

For Immediate Release

April 7, 2007

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CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK TO OFFER MOST VALUABLE WARHOL PAINTING EVER TO COME TO AUCTION

***GREEN CAR CRASH (GREEN BURNING CAR I)* SET TO FAR EXCEED PREVIOUS WARHOL RECORD**

Post-War and Contemporary Art
May 16, 2007

"You imagine that everyone around who you haven't seen in a long time is living this very regular and humdrum life that's peaceful ... But then you start learning the details."

Andy Warhol cited in *America*, 1985

New York – On May 16, Christie's in New York will offer Andy Warhol's *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)* from his seminal *Death and Disaster* series. With a pre-sale estimate of \$25 – 35 million, *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)* is expected to far exceed the previous record for the artist which was established at Christie's New York in November 2006 when Warhol's iconic *Mao*, 1972 was purchased for \$17.4 million. Not only has *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)* resided within the same private collection for over three decades, the painting is also the most important work of Warhol's seminal *Death and Disaster* series to have ever appeared at auction. This sale is bound to set a new price structure for the artist.

"The appearance on the market of Warhol's *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)* will send a shock of excitement through the art world," said Brett Gorvy, Deputy Chairman and International Co-Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art. "This is a painting that has been considered the Holy Grail by a legion of contemporary art collectors and for years this work has been on every major wish list. Warhol's uncanny, oracle-like sense of what the future will bring is striking to say the least.

As the *Mao* series was a prelude to the rise of China as a super power, the *Death and Disaster* series was indicative of today's cult of the self. YouTube, MySpace, FaceBook – everybody and anybody acting out their tragedy and on stage for the world to see. Warhol got that '15 minutes of fame' concept down to an art long before it changed our lives irrevocably and forever."

Warhol's *Car Crashes* – created between late 1962 and early 1964 – remain among the most powerful, challenging and provocative paintings made in the Post-War era. Among this group, *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)*, is based on what is arguably the most extraordinary, strange and disturbing source image of them all. The scene is a mundane, suburban street transformed in an almost surrealistic nightmare in which an overturned car in flames is shown in the foreground while the catapulted body of the driver can be seen hanging, limp though still alive, impaled on a post. What renders the image even more morbid is the figure at the heart of the picture, a man, hands in pockets, passing by nonchalantly, seemingly oblivious of hell happening on the other side of the sidewalk.

Like something from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* or *Blue Velvet*, where a charming and banal idyll of a suburban community is shown to be nothing more than a shallow artifice of respectable surface appearance beneath which there lurks a darker reality of horror, *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)* reveals a similar disconnect in the world of appearances. The extraordinary contrast between the mundane normality of everyday suburbia and the exceptional tragedy and violence that periodically strikes at its heart is exactly what Warhol wished to express with supercool detachment in the *Death and Disaster* series.

Besides showing Warhol's morbid fascination with the fleeting aspect of life, the series also presents Warhol's razor-sharp criticism of the moral complacency middle-class America had stumbled into in the 1960's. In his own inimitable and targeted way, Warhol – once described as 'a rather terrifying oracle' – holds up a deeply incisive mirror, shattering the American dream mercilessly.

Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I) leads the extraordinary group of works by Andy Warhol Christie's will offer in the *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale* on May 16 – the value of the entire group is expected to realize in excess of \$67 million. Among the other highlights are *Lemon Marilyn*, 1962 (estimate on request), *Four-Foot Flowers*, 1964 (estimate: \$5 – 7 million) and *Self Portrait*, 1966/67 (estimate: \$5.5 – 6.5 million).

Christie's evening sale of *Post-War and Contemporary Art* in November 2006 was a landmark event for the Warhol market. Christie's not only established a new world auction record for the artist at \$17.4 million for *Mao*, 1972, but seven further works realized extraordinary prices, including *Orange*

Marilyn, 1962 (\$16.3 million) and *Sixteen Jackies*, 1964 (\$15.7 million). The Warhol group in that sale totaled \$59.7 million.

Auction: Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale

May 16 at 7 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

May 12 – 16

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