

# CHRISTIE'S

THE ART PEOPLE

PRESS RELEASE | HONG KONG | 11 November 2015

## Treasures of the Imperial Era

A Selection of Rare and Majestic Works of Art



**Hong Kong** – Christie's unveils a range of magnificent works of art as part of the **Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art Sales** to take place on 2 December 2015 in Hong Kong.

These exquisite pieces represent some of the most precious ceramics and works of art created in imperial China and span hundreds of years. The sale affords a privileged opportunity to acquire works of art, coveted the world over by connoisseurs, fresh from private collections.

**Chi Fan Tsang, Specialist Head of Department, Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art**, commented: Very few such exquisite examples remain in private hands today, with the majority being in museum collections around the world. Each of these highlights is wonderfully rare and precious and all bear flora motifs, which have long been beloved by the Emperors through the ages. The works represent the zenith of technical and artistic refinement and the highest echelons of artistic accomplishment.

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A key highlight of the sale is the *falangcai* 'prunus and bamboo' bowl in exquisite sepia enamel, recorded in the palace records as '*shuimo falang*' (inkwash enamel). This example to be offered at Christie's, stands out as the most unique and elegant among *falangcai* pieces, which were much beloved by the Yongzheng Emperor. Unlike Imperial porcelain made for display and decoration, *falangcai* porcelain was kept hidden and guarded within the Palace, intended to be appreciated by the Emperor alone.

A FINE AND IMPORTANT FALANGCAI  
SEPIA-ENAMELLED 'PRUNUS AND  
BAMBOO' BOWL  
YONGZHENG FOUR-CHARACTER MARK IN BLUE  
ENAMEL WITHIN A DOUBLE SQUARE AND OF THE  
PERIOD (1723-1735)  
Estimate on Request



Not only have Yongzheng *falangcai* bowls been rarely seen on the market, as there have been only a handful sold publicly, no other *shuimo falangcai* bowl has ever appeared at auction - making this exquisite bowl exceptionally rare and desirable.

The painting on the current bowl pays tribute to Song dynasty bird and flower paintings, specifically those produced by the Painting Academy of the Song Court. The delicately painted petals contrast with the jagged and gnarled branches creating dynamic silhouettes. The artist has ingeniously painted the petals in very pale enamels so that they contrast with the rest of the bowl to give the illusion that the prunus tree on the bowl is bearing white blossoms. The paintings in such pale lines presented a technological triumph and add to the ethereal beauty of the bowl.

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A MAGNIFICENT AND EXTREMELY RARE CARVED AND MOULDED CELADON-GROUND FAMILLE ROSE LOBED VASE

QIANLONG SIX-CHARACTER SEAL MARK IN UNDERGLAZE BLUE AND

OF THE PERIOD (1736-1795)

Estimate on Request

A magnificent and extremely rare carved and moulded celadon ground famille rose lobed vase will also be for auction at Christie's this season.

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This vase is one of a small group of very fine similarly decorated porcelains made for the court in the Qianlong reign, and appears to be one of only two known examples to be decorated with the flowers of the four seasons. It is probable that this vase was originally produced as one of a pair, with an identical vase in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The beautiful vase combines two aspects of imperial porcelain which reached the peaks of refinement by the early Qianlong reign: pale celadon glaze applied to porcelain, and *famille rose* overglazed enamel decoration. On the current vase, these enamels have been used to beautiful effect in painting a collection of flowers representing the four seasons. On one panel presenting winter, is a branch of blossoming prunus combined with camellia flowers, while spring is presented on another panel with pink, red and yellow peonies. A third panel contains pomegranate and jasmine representing summer, with the fourth panel depicting white and golden chrysanthemums with balsam and rocks representing autumn.



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Drawing together a range of remarkable skills is a ten-fold imperial screen, which will be offered for auction. It is clearly evident that a variety of imperial ateliers including the finest lacquer painters, *kesi* weavers, embroiderers, painters on silk, painters on paper, wood carvers and gilders all worked on this momentous piece to produce an extraordinary work of art.



A MAGNIFICENT IMPERIAL KESIEMBELLISHED AND POLYCHROMELACQUERED HARDWOOD TEN-FOLD SCREEN

HK\$30,000,000-50,000,000

US\$3,900,000-6,500,000

Given the screen required the cooperation of craftsmen of such diverse talents, it was most probably used to commemorate a special occasion, such as a birthday. This magnificent large screen has an imposing presence and its beautiful workmanship expresses a typical Qing imperial style. Dating to the early Qing period, it is without doubt a rare work of art, with no other works approaching a comparable level in the wealth of materials, techniques and skills employed.



**The front:** There are eight central panels, each finely painted on paper depicting five Imperial dragons above lapis-blue and malachite-green rocks rising from cresting waves. Mounted above gilt and polychrome lacquered panels, hanging flower baskets are surrounded by lingzhi and lotus scrolls within formal gilt border. The two panels on either end are each embroidered with sixty stylised Shou characters above a smaller kesi panel and a lacquered dragon roundel.

**The reverse:** Each of the ten leaves are set with a fan-shaped kesi panel, finely woven with seasonal flowers and fruit, growing from behind ornamental rocks. Below, rectangular panels containing paintings on silk depicting flowering branches within mountainous landscapes, both framed within a dense floral scroll carved in relief from painted hardwood.

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AN EXCEPTIONALLY RARE LARGE BLUE AND WHITE RESERVE-DECORATED 'PEONY DISH

XUANDE SIX-CHARACTER MARK IN UNDERGLAZE BLUE IN A LINE

AND OF THE PERIOD (1426-1435)

HK\$15,000,000-25,000,000

US\$2,000,000-3,200,000

Presenting further exceptionally rare pieces, Christie's will offer this large blue and white reserve-decorated 'peony' dish. The impressive dish displays a rare type of decoration from one of the most highly esteemed periods for imperial blue and white porcelain - the reign of the Ming dynasty Xuande Emperor (1426-35). The reserved decoration in white stands out against a deep cobalt blue glaze, rather than underglaze blue painting. The Xuande cobalt blue glaze is one of the finest blue glazes produced in China and is widely admired for its jewel-like colour and rich depth.

The magnificent dish is beautifully decorated in the centre with a flamboyant peony, surrounded by six fruiting sprays on the cavetto. The patterns are all reserved in white with fine incised details against a rich cobalt background, while the reverse is decorated with an elaborate chrysanthemum scroll around the edge.

Very few dishes of this design are in private hands, with the only other known example being in the collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, designated an 'Important Cultural Property' in Japan. The upcoming auction of this work represents an extremely rare opportunity for collectors.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### IMPORTANT CHINESE CERAMICS AND WORKS OF ART

**Auction:** 2 December 2015

**Saleroom:** Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, 1 Expo Drive, Wan Chai

**Viewings:**

Thursday, 26 November, 10.30 am - 6.00 pm

Friday, 27 November, 10.30 am - 6.00 pm

Saturday, 28 November, 10.30 am - 6.00 pm

Sunday, 29 November, 10.30 am - 6.30 pm

Monday, 30 November, 10.30 am - 6.30 pm

Tuesday, 1 December, 10.30 am - 6.30 pm

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#### About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2015 that totalled £2.9 billion / \$4.5 billion. In 2014, Christie's had global auction and private sales that totalled £5.1 billion/\$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. 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 has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions 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 \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Christie's has a global presence with 54 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth 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. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, third-party financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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