

For Immediate Release

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**EXCEPTIONAL BLUE AND WHITE PORCELAIN TO BE OFFERED AT
CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG**



A Magnificent Yuan Blue and White 'Fish' Charger
Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368)
45 cm diam
Estimate: HK\$8,000,000-10,000,000 (US\$1,100,000-1,300,000)

Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art

28 November 2006

Hong Kong - An exceptionally outstanding selection of blue and white porcelain will be featured in the forthcoming *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* autumn sale at Christie's Hong Kong on 28 November. Alongside the *Jade Shears and Shimmering Feathers - Imperial Chinese Ceramics from the Robert Chang Collection*, and *Important Chinese Jades from the Personal Collection of Alan and Simone Hartman* to be offered by Christie's on the same day, the three sales are expected to realize a total of over HK\$420 million/ US\$53 million. This marks the highest pre-sale total for any series of Chinese ceramics and works of art auctions at Christie's.

Blue and white wares have played an important role in Chinese ceramic history since the Yuan dynasty (13/14th Century) when trade with the Middle East expedited a higher demand for quality workmanship particularly those exported at the requests of the Sultans. One such example is the magnificent charger painted with a carp swimming amidst water weeds being offered this season (lot 1506, estimate HK\$8,000,000-10,000,000/ US\$1,100,000-1,300,000). The brushwork of the fish, portrayed with its furtive eye alert as if looking for pry, is expertly rendered to differentiate the fins, gills and scales.

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Large dishes of the 14th century were particularly valued in the Islamic West where they were used for princely banquets as shown in early illustrations such as the Mughal *Babarnama* (memoirs of Babar) manuscript dated *circa* AD1590, now in the British Library collection. These illustrations reveal a number of Chinese dishes being used at a royal feast for the communal sharing of food. Other examples of large dishes similarly painted with a single fish in the central medallion were found in the ruins of the Kotal Firuzshah, a Tughlaq Palace in Delhi which was abandoned in 1388.

The underglaze-blue decoration on these ceramics owed its vibrant sapphire-blue colour to cobalt which during the Yuan and early Ming periods would have to be imported at vast expenses. This mineral with its high iron content was quickly perfected by the potters of Jingdezhen to provide the exuberant violet-blue tone that is exemplified by a large *meiping* vase, dated to the Yuan dynasty (lot 1505, estimate: HK\$6,000,000-9,000,000/ US\$770,000-1,200,000). Painted on the exterior in an arrangement of horizontal bands, the main body is decorated with large blooms of peony flowers, each in different profile and all borne on a single undulating vine.



By the early 15th century, the design on *meiping* vases evolved into a less crowded format as can be seen on a vase dated to the Ming Yongle period (1403-1425) (lot 1518, estimate: HK\$7,000,000-9,000,000/ US\$900,000-1,200,000). Instead of imitating the Yuan style, the painting on the Ming vase permits a greater spacial distance between the fruiting branches, providing an overall subtle design.

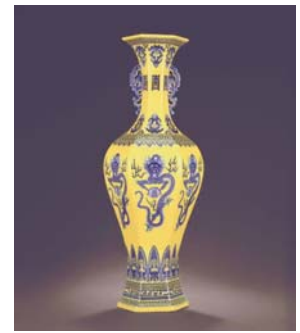
Imitating past styles and trans-cultural influences both appear in blue and white ceramics as seen on a rare Yongle period basin (lot 1510, estimate: HK\$7,000,000-10,000,000/ US\$900,000-1,300,000). Unusually potted with straight sides and a broad flattened mouth rim, resembling an upside-down top-hat, its shape is from the Near East where it was produced both in metal and in glass such as the 14th century Syrian/Egyptian brass basin decorated with Islamic script in silver inlay in the Metropolitan Museum collection, New York.



Interestingly, this same form was re-adopted in the Qing dynasty, 18th century, and a Qianlong mark and period basin is to be offered in the same sale (lot 1511, estimate: HK\$3,000,000-5,000,000/ US\$390,000-640,000). The later Qing dynasty basin was undoubtedly made in emulation of earlier Ming examples as they both share similar decorative motifs in the composite floral scroll on the exterior and turbulent-waves pattern on the everted broad mouth rim.

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Qing dynasty ceramics are also featured strongly in the sale. Following the huge success of a Qianlong blue and white hexagonal 'dragon' vase which sold for HK\$13,560,000/ US\$1,762,800 from the collection of Evelyn Annenberg Hall, sold by Christie's Hong Kong in Spring of this year, the forthcoming sale will see a larger vase from the same series. The yellow-ground blue and white 'dragon' vase being offered is even more spectacular as its elegant form measures 57 cm. high (lot 1529, estimate on request). These vases were produced from sketches drawn by the celebrated supervisor of the imperial kilns, Tang Ying (1682-1756), to celebrate Emperor Qianlong's 60th birthday. It was thought that each facet of this innovative shape represented a decade of the Emperor's life.



Other examples of innovative ceramics are included such as the extremely rare green-glazed black-ground pear-shaped vase of the Qianlong period, displaying a unique decorative technique of green enamel over black (lot 1530, estimate: HK\$4,500,000-5,500,000/ US\$580,000-700,000); an exquisitely enamelled *famille rose* charger, typical of the Yongzheng period (1723-1735) painted with flowering branches that appear from the exterior and continuing onto the interior (lot 1557, estimate HK\$5,000,000-8,000,000/ US\$640,000-1,000,000); and a fine *famille rose* lantern-shaped vase bearing the Jiaqing mark and of the period (1796-1820), decorated with dancing ladies in memory of the golden days of the Han dynasty (206 BC –AD 220) (lot 1560, estimate: HK\$2,500,000-3,500,000/ US\$320,000-450,000).

Highlights of the works of art section include a very rare pair of Imperial cloisonne enamel ewers which was obviously inspired by Tibetan Buddhism and produced for the Buddhist halls within the Forbidden Palace (lot 1616, Estimate: HK\$3,000,000-4,000,000/ US\$390,000-510,000); a large cloisonne enamel vase of the 18th century, inspired by an archaic bronze (lot 1682, estimate: HK\$2,000,000-2,500,000/ US\$260,000-320,000); and a large ruyi-shaped cinnabar lacquer box (lot 1703, estimate: HK\$500,000-700,000/ US\$64,000-90,000).

Pre-sale exhibitions

Shanghai	Portman Ritz Carlton	1-2 November
Hangzhou	Hyatt Regency	5-6 November
Beijing	St. Regis	8-9 November
Taipei	Fubon Life Assurance Building	18-19 November
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre	24-27 November

Auction:

Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, 28 November 2006, 2:30pm
Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

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More information about Christie's sale of Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.