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MASTERPIECE BY MARK ROTHKO AT SOTHEBY'S



No.1 (Royal Red and Blue) from 1954 Will Be Offered on 13 November 2012

New York, NY – A seminal, large-scale masterpiece by Mark Rothko will lead Sotheby's Evening Sale of Contemporary Art on 13 November 2012 in New York. **No.1 (Royal Red and Blue)** was painted in 1954, a time considered by many to be the zenith of the artist's creative powers. The majestic canvas was one of eight works hand-selected by Rothko for his landmark solo show of the same year at the Art Institute of Chicago. Measuring 113¾ x 67½ in (288.9 x 171.5 cm), **No.1 (Royal Red and Blue)** has remained in the same collection for 30 years and is estimated to sell for \$35/50 million*. The canvas will be on view in New York beginning 1 November.

“To have a ravishingly beautiful and monumental work from the legendary 1954 show appear at auction is a



major market event,” commented Tobias Meyer, Sotheby’s Worldwide Head of Contemporary Art. “Beginning with the breakout price achieved for *White Center (Yellow, Pink and Lavender on Rose)* from the collection of David Rockefeller at Sotheby’s in 2007, demand for key works by the artist has been insatiable. **No.1 (Royal Red and Blue)** joins major abstract expressionist paintings by Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still and Willem de Kooning at Sotheby’s this autumn, creating a particularly exciting opportunity for collectors to appreciate this crucial period in 20th century art.”

No. 1 (Royal Red and Blue) stands as the one of the great achievements of Rothko’s abstract painting. The stunning aura of its brilliant red and orange surface is superbly countered by the intensely vivid blue stack

towards its base, giving the viewer a sense that the canvas is illuminated from within. The painting is central to Rothko’s mature mode of artistic expression in which he pioneered unprecedented territory in a spectacular outpouring of innovation.

In April 1954, Rothko was approached by Katherine Kuh, a visionary curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, who proposed the artist’s first one-man show at a major American museum. Rothko was closely involved in the organization of the exhibition, personally selecting the works to be exhibited and even prescribing the color of the walls. Of the eight works included in *Recent Paintings by Mark Rothko*, four are now in the collections of major museums: The Tehran Museum of Art, The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, The Phillips Collection in Washington D.C. and The Whitney Museum of American Art; one each belongs to the artist’s son and daughter; and in addition to **No.1 (Royal Red and Blue)**, only one other work remains in private hands.

In preparation for the exhibition, Kuh and Rothko engaged in significant correspondence, originally intended to provide material for a pamphlet to accompany the show. Having visited the artist’s studio in New York, her initial request for paintings specifically singled out the present work, as she wrote: “*I particularly want that marvelous large red one*” (letter of June 3, 1954). When Rothko asked her to describe her reactions to his

paintings she wrote of the ones she had seen (including the present work): *"for me they have a kind of ecstasy of color which induces different but always intense moods. I am not a spectator - I am a participant"* (letter of July 18, 1954).

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium