

CHRISTIE'S 佳士得

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG PRESENTS IMPORTANT CHINESE CERAMICS & WORKS OF ART SPRING AUCTIONS 2014

Hong Kong – Christie's Hong Kong will present a series of **Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art** auctions on 28th May 2014. Featuring five individual sales with more than 400 works, the auctions are estimated to realize in excess of HK\$700 million/US\$87 million.

IMPERIAL CHINESE TREASURES FROM A DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN COLLECTION

Following the success of *Imperial Chinese Porcelain- Treasures from a Distinguished American Collection* in 2013, Christie's is privileged to offer *Imperial Chinese Treasures from a Distinguished American Collection*, an addition of 18 works from this renowned collection on Wednesday, May 28. This group of works represents some of the finest and rarest Ming and Qing dynasty Imperial porcelain and glass wares.



Highlights include a fine and extremely rare copper-red decorated pear-shaped vase, *yuhuchunping*, Hongwu period (1368-1398) (Estimate: HK\$15,000,000-20,000,000/US\$1,875,000-2,500,000), a very rare imperial yellow-ground *falangcai* 'floral' bowl, Kangxi pink-enamelled four-character *yuzhi* mark within double squares and of the period (1662-1722) (*Illustrated right*, Estimate: HK\$12,000,000-18,000,000/US\$1,500,000-2,500,000) and a magnificent and rare *famille rose* vase, *tianqinping*, Yongzheng six-character seal mark and of the period (1723-1735) (Estimate: HK\$12,000,000-15,000,000/US\$1,600,000-1,900,000) (Please refer to a separate press release for details).

THROUGH CONNOISSEURS' EYES – WORKS OF ART FOR THE EMPEROR



Christie's will present *Through Connoisseurs' Eyes – Works of Art for the Emperor*, a sale of 22 imperial works sourced and curated in collaboration with Coobie Chui and Milton Man, two well-known connoisseurs in the field of Chinese art. Highlights include a magnificent and rare imperial paste-inset gilt-bronze vase, Qianlong Period (1736-1795) (Estimate: HK\$5,000,000-7,000,000 / US\$625,000-875,000) and an imperial inscribed cloisonné enamel rectangular panel, Qianlong *Guisi* cyclical date, corresponding to 1773 and of the period (*Illustrated right*, Estimate: HK\$2,000,000-3,000,000 / US\$250,000-375,000) (Please refer to a separate press release for details).

AN IMPERIAL FAVOURITE – THE YONGZHENG EMPEROR'S DRAGON ZUN

This single-lot sale presents an extremely important and rare archaic bronze vessel, which was illustrated in scroll 6 of the *Guan Tu*, 'Scroll of Ancient Playthings', a visual document of antiquities treasured by the Yongzheng Emperor. Likely to be made around the Kangxi Period (1662-1722), this important Imperial archaic bronze is one of the works that was highly esteemed by the Yongzheng Emperor. Sturdily cast in the form of a powerful winged dragon, the body supports a *zun* vessel, and the well-defined features exemplifies the superb quality that can only be made by the most skilled craftsmen of the period. This 'Dragon' *Zun* has only has been exhibited once in London in 1999 and will be offered at auction for the first time (*Illustrated left*, Estimate on request).



The Yongzheng Emperor recorded his antiques by commissioning scrolls in the sixth year of this reign (AD 1728) that took at least a two-year period to paint and made up of at least nine individual scrolls. To date, the only two surviving scrolls are held in the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, now housed in the British Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The very long scrolls contain highly detailed paintings of almost 250 imperial works including jades, ceramics, ivory, wood, and this 'Dragon' *Zun*, which provides a fascinating insight into the tastes of the Emperor as an admirer of antiques. This

suggests that the items depicted on the scrolls had probably been selected for display in the emperor's private apartments, where he could peruse them in quiet moments.

THE SOUND OF JADE AND THE SHADOW OF A CHRYSANTHEMUM – WORKS OF ART FROM THE SONG DYNASTY

Christie's is also presenting a select group of rare art works from the Song dynasty, the epitome of refined aesthetics, in *The Sound of Jade and the Shadow of a Chrysanthemum – Works of Art from the Song Dynasty*, a dedicated sale of 46 works ranging from ceramics from various classic kilns, lacquer wares, jades, scholar's objects to an extremely rare Imperial zither.



Highlights include an important and extremely rare *Guan* chrysanthemum-shaped dish (*Illustrated left*, Estimate on request) and an exceptional Ding chrysanthemum-shaped washer (*Illustrated right*, Estimate on request). These two lots share the feature that their form has been inspired by the shape of a chrysanthemum and that they appear to be unique. Both are from prestigious kilns that made ceramics for the Song courts. One is of delicate white *Ding* ware and dates to the Northern Song dynasty, while the other has the richly crackled glaze of *Guan* ware and dates to the Southern Song. The colour of the first has the purity of snow: the glaze of the second has intricate fissures reminiscent of ice – appropriate for a flower that is admired for its resistance to the cold weather of early winter. Both dishes also reflect the exceptional refinement of Song imperial aesthetics. Their chrysanthemum form is rare amongst Song ceramics

from the kilns that were esteemed at the Song court, but nevertheless is in keeping with a tradition of appreciation for this special flower. Chrysanthemums have been greatly admired, especially by Chinese scholars, for centuries.

Aside from its rarity and subliminal beauty, the present *Guan* chrysanthemum-shaped dish also has impeccable provenance and exhibition history. Formerly in the collection of Mrs. Alfred Clark, the renowned Chinese art collector in the early 20th century, this dish had been exhibited in various major museums and art institutions worldwide including Musée de l'Orangerie and Musée Cernuschi in Paris, Oriental Ceramic Society in London, Palazzo Ducale in Venice, as well as Osaka Municipal Art Museum.



The current Ding chrysanthemum dish is of particular interest, and especially rare, as it appears to have been fired standing upside-down on the tips of its petals, which are unglazed. Otherwise the dish is fully glazed. As the dish is delicately potted, and thus would have been liable to warp in the firing, this was a risky strategy on the part of the potter. However, the fully-glazed base adds to the sophistication of the vessel. In view of the rarity of this firing method and the high risk of failure, it is tempting to wonder if this dish was part of a special commission from a personage of great importance – perhaps an emperor.

IMPERIAL TEXTILES FROM THE COLLECTION OF AN AMERICAN GENTLEMAN

A selection of *Imperial Textiles from the Collection of an American Gentleman* will also be presented in *The Imperial Sale*. The nine pieces are of different types, and were made for different ranks and occasions. Aside from the immense aesthetic pleasure, these textiles also present a unique opportunity for collectors to appreciate the hierarchical codification and the characteristics of Qing court costumes.



One of the highlights is an extremely rare imperial midnight-blue embroidered silk formal court robe, *chaopao*. *Chaopao*, or court robes, were robes worn by the Qing Emperors, Princes, nobility and officials during court audiences and sacrificial ceremonies. Made during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor, this current robe in the sale features decorative patterns of red, blue, yellow, green and white on a blue satin fabric, embroidered using more than ten techniques with velvet threads of more than ten colours as well as gold-wrapped threads. The rich colours are superbly preserved in this exquisite piece. (*Illustrated left*, Estimate: HK\$2,500,000–3,500,000 / US\$312,500–437,500).

Another remarkable piece is an extremely rare imperial midnight-blue surcoat with dragon roundels, *longgua*. This robe is embroidered in gold thread and floss thread in more than sixteen colours, using more than ten different kinds of techniques such as couched gold thread, plain stitch, layered stitch, interlocking stitch for waves, rolling stitch for outlining dragons' eyes, connected stitch, black padded applique for the dragons' eyes, Peking knot for the *qing*, and scale stitch. Through the mastery of these



techniques using many different colours, the design of this robe takes on a highly realistic, almost lifelike quality. This is an exceptionally rare masterpiece for an Empress Dowager or an Empress of the Qianlong period. (*Illustrated right*, Estimate: HK\$2,800,000–3,500,000 / US\$350,000–437,500).]

THE IMPERIAL SALE

IMPORTANT CHINESE CERAMICS AND WORKS OF ART



One of the top lots is a magnificent and extremely rare pair of Yongzheng-marked painted enamel *gu*-shaped vases. This pair was commissioned by the Yongzheng Emperor for his deceased brother Prince Yi. Prince Yi, also known as Yun Xiang (1686–1729), was Kangxi's 22nd son. From national finances to the security of the emperor, he was one of the most powerful officials in the Yongzheng period. Yun Xiang passed away at the age of 45, and only six days later, the Yongzheng Emperor ordered the Zaobanchu (the Department of Palace Supply) to produce a set of painted enamel five-piece garniture. This pair of vases, together with its companion censer and pair of candlesticks, is very likely to be the set specially commissioned by the Yongzheng Emperor for his beloved brother. The form, colour and decoration on this pair of painted enamel vases make them unique and of arresting magnificence. They are truly fitting examples of the Yongzheng Emperor's pursuit of refinement and elegance (*Illustrated left*, Estimate on Request).

Further highlights include a magnificent and very rare Yuan blue and white 'dragon' jar, *guan*. This jar is richly painted in cobalt blue, and is among the best examples of the very rare Yuan blue and white wares decorated with dragons. Of the few published jars designed with dragons as a major motif on the body, only two comparable examples of this large size and decoration are known, highlighting the exceptional rarity of the present jar (*Illustrated right*, Estimate: HK\$12,000,000–18,000,000 / US\$1,500,000–2,250,000).



A superb and extremely rare Yongle blue and white 'dragon and phoenix' brush washer will also be offered in the auction. This extraordinary fine brush washer belongs to an extremely limited number of similar bracket-lobed examples, dating to the late Yongle period of the Ming dynasty, and was collected by the subsequent Qing rulers. By the early Qing period, brush washers of this type were evidently treasured as an art object as a similar object is identified illustrated on *Guan Tu* 'Pictures of Ancient Playthings', dated to the 6th year of the Yongzheng reign (AD1728), a visual document of the Imperial collection of antiquities treasured by the Emperor. (*Illustrated left*, Estimate: HK\$30,000,000–50,000,000 / US\$3,750,000–6,250,000).

Christie's will also present an extremely rare Yongle blue and white flask, *bianhu*. This very rare porcelain flask provides interesting evidence of the influence of the cultures of the Islamic west on Chinese porcelain in the early 15th century. A number of Chinese porcelain were made at that time in forms that show the influence of Islamic artefacts – usually metalworks or glass, but this flask form is one of the rarest. The form of the current porcelain flask is very distinctive and this evidence suggests that it was probably inspired by Islamic metalwork (*Illustrated right*, Estimate: HK\$20,000,000–30,000,000 / US\$2,500,000–3,750,000).



The sale is also highlighted by a magnificent and fine pair of Yongzheng-marked Imperial *famille rose* 'peach' dishes. It is believed by many scholars that the particular design on this pair of dishes was applied to vessels made for the celebration of imperial birthdays. The composition of eight peaches and five bats is very auspicious. This decorative pattern is also known as *guoqiangzhi* that suggests the sound of *changzhi*, meaning prolonged peace under good government, which would provide a compliment to the emperor and a wish for his reign to be a long one. This striking pair of dishes is not only in excellent condition, but also have very well established

provenance, being once in the collection of American heiress Barbara Hutton (1912–1979) and the British Rail Pension Fund (*Illustrated left*, Estimate: HK\$40,000,000–60,000,000 / US\$5,000,000–7,500,000).

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CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG

CHINESE CERAMICS & WORKS OF ART SPRING AUCTIONS 2014

Imperial Chinese Treasures from a Distinguishes American Collection

Date: 28 May (Wednesday)
Time: 10:30am

Through Connoisseurs' Eyes – Works of Art for the Emperor

Date: 28 May (Wednesday)
Time: 11:00am

An Imperial Favourite – The Yongzheng Emperor's Dragon Zun

Date: 28 May (Wednesday)
Time: 11:30am

The Imperial Sale

Date: 28 May (Wednesday)
Time: 11:30am

The Sound of Jade and the Shadow of a Chrysanthemum – Works of Art from the Song Dynasty

Date: 28 May (Wednesday)
Time: 2:30pm

Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art

Date: 28 May (Wednesday)
Time: 3pm

Venue: Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, 1 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 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. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

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