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ANDY WARHOL'S *MAO* TO LEAD POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART SALES IN NOVEMBER AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK

*"It is something of a miracle that a contemporary Western artist could seize,
as Warhol has, the Olympian Big Brother image of Mao Tse-Tung. In a quarter of canvases huge enough to catch
one's eye at the Worker's Stadium in Peking, Warhol has located the chairman in some otherworldly blue heaven, a
secular deity of staggering dimensions who calmly and omnipotently watches over us earthlings"*

Robert Rosenblum



Mao, Andy Warhol, 1972

Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale November 15, 2006

New York – On November 15, Christie's New York will offer Andy Warhol's *Mao*, the most important and iconic painting by the artist to come to auction for over a decade, and recognized as one of the finest examples of Warhol's greatest and most sensational series of the 1970's. This

extremely rare masterpiece is being sold by the Swiss-based Daros Collection and is expected to realize in excess of \$12 million.

“This is one of the most exciting and spectacular landmark events for the red hot Warhol market,” said Brett Gorvy, Deputy Chairman and International Co-Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art. “This work has the most prestigious provenance, staggering wall-power and is literally an icon of the 20th century. Warhol wryly marries the omnipotent image of a Communist God, as propagated by the state controlled Chinese propaganda apparatus, with the drag-queen decadence of the mass-consumer culture that Warhol epitomized and glorified. What better symbol for this moment in our time when China is becoming one of the major super-powers in the Capitalist arena.”

During 1971, the year of renewed relations between China and the United States, Warhol displayed an unusual interest in the People’s Republic and especially in its totalitarian leader, Mao Tse-Tung. He was particularly fascinated by the image of Mao which had become one of the most recognizable faces in the world alongside famous Western idols such as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. In a typically visionary way, Warhol sensed that this threatening and alien face of Communism would have an inevitable, perverse appeal to the capitalist collector. Unabashedly the artist proclaimed, “Since fashion is art now and Chinese is in fashion, I could make a lot of money.” In 1972, Warhol produced a series of images of Mao, the present work being only one of ten large scale portraits of this subject and considered by most experts as the best. Its appearance on the market is remarkably timely due to the current surge of Asian activity in the art market, as well as being a time when the world’s top collectors will compete intensely and beyond all expectation to acquire universally acclaimed masterpieces by the leading Post-War and Contemporary artists.

The *Mao* series was radical as it also introduced Warhol’s sudden and complete return to painting after having been mainly preoccupied with film making for the most of the late 1960’s. The most striking characteristic of the present painting is the broad, loose and gestural brushworks and rainbow colors that ignite the surface of the portrait. When the *Mao* series was famously exhibited at the Musée Galliera in Paris in 1974, Gregory Battcock wrote in his review for *Arts Magazine*, “The new portraits and *Mao* paintings emphasize the coupling of technique and subject matter. Characteristically, Warhol continues to reverse what appears mainstream. We find indication of a return to aesthetics and to formal pictorial principles.”

Kynaston Mcshine of the Museum of Modern Art in New York notes that Warhol adds “a touch of subversion in a collective regime that proscribed individual artistic activity.” The genius of Warhol was to have found at the exact right moment a way to tap into public consciousness with Mao’s image being omni-present in the East and, as a result of easing international relations, an image immediately recognizable in the West. He succeeded in suggesting the deification of Mao in China

