

# CHRISTIE'S

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20/21 LONDON TO PARIS

## CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER YVES KLEIN'S *ANTHROPOMÉTRIE DE L'ÉPOQUE BLEUE*, (ANT 124) AT AUCTION FOR THE FIRST TIME 20<sup>TH</sup> / 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: LONDON EVENING SALE

### A DEFINING MOMENT IN POST-WAR EUROPEAN ART

28 JUNE 2022



Yves Klein, *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) (1960, estimate on request)

- *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124), which occupies unique territory in Yves Klein's practice, is offered to the market for the first time and will be a leading highlight of Christie's 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> Century: London Evening Sale on 28 June 2022
- *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) is one of only a handful of *Anthropométries* on this scale to remain in private ownership
- The combination of eight solid blue imprints against a shimmering, dappled azure backdrop stands alone within the artist's *oeuvre*
- *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124), created in 1960, represents an important early instance of Klein's pioneering technique showcased in his seminal performance of the same title at the Galerie Internationale d'Art Contemporain, Paris

- The creation of *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) was a defining moment in European Post-War art: it stands as a historic record of one of the twentieth century's most daring and unique artistic projects - to seal in paint the passage from the material to the immaterial realms
- Originally owned by Werner and Anita Ruhnau, *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) attests to one of the most important relationships within Klein's oeuvre
- The painting was first unveiled in 1964 as part of the exhibition *Moderne – gesammelt in Gelsenkirchen* at the Künstlersiedlung Halfmannshof in Gelsenkirchen and was later included in Klein's major retrospective at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2006-07)
- *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) represents the culmination of performance art and action painting
- The painting embodies the essence of the 20/21 London to Paris sale series and is the largest Yves Klein painting to be offered at auction since 1995

**LONDON AND PARIS** – Christie's will offer Yves Klein's *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) (1960, estimate on request) as a leading highlight of the 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> Century: London Evening Sale on 28 June, part of the 20/21 London to Paris sale series. One of only a handful of *Anthropométries* on this scale to remain in private ownership, its combination of eight solid blue imprints against a shimmering, dappled azure backdrop, which anticipate the *Cosmogonies* series, occupies a unique position within the artist's oeuvre. Created in February 1960, it represents an important early instance of the newly-discovered technique that Klein would showcase just weeks later in his seminal performance of the same title at the Galerie Internationale d'Art Contemporain, Paris. Representing the culmination of performance art and action painting, it stands as a historic record of one of the twentieth century's most daring and unique artistic projects: to seal in paint the passage from the material to the immaterial realms, using 'living brushes'.

Originally owned by Werner and Anita Ruhnau, *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) attests to one of the most important relationships within Klein's oeuvre. Werner was the architect of the Gelsenkirchen Opera House, where he had worked closely with Klein on his recently-completed installation of vast 'International Klein Blue' (IKB) sponge-reliefs and monochrome panels in the theatre's foyer. It was under the Ruhnau's stewardship that *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) was first unveiled, as part of the 1964 exhibition *Moderne – gesammelt in Gelsenkirchen*. The show, held at the Künstlersiedlung Halfmannshof, offered a showcase of private collections in Gelsenkirchen, featuring a sponge-relief by Klein as well as a rich survey of works by ZERO artists. Between 1976 and 2004, the work remained largely concealed from public view, making a significant reappearance in Klein's major 2006-07 retrospective at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. There, it was shown directly alongside two of its closest counterparts, each featuring five blue imprints: a work of the same title held in the Pompidou's collection, *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 82), as well as *Anthropométrie sans titre*, (ANT 100) (Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.).

**Katharine Arnold, Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art, Christie's Europe:** "Yves Klein's *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) brought together the pioneering fields of performance and action painting, resolving for Klein his quest to remove the artist's hand when applying his signature IKB pigment. This pivotal moment in the 20<sup>th</sup> century art historical canon paved the way for some of the greatest artists of our time, including Marina Abramović and Tracey Emin. Klein not only transformed the plastic application of pigment but his esoteric approach captured what it is to be human; to be present, to be impactful, and to leave behind a permanent mark, the trace of one's body and of one's life. Klein bequeathed us with an incredible oeuvre and this pioneering spirit is what defines our second 20/21 London to Paris sale series. I can think of no greater way for us at Christie's to celebrate Klein's legacy than by featuring the painting as a major highlight of our forthcoming live and livestreamed 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> Century: London Evening Sale. We look forward to presenting *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) to our global client base – this will be one of the most revered artworks offered to the market in London this summer."

**Alex Rotter, Chairman, 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> Century Art Department, Christie's:** "*Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) by Yves Klein marks a seminal turning point in the artist's career. He had developed International Klein Blue and was in pursuit of ways by which to transcend the body and the physical realm. In his pioneering performance technique, he found it. This exquisite work will offer clients a rare opportunity to acquire a piece of 20<sup>th</sup> century history – an artwork of ground-breaking significance, and the second largest Klein painting to be offered at auction. It has been a decade since we saw a work of this magnitude

by Klein on the market, in May 2012 we sold FC1 (Fire Color 1) for a record price, setting a new benchmark for his pioneering body of work. We anticipate a hugely positive reaction from our clients as *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) is offered at auction for the first time from our live and livestreamed platform in London on 28 June."

Klein's *Anthropométries* marked a pivotal phase in his 'époque bleue': a period that began with the discovery of IKB itself. The hand of the artist, Klein maintained, should in no way interfere with the application of IKB, at the risk of muddying its electrifying life-force. Klein had initially used a roller to create his blue monochromes; later, he had hit upon the idea of using sponges, which absorbed the pigment of their own accord. Over time, Klein invited life models to come to the studio, having reached the conclusion that the spiritual presence of human flesh would help to focus his communion with IKB. The models, or 'living brushes', as they came to be known, were not in any way objectified, but rather became creative partners in Klein's journey into the void. In the present work, the forms float freely among it, as if suspended against a midnight blue sky, or lapped by a burning flame.

Klein would later radically diversify the *Anthropométries*, some were conceived as battlegrounds, others resembled divers or swooping angels. Some contained pink and gold, or fragments of text; others were conceived as negative imprints, created by spraying blue paint around the body and later filling in the void with sparse body markings. Klein would extend the remit of the series further, initially through the so-called *Anthropométries suaires* (*Shroud Anthropométries*) executed on fabric, and later, in works such as the immortal *FC1 (Fire Color 1)*, by combining the technique with his use of fire and water. *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124)'s textured backdrop seems to anticipate the effects created in Klein's series of *Cosmogonies*, begun several months later, created by exposing paper to natural elements such as rain and wind. Light dapples across the surface, like blue flames rising up from the deep.

The relationship between the human body and art was a growing concern among many of Klein's contemporaries. Jackson Pollock's drip paintings forged a new connection between art and human physicality, seeking to transfer the energy of the artist's body to canvas. Francis Bacon's visceral portraits strove to capture what he described as 'all the pulsations of a person', while Henri Matisse's *Blue Nudes* distilled the female form to a series of rhythmic segments. This was also a time of radical empowerment among female artists, with Yayoi Kusama's naked anti-war 'happenings' and Marina Abramović's use of naked bodies as a means of testing the limits of human endurance. More recently, her mixed reality work, *The Life* (2019), enacted the idea of the body's trace in haunting virtual terms. Tracey Emin, meanwhile, would bare her flesh in candid explorations of the human condition, significantly paying explicit homage to Klein's *Anthropométries* in her seminal performance work *Exorcism of the Last Painting I Ever Made* (1996).

Embodying the essence of the sale series, Yves Klein's *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue*, (ANT 124) will be on view in Zurich from 10 to 12 June before being exhibited in London from 22 to 28 June 2022.

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