding (1647- after 1709) executed in ink and colour on silk dated 1696 (estimate: HK\$3,000,000-4,000,000/ US\$387,100-516,100, Lot 838). This long scroll, a collaboration between Wang and Yu, portrays Emperor Kangxi's imperial expedition towards the northern Zhungaer clan, led by Gaer Dan. This accurate representation of the expedition serves as an important historical and artistic document.

Shen Zhou (1427-1509) is represented by two important works. *Lily* (estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$193,500-258,100, Lot 851) was a gift from the artist to his close friend Wang Ao. It describes the longing Wang Ao felt for his recently deceased mother, as well as his longing for a remote and tranquil place. On the back of the painting are colophons by Wang Wei and Zhu Yunming, both of whom are the younger brothers of Wang Ao.

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A Tranquil Place, is an exceptional landscape work by Shen Zhou that combines both broad and thin strokes (estimate: HK\$3,000,000-4,000,000/ US\$387,100-516,100, Lot 864). This is a rarity among works by Shen, as most of his works are painted with a broad stroke technique only.



Another Ming master Tang Yin (1470-1523) is represented by *Old Trees in the Forest* (estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$193,500-258,100, Lot 866). This hanging scroll is executed with the utmost precision. Though it depicts a small patch of flowers and trees, the painting in fact extends further back in the landscape to a plunging waterfall. At the top of the painting, there is a poem inscribed by the artist describing Tang Yin's endurance in life despite the solitude he experienced. The painting is further inscribed by modern artist Wu Hufan, who shares the overwhelming emotions of the artist's inscribed poem.

Mountain Villages by the Qing dynasty court painter Zhang Zongcang (1686-1756) is a rare and exquisite work (estimate: HK\$1,200,000-1,500,000/ US\$154,800-193,500, Lot 920). The painting was kept in the collection of the Imperial art academy for nineteen years. When Zhang Zongcang, a more prominent member of the court painters, returned to his hometown sick and frail, Emperor Qianlong often looked upon the painting and reminisced about Zhang. The emperor then inscribed the painting with phrases that described the intimate conversations the Emperor and the artist shared.



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 – 25 November

Auction:

Fine Chinese Classical Paintings and Calligraphy, 26 November at 9:30 am
Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

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About Christie's

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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 \$600 to over \$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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