ASIAN ABSTRACT ART
TO LEAD ASIAN 20TH CENTURY AND CONTEMPORARY ART 2015 SPRING AUCTIONS

Evening Sale: 30 May | Day Sales: 31 May | Preview: 28-30 May, HKCEC
Hong Kong – On 30th and 31st May Christie’s Hong Kong will stage three Asian 20th Century & Contemporary Art sales as part of its 2015 Spring auctions, presenting over 600 lots with a combined estimate in excess of HK$580 million/ US$72.5 million. The Evening Sale, taking place at 6pm on 30th May, consists of 95 masterpieces by an array of celebrated Asian artists, with highlights from Asian 20th century abstract art, Southeast Asian art and Asian contemporary works that discuss the “Spiritual Space” of today’s society. Two day sales, both to be held on 31st May, will offer 215 pieces of contemporary art and 309 lots in the 20th century art sale.

ASIAN 20TH CENTURY ABSTRACTION

Art history interpreted from the Western perspective regards Asian abstraction as derivative of developments in European and American art after World War II. On the contrary, abstract Asian modern art derives from its own historical legacy. 20th century Chinese artists working in the West such as Sanyu, Wu Guanzhong, Chu Teh-Chun, Zao Wou-Ki and others made an immeasurable contribution to the birth and development of abstract painting in China. Born and raised in China, these artists possessed a deep understanding of traditional Chinese culture, and then later gained their artistic training in France. Their similar backgrounds resulted in a generation of masters known for their interpretation of traditional Chinese aesthetics through Western art forms. Notable works from all four artists are among the highlights of this season’s Evening Sale.

One of the artist’s rare “blue” paintings, Sanyu’s *Chrysanthemums in a Glass Vase* has the subject set against an empty space for greatest effect, where the correspondence between light, space, and line finds a natural harmony and balance.

Lot 13, SANYU (CHINESE, 1901-1966), *Chrysanthemums in a Glass Vase*, oil on masonite, 75 x 92 cm., Painted in the 1950s, Estimate on request

The fluid lines of ink, foreshortened depth and rich colours in *A Lacebark Pine* by Wu Guanzhong establishes opposing relationships between near and far and between colour and white space. The work vividly illustrates Wu’s doctrine of “a national style of oil painting, and a modern style of Chinese ink painting”.

Lot 16, WU GUANZHONG (CHINESE, 1919-2010), *A Lacebark Pine*, ink and colour on paper, 117.3 x 95.8 cm., Painted in 1984, Estimate: HK$15,000,000 - 18,000,000/ US$1,923,100 - 2,307,700

*Lumière de la Montagne Pa-Shin (Light of Pa-Shin Mountain)*, combining impressionistic techniques with the grandeur of the aesthetics of ancient Chinese landscape paintings, is one of Chu Teh-Chun’s most stunning early abstract works and crucial to an understanding of his creative blend of Eastern and Western influence.

Lot 22, CHU TEH-CHUN (FRENCH/CHINESE, 1920-2014), *Lumière de la Montagne Pa-Shin (Light of Pa-Shin Mountain)*, oil on canvas, 100 x 65 cm., Painted in 1959, Estimate: HK$9,000,000 - 15,000,000/ US$1,153,800 - 1,923,100

Zao Wou-Ki’s 12.04.60 displays the profundity of the thinking about nature and space. The maturity of his abstract language, in dynamically implying the primitive element of fire, marks the start of a completely unique, self-confident personal style.

Lot 29, ZAO WOU-KI (FRENCH/CHINESE, 1920-2013), 12.04.60, oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm., Painted in 1960, Estimate: HK$25,000,000 - 35,000,000/ US$3,205,100 - 4,487,200
After World War II, Japan aspired to creative freedom and the most noteworthy artistic group from this period was the Gutai Art Association. Gutai used the vocabulary of modern art to create new art forms, while integrating different media along with Japanese cultural heritage, as well as placing an emphasis on the freedom of the artists’ spirit to challenge the notions of art.

**THE LARGEST FAN-SHAPED PAINTING IN KAZUO SHIRAGA’S ARTISTIC CAREER**

The Evening Sale will introduce works from ten important members of the Gutai group, including *Keicho 19 (Osaka Winter Campaign)*, the largest fan-shaped painting in Kazuo Shiraga’s artistic career. Inspired by the Siege of Osaka, a historic battle that ended Japan’s warring states period and turned Japan into a unified nation, the painting displays the artist’s transformation of his feeling for history into a personal work of art. It also shows how, by means of creative techniques, he was able to capture the natural, flowing movements of the body on canvas and their speed in painting.

The Group’s co-founder Shozo Shimamoto is best known for his visionary theory of a creative painting process, since the mid-1950s, which involved hurling bottle glasses, filled with colour onto the canvas. In the mid-to-late 1960s, Shimamoto experimented with funnel dripping to capture the natural fluidity of colour on colour.

In *Untitled 141202*, by applying mixed media and oil on canvas, Tsuyoshi Maekawa constructs a three-dimensional illusion that possesses an organic, flowing quality, which puts forward a new way of reading this piece of art.

In Uemae’s 1971 *Untitled*, his long, exquisite brushstrokes produce shadowy, half-emerging lines, which become apparent only by virtue of reflections that vary with the size and angle of his brushstrokes and the thickness of the pigment carried on his brush tip. This *Untitled* shows Uemae’s rich understanding of the properties of the medium of oil and new potential in its use. Through the varying strengths of his hues and his precise shifts in shape and colour, Uemae evokes illusory visual effects similar to those that, in the late 1950s, began to be popularized by the proponents of Op Art.
On the other hand, in Korea, after the Korean War, some avant-garde artists began to create abstract paintings. During the 1970s, the movement named Dansaekhwa came into being, which proposed painting on a large pictorial surface in monochrome. This movement aimed at cultivating traditional Korean aesthetics to achieve a modern art ostensibly imbued with Korean characteristics.

One important lot from this movement is *Untitled* by Chung Sang-Hwa, who is famous for the style of “rip” and “fill”. The artist creates numerous grids on the canvas, which is in turn folded over and over again. He then rips off the paint from chosen grids and fills them with layers of acrylic paint. Through this meditative repetition, he achieves as sense of infinite temporality and universality.

Lot 53, CHUNG SANG-HWA (KOREAN, B. 1932), *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas, 161 x 96 cm., Painted in 1985, Estimate: HK$1,200,000 - 1,800,000/ US$153,800 - 230,800

Another highlight is a representative piece *From Point No. 79056* by Lee Ufan. Lee is one of the most respected masters in Korea. In this work, the artist reduces the element of personal ego to its lowest level, arranging repetitions of a point, which he felt was the most basic unit or element common to all things. The interstices between the points unfold like a series of doors, allowing the viewers to explore the work and letting the outer world enter the entire pictorial space.

Lot 54, LEE UFAN (KOREAN, B. 1936), *From Point No. 79056*, oil and mineral pigment on canvas, 161 x 129.5 cm., Painted in 1979, Estimate: HK$9,000,000 - 14,000,000/ US$1,153,800 - 1,794,900

SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART

Celebrating the diversity of artistic expression in Southeast Asia, Christie’s Hong Kong will feature more than 200 artworks by artists from the Southeast Asian region in the auctions.

Indonesian expressionist artist Affandi’s rare-to-market 1959 painting *Affandi and Grandchildren* leads the sale of Southeast Asian art. Its first ever appearance at auction, the painting is a rare portrayal of the artist surrounded by his loving grandchildren – revealing the artist’s joy in his family, and comes from the renowned private collection of Alex Papadimitriou, who was a close friend and patron of Affandi.

Lot 3, AFFANDI (INDONESIAN, 1907-1990), *Affandi and Grandchildren*, oil on canvas, 119 x 100.5 cm., Painted in 1959, Estimate: HK$3,000,000 - 5,000,000/ US$384,600 - 641,000

Having established the world record for any Vietnamese work of art ever sold at auction with Le Pho’s *View From the Hilltop* at Christie’s Hong Kong in November 2014, we are proud to present two more historically significant artworks in Vietnamese art history – including Nguyen Gia Tri’s *La Perfection ou Femmes et Jardins du Vietnam*, which highlights the technical sophistication achieved in lacquer painting, a medium closely associated with the inception of modern Vietnamese art.

Lot 5, NGUYEN GIA TRI (VIETNAMESE, 1908-1993), *La Perfection ou Femmes et Jardins du Vietnam (Perfection or Women and Gardens of Vietnam)*, lacquer on panel, 50.6 x 65 cm., Executed in 1956-1959, Estimate: HK$800,000 - 1,000,000/ US$102,600 - 128,200
Indonesia’s I Nyoman Masriadi and the Philippines’ Alfredo Esquillo Jr. represent the continued strength of Southeast Asia’s contemporary artists.

Day Sale, Lot 119
I NYOMAN MASRIADI
(INDONESIAN, B. 1973)

Chicken Dance
acrylic on canvas
200 x 150 cm.
Painted in 2010
Estimate:
HK$2,000,000 - 3,000,000/
US$256,400 - 384,600

Lot 39
ALFREDO ESQUILLO JR.
(FILIPINO, B. 1972)

The Coming of the Plagues
oil on EVA panel, triptych
each: 240 x 120 cm.;
overall: 240 x 360 cm.
Painted in 2013
Estimate:
HK$450,000 - 550,000/
US$57,700 - 70,500

Masriadi’s Chicken Dance is a tongue-in-cheek commentary on contemporary life, with the half-man, half-chicken figure representing playfulness, and a mischievous disruption of peace.

Alfredo Esquillo Jr.’s monumental triptych Coming of the Plagues is a powerful metaphor for a crisis of faith – a deeply relevant theme in contemporary society – and highlights the relationship between God, Man, and Nature.

ASIAN CONTEMPORARY ART

“Where am I?” is a universal and eternal question. Humans depend on our senses to learn about the world, a process through which we ultimately affirm our existence on a psychological level. Urbanisation has resulted in an unprecedented high-density lifestyle, directly changing the inherent relationship between mankind and space. And with the advent of the technological age dominated by the Internet, visual experience has reached a level of sophistication that is previously unimaginable, while humanity’s dependency on the physical world has been shifted to the flat and virtual world to a certain degree. Even the physical world we dwell in is being transformed into an abstract concept. Various Asian contemporary artworks featured in the upcoming auction attempt to discuss the interaction between life and space in the contemporary age through the lenses of different cultural backgrounds, sparking new imaginations of our spiritual space.

Lot 36
LIU WEI (CHINESE, B. 1972)

N5-1
oil on canvas
221 x 221 cm.
Painted in 2010
Estimate:
HK$1,600,000 - 2,600,000/
US$205,100 - 333,300

Lot 45
LIU YE (CHINESE, B. 1964)

Snow White
oil on canvas
210.5 x 210.5 cm.
Painted in 2006
Estimate:
HK$10,000,000 - 15,000,000/
US$1,282,100 - 1,923,100

In Liu Wei’s N5-1, abstract patterns of upward-reaching vertical lines blanket the canvas in a gauze, similar to a grid that is at once engulfing and entralling. The rise and fall of the rhythmic lines create the impression of three dimension buildings lingering in calming air. This recurrent geometric diagram belies an unrestrained logical, systematic approach.

Meanwhile in Snow White, Liu Ye composed the body of Snow White with geometric shapes: the head is an oval, the arms in front of her chest form a triangle, the skirt is a trapezoid, and the legs form a rectangle. The figure is placed in a timeless space as if the boundaries and references of space-time no longer exist.
Steam Room III by Yuan Yuan has a name that puts the viewers in a state that is oppressively hot and thick with humidity. Yet, the painting does not show any signs of dampness. The uniformity of the small tiles on the seat and the random distribution of stones of varying sizes on the wall create a dramatic visual contrast. Compounded by the effects of the vibrant colours, this realistic environment is transformed into an intriguing realm of abstract patterns.

The distinguishing characteristic of sculpture as a modelling art is its occupation of the three dimensional space. The most fascinating aspect is that viewers can observe it from any subjective angle of their choices, discovering myriad new forms. Sculptures form an integral part of this season’s contemporary art collection, with highlights such as Zhan Wang’s Artificial Rock No.150. Zhan Wang started creating his Stainless Steel Artificial Rock Mountain Series in 1995. By using sheets of stainless steel to reproduce this artificial mountain, semantically, the genuine mountain has been reproduced two-fold, inspiring a dialectic on authenticity.