

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER JACKSON POLLOCK'S *RED COMPOSITION* IN OCTOBER 6 EVENING SALE IN NEW YORK



JACKSON POLLOCK (1912-1956)

Red Composition

signed 'Jackson Pollock' (lower right); signed again and dated 'Pollock 46' (on the reverse)

oil on Masonite

19 ¼ x 23 ¼ in. (48.9 x 59.1 cm.)

Painted in 1946.

Estimate: \$12-18 million

NEW YORK – Christie's will offer Jackson Pollock's *Red Composition* as a highlight of its newly-announced Evening Sale of 20th and 21st Century Art on October 6, 2020. Estimated at \$12-18 million, *Red Composition* is an important early work by the celebrated American artist whose drip painting technique would come to revolutionize 20th Century art. Painted directly after his seminal *Sounds in Grass* series, this intricate and multi-faceted work stands among the first paintings in which Pollock freed paint from the interference of his brush, allowing it to take on its own form and in the process become a manifestation of true abstraction.

Barrett White, Christie's Executive Deputy Chairman comments, "*Christie's is thrilled to be entrusted with the sale of this early and seminal painting Red Composition from the collection of the Everson Museum. The last painting the artist completed in 1946, Red Composition is an exceedingly rare opportunity to acquire a museum quality work by Pollock that marks the breakthrough of his fabled "drip" technique. Red Composition was painted directly after Free Form, arguably his first drip painting, which is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Reveling in his flowing skeins of paint, Pollock announces his arrival and leadership of the New York School Irascibles with the daring composition and vibrant red palette of Red Composition.*"

The painting is offered for sale by the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York, as part of a larger museum commitment to refine and diversify its collection and establish a fund for future acquisitions of artworks by artists of color, women artists, and other under-represented emerging and mid-career artists. A portion of the proceeds will establish a fund for the direct care of the remainder of the collection. The decision to sell is in keeping with guidelines established by the American Alliance of Museums and has the support of the Board of Trustees of the Museum as well as the foundation established by Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman who donated the work in 1991. [See press release from Everson Museum.](#)

Robert Falter, Trustee of The Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation, noted, “As a longtime Board Member and benefactor of the Everson, Marshall would have been extremely happy to see his gift used for the greater good of the Museum, its future sustainability, and its impact on the community.”

Red Composition first belonged to the legendary dealer and gallery owner Peggy Guggenheim who was one of Jackson Pollock’s earliest and most ardent patrons. Guggenheim then gave the painting to James [Jimmy] Ernst, son of the Surrealist painter Max Ernst in 1947. Ernst Senior was one of the most influential voices of the European *avant-garde*, and after a tumultuous courtship was married to Guggenheim between 1941 and 1946. Early in the 1950s, the painting was then acquired by New York businessman and Syracuse native Marshall Reisman and his wife Dorothy. It remained in their personal collection for over forty years until it was donated in 1991 to the Everson Museum of Art.

Red Composition

Along with Willem de Kooning’s *Women* paintings, Mark Rothko’s transcendental fields of color, and Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans*, Jackson Pollock’s ‘drip’ paintings have become some of the most seminal paintings of the later part of the twentieth century. *Red Composition* was painted at a pivotal juncture when the artist was shifting his focus away from the more figurative elements of his earlier practice. It represents the period during which the paint becomes liberated from his brush, a development that would revolutionize the practice of painting forever. With *Red Composition*, Pollock had taken an important step in freeing himself from the influences of his interest in Surrealism, and standing on the verge of becoming—in the words of Peggy Guggenheim—‘the greatest painter since Picasso’.

In addition to playing an important role within his own artistic development, *Red Composition* also embodies some of the important relationships in Pollock’s personal life too, having been owned by his great friend and mentor, Peggy Guggenheim. Executed at the beginning of a period of intense creativity for the artist, no part of the canvas is untouched by Pollock’s swoops and swirls of thick impasto, making it a remarkably prescient painting that foretold of the seismic changes to come.

The origins of Pollock’s signature style emerged in 1946, in what has come to be regarded as the artist’s most pivotal year. This was the year when, along with *Red Composition*, Pollock produced his seminal *Sounds in Grass* series; these seven paintings mark the first time Pollock abandoned applying his paints exclusively with the aid of a brush and began instead to smear the pigment directly from the tube. This important series of paintings includes *Eyes in the Heat* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection, New York), regarded as one of the artist’s most important early paintings, as it heralds the ‘poured’ paintings that Pollock initiated in the winter of 1946-47.

Directly following the *Sounds in the Grass* paintings are two related paintings; first is *Free Form* (Museum of Modern Art, New York), a lyrical painting with flowing black and white trails of liquid paint traversing a familiar red ground which the museum states “very likely Pollock’s first’ drip painting”. Directly following *Free Form* is *Red Composition*, making it all the more instrumental in the trajectory which propelled Pollock to become one of the most groundbreaking and important artists of his, and subsequent, generations.

Red Composition is the second highlight of Christie’s October 6 Evening Sale to be announced, joining [Paul Cézanne’s *Nature morte avec pot au lait, melon et sucrier*](#), a superlative watercolor still life from the collection of the Edsel & Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan (in the region of \$25 million). Additional highlights of the Christie’s expanded New York sales calendar for the fall, including the best examples of Impressionist, Modern, Post-War and Contemporary art, will be announced in the coming weeks.

New York Sales Exhibition (by appointment):

20 Rockefeller Center
October 1- 6, 2020

20th Century Week Sale

Evening Sale (Live and Live-streamed)
Tuesday, October 6, 2020 | 7PM

To learn about the 20th Century Evening Sale visit: <https://www.christies.com/auctions/20th-century>

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had auction sales in 2019 that totalled £4.5 billion / \$5.8 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.*

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