

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG PRESENTS IMPORTANT CHINESE CERAMICS & WORKS OF ART WITH FIVE DEDICATED SALES

Hong Kong – Christie's Hong Kong fall sales of *Important Ceramics and Works of Art* will take place on December 3 at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre. With several important collections and single-owner sales presented during this day-long series, collectors will be treated to a wide range of unique objects across multiple categories. These five sales offer over 300 works of ceramics, lacquer, bamboo, furniture, textiles, and jade carvings with a combined estimate in excess of HK\$300 million (US\$38 million).

This series of auctions includes a number of important single-owner sales and collections. Among the most anticipated sales this season is that of the unrivalled group of lacquers from the famed **Lee Family Collection**. A fine selection of Chinese bamboo carvings from the personal collection of **Mr. and Mrs. Gerard Hawthorn** will also be offered in a single-owner sale, presenting a comprehensive range of 16th to 18th century examples of this scholarly art form that they have passionately collected for over 45 years. Christie's honours the centenary of the passing of the **Dowager Empress Cixi** with a special sale that celebrates the elegance of the late Qing dynasty. And offered on behalf of the Ping Y. Tai Foundation, with proceeds benefiting their numerous charitable causes, is a tremendous **Imperial *Famille Rose* 'Butterfly' Vase**, an absolute masterpiece of Qing Imperial porcelain.

A MAGNIFICENT IMPERIAL *FAMILLE ROSE* "BUTTERFLY" VASE: PROPERTY OF THE PING Y. TAI FOUNDATION



Following the success of the first sale in this series at Christie's in New York in September, Christie's is honoured to have been entrusted by the Ping Y. Tai Foundation with the sale with **of the magnificent imperial *famille rose* 'Butterfly' vase** in Hong Kong on December 3rd. This masterpiece of Qing Imperial porcelain will be the centrepiece of the Hong Kong series of Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art and is **expected to fetch in excess of HK\$40 million /US\$5million** (*illustrated left*).

Qianlong vases of this large size decorated with such delicacy on an engraved enamel ground are extremely rare. Each of the butterflies is exquisitely painted in brilliant multi-coloured enamels with meticulous attention to detail while the other elements of design such as the flower sprays, *nyi* band and the yellow-petal panels at the foot are equally well-rendered and balance the whole design creating a *tour-de-force* of Qing enamelling technique (*detail image right*).



The beauty and rarity of this vase is enhanced by its impeccable provenance. Formerly in the collection of Alfred Morrison (1821-97), one of the most famous 19th century English collections of Chinese Art, this remarkable vase is also published by Soame Jenyns in his seminal 1951 volume *Later Chinese Porcelain - The Ch'ing dynasty*. A large proportion of Morrison's Chinese porcelains and enamels were connected to the *Yuanmingyuan*, or Summer Palace, having been purchased in 1861 from Lord Loch of Drylaw (1827-1900), who brought them to Britain following the sacking of the palace in 1860; this present 'butterfly' vase is believed to have been one of the pieces that originated from the Summer Palace. Christie's has a long and successful association with the Fonthill Heirlooms collection, having conducted the first sale of the collection on May 31, 1965, again on October 18, 1971 (when the present lot was sold as lot 65) and more recently in London on November 9, 2004.

The series of three single-owner sales of 151 Chinese classical paintings, ceramics and works of art is expected to realize between HK\$170-220 million (US\$22-\$28 million). The collection was formed by the late Ping Y. Tai and is predominantly comprised of gifts to her from her husband Jun Tsei Tai who, until his death in 1992, was internationally renowned as the dean of Asian art dealers in the United States and affectionately known as J. T. Tai. Like her husband, Ping Y. Tai had exquisite taste and a deep knowledge of Chinese art and the present collection, now belonging to the Ping Y. Tai Foundation, is a testament to the ethos of refined connoisseurship and love of Chinese art that was widely prevalent in Europe and America around the mid-20th century.

Proceeds of the sale will benefit the Ping Y. Tai Foundation that regularly donates to American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, UNICEF, City Meals on Wheels, Lighthouse International and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

IMPORTANT CHINESE LACQUER FROM THE LEE FAMILY COLLECTION

Christie's is pleased to present *Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee Family Collection*, a landmark single-owner sale of exceptional lacquer wares. **The Lee Family Collection is undoubtedly the finest group of Chinese lacquers from the Song to the Ming dynasties ever to appear on the international market.** This remarkable group of 34 lacquer works of art is a testament to the passionate expertise and taste of K.T. Lee following in the footsteps of an equally passionate and knowledgeable collector, his father, Sammy Lee. With exceptional examples from the Song, Yuan

and Ming dynasties, a great variety of forms, periods and motifs are represented in the collection the group. **The group is one of the most studied, published and exhibited collections of lacquer in private hands.**

Lacquer, like porcelain and silk, is one of the materials immediately associated with China. The Chinese were the first to exploit lacquer and to recognise its amazing properties. In addition to being useful as a protective coating, lacquer has exceptional aesthetic qualities. When applied properly it will take on a beautiful glossy sheen; it can be combined with certain pigments to produce dramatic colours; it can be used to paint designs; and, when applied in many layers, it can be intricately carved. Whether plain to display the rich colour and glossy texture of the lacquer, carved to display complex designs and subtle modulations, or patterned on the surface with colours and gold like a rich brocade, these Chinese lacquers are a remarkable testament to the craftsmans' skill and artistry.



The highlight of the collection is **one of the most important lacquers remaining in private hands: a superb Imperial early Ming inscribed cinnabar lacquer bowlstand treasured by two Emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties** (*illustrated left*).

Expected to sell for in excess of HK\$30 million/US\$3.8 million, this magnificent piece is poised to break the auction record for lacquer.

Formerly in the Percival David Collection and one of the best known pieces in the collection, it was included in the seminal 1935 Royal Academy exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House, London that was the first, and remains one of the most important, exhibitions of Chinese art ever held in Europe. Dating to the Yongle period (1403-1425), which is considered to be the most accomplished period of Chinese lacquer carving, this exquisitely carved bowlstand bears not only the reign mark of the Yongle Emperor, but also an exceptionally rare inscription dated to 1781 by the Qing Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795) in praise of the bowlstand. The Qianlong Emperor took a passionate interest in art and antiques, and, if a certain piece from his collection pleased him, would compose poetic comments which were then inscribed. **Treasured by two of the most important Emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties, this piece is among the season's most anticipated works offered.**

A magnificent and **extremely rare early Ming Hongwu period (1368-1398) carved cinnabar lacquer foliated dish** is also among the collection's highlights (*image right*, estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/US\$800,000-1,000,000). This extraordinary dish boasts an exquisitely carved landscape scene depicting the Daoist immortal, Xiwangmu, dressed in a long flowing robe being greeted by two pilgrims bearing gifts that are symbolic of longevity including a tortoise, lingzhi fungus and double-gourds.



DOWAGER EMPRESS CIXI: ELEGANCE OF THE LATE QING

Coinciding with the centenary of the passing of the most powerful, controversial and perhaps misrepresented female member of the Qing imperial family, Dowager Empress Cixi (1835-1908), Christie's will present a sale dedicated to the elegance of the late Qing period and the flourishing of amazing works of art and imperial lifestyle during this time. The sale features over 70 imperial objects that are connected to, and associated with, the Dowager Empress.

In 1852, at the age of 17, the daughter of a minor Manchu nobleman, she was selected as a "Preparative Concubine" for the 22 year-old Manchu Emperor Xianfeng (reigned 1851-1861). Yehenala rose quickly through the imperial concubine ranking system, and reportedly aided by mysterious Palace intrigues, she became Dowager Empress Cixi and went on to dominate the Chinese imperial stage for almost 50 years. Much has been written about Cixi, but little is known about who she really was as the Qing Court was very much closed to the outside world at the time. One hundred years after her demise it is still impossible to disentangle or disperse the myths surrounding her life, particularly when current scholarship is of the opinion that early writing about the Dowager were clearly fictitious, if not malicious.

Among the lots offered in this special sale is a **beautiful emerald-green jadeite hairpin** (*illustrated right*, estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$800,000-1,000,000). Jadeite was restricted for use by the higher echelon of the imperial family, and the material was known to be among Cixi's favourite gemstones. The hairpin is boldly carved from a single piece of highly translucent jadeite material, gracefully arched and terminating at one end with a reticulated coiled dragon, a supreme symbol of Imperial power. Embellished with rubies and a large natural pearl, this imperial hairpin forms the pair to an identical one in the Shenyang Palace Museum which was donated by the last Emperor Puyi.



Also included in the sale is a **group of imperial ceramics from the collection of Ronald W. Longsdorf known as "Dayazhai" wares.**

These ceramics are named after the three boldly written characters, *Da Ya Zhai*, 'The Studio of Great Refinement', that are written in a horizontal line on each piece. Enamelled with bright colours and designed with auspicious motifs that convey images of eternal spring, such as song birds and flowers, these ceramics are innovative and distinctive to those of the earlier Qing dynasty. It has been suggested that these *Dayazhai* ceramics, a special commission by Emperor Tongzhi in 1864, were destined for refurbishing the Summer Palace which was sacked by Anglo-French troops in 1860. However, due to lack of funds the renovation project was stopped, and instead these ceramics were sent to the Forbidden City.

Another special ceramic piece in the sale is an early Ming dynasty blue and white ‘grapes’ dish from the Yongle period (1403-1425) that was given as a retirement present by Cixi to the Sir Robert Hart, 1st Baronet (1835-1911) (*illustrated right*, HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000 / US\$800,000-1,000,000). Presenting a foreigner with such a generous gift was rare, although Cixi herself was known to have been an extravagant person. The gesture of giving away a Palace treasure was not only telling of the respect Cixi had for Hart, but was a clear indication that it was her prerogative as one of the ultimate authorities in China.



Also of note is a rare imperial child’s *kesi* twelve-symbol dragon robe (*illustrated left*, estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000 / 150,000-200,000) which was probably made for the Emperor Guangxu (r. 1875-1908), Cixi’s nephew. The ‘*Twelve Symbols of Imperial Authority*’ were exclusively reserved for the emperor, signifying the Ruler of the Universe and were adopted as imperial motifs on Qing dynasty Emperor’s formal ‘dragon’ robes.

FINE CHINESE BAMBOO CARVINGS FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF MR & MRS GERARD HAWTHORN

Christie’s Hong Kong is pleased to offer the single owner sale of a group of fine Chinese bamboo carvings from the personal collection of Mr and Mrs Gerard Hawthorn who have devoted the past 45 years collecting these wonderful sculptural carvings, an art form that has long been appreciated by Chinese scholars and cognoscenti. Bamboo carvings of the late Ming and Qing dynasties were abundant and conveyed an integration of poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal carving. These works of art exude a rich scholarly flavour which endows them with a lasting charm and strong artistic appeal. This collection includes rare and important examples from the 16th to the 18th centuries, presenting a comprehensive range of bamboo carvings of this period.



Leading the sale is a superbly carved bamboo *parfumier* (*illustrated left*, estimate: HK\$600,000-800,000 / US\$ 80,000-100,000). Exquisitely carved in various levels of relief and in openwork, it depicts the Eight Immortals and three Star Gods being led by Shoulao seated on the back of a crane which is descending through billowing clouds to attend the Queen Mother of the West, Xiwangmu's birthday banquet.

An unusual 18th century bamboo ‘doe and fawn’ group (*illustrated right*, estimate: HK\$300,000-400,000 / US\$45,000-50,000) is one of the fine sculptural pieces in the collection. Gracefully carved ‘in the round,’ this elegant work depicts a doe tending to its young. The finely-incised fur on the backs of the animals, accentuated by the natural patina and markings of the bamboo, underscores its high level of craftsmanship.



IMPORTANT CHINESE CERAMICS & WORKS OF ART

The sale of *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* will feature a broad array of masterpieces across a number of collecting categories, including important jade carvings, superlative ceramics, cloisonné, and works of art. For the first time, this season also features an exceptional selection of Chinese furniture from the Ming and Qing dynasties. There has been a recent emergence of furniture as an important collecting category in Asia and Christie's is pleased to present several important examples this season in Hong Kong.

JADES FROM AN IMPORTANT ENGLISH COLLECTION

Featuring prominently among the sale's offerings is **an exquisite group of ten Chinese jade carvings from a private English collection, many of which were formally in the famed collection of Sir John Buchanan-Jardine (1900-1969), a Baronet with a distinguished military career who later became the head of Jardine-Matheson.** This remarkable private collection has remained almost unknown to the public since the inclusion of a number of the pieces in the seminal 1935 Royal Academy exhibition of Chinese Art at London's Burlington House. The Royal Academy exhibition was the first, and remains one of the most important exhibitions of Chinese art ever held in Europe, drawing together some of the most illustrious private and public collections of the period including stunning examples of Imperial works of art on loan from the Palace Museum in Beijing. Of the small number of Qing jades that were represented in the exhibition, many were from the collection of Sir John Buchanan-Jardine, who, in his position as head of one of the most powerful organizations of the British Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, had access to some exceptional examples of Chinese art during a time of turmoil within China when many pieces from the Imperial Collection were being dispersed. At some time following the 1935 exhibition, the Buchanan-Jardine collection was in turn sold in London, with most of the collection acquired by Mr E.J.C. Vint (1894 - 1971), in whose family they have remained until today. **This select collection of jades is undoubtedly one of the finest groups of Qing dynasty jades to have been offered at auction and all the more remarkable for the fact that until now they have remained almost unknown outside the family for over 60 years.**



Leading the collection is **a magnificent white jade dragon vase and cover from the Qianlong period (1736-1795)** (*illustrated left*, estimate: HK\$6,000,000-8,000,000 / US\$800,000-1,000,000). Exquisitely carved and boasting a highly-polished even white tone, this extraordinary work of art depicts a full-faced dragon coiled around a flaming pearl and encircled by eight Buddhist emblems. Also of note is **an exceptionally large rare Imperial white jade 'Zodiac Animal' marriage bowl and cover from the Qianlong**



period (*illustrated right*, estimate: HK\$5,000,000-7,000,000 / US\$650,000-900,000). As the only other similarly decorated bowl and cover is in the Palace Museum in Beijing this present lot is exceedingly rare.

RARE CHINESE FURNITURE FROM THE MING & QING DYNASTIES

The sale also features an extremely rare selection of Chinese furniture from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Leading the selection is a magnificent *Zitan* imperial *kui* dragon throne of the Qianlong period (1736-1795) (illustrated right). Extremely rare and historically significant, it is expected to fetch over HK\$10million (US\$1.2million). Imperial thrones were placed in various settings within the palace compound, including in the palace gardens, official halls, imperial residences and princes' regional residences. They were a symbol of ultimate authority only the emperor and empress were permitted to sit on a dragon throne. The present lot, carved with lively *kui* dragons on the outer and inner sides, is important from a historic and artistic point of view and will be among the most highly desired pieces offered this season.



An imperial six-post *Huanghuali* 'dragon' canopy bed from the 18th century (illustrated left, estimate: HK\$2,200,000-2,800,000 / US\$300,000-350,000) carved with symbols of longevity and fecundity such as phoenix and peonies will also be offered. Other closely related *Huanghuali* canopy beds bearing similar design and construction features include the one formerly in the collection of the Museum of Classical Chinese Furniture (sold in Christie's New York, 19 September 1996, lot 62), one in the Palace Museum in Beijing, and another in the Great Mosque in Xi'an. The main dragon on the railing of the present lot has four talons, which according to the Qing period sumptuary regulation, were permitted for use as insignia for princes and nobles of third and fourth ranks.



Also of note is an important pair of Occidental-style *zitan* chairs from the late Qianlong period expected to fetch in excess of HK\$5million/US\$600,000 (illustrated left). During the 18th century, Western architecture, sculpture and painting techniques were embraced and adopted by the Chinese Emperors who were fascinated by the novel techniques and styles. In order to furnish the *Yuanmingyuan* (Summer Palace), a palace whose architecture was heavily-influenced by European palaces of the day, the Qing court commissioned custom-made European-style furniture from the Imperial workshops to match. The design and style of this extraordinary pair of chairs is clearly influenced by Rococo designs inspired by shell-like curves and natural patterns.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

From the collection of Baroness Irene von Oertzen comes a large imperial court portrait of Ha Guoxing, the former Counsellor-Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Xi'an, Qianlong period and dated 1776 (illustrated right, estimate: HK\$6,500,000-8,000,000/



US\$800,000-1,000,000) executed in ink and colour on silk and featuring an imperial dedication.



Also of note is a **magnificent celadon-glazed three-handled vase from the Yongzheng rein (1722-1735)** (*illustrated left*, estimate: HK\$12,000,000-15,000,000 / US\$1,500,000-2,000,000). Simple in form and design, and displaying an exquisite colour, this vase is among the finest celadon wares produced in this period. The glaze is particularly striking as the potter has achieved a remarkable evenness and lustrous quality in this glaze, which is extremely complicated to fire to this consistent tone of palest celadon.

IMAGES OF HIGHLIGHTS CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE:

<http://cshk.myftp.org/2008/%20Christie's%20Hong%20Kong%20Fall%20Auctions/Important%20Chinese%20Ceramics%20and%20Works%20of%20Art/>

Auctions: Wednesday, December 3, 2008

Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee Family Collection

10am

Dowager Empress Cixi: Elegance of the Late Qing

10:45am

Fine Chinese Bamboo Carvings from the Personal Collection of Mr & Mrs Gerard Hawthorn

12pm

A Magnificent Imperial Famille Rose 'Butterfly' Vase: Property of the Ping Y. Tai Foundation

3pm

Important Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art

3pm

Viewing and Tours

SHANGHAI, *Four Seasons Hotel Shanghai*

November 2-3

TAIYUAN (SHANXI), *World Trade Hotel*

November 6-7

BEIJING, *Park Hyatt Beijing*

November 10-11

TAIPEI, *Fubon Life Assurance Building*

November 22-23

HONG KONG, *Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre*

November 27 –December 2

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About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global art sales in 2007 that totalled £3.1 billion/\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. For the first half of 2008, art sales totalled £1.8 billion / \$3.5 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as 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 \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai, Hong Kong and Zurich. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium*