

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTOPHER WOOL'S *APOCALYPSE NOW*, 1988 THE SEMINAL PAINTING OF CONTEMPORARY ART - AN EMBLEM OF A GENERATION

"Apocalypse Now ... becomes a chant, a rant, a slogan, and a scream."

Jerry Saltz, 1988



© Christopher Wool

Christopher Wool
Apocalypse Now
Alkyd and flashe on aluminum and steel
84 X 72 in. (213.4 X 182.9 cm)
Painted in 1988
Estimate: \$15,000,000-20,000,000

Post-War and Contemporary Art, Evening Sale

November 12th, 2013

New York - On November 12th, Christie's Evening Auction of Post-War & Contemporary Art will present a major painting by Christopher Wool, *Apocalypse Now* ("SELL THE HOUSE, SELL THE CAR, SELL THE KIDS"). Executed in 1988, this work is widely recognized as the most important painting in the artist's oeuvre. With an estimate of \$15-20 million, *Apocalypse Now* is poised to break Wool's world auction record of \$7.7million, which was achieved in February 2012 at Christie's in London.

"Christopher Wool's Apocalypse Now is the essential image of our times. Executed with a raw power and gritty directness that gave new purpose to the medium of painting in the 1980s, this legendary statement of absolute nihilism makes it one of the most seminal works of contemporary art. It's much anticipated appearance at auction, firmly places Wool amongst the pantheon of great masters of the 20th century", stated Brett Gorvy, Chairman and International Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art.

Christopher Wool is one of the most important abstract painters of his generation, particularly known for his paintings of large stenciled letters focused on words or expressions with multiple meanings as they are broken up in composition. Executed in 1988, *Apocalypse Now* is his most iconic work fusing all of the elements that Wool learnt to master throughout his career, combining aspects inherited from Abstract Expressionist art of the 1950s (painterly gesture), Pop Art of the 1960s (the use of silkscreen and other reproductive technologies as well as the influence of street culture), and Conceptual Art of the 1970s (the use of language). Jackson Pollock's *Number one*, Andy Warhol's *Marilyn* or Jean-Michel Basquiat's *Untitled (Prophet I)*, all revolutionized the history of Post-War art, *Apocalypse Now* is similarly acclaimed as one of the game changers of Post-War and Contemporary American art. This work was previously owned by prestigious collectors, Werner and Elaine Dannheisser, François Pinault, David Ganek, before being offered at auction by the present owner.

Christopher Wool's *Apocalypse Now* ("SELL THE HOUSE, SELL THE CAR, SELL THE KIDS"), is an iconic example of the artist's most important series of word-based paintings, which begun in 1987. Christopher Wool once said he was *'more interested in how to paint it than in what to paint'*. In his signature white aluminum crowded with black block letters, Wool chose text as a vehicle for his reflections on painting. The whole surface is covered with words, phrases and even jokes and curses, taken from variety of sources and from other media, such as music, and films. The text of the painting is expressing a definitive break, with no possible return, a subtle postmodern fusion of black humor and concrete poetry, effectively exploring a key area of the most recent cultural history. The 1988 painting *Apocalypse Now* draws from Francis Ford Coppola's film adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and the text comes from the chilling letter from Captain Colby: *"sell the house, sell the car, sell the kids."* The work loops off three lines from a six line letter judicious and carefully edited *"find someone new, forget it. I am never coming back. Forget it"*. *"Wool uses only the first three lines of captain Colby's letter home... he has applied the letters with a graffiti-like touch, thereby echoing, in the painting, the scratched quality of the letter. Apocalypse Now is like an evil crossword puzzle filled in by the damned, the words breaking down with indeterminate angularity into chaos and confusion. The painting becomes a chant, a rant, a slogan, and a scream"*, wrote **Jerry Saltz**, in Arts Magazine in 1988.

Richard Flood, Chief Curator of the New Museum in New York, declared in 2008: *"The first time I was really aware of work by Chris Wool was in a now legendary exhibition at 303 Gallery in 1988. It was a collaboration with Robert Gober and included Apocalypse Now (1988), arguably one of Wool's most important paintings ("SELL THE HOUSE, SELL THE CAR, SELL THE KIDS"). It was probably the painting of the year, and one of the most emblematic pictures in the recession to come that would humble the art world the following year. It offered such a simple, reductive solution for moving on that it became a kind of late-eighties mantra."*

Exhibition 1-12 November, 2013

Auction 12 November, 2013

Christie's New York, 20 Rockefeller Plaza, 10020 New York

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2013 that totaled £2.4 billion/\$3.68 billion. In 2012, Christie's had global auction and private sales that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. 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 £465.2 million (\$711.8 million) in the first half of 2013, an increase of 13% on the previous year, and for the third successive year represents the highest total for the period in both company and art market history.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai 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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