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ANDY WARHOL'S *WHITE MARILYN* A POP ICON OF THE 1960s



ANDY WARHOL (1928-1987)
White Marilyn
acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen
20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm.)
Painted in 1962.
Estimate : \$12,000,000-18,000,000

New York - On May 13, Christie's will offer Andy Warhol's *White Marilyn*, 1962, one of the most iconic portraits created by the artist and widely recognized as one of the finest examples of Warhol's greatest and most sensational bodies of work, the *Death and Disasters* series. The spectacular *White Marilyn* (estimate: \$ 12–18 million), a stunning image of one of Hollywood's larger-than-life legends, was created immediately after Monroe's untimely death in 1962, when Warhol became fascinated with the idea of Monroe as a pre-fabricated media product. *White Marilyn* emerges as an emblem of 1960s Pop. Belonging to the twelve "single Marilyns" mentioned by Warhol in *POPism*, *White Marilyn* was one of eight Marilyns selected for Warhol's first one-man exhibition at Eleanor Ward's renowned Stable Gallery in New York in 1962, and was once part of her personal collection.

"We are extremely proud to present White Marilyn, one of the nucleuses of Warhol's first ever and most significant solo exhibition organized by Eleanor Ward for the Stable Gallery in 1962. With his unique ability to fuse painting and photography into an unforgettably iconic image, Warhol condensed all the themes of his art in this magnificent White Marilyn which keeps one such icon alive and forever in style. Compared to the perfectly coiffed media propagated publicity images of the actress, in White Marilyn she appears touched by humanity, and transcends reality to become a modern Saint. Warhol dedicated this work to Ward and expressed his gratitude scattering hearts on the reverse of the painting. Warhol gave Mint Marilyn to Jasper Johns, Gold Marilyn Monroe and Blue Marilyn were acquired by Phillip Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Barr before being gifted respectively to the National Gallery of Arts in Washington, and the Princeton University Art Museum." **declared Laura Paulson, Christie's Chairman and International Director for Post-War and Contemporary Art.**

Warhol's first Pop exhibition in a New York gallery took place at the Stable owned by Eleanor Ward, on November 1962. The show featured eighteen works by the artist, including *Do It Yourself*, *Baseball*, *Marilyn Diptych*, *Gold Marilyn Monroe*, *129 Die*, *Close Cover Before Striking*, *Red Elvis*, *Troy Donahue*, *Dance Diagram* and Warhol's serial images of *Campbell Soup Cans*, *Coke Bottles* and *Dollar Bills*. The attention that Warhol's first NY Pop exhibition generated in the general press was extremely positive, Michael Fried in *Art International* magazine wrote: *"Of all the painters working today in the service - or thrall - of a popular iconography Andy Warhol is probably the most single minded and the most spectacular. His current show at the Stable appears to have been done in a combination paint and silk-screen technique... The technical result is brilliant, and there are passages of fine, sharp painting as well... At his strongest - and I take this to be in the Marilyn Monroe paintings - Warhol has a painterly competence, a sure instinct for vulgarity (as in his choice of colours) and a feeling for what is truly human and pathetic in one of the exemplary myths of our time that I for one find moving; but I am not at all sure that even the best of Warhol's work can much outlast the journalism on which it is forced to depend."*

Created in the month after Monroe's death, *White Marilyn* is one of the earliest of such manifestations; it is a poignant embodiment of the extinguished star. *"I don't feel I'm representing the main sex symbols of our time in some of my pictures, such as Marilyn Monroe or Elizabeth Taylor,"* the artist stated of his penchant for tragic female stars. *"I just see Monroe as just another person. As for whether it's symbolical to paint Monroe in such violent colors: it's beauty, and she's beautiful and if something's beautiful it's pretty colors, that's all. Or something. The Monroe picture was part of a death series I was doing, of people who had died by different ways. There was no profound reason for doing a death series, no victims of their time; there was no reason for doing it all, just a surface reason.* In the weeks prior to Monroe's death Warhol had been exploring an eccentric and highly topical approach to realist art. By utilizing the silkscreen, Warhol was taking his first steps in the Duchampian tradition of using a "ready-made" image, in this case a photograph, as the basis for a work-of-art.



Andy Warhol, publicity still of Marilyn Monroe, source image for the Marilyn series, 1962.

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He used the silkscreen process to stencil a photo-derived image on top of a hand-painted background. Head and shoulders portraits of the attractive young actors Troy Donahue and Warren Beatty were initially his main focus, and his custom-made silkscreens reproduced the kinds of publicity photographs that abounded in the latest teen and movie magazines. Warhol soon learned how to make the inky detailing of the silkscreen stand out against the flat color beneath, creating an electric effect. For his new Marilyn series he ordered a silkscreen enlargement of a detail of a bust-length photo taken by

Gene Korman for the promotion of the 20th Century Fox film *Niagara* (1953). *"In August '62, I started doing silk-screens,"* Warhol explained in his own words. *"The rubber-stamp method I'd been using to repeat images suddenly seemed too homemade; I wanted something stronger that gave more of an*

assembly-line effect. With silk-screening, you pick a photograph, blow it up, transfer it in glue onto silk, and then roll ink

across it so the ink goes through the silk but not through the glue. That way you get the same image, slightly different each time. It was all so simple—quick and chancy. I was thrilled with it. My first experiments with screens were heads of Troy Donahue and Warren Beatty, and then when Marilyn Monroe happened to die that month, I got the idea to make screens of her beautiful face—the first Marilyns.”

Viewing:

New York: 2-13 May 2014

Tour:

Hong Kong: 3-5 April 2014

San Francisco (Hedge Gallery): 9-10 April 2014

London: 11-17 April 2014

Auction:

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

PRESS CONTACT: Capucine Milliot | +1 212 641 5078 | cmilliot@christies.com

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