

Press Release Paris

Paris | 33 (0)1 53 05 53 66 | Sophie Dufresne | sophie.dufresne@sothebys.com

Marcel Brient Collection

The French Chapter



Simon Hantaï, Study, 1969 (est. €250,000-350,000 / \$308,000-431,000)

Paris, 17th July 2012 – Sotheby's is honoured to announce the sale of part of the Marcel Brient Collection of Contemporary Art, to be held in Paris on 24th September 2012 and consisting of around 100 lots reflecting the collecting career of this intuitive, free-thinking Frenchman. The ensemble presents a rich overview of creation in France since the 1960s, and of the extraordinary diversity of the artists involved.

In the words of Stefano Moreni, Head of Contemporary Art at Sotheby's France: 'Although this ensemble selected from the Marcel Brient Collection makes no claim to be exhaustive, it will offer collectors from France and around the world a deeply varied insight into the work of artists in France over the last forty years, and a rare opportunity to acquire works that occupy a major role in the history of art.'

Over four decades Marcel Brient discreetly amassed one of the largest collections of contemporary art in France – more as a personal adventure than a commercial undertaking. He prefers 'works discovered by chance' and believes strongly that each work is linked to history 'in an extraordinary way.' A number of encounters have guided his eye down the years, the most decisive being that with Louis Clayeux, Director of Galerie Maeght in Paris from 1948-65, who took him to visit Alberto Giacometti in his studio. Other gallerists were equally influential – like



Karl Flinker, who sold him a gouache by Jean Helion, and Jean Fournier, who sold him a pastel by Joan Mitchell – not forgetting Brient's close relationship with Galerie Durand-Dessert, Galerie Maeght, Galerie de France and the dealers Claude Bernard and Yvon Lambert, among others.

As well as regularly acquiring works by artists based in France, Marcel Brient was also one of the first to buy works by Jeff Koons, John Currin, Takashi Murakami and Felix Gonzales-Torres — not forgetting Georg Baselitz, Sigmar Polke and Kara Walker. The artist's nationality was irrelevant; it was solely Brient's taste and eye that led him to the artists he admired.

This demanding collector with radical tastes has always been keen to transmit his passion, and this desire is reflected here by the sale's didactic selection – offering the market the chance to recognize the artists Marcel Brient supported through his acquisitions down the years.

The collection will also permit an in-depth appraisal of various chapters in the recent history of art in

France, covering such powerful individual artists as Michel Parmentier and Simon Hantaï, and beginning with Brient's first ever purchase: *La Relève* (1947), a gouache by Jean Hélion.

Leading works by the Nouveaux Réalistes are featured in the sale, including a *Tree* (1959/60) made from plastic bottles by Martial Raysse, an artist who liked to use colourful everyday objects and packaging (estimate: €200,000-300,000 / \$246,000-369,000)*; a *Wrapped-Up Push-Chair* (1962) by Christo, who joined the movement soon after his arrival in Paris, having earlier produced abstract paintings before starting to wrap objects in canvas or plastic (est. €120,000-180,000); and *Seita* (1966/7), an oversized matchbox by Raymond Hains, who produced images combining cultural references, everyday items and proper names so as to build bridges between banal everyday life and the world of creation (est. €60,000-80,000 / \$74,000-98,000).





The collection includes various paintings by **Michel Parmentier** from the mid-60s, a key period in the turbulent career of an artist who stopped painting from 1970 until 1982. His powerful *15 Octobre 1966* and *18 Février 1968* are based on alternating, evenly spaced bands of colour and blank canvas (est. €40,000-60,000 / \$49,000-74,000 apiece).

Simon Hantaï, a leader of the Support/Surface movement, is represented by several magnificent canvases that were first folded, crumpled and soaked in colour before being *un*-folded, including *Study* from 1969 (est. €250,000-350,000 / \$308,000-431,000). These series of works are now much in demand among collectors.

Two magisterial *Untitleds* from 1968 and 1980 by Claude Viallat, a founding member of the Support/Surface movement, repeat a simple form applied to a dyed canvas without a stretcher, like an imprint (est. €15,000-20,000 / \$18,000-25,000).

Martin Barré is a major abstract artist, much concerned by space, form and background as he strives to produce works of sparse refinement. The collection includes two remarkable Barré works from the 1980s: 80B-100 x 90 (est. €50,000-70,000 / \$61,500-86,000) and 86-87-120 x 120B (est. €40,000-50,000 / \$49,000-61,500).

The Figuration Narrative artist **Gilles Aillaud** concentrates on portraying animals in zoos and deserted coastal landscapes, using a deliberately cool palette. He pays great attention to perspective and composition, so as to keep viewers at an emotional distance from his subjects while physically integrating them into the work's space. His works **Sea-Lions in the Water** (1976) and **Empty Cage** (1971) will be offered here.

Finally, the sale also includes works by international artists who worked in France – like **Joan Mitchell**, with an **Untitled** diptych from 1987 (est. **€120,000-180,000** / **\$147,500-221,000**); and **Sam Francis** with an acrylic **Untitled** from 1982.

Viewing

Thursday 20th September 10am – 6pm Friday 21st September 10am – 6pm Saturday 22nd September 10am – 6pm Sunday 23rd September 2pm – 6pm Monday 24th September 10am – 2pm

^{*}Estimates do not include buyers' premium