

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Songde Tang Collection of Chinese Modern Paintings To Be Offered At Christie's HK Spring Sale In May 2010

- Collection from a notable connoisseur and passionate collector of Chinese Paintings, representative of early 20th century China by artists such as Qi Baishi, Fu Baoshi and Xu Beihong etc.
- Through Shuai Mengchu, a well-known and respected art dealer of Qi Baishi's paintings in Hong Kong at the time, the Songde Tang collection built up an impressive number of Qi's top works, encompassing a wide range of subject matter, presenting an important opportunity for collectors worldwide.

Hong Kong (April 2010) – Christie's is pleased to announce that it has been entrusted with the sale of an important selection of fine Chinese modern paintings from Songde Tang, showcasing the very best of representative of early 20th century China by artists such as Qi Baishi, Fu Baoshi and Xu Beihong etc.. This collection of superb fine Chinese modern paintings valued at over HK\$35 million (US\$4.5 million) will be offered on May 28th as part of Christie's Hong Kong 2010 spring auctions.

The Songde Tang collection comes from a notable connoisseur and passionate collector of Chinese Paintings. Having immigrated to Hong Kong in early 1950's, the owner understood the importance of careful study of paintings to better determine authenticity, as well as the need to understand the socio-political situation it was created under in order to gain a deeper appreciation of such works. He thus sought to collect paintings that carried not only artistic value, but those able to reflect the social situation at the time, whether through direct criticism or passive condemnation through symbolism and poetry. Through Shuai Mengchu, a well-known and respected art dealer of Qi Baishi's paintings in Hong Kong at the time, the Songde Tang collection built up an impressive number of Qi's top works, encompassing a wide range of subject matter. Significantly, many of Qi Baishi's paintings express the artists' sentiments to social matters of the time – particularly, Qi made use of poetry to further strengthen his views on social and political matters.

It is not surprising then, that the Songde Tang collection holds paintings representative of early 20th century China by artists such as Qi Baishi, Fu Baoshi and Xu Beihong to name but a few, whose art were affected by poverty, political pressure, repression in Nanjing under Japanese rule, or by a clash of east and west cultures. Christie's is honored and excited to present such monumental pieces for our upcoming sale. Over 20 important works by Qi Baishi will be featured in the sale, which reflect the collector's discerning and impeccable taste while the artworks provide a running commentary on the political and artistic influences of the time.

The following are highlights that will be offered in this landmark sale.



QI BAISHI (1863-1957)

Going to School

Scroll, mounted and framed, ink and colour
on paper

110 x 43 cm. (43 1/4 x 16 7/8 in.)

Dated 1931

Estimate: HK\$2,200,000-2,800,000/
US\$283,900-361,300

The genius of Qi is that in simple few strokes, a deeper discovery sees a play of space and levels of meaning, which engage the imagination and intellect and stimulate them. There is no aim to render every detail with documentary accuracy; however, he consciously expresses the essence of the scene whilst omitting irrelevant features.

With little means to understand textbooks during the early development of his craft, Qi Baishi's style was inherently one of folk art, where the observation of nature surpassed any textbook manual of drawing figures and plants. What was to be a simple pleasure eventually developed into a sophisticated and highly enterprising profession.

Going to School depicts an everyday scene of a boy unwilling to attend school, removed from any specified time and place. Kai-Yu Hsu in *Qi Baishi's Paintings* mentions variations on the theme of taking the son to school, all depicting the old man in blue, flowing robes and the young boy dressed in red clutching a book, devoid of any background it has been suggested that the old man is Qi Baishi himself and the child is his son. Kai-Yu Hsu speculates that the painting and its later sketches were created around 1930, by which time, Qi Baishi's son "Qi-Qi", born in 1923, would have been 7 years old and at schooling age. Qi's interest in this theme may also stem from his childhood, for his family could not afford to provide schooling for Qi.

There's a poem written as an inscription on this painting, which is the same as one reproduced in the *Album** with the same lines:

There are children everywhere,
And everyday is play day for them.
This one is really a mean old man
Who has to take you, alone, to the teacher.

It's not wrong to learn to read.
You go to your mother and then come right back here.
Watch out for your tears,
Don't let them ruin your red robe.

When a poem is written as an inscription on a painting and is linked up their synergy often inspires a new flight of imagination of perception or apprehension in the viewer.



QI BAISHI (1863-1957)

Sailing through Winds and Waves

Qi Baishi's unerring powers of observation capture and express the relationship between man and the environment in the most simplistic and unpretentious form. Qi first mastered the art of depicting images and objects in their true form-likeness, which is, portraying what he saw through his eyes with utmost precision and delicacy.

Through studies of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual* in his early years, Qi produced an impressive array of naturalistic paintings from flowers and birds to figures and landscapes, but it was not until his later years did he reach the apex of

Scroll, mounted and framed, ink and colour on paper
 101 x 46 cm. (39 3/4 x 18 1/8 in.)
 Estimate: HK\$2,000,000-2,500,000/
 US\$258,100-322,600

his artistic career. Qi transcended his artistic ability in portraying realism, instead, transforming his paintings into masterpieces of rustic simplicity that expressed the essence of his spirit and the scene rather than its true form-likeness. In today's technological world, reflecting one's view in front of them is not hard, but to extract its essence and be aesthetically pleasing, emotionally charged and all the while making the landscape believable stands the difficulty. Attaining this thus reflects true value in a painting, as can be seen in this current lot.

In *Sailing through Winds and Waves*, Qi deliberately and strategically places houses, trees and the boats to bring about a unique sense of perception to the painting while evoking a sense of calm, symbolically encouraging one to ride the winds and break the waves, to fearlessly and steadfastly pursue a goal without regret. *Sailing through Winds and Waves* was dedicated to Zhu Guang (1906-1969), a Guangzhou native who was a member of the Communist Party in 1930, and later became mayor of Guangzhou in the 1950's.



QI BAISHI (1863-1957)
Four Apples

Scroll, mounted and framed, ink and color on paper
 68.6 x 33 cm. (27 x 13 in.)
 Inscribed and signed, bearing two seals of the artist
 Estimate: HK\$1,800,000-2,200,000/
 US\$232,300-283,900

Japan's defeat in the war in August 1945 was a happy period in Qi Baishi's life. Beijing had been under siege since 1937 and under such unpredictable and difficult times, Qi refused to meet with guests and often blamed it on his heart problems in 1939. In addition to the problems his country was facing, Qi was also dealing with personal grief with the passing of his sons and wives.

This painting *Four Apples*, created in 1986, was painted many years after when Qi was eighty-six, but the symbolism for peace and a stable life echoes louder knowing the loss he had experienced. This rare piece was one of the first paintings of Qi Baishi the present owner purchased, and Qi's genius is manifested in the subject matter, composition and mood of the painting.



The apple is homophonic to the word stable, which translates into an expression for peace and stability. In comparison with a painting of the same subject matter on p.98, *Viewing Qi Baishi's Paintings*, the sense of space is more compact. The lush red apples are round and plump, radiate in a woven basket that balances the single leaf in the corner and the grandiose calligraphy that takes up the top half of the painting.



XU BEIHONG (1895-1953)
A Stallion

Scroll, mounted and framed, ink and colour

A Stallion represents one of the many horses in the army of soldiers in the battlefield, whether racing through the night, whether resting from battle, or just standing in preparation for the fight. Xu expresses his national pride by putting to painting his ambiguity towards war but the inevitability of it in order to protect his country. In all of his paintings of horses, Xu does not indicate the presence of a saddle or stirrups, indicating his deepest desire is to see the horses removed from battle, the same way the Chinese people could be removed from war, famine and suffering.

<p>on paper 130.8 x 77.5 cm. (51 1/2 x 30 1/2 吋) Date 1938 Further inscribed by XieWuliang (1884-1964) Dedicated to <i>Cihe</i> Dated spring, year (1941) Estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000/ US\$258,100-387,100</p>	<p>Xu always advocated a need to first sketch out his ideas. He regarded painting as a means to express man's deepest desires at a time where action could not grant freedom. He saw an artist's biggest achievements as where their paintings could reflect the social situation of the time. Xu also specially created a seal that reflected the need for freedom and a discontentment towards the current situation.</p> <p>There is an additional inscription by Xie Wuliang (1884-1967). A scholar, poet and calligrapher, Xie was an archaeologist and took up posts in various museums and academic institutions. In 1937 Xie escaped to Hankou, then Hong Kong before returning to Chongqing in 1940. This painting, painted in 1941, shows the unrest of war and the fear of the people, like a horse ready for battle, fearful of the sudden canon.</p>
 <p>FU BAOSHI (1904-1965) <i>Travelling to the Mountains</i> Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper 103.9 x 59.4 cm. (40 7/8 x 23 3/8 吋) Estimate: HK\$2,200,000-2,800,000/ US\$283,900-361,300</p>	<p>The most important quality sought after in the Chinese Paintings is an artistic realism where the vitality of the subject is captured. As such paintings can come alive to the viewer; they are greatly valued as masterpieces.</p> <p>From 1939 to 1946, Fu Baoshi lived in a farm house located in the west suburb of Sichuan Province's Chongqing city. This farm house is the "Studio at the Foothills of Jingang"(Jingang Po Xia Shanzhai), this name often appears in the inscriptions of his paintings of that period. It was at this studio that Fu transformed and solidified his distinctive style. At the same time, the mesmerizing scenery and foggy atmosphere of Sichuan seemed to have permeated into his landscape paintings. Fu Baoshi was keen on innovation in both the study and execution of fine arts.</p> <p>During his eight years in Sichuan, his theory of ink painting had developed and evolved, so did his techniques. He utilized water, ink and color harmoniously with great ease. In terms of the composition of his works, the peaks of the mountains often extend to the top or beyond the top of the painting, without leaving much space for the sky. Breaking traditional protocol, this idiosyncratic composition <i>Travelling to the Mountains</i> creates a towering presence and powerful force. Throughout the mountains, trees and plants are overgrown, contributing to the vastness of nature that this work presents to its viewers.</p>
 <p>FU BAOSHI (1904-1965) <i>Scholar and Musicians</i> Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper 98.2 x 44.5 cm. (38 5/8 x 17 1/2 in.)</p>	<p>Fu Baoshi was as much an historian as he was a painter, putting himself into the place of ancient poets and literati and communicating their viewpoints in his paintings.</p> <p>Fu investigated the developmental changes through history of the "line" technique in Chinese paintings, and began practicing drawing the various fabric drape patterns in his character art. Fu Baoshi primarily draws characters from the perspective of an art historian, with primary focus in Chinese art through the Eastern Jin Dynasty (316-420AD) and the Six Dynasties, which was amongst those he studied with utmost dedication.</p>

<p>Dated 1942 Estimate: HK\$3,000,000-4,000,000/ US\$387,100-516,100</p>	<p>In this collection, Fu Baoshi's <i>Scholar and Musicians</i> depicts the important historical figure, the heroic general Xie An from the Jin dynasty who retreated into the mountains as a hermit. He spent his time playing music and wandering the mountains in a leisurely manner; people admired his willingness to extricate himself from society and politics to be at peace with himself. The image of the general with musicians is a popular subject and makes this a very desirable work.</p>
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Notes to Editors:

- In 1986, Christie's established its Chinese Art Auctions in Hong Kong. Christie's started to have individual classical Chinese paintings sale in 1995
- At the autumn 1993 and spring 1994 auctions, the collection of Ms Alice Boney, of over 30 Qi Baishi's paintings, created quite a sensation.
- Christie's remains the auction house of choice for the most important private and institutional collections that have come up for sale in recent years, including *Property from the Ping Y. Tai Foundation, the Pine Moon Studio (Autumn 2006), and many other private anonymous collections.*
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- Christie's offers Chinese paintings sales twice a year in Hong Kong.
- Christie's Chinese art specialists team worldwide are the most highly qualified and scholarly team in the business. Christie's Chinese Classical & Modern paintings dept is a global team with specialists based in NY and Hong Kong.
- The demand for Asian art of supreme quality, exceptional provenance, and excellent condition has made Christie's sales of Chinese Classical and Modern paintings among the most anticipated events on the international collecting calendar for knowledgeable connoisseurs.
- In 2009, Christie's HK sold over HK\$446.5million worth of Chinese paintings which is our highest yearly total ever and was an increase of over 85% over the previous year despite the overall economic gloom. 2009 HK CCP&CMP fall sales results indicate the strength of the market from the large proportion of sold lots over the high estimate - 70% in both sales - with some lots exceeding their high estimate by six or seven times, reflecting the continued appeal of, and the robust market for the Chinese Paintings category.
- HK Fall 2009 Chinese paintings sales saw a 49% increase in Mainland China buyers from Spring 2009.
- Rare property with good provenance and in good condition continues to generate record prices, as seen in record price for Fu Bao Shi 's <Landscape Inspired by Dufu's Poetic Sentiments>(new auction record for the artist) and top lot from Ren Ren Fa in 09 HK Fall CCP Sale

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com/chinese

The Songde Tang Collection of Chinese Modern Paintings highlights info and high-reso images are available at:

<http://cshk.myftp.org/Spring%202010%20Christie's%20Hong%20Kong%20Auctions/ChinesePaintings/Songdetang/Images/>

Fine Chinese Modern Paintings highlights info and high-reso images are available at:

<http://cshk.myftp.org/Spring%202010%20Christie's%20Hong%20Kong%20Auctions/ChinesePaintings/CMP/Images/>

Fine Chinese Classical Paintings and Calligraphy highlights info and high-reso images are available at:

<http://cshk.myftp.org/Spring%202010%20Christie's%20Hong%20Kong%20Auctions/ChinesePaintings/CCP/Images/>

Auction

Fine Chinese Classical Paintings and Calligraphy Friday, 28 May 2010, 10.00am
The Songde Tang Collection of Chinese Modern Paintings Friday, 28 May 2010, 2.30pm
Fine Chinese Modern Paintings Friday, 28 May 2010, 4.00pm

Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre,
No. 1 Expo Drive, Wanchai, Hong Kong

Viewing

Taipei May 22-23, 10:30am-6:30pm
Fubon Insurance Building

Hong Kong May 26 – 27, 10.30am-6pm
Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, No. 1 Expo Drive, Wanchai, Hong Kong

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2009 that totalled £2.1 billion/\$3.3 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 450 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 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salesrooms around the world including London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More 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. For more information, please visit www.christies.com.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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