

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

佳士得香港有限公司

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**EXCEPTIONAL WORKS BY CHINESE MASTERS HIGHLIGHT
CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG CHINESE MODERN PAINTINGS SALE**



Xu Beihong (1895-1953)
Eight Horses
Scroll, mounted and framed, ink and colour on paper
47.5 x 254cm
Estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$774,200-1,032,300)

Fine Chinese Modern Paintings

26 November 2007

Hong Kong - Christie's Hong Kong will offer 350 exceptional works in the sale of *Fine Chinese Modern and Contemporary Paintings* on 26 November at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The sale promises to be exhilarating as rare pieces by renowned 19th and 20th century masters including Zhang Daqian, Qi Baishi, Xu Beihong, Li Keran will be presented. Of particular note is a selection of works from the Chunfeng Tang Collection assembled by an American collector from the Midwest.

Xu Beihong

The star lot of the sale is *Eight Horses* by Xu Beihong (1895-1953), which is one of the most important works by Xu ever to come to market (Estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$774,200-1,032,300). Xu is renowned for his depiction of horses and his fellow master of Chinese paintings

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Zhang Daqian commented that Xu's horses were drawn with a "divine essence." In this masterpiece, Xu uses a refined style which gives each horse a unique personality. The painting depicts horses gently sipping water, observing their surroundings and communicating with each other. It conveys the artist's perception of natural beauty as solicitude in the way that the horses peacefully coexist.

Painted in 1943, *Eight Horses* was dedicated by the artist to his close friend Wu Zhihui. In 1928, Xu moved from Shanghai to Nanjing and was desperately in need of a large living and working space. Wu generously supported him and drummed up donations to build a residence for the artist. In 1937 when the Sino-Japanese war broke out, Xu was forced to move again from Nanjing to Chongqing.

During this period, the artist and Wu were in constant correspondence. This painting not only represents the close friendship with Wu but it is also a gentle gesture of gratitude.

Another exceptional work by Xu represented in the sale is *Picnic*, which depicts the artist and his friends enjoying a picnic in 1934 during their three-month stay in Moscow and Leningrad to participate in a Chinese paintings exhibition (Estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$193,500-258,100).

During his stay, Xu presented 12 works to the Leningrad Museum and 15 works to Moscow's Modern Art Museum. He was also involved in activities to promote art and cultural exchange between China and the Soviet Union. The present work shows a strong Western influence in its subject, composition and technique, indicative of Xu's early artistic training in France. The artist captures in vivid detail his friends leisurely lying and sitting on the grass in a relaxed atmosphere.



Zhang Daqian

Secluded Valley is a breathtaking piece by Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) painted on gold paper and it is a splendid example of Zhang's famous splashed ink and colour technique (Estimate: HK\$1,800,000-2,200,000/ US\$232,300-283,900). In the 1950s, Zhang Daqian traveled extensively in the West and came into close contact with Western painting styles. Upon learning of abstract expressionism, Zhang found that he could use this approach to enhance Chinese paintings. Hence, in the 1960s, he began to adopt a new splashed ink style based on an ancient method but allowing the ink and colours to move freely on the surface of the paper, which helped him to express the unfaltering beauty of nature.



Secluded Valley, painted in 1970 and featuring the traditional elements of a bridge, a cottage, pine trees and faded mountains in misty clouds, demonstrates Zhang's mastery of the splashing technique. Because gold paper does not absorb ink very well it is extremely difficult to control the tonality, especially in the lightly shaded areas. In some areas, Zhang applied saturated colours to give weight and richness, while in others he let the gold paper shine through. He used a long narrow sheet of paper to create an illusion of height, bringing out the depth of the valley and the distance between the houses. The results of the methodology allow the work to move between astonishing realism and a kind of visual chaos.

Qi Baishi

Qi Baishi (1863-1957) is represented by two superb works, *Candle, Wine and Crabs* (Estimate: HK\$400,000-500,000/ US\$51,600-64,500) (*illustrated left*) and *Buddha* (Estimate: HK\$800,000-1,000,000/ US\$103,200-129,000) (*illustrated right*), both painted after 1922 when Qi resided in Beijing. Qi captivates viewers with his detailed, yet natural and vivid strokes. The poems inscribed in the paintings express his longing for home, his family and for stability in society. However, he was forced to stay in Beijing to sell his paintings for a living, and he could only express his melancholia and longing through composing poems and creating paintings. A further highlight is *Osprey Fishing by the Willow* by Qi (Estimate: HK\$1,500,000-1,800,000/ US\$193,500-232,200).



Li Keran

Mount Huang, by Li Keran (1907-1989) is a virtuoso display of the unique techniques the artist used in his landscape paintings (Estimate: HK\$2,500,000-3,000,000/ US\$322,600-387,100). While teaching at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, Li Keran made two special journeys. In the first journey in 1954, he traveled with friends through Suzhou, Hangzhou, Shaoxing, River Fuchun and Mount Huang for three months. The second one in 1956 was a long and arduous journey which lasted eight months. During these trips, the artist was particularly drawn to the beauty of Mount Huang, and for many years after his travels, spoke of the mountain with great affection. Mount Huang was then used on multiple occasions by Li as a subject for his paintings. In the present work, Li captivates viewers with his skillful composition and use



of depth and strong colours, which magnificently depict the beautiful and gorgeous mountains and misty rivers.

The Chunfeng Tang Collection of Modern Chinese Paintings

The sale offers a remarkable selection of 44 paintings from the Chunfeng Tang Collection or 'Hall of Appreciating Antiquity' amassed by an American Midwestern collector. While the owner spent modestly, he chose carefully and well – often acquiring paintings by artists while they were still young and always following his own personal standards and interests.

It was while managing the branch of a bank in Taiwan between 1982 and 1985, that the collector's interest in Chinese art and civilization was sparked. A chance encounter with a statement from a renowned art historian, who claimed that no important paintings were created after those of the 17th century artists known as the Four Monks, made the collector decide to embark upon his own collecting odyssey in order to counter this statement. Determined and inspired, his goal was to assemble a collection that would show his own vision of how Chinese landscape painting had progressed in the 20th century. This is how the Chunfeng Tang Collection came into being.

Consisting entirely of landscape paintings, the collection features splendid works by artists such as Zhang Daqian, Huang Binhong, Yu Chengyao, Xiao Sun, Li Huashen and Yu Peng whom the collector feels responded to their long tradition while developing important innovations and influencing later artists.

The centerpiece is an exceptional work by Zhang Daqian, *Three Perils Mountain* (Estimate: HK\$300,000–400,000/ US\$38,700–51,600). The owner was intrigued by the careful renderings of the calligraphy that appeared in this landscape painting executed in 1941 when Zhang was living in remote Dunhuang, studying and copying the ancient Buddhist paintings. Since there is no dedication in the inscription, Zhang probably made the work for his own pleasure. As he began to discern a sense of Zhang's spirit in the painting, the collector decided this example met his criteria of looking for works which reveal the personality of the artist and exemplify the painter's principal artistic contributions.



Pre-sale Exhibitions:

Singapore	Grand Hyatt Singapore	19 – 20 October
Shanghai	Four Seasons Hotel, Shanghai	3 – 4 November
Beijing	Sofitel Wanda Beijing	7 – 9 November

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Taipei	Fubon Life Assurance Building	17 – 18 November
Hong Kong	Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	22 – 25 November

Auction:

Fine Chinese Modern Paintings, 26 November 2007, 2:00 pm
Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2006 that totalled £2.51 billion / \$4.67 billion. Worldwide sales for the first half of 2007 totalled £1.63 billion / \$3.25 billion, an increase of 32% by £ and 45% by \$ 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 \$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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