

PRESS RELEASE

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SOTHEBY'S EVENING AUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART INCLUDES MASTERPIECES BY BACON, WARHOL, FONTANA AND RICHTER.



Francis Bacon, *Study of Nude with Figure in a Mirror*, 1969.
Estimate in excess of £18 million.

Following intense growth of the Contemporary Art market over the last decade, SOTHEBY'S first February stand-alone week of Contemporary Art sales will be headlined by the finest ever collection of works in an Evening Auction in Europe on Wednesday, February 27th with important pieces by Gilbert & George, Bridget Riley, Andreas Gursky and, to coincide with their exhibitions at Tate, important works by Juan Muñoz and Peter Doig. Sales for the Evening Auction alone are estimated to reach in excess of £72 million - the highest ever pre-sale estimate for any auction of Contemporary Art in Europe.



Three Self Portraits, by **Andy Warhol (1928-87)** is a rare trinity of canvases dating from 1986. Their unveiling in London represents a homecoming for the portraits

which were acquired by the owner directly from the artist's landmark exhibition at the Anthony D'Offay Gallery in 1986, in a transaction completed the day before Warhol tragically died on February 22nd 1987. Only six self portraits were made in this size for the D'Offay show. Of these, the other three have been split up. Upon seeing the exhibition in 1986, Robert Rosenblum, the great critic and intellect, commented: *"The one thing I keep thinking about was the relationship of this to, well, the great late self-portraits, people like – one doesn't dare say it – Rembrandt, Van Gogh – a kind of moodiness, a kind of inwardness, a kind of darkness, a kind of loneliness and this is a whole new world for Andy, and it suddenly clicks into place with the whole history of tragic late self-portraiture."* Produced in the red, white and blue of the American flag *Three Self Portraits* are synonymous with American culture's greatest gift to the 20th century: Pop Art. As the progenitor of Pop and the arbiter of consumerism, Warhol depicted numerous celebrities including Marilyn, Jackie and Elvis. However, it was Warhol who went on to become the ultimate icon, more famous than many of the celebrities he selected. With the artist's silkscreen skills perfectly honed, these images are flawless and filled with a strong inky black surface. *Three Self Portraits* is estimated to sell for in excess of £10 million.

Lucio Fontana's (1899-1968) *Concetto Spaziale, La fine di Dio* of 1963 is widely regarded as one of Fontana's greatest paintings. Emanating from his most important series, the *Fine di Dio* or End of God, the egg shaped canvas announce arguably the most important development in European abstract art of the 20th century. One of only two gold coloured works in this series, the other being in the Italian Embassy in Tokyo, this work was executed as a direct response to the growing phenomenon of space which grew around Yuri Gagarin's first trip in 1961. Executed by Fontana literally piercing the



canvas with his fingers and fists in a flurry of direct expression, the golden glitter sits over an underpainting of green and sparkles like a constellation of stars. The surface of the painting is like the surface of the moon. Luca Massimo Barbero, Associate Curator of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice has commented about this specific work: *"In this work, the artist perfectly disseminates a system of various signs, holes and cuts, creating a masterpiece which is at once beautifully complete and complex... the artist disseminates these openings across the entire surface, in a sort of meteoric storm...The glitter is incorporated in the material of the work, it permeates it and at once remains suspended within it, an almost magical cosmic powder reflecting light from distant and possibly inexistent stars. With this material Fontana demystifies the form and at the same time impregnates it with light and metal to make its contours explode, illuminating the dark holes and the deep tears."* Its

value is estimated in excess of £4 million and it is expected to beat the current record price for Fontana of £2.4 million.

Executed in 1969 at the height of his career, *Study of Nude with Figure in a Mirror* (illustrated right) by **Francis Bacon (1909-92)** has been included in all of his major retrospective exhibitions to date. Renowned critic and art historian John Russell concluded that with this work: "*We are left wondering if natural life – life as it is actually lived out, without packaging – has ever been portrayed more completely in painting.*"

The work sets up an intriguing narrative involving a rare full length nude portrait of his close friend Henrietta Moraes cast against a mysterious male figure in the mirror which could be the artist himself.

The head of Moraes reminds us of Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* from 1907 and the figure in the mirror sets up an interesting relationship with Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergeres*. The work is estimated to sell for in excess of £18 million. Also offered is a small portrait which is thought to be the very first portrayal of Bacon's last great love John Edwards. It is estimated at £1,500,000-2,000,000 (illustrated end page).



The auction includes five major paintings from the oeuvre of Gerhard Richter which chart his unmatched post modern exploration of style in painting. *Corrugated Iron*, 1967 is estimated at £750,000-1,000,000. *Gebirge* from 1969 is estimated at £700,000-900,000. *Ohne Titel (Untitled)*, dating from 1979 is estimated at £650,000-850,000. *Struktur (1)* from 1989 (illustrated below right) is estimated at £1,500,000-2,000,000. Finally, *Kerze* from 1983 (illustrated left), represents one of Richter's most renowned Photo Paintings taking the age-old

romantic still life image of a candle, Richter here brings it very much up to date with a studied adaptation of abstraction in a figurative image. Others from the series are held in museums including the Art Institute of Chicago, Galerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut and F.R.A.C. Collection, Rhone-Alpes. The artist was just short of 50 years old when he produced this painting which makes use of all his experience, analysis and painterly genius to finally master his Photo Painting style. *Kerze* is estimated at £1,800,000-2,500,000.



Following the sale of *Hanging Heart* at Sotheby's New York in November 2007 which achieved a record price for a living artist of \$23.6 million, **Jeff Koons' (born 1955)** sculpture *Kiepenkerl* (illustrated right), stands as a watershed between two of his most important series from the 1980s '*Statuary*' and '*Banality*'. At the time, it was his largest sculpture. Koons was commissioned to make this work, at the height of his career, for the Münster Sculpture Project and another work, of the edition of three, is in the permanent collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC. The artist explains: "*This work liberated me. I was free now to work with objects that did not necessarily pre-exist. I could create models.*" The making of *Kiepenkerl* thus represents the moment when Koons abandoned constrictions and embarked on a period of creativity that yielded further masterworks such as *Puppy* and *Hanging Heart (Magenta/Gold)*. It is estimated at £1,500,000-2,500,000.



French collector Marcel Brient is one of the most progressive and pioneering collectors in France and Sotheby's offers four of his exceptional works, by two of China's greatest contemporary artists, Zhang Xiaogang and Yue Minjun. Marcel Brient has been collecting contemporary art for 30 years, showing incredible flair in discovering artists destined to become the stars of tomorrow. He collected Glenn Brown, Peter Doig, Felix Gonzales-Torres, Neo Rauch and Marc Newson well ahead of the market. Brient began admiring Chinese art in 1999 at a time when Chinese artists were not widely known in China and few Contemporary Chinese works could be seen in France. Zhang Xiaogang and Yue Minjun were discoveries he made with Catherine Thieck of Galerie de France, then one of the few dealers showing contemporary China's creative output.



Measuring three metres in width, *Big Family No. 1* (illustrated below left) is by far the largest work by Zhang Xiaogang to come to auction to date. Executed in 2001, it is the culmination of the artist's highly acclaimed 'Bloodlines' series which he began in 1983 and as such ranks among the most important works in the series. It is a monumental embodiment of the revolutionary spirit of Chinese avant-garde art and encapsulates the mood of 20th century Chinese history. Its value is estimated at £1,500,000-2,000,000. Speaking about Zhang Xiaogang and Yue Minjun, collector Marcel Brient comments: "*One day these painters will be in the leading collections and museums and, in their own way, telling us what happened and what, thanks to them, is changing. They have helped bring about this change.*"



Francis Bacon, *Study for a Portrait*, 1978.

Estimated at £1,500,000-2,000,000.

All works in this sale will be exhibited at Sotheby's, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1 from February 22nd-27th:

Fri, 22 Feb 08, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Sat, 23 Feb 08, 12:00 Noon - 5:00 PM

Sun, 24 Feb 08, 12:00 Noon - 5:00 PM

Mon, 25 Feb 08, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Tue, 26 Feb 08, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Wed, 27 Feb 08, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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