

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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## Immediate Release

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### A RARE AND SUPERB WORK BY XIA CHANG TO LEAD THE CLASSICAL CHINESE PAINTINGS AND CALLIGRAPHY SALE AT CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG

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## Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy

28 November 2005

**Hong Kong** – Christie's Hong Kong *Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy* Autumn auction will be held on 28 November, offering 248 important works by esteemed masters.

Important calligraphy pieces are featured prominently in the sale. One of the highlights is the handscroll, *Sanyue Tie*, attributed to the father of Chinese calligraphy Wang Xizhi (321-379). All extant works are attribution, being copies made in the Tang or Song Dynasty such as this example. The *Sanyue Tie* was recorded in the *Xuanhe Shupu* of Emperor Huizong of the Northern Song (12<sup>th</sup> century). This scroll was in the collection of the great early Qing painter Wang Shiming, and has a frontispiece by the Kangxi Emperor (Lot 1028, estimate: HK\$1,000,000-1,500,000/ US\$129,000-193,500).

Also on offer is a set of four albums of calligraphy by the early Ming artist Xia Chang (1388-1470), famous for his paintings of bamboo. Xia Chang, together with his brother Xia Bing, were appointed

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Imperial scribes for the Yongle Emperor. It is known that he practised calligraphy avidly, writing at least one thousand characters each day. While it is still possible to see a few paintings of bamboo by Xia Chang, his calligraphy is rarely seen. This set was once in the Imperial collection of the Emperor Qianlong, carrying a full set of eight collector's seals of the emperor, and was recorded in *the Shiqu Baoji*, or the Catalogue of the Imperial collection (Lot 1238, estimate: HK\$4,000,000-5,000,000/ US\$516,100-645,000).

Dong Qichang (1555-1636) from the late Ming Dynasty was indisputably the most important and influential calligrapher. The sale includes a set of ten albums of the *Chunhua'ge Tie* by Dong Qichang. The first album is dated in the summer of 1624 when the artist was sixty-nine, while the last album was finished in the twelfth month of the following year. Although written over one and a half year, the set can be viewed as a continuous whole. Dong Qichang copied the *Chunhua'ge Tie* a number of times in his life. Some of these other copies are in museums, but not always a complete set of ten (Lot 1098, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$193,500-258,100). Comparable to Dong's Chunhua'ge tie is another set of ten albums also of the Chunhua'ge tie, written by Yong Xing, Prince Cheng (1752-1823). Yong Xing was the eleventh son of Emperor Qianlong, and most famous for his standard script calligraphy. This set of ten albums reveals Yong Xing's great ability in all other scripts often overlooked (Lot 1243, estimate: HK\$600,000-800,000/ US\$77,400-103,200).

Another piece from the Ming Dynasty is by the calligrapher Zhang Bi (1425-1487), famed for his cursive calligraphy. The scroll comprises three poems by Zhang, each written for his sons and nephews as sending off gifts as they left home for the official examinations in Beijing. There is a colophon at the end of this scroll by Wen Zhengming (1470-1559) (Lot 1027, Estimate: HK\$400,000-600,000/ US\$51,600-77,400). Another long scroll of cursive calligraphy from the Ming is by the literati Wang Wen (1497-1576). Wang was famous for his strong calligraphy with a lot of character, following the style of Mi Fu and Huang Tingjian. Such influences are indeed apparent from this scroll (Lot 1063, estimate: HK\$600,000-800,000/ US\$77,400-103,200).

Emperor Qianlong was a great admirer of Dong Qichang. On offer in the Autumn sale is a handscroll of running script of the *Lezhi Lun after Dong Qichang* by Emperor Qianlong (Lot 1228, estimate: HK\$1,200,000-1,500,000/ US\$154,800-193,500). This scroll retains its original Qing imperial mounting, with original white jade toggle carved with the title of the piece, and its original imperial brocade outer wrapper. It is recorded in the *Shiqu Baoji*, stating that this was kept in the Chonghua Hall in the Palace.

Amongst the many paintings on offer is an anonymous Song landscape, previously attributed to Ma Lin (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century). It was in the collection of the Ming connoisseur Zhang Chou, and in the Qing

belonged to the painter collector Da Chongguang and then Geng Chaozhong. The piece was subsequently in the Fujii Yurinkan collection in Japan, and then the Manno Art Museum (Lot 1049, estimate: HK\$800,000-1,000,000/ US\$103,200-129,000).

Of the Yuan Dynasty is a landscape, *Playing the Di in the Evening*, by Sheng Mao (circa 1310-1360). This is a hanging scroll, painted in light colours on paper, and describes a scholar sitting in a pavilion listening to a fisherman playing the Di. There is a colophon above the painting by the Qing literati and official Wang Wenzhi, and it carries collector's seals of the late Ming collector Wang Hongxu (Lot 1077, estimate: HK\$1,200,000-1,500,000/ US\$154,800-193,500).

The first of the Ming Masters Shen Zhou (1427-1509) toured the Yixing region in 1499 and the scenery of Yanhua Xi was recorded in a scroll, with a poem by Shen Zhou written in large standard script calligraphy. This was in the collections of Chan Guilong and Lu Shihua in the Qing, and recorded in their collection catalogues. The modern art historian also wrote about this piece in his book, *Shen Zhou – A Chronological Journal* (Lot 1071, estimate: HK\$800,000-1,000,000/ US\$103,200-129,000). The students of Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming (1470-1559) and Tang Yin (1470-1523) both have representative pieces in the autumn sale. Wen painted a massively long hanging scroll of *Playing Chess in the Mountains*, measuring over three metres in height. Unlike his refined technique and detailed brushstrokes, Wen used here broad and bold brushstrokes to describe an impressive landscape (Lot 1066, estimate: HK\$600,000-800,000/ US\$77,400-103,200). The painting by Tang Yin is comparatively small, but is painted in a typically Wu school manner with subtle and refined lines. This scroll was recorded by the late Qing collector Fang Ruiyi, and also John C. Fergusson (Lot 1068, estimate: HK\$1,200,000-1,500,000/ US\$154,800-193,500).

Of particular interest are two very large works, one set of twelve hanging scrolls mounted as a pair of six fold screens, being a collaborative work by the Ming artists Lan Ying (1585-after 1664) and Chen Yuyin (active circa 1651-1654). Chen Yuyin was a pupil of Chen Hongshou, and very few of his works are extant. One work, collaborating with his teacher Chen Hongshou, is in the Beijing Palace Museum, while the other is dated 1654 and kept in the Tianjin Municipal Museum. This pair of screens was painted to commemorate the birthday of a Master Wen, and dated in 1652 (Lot 1184, estimate: 2,300,000-3,000,000). The other large work is a set of twelve hanging scrolls by the early Qing painter Lu Huancheng (1630-circa 1710). This is entitled *Spring in the Han Palace*, and described life of ladies at court in the Han dynasty (Lot 1184, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-2,500,000/ US\$258,100-322,600).

Two of the four monks of the early Qing, Shitao (1642-1707) and Bada Shanren (1626-1705) are well represented. There are several paintings by Bada, including a scroll of *Deer and Pine* (Lot 1128,

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estimate: HK\$800,000-1,000,000/ US\$103,200-129,000), and three small album leaves each mounted as a hanging scroll, respectively *Pipa* (Lot 1138, estimate: HK\$200,000-250,000/ US\$25,800-32,300), *Birds Rock and Plum Blossoms* (Lot 1157, estimate: HK\$200,000-250,000/ US\$25,800-32,300), and a work that can be dated to the early part of the artist's life, *Fish* (Lot 1139, estimate: HK\$300,000-400,000/ US\$38,700-51,600). Also on offer is a very important album by Shitao, with twelve leaves of which six are landscapes and six are flowers. Each leaf was inscribed with a poem by the artist, and the album was once in the collection of the late Qing collector Mo Youzhi (Lot 1148, estimate: HK\$2,500,000-3,200,000/ US\$322,600-412,900).

Wang Hui (1632-1717) painted a long handscroll of the Landscape of Wangchuan in 1711. The painting was executed with ink and colour on silk, and carries a poetic inscription at the end by the artist. It was previously in the collection of Xu Shukun, the late Qing collector and connoisseur (Lot 1168, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000/ US\$193,500-258,100). The Eccentrics of Yangzhou are well represented in the sale but of particular note is a *Landscape after Yuan Masters* by Hua Yan (1682-1756). Hua is mostly known for his birds and flower paintings and landscapes by him are rarely seen. This painting adopts not only a Yuan style but also a Yuan technique, using fine meticulous lines unlike Hua's usual bold and broad style (Lot 1198, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-1,800,000/ US\$7,700-10,300).

There are twenty pieces of imperial paintings and calligraphy grouped at the end of the sale, and these include works by emperors, empresses, and princes, as well as pieces in the Qing Imperial collection. Of note is a small handscroll of the *Three Friends of the Winter* by the official and court artist Zhang Ruo'ai (1713-1746). The scroll carries with it collectors' seals of the Qianlong, Jiaqing, and Xuantong emperors, and was recorded in the *Shiqu Baoji Sanbian* (Lot 1231, estimate: HK\$600,000-800,000/ US\$77,400-103,200).

## Pre-sale Exhibitions:

Beijing	St. Regis Beijing	November 5 — 6
Shanghai	The Westin Shanghai	November 8 — 9
Taipei	Fubon Life Assurance Building	November 19 — 20
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	November 25 — 27

## Auction:

Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy  
28 November at 12:00 noon  
Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

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*More information about Christie's sale of Fine Classical Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy can be found on [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com) provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.*

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