

For Immediate Release

October 4, 2007

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WARHOL, ROTHKO, KOONS AND RICHTER TO HEAD POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING SALE AT CHRISTIE'S



Mark Rothko
No.7 (*Dark Over Light*)
Estimate: \$20 – 30 million

“...that the poignancy of art in my life lay in its Dionysian content and that the nobility, the largeness and exaltation are hollow pillars, not to be trusted, unless ...they are filled to the point of bulging, by the wild”
Mark Rothko, 1955

Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale November 13, 2007

New York – On November 13 Christie's New York will hold its bi-annual *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale* which will follow the evening auction of *Selections from the Allan Stone Collection*, taking place the night of November 12. The evening will be rich in key works by the iconic artists of the 20th and 21st centuries and presents among its highlights Andy Warhol's *Liz*; Gerhard Richter's *Düsenjäger*; *Ib and Her Husband* by Lucian Freud; and *Diamond (Blue)* from Jeff Koons's *Celebration* series (separate releases available). In its variety and depth, the sale presents collectors in Western and Eastern hemispheres with excellent and rare buying opportunities and is expected to realize in excess of \$250 million.

At the zenith of the art market lives Andy Warhol and two major works have entered the sale. Coolly sexy and stunningly beautiful, *Liz* (estimate: \$25 – 35 million) is part of the series of portraits



Warhol executed in the 1960s when his near-obsession with three legendary muses in his life – Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy – drove him to create some of the most iconic portraits of the 20th century. He chose to portray his three semi-goddesses during times of utter distress and beyond. In the case of *Liz*, he idolized and immortalized her at a point in time when a severe illness led many to believe she would not survive. However, the *Liz* portraits take a different stance as they eventually came to depict her recovery. The present painting, one of a series of twelve,

is nothing if not alive – a superbly sophisticated turquoise background mimics and accentuates *Liz*'s eye shadow while blood-red lips splash verve into the image (*see separate release*). Also offered is *Elvis 2 Times* (estimate: \$15 – 20 million), one of the celebrated pictures of the “King” that Warhol executed in his Firehouse studio in 1963. *Elvis 2 Times* was based on a publicity image for a movie, *Flaming Star*, and it is therefore all the more appropriate that Elvis is shown against a silver background, a substitute for the silver screen. Warhol’s choice of ‘Elvis the movie star’ also reveals his increasing fascination with cinema, which led to his experimentation with movies, an occupation that would dominate a large part of his career. As with so much of Warhol’s work, this picture is a modern gleaming icon, a shimmering promise of wealth, a mirage and a dream.

Mark Rothko’s superbly magical and reflective work never fails to stun one in its serene but almost tangible power. The sale is strong in Rothko’s work, offering four of his paintings; two canvasses dating from the early 1950s (1954 and 1955), a third canvas painted shortly before his death in 1969 and a verdant painting in paper from 1968. Together they constitute the most valuable group of works by Rothko to have ever appeared in one single auction. Rothko once presented a lecture audience with his ‘formula’ for art and the ingredients it should contain and the list ran thus: death, sensuality, tension, irony, wit & play, chance & the ephemeral, and hope.

Observing his work, one is deeply struck by the intense humanity that shines through, and realizes that he has indeed captured some or all of humankind’s anxieties and joys. *Untitled (Red Blue Orange)* (estimate: \$25 – 30 million) and *No.7 (Dark Over Light)*, 1954 (estimate: \$20 – 30 million) both derive from Rothko’s classic period and they reflect the artist’s spare but emotive vocabulary of luminous rectangles stacked and set afloat within a radiantly hued ground. *Untitled (Red Blue Orange)*, is a rich and exuberant painting, which establishes a mysterious and powerful sense of depth and resonance, using a bold and rare play with blues in different layers, offset by orange set in a warm reddish background. It is one of



the works that are perfect illustrations of Rothko's statement that one should 'feel' a painting in one's back when turned away from it, in the same way one would feel the sun. *No. 7 (Dark Over Light)* embodies the extraordinary depth of feeling that his alchemical manipulations of color, form and scale engendered; towering at over seven feet with looming forms of black pitched against white, this painting taps into the universal binaries of Dionysian and Apollonian forces at the heart of all existence. *Untitled (Black and Gray)*, 1969 (estimate: \$10 – 15 million) is part of his ultimate and final series of works – the *Black on Gray* paintings. Executed in the final years of his life, this body of work epitomizes the artist's career-long quest for the heart of the human condition and the eternal wretchedness of its hopeful beginnings and blighted ends. The radical simplification of these paintings – revealed in the neutral and contrasting shades and an austere demarcation into two rectangular zones in the present work – refines and highlights Rothko's central 'idea' of his work. The universal dualities of existence take form and an extraordinary sense of transcendence emanates, which not only places these paintings prominently in the distinguished lineage of Rothko's own career but also in the grand heritage of 19th century predecessors. In *Green, Blue, Green on Blue* (estimate: \$3 – 5 million) verdant planes of color float upon a sky-blue ground and Rothko's subtle chromatic play seems to evoke an encounter between the intangible forces of nature.



Untitled XXIII (estimate: \$16 – 19 million) is a prime example of de Kooning's oeuvre after his 'renaissance' of the mid-1970s when a sudden bout of energy and renewed force drove and inspired him to take up painting again. Once again, the artist found himself reveling in the act of painting as a joyous and deeply sensual experience and these works form the culmination of much that he had



attempted in the past but never resolved. He became increasingly preoccupied with landscape – triggered by his move to Long Island – and especially the water element intrigued him to no end. The mercurial effect of its shimmering surface and its ability to reflect and merge the surrounding imagery in a constantly shifting abstract surface of color and form was what he began to emulate in his paintings. With this focus, de Kooning also started the search for a new type of light, a light that comes from within the

paint itself rather than being created by outside effects. And the eternal female shape, the woman in the landscape idea, is clearly apparent in *Untitled XXIII* where de Kooning's corporeality comes through in the fierce sweeping and meandering lines but also through the rich fleshy tones and deep red hues of the paint.

Lucian Freud's *Ib and Her Husband* (estimate on request), a deadly honest and deeply intriguing portrait of Freud's daughter Isobel and her partner will also be offered. Dating from 1992, *Ib and her Husband*, a work that has been included in several major exhibitions since it was painted, is another splendid example of the intricate father-daughter artistic relationship (see separate release).

An iconic Photo-Painting from the earliest phase of Richter's career, *Düsenjäger* (estimate: \$10 – 15 million) is part of an exclusive group of works depicting military aircrafts – many of which reside in museum collections. It is one of the largest and rarest of the artist's monumental depictions of a single fighter jet in motion. The work is being offered by well-known Chicago collectors Lewis and Susan Manilow (see separate release).

Dazzling, magnificent, gigantically grotesque and staggeringly beautiful, Jeff Koons's *Diamond (Blue)*, 1994-2005 (estimate on request) is part of the famed *Celebration* series which the artist commenced in 1994. *Blue Diamond* – a sculpture that occupies not only a seminal place in Koons's body of work but also in his personal life – will present collectors with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to acquire an *oeuvre clé* by one of the most important artists of our time (see separate release). Also by Koons is *Fait d'hiver*, executed in 1988 (estimate: \$4 – 6 million).



The sale offers two major works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Untitled (Black Figure)* (estimate: \$8 – 12 million) and *Sugar Ray Robinson* (estimate: \$6 – 8 million), both executed in 1982, the year Basquiat himself claimed as the one in which he painted 'his best paintings ever.' 1982 was indeed pivotal – Basquiat had his first solo show at Anina Nosei in New York, followed by solo exhibitions at Gagosian in Los Angeles and Bruno Bischofberger in Zurich, and finally possessed the stardom he had always sought. However, Basquiat's reign, as a black artist, over the art world was fraught with

tension and unease, as can be sensed from *Untitled (Black Figure)* where a black figure on the right stands visibly apart from the overwhelmingly white left and the complete lack of any hint of integration. *Sugar Ray Robinson* walks the same line, not so much by focusing on the divide, but rather through a glorification of black heroism. Basquiat did a series of portraits of his heroes, members of the pantheon on black characters which he revered in his paintings with a passion and a ferocity that express as much a true celebration

as frustration and anger. *Sugar Ray Robinson*, a world champion boxer, is shown in his element as a sporting god but in all its rawness and grafitti-strewn directness, the work is as much about the



boxer's achievements and his success as it is about failure and his ultimate downfall. *Sugar Ray Robinson* doubtlessly served to illustrate the artist's own anxieties about his success, his status as a black artist and, tragically, about his own potential to tumble from the pedestal.

A beautiful selection of minimalist work is led by Robert Ryman's *Untitled (Winsor Series)*, 1966 (estimate: \$8 – 12 million). The present work is part of the Winsor series – named after the British paint manufacturer Winsor & Newton who produced the shade of white Ryman uses – which the artist started in 1966, the year that saw him crystallize his unique approach to painting and live into his fully mature style. Ryman has relentlessly explored the lyricism of the individual mark and as such has created aesthetically powerful and meditative works of art. Donald Judd's *Untitled, 1979 (79-40 BERNSTEIN)* (estimate: \$7 – 9 million) is a superb example of his vertical progressions or 'stacks,' by which he succeeded in articulate the real space of a room by separating the space from the floor to the ceiling into an alternating sequence of equal volumes. Using Plexiglas, as in the present work, Judd was able to take the process one step further as the inside of the volume could be seen and it became less ambiguous. Also offered are On Kawara's seven paintings executed consecutively on December 1 – 7, 1974 (estimate: \$1.4 – 1.8 million) and works by Carle Andre, Dan Flavin and Martin Puryear.

Burning Gas Station by Ed Ruscha, 1965-66 (estimate: \$4 – 6 million), one of Ruscha's most arresting paintings, presents a vivid paradox to the viewer – the cool and restrained lines of the artist's iconic gas station have given way to searing flames that flicker against the building's hard edges. An outstanding example from Ruscha's formative period in the mid-1960s, the tension that the artist builds in this composition is as acute as it is mysterious. Ruscha engulfs in flames a subject that had become a hallmark of a distinguished career, directing a seemingly iconoclastic impulse against his own art while creating a newly fascinating image.



A group of Chinese contemporary artists will be offered, with as a centerpiece Zhang Xiaogang's *Bloodline Series: Mother with Three Sons (The Family Portrait)*, painted in 1993 (estimate: \$1.8 – 2.2 million). Other Chinese artists featured include Cai Guo-Qiang and Zeng Fanzhi whose *Mask Series 1995 No. 26*, 1995 (estimate: \$700,000-900,000) will be offered from a Distinguished European Collection.

Other highlights of the sale include Jasper Johns's *Untitled*, 1965-67

(estimate: \$4 – 6 million); Joan Mitchell's *Atlantic Side*, 1960 (estimate: \$2.5 – 3.5 million); Frank Stella's *Carl Andre*, 1963 (estimate: \$3 – 5 million); Richard Prince's *Piney Woods Nurse*, 2002 (estimate: \$2 – 2.5 million); and *Naja Naja Sputatrix* (estimate: \$1 – 1.5 million) and *Judas Iscariot* (estimate: \$900,000 – 1,200,000) by Damien Hirst.

November 14 will continue with Morning and Afternoon Sessions of Post-War and Contemporary Art. The *Morning Session* offers a diverse and exciting array of works by renowned post-war artists, including property from the collection of renowned scholar, critic and art collector H.H. Arnason. Highlights from this collection include *A Figure 4 on an Elegy* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) by Robert Motherwell and *Late September* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000), a gift to Arnason from the artist Philip Guston. Other sale highlights include *Woman in Landscape* (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000), circa 1968, by Willem de Kooning, and a rare *Self-Portrait* (estimate: \$1.5 – 2 million), executed in gold, from Andy Warhol's final series of self-portraits. The *Afternoon Session* offers a tremendous range of contemporary paintings, sculptures and photographs. Leading the sale are works by Jean-Michel Basquiat including *Untitled*, 1980-81, (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) and Agnes Martin's *Untitled #8* (estimate: \$1.2 – 1.8 million). Other artists represented in the sale include Cindy Sherman, Wangechi Mutu, and On Kawara. The sale also features Chinese contemporary works such as *Big Family* by Zhang Xiaogang (estimate: \$600,000-800,000).

Auction: Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale

November 13 at 7 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

November 10 – 13

About Christie's

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