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PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | 4 NOVEMBER 2014
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MICHELE OKA DONER: THE SHAMAN'S HUT - 50 YEARS OF OBJECTS FROM A CEREMONIAL LIFE A PRIVATE SELLING EXHIBITION THAT ENTERS THE LIFE OF THE ARTIST



LEFT: Michele Oka Doner, New York, 2014 | Photo: Annie Leibovitz **CENTER:** four 'Winter Branch' Pins, 2012-2013 **RIGHT:** Doner Studio, New York

New York – Christie's is delighted to present *Michele Oka Doner: The Shaman's Hut - 50 Years of Objects from a Ceremonial Life*, a private selling exhibition featuring the work of artist Michele Oka Doner, from November 21 through December 18. The exhibition encompasses objects, which span five decades and were hand selected from Oka Doner's personal collection, serving as a preview into her artistic evolution and the development of her philosophical essay. *The Shaman's Hut* includes a sweeping representation of the Oka Doner's *oeuvre*, with objects that explore the issues of how we live. Devoted to bringing a heightened awareness into everyday life, Oka Doner's pieces fill human utilitarian necessities, while bringing significance and grace into everyday rituals.

In his essay *The Ritual and Dignity of Everyday Life*, John Yau explains: "By refusing to draw a line, Oka Doner challenges a long held belief that separates art from function. Her work collapses these familiar categories because for her, it is symbolic to do so. Her chairs are not just chairs; they are also highly charged symbols derived from nature, things that are found and seen, from tree roots to constellations. This is also true of her art, which often alludes to such phenomena as whirlpools and galaxies, or is made of tree branches, roots or coral."

From the beginning of her career, Oka Doner faced the challenge of combining her activity in the studio with the reconciliation of the rituals in daily life. She responded to this challenge by utilizing her studio as a laboratory for living; her work becoming a noble experiment. Oka Doner's art is molded by her lifelong appreciation for the natural world, drawing significant influence by the forms and textures from ecological elements and their evolution. As philosopher and art critic, Arthur C. Danto writes in his in his monographic essay, *The Furniture of the Universe*: "Oka Doner is drawn to natural objects; they are her models and her motifs, the source of her metaphors."

The artist began to incorporate nature into her work as a result of a basic quandary: having recently moved into a home with three fireplaces, she was unable to find fireplace tools that were to her liking in a retail setting, which prompted her to use



the fallen limbs of a nearby weeping willow to tend to the fire. She found that by satisfying a basic need with an object of beauty and substance, it was possible to translate a simple task into a visceral experience, enhancing one's mindfulness with every use. Micky Wolfston describes this tendency in the artist's work, saying: *"The Okaian principal rejects the purely ornamental. What is made is never an accessory or a useless luxury. It has the authority to educate, share and pass on culture to the next generation."*

To give them permanence in their utilitarian role, Oka Doner cast the branches in bronze. When she moved to New York these beautiful sculptural tools were met with tremendous fanfare from her peers, including the director of the Furniture of the Twentieth Century gallery, who featured them in a solo exhibition of her work. Four examples of Oka Doner's patinated bronze *Burning Branch, Fire Place Tools, 1981* - pictured left, will be included alongside over 100 objects comprised by *The Shaman's Hut*.

Each work within the exhibition was devised by Oka Doner, as a means of elevating the necessities of daily life. Among the grouping, is a particularly significant selection of serving pieces that were created to redefine the act of serving as a gesture of grace. The exhibition is highlighted by:



'Alter II,' 2003
Patinated Bronze



'Cosmic Vessel,' 2009
Sterling Silver
From an Edition of 3



'Citra Bench,' 2012
Tropical Almond



'Goliath's Crown,' 2009
Sterling Silver



A Pair of Serving Forks, 2003
Sterling Silver



'Bloodroot Seed' Ring, 2007
22 Karat Gold
From an Edition of 4

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