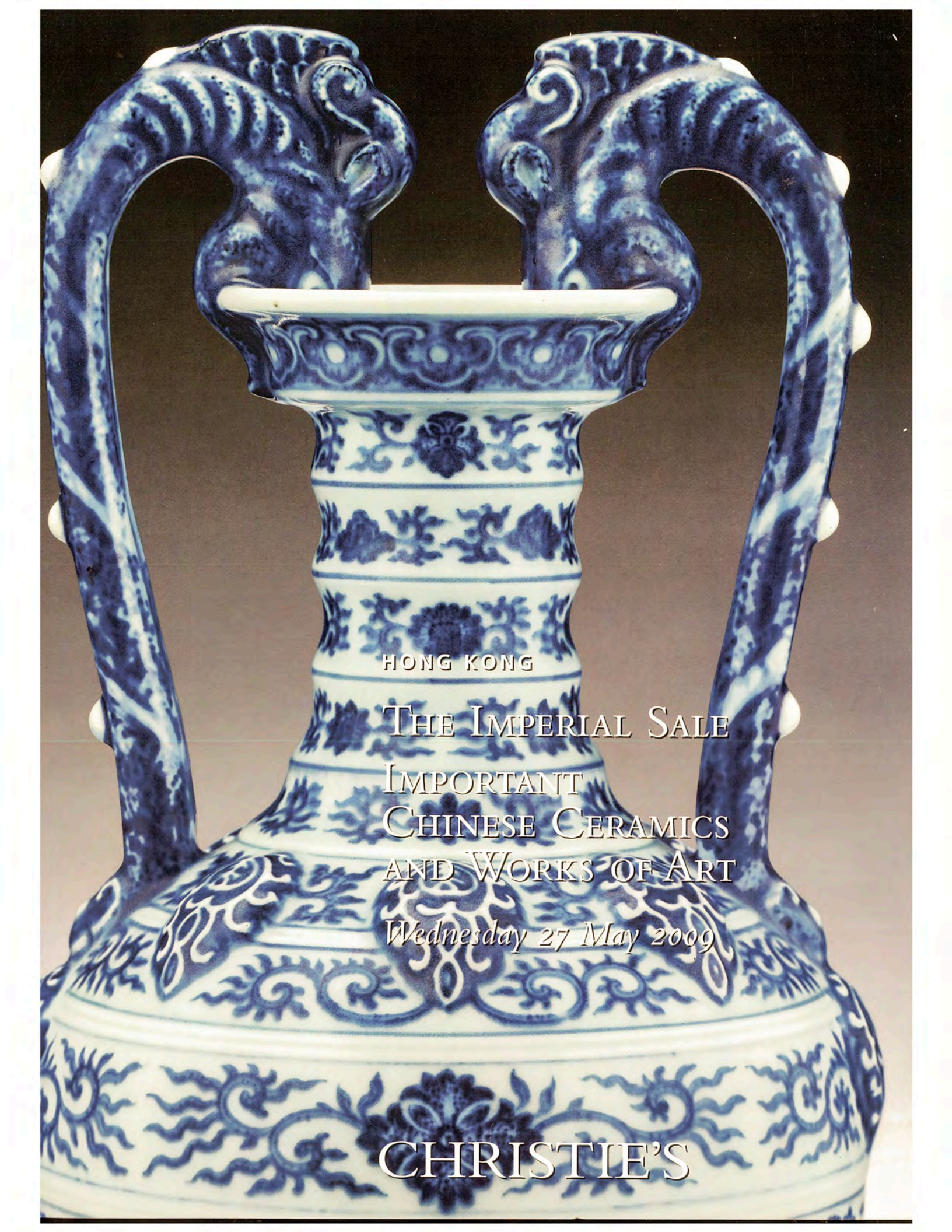




HONG KONG

THE IMPERIAL SALE
IMPORTANT
CHINESE CERAMICS
AND WORKS OF ART
Wednesday 27 May 2009

CHRISTIE'S

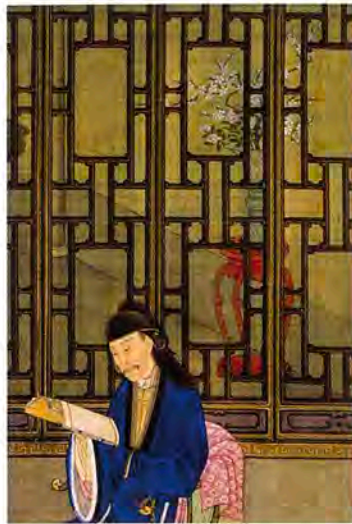


fig. 1 Incense stand with flower arrangement. Detail from *Images of Yongzheng's Pleasure*, album leaf painting, early 18th century.
(圖一)「雍正行樂圖」細部，見圖中香几上置花瓶花



fig. 2 Detail of lacquer incense stand, lot 1813.
(圖二) 拍品1813細部

EXQUISITE LACQUER FURNITURE

CURTIS EVARTS

Chinese furniture has been finished with lacquer since ancient times. Processed and cured, natural lacquer resin provided a durable smooth surface, and it was also well suited to a wide range of decorative effects. Lacquer craftsmanship reached unprecedented heights throughout the Song, Yuan, Ming, and early Qing periods, and by the late Ming period, some one hundred eighty distinctive techniques were recorded in the lacquer treatise *Xiushilu*. With the increased popularity of hardwoods and wood-carved decoration throughout the Qing dynasty, the use of decorated lacquer for furniture gradually waned. Three exceptional lots (lot 1813, 1814 and 1815) offered in this sale reflect the height and breadth of the lacquer tradition, and moreover, stand independently as masterpieces of the celebrated Chinese furniture-making tradition.

Black Lacquer Incense Stand with Painted and Mother-of-Pearl Inlay

The incense stand is unique to the Chinese tradition. Surpassing the mundane, its functionality borders upon metaphysical realms. The form generally exhibits an elevating aesthetic and at times, bears a resemblance to the rising lotus blossom. The common name *xiangji* reflects the traditional use as a platform, or portable altar, for burning fragrant incense – a sophisticated ritual (now largely lost to modern culture) for contact with worlds beyond. It was used to display spirit rocks, whose miniaturized forms reflected the ever-present *qi* of Great Nature. As a stand for elegant flower arrangements or potted plants, it also served to evoke the gentle state of grace (**fig. 1**).

The lacquer incense stand from the Mimi and Raymond Hung Collection exhibits a sumptuous, fully sculpted form. The foliated shape of top echoes through to the base with a contoured profile that was popular with Yuan and early Ming lacquer wares and porcelains (**fig. 2**). Six cabriole legs extend gracefully from *nuyi* clouds at the corners of the aprons; the legs terminate with scrolled feet and leaf tendrils that rest upon the base. Combined with a masterful integration of motifs drawn from nature, the marvelous form breathes with life.

Lustrous, thick black lacquer coats the entire surface, which is further embellished with a variety of techniques. The top patterned like a fitted panel of 'lantern brocade' fabric with engraved and painted with 'five-colour' lacquer. The waist panels are inlaid with mother-of-pearl 'cracked-ice' decoration and gold-painted plum blossoms. The base panel is lightly decorated with mother-of-pearl and painted floral motifs. The resulting impression is one of natural beauty unmarred by excess.



fig. 3 Lacquer wardrobe with *Zhouzhi* inlay, 17th century, after Roche, Odion *Les Meubles de la Chine*, Paris, 1926. pl. 9.
(圖三) 清十七世紀周製百寶嵌頂櫃，歐洲收藏

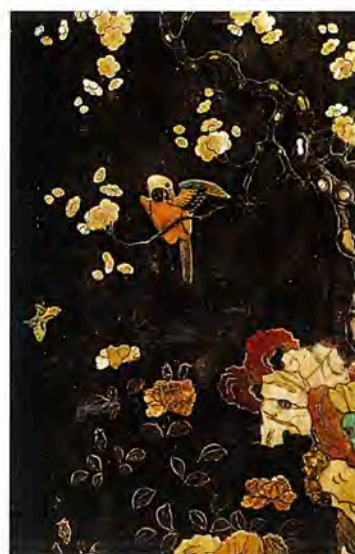


fig. 4 Detail of lacquer cabinet, lot 1814.
(圖四) 拍品1814細部

Lacquer Cabinet Decorated with Colourful Semi-precious Inlays

Records of furniture decorated with semi-precious inlays date from the Han dynasty, and few rare works with colourful inlay reflecting the Tang dynasty tradition have also survived, indicating a decorative tradition of ancient origins. By the late Ming period, the technique had evolved to yield creations of enchanting painting-like imagery composed of multi-coloured inlays. The technique appears in the lacquer manual *Xiushilu* as 'hundred-treasures inlay' (*baibaoqian*), and is also associated with a semi-legendary artisan from Yangzhou named Zhou Zhu whose inlay work was applied to both lacquer and hardwoods, and whose hallmark *Zhouzhi* was used for the imitated style that thrived throughout the Qing dynasty.

Credence to the legend is suggested by the inlay tradition largely centered around Yangzhou, where the highly developed jade-working skills were adapted to semi-precious, hardstone gems and coloured glass. Because of the complexity and laborious expense of creating such puzzle-like compositions, *Zhouzhi* inlay work appears primarily on small objects such as brushpots and cases. The few surviving works of large-scale *Zhouzhi* furniture that are known were in the possession of those for whom lavish expense was of no concern. Thus, it is within the Palace Museum collection where large wardrobes have survived with *Zhouzhi* inlay work depicting scenes of 'foreigners bringing tribute' and 'one-hundred children'; it is likely that the few others in early Western collections depicting 'precious antiquities' and 'flower-and bird' patterns also originated from Imperial palaces in Beijing (fig. 3). Qing dynasty palace records also reveal Yangzhou to be an important source of inlaid works that were both commissioned by the palace and sent as tribute.

The tapered cabinet from the Mimi and Raymond Hung Collection is a superb example from the early period of the *Zhouzhi* tradition. The cabinet itself reflects the elegant proportions and refined style of late Ming period craftsmanship from the Jiangnan region – a subtlety that is largely overshadowed by the splendid imagery with auspicious flowering plants, birds and butterflies. The composition of inlays are further enriched with painted decoration of flowers and bamboo, most of which have faded to dark shadows over time (fig. 4). Set against the black lacquer ground, the splendid array stirs the heart to wonderment.



fig. 5 Detail of carved lacquer throne,
© V&A Images / Victoria and Albert Museum 18th century.
(圖五) 倫敦維多利亞與阿爾伯特博物館藏十八世紀剔紅寶座細部



fig. 6 Detail of carved lacquer chair, lot 1815.
(圖六) 拍品1815細部

Pair of Carved Cinnabar Lacquer Chairs

Carved cinnabar lacquer is the most luxurious of all lacquered-furniture types. The production of a thick surface suitable for deep carving was notoriously time consuming, requiring between 40 to 100 layers of lacquer.

The earliest known work of carved-lacquer furniture is a recessed-leg table, excavated from a Yuan dynasty tomb in the arid region of Gansu province. The well-known altar table at the Victoria and Albert Museum and an incense stand at the Palace Museum, both with Xuande dated inscriptions, were undoubtedly pieces for use at the early Ming Imperial court, and coincide with the pinnacle of the carved lacquer tradition. Evidence for large-scale furniture pieces reappears during the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods, where finely carved lacquer furniture was produced for the Qing Palace in the Jiangnan region workshops (fig. 5). During the late Qing period, the quality of carved lacquer work rapidly declined, and most was produced moulded rather than carved.

This pair of carved cinnabar lacquer chairs (lot 1815) clearly fits into the last great period of carved-lacquer production. The thick surface is comprised of two colour layers – a base of green lacquer followed by a stratum of red lacquer. Scrolling lotus, dragons and clouds appear in relief against the exposed green lacquer ground, incised with a *wanzi* diaper pattern. The technique of carving through to coloured layers also appears in *Xiushilu* as *tikai*, or literally, 'picking out the colour'. The scrolled backrest is carved with a five-clawed dragon holding a stylised longevity character that integrates the imagery of the Sun and Moon (fig. 6). The complexity of patterns throughout the multiple surfaces, particularly in the articulate scrolls, displays the virtuosity of one of the last few carved-lacquer masters.

典雅華貴——漆器傢俱

柯惕思

中國髹漆傢俱起源甚早。古人發現利用漆樹上割取下的汁液，經過加工處理後，施用於器物表面，可有保護的作用，使器物更堅固耐用，同時也可增加裝飾及美觀效果。漆器工藝在宋、元時期發展至高峰，到了明朝及早清時期則達到前所未有的極盛時期；直至明末，根據《髹飾錄》記載，已經發展出大約一百八十餘種製作裝飾手法。及至清朝，對硬木傢俱的喜好才逐漸取代漆器傢俱的地位。難能可貴的是本場齊聚一堂的三件漆器傢俱，件件皆為珍罕的精品，在中國傢俱史上均可佔有一席之地。

黑漆嵌螺鈿荷葉式六足香几

香几是中國獨有的傢俱器型。除了實際功能之外，此件六足香几高挑優美，特殊的荷葉型面心板承托於三彎腿之上，猶如出水蓮花。香几之名其來有自，原為香爐的承具，明代有焚香的習俗，由於香几體積比供桌輕巧，方便移動，室內與室外皆可使用。除了安放香爐外，也可用來陳設奇石、瓶花、盆栽，散發靜謐優雅的魅力與文人氣息（圖一）。

本件洪氏珍藏的明黑漆嵌螺鈿荷葉式六足香几（lot 1813），裝飾華麗，氣勢堂皇。花形几面與同形几座相互呼應，此類花瓣形口沿，常見於元朝及明朝早期的漆盤及瓷器（圖二）。彎弧有力的三彎腿自鏤出如意雲頭紋的牙條下伸展出來，足端雕外捲葉紋，下承托足，落於蓮葉形几座上，一氣連作，混然天成。

几身通體施黑漆，弧形面框起攔水線，板心以五彩漆飾精緻的團花織錦紋飾，高束腰飾雙竹節短柱間鑲六塊鏤空海棠式開光如意紋圈口，飾冰裂紋嵌螺鈿並繪金漆梅紋，底座用螺鈿嵌飾帶一圈，內繪瓜果蔓枝紋。整體造型自然優美，線條流暢，裝飾富麗堂皇，為難得的明代漆器傢俱極品。

黑漆百寶嵌圓角櫃

文獻計載鑲嵌半寶石的傢俱，已可追溯至漢朝；唐代期間，也有少數鑲嵌作品傳世。到了晚明，鑲嵌裝飾工藝達到極高水平，能根據花鳥圖案的紋飾要求，區分殼色，隨類賦彩，造成絢麗多彩的效果。此種技法於《髹飾錄》中稱之為「百寶嵌」。根據記載，「有

周姓始創此法，故名周製」；周製，指揚州漆器名工周柱。揚州以高超的玉工手藝聞名，因此在處理鐫刻其他寶石色料上也頗有名聲，當地工匠因製物之人名而呼其物，因此稱百寶嵌又作「周製」，直到清代仍然沿用此名。因為周製百寶嵌作工繁複細膩，所以大部份的成品多為小件物項如筆筒或箱盒；能負擔得起大件百寶嵌傢俱者，非福即貴。根據清宮檔案記載，宮中亦有許多自揚州訂製或上貢的鑲嵌工藝品；北京故宮至今仍留有少數周製傢俱，如一件黃花梨百寶嵌玉石人物頂豎櫃，以及一件黑漆百寶嵌戲圖立櫃便為證明。其他亦有少數佳作流傳於西方收藏，如（圖三）所展示的黑漆嵌花鳥圖頂豎櫃。

洪氏珍藏的此件圓角櫃（lot 1814），正是周製傢俱精緻作工的最佳典範。圓角櫃本身比例優美勻視，反映晚明時期江南地區文人品味的要求與標準，與櫃身上的花鳥飛蝶圖紋裝飾相輔相成。除了繁複的鑲嵌工藝，圖案的細節部份還以色漆彩繪（圖四）；光素的黑漆映襯著絢麗的設計，令人目炫神迷，嘆為觀止。

剔紅躍龍捧壽紋扶手椅一對

剔紅傢俱是漆器傢俱中最珍罕的類型。剔紅雕漆製作工藝費工費時，料漆髹塗自四十至上百道不等，層層累積至一定厚度，待漆層表面深淺一致，手摸不黏而軟，便得雕刻，乾固則無法下刀，因此傳世多為盤、盒類小件作品。至今定代最早的雕漆傢俱為甘肅地區元代墓葬出土的一張案桌，宋代畫中亦出現許多漆器傢俱的圖例。倫敦維多利亞與阿爾伯特博物館所藏著名的剔紅龍鳳紋聯屨案與北京故宮博物院的剔紅孔雀牡丹紋香几，皆帶宣德款，無疑為明朝早期御製傢俱（圖五）。清雍正、乾隆朝期間，有證據及文獻證明宮廷造辦處向江南地區作坊訂製雕漆傢俱。至清朝晚期，製漆工藝凋零，多數作品為模製而非雕飾。

此對剔紅龍紋扶手椅（lot 1815）正是清朝雕漆工藝高峰的作品。以綠漆萬字錦紋為地，映襯高浮雕剔紅漆紋飾：纏枝蓮紋、雲蝠紋及海水雲龍紋，鮮明生動。背板中央刻栩栩如生的五爪躍龍，前爪間抓捧團壽紋（圖六），生猛威武，不愧是清代雕漆的代表傑作。



