

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER PROPERTY FROM THE COLLECTION OF JOHN CAGE AND MERCE CUNNINGHAM SOLD TO BENEFIT THE MERCE CUNNINGHAM TRUST IN NEW YORK THIS NOVEMBER

Works by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Philip Guston from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham to Highlight Christie's New York Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale



November 10, 2009

New York – On November 10, 2009 Christie's will pay tribute to two of the most influential American artists of the 20th century in its *Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale*, offering *Property from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham Sold to Benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust*. The sale of *Property from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham Sold to Benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust* will present collectors the opportunity to acquire six significant works by the great Post-War masters

Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Philip Guston. The six works from the Collection are expected to realize in the region of \$5 million.

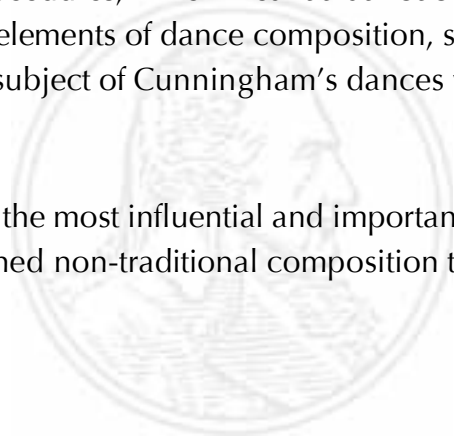
Laura Paulson, Deputy Chairman of Christie's commented: *"We are privileged to have been entrusted with the sale of this Collection, and for its proceeds to benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust. A sale of this grouping is unprecedented at auction and the works' supreme freshness to the market and esteemed provenance will make them highly sought after by collectors from around the world. They represent a true time capsule of a watershed moment in the development of Post-War art, music, and performance."*

"These works of art that have shared space with John Cage and Merce Cunningham for so many years will now help the Merce Cunningham Trust fulfill its mission to preserve and promote the legacy of Cunningham," said Laura Kuhn, a Trustee of the Merce Cunningham Trust. *"It is my hope that each and every one of these pieces finds a new home as hospitable to the arts and artists as that of Cage/Cunningham."*

Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) is widely recognized as one of the greatest choreographers of all time, with a career spanning seven decades that profoundly influenced modern dance. He was also one of the greatest American dancers. He attended the Cornish School (now Cornish College of the Arts) in Seattle, and was a soloist in the Martha Graham Dance Company from 1939 to 1945. He presented his first New York solo concert with John Cage in 1944, and formed the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Black Mountain College in 1953.

In his over 200 works, Cunningham was noted for his collaborations with contemporary visual artists and musicians, particularly Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and John Cage, his life partner from the 1940s until Cage's death in 1992. Together, Cage and Cunningham proposed a number of radical innovations, including the controversial notion that music and dance should occur in the same time and space but without supporting or being connected to one another in a conventional way. Both Cunningham and Cage made extensive use of chance procedures, which meant that not only musical forms but narrative and other conventional elements of dance composition, such as climax and anticlimax, were also abandoned. The subject of Cunningham's dances was always dance itself.

John Cage (1912-1992) is lauded as one of the most influential and important American composers of the 20th century. He championed non-traditional composition through his



use of chance procedures, and propounded innovative uses of musical instruments, including his invention of the prepared piano. Cage is famous for his revolutionary approach to music as both behavior and as artistic practice, and for distinguishing the relationships between and among composers, performers, and listeners. He is perhaps best known for his notoriously tacit composition, *4'33"*, consisting of three movements performed without a single note being played, where he bestowed equal importance on both silence and sound.

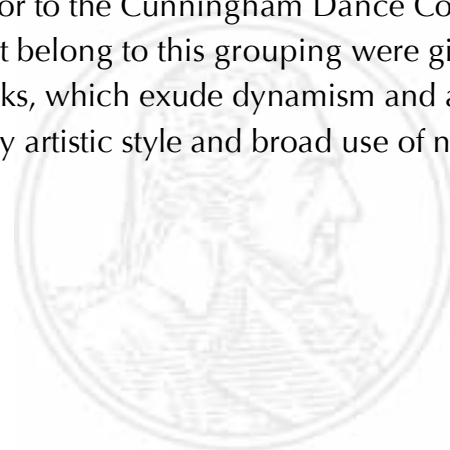
Jasper Johns

The centerpiece of the collection is a work directly inspired by Merce Cunningham and his company of dancers, *Dancers on a Plane, Merce Cunningham, 1980-1981*, by Jasper Johns (b. 1930), (estimate: \$1.5 million to 2 million), pictured right. Johns was artistic advisor to the Cunningham Dance Company from 1967-1980 and subsequently dedicated the work to Cunningham, whose name together with this title, appears in interspersed letters along the bottom of the picture. Inspired by a tantric painting of the god Shiva represented as Lord of the Dance and copulating with the goddess Sakti, the work is permeated with the themes of sex, dance and religion. Dance is presented as abstract forms on the canvas, and at the center top and bottom of the frame are stylized images of both male and female genitalia. Only two versions of this work exist in a larger format, one is in the Collection of the Tate Museum in London, and the other, in primary colors, belongs to Jasper Johns.



Robert Rauschenberg

An exceptional group of works from the early 1950s until 1961 by Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) will be offered, each representative of his highly experimental approach to painting. Rauschenberg served as art advisor to the Cunningham Dance Company for 10 years beginning in 1954, and the works that belong to this grouping were gifted by him to Cunningham and Cage. All are pivotal works, which exude dynamism and are emblematic of Rauschenberg's revolutionary artistic style and broad use of non-art materials.





Rauschenberg painted *No. 1*, 1951 (estimate \$800,000-1,200,000) over a work originally created by his former wife, Sue Weil. After it was in his 1951 one-man show at the Betty Parsons Gallery it became the property of John Cage. Some years later, to thank Cage for letting him stay at his apartment, Rauschenberg repainted *No. 1* entirely in black. Then in 1985 he refreshed the canvas with another coat of black and left Cage an accompanying note that read, "This is part of the history of this single canvas – I hope the dialogue continues for many more years. I will if John dares. Love Bob Rauschenberg."

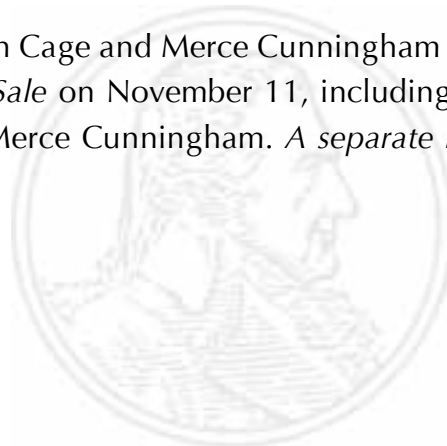
An exceptional transfer drawing, *Untitled*, from 1961 (estimate: \$100,000-150,000), pictured pg 3, left, is among the works on paper highlighting the sale. The inscription on the lower right indicates that Rauschenberg dedicated it to John Cage, and he created it specifically for him as a peace offering after being reprimanded for always turning up late 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. The sale will also feature a work on paper *Untitled*, from 1956 (estimate: \$100,000 - 150,000).



Philip Guston

Completing the selection of *Property from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham Sold to Benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust* is an early, rare work on paper by Philip Guston (1913-1980), *Untitled*, circa 1953 (estimate: \$150,000-200,000), pictured left. Masterfully executed, raw and powerful, this abstract expressionist drawing has never before been seen in public.

Additional works from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham will be offered in the *Post-War & Contemporary Art Day Sale* on November 11, including a portfolio of Jasper Johns prints and rare drawings by Merce Cunningham. *A separate release will be made available.*



Auction: *Property from the Collection of John Cage and Merce Cunningham Sold to Benefit the Merce Cunningham Trust*, November 10 & 11

Viewing: Park Avenue Armory, October 22-28

Christie's Galleries at 20 Rockefeller Center, November 6-10

About the Merce Cunningham Trust

Established by Cunningham in 2000 and recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation in 2002, the Merce Cunningham Trust holds and administers the rights to Cunningham's choreography. The mission of the Trust is to preserve, enhance and maintain the integrity of the choreographic and other artistic works of Merce Cunningham, and make such works available for the benefit of the public. Upon closure of the Cunningham Dance Foundation, as outlined in its Legacy Plan, the Trust will assume sole responsibility for the furtherance of Merce Cunningham's artistic legacy.

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2008 that totalled £2.8 billion/\$5.1 billion. For the first half of 2009, art sales totalled £1.2 billion/\$1.8 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 conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 sales 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 \$80 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the Middle East, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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Images from this sale are available at <ftp://ftpus.christies.com> (user name and password: christies)

