

# CHRISTIE'S

PRIVATE SALES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## RUTH ASAWA: OBJECTS & APPARITIONS

Private Sales Exhibition May 6—May 31



Wire Sculpture and Shadows – Photograph by Imogen Cunningham

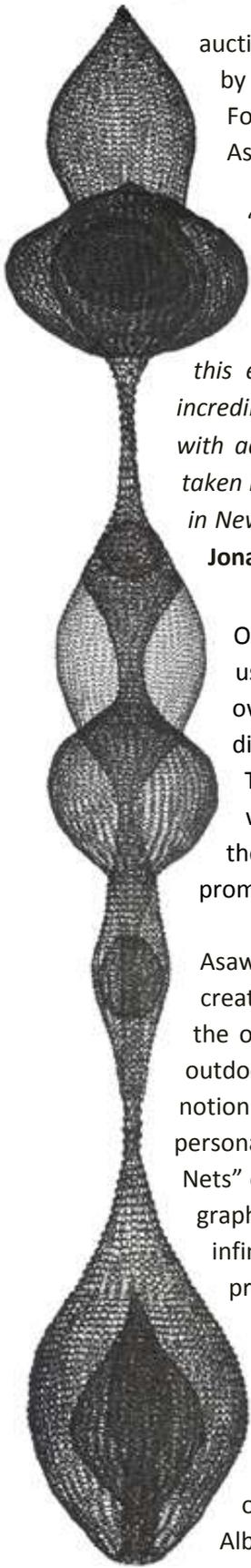


Ruth Asawa, 1956 – Photograph by Imogen Cunningham

**“I was interested in wire sculpture because of the economy of a line, making something in space, enclosing it without blocking it out. It’s still transparent. I realized that if I was going to make these forms, which interlock and interweave, it can only be done with a line because a line can go anywhere.”**

**Ruth Asawa**

**New York** - Christie’s is proud to present a survey exhibition dedicated to one of America’s most talented artists of the 20th century, Ruth Asawa. **Objects & Apparitions** is Asawa’s first major solo show in New York in over 50 years. This curated exhibition will feature an extraordinary grouping of approximately 50 works including sculpture and works on paper — for private sale or on loan— and will afford a rare and comprehensive view of the artist’s body of work. This exceptional three-week exhibition will take place on the 20th floor of 1230 Avenue of the Americas, at Rockefeller Center in May 2013. The exhibition coincides with the New York Post-War and Contemporary Art



auctions in May of this year, and will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue, with original texts by poet and art critic, John Yau, and Nicholas Fox Weber, Executive Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. At the May 15<sup>th</sup> evening sale auction, Christie's will offer a major sculpture from the Ruth Asawa Family Collection.

*"It is an honor to present this survey of amazing and singular works by Ruth Asawa. The exhibition will trace Asawa's artistic journey from her works on paper, created while studying with Josef Albers at Black Mountain College, to her career as a pioneering modernist sculptor currently gaining international recognition. The large scope and stature of Asawa's work will come into vivid focus in this exhibition that I had the pleasure of assembling with the assistance and guidance of Asawa's incredible family. We are privileged to be able to present thirty-four sculptures and fourteen works on paper, with additional documentary source materials including vintage photographs of the artist and her work taken by the renowned photographer Imogen Cunningham. This exhibition is the artist's first solo exhibition in New York City in over fifty years and Christie's is pleased to be able to host this incredible event"* **stated Jonathan Laib, Christie's, Senior Specialist, Post-War & Contemporary Art, curator of the exhibition.**

On a journey to Mexico in the summer of 1947, Asawa was captivated by the looped-wire baskets used in markets to sell eggs and other produce. Intrigued with wire as an exploratory medium for her own studies, she began to loop and twist wire in a similar fashion. Asawa began creating three-dimensional forms that played with their surrounding space using one continuous line made of wire. These looped wire sculptures with their multi-layered exterior and interior forms invoke a sense of wonder that immediately turns to a curiosity about how they were made. These sculptures rely on the language of transparency that is associated with the formulation of modernism and design promoted by the Bauhaus.

Asawa's looped wire forms were often executed in her home, with her six children surrounding her, creating a poetic narrative in which life intertwines with art. The maternal character of Asawa's art recalls the organic forms of another important 20th century female artist, Louise Bourgeois, whose oversized outdoor bronze spider sculptures possess a similar sense of labored domesticity. Both artists touch on the notion of a mother figure weaving and threading her way through art and life as a means of reflecting upon personal experience. Similarly, Asawa's process and rhythmic wire loops bring to mind the early "Infinity Nets" created concurrently by Yayoi Kusama in the 1950s and 1960s. Though Kusama's nets were primarily graphic works on canvas, her paintings, like Asawa's looped wire sculptures, were created through the infinite repetition of a single calligraphic motion. Like Yayoi Kusama, Ruth Asawa creates mystery and profundity through deceptively simple means while giving form to the ineffable.

If Asawa became a groundbreaking modernist sculptor of abstract forms, she was first an extremely talented painter. The exhibit will present a series of works on paper from her time studying at the famed Black Mountain College and additional works created during her residency at the legendary Tamarind Institute. These works feature variations and meanders, bird and chevron motifs, and overlapping forms, creating multiple optical illusions, a vocabulary inspired by her studies with Josef Albers.

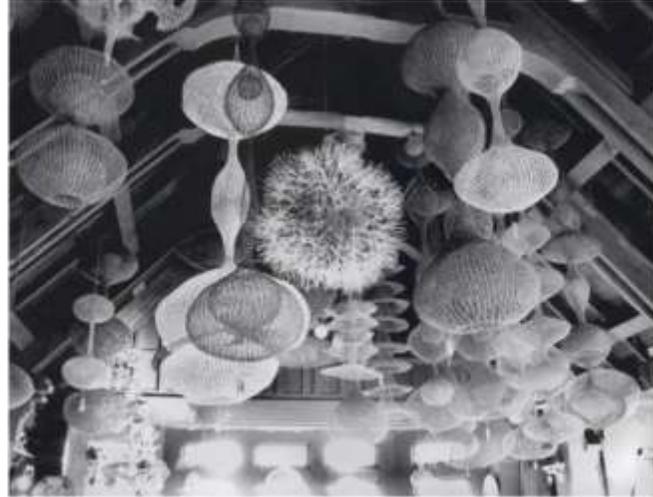
## Evening sale Post-War and Contemporary Art - May 15, 2013

A major work from the Ruth Asawa Family Collection will be offered at auction on May 15. Estimated at \$250,000-350,000, *Untitled (S.108, hanging, six lobed, multi-layered continuous form within a form)* — illustrated on page 2 — is one of the artist's largest and most intricate sculptures, incorporating her best-known form-within-a-form motif. With a length of 137 inches, *Untitled (S.108)* exists essentially as a drawing in space, an intertwining network of brass and copper wire. It was exhibited in the American Pavilion at the 1970 Osaka World's Fair.

### RUTH ASAWA (B. 1926)



Life magazine feature, 1954  
Photograph by Nat Farbman



Living room of the Asawa Lanier home, circa 1995  
Photograph by Laurence Cuneo



Ruth Asawa, 1954  
Photograph by Nat Farbman

Ruth Asawa has lived a rare and unique life as an artist. Her life, like her art, has been shaped by social and political impositions, unjust restrictions on her liberties and supposed inalienable rights. As a teenager in the early 1940's, Asawa and her family were sent by Executive Order to an internment camp along with approximately 120,000 fellow Japanese-Americans. Under the tutelage of professional artists who were also held captive in the camps, Asawa began exercising freedom through her art while the government stripped her of her civil liberties. Despite the suffering she endured, Asawa exhibited great humility and harbored little resentment more than fifty years after the event, saying, "*I hold no hostilities for what happened; I blame no one. Sometimes good comes through adversity. I would not be who I am today had it not been for the Internment, and I like who I am.*"

By 1946, Asawa had been recruited by fellow student **Ray Johnson** to attend Black Mountain College where, for the next three years she was mentored by such visionaries, as **Josef and Anni Albers, Ilya Bolotowsky, Merce Cunningham** and **Buckminster Fuller**. From the teachings of these legendary artists, Asawa absorbed fundamental lessons that instilled a "less is more" approach to art making. Asawa gained prominence with her wire sculptures in the 1950s. Her work appeared several times in the annual exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art and in the 1955 São Paulo Art Biennial, but also in solo and group shows at the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Oakland Art Museum, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. She had major solo retrospective exhibits at the San Francisco Museum of Art (1973), the Fresno Art Center (1978 and 2001), the Oakland Museum (2002), the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum (2006), and the Japanese American

National Museum (Los Angeles, 2007). Her work can be found in major collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. She has received numerous awards including the Fine Arts Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects and the Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Visual Arts from the Women's Caucus for Art. In 1982, February 12th was declared Ruth Asawa Day in San Francisco. The same year she was the driving force behind the creation of the public high school for the arts, which is now the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts.

## EXCEPTIONAL THREE WEEK EXHIBITION

**CHRISTIE'S**  
PRIVATE SALES

### PRIVATE SALES EXHIBITION

**RUTH ASAWA: OBJECTS & APPARITIONS** (48 Works of Art, including Sculptures and Works on Paper)

Rockefeller Center, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor on 1230 Avenue of the Americas

May 6 – 31, 2013

Monday to Sunday 10 am – 5 pm

**CHRISTIE'S**

### EVENING SALE EXHIBITION

**Untitled (S.108, hanging, six lobed, multi-layered continuous form within a form)**

Christie's 20 Rockefeller Plaza

May 11 – 15, 2013

Auction May 15, 7pm

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### About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2012 that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 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 has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions 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 \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £631.3 million/\$1 billion in 2012, an increase of 26% on the same period last year.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the Middle East, with successful sales, exhibitions and initiatives in Moscow, Baku, Beijing, Mumbai, Delhi, Jeddah, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Dubai.

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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*Images available on request*

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