

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

LEADING WORKS BY TWOMBLY, ROTHKO AND DE KOONING TO HIGHLIGHT OCTOBER EVENING SALE OF 20th CENTURY ART



Cy Twombly's *Untitled (Bolsena)*, 1969. Estimate: \$35-50 million

NEW YORK – Christie's announces that its highly-anticipated Evening Sale of 20th Century Art on October 6 will include three exceptional works by Cy Twombly, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning bringing the overall low estimate for the sale to over \$300 million. In assembling the October auction, Christie's has utilized its leading technology, insight into client demand, and logistical agility to re-imagine the auction model for a rapidly evolving world. The addition of this major marquee week aims to serve collectors in what is a particularly strong moment in the art market. By departing from the traditional auction schedule and bifurcating our 20th Century offering in New York between two major sale weeks – the first in October, the second scheduled for later this fall – Christie's aims to deliver exciting material in a volume that is apt for today's market. The addition of Cy Twombly's *Untitled [Bolsena]*, 1969 (\$35-50 million), Mark Rothko's *Untitled*, 1967 (\$30-50 million) and Willem de Kooning's *Woman (Green)*, 1953-1955 (\$20-30 million) is a testament to the continued confidence and demand that continues to course throughout the global collecting community.

The Evening Sale, to be livestreamed from Christie's Rockefeller Center headquarters, features 59 works in total and represents some of the most seismic artistic moments of the last 100 years, from Impressionist masters to Contemporary art stars. Select highlights, including the Rothko and de Kooning, will tour to

Christie's Hong Kong for a by-appointment exhibition beginning September 25. To view previously announced highlights of Christie's October 20th Century Week, click [here](#).

Marc Porter, Chairman, Americas, remarked: *"Building on the innovation of ONE, Christie's live-streamed global auction in July, we set out to demonstrate great agility again, introducing a marquee week of exceptional quality works from across the 20th and 21st centuries, creating a singular opportunity for collectors well ahead of the traditional fall sale calendar. In building this sale, we prioritized works like the Twombly, Rothko and de Kooning, which have been closely held for many years. The quality, rarity and provenance of the lots we selected – paired with opportune timing ahead of the U.S. presidential election – creates an ideal, focused environment for us to present this significant group of work fresh to the market on October 6. This is another example – like our focus on private sales and online-only sales – that exemplifies Christie's careful response to an evolving marketplace. In this moment, the market needs flexibility and innovation, and that is what we are putting forward here."*

Leading the Evening Sale of the 20th Century is Cy Twombly's *Untitled [Bolsena]*, 1969 (\$35-50 million) – *pictured on page 1*. Dating from a pivotal moment in global history, the present work is a rare masterpiece from Cy Twombly's landmark series of *Bolsena* paintings. Completed between August and September 1969, in the aftermath of the Apollo 11 mission, these works eloquently fuse painting, drawing and writing into a lyrical thesis on time and space. Formerly part of the Saatchi Collection, and prominently exhibited throughout its lifetime, the present work takes its place alongside other examples from the series held in The Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C., the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich and The Broad, Los Angeles. The 20th Century Evening Sale will mark first time that this canvas has ever appeared at auction.

While staying in the Palazzo del Drago—a stone house overlooking the picturesque Lake Bolsena, north of Rome—Twombly completed fourteen large-scale works on pale backgrounds, each comprising a hypnotic rhapsody of forms, lines, textures and pictograms. The explosive complexity distinguishes the present work within the *Bolsena* series: ethereal numbers and inscriptions collide with vivid chromatic punctuations, dispersed across the canvas with electric, rhythmic vitality. With this work, the ancient world of myths and mark-making that captivated Twombly throughout his lifetime is brought into alignment with a new, contemporary epic: the moment that humankind took its first steps upon the moon.

With its dueling forces of rich color juxtaposed next to a dark, ominous void, Mark Rothko's *Untitled* (\$30-50 million) – *pictured right*, is one of the most dramatic paintings from the latter part of the artist's career. It's dramatic painted surfaces display the ultimate drama of Rothko's canvases. Painted in 1967, it is one of only four vibrant canvases completed after finishing his suite of dark meditative paintings for the Rothko Chapel, and his series of black and gray bifurcated canvases that were to be the final paintings of his career.

In *Untitled*, Rothko fills the canvas with his iconic fields of floating color. The upper register—occupying almost two-thirds of the painted surface—is filled with the artist's warm, rich hues of red and its neighbors on the color spectrum. The concentrated, vibrate, fiery pigment is the result of Rothko's unique painterly process, a method in which he laid down layer upon layer of colored washes to produce an ethereal experience.



The floating blocks of sizzling red in the present canvas are among the last renditions of this iconic form that the artist ever produced, yet their intensity remained as striking as they were two decades earlier when they first emerged out of the surreal shapes of the artist's *Multiforms*. This particular composition is among Rothko's most powerful and intense, containing the strength and concentration perhaps matched only by other celebrated colorists such as J.M. W. Turner or Edwin Church. *Untitled* not only amply demonstrates the power of pigment, but also Rothko's unique ability to evoke a sense of authority and emotion through the simple act of applying paint to a surface.



Woman (Green), 1953-1955, (\$20-30 million) – pictured left, is a scintillating work from one of the most groundbreaking series in twentieth-century art: Willem de Kooning's *Women*. Bearing wide, almost cartoonish eyes, rouged cheeks and a blue headscarf, the woman meets our gaze with a head-on smile. De Kooning creates the ambiguity between figure and ground, typical of his work, clashing gestural and pictorial impulses into a space of thrilling, unresolved tension. The present work was started shortly after the 1953 exhibition at Sidney Janis Gallery of de Kooning's first group of *Women*, which included *Woman I* (1950-1952, Museum of Modern Art, New York)—what Peter Schjeldahl has called “the most controversial painting ever made in America”. *Woman (Green)* sees the artist's 1950s idiom at its dynamic, peacock-hued height, embodying his epoch-defining vision of the female form and paving the way for the superlative abstract paintings that would follow.

Woman (Green) was shown in a 1955 exhibition at Martha Jackson Gallery, alongside works including *Marilyn Monroe* (1954, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY), *Woman-*

Ocher (1954-55, University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson), *Queen of Hearts*, and *Two Women in the Country* (1943-46 and 1954, both Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.). Only de Kooning's fourth solo exhibition, *Recent Oils by De Kooning*, cemented his position as the leading figure of New York's avant-garde. The critic Dore Ashton considered these *Women* more refined than those on show in 1953, and saw them as illuminating the “apogee of abstract power”.

20th Century Week Exhibitions:

Hong Kong September 25-26, 2020
Select Highlights

New York October 1-6 2020
Full 20th Century Week Highlights

New York Sale Dates and Times

20th Century Art Evening Sale
(Live and Live-streamed), Tuesday, October 6, 2020

Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Sale
(Live and Live-streamed), Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale
(Live and Live-streamed), Wednesday, October 8, 2020

Further 20th Century Week Press Releases:

- [Lempicka, Dalí and Nolde to Highlight October Evening Sale in New York](#)
- [Picasso Portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter to Highlight October Evening Sale in New York](#)
- [Christie's to Offer One of the Largest, Most Complete, And Widely Studied T. Rex Skeletons](#)
- [Picasso's Femme dans un fauteuil to highlight Christie's October 6 Evening Sale](#)
- [Christie's to Offer Over 60 Works by Robert Motherwell from the Dedalus Foundation](#)

- [Basquiat and Mitchell to Highlight 'A New York State of Mind'](#)
- [Christie's to Offer Jackson Pollock's Red Composition in October 6 Evening Sale](#)
- [Christie's to Offer Paul Cézanne's *Nature Morte Avec Pot Au Lait, Melon Et Sucrier*](#)
- [Christie's 20/21 Department Announces Global October Sale Calendar](#)

Notes to editors:

- Christie's follows all public health guidelines and local regulations in all regions to ensure exhibitions and sales are conducted in adherence with all public health guidelines. To schedule appointments for viewings please contact INFO@christies.com. To check the status of regional offices, please click [here](#).

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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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