LOT 4
ZHANG DAQIAN (CHANG DAI-CHIEN, 1899-1983)
PLUM BLOSSOMS
with one seal of the artist, and two collector’s seals, one on the titleslip. Titleslip by Kao Ling-mei
Inscription: Prunus is the most important species among the tree family, followed by peach and apricot. Attention should particularly be paid to painting the branches and dotting the calyxes. Yuan.
ink and light colour on paper, hanging scroll
34 BY 58 CM. 13 BY 22 IN.

ESTIMATE 550,000-700,000 HKD
Lot Sold: 687,500 HKD

EXHIBITED
Hong Kong, City Hall Art Gallery, Recent Paintings by Chang Dai-chien, 21 April-9 May 1962
Singapore, Victoria Memorial Hall, Exhibition of Paintings by Chang Dai-chien, 12-17 March 1963
Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, Exhibition of Paintings by Chang Daichien, 24-30 June 1963
Malaya, Ipoh, Ku Kong Chow Kung Wai, Exhibition of Paintings by Chang Dai-chien, 9-16 November 1963
Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Art Gallery, The Mei Yun Tang Collection of Paintings by Chang Dai-chien, 17 April-23 May 1993
CATALOGUE NOTE

On Painting Plum Blossoms

To do justice to the sturdiness and chastity of the plum tree - to which these characteristics are traditionally attributed - the artist must paint its rugged stem and gnarled limbs as though they were wrought in iron. While the branches are being drawn, suitable space should be reserved for the blossoms. In an ink monochrome, the artist first makes a rough sketch of the plum blossoms in diluted ink, then executes the detail in light strokes with inspired abandon, in order to achieve rhythmic vitality. In a water-colour, it is best to delineate the petals in thin lines and suffuse the outskirts with a tinge of pale indigo, so that the blossoms will stand out without having to be painted white, and will seem to be bathed in moonlight. The indigo shading will not be necessary, of course, if the petals are to be dabbed with safflower red.

The component parts of the plum blossom should be painted in the following order: first, the petals; next, the filaments; then, the pistils; and lastly, the calyxes. Of the four, the last is the most difficult, for it is the very thing, as Ku K’ai-chih (397-467) observes, in which the artist may capture the spirit and essence of his subject.

The contour of the petals should be round, not as uniform and perfect as a cluster of pearls, but in such a vivacious manner that the buds and blossoms alike appear to stir with the gladness of life. The filaments should be done in neat order without suggesting the mechanical symmetry of pins tidily stuck in a pincushion. The tiny dots of anthers should be evenly distributed as would befit the varying length of the filaments and thus produce a charming effect. The calyx should be so painted that it either peeps out behind parted petals or firmly embraces a bud, as it does in nature. While working on the calyxes, the artist must carefully study the particular attitude and poise of each blossom and see whether it faces front, back, left or right, whether it
is prone or supine, in the light or in the shade, as the case may be. He should see to it, of course, that each calyx indicates the branch to which the blossom is attached...

Extracted from Chinese Painting with the Original Paintings and Discourses on Chinese Art by Professor Chang Dai-chien
Edited and compiled by Kao Ling-mei
Translated by Yao Hsin-nung

Fig. 1
Plum Blossom Sketch 1 by Zhang Daqian

Fig. 2
Plum Blossom Sketch 2 by Zhang Daqian