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Collecting special: All eyes on Hong Kong

By Georgina Adam

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The sale of Islamic art from the Stuart Cary Welch collection was a roaring success in April in London, pulverising its pre-sale estimate to fetch over £20m. Now Sotheby's is following up with the second part of his holdings, this time devoted to the Arts of India. Cary Welch was a foremost scholar of Mughal and Indian art, and Part II offers 200 lots of miniatures, objects, jewellery and tribal art. As in the first sale, estimates are temptingly low but again likely to be left in the dust. Among many interesting lots are a delicate drawing of two Burmese adders from Calcutta (£3,000-£5,000); a bold study of a Gingi vulture (£10,000-£15,000); a fakir on his bed of nails (£12,000-£18,000); and a Rajasthani painting of Krishna playing the flute in a forest (£7,000-£10,000).

While works on paper form the bulk of the sale, there is also an unusual group of ornaments and objects from Nagaland in north-east India. The Naga were head-takers and the sale includes pendants in the form of human heads (a double one, which probably records the taking of two heads, is estimated at £300-£500).

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All eyes are on Hong Kong this week as the art fair HK11 goes into its fourth edition (ends on Sunday). The fair finishes after press time so I will report on it next week. But ahead of HK11's opening, a number of galleries unveiled new shows in what is now being dubbed "Hong Kong art week". The French dealer Edouard Malingue, who opened in Hong Kong in September, is showing ash paintings by the Chinese painter Zhang Huan, and quickly sold two works to Europe-based collectors (prices in the region of $200,000); he reports having strong interest in a massive sculpture, "Three Heads Six Arms" (2008), priced in the region of $1m, a fragment of a Tibetan Buddhist sculpture on to which Zhang has welded his own face. This is displayed Kowloon side in a vast shopping plaza: Malingue says that among those interested are a mainland Chinese buyer and a Hong Kong collector. For galleries such as his, establishing a presence in China is a long-term project: "I am giving it three to five years," he says. The first sale to a local collector is crucial, he adds: "Once you sell to one person, then you are likely to sell to all his friends."

Close by, in the historic Pedder Building, which is increasingly being taken over by art galleries, Ben Brown is showing paintings, bronzes and ceramics by the Spanish artist Barceló, while above him the heavy-hitting Gagosian gallery has a display of works by Richard Prince; early visitors included the Miami collectors Mera and Don Rubell and the ever-glamorous Hong Kong socialite and dealer Pearl Lam.

Still in Hong Kong, this weekend sees Christie's hold its spring series of sales with 13 auctions spread over six days – to pack it all in, the firm will have two auctions operating simultaneously. The sales include all the firm's Hong Kong categories, from wine and jewellery to contemporary Chinese art and classic brush painting: there is even a revolving Qianlong vase. Pieces using this extraordinary technique were probably only made in the Qianlong reign, and were fiendishly difficult to make, as the vases had to revolve, while the outer shell had to be pierced to create a pattern through which you could see the inner decoration. The vase may not be to European taste but such works are highly sought-after in China and reflected in its estimate "on request".

Normally, Sotheby's holds its sales at a different time from rival Christie's, but on Tuesday is going "off season" to sell 25 works by the traditional Chinese painter Zhang Daqian (1899-1983). You may not have heard of Daqian, but he stood at number four among the world's top-grossing artists in 2010, according to Artprice, with auction sales of $304.3m – above him are only Picasso, Warhol and another Chinese, Qi Baishi. Daqian was very prolific, and while his top price of $11m is not in the Picasso or Warhol class he is enormously popular in China and Hong Kong. Sotheby's estimates that the sale will make more than $16.7m (presale estimates don't include premium, results do); among the works on offer is the 1947 "Lotus and Mandarin Ducks" (est. £1.2m-£1.5m).

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Back in Europe, London gallery Lisson is opening an outpost in Milan in September. The 140 sq m space is in a prime site, the Via Zenale, and stands adjacent to a palazzo with which it shares a garden. In charge is director Annette Hoffman, who says that Lisson chose Milan over the more obvious Rome because it's the commercial centre of Italy and because Lisson has long-standing connections with collectors in the region, which is close to Switzerland, Germany and France. "We hope that having this space will stimulate our gallery artists," she says. The first exhibition will be a group show of gallery artists curated by Ryan Gander.

This is an excellent year for Lisson: no fewer than 10 of its artists feature in the Venice Biennale, with Gerard Byrne, Ryan Gander and Haroon Mirza in the central pavilion (curated by Bice Curiger), Allora and Calzadilla in the US Pavilion, and Marina Abramovic, Daniel Buren, Anish Kapoor, Tatsuo Miyajima, Lee Ufan and Lawrence Weiner dotted about in other locations.

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A good deed comes to the auction room in France on Sunday, when the French auction firm Artcurial puts a major work by Feininger on the block. The painting, "Port of Swinemünde" (1915), was left to three medical charities by its owner, French collector Roger-Jean Spiri, when he died four years ago, and destined to raise funds for good works. Spiri had bought it from a Jewish collector, Hugo Simon, in the late 1930s, but as the date was uncertain, it has taken this time to establish clear provenance. The work, estimated at €1.5m-€2m, is being sold after consultation with Simon's heirs, and goes on the block in Paris on Sunday.

Georgina Adam is editor-at-large of The Art Newspaper