

For Immediate Release

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**BASQUIAT, WARHOL, KOONS AND JUDD TO HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK
POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING SALE**



New York – Christie's highly anticipated *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale* will offer collectors a fascinating selection of works on November 10, 2009. The sale is led by a major work by Jean-Michel Basquiat, two seminal paintings from Andy Warhol's pivotal *Death and Disaster* series, and important works by Donald Judd, Jeff Koons, Peter Doig and Joan Mitchell, among others. Comprised of 47 lots, the auction is expected to realize in the region of \$67-94 million.

Robert Manley, Head of Christie's *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale*, commented: "We are pleased to bring such an exciting and attractively estimated selection to the market, in many cases providing collectors with first-time opportunities to acquire rare, coveted works. The sale is dominated by works from long-held private collections or estates, such as the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham, sold to benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust, the Property from the Collection of Betty Freeman, the Estate of Robert and Jean Shoenberg, and the Estate of Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman sold to benefit the Reisman Charitable Foundation, among others."



The sale of *Property from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham, Sold to Benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust* will present the opportunity to acquire six significant works by the great Post-War masters Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Philip Guston. Both Rauschenberg and Johns worked closely with Cage and Cunningham and collaborated as art advisors to the Cunningham Dance Company. It is therefore fitting that the centerpiece of the collection is a work directly inspired by Merce Cunningham and his dance troupe – Jasper Johns, *Dancers on*

a Plane, Merve Cunningham, 1980-1981, (estimate: \$1.5-2 million), pictured left. An exceptional group of works by Robert Rauschenberg including works from the 1950s will be offered, each emblematic of his highly experimental approach, including: *No. 1*, 1951 (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000) and a transfer drawing, *Untitled*, from 1961 (estimate: \$100,000-150,000) that Rauschenberg dedicated to John Cage as a peace offering after being reprimanded for his recurring tardiness to rehearsals. Combining irony, poetry, and nuances of color, the drawing is laden with allusions to time passing, the vestiges of time, and of course, to being on time.

Leading the sale is one of Jean-Michel Basquiat's epic masterpieces, *Brother Sausage*, 1983, (estimate: \$9-12 million), pictured pg 1. Featured on the cover of Jean-Michel Basquiat's catalogue raisonné, the cartoon strip-like painting is composed of six panels hinged together to form a narrative frieze of multiple drawings and Xeroxed overlays; each laden with themes of racial inequality and prejudice, wealth and corporate greed in a fame and consumer-obsessed American. The work is steeped in Basquiat's signature style, raw energy and ingenious, loaded layering. *Brother Sausage* exemplifies Basquiat at the pinnacle of his career. More ambitious in its construction and complex synthesis of structure, the work is an extraordinary culmination of the different sources of inspiration - from street art to abstract expressionism - that characterized the very best of his creative output.



Three seminal, early works by Jeff Koons highlight the contemporary offerings in the sale. *Large Vase of Flowers*, 1991, (estimate: \$4-6 million), pictured left, an exquisitely colorful, vibrant work from 1991, contains psychologically complex allusions to social hierarchies, taste, life cycles, and sex. *Wishing Well*, 1988, (estimate: \$1.2-1.8 million), a large Rococo-like mirror inspired by the artist's fascination with old masters and immortality, belongs to his best known series, *Banality*. Completing the selection is Koons's *New Shelton Wet/Dry 5-Gallon, New Hoover Convertible Doubledecker*, 1981-87, (estimate: \$2-3 million) from his ground-breaking series, *The New*.

By celebrating the banal, the ordinary and even the kitsch, Koons attempts to seduce the viewer back into openly marvelling at the appeal of these objects and provokes questions about aesthetics, mass consumerism and immortality.

Andy Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series – created between late 1962 and early 1964 – are among the most fascinating, challenging and provocative paintings made by the artist. For these works, Warhol sourced images from powerful, strange and disturbing subject matter.

Andy Warhol's *Tunafish Disaster*, 1963 (estimate: \$6-8 million), pictured right, is composed of mundane, pedestrian images of suburban life: two housewives and cans of tunafish. However, beneath the charming and banal idyll of suburban life, there lurks a somber reality of horror and catastrophe. Warhol had been inspired by news reports of the



gruesome incident of two Detroit housewives, Mrs. McCarthy and Mrs. Brown, who had died tragically after ingesting contaminated cans of tuna. The extraordinary contrast between the mundane normality of everyday suburbia and the exceptional, absurd tragedy that periodically strikes at its heart is a leitmotif persistent throughout Warhol's career.



Offered for the first time at auction, *Most Wanted Men #3, Ellis Ruiz B.*, 1964 (estimate: \$5.5-6.5 million), pictured left, is a rare and fascinating work belonging to one of the starkest, but most important and scandalous series of paintings in Warhol's career, *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*. The paintings were installed on the exterior of Philip Johnson's pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York. Comprised of portraits replicating police department head-shots of felons, rapists and murderers, the work resulted in public outrage and was ultimately destroyed.

The present lot depicts a grainy newspaper-print image of Ellis Ruiz Baez, a man wanted by police for the brutal murder of a 14 year-old girl. Because the killer was at large and subsequently never apprehended, no mug-shot was available and the police distributed a snapshot from an unknown source. Therefore, *Most Wanted Men #3, Ellis Ruiz B.* is only one of three images in the series Warhol did not appropriate from a mug-shot. In this work Warhol explores a fascination with both the macabre and the 'celebrity status' unwittingly bestowed upon criminals who reach the 'most wanted' classification. Imbued with mystery and discomfort, the painting reconciles the ordinary with the iconic, permanency with the ephemeral, and the transcendental nature of the themes that preoccupied much of Warhol's work.

One of the most important paintings by Joan Mitchell to be offered at auction, *Untitled*, circa 1958 (estimate: \$5-7 million), pictured right, shares the same staccato rhythms and lush coloration of her most sought-after work. A powerful and intense painting created by a youthful Mitchell at the beginning of her career, *Untitled* demonstrates the unbridled force and unrelenting passion that came to define Mitchell's best work.



Another notable highlight is an important orange-hued vintage stack sculpture by Donald Judd, *Untitled, 1968* (DSS120), (estimate: \$2.5-4.5 million), pictured left. By combining geometrical forms of rectangular boxes to create a complex and nuanced composition that seems to float in space, Judd breaks with tradition and defies the sense of gravity that anchors traditional sculpture to the pedestal. The present work is one of a small number of this ground-breaking series composition Judd created between 1965-1968.

Peter Doig's *Reflection (What Does Your Soul Look Like)*, 1996, (estimate: \$4-6 million), pictured right, one of the artist's great masterpieces, will also be offered. The title is a reference to a track by DJ Shadow, whose album *Endtroducing*, released the same year that this work was painted, contained several versions of his 1994 single, *What Does Your Soul Look Like*. DJ Shadow is a modern master of sampling various forms of music to create an atmospheric audioscape. Doig himself is a form of artistic sampler: this picture can be seen to echo Gustav Klimt's landscapes, Caspar David Friedrich's figures, Claude Monet's waterlilies, and Jackson Pollock's drips.



The Evening sale will also feature master works on paper from prominent artists, including a rare large-scale *Untitled*, 1982 by Jean-Michel Basquiat (estimate: \$1.8-2.8 million), a *Heinz Tomato Ketchup with Campbell's Soup Can* from 1961 by Andy Warhol (estimate: \$1-1.5 million), and *Untitled with Green*, 1989 by Brice Marden (estimate: 800,000-1,200,000).

Auction: *Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale*

10 November at 7pm

Viewing: Only highlights from *Property from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham, Sold to Benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust*

24 October-3 November

All *Post-War & Contemporary Art Sale* highlights

6 – 10 November

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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