

For Immediate Release

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***YELLOW MARILYN* TO HEAD CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK SALE OF POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART**

Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale May 16, 2007

New York – Christie's New York will offer Andy Warhol's *Lemon Marilyn* (estimate on request), an unambiguous canonization of the legendary actress and one of the eight 20 x 16 inches *Marilyns* included in the first one-man-show of Andy Warhol in New York, organized by Eleanor Ward for the Stable Gallery in 1962. It was at this premiere that *Lemon Marilyn* was acquired by the present owners. The painting is expected to realize in excess of \$18 million when it will be offered in the *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale* on May 16.

As the crystallization of the fame, glamour and wealth of Hollywood, Monroe was a product ripe for Warhol's creative transformation. Her death caused a nationwide fixation that was fueled for months by the media. If Monroe was famous in life, she was legendary in death. The press was awash in the details of her suicide and Warhol, with his uncanny eye for myth and the machinery of its propagation, swiftly seized upon its operations. Warhol purchased a publicity photograph of Monroe from the 20th century Fox film *Niagara*, a few days after her death. Cropping the bust-length image of the artist just below the chin, Warhol ordered a 20 x 16 inch silkscreen based on an enlargement of this detail. That he conceived of his initial *Marilyns* in the same size and format that he had used for his *Campbell's Soup Cans* suggests that Warhol recognized the posthumous Monroe as a complete and artificial construct of the media.

Warhol's process for the *Lemon Marilyn* involved hand-painting seven blocks of color that indicated the actress's hair, skin, eyes, eyelids, lips, collar and the space surrounding her head, creating in effect

a colored map of Monroe's face, and then squeezing black pigment through the mesh of the silk screen. The result, perfectly reflected by the present *Lemon Marilyn*, was one of unprecedented immediacy. The 'personality' of the painting is even more pronounced as Warhol did allow 'imperfections' to be part of the image, despite the mechanical nature of the creative process. In *Lemon Marilyn* for instance, the registration of the screen is not properly aligned with the features on account of Warhol's tendency to make areas of color larger than the forms they were intended to describe, there is a blurriness to the registration of the hair and the border of the screen are visible on the upper, lower and left edges of the painting. These attributes are unique to this work and not only do they evoke a certain level of humanity but they also testify to the ultimate role of the hand of the artist.

Such traits of individuality leap out in *Lemon Marilyn*, ultimately extending to the star herself. Against the gilded aura of her background she appears isolated and afloat like a Byzantine icon of a bygone era. This mysterious and haunting quality might have been the reason the present owners singled out *Lemon Marilyn* at its premiere at the Stable Gallery in November 1962, and decided to acquire it at first sight. Besides being one of Warhol's most exquisite portraits, *Lemon Marilyn* also comes with a stellar provenance, having been in the same private collection for the past forty-five years.

Auction: Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale

May 16 at 7 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries Rockefeller Center

May 12– 16

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