PIERRE SOULAGES, PEINTURE

Pierre Soulages will be the highlight of the Paris Avant-Garde sale with a real masterpiece executed in 1961 and coming from the personal collection of Donald & Jean Stralem, two major American collectors who acquired the painting the same year of its execution. This important large-scale painting has never been seen on the market since its purchase in 1961. It is a great chance for international collectors to discover this masterpiece by the artist. The early 1960’s were decisive for Pierre Soulages. First, because he and his wife moved to Sète where his work evolved dramatically and second because Soulages gained in notoriety thanks to two major exhibitions organized in 1960. Peinture 162 x 130 cm, 9 juillet 1961, estimated at €6,000,000-8,000,000 is a real rediscovery for the art market.

ZAO WOU-KI, 31.07.68

Christie’s will also present 31.07.68 by Zao Wou-Ki. This painting was realised by the artist a few years before his wife’s passing which brought him a lot of suffering. The artist materialized his torment on the canvas as seen here and it depicts the chaos inside of him. The genius of the painter, however, lies in his ability to transcend this intimate dimension. Zao Wou-Ki's revolution, which fuses the spontaneity of Western painting with the mastery of Chinese calligraphy, explores the expressive possibilities offered by abstraction and opens up a new world of representation. Four years earlier, Pierre Schneider had described his painting as a "liquid universe" where color becomes light. 31.07.68 offers us a fragment of it (estimate: €1,100,000-1,500,000).
Further highlights of the sale include L’effrayé by Jean Dubuffet (estimate: €850,000-1,200,000). Painted in February 1951, L’effrayé is at the heart of a cycle of creation that began the previous spring and that ends precisely at the beginning of 1951, called the Corps de dames. Although it does not strictly represent the female body, the painting nevertheless takes up the whole pictorial code: the frontality of the composition, the plane framed at mid-legs, the subject's pelvis open like an anatomical board or a dissection table, the treatment of the body less like flesh than like a landscape, with its roughness, its relieve, its depressions. This notion of the body as landscape is important and the series in which L'effrayé takes place constitutes in this sense an essential time in the evolution of Jean Dubuffet's work: it begins the privilege given to the landscape in favor of the human figure and announce a decade of works in which the artist goes into exile far from the city and becomes more of a geologist than a portraitist, in canvases in which the figures are reduced to the bare essentials or even disappear altogether.

The Modern Art section will also present major works of art from the greatest artists of the 20th century including the master Pablo Picasso. The sale will present a remarkable unseen still life, Nature morte aux tomates, executed in 1920 when Pablo Picasso just met his second wife Olga Khokhlova with whom he was leaving in Juan Les Pins in the South of France. This still life, painted during the summer of 1920 in Juan les Pins, is both a witness of the artist's return to the figurative (initiated in 1916) and an exceptional work by its wealth of pictorial elements both contradictory and complementary. The subject matter, a bowl containing tomatoes and a coffee pot placed on a table, links this painting to the long tradition of still lifes that became a genre in its own right in the 16th century. But the object here is developed by Picasso in a remarkable and almost subversive spatial dynamic (estimate: €900,000-1,300,000).

Over the next three years, Christie's will be presenting for sale 2/3 of the total 200 works from The Deutsche Bank Collection sold to benefit the bank’s future contemporary art purchases. The first three works by Wassily Kandinsky (Trüber Aufstieg, 1924, estimate: €900,000-1,500,000), Egon Schiele and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy will be offered in the Paris Avant-Garde auction in Paris on October 22, 2020. The Deutsche Bank holds an art collection strong of 55,000 works with a main focus on works on paper and photographs by contemporary artists as defined in the collection’s concept back in 1980. Any work offered for sale has been purchased before the collecting concept was in place.
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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