

## CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG CHINESE CERAMICS & WORKS OF ART AUTUMN 2012 AUCTIONS ON NOVEMBER 28

HIGHLIGHTING THE FIRST-EVER STAND ALONE SALE IN ASIA OF FURNITURE FROM PRIVATE AMERICAN COLLECTIONS & IMPORTANT CHINESE LACQUER FROM THE LEE FAMILY COLLECTION

| Fine Chinese Furniture from Private American Collections, 10:00am | Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee | Family Collection, Part III, 11:00am | Important Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art, 11:30am & 2:30pm |

**Hong Kong** – On November 28, 2012 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Christie's Autumn sale of Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art will present approximately 380 lots, valued in excess of HK\$400 million. Highlighting the sales are two prominent collections: *Fine Chinese Furniture from Private American Collections*, and *Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee Family Collection, Part III*. Comprising over 50 lots of fine Chinese furniture, the furniture sale is estimated to realize in excess of HK\$49 million/US\$6 million. Sourced solely from a number of private American collectors, the works are being offered at auction in Asia for the first time. The sale of lacquer from the Lee Family Collection, one of the most researched and exhibited single-owner lacquer collections, will offer 29 lots, and is estimated to realize in excess of HK\$25 million/US\$3 million.

### FINE CHINESE FURNITURE FROM PRIVATE AMERICAN COLLECTIONS, SALE 2966

Leading the collections are works of *huanghuali*, "yellow flowering pear wood", and *zitan*, a type of sandalwood admired for its rarity, density, fine grain and deep purplish-brown patina. Traditionally collected by Americans and in the West, prominent Chinese furniture collectors are now emerging from Greater China. The choice of location for the furniture sale indicates the category's global appeal and the strengthening collecting trend across Asia.

From the mid-20th century and into the 21st century, collecting Chinese furniture was in vogue in North America, and people travelled to Hong Kong and London to source works from the leading dealers in the field. The pure linear forms of Chinese furniture blended seamlessly with the contemporary interiors of North America, and became an iconic element of Western interior design.



From the private collection of Dr. Sam and Annette Mandel is a superb and very rare pair of large *huanghuali* square-corner display cabinets, *liang'ge gui* (lot 2018, illustrated left, estimate: HK\$2,400,000-4,000,000 / US\$300,000-500,000). Pairs of cabinets do not often survive together. The generous proportions of the cabinets, and because they are crafted entirely from *huanghuali* with no use of secondary wood, indicate they would have been costly even at their time of construction.



A rare large huanghuali recessed-leg altar table, *pingtoun*, from the private Midwestern collection of Major A.P. Moore, is also featured in the sale (lot 2028, illustrated left, estimate: HK\$2,400,000-4,000,000 / US\$300,000-500,000). Fashioned with metal fittings binding the feet, this single-panel table features ample proportions and a generous use of *huanghuali*. In 1948, Major Moore acquired the table to decorate his home in Shanghai, where he worked until he left China. He also furnished his home in the America with Chinese works of art that he prized, and his collection held an important place in his family's home until his death in 1990.

From a private Hollywood, California, collection is a magnificent and very rare pair of large imperial zitan lantern stands and zitan and softwood lanterns, *tian gan deng jia* (lot 2041, illustrated right, estimate: HK\$2,400,000-4,000,000 / US\$300,000-500,000). The pair once belonged to actor Bela Lugosi, famous for his role in the movie *Dracula*. Exemplary of their type, owing to their sizable proportions, style, and quality of carving, similar imperial lantern stands would have been included among the palace furnishings of the early to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Composed of a substantial amount of precious materials and crafted with striking delicacy, the pair is likely to date to the Yongzheng (1722-1735) or early Qianlong period (1735-1796), as they exhibit a level of refinement seldom seen in later works. Excellent workmanship is evident in the lampstand base, intricately carved with patterns symbolizing peace and contentment, *ping'an ruyi*.



Also highlighted in the collections is a magnificent pair of huanghuali 'Southern Official's Hat' armchairs, *nanguanmaoyi*, from an important private Midwestern collection (lot 2026, illustrated left, estimate: HK\$4,600,000-6,200,000 / US\$600,000-800,000). When these chairs were constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they would have been reserved for the most important guests or members of the household, as the S-shaped backrest places the body into an upright position, giving the sitter an air of power, while those of lower rank would sit on stools. Armchairs of the present slender and delicate type were made for the chambers of an imperial court lady, and not often produced.

From a private Midwestern collection is a rare zitan waistless 'four-corner's flush' side table, *simianping* (lot 2040, illustrated right, estimate: HK\$2,400,000-4,000,000 / US\$300,000-500,000). Derived from an earlier method of construction, which rose to prominence during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), this three-panelled *simianping* design relies on the simple purity of line and form, combined with the rich luminosity of the wood, for its beauty. Today, works of this caliber are seldom available for sale.



## CHINESE LACQUER FROM THE LEE FAMILY COLLECTION, PART III: A LANDMARK SALE OF THE FINEST LACQUER WARES IN PRIVATE HANDS, SALE 2965

This autumn, Christie's will present the third part of *Important Chinese Lacquer from the Lee Family Collection*, a single-owner collection regarded as the finest group of Chinese lacquers from the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties ever to appear on the international market. Lacquer in a variety of techniques, forms and decorative motifs make up the Lee Family Collection, one of the most studied and exhibited collections of lacquer in private hands. The collection is a testament to the expertise of K.T. Lee, following in the footsteps of an equally passionate and knowledgeable collector, his father, Sammy Lee. This sale provides ample opportunities for both new and seasoned collectors, offering a wide range of museum quality works at approachable price points.



An important and very rare bowl and tixi lacquer bowl stand from the Song dynasty (960-1279) highlight the sale (lot 2093, illustrated left, estimate: HK\$ 6,000,000-8,000,000 / US\$780,000-1,000,000). The term *tixi*, which translates to "carved rhinoceros," is from the Chinese characters for the term *xipi*, used to describe marbled lacquer, which resembles a rhinoceros hide. While the technique of *tixi* lacquer can be traced to the Tang dynasty, it rose to popularity during the Song and Yuan (1271-1368). Decorated by heart-shaped *ruyi* designs carved through alternating layers of coloured lacquer, very few bowl stands of this Song dynasty type survive today, and it is even more unusual to find carved examples adorned with *ruyi* motifs.

A rare and finely carved polychrome lacquer circular 'dragon' dish Song dynasty (960-1279), decorated with the image of a three-clawed *chilong* dragon amidst swirling *ruyi* cloud motifs, belongs to a small group of lacquer wares with this distinctive *chilong* design (lot 2082, illustrated right, estimate: HK\$1,500,000-2,000,000 / US\$200,000-250,000). *Chilong* dragons are considered auspicious mythical creatures with the power to exorcise evil and avert disaster. The green lacquer of this Song dynasty dish is rarely seen on other lacquer wares from this period, and no identical example appears to have been published.



Continuing on the theme of auspicious motifs is an extremely rare carved polychrome lacquer 'toy peddler' circular dish Jiajing six-character mark and of the period (1522-1566) depicting an elaborate scene (lot 2097, illustrated left, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000 / US\$250,000-380,000). In the central medallion, a street vendor carries a rack displaying different kinds of toys to a group of children, beneath the branches of a peach tree. The design was inspired by genre paintings known as *huolang tu*, or 'commodities for children,' a theme that became popular among Southern Song court artists. Images of children were symbolic of offspring and fulfilment of the Confucian ideal of the advancement of sons. The Jiajing Emperor, who wished for a male heir, was especially drawn to works illustrating this theme, and commissioned a number of pieces during his reign.

An exquisitely carved and very rare cinnabar lacquer circular box and cover from the early Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and originally from the renowned Frederick Mayer collection, will also be offered in the sale (lot 2092, illustrated right, estimate: HK\$3,500,000-4,500,000 / US\$450,000-600,000). The ornate floral design carved on the surface is a dense pattern of different species of flowers, rather than a single type of flower, which was found on most lacquer boxes or dishes dating to this period. The only other comparable example recorded is a large dish now housed in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.





The quality of the collection is underscored by *an extremely rare tixi lacquer saddle*, from the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) (lot 2086, illustrated left, estimate HK\$2,500,000-3,500,000 /US\$350,000-450,000). This saddle is a tangible reminder of the importance of horses in Yuan China. Composed of a leather-bound wooden seat and wooden trimmings covered in *tixi* black lacquer, no other example of its kind and early date has been documented nor is believed to have survived. Saddles made in precious materials like lacquer were reserved

for the powerful and elite and stood as the ultimate symbols of status and wealth. The detailed ornamentation carved into this saddle is of excellent quality and would have required a considerable amount of time and money to make, suggesting that its original owner enjoyed sophisticated tastes as well as a high social rank.

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#### PRESS CONTACTS:

Suky Lo | Hong Kong | +852 2978 6736 | [sukylo@christies.com](mailto:sukylo@christies.com)  
Meng Mi | Beijing | +86 10 6500 6517 | [mmi@christies.com](mailto:mmi@christies.com)

**IMAGES of select highlights are available [here](#)**

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