

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 27 APRIL 2018

CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER 22 *MASTERPIECES* BY *RICHARD DIEBENKORN: PROPERTY SOLD TO BENEFIT THE DONALD AND BARBARA ZUCKER FAMILY FOUNDATION*



LEFT: Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park #126*, oil on canvas, 1984. \$16-20 million
RIGHT: Works from the collection installed in the home of Donald and Barbara Zucker

New York – This May, Christie's will offer 22 **Masterpieces by Richard Diebenkorn: Property Sold to Benefit The Donald and Barbara Zucker Family Foundation**. The selection will be sold across Christie's Evening and Day Sales of Post-War and Contemporary Art on May 17 and 18. Leading the group is Richard Diebenkorn's iconic *Ocean Park #126*, 1984. With an estimate of \$16-20 million, the painting is positioned to realize a new world auction record for the artist. The present group demonstrates superb focus, as it traces the artist's creative trajectory from abstraction and figuration to the seminal *Ocean Park* series.

Sara Friedlander, International Director, Specialist Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art, remarked: "For the past thirty years, the Zucker's have lived with Richard Diebenkorn's entire career in their living room. This exceptionally rare exploration of one artist in such depth represents a Diebenkorn retrospective and touches on virtually every moment of his life as he moved across America. Diebenkorn's deeply personal vision and exploration of both abstraction and figuration cement him as one of the most important American artists of the 20th Century."

Refined over the course of four decades, Richard Diebenkorn's body of work is distinguished by an effortless elegance that disguises the complexity and sophistication of its creation. Shimmering planes of saturated color are infused with the heady atmosphere specific to the West Coast. Beginning with his earliest work, Diebenkorn



sustained virtuosity in not one, but many different styles, from the gestural Abstract Expressionist paintings of his Sausalito, Albuquerque and Berkeley series, to the Bay Area Figurative movement, and finally, the consummate splendor of *Ocean Park*. This unsurpassed collection of paintings and works on paper beautifully illustrates each of the artist's distinct forays into a different pictorial vernacular.

Leading the collection is Richard Diebenkorn's consummate canvas, *Ocean Park #126* (estimate: \$16,000,000-20,000,000) – pictured on page one, left, and in-situ, left. Painted in 1984, the present canvas stands out as one of the pinnacles of this now iconic series. In this monumental canvas—arguably the best

of his career—the viewer is engulfed by its immense scale and broad passages of luminous color. Standing before the painting, one has the uncanny sensation of being warmed; its inner light has a radiating effect. Raking diagonals evoke the sparkling view of the ocean as seen through the window on a sun-filled California afternoon. Coming as it did on the heels of two decades of refinement, the three predominate hues of crystalline blue, orange-tinged yellow and delicate pink play off each other like a beautiful melodic chord. “One of the greatest things about [his] work is his use of color, which is spectral or prismatic,” the artist Wayne Thiebaud has said of Diebenkorn's work. “There are always at least two yellows, two reds, two blues, so that the warm and cool alternation or juxtaposition of the colors enlivens the work. ...and they tend to develop what's called color chords, much like the three notes on a piano.” *Ocean Park*, 1984, is positioned to realize a world auction record for the artist.



The earliest work represented by the group is *Sausalito*, which was painted in 1949 (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) – pictured right. With this painting, Diebenkorn lays out the foundation of a style that would sustain him for many years to come. Evocative of landscape without figurative depiction, this early canvas evokes the hue of the hillside town on the Bay, with wisps of cloud-like forms rolling in off the water. Already in this remarkable prescient work, the architecture of Diebenkorn's mature style has crystallized; its wide swathes of atmospheric color are bordered by a muscular yet graceful line amid bursts of bright color.



Moving into the next decade, *Berkeley #25* (\$700,000-1,000,000) – pictured left, is a triumphant example of the artist's eponymous series painted in 1954. Executed with a gestural force that rivals even Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, Diebenkorn's thickly-loaded brush links together the loosely-geometric planes of brushy color. Touches of pale blue and mossy green hint at the luminous hues that would become his signature palette—evocative of sun-dappled vistas, leafy green hills and the pellucid waters of the San Francisco Bay. In this sophisticated arrangement of color, gesture and form, Diebenkorn is both at the full height of his Abstract Expressionist powers.

In the mid 1950's, Diebenkorn became associated with the Bay Area Figurative Movement, and continued to work in a representational mode for the next ten years. In lush evocations of the female form, such as *Nude—Elbow on Knee*, painted in 1961 (\$800,000-1,200,000) – *pictured right*, he continued many of the pictorial innovations of the prior series but nestled them within an intimate portrayal of the human figure. This important painting was recognized early on as a significant one within the artist's newly developed oeuvre. It was included in a watershed exhibition of the artist's work at the de Young museum in San Francisco in 1963, where it featured alongside such masterpieces as *Girl Looking at Landscape* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York) and *Girl on a Terrace* (Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase).



The linear structure that buttresses the organic curvature of the nude in *Nude—Elbow on Knee* opened up and blossomed several years later, when the artist again switched course in the midst of a successful series to begin his most beloved body of work, the *Ocean Park* paintings, with the *Ocean Park #126* of 1984 as the definitive example. Refined and polished over several decades, Diebenkorn's work reached a glorious culmination with the *Ocean Park* series that he began in 1967 and continued, until his death in 1993.

PRESS CONTACT: Rebecca Riegelhaupt | 212 636 2680 | RRiegelhaupt@christies.com

Public Exhibition

Collection Highlights: May 9-17

Full Collection: May 12-17

Auction:

Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale

17 May, 7pm

Post-War and Contemporary Art Morning Sale

18 May, 10am

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in 2017 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$6.6 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Christie's offers around 350 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 & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

**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 and are reported net of applicable fees.*

###

Images available on request

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:

