

CHRISTIE'S

NEW YORK - POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING SALE - 13 MAY 2014
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JACKSON POLLOCK'S *NUMBER 5 (ELEGANT LADY, 1951)* FROM THE E.ON ART COLLECTION



Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)
Number 5 (Elegant Lady), 1951
Estimate: US\$ 15.000.000 – 20.000.000
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New York/Düsseldorf – Christie's is delighted to be entrusted with the sale of the Jackson Pollock masterpiece *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) from the E.ON art collection (estimate: \$15 – 20 million). With this sale E.ON, which has been an important patron of the arts for over 20 years, aims to raise funds to continue their art and culture activities as well as their commitment to Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, which E.ON has generously supported since 1998 in Germany's largest cultural public-private-partnership.

“The sale of *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) offers the rare opportunity for collectors to acquire a late Jackson Pollock masterpiece with exceptional provenance. This work has been owned by two legendary dealers from both sides of the Atlantic – the celebrated New York dealer Martha Jackson and one of the most powerful gallerists of Post-War Germany Alfred Schmela. It’s an honor for Christie’s to support E.ON to continue pursuing its outstanding dedication to the arts by facilitating this sale”, commented **Robert Manley**, *International Director Post-War and Contemporary Art New York* and **Herrad Schorn**, *Director Post-War and Contemporary Art Düsseldorf*.

“We do not part with *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) easily, but this sale will allow us to secure E.ON’s engagement with art and culture for years to come” explained **Dr. Johannes Teyssen**, CEO E.ON SE and **Dorothee Gräfin von Posadowsky-Wehner**, Head of Arts & Culture E.ON SE.



E.ON Headquarter in Düsseldorf, designed by Oswald Matthias Ungers, in the front Museum Kunstpalast
Image: Courtesy of E.ON

Number 5 (Elegant Lady), 1951) found its way into the E.ON art collection in 1980. The corporation known then as VEBA acquired the painting on the advice of the legendary art dealer Alfred Schmela (1918-1980). For the next twenty years, the painting hung in VEBA’s headquarters in Düsseldorf. In 2001, after VEBA merged with VIAG to become E.ON, the company moved into its new headquarters in Düsseldorf, neighboring the Museum Kunstpalast. To share the work with the wider public, *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) was exhibited in the museum from then on. At Museum Kunstpalast *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) was part of the widely acknowledged exhibition *Le grand geste!* (April – August 2010), which traced the development of Art Informel and Abstract Expressionism. *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) was also shown in the equally bespoke exhibition *Jorn & Pollock: Revolutionary Roads* (November 2013 – February 2014) at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk north of Copenhagen.

The outstanding exhibition history of *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) spans back to 1956, when the legendary New York art dealer Martha Jackson (1907-1969) presented it in the opening show of her new space at 32 East 69th Street. In 1954, Martha Jackson had traded this work with Pollock — along with another painting from the same period (*Number 23*, 1951/*Frogman* currently in the collection of the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia) - for her green 1950s Oldsmobile. A move which would have tragic circumstances two years later when Pollock crashed this car into a tree near his home on Long Island killing himself and Edith Metzger. As was the practice at the time Pollock only titled his work with a number and the verbal titles of these two pieces were assigned by Martha Jackson herself. It is not difficult to see how she come up with this particular moniker as the curvaceous line that spills down the right hand portion of the canvas recalls the seductive outline of a female figure along with the sultry form of two eyes suggested by the bold form that emerges in the upper left corner. Both paintings, *Elegant Lady* and *Frogman* are from Pollock’s celebrated series of *black enamel paintings*, which he started in late 1950s and of which examples can be found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Tate Modern in London as well as the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo. 1951 marks the most productive and



significant moment in Pollock's career as a draughtsman and the *black enamel paintings* articulate a new and more sophisticated approach to his famed dripped technique.

In the months prior to 1951, Pollock began to work on a series of drawings using black enamel dripped directly onto his chosen support. In a letter to his friend and mentor Alfonso Ossorio in January 1951, Pollock announced, "I've had a period of drawing on canvas in black — with some of my early images coming thru — think the non-objectivists will find them disturbing — and the kids who think it's simple to splash a Pollock out". Following his radical intervention into the artistic canon with his iconic 'drip' paintings, this return to his earlier interest in automatic drawing provided the artist with a new approach to the drip. In works such as *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951, Pollock reduced its means to the bare minimum: colors are expelled in favor of black, and lines are used sparsely. Although not properly figurative, these paintings began to move away from the abstract, atmospheric feeling of the drip paintings, in which lines, colors and space fuse into wholeness. As Kirk Varnedoe suggests, Pollock disliked being thought of as a 'known quantity' and with these new works he relished the opportunity to surprise people again by revisiting some long abandoned habits of the hand.

Following its exhibition debut at Martha Jackson Gallery in 1956 *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)*, 1951) was included in a number of early museum exhibitions for the artist, including the influential *New Images of Man* show curated by Peter Selz at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1959. The exhibition included works by artists such as Francis Bacon, Alberto Giacometti and Willem de Kooning. In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, Frank O'Hara extolled the virtues of Pollock's work, particularly its originality and richness: "One of the dramas of these paintings is the intolerable conflict between an artistic intent of unerring articulateness and a medium which is seeking to devour its meaning. In the traditional sense, there is no surface, as there is no color. There is simply the hand of the artist, in mid-air, awaiting the confirmation of form."

Note to editors: Christie's holds the world auction record for a work by Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) with *Number 19* (1948) sold for \$58,363,750 (£38,520,075/ €45,523,725), in New York on May 15, 2013 in the *Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale*.

Viewing: New York: 2 - 13 May 2014

Tour: Hong Kong: 3 - 7 April 2014 / London: 11 - 15 April 2014

Auction: Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale, 13 May 2014, Christie's New York

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About E.ON and its art and culture activities

E.ON is one of the world's largest investor-owned power and gas companies. It has facilities across Europe, Russia, and North America and more than 62,000 employees. E.ON was formed in June 2000 by the merger of VEBA and VIAG, two of Germany's largest industrial groups, each with an impressive history in its own right. In 2003 E.ON acquired the majority shareholding of Ruhrgas. The art and culture activities of the company go back to the 1980s, when single art works were bought and the company began sponsoring cultural events, especially in Germany. Over the course of many years a collection of contemporary and classical modern art was established, by both internationally celebrated and German-born artists. Highlight of the collection always was Jackson Pollock's *Number 5 (Elegant Lady, 1951)*. Works from artists such as Andreas Gursky, Tony Cragg, Nam June Paik, Günther Uecker, Otto Piene, Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland up to Lyonel Feininger, Max Ernst, George Grosz and Kurt Schwitters belong to the collection. Most of the company's art works are in the company's buildings in Germany.

E.ON's commitment to the arts is very well-known, due especially to its great support for the realization of special exhibitions in museums. For over 20 years E.ON has enabled dozens of great exhibitions in Germany's leading museums. Some examples are: "Paul Cézanne – Aufbruch in die Moderne" (2004 in Museum Folkwang), "Caravaggio. Auf den Spuren eines Genies" (2006 in Museum Kunstpalast), „Mark Rothko. Die Retrospektive“ (2008 in the Kunsthalle Hamburg), "Jeff Koons. Celebration" and „Das Universum. KLEE“ (2008/2009 in the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin) and „Candida Höfer. Düsseldorf“ (2013 in the Museum Kunstpalast). Since 2001 E.ON has enabled 17 exhibitions in the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf. E.ON and the Kunstpalast are connected through a public private partnership E.ON has with the city of Düsseldorf since 1998. It is Germany's largest public private partnership in the cultural field.

E.ON accompanies the large exhibitions in the museums with exhibitions in the company's headquarters in Düsseldorf, which are open to the public. These exhibitions focus on works from younger artists. Up to February 2014 E.ON presented works from 14 photography artists in its building. It was a cooperation with seven gallerists from Düsseldorf. It ran parallel to E.ON's sponsoring of the Candida Höfer-exhibition in the Museum Kunstpalast.

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. 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 around 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 & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

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