

# CHRISTIE'S

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## ED RUSCHA'S ICONIC *RIPE* WILL BE A MAJOR HIGHLIGHT OF CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EVENING SALE

HELD PRIVATELY FOR OVER 20 YEARS, THIS FALL MARKS THE FIRST TIME THIS 1960s MASTERWORK FROM RUSCHA'S COVETED SERIES OF LIQUID PAINTINGS HAS COME TO AUCTION IN OVER TWO DECADES



**Ed Ruscha (b. 1937)**

*Ripe*

oil on canvas

59.1/4 x 54.3/4 in. (150.5 x 139.1 cm.)

Painted in 1967.

Estimate: \$18,000,000 - \$22,000,000

**New York** – On Thursday, 11 November, 2021 Christie's New York is honored to present Ed Ruscha's *Ripe*, 1967 (estimate: \$18,000,000 – \$22,000,000). This seminal masterpiece that

challenged the accepted definitions of the postwar art historical canon will highlight Christie's November marquee sale of 20th Century Art. Painted in 1967 at the height of Pop Art, *Ripe* not only embodied the bold Pop aesthetic, it also paved the way for many of the movements and artists that followed; Minimalism, Conceptual Art and the text-based paintings of the Pictures Generation by artists such as Barbara Kruger and Richard Prince, as well as the work of Christopher Wool, and even Jean-Michel Basquiat, can all trace origins of their practice back to the word-based paintings of Ed Ruscha. *Ripe*, which has been held privately and unseen by the public for over two decades, will be on view for the first time in a quarter-century at Christie's Los Angeles from 20 – 23 October. It will then travel to Christie's New York, where it will be on view from 30 October – 11 November ahead of the evening sale.

**Barrett White, Executive Deputy Chairman for the Post-War & Contemporary Art**

**Department**, remarks, "*Ripe* stands as a wonderful example of the highly celebrated series of liquid paintings by the inimitable Ed Ruscha. Rendered across a vibrant yellow-green background, the four curvaceous red letters are seemingly controlled by the physical weight of the material they purport to represent. Joyful aesthetics and delightful humor culminate flawlessly in this masterful composition. We are thrilled to present this icon as a highlight of our 20<sup>th</sup> Century Evening Sale this November."

*Ripe*, 1967 is an exceptional and rare example from the artist's *oeuvre*, standing as the most striking of a seminal series of liquid paintings Ruscha executed from 1966 to 1969. In it, he furthers his investigations into the formal qualities of words, which he began in earnest with *OOO*, 1962 (Museum of Modern Art, New York). In *Ripe*, Ruscha not only renders the fluid silhouette of the word's shape, but also the three-dimensional qualities of liquid, as it appears to sit on the surface of the canvas. It stands as one of the earliest examples of Ruscha's word paintings in which he introduces three-dimensionality, and is one of only twelve large scale liquid paintings, nine of which are in institutional collections.

Ruscha was one of the first artists to consistently use text as an integral part of his *oeuvre*. Furthering Warhol's appropriation of newspaper headlines, and Roy Lichtenstein's comic book lexicon, Ruscha's interest was in the formal qualities of the word. By meticulously rendering different words in distinct liquid formats, the artist removed any literal representation and instilled a deeper, more conceptual, meaning into these everyday forms. This momentous move paved the way for a generation of artists who followed to continue this dialogue, from Christopher Wool's monumental word paintings, and even Jean-Michel Basquiat's adoption of enigmatic words and phrases that populate the very best examples of his work.

Words have been an important part of Ruscha's artistic practice since the beginning of his career, first appearing as subject matter in 1959. In them, he successfully fuses painterly tradition with contemporary culture, playfully poking fun at modes of commercialization. In recent years, his word paintings have become leaders in the market, establishing new highs at auction. Just two years ago in November 2019, [\*Hurting the Word Radio #2\*](#), 1964 sold for nearly \$52.5 million at Christie's New York, thus setting the current auction world record.

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