SPRING SERIES OF CHINESE CERAMICS AND WORKS OF ART SALES

Glories of Buddhist Art
The Baofang Pavilion Collection of Imperial Ceramics
Four Masterpieces of Jun Ware
Leisurely Delights of a Transient Life

Important Chinese Ceramics and Works Of Art

A Selection of Highlights to be auctioned on 29 May
From left to right: A HIGHLY IMPORTANT MAJESTIC PAIR OF WOOD FIGURES OF STANDING BODHISATTVAS
THE LARSON YONGZHENG VASE
A HIGHLY IMPORTANT IMPERIAL WHITE JADE ‘ZHOUIIA YANXI ZHI BAO’ SEAL

Christie’s Hong Kong Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art auctions will take place on 29 May with five dedicated themed auctions featuring the Glories of Buddhist Art and the return of the well-established Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art sales as well as the second edition of the Leisurely Delights of A Transient Life sale.

Chi Fan Tsang, Deputy Chairman, Specialist Head of Department, commented, “This season celebrates our most popular sales, most notably the Buddhist themed sale which continues to captivate collectors. The five specially curated auctions present a breadth and depth of the finest works on the market and cater to the discerning and diverse tastes of our clients”.

CHRISTIE’S
PRESS RELEASE | HONG KONG | 16 April 2019
This special-themed sale includes several masterpieces of Buddhist art of superb quality and impeccable provenance, which have rarely been seen on the market for many decades.

Leading the sale is a pair of highly important and majestic wood figures of the bodhisattvas Guanyin and Mahasthamaprapta, dating to the Five Dynasties to early Northern Song period (AD 10th-11th century). It is extremely rare to find large wood sculptures from an early period preserved in such good condition. They are unusually large and exceptionally well carved, commanding both grace and elegance. Adding to their appeal is their illustrious provenance, being formerly acquired by the esteemed Asian Art dealer Yamanaka Sadajirō (1866-1936) who published the figures in the important catalogue Shina kobijutsu taikan [Comprehensive Review of Ancient Chinese Art] as early as 1924. Both figures are radiocarbon tested, confirming their dating.

Measuring over 170 cm. high, this figure is the largest known sculpture in this distinctive style, which reflects the Qing court’s devotion to Tibetan Buddhism. Exceptional in its massive scale, superb quality and sublime beauty, it is a masterpiece of Buddhist sculpture radiating wisdom and benevolence. This magnificent figure is privately owned and had been on long-term loan to the iconic luxury home and furnishing store Gump’s in San Francisco where it was on display for several decades.

Of equal importance is an exceedingly rare huanghuali altar table. Dating to the 15th century of the Ming dynasty. It is one of the earliest known pieces of huanghuali furniture, and is possibly the only altar table surviving from this period. It is also highly unusual that this table is constructed entirely of the precious material huanghuali wood- including the drawers and their inner linings. Its exceptionally graceful shape also indicates copious consumption of the prized wood, since a large part of the material would have been carved away in order to render these elegantly curved legs and intricately pierced decorations on the foot ends. Only an extremely wealthy and powerful patron, likely imperial of nature, could have afforded such a commission.
This sale comprises 16 pieces of Imperial porcelain from the Ming and Qing dynasties, all of superb quality and great rarity, from the private collection of a seasoned connoisseur.

Of particular note is a pair of exquisite bowls painted in the highly desirable yangcai (foreign colours) palette, bearing Yongzheng yuzhi marks indicating they were made by Imperial command of the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723-1735). The yangcai palette exhibits strong European influence and its appearance on porcelains was a novelty achieved by the Imperial kilns during the early 18th century, reflecting the distinct and sophisticated tastes of the Qing emperors. These bowls also have illustrious provenance, coming from the esteemed collector Stephen Junkunc, III (1904-1978).

Another exceptional piece is a robin’s egg-glazed vase also bearing the Yongzheng Emperor’s reign mark. This very special monochrome glaze was first invented in the Yongzheng reign. One of the most notable features of this glaze is the variation of the mottling, which presents a pleasing mixture of lavender blue and purplish colours as seen on the current vase. The vase also has a very rare form, as few pear-shaped vases are as deeply compressed, with the centre of gravity so far down the lower body. Successful firing of this form would have been extremely difficult with a high probability of the body sagging or leaning to one side, which may explain why there are so few similar examples in existence.

This fascination group of four Jun tripod vessels, each incised with a numeral on its base, including One, Three, Four and Five, comes from an important Asian private collection. These vessels are admired by collectors for their remarkable glazes with their lustrous and opalescent qualities. This opalescence is due to the effect of light on certain features within the glaze: the masses of tiny gas bubbles trapped in the glaze, and the formation of minute crystals which reflect light back through the glaze. This optical effect is due to an emulsion of two liquids within the glazes, very similar to the mixing of oil and water. Early examples of Jun vessels have an even pale bluish glaze but by the early 12th century, potters began to add splashes of copper oxide to the unfired glaze, which resulted in colourful pieces comprised of bright purple areas contrasting with the soft blue tones. Collectors are particularly interested in Jun wares that are incised with Chinese numerals on their bases.
Christie’s is pleased to be presenting this specially curated sale for the second time, which includes works carefully selected that reflect the refined and scholarly taste of the Chinese literati.

Of significant historical value is a large Imperial seal carved out of white jade, bearing the inscription Zhoujia yanxi zhi bao, ‘Seal of continual joy on the sixtieth birthday’.

This important seal was specifically made to celebrate the Jiaqing Emperor's (r. 1796-1820) sixtieth birthday, and was one of the very few commemorative items made for this special occasion. As the Jiaqing Emperor was known to favour frugality, and even decreed that no birthday celebrations nor any elaborate rituals should be held, this seal is all the more special and must have been of a very personal nature to the Emperor.

Another highlight is a very rare white jade ewer from the Qianlong period, which takes inspiration from ancient bronze vessels known as gong. The Qianlong emperor’s great love of jade combined with his passion for antiques resulted in his commissioning significant numbers of archaistic jade items for his court. The present ewer is especially distinguished by the size and quality of its material. The stone displays attributes of the finest ‘mutton-fat’ jades - white, unctuous and devoid of flaws. The source of the material came from Xinjiang, most likely in the 1750s after regaining political and military power over this area by the Qing Empire, which brought a steady flow of Khotan jades to the Qing court.

One of the most exciting works on offer this season is a magnificent blue and white vase from the Yongzheng period. It is the first time this exceptionally large vase is being offered at auction.

Known as ‘The Larson Yongzheng Vase’, this treasure was acquired by the renowned Swedish missionary, diplomat and businessman Frans August Larson (1870-1957), who resided in Northern China and Mongolia from 1893 to 1939. During this time, Larson was consulted by prominent political leaders such as Yuan Shikai and Chiang Kai Shek for his knowledge on Mongolia and for his advice in mediating border conflicts between Mongolia and China. Upon the outbreak of World War Two, Larson left China and Mongolia to settle with his family in the United States. The vase has been well kept within the family ever since.

Measuring 57 cm. high, this magnificent vase would have been extremely difficult to produce, due to its exceedingly large size and compressed belly. The chance of collapsing during firing would have been very high, which may explain why so few examples of such size and shape have survived. Without any known identical example, this extraordinary vase appears to be unique.
Notes to Editors:

Glories of Buddhist Art
The Baofang Pavilion Collection of Imperial Ceramics
Four Masterpieces of Jun Ware
Leisurely Delights of A Transient Life
Important Chinese Ceramics And Works Of Art

DATE: 29 MAY 2019
LOCATION: Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, No.1 Harbour Road, Wanchai, HK

PRESS CONTACT: Lee Bingle | +852 2978 9966 | lbingle@christies.com

Image Download Link

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in 2018 that totalled £5.3 billion / $7 billion. Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Christie's offers around 350 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.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

*Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.

###

Images available on request
FOLLOW CHRISTIE’S ON: