

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | 2 NOVEMBER 2012

TULIPS IN FULL BLOOM

CHRISTIES TO PRESENT JEFF KOONS'
MONUMENTAL SCULPTURAL MASTERPIECE, *TULIPS*
HIS MOST COMPLEX TECHNICAL CREATION TO DATE
PROPERTY FROM THE COLLECTION OF NORD/LB, HANNOVER

CENTERPIECE OF CHRISTIE'S POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART
EVENING SALE ON NOVEMBER 14, 2012

PROMINENT OUTDOOR EXHIBITION
3-14 NOVEMBER - 20 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA



Jeff Koons (b.1955)

Tulips

High chromium stainless steel with transparent color coating

80 x 180 x 205 in. (203.2 x 457.2 x 520.7 cm.)

Executed in 1995-2004.

Estimate On Request

New York - Spring comes early at Christie's this November with a stunning set of seven rainbow-hued tulips. Estimated \$20-30 million, *Tulips* is the most complex and colorful sculpture of Jeff Koons' Celebration series. The five meter bouquet of seven polychrome tulips will bloom in the plaza entrance of Christie's 20 Rockefeller for two weeks, before being harvested for the evening sale on November 14.

Tulips was created in an edition of five, each of which features a unique arrangement of the colours of the flowers. Since their completion, these have become emblematic of Koons' work, the other examples are held by high-profile collections: one was shown at the unveiling of the Broad Contemporary Art Museum at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2008, while others are at the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Prada Foundation and the Viktor Pinchuk Foundation; a temporary exhibition copy was also created to be shown in China and is on a ten-year loan to the US Embassy in Beijing. The present one was acquired in 2002 by NORD/LB Norddeutsche Landesbank in Hanover, Germany. In May, the bank announced to sell *Tulips* in order to fund the creation of an arts foundation in Hanover, with the mission to support creative and invigorating contemporary arts projects in northern Germany.

“Tulips is one of the most vivid and optimistic works from Koons’ seminal Celebration series, a tribute to pleasures of all kinds—sentimental, playful, and erotic. Inspired by flowers that are known to symbolize spring, rebirth, love and passion, Koons transforms this universally appealing source, referenced throughout the history of art, into a monumental sculpture that is both formally sophisticated and technically dazzling. The extraordinary quality of Tulips, combined with Koons’ esteemed position within the international marketplace makes it a particular delight for us to handle the sale on behalf of NORD/LB”, said Brett Gorvy, Chairman and International Head of Christie’s Post-War and Contemporary Art.

Jeff Koons' jubilant *Tulips* comprises seven individually-coloured balloon flowers, scaled up to an epic size and presented in gleaming monochrome. This sculpture, with its spray of coloured flowers, marks the explosive culmination point of Koons' now-legendary *Celebration* series. This was a group of works that he created from the mid-1990s and which took a vast amount of time to produce due to the artist's own exacting standards, which pushed him towards financial trouble in his single-minded quest for the perfection evident in the pure, reflective gleam of *Tulips*. Of the steel sculptures in *Celebration*, *Tulips* is one of the most complex and features a rare, emphatic spectrum of colours: the rest, with the exception of *Coloring Book*, comprises either one or two colours only, as opposed to the rainbow-like spread here. The combination of the vivid colour-scheme of *Tulips* and its mirror finish means that it reflects the viewers, and also crucially reflects itself. This unleashes a kaleidoscopic cascade of colour variations that derives from a deliberately limited palette of the seven constituent parts. If the orange is reflected in the blue, say, and that reflection is viewed in the surface of the magenta tulip, the resulting colours recede in reflection after reflection like a Pantone colour chart, filled with infinite variety. In this way, the surface of *Tulips* embraces itself, resulting in an implosion of colour ricocheting through the near-infinite succession of reflections.

Childhood was fundamental to the inspiration behind *Celebration*: when he began work on the series, Koons was viewing the events of the calendar from a child-like perspective inspired by the birth of his son Ludwig. He was intrigued by the innocence of Ludwig's view of the world, which was untainted by the cultural programming of education. A short time after he had embarked upon *Celebration*, Koons' marriage to Ilona Staller - the Hungarian-born porn star who had become an Italian politician - disintegrated; after a custody battle, Ludwig was abducted and taken abroad. *“Celebration became a way for me to celebrate Ludwig’s return,” Koons explained. “There was a new urgency to the work. It was a way for me to communicate with him how much I was missing him”*. In a sense, the

sculptures and posters of the *Celebration* series are the greetings cards from father to son, carried out on an epic scale. This reveals to what extent the near-universal markers that Koons selected to give a sense of the year's various celebrations, viewed from a child's perspective, also come from a highly personal dimension.

While the balloons invoke Ludwig's childhood, the subject of flowers also harks back to Koons' own. *"I have always enjoyed flowers,"* he has said. *"Since taking art lessons as a child, I have had flowers in my work. I always like the sense that a flower just displays itself. The viewer always finds grace in a flower. Flowers are a symbol that life goes forward"*. The flower has been a recurring feature in Koons' visual lexicon, already appearing in his first recognised series, the *Inflatables* of 1979.

NORD/LB Norddeutsche Landesbank will part with the sculpture *Tulips* in order to establish the NORD/LB Arts Foundation headquartered in Hanover, Germany. The foundation will bundle and intensify the bank's funding of art and culture. The proceeds of the auction are to be used to fund the foundation's capitalization. *"It is with a heavy heart that we part from the Tulips. This presents us, however, with the possibility to set new impulses by sponsoring a variety of art and cultural projects. We want to make a considerable contribution towards the enrichment of the cultural scene especially in northern Germany,"* **said NORD/LB CEO Dr. Gunter Dunkel.**

Since 1999, the NORD/LB operates its own art gallery in Hanover. The bank has also built up an extensive collection of post-war and contemporary art works dating from 1945 to present. Works from Georg Baselitz, Joseph Beuys, Louise Bourgeois, Rebecca Horn, Jörg Immendorff, Per Kirkeby, Jannis Kounellis, Sol LeWitt, Markus Lüpertz, Jonathan Meese, Sigmar Polke, Neo Rauch, Gerhard Richter, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly, as well as additional works from **Jeff Koons** are among the collection of over 3,000 pieces. In addition to the sponsorship of culture and the arts that NORD/LB plans to operate through its new foundation, the bank will continue its extensive commitment to social and charitable projects, as well as its funding of the sciences.

Note to editors

Jeff Koons is the second most expensive living artist after Jasper Johns.

Christie's hold the world auction record for a work by the artist with is *Balloon flower (Magenta)* sold for £12,921,250 (US\$25,765,204) in London on June 30, 2008 in the Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale.

Viewing

3 – 14 November 2012

Christie's will present Jeff Koons' *Tulips*, in front of the 20 Rockefeller Center from November 3 to 14 as part of the sales preview for its highly-anticipated Post-War and Contemporary Art evening sale in New York that take place on November 14.

Sale

14 November 2012

Christie's New York, 20 Rockefeller Plaza

PRESS CONTACT: Capucine Milliot | +1 347 403 1564 | cmilliot@christies.com

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2011 that totaled £3.6 billion/\$5.7 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £502 million / \$808.6m in 2011, an increase of 44% on the previous year. Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

About NORD/LB

NORD/LB Norddeutsche Landesbank is the leading universal bank in the north of Germany. With a balance sheet total of EUR 228 million and 7,300 employees, NORD/LB Group belongs to the ten largest banks in Germany. As a commercial bank, NORD/LB offers an extensive range of financial services to private, corporate and institutional customers. In the area of structured finance, NORD/LB's expertise ranges from international ship and aircraft financing to renewable energy, infrastructure, industry and commercial real estate projects. The bank looks back on almost 250 years of history. As Landesbank of German federal states Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, it supports the public sector in municipal financing and assumes the responsibilities of a central bank for the savings banks in these two states as well as Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

#

Images available on request

Visit Christie's Website at www.christies.com

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:

