

# CHRISTIE'S

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## CHRISTIE'S ANNOUNCES JOAN MITCHELL, *UNTITLED* WILL HIGHLIGHT THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EVENING SALE POISED TO SET A NEW RECORD

NOVEMBER 9 2023 | NEW YORK



PROPERTY OF AN IMPORTANT NEW YORK COLLECTION

**JOAN MITCHELL (1925-1992)**

*Untitled*

oil on canvas

Painted circa 1959.

Estimate: \$25,000,000-35,000,000

**NEW YORK** - Christie's is thrilled to announce Joan Mitchell's *Untitled* will be a leading highlight in the 20th Century Evening Sale taking place live on November 9, 2023 at the auction house's Rockefeller Center saleroom. A seminal masterpiece by a pioneering figure of Abstract Expressionism, the work is

estimated to achieve \$25 million - \$35 million—one of the highest auction estimates in history for a female artist, and the highest ever for a female Abstract Expressionist. It is poised to establish a new artist record.

**Sara Friedlander, Deputy Chairman of Post-War and Contemporary Art, Christie's**, remarks, *“In the tradition of storied painters such as Sofonisba Anguissola and Artemisia Gentileschi, Joan Mitchell had to fight for the recognition that she was due as a female artist in a male-dominated industry. She succeeded with her forceful yet lyrical form of gestural abstraction grounded in memories and feelings of the natural world. Brimming with lush, unfettered hues, Untitled stands as a best-in-class example, declarative of Mitchell’s deep understanding of color and demonstrative of the fearlessness with which she wielded her brush. We are honored to be offering this painting as a highlight in our 20<sup>th</sup> Century Evening Sale.”*

Joan Mitchell painted with an athletic sensibility. Using the full reach of her arms and often standing on tiptoe, she approached her canvases with a relentless determination. The towering scale of her paintings was matched by the limitless scale of her ambition. Bolstered by the mounting critical and commercial success of her paintings including *Ladybug* (1957, Museum of Modern Art, New York) and *Hemlock* (1956, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), by 1959 Mitchell had established herself amongst the vanguard of New York’s Abstract Expressionist elite, and as the 1950s progressed, her visual vocabulary became more assertive and sophisticated, distinguishing from her contemporaries for her singular style that melds bravura with grace. In 1959, Mitchell traded the gritty downtown scene in New York for an older, richer tradition in France, moving to Paris permanently and joining a thriving intellectual and artistic community. It was at this time that she was at her creative, commercial and critical peak.

A majestic tour-de-force teeming with fierce, muscular brushstrokes and a kaleidoscopic display of the most powerful colors in her arsenal, Joan Mitchell’s ‘Untitled,’ circa 1959, boasts all of the hallmarks of her most celebrated pictures, making it a true masterpiece from the most pivotal and exciting decades of her career. The painting employs Mitchell’s signature linear elements known as “whiplash” strokes, infusing the canvas with a frenetic sensibility. Through the course of the 1950s, these linear elements proliferated and multiplied, resulting in a veritable explosion, a harmonious cacophony of color, texture and form.

IMAGE FOR PRESS USE AVAILABLE [HERE](#).

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*\* Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue. \*Estimates do not include buyer’s premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer’s premium.*

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