

Press Release

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SOTHEBY'S SPRING 2007 SALE OF *CONTEMPORARY ART ASIA:* *CHINA KOREA JAPAN* IN NEW YORK TO BE HELD ON MARCH 17, 2008



Pictured above: Zeng Fanzhi's **Mask Series No. 11 (Triptych)**, 1996, est. \$800,000/1 million

New York, New York – This spring Sotheby's New York will hold its fifth sale of *Contemporary Art Asia: China Korea Japan* on March 17th, 2008. The sale, which will include 292 lots, will primarily feature works by seminal Chinese contemporary artists, including mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas, such as Yue Minjun, Zhang Xiaogang, Zeng Fanzhi, Ai Weiwei, Zhao Wuji (Zao Wou-Ki), Geng Jianyi, Yan Pei-Ming, Liu Ye and Wang Guangyi, among many others, with a smaller offering of works from Japan and Korea. Property from the sale will be on exhibition beginning March 13th and is estimated to bring \$23.1/33.4 million*.

From Zhang Xiaogang's enigmatic *Bloodline Series* is **2001 No. 8**, a grand descendant of the mid-1990's work, in which a new color language and more sculptural figural forms are powerfully asserted (pictured on page 2, est. \$1.8/2.5 million), and **Bloodline Series: Big Family No. 8** from 1996 (est. \$1/1.5 million). In contrast to the 1996 pair, the male and female figure of 2001 seem to come less from the real world of photographic snapshots than from an idealized world of the artist's fertile imagination. A primitive

simplicity characterizes the modeling of these epic figures, as their sculptural presence is defined with geometric precision. Untethered from the bloodlines of the mid-90's, their naked shoulders visible, the figures of *No. 8* body forth an almost Edenic composure, as though they were incarnations of the first man and woman before the fall. And yet the patches of color, here in a light pink, remain from Zhang's earlier practice. *2001 No. 8* is a quintessential example of Zhang Xiaogang's grandeur on a monumental scale.



In his *Masks Series*, Zeng Fanzhi expressively renders figures with small bodies and huge heads and hands that appear in a variety of contexts, always wearing masks to obscure their identities. **Mask Series No. 11**, 1996, consists of three canvases of equal size and similar subject matter (pictured on page 1, est. \$800,000/1 million). The single male figure is centrally positioned in each work against a blue background, and we only see his upper body, clad in a crisp white shirt and neat red scarf, indicating he is a member of Mao's Young Pioneers. The triptych refers to the strivings of individualism amidst the communist

collective that was latent but still present during the Cultural Revolution of Zeng's youth. The work is less a remembrance of decades past and the tribulations of childhood than an allegory in the 1990s, when status-seeking individualism and rampant materialism transformed the society.



An **Untitled** work by Yue Minjun from 1996 will also be featured in the sale (pictured here, est. \$650/850,000). Laughing with closed eyes, Yue wears a pink dress with a high waist and cradles a giant, marvellously striped gourd. The gourd's bulbous, faintly phallic shape and improbable striations are more outlandish when cradled by this cross-dressed cartoon.

The sale will feature an important and monumental work by Cai Guo-Qiang **Escalator: Explosion Project for Centre Pompidou**, made of gunpowder on paper (pictured here, est. \$500/700,000). The

work was commissioned for the Centre Pompidou in 2003, drawing upon the museum's infrastructure, for the exhibition "Alors, la Chine".



Yan Pei-Ming is known for his epic-size portraits of himself, his relatives and famous figures such as Mao, Pope Paul and Bruce Lee. In his 1998 portrait of **Mao**, 1998, one of the many paintings he has completed on the subject of the great leader, Yan shows his painterly style involving forceful brushstrokes and expressive drips and has emphasized the play of light and shadow in the modelling of three-dimensional form (pictured here, est. \$400/600,000). Mao's countenance seems confident and discerning, appropriate for a man who held so much power. Given the carefully orchestrated and overtly triumphant public imagery of Mao in China, however, one might say that Yan's portrait represents a more human side of the leader in its deliberate lack of polish.



Zhao Wuji (Zao Wou-Ki) occupies a pivotal role in the artistic dialogue between East and West. In **30.11.67**, 1967, Zao's staccato-rhythm of black marks across the surface of the work, and vibrant brushwork—in light lilac, peach, yellows, blues, and blacks—dances across the center of the composition, a dynamism that is offset by bands of color across the bottom and top of the picture (est. \$400/600,000). In the whole of the composition, it is hard not to see a rugged seascape in violent turmoil, frothy waves crashing on a plunging shore just near us and across the painting's lower middle expanse. Again, however, the painting remains purely abstract; it captures the vitality of natural forces expressed as an embodiment of this masterful painter's vivid imagination.



A work by one of China's leading conceptual artists, Geng Jinyi, will also highlight the March sale. **The Second Condition**, 1989, is an iconic image of the Chinese avant-garde art movement, arising from and expressing repressed emotion giving way to surging excitement (pictured here, est. \$300/500,000). The work conveys its message not only through the image of a face in the throes of emotional release, but also through the use of color and light, which play important roles, both descriptive and symbolic.

Rounding out the highlights is Zhang Wang's stainless steel **Artificial Rock No. 31**, 2001, edition 3 of 3, a surreal contemporary sculpture inspired by classical scholar rocks (pictured here, est. \$180/250,000). Zhang has become known internationally for these sculptures, which he produces by pounding sheets of stainless steel onto the *Jiashanshi* (rock) until they conform exactly to the surface, before welding the pieces together and polishing each seam until they disappear. This labor and time intensive process only allows for limited copies. In each work Zhan plays on the idea of how our connection with nature has become dissipated, in favour of an often polished yet artificial existence.



Among the four works by Ai Weiwei included in the sale that demonstrate his far-ranging interest is **Divina Proportion**, 2007, an impressive sculptural form over nine feet in diameter meticulously crafted from Huanghuali wood using nail-free furniture joinery techniques perfected in the Ming dynasty (pictured here, est. \$250/350,000). The



beautiful wood and faultless construction are in harmony with the regularity of the complex form, whose proportions are founded in the golden ratio. Another one of his works featured is **6.3-4**, a series of 24 large photographs from 2006 that express the artist's ongoing interests in urban development in China. This photography captures the construction of the Bird's Nest stadium over a 24-hour period; it is a subtle but

powerful cinematic documentation of daily change representing the transformations of an era (est. \$150/250,000).

Other highlights of the sale include Liu Ye's **Untitled** work from 2000, which depicts a young boy and a little girl in sailor suits and blurs the line between childhood and maturity (est. \$380/450,000); Wang Guangyi's **Great**



Criticism Series: Cartier from 1994, which features two resolute workers in two-tone yellow and Cultural Revolution-era Communist ethos (est. \$200/300,000); and Li Huayi's **Autumn Mountains**, 2007, which shows a dramatic mountain vista dominated by a mist enshrouded natural bridge and steep waterfalls and merges both Chinese ink painting with Western modernism (pictured here, est. \$350/450,000).

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

Sotheby's New York Spring 2008 Asian Art Auction Schedule:

- March 17 Contemporary Art Asia: China Japan Korea
- March 18 Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art
- March 19 Indian Art
- March 19 Indian and Southeast Works of Art, Including Miniatures

Sotheby's Hong Kong Spring 2008 Auction Schedule at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre:

- April 8 Fine Chinese Paintings
- April 8 Modern & Contemporary Southeast Asian Paintings
- April 9 Contemporary Chinese Art
- April 10 Magnificent Jewels and Jadeite
- April 10 Important Watches
- April 11 Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art

Sotheby's London Spring 2008 Asian Art Auction Schedule

- May 14 Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art

Sotheby's Paris Spring 2008 Asian Art Auction Schedule

- June 12 Arts of Asia

****Sales information and dates are subject to change****

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