LOT 11
A LARGE AND BRILLIANTLY PAINTED BLUE AND WHITE ‘PEONY’ FRUIT BOWL
MARK AND PERIOD OF XUANDE
sturdily potted with deep rounded sides resting on a short foot, the exterior superbly painted in rich cobalt-blue tones with eight peony blooms borne on a meandering leafy scroll issuing further peony buds, above a band of upright lappets encircling the lower body, the foot skirted with a densely rendered undulating floral scroll, all between two double-line bands bordering the rim and foot, inscribed with a horizontal six-character reign mark below the rim
29.9 cm, 11 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE 3,000,000-5,000,000 HKD
Lot Sold: 7,975,000 HKD

PROVENANCE
Sotheby's London, 3rd July 1956, lot 62.
Collection of Raymond F.A. Riesco (1877-1964).
Sotheby's London, 11th December 1984, lot 321.
Christie’s Hong Kong, 13th January 1987, lot 562.

EXHIBITED
Chinese Porcelain in the S.C. Ko Tianminlou Collection, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, 1987, cat. no. 27.
Blue and White Porcelain from the Tianminlou Collection, Chang Foundation, Taipei, 1992, cat. no. 43.
Tianminlou qinghua ci tezhan [Special exhibition of blue and white porcelain from the Tianminlou collection], Shanghai Museum, Shanghai, 1996.

LITERATURE
Blue and White Porcelain from the Collection of Tianminlou Foundation, Shanghai, 1996, no. 44.
CATALOGUE NOTE
This piece is a rare version of an important and interesting type of blue and white bowls made during the Xuande reign. Bowls of this group are remarkable for their expert potting and sturdy construction, with walls measuring almost 1cm in thickness, balanced by elegant and graceful decorations. Made only for a short period of time in the Xuande reign, bowls of this group are known with a variety of designs.

The original function of these bowls has not yet been definitely determined. While they are often referred to as ‘dice bowls’ and may have been used as such, some scholars believe they were used as brush washers, as fruit bowls or for the popular game of cricket fights. The latter appears to have been a favourite pastime of the Xuande Emperor. Shen Defu (1578-1642) in his Wanli yehuo bian (Miscellaneous compilation of the Wanli period), recounts that Xuande 'was most adept in [cricket] play. He sent a secret edict to the magistrate of Suzhou prefecture, Kuang Zhong, to provide one thousand crickets as tribute' (Liu Xinyuan, 'Amusing the Emperor: The Discovery of Xuande Period Cricket Jars from the Ming Imperial Kilns, Orientations, September 1995, p. 62). The Emperor's enthusiasm for this activity is further displayed by the relatively large quantity of extant and excavated porcelain cricket jars of the period.

A bowl of this design from the Qing Court collection and still in Beijing, is illustrated in The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum. Blue and White Porcelain with Underglaze Red (I), Shanghai, 2000, pl. 145; one in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, was included in the Museum's Special Exhibition of Selected Hsüan-te Imperial Porcelains of the Ming dynasty, Taipei, 1998, cat. no. 48; another from the Avery Brundage collection, in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, is illustrated in René-Yvon Lefebvre d'Argencé, Chinese Ceramics in the Avery Brundage Collection, San Francisco 1967, pl. LI B; and a fourth bowl in the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo, is published in The Panoramic View of Chinese Patterns, Tokyo, 1985, pl. 106.

Two further bowls of this pattern were sold in these rooms, 7th May 2002, lot 565, and 5th October 2016, lot 3631, the latter from the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art and Archaeology, Durham, previously sold at Christie's London, 9th November 2004, lot 132.

These sturdy and shallow bowls are also known painted with Indian lotuses, such as lot 7 in this sale, clusters of fruits, lot 5, and composite floral scrolls, lot 9. Designs of roses and lingzhi are also found on bowls of this type. A bowl painted with roses from the Sir Percival David collection, now in the British Museum, London, is illustrated in Margaret Medley, 'Regrouping 15th Century Blue and White', Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society, vol. 34, 1962-63, pl. 3a.