

Communiqué de Presse Paris

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CONTEMPORARY ART



Pierre Soulages: *Peinture 130x162cm – 21 juillet 1958*, estimate €800,000-1,200,000 (lot 5)

AUCTION 10 & 11 DECEMBER 2008

VIEWING

Saturday 6 – Tuesday 9 December, 10am-6pm

Sunday 7 December 3pm-6pm

Wednesday 10 December 10am-2pm

Paris, December 1st, 2008 – Sotheby's two-session sale of contemporary art, to be held in Paris on December 10/11, has an overall estimate of **€12-17 million** and features **142 important works** by leading 20th century artists. Several represent landmarks in their artists' careers or number among the handful of works by the artist still in private hands.

The top lot at the evening sale is expected to be **Francis Bacon's** *Two Figures* (1961), featuring two sturdy, naked figures shown contorted and convulsed, their faces wracked in pain (lot 11, estimate **€5,000,000-7,000,000**). This sort of subject recurred in Bacon's work for many years, but this painting is particularly important as it marks a watershed in his figurative approach. By placing the *Two Figures* in an abstract setting, Bacon underlines both their solitude and captive condition – they are imprisoned, as it were, within a dull field of faded pink and dirty grey, where space and time are frozen.



Sotheby's Paris has now offered major works by Francis Bacon on three occasions, including *Seated Woman* (a portrait of Muriel Belcher), which holds the record price for contemporary art in France at €13.7m.



Two major works by **Maurice Estève**, one of the foremost painters of the second half of the 20th century, evoke key moments in his career. *Trophée* was painted in 1952, at a time when Estève was moving away from a figurative approach and experimenting with abstraction. As such, *Trophée* can be considered a personal victory for Estève and his ability to go beyond reality (lot 3, est. **€180,000-250,000**).

Jeune Fille au Pichet (1942) comes from the collection of Chantal & Guy Heytens and formerly belonged to Louis & Olga Carré. It is a striking example of Estève's early work and, with its flamboyant colouring, pays powerful homage to Pierre Bonnard (lot 23, est. **€80,000-120,000**).

Serge Poliakoff's *Abstract Composition* (1955) typifies the artist's highly individual appeal (lot 4, est. **€220,000-280,000**). Each tone or colour is underscored by another that imperceptibly reinforces or lightens it, to provide resonance and expressive density.

The sale also includes two major works by **Pierre Soulages**: *Peinture 130x162cm – 21 Juillet 1958*, involving broad, powerful stripes arranged vertically, horizontally and diagonally across the canvas (lot 5, est. **800,000-1.200,000 €**); and *Peinture 12 Mai 1965*, probably the last painting of such size – and with such a chromatic range of blacks and browns – to remain in private hands (lot 8, est. **500,000-800,000 €**).



A 1959 Soulages *Composition* fetched €1.2m at Sotheby's inaugural sale of contemporary art in Paris in July 2006, posting a new world record price for the artist.



Hans Hartung's *T1966-E48* is a magnificent example of the artist's search for the transparent glaze, exploited by the Impressionists but since largely forgotten, that enhances colour's ability to receive light. Hartung aimed to rediscover this approach to colour – one not affected by brushwork, and able to change from hot to cold (lot 6, est. **€100,000-150,000**).

Chu Teh-Chun's *Le Printemps Pointé* (1985), acquired directly from the artist by the current owner, is a rare example of Chu Teh-Chun's use of the *drip* technique (lot 9, est. **€350,000-450,000**).



Jean Fautrier's *Tête de Partisan – Budapest* belongs to series that followed his famous one "Hostages" or *Têtes d'Otages* (lot 10, est. **€100,000-150,000**). In 1956, history rudely re-entered Fautrier's work: he was just as revolted by the invasion of Hungary, and the massacres that ensued, as he had been by the horrors of Nazism. His anonymous heads are accompanied by quotations from Paul Eluard's poem *Liberté*, written in memory of freedom-fighters and Resistance members.

Jean Tinguely's *Eos III* (1965) is one of an important series of works begun in 1964 with *Eos I*, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (lot 14, est. €180,000-250,000). All of them involve the wheel, connected by a belt to an articulated arm powered by a motor. Tinguely again exploited this majestic, dramatic visual effect in *Hannibal II*, combined with a metal chain swaying to and fro (Tinguely Museum, Basle). Sotheby's Paris sold *Clarissa*, another work from this series, for €336,800 to a private collector in 2006.



Yves Klein's *F94* from 1961, in burnt card mounted on panel (lot 15, est. €300,000-400,000), reflects Klein's close and productive friendship with the poet and art critic Pierre Restany, to whom it is dedicated: "*A Pierre le feu de l'esprit et l'empreinte de l'amitié*" ("to Pierre the fire of the spirit and the mark of friendship").

Jean Dubuffet's *Le Téton* (1960), in papier mâché and silver foil on panel, recalls a New Year's party in Paris at the start of 1959, when Dubuffet rediscovered magical silver foil – his childhood idea of opulence – wrapped around a cactus pot (lot 20, est. €150,000-200,000).



Wang Du's *Weather Forecast* (2007) takes the form of a giant sheet of crumpled newspaper, apparently destined for the waste-bin (lot 27, est. €100,000-150,000). With this simultaneous act of *negation* (of information) and *affirmation* (of the ephemeral, volatile character of daily news), Wang Du invites us to immerse ourselves in the world of images and the media.

* estimates exclude buyer's premium