

Gianguan Auctions celebrates 17th Annual September Sale with Artistry of the Ages



"Leaves and Insects" by Qi Baishi (1864-1957). Inscribed and signed Qi Baishi, with two artist seals on each panel. Lot 83.

NEW YORK, NY. - On September 9th, Gianguan Auctions will celebrate the 17th running of its annual fall sale. Dovetailing with Asian Art Week, the auction offers fine paintings, carved jades, ceramics, teapots and religious items rich in aesthetics and craftsmanship. This year, works by early 21st c. Chinese avant garde artists working the traditional manner will be included.

Sale highlights begin with the cover lot, a fine gilt bronze censer in the form of ferocious luduan, incised and further decorated with a tootie mask of coral, lapis, jade, malachite and glass. A favorite of Qing emperors, luduan were said to detect truth. This fabulous animal has all the hallmarks of its station: sharp clawed hooves, bulging eyes, fanged teeth, a single horn. This lavish expression of royal protection is Lot 75, of the Qianlong period, and valued at more than \$60,000.

Symbolic imagery overflows onto a dragon encrusted, gilt-incised and painted lacquer box. The five-clawed beasts of royalty appear in all guises from a commanding frontal facing dragon centered among four in flight to four confronting pair on the outer box. They allude to the desire for longevity that, in the case of emperors, was to realize five generations within his household. (Most emperors died in their 40s.) Enhanced with scrolling gold Tiangi leaves, florals of blue, red and brown, a "Wan" diaper ground, and key fret pattern, the box is in excellent condition for its age. Lot 107 is 20" (52.7 cm) tall, it bears the Qianlong six-character mark and is of the period. Estimate is upwards of \$20,000.

The importance of even the most mundane creatures of the natural world comes to light in "Leaves and Insects" by Qi Baishi (1864-1957). Caterpillar, dragon fly, butterfly, and ant take on detailing and density that renders them important players in a 2-panel scene featuring skeletal brown branches and leaves of ochre and green. Inscribed and signed Qi Baishi, with two artist seals on each panel, the bidding on Lot 83 begins at \$300,000.

There are six more works by Qi Baishi in the sale. Estimates begin just shy of \$100,000.

The focus then turns to other 20th c. Chinese innovators, including Xu Beihong. "Roaring Lions," (1938), depicts two pair atop outcroppings, while an open mouthed beast in three-quarter profile takes center stage. Lions are generally symbolic of power. Lot 86 is inscribed and signed Beihong, with two artist seals. (Estimate on request.)

Two works by Li Keran, splashed line drawings of young shepherds tending hulking water buffalo capture the interplay between man and beast. They are Lot 136, "Young Herders and Cricket," and Lot 111, "A Shepherd." Both carry moderate estimates of \$60,000 or above.

The contemporary art collection leads with "Lotus" by Zhang Xiujin (b. 1951). Admiring "Lotus" (2016), one can see other paintings implied within the overall context. The muddy, weedy ground from which rise a turquoise mist and brilliantly colored flowers straining against their hard-edged outlines is the sort of visual poetry one expects from Zhang Xiujin. She has been awarded many honors including "Chinese Charity Artist" by the China Charity Federation. It is anticipated that Lot 62 will exceed its low estimate of \$150,000.

Master works from the past include "Crane and Pine" by Qing artist Hua Yan (Xinluo Shanren). The energetic rendering of nesting cranes in evergreen brings forth references to both longevity and wisdom. Executed realistically with precise brush strokes, the painting retains its vibrancy of color. Lot 169, inscribed and signed Hua Yan, with two artist seals and two collectors' seals, is an admirable acquisition at \$30,000 or higher.

Other masterpieces from centuries past include "Bamboo and Rock," by Ming artist Xu Wei. Within the monochromatic statement are hints of the splash technique of future movements. Lot 154, signed with two artist seals, is set to go off at \$25,000 plus.

A highlight of the ceramics collection is a sancai vase of ovoid form animated with swooping red phoenixes and leaping dragons. The bright color portends good fortune and joy. The background of intertwined peonies and chrysanthemum is rendered in green and yellow with dashes of red. Finished with bands of red with white flowers at shoulder and garlic-form mouth, Lot 162 is 18" tall and expected to go off at \$60,000 or more.

Also Ming is a pair of sacrificial red glazed bottle vases. The color often graced Imperial wares of the Yongle period. On these well-potted examples, color fades to white at the rim. Lot 177, 20" tall, has a starting bid of \$15,000.

Amidst a deep collection of famille rose enameled items, two delightful and easily accessible items stand out. A copper hand warmer (2.5" tall) with a yellow ground (the color for the earth) is over glazed with elaborate phoenixes of blue, red and green, and bordered by green plantains. The cover is pierced with a diapered ground of geometric coins, bordered with floral scrolls. With the Yongzhen two-character mark, it is of the Period. Lot 141 opens at \$3,000. Following is a famille rose enameled three-abundances water pot painted with the auspicious Sanduo symbols of peach, pomegranate and finger citron, all on a turquoise ground. Lot 142 carries the Yongzheng four-character mark within double squares and is of the period, it is a treasure at \$5,000.

Leading the stone carvings is a white jade moon flask with cover and elephant head handles with rings. The moon windows on obverse and reverse of this outstanding flask are elaborately carved with pairs of bats, deer, and cranes amid bamboo, lingzhi, rock outcroppings, pine trees and clouds. On the cover, a peach and bat design. The knob, a lingzhi and cloud frieze. The neck bears a stylized ruyi. Traditionally such work imparts blessings of Fu Lu Shou Quan-zhiyouquan, doubled happiness, wealth and longevity simultaneously. Lot 114 is 13" high and is well valued at upwards of \$80,000.

The maker of a Warring States zun of semi-transparent greenish brown jade called on all the mythical animals to create this ritual item. While the cylindrical body is in low relief with Kui dragon motifs and geometric scrolls separated by notched flanges, there is drama in the cover, handles and feet. A recumbent Bixie is at the knob, while elongated Bixie scale the sides to form handles. The tripod feet are recumbent mythical beasts. Modeled after a ritual bronze vessel, Lot 120 is 10.5" tall, weighs in at more than 4,000 grams, and carries an opening bid of \$40,000. (It leads a collection of archaic carvings that can be seen in the Gianguan catalog.)

The square turquoise seal of General Wei De kicks off a collection of stone seals. With dragon masks on the base and a pierced qilin knob, the script characters are Gui De Wei Yin. Lot 44 starts at \$50,000.

A set of twelve Tianhuang seals with zodiac animal knops is an impressive buy starting at \$3,000. It leads a collection that offers such rarities as a figural pavilion scene atop a pair of 8" tall shoushan stone seals. Lot 28, \$800 and up. Other gems of imagination and skill include a pair of jixue seals with Buddhist lions knops. Lot 27, minimum of \$1,500.

Classic and quixotic Zisha teapots, a favorite of collectors, include Chao Daheng's Yixing Zisha pot with a monk's cap cover. It carries the Shao Daheng mark on the base. The opening bid for Lot 218 is \$600. A Jiang Rong yellow glazed melon form Zisha teapot has a cicada knob, green glazed spout and a handle that culminates in a low relief leave. It is Lot 220. Lot 221 is the mirror image in green glaze with brown decorations. Both are signed and start at \$800.

Not to be overlooked is the collection of fine jade jewelry that opens the sale. For full-color photographs and descriptions of all properties in Gianguan Auctions 17th annual Fall sale, please visit www.gianguan.auctions.

The Monday, September 9 sale begins at 6 pm EDT. It is preceded by a week of live viewing beginning on September 2nd and running through 5 pm on September 9th. Inquiries are being accepted at 212 867-7288 and 212 867-9388. Email: info@gianguanauctions.com. The auction will also be carried on invaluable.com and liveauctioneers.com