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CHRISTIE'S ANNOUNCES CY TWOMBLY'S MASTERPIECE FROM THE BACCHUS SERIES WILL LEAD THE 21ST CENTURY EVENING SALE

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CY TWOMBLY (1928-2011)

Untitled (Bacchus 1st Version II)

acrylic, oilstick and crayon on wood panel, in artist's wood frame

Executed in 2004.

Estimate: \$18,000,000-25,000,000

NEW YORK - Christie's is pleased to announce *Untitled (Bacchus 1st Version II)* by Cy Twombly as the top lot in the 21st Century Evening Sale, the premier event of the Fall Marquee Week. Taking place live on November 7, 2023 the artist's late masterpiece will be sold at the auction house's storied Rockefeller Center saleroom in the heart of Manhattan. The work comes from the artist's celebrated Bacchus series and is the crown jewel of the single-owner collection, *The Elegant Eye: Works from An*

Exceptional International Collection; subsequent works from the collection will be sold during the Marquee Week 21st Century Evening Sale and Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Sale. Standing nine feet high and extending more than six feet long, the work is estimated to achieve \$18 million - \$25 million.

Ana Maria Celis, Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art Department, Christie's, remarks, *"With thick, red strokes on towering canvases, untamed loops rising and falling, bursting with energy, Twombly generates a fiery, magisterial mass of painterly form in the Bacchus paintings. These 20 paintings, completed in a five year period starting 2003, stand as a testament to Twombly's artistic bravado. The seamless melding of classical mythology and contemporary abstraction reveal Twombly at his finest, accounting for three of his top ten prices at auction. We are honored to present Untitled (Bacchus 1st Version II) as the top lot in this season's 21st Century Evening Sale."*

The Bacchus canvases stand as a grand culmination of Twombly's fifty years of painterly practice. The iconic looping theme had been integral to his body of work since the meandering scrawl of his 1960s Blackboard paintings first explored the motif's singular ability to convey continuous fields of energy. The character of Bacchus (or Dionysus in Greek), god of revelry and wine, is a notable presence, employed repeatedly throughout Twombly's long career. The character is first referenced in his 1975 collage *Dionysus*, then again in a 1977 series on the theme of Bacchanalia, and once more in a 1981 triptych *Bacchus*.

The 2003 – 2008 Bacchus series is broken into three distinct sets. *Untitled (Bacchus 1st Version II)* comes from the first set: it is one of six portrait-format paintings Twombly completed in 2004, not exhibited until 2008 at the Red October Chocolate Factory in Moscow. This set includes the only works with text. Four, including the present example, are inscribed with 'Psilax' translating to "the Giver of Wings" a surname attributed to Dionysus.

The second set of the 2003 – 2008 Bacchus series comprises eight landscape-format paintings completed in 2005 and exhibited together that year at the Gagosian Gallery in New York. The third and final set includes an additional tranche of six landscape-format paintings, made by Twombly in response to attending his own museum retrospective at the Tate Modern in 2008. After seeing his Bacchus canvases hung in a pair and coming to the conclusion that they looked quite good together, he painted the final installment. He donated the three largest works to the Tate, and kept the remaining three for himself.

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