

# 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT

Sale Interest: 49 Lots



[View Sale](#)



[Conditions of Sale](#)



**PHILLIPS**

# 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT

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## Auction & Viewing Location

22 June 2022, 6:00pm

JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong, 88

Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong

## Viewing

18-21 June 2022, 10am - 7pm

22 June, 10am - 6pm

## Sale Designation

When sending in written bids or making enquiries please refer to this sale as HK010122 or 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale.

## Absentee and Telephone Bids

tel +852 2318 2029

[bidshongkong@phillips.com](mailto:bidshongkong@phillips.com)

## Contemporary Art Department

Charlotte Raybaud

Specialist, Head of Evening Sale

+852 2318 2026

[CharlotteRaybaud@phillips.com](mailto:CharlotteRaybaud@phillips.com)

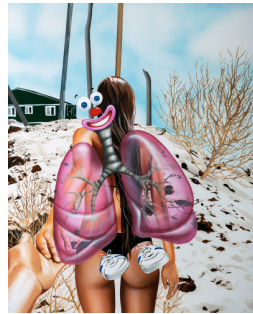
# 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT

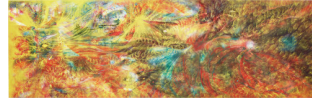
Sale Interest: 49 Lots



1  
**Julie Curtiss**  
*Funky Boots*  
Estimate  
HK\$600,000 — 800,000



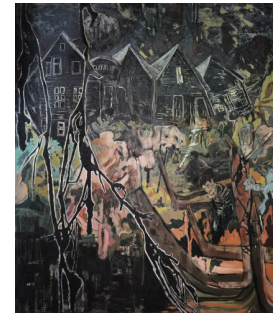
2  
**Jamian Juliano-Villani**  
*Hand's Job*  
Estimate  
HK\$400,000 — 600,000



3  
**Lucy Bull**  
*8:50*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,000,000 — 1,500,000



4  
**Scott Kahn**  
*Soundview*  
Estimate  
HK\$900,000 — 1,400,000



5  
**Hernan Bas**  
*Who Told Them We Were Comin...*  
Estimate  
HK\$4,000,000 — 6,000,000



6  
**Shara Hughes**  
*Pleasure House*  
Estimate  
HK\$3,000,000 — 5,000,000



7  
**Loie Hollowell**  
*Linked Lingam in Red and Blue*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,800,000 — 2,800,000



8  
**Anna Weyant**  
*Chest*  
Estimate  
HK\$500,000 — 700,000



9  
**George Condo**  
*Transparent Female Forms*  
Estimate  
HK\$25,000,000 — 35,000,000

10  
This lot is no longer available.

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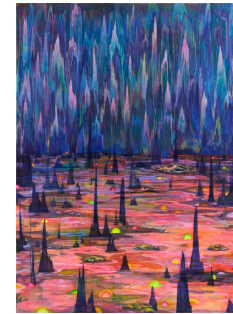
11  
**Matthew Wong**  
*Pink Wave*  
Estimate  
HK\$16,000,000 — 26,000,000



12  
**David Hockney**  
*Painted Landscape (Or Red and ...)*  
Estimate  
HK\$16,000,000 — 24,000,000



13  
**Ed Ruscha**  
*Spied Upon Scene: Window*  
Estimate  
HK\$3,500,000 — 5,500,000



14  
**Huang Yuxing**  
*Pearl Shore*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,500,000 — 2,500,000

15  
This lot is no longer available.



16  
**Nicolas Party**  
*Two Portraits*  
Estimate  
HK\$6,000,000 — 8,000,000



17  
**George Condo**  
*The Strangers*  
Estimate  
HK\$5,000,000 — 6,500,000



18  
**Ernie Barnes**  
*Life After Sundown*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,500,000 — 2,500,000



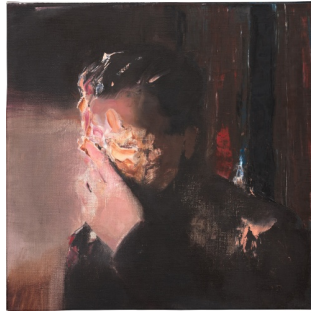
19  
**Javier Calleja**  
*1971*  
Estimate  
HK\$3,500,000 — 5,500,000



20  
**Yoshitomo Nara**  
*Untitled*  
Estimate  
HK\$6,000,000 — 8,000,000

# 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

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21

This lot is no longer available.

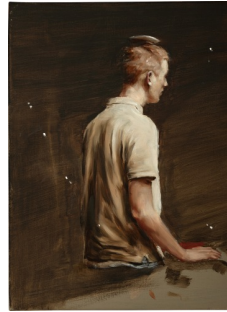
22

**Adrian Ghenie**

*Pie Fight Study 4*

Estimate

HK\$3,500,000 — 4,500,000



23

**Michaël Borremans**

*Stars*

Estimate

HK\$2,000,000 — 3,000,000



24

**Li Chen**

*Angelic Smile*

Estimate

HK\$2,000,000 — 3,000,000



25

**Zhang Xiaogang**

*Bloodline Series - Big Family*

Estimate

HK\$7,500,000 — 10,000,000



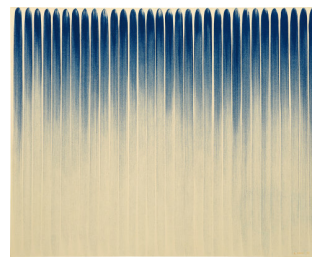
26

**Zhang Enli**

*Things*

Estimate

HK\$2,200,000 — 4,200,000



28

**Lee Ufan**

*From Line No. 790372*

Estimate

HK\$9,000,000 — 14,000,000



29

**Pierre Soulages**

*Peinture 102 x 130 cm, 11 mars 2...*

Estimate

HK\$7,500,000 — 10,000,000



30

**Ouattara Watts**

*Intercessor*

Estimate

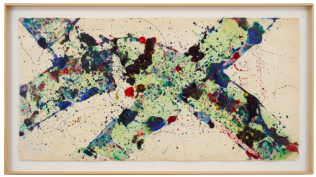
HK\$800,000 — 1,200,000

27

This lot is no longer available.

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31  
**Sam Francis**  
*Untitled*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,500,000 — 2,500,000



32  
**KAWS**  
*UNTITLED*  
Estimate  
HK\$3,500,000 — 4,500,000



33  
**Kohei Nawa**  
*PixCell-Deer #21*  
Estimate  
HK\$2,800,000 — 3,500,000



34  
This lot is no longer available.

35  
**Anna Park**  
*I to I*  
Estimate  
HK\$300,000 — 500,000



36  
**Trey Abdella**  
*Some Things Aren't Worth Waiti...*  
Estimate  
HK\$600,000 — 900,000



37  
**Szabolcs Bozó**  
*One Bird, A Cat and A Man*  
Estimate  
HK\$400,000 — 600,000



38  
**Katherine Bernhardt**  
*Laundry Day*  
Estimate  
HK\$800,000 — 1,200,000



39  
**Issy Wood**  
*Dog With Pendants (Not as Close)*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,200,000 — 1,800,000



40  
**Robert Nava**  
*Shark Wing Pegasus*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,200,000 — 1,800,000

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41  
**Ayako Rokkaku**  
*Untitled*  
Estimate  
HK\$2,000,000 — 3,000,000



42  
**Allison Zuckerman**  
*Bullseye*  
Estimate  
HK\$550,000 — 750,000



43  
**Serge Attukwei Clottey**  
*Valentine's Day*  
Estimate  
HK\$250,000 — 450,000



44  
**Gieve Figgis**  
*Pink Ballroom*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,500,000 — 2,000,000



45  
**Emmanuel Taku**  
*Brothers in Red*  
Estimate  
HK\$300,000 — 500,000



46  
**Aboudia**  
*Take Me II*  
Estimate  
HK\$500,000 — 700,000



47  
**José Parlá**  
*Writers' Bench: Grand Concours...*  
Estimate  
HK\$800,000 — 1,200,000



48  
**Edgar Plans**  
*Night Creatures*  
Estimate  
HK\$1,200,000 — 1,800,000



49  
**Rafa Macarrón**  
*Sin título (Cosmos)*  
Estimate  
HK\$700,000 — 1,000,000



1

**Julie Curtiss**

*Funky Boots*

signed, titled and dated 'Julie Curtiss "Funky boots", 2017' on the reverse

acrylic and oil on canvas

61.4 x 51 cm. (24 1/8 x 20 1/8 in.)

Painted in 2017.

**Estimate**

HK\$600,000 — 800,000

€73,200 — 97,700

\$76,900 — 103,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“I am interested in nuances, in complexity, in the in-between, in complementarity. I am afraid of the lack of it — I am afraid of extreme polarisation, of a lack of conversation, of a black-and-white vision of the world.” — Julie Curtiss*

Julie Curtiss’ sardonic, psychedelic world is a visual feast of Jungian proportions: impossible dreamscapes filled with warped scenes of domesticity and topsy-turvy quotidian life fill her oeuvre; troupes of hairy ghouls sporting bright, talon-like nails coexist with exotic plants and hirsute slabs of meat. As the artist aptly quips, ‘My work is completely psychological.’<sup>1</sup> Drawing from sources as broad as the Surrealist movement to the Chicago Imagists, while flirting with the art of 19th Century French painters, Curtiss’ works toy with notions of gender roles, sexuality, and the human psyche.

Installation view of the present work (far right) Anton Kern Gallery, New York, 10: *Louise Bonnet, Huguette Caland, Julie Curtiss, Jackie Gendel, Heidi Hahn, Loie Hollowell, Jeanne Mammen, Aliza Nisenbaum, Emily Sundblad, Alice Tippit*, 12 January – 14 February 2018

## Things Get Pretty Hairly

French-born, Brooklyn-based artist Julie Curtiss draws from multiple points of art history to create her unique language. Curtiss’ artistic footnotes have oftentimes been traced to the Chicago Imagists — a group of artists whose works referenced Surrealism and Pop Culture — and in particular, to [that of Christina Ramberg](#). Ramberg’s sinisterly sensual oeuvre, likewise, tackled the notions of femininity and gender. Serendipitously, it is Ramberg’s description of her own work that encapsulates Curtiss’ renderings of female existence: ‘Containing, restraining, reforming, hurting, compressing, binding, transforming a lumpy shape into a clean smooth line.’<sup>ii</sup>

If the ‘clean smooth line[s]’ of Curtiss’ oeuvre should refer to her meticulous renditions of hair, then the ‘lumpy shape[s]’ she is taming into place are the fetishisation of female forms. ‘Hair started interesting me ever since I was a teenager...I realised there was this part of us that would remain long after we are gone. Hair itself is amorphous, but you can shape it; it’s inert and alive at once. On women’s heads it’s a sexual asset, but on her body, it’s considered “abject.”’<sup>iii</sup>

Chicago Imagist, Art Green, *Disclosing Enclosure*, 1968

The artist considers hair as one of those ‘physical attributes that women everywhere in the world tame and groom, transcending them into tools of communication and seduction’<sup>iv</sup>. She has been quoted reclaiming the mythology of Gorgon Medusa, a vain woman with luscious hair cursed

instead with a head of snakes: ‘There is something interesting in embracing and overcoming the negative sides of being a woman... I find this version of the dangerous female fascinating, powerful, and rich.’<sup>v</sup>. Thus, when paired with other accessories typically associated with sex and seduction: nails, clothing, shoes (such as the titular boot), hair takes on a certain mysticism, rebellion, and allure in the artist’s work.

## Shoes, Shoes, Shoes

Andy Warhol, *Untitled (“Tony” Shoe)*, circa 1956 Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

In *Funky Boots*, an unzipped, hair-covered boot sags at its opening to reveal a lattice of flesh. The solitary boot rests on a furry, navy carpet, its shape casting a shadow against a grey wall. Portrayed as such, the common boot becomes a mysterious object of desire, or even one which commands envy. The overall effect is not unlike Andy Warhol’s own illustrations of shoes: elevated and to be marvelled at as symbols of class and elegance, and even more revered when covered in gold foil. Such early illustrations sprang out of Warhol’s stint in commercial sketches for the shoe brand I. Miller in the mid-fifties, when the young artist was commissioned to create campaign advertisements for the Sunday edition of the New York Times. Clearly Curtiss too is fascinated by the relationship between shoes, commercialism, and self-imaging, having curated [The Shoo Sho](#), in which several artists’ works (including Curtiss’ own) riffed on shoe shops’ window displays. The link between bodies, gender politics, and commercial objects was blatant in this show — amplified all the more by a papier mâché version of *Funky Boots* in the form of [Strip Boot \(2021\)](#).

In the same vein however, the commercialisation of female shoes exists in tandem to female fetishisation. As endless examples of shoe advertisements can elucidate, the sexualisation of women and mere footwear have always been intimately linked: certain boots or heels carry underlying connotations of sexual gratification or gender dynamics. This link is made patently clear in *Funky Boots*: the shoe in question unzips to reveal the absent female form as a literal sack of meat — purposefully charged with symbolic meaning.

Shoe advertisement for Weyenberg Massagic shoes, circa 1972 (a version of which was reprinted in Ms. Magazine in 1974, after appearing in Playboy)

*“I am interested in the way our unconscious minds create fully-formed artworks: dreams. I like how dreams can be extremely vague and precise at once, and I aim to recreate this balance.” — Julie Curtiss*

## Have You Any Dreams You'd Like to Sell?

Julie Curtiss' work fits into not one single category, though the artist has in the past remarked, 'If the Chicago imagists and the surrealists had a baby, I think it would look a little like my work.'

<sup>vi</sup> Having lamented the underrepresentation of female Surrealism, Curtiss is at the forefront of a new movement of female Surrealists, having shown alongside other key figures such as Loie Hollowell in exhibitions [Dreamers Awake](#) and [10](#).

Dorothea Tanning, *Family Portrait*, 1954 Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou, Paris © 2022 The Destina Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Much like Dorothea Tanning, whose soft sculptures once inspired the artist, Curtiss' art investigates gender norms through the prism of surrealism, frequently subverting preconceived 'values' and tradition. Alongside other graphic-heavy female surrealists of her generation such as Emily Mae Smith, Curtiss reexamines the script of art history and employs dark humour, recurrent themes, and strong visual cues and iconography to dissect the annals of art history. As Julie Curtiss has remarked:

*"I don't think I am trying to turn back the clock on the genre because I am more interested in understanding why history is the way it is. I believe that what I am doing is revisiting the genre, and paying homage to some of my favourite artists. I feel very much in the continuation of my female predecessors. So much of Surrealism is about archetypes, and male artists have extensively represented their female archetypes. The interesting thing for me, while revisiting the Surrealist language, is to turn that female archetype inside out, shifting perception, like the model descending from the pedestal and picking up a brush." — Julie Curtiss*

## Collector's Digest

Curtiss has mounted numerous exhibitions in recent years. This includes at the White Cube Gallery in London (2021), and Anton Kern Gallery in New York (2020, 2019). The artist's work is represented in a number of museum collections around the world, among which are the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Maki Collection, Japan; Bronx Museum, New York; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Yuz Museum in Shanghai. She will soon be the subject of an upcoming solo exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery in New York.

<sup>i</sup> Julie Curtiss, quoted in Claire Milbrath, 'Unsettling Energies with Julie Curtiss', *The Editorial Magazine*, 17 September 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Anna Gritz, ed., *The Making of Husbands: Christina Ramberg in Dialogue*, 2019, n.p.

<sup>iii</sup> Julie Curtiss, quoted in Evan Pricco, 'Julie Curtiss: Where The Wild Things Are', *Juxtapoz*, [online](#)

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Julie Curtiss, quoted in Claire Milbrath, 'Unsettling Energies with Julie Curtiss', *The Editorial Magazine*, 17 September 2019, [online](#)

<sup>vi</sup> Julie Curtiss, quoted in Daniel Milroy Maher, 'Painter Julie Curtiss explores the representation of women in art history', *itsnicethat*, 15 March 2019, [online](#)

## Provenance

Anton Kern, New York

Private Collection

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## Exhibited

New York, Anton Kern Gallery, *10: Louise Bonnet, Huguette Caland, Julie Curtiss, Jackie Gendel, Heidi Hahn, Loie Hollowell, Jeanne Mammen, Aliza Nisenbaum, Emily Sundblad, Alice Tippit*, 12 January - 14 February 2018

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2

### Jamian Juliano-Villani

#### *Hand's Job*

signed, titled and dated '2019 "HAND'S JOB" JAMIAN JULIANO-VILLANI' on the stretcher  
acrylic on canvas  
152.4 x 121.9 cm. (60 x 47 7/8 in.)  
Painted in 2019.

#### Estimate

HK\$400,000 — 600,000  
€48,600 — 72,800  
\$51,300 — 76,900

[Go to Lot](#)



*“I feel painting has gone farther and farther away from expressing yourself and is now all about expressing painting traditions. Who cares about that?” — Jamian Juliano-Villani*

Composed with an amalgamation of references culled from the artist’s obsessive absorption of visual culture, the bewildering 2019 painting *Hand’s Job* display a rare clarity in composition and takes viewers on another adventure into the humorously bizarre and wild visual realm of Italian American artist Jamian Juliano-Villani. Working with projectors and sourced imagery, Juliano-Villani’s signature practice of combining disparate styles and subject matters pushes the envelope of the conventional subconscious preconception that everything should make logical sense, garnering her growing recognition and popularity in the international art scene.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Coesu1h2t9Q>

The artist discusses her practice in her Brooklyn Studio, 2015 Video Courtesy of Art21

## A Playful Tease

Compared to her iconic loud colour palette and bazaar-like visual arrangement, *Hand’s Job* offers a refreshing sense of organization that is unusual to Juliano-Villani’s oeuvre. The painting refers to the famous Instagram trope of a woman who leads her partner by hand seen from the partner’s perspective, as they look upon stunning views of exotic holiday destinations. The picture features the back of a slender and sexy young woman in a black bikini, holding the hand of her partner, whilst looking into a snowy urban landscape with bare wintery trees. This humorous juxtaposition is toppled by a translucent layer of pink right on the woman’s back: a pair of anthropomorphic lungs with alarming grey-coloured bronchus and bronchioles is smiling at the audience. Absurdly, this pair of comical lungs is wearing a red nose and thick lips, evocative of a clown’s makeup or the cartoon character Mr. Potato Head, whilst wearing a pair of white sneakers. Unequivocally bizarre, the current composition elicits hearty laughter whilst creating a trippy psychedelic effect.

Candid and carefree, Juliano-Villani’s not-taking-myself-so-seriously attitude comes through in her creative choice. It is not entirely easy for one to overlook the conspicuous double entendre intended by the artist in the title, not to mention that this provocative name barely corresponds to the subject matter. The artist made clear with this naughty mischief that she is unbothered by what others might think.



Peter Saul, *Two Napoleons Crossing the Alps*, 2015 Sold by Phillips, New York, 16 May 2018 for USD\$93,750 (Premium)

© 2022 Peter Saul / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

With her bold colour palette, provocative style, and true-to-self attitude, Juliano-Villani’s approach has evoked references to brow-raising works by fellow American painter Peter Saul. Originally following the footsteps of Francis Bacon, Saul had his heart set on creating works that are gloomy and melancholic in atmosphere. However, upon seeing two viewers laughing while looking around his first show in Paris, he unexpectedly changed his mind to be a ‘funny artist’<sup>1</sup>. So committed was Saul that he changed his self- definition, embracing this new identity and has enjoyed much blessed laughter and humour ever since.

Juliano-Villani certainly shares this light-heartedness with Saul in her creations. By juxtaposing visual elements that are seemingly mis-matched, she challenges common perceptions of comfort and the norm: 'You know how you have all the different areas for tastes on your tongue? In paintings I've got to hit those marks-and humour is one of them.' As the artist jocularly explains, 'When I make a painting, I like to start out with something stupid, then bring it somewhere to cancel that out-then bring it back to something else... so aggressively stupid that you can't even talk about it!' <sup>ii</sup>

*"Finding the 'I'm-not-sure area' is the thing that I find interesting." — Jamian Juliano-Villani*

### Outta Your Mind!

*"I respond to things immediately, in like an emotional, guttural way, and that's how decisions are formed." — Jamian Juliano-Villani*

Juliano-Villani's highly intuitive and illogical creative process flies in the face of modern human's habitual obsessiveness to asking 'why', with the expectation of getting a comprehensible answer. She works with the method of projecting images onto a canvas, usually from any number of elements taken from her extensive archive of visual inspirations. This allows her to include as many visual references as she sees fit in a single painting, creating an element of surprise that has become the defining aesthetic of her repertoire, interacting with the viewer in a straightforward way that is highly comparable to her approach to life.



Detail of the present work

The literal association between the subject matter and title *Hand's Job* is rather straightforward to notice in the painting, yet beyond which, nothing really makes logical sense. The animated smiling pink lungs, however, truly throws the audience for a loop. The artist's bizarre choice leaves one making all sorts of nonsensical guesses, yet not satisfied with what they come up with. The question 'why it is here' is not so much more important than the fact that 'it is here'. By leaving the theme open-ended to the viewer, Juliano-Villani allows the audience open-access to her idiosyncratic thoughts, urging the viewer to really look at what is presented in front of them.

### Eclectic Collage

*"I make my paintings out of necessity, and like using the things around me to communicate what I need to, because I'm really bad at articulating how I feel, vocally. The paintings do that for me." — Jamian Juliano-Villani*

Communication lies at the core of Juliano-Villani's practice, and her paintings are her surrogate for connecting with other human beings. This propels her to use widely recognized cartoon and comic

characters, as well as social media tropes in her work, as a way of externalising her inner mind in visual forms, making it accessible to the viewer.



Lot 228, KAWS, *Untitled (CALIVIN KLEIN)*, 1999 Phillips Hong Kong Day Sale, 21 June 2022 Estimate: HK\$500,000-700,000

With comparable styles of communication, street art is a highly accessible form of aesthetics that easily resonates and appeals to the public — qualities that are also identifiable in Juliano-Villani's practice. At first glance, visual elements of *Hand's Job* resembles an intervened photograph, which calls to mind street art intervention on ads and billboards by American artist and designer KAWS in the 90s. This association is reinforced by the visual references that populate Juliano-Villani's

works, each 'rub[ing] up against others culled from altogether different times, places, and sensibilities. Within one painting, the references can span generations and decades.'<sup>iii</sup>

Unconcerned with the conventional definition of good taste, Juliano-Villani's style is inarguably controversial. She lives and paints as she pleases, parading her unique personal taste in everything she undertakes. By creating pictures that are packed with both sentiment and banal humour, the artist commands attention to her inner vision that stems from the very recesses of her psyche.

*"I'm all about explicitness; not crude, but legible." — Jamian Juliano-Villani*

### Collector's Digest

Born in 1987 in Newark, New Jersey, Jamian Juliano-Villani now lives and works in New York. She graduated from Rutgers University in 2013, forfeiting the chance to further her studies with a master's degree and opting instead to learn by working as a studio assistant to artists Erik Parker and Dana Schutz.

Juliano-Villani held her first seminal museum exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit in 2015. Since then, the artist had also exhibited internationally at Kunsthall Stavanger (2021); JTT Gallery, New York (2020); Massimo De Carlo, London (2019); Studio Voltaire, London (2016), Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin (2015), amongst others. Her work has recently been included group shows at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Jewish Museum, MoMA PS1 and the Brooklyn Museum, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Kunsthall Rotterdam and the MAXXI Museum in Rome.

Earlier in 2021, Juliano-Villani opened her own gallery in New York City called *O'Flaherty's*. The artist's latest solo exhibition, *Steak Wars*, also just closed at the Pond Society in Shanghai (11 September to 30 October 2021), which marked the artist's debut in China. Her work is currently on show at the 59th Venice Biennale at the Arsenale (23 April – 27 November 2022).



Jamian Juliano-Villani's works at the Venice Biennale, 2022

<sup>i</sup>Andy Battaglia, quoted in 'Peter Saul & Jamian Juliano-Villani', *ARTnews*, December 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> Laura Phipps and Elisabeth Sherman, 'Flatlands: On Unstable Ground', *Whitney Museum of American Art*, [online](#)

#### Provenance

JTT Gallery, New York

Private Collection

Acquired from the above by the present owner

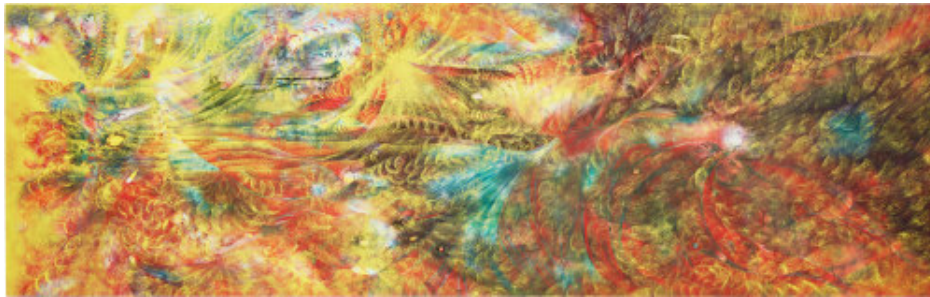
#### Literature

Russell Tovey and Robert Diament, *Talk Art: everything you wanted to know about contemporary art but were afraid to ask*, London, 2012, p. 132 (illustrated)

Andy Battaglia, 'Peter Saul & Jamian Juliano-Villani', *ARTnews*, 3 February 2020, [online](#) (illustrated)

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PROPERTY OF AN IMPORTANT ASIAN PRIVATE  
COLLECTION

3

### Lucy Bull

8:50

signed with the artist's initials and dated 'LB 2020' on  
the reverse

oil on canvas

93 x 296.5 cm. (36 5/8 x 116 3/4 in.)

Painted in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$1,000,000 — 1,500,000

€121,000 — 182,000

\$128,000 — 192,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“I want to titillate the senses. I want to draw people closer. I think people aren’t used to paying much-prolonged attention to paintings on walls and I want to allow people to have more of a sensory experience. I want to draw them in so that there is the opportunity for things to open up and for them to wander.” — Lucy Bull*

Phillips is pleased to present for the first time in Asia, and only second time ever at auction, a work by one of the world’s most exciting and forward-thinking young painters, the enigmatic Lucy Bull. After a breakout show at David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles last year, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago graduate has become darling of both collectors and critics alike: the former jostling for her arenas of psychedelia, the latter heralding her as the new champion of Western abstraction.

A fine balance between acid trip and surrealist climax, Bull’s compositions burn the retina, more siren than artwork as we are entranced by their vivid tessellations of synaesthesia, and drawn into her colour fields that seem to defy the pictorial space and wrap us in their limitless undulations. Otherworldly and fantastical, our brains are forced into hyperdrive as we attempt to comprehend the symphonies of blushes that bleed into one another, almost redefining the essential qualities of colour itself. However, Bull is hesitant to take the mantle of a strict abstraction, instead acknowledging the work of the late British painter Howard Hodgkin as a forefather, mirroring his figuration within her fervent reveries, and claiming ‘I am a representational painter, but not a painter of appearances. I paint representational pictures of emotional situations.’<sup>i</sup>

### Kaleidoscopic Colour and Sensation

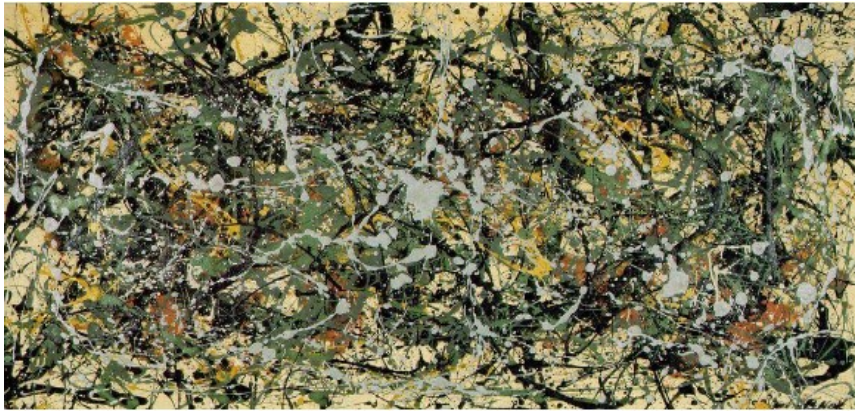
Bull’s work is defined by dialectic, opposition, contrast – precision and abandon, order and chaos, concord and discord. *8:50* stands as one of the artist’s largest visions, where forms and patterns seem to emerge to allow us grounding in the composition, only to then fall away as the kaleidoscopic sands of pigment shift eternal, forcing self-accusations of pareidolia. An Eleusinian Mystery, time and space are conquered by colour and sensation, made mechanical and played on loop, elliptical. This layered hierarchy that is found at the core of Bull’s work is a product of industry, repeatedly painting over works in small scratches until the piece reaches perfection in the artist’s strict specifications. Yet her technique of addition through scratching is but a mere chimaera, as in reality she engages in a process of excavation when she does so: previous marks get dragged to the foreground, obscuring the boundaries between past and present, old and new. She points to the technique of frottage espoused by the German Surrealist Max Ernst, who would place paper upon various materials, then transpose their surfaces by rubbing pencil or crayon in his investigation of the subconscious<sup>ii</sup>. Nonetheless, these formal qualities are merely visual bait as the reality of *8:50* is found in the work’s raw emotion.



Max Ernst, *The Eye of Silence*, 1944 Collection of the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis © 2022 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

### At Eternity’s Gate

Forged in an ayahuasca caprice and made manifest by the artist’s boundless creative spirit, approaching the painting is akin to coming face to face with our own subconscious, a Rorschach-like experiment between artwork and spectator that makes the worlds of Michael Fried and Aldous Huxley come crashing together in ethereal harmony. The antithesis of hermetic, *8:50*’s essence is found not on the canvas itself but in the experience of interaction with the canvas. Bull explains this as: ‘The work itself is so subjective, there isn’t just one narrative...Rich in so many associations, I never want to short-circuit any of my viewers in their viewing of the work by telling them what I see. I’m more interested in creating something that is more in-between and open-ended with multiple entry points.’<sup>iii</sup>. In a world of sensory overload - TikTok reels, endless advertisements and cacophonies of anxiety – Bull’s practice allows for mediation through submission. Like the Instagram Age’s answer to Jackson Pollock, the artist asks us to lose ourselves to find ourselves in her painting, promoting receptions that are visceral rather than conceptual.



Jackson Pollock, *Number 8, 1949* © 2022 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ Artists Right Society (ARS), New York

#### Provenance

Smart Objects, Los Angeles

Acquired from the above by the present owner

### Collector's Digest

In addition to her solo show at David Kordansky, Lucy Bull has been the subject of solo exhibitions at High Art (Arles, 2020; Paris, 2019); Human Resources, Los Angeles (2019); Smart Objects, Los Angeles (2019). Furthermore, her work is held in the permanent collections of MAMCO Geneva; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Dallas Museum of Art; and Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami.

Recent exhibitions include: *Lucy Bull: Skunk Grove*, 20 March – 1 May 2021; the artist is also currently in a group exhibition, *Women of Now*, with Plus Gallery alongside other female artists such as Anna Park, Anna Weyant, and Issy Wood.

<sup>i</sup> Lucy Bull, quoted in Stephanie Eckardt, 'In the Studio With Lucy Bull, the Painter Bringing Back Abstraction', *W Magazine*, 2 April 2021, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> John Garcia, 'Getting Lost in the Brushstrokes: Lucy Bull Interviewed by John Garcia', *BOMB Magazine*, 26 April 2021, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Lucy Bull, quoted in Ophelia Sanderson, 'Getting Lost in the Enigmatic Paintings of Lucy Bull', *Whitewall*, 18 November 2021, [online](#)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



4

### Scott Kahn

#### *Soundview*

signed and dated 'Scott Kahn '08' lower right; further signed, titled, inscribed and dated "'SOUND VIEW" KAHN 2008 © 2008 by Scott Kahn all rights reserved' on the overlap  
oil on linen  
76.3 x 86.4 cm. (30 x 34 in.)  
Painted in 2008.

#### Estimate

HK\$900,000 — 1,400,000

€110,000 — 170,000

\$115,000 — 179,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*“Creating reaches us and reveals to us who we are. This is why I paint.” — Scott Kahn*

Currently based in Brooklyn, New York, Scott Kahn is best known for his striking yet intricate oil paintings, carefully composed to showcase a highly methodical manipulation of light, shadow, and depth. Kahn’s oeuvre is a collection of autobiographical vignettes, encompassing serene landscapes, familiar portraits, and domestic interiors that the artist recalls from his creative reveries. Artfully refracted through the prism of memory, emotion, and experience, Kahn’s work is a harmonious marriage of existing locations and his own phantasmagorical interpretations. His manifestations are delightful and warm in their realistic nature, yet he diverges from the traditional path of naturalistic painting, incorporating subtle elements of the surreal into his work and instilling in it a simmering sense of unease. Kahn’s detailed, dreamlike canvases strike the perfect balance between the homely and the haunting, creating an aesthetic that, while seemingly reminiscent of American Regionalism, is completely unique.

### Snapshots of a Dream

*“I consider my work to be a visual diary, a record of my life.” — Scott Kahn*

Kahn’s 2008 painting takes us to a park in Soundview, a neighbourhood in the Bronx, New York. Standing on a small, lush-green field, our line of sight is framed by dense, yellowing foliage, hinting towards a nearing autumnal time. Beyond the hedges and shrubs, our view extends into the salt marshes, partially obscured only by a lone fir tree. Further out, the calm waters glisten in the mellow midday sun, seamlessly blurring with the clear sky as its edges disappear into the horizon. The drifting clouds infuse the otherwise naturalistic scene with a dreamlike sensibility, tinted with ombre hues of mauve and bubblegum pink more typical of a sunset sky. A comfortable solitude pervades the landscape, evoking a wave of tranquillity and peace within the viewer — and yet, the isolated and subtly illusive setting conjures a confusing sense of liminality, leaving us to wonder if we are in a dream.



Detail of the present lot

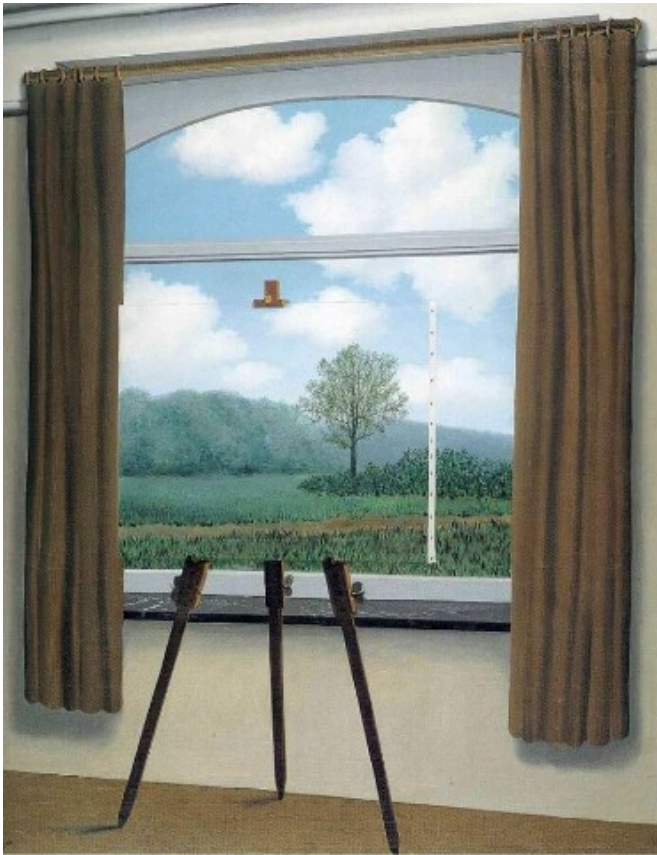
*Soundview* epitomises Kahn’s ability to transcend the boundaries between the material and the immaterial. Instead of recording the exact physicality, Kahn chooses to focus on depicting the version of it in his memories or daydreams, merging quotidian landscapes with enthralling reveries. Masterfully blurring the lines between imagination and reality, Kahn imbues the selected scene with intense emotion and a personal touch that makes his paintings all the more intimate.

### Poetic Transcendence

While some have labelled Kahn to be a photorealist, the artist disagrees with this classification, emphasising individual uniqueness over restricting himself to a single category or movement. Although his works could be considered photo-realistic, they are based on sudden bursts of inspiration brought about by recent experiences or feelings instead of pre-existing photographs. Elaborating on his style, Kahn muses: ‘I don’t consider myself a conceptual artist, but I certainly want to express some symbolic and philosophical meaning through my work.’<sup>i</sup> Similarly, he cites his dreams as inspirations for his paintings, hoping to achieve a ‘poetic transcendence’ through the use of dreamlike allegories and symbolism; a lingering implication that his canvases portray more than what meets the eye<sup>ii</sup>.

## A Surrealist Touch

‘He’s our Magritte.’ says Harper Levine, Kahn’s 2021 New York dealer <sup>iii</sup>. Indeed, this is an apt and commonly-made comparison — critics frequently draw a connection between Kahn and René Magritte, who is perhaps best known for his thought-provoking masterpieces, created by combining and transfusing mundane elements into surreal, unsettling imagery. Much like Magritte, Kahn experiments with realism and perception, challenging preconditioned ideas of depth, perspective, and reality.



René Magritte, *The Human Condition*, 1933 Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. © 2022 C. Herscovici, Brussels / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Kahn’s vistas are intimate yet otherworldly, bridging the gap between the tangible and fantastical, enticing viewers to contemplate what exists beyond the frame. There is a mysterious allure to the locations that Kahn selects; often too visually indistinct to pinpoint a specific time and place, yet generic enough for us to link to a faraway memory. Kahn’s repertoire is an imaginative and introspective one, constantly exploring and expanding the myriad of possibilities within both the interior and landscape genres.

## Collector’s Digest

Scott Kahn was born in 1946 in Springfield, Massachusetts. After receiving his BFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1967, he went on to obtain an MFA from Rutgers University in 1970, followed by further studies at the Art Students League. There, he was mentored by Theodoros Stamos and met many of the first-generation Abstract Expressionist artists such as Mark Rothko. His refined technique and distinctive repertoire have received international recognition and critical acclaim over the years, earning him a Pollock-Krasner Foundation award in 1986 and 1995, as well as a fellowship at the Edward F. Albee Foundation. His work has also been honoured in numerous major private and public collections, such as that of the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater.

In July 2021, Almine Rech gallery announced their exclusive representation of Kahn, following their online solo show of his works, *One by One: Scott Kahn*. Kahn’s most recent solo exhibitions include *Scott Kahn* with Almine Rech Paris Matignon (2021), and an ongoing exhibition with Almine Rech New York, *The Walled City* (3 May - 14 June 2022). Following an endorsement from the late Matthew Wong in 2018, collector interest in Kahn’s work has rapidly increased, and this demand shows no signs of slowing.

In 2021, Kahn set his personal auction record with Phillips Hong Kong, selling his 2002 piece *Cadman Plaza* for HK\$7,510,000. This also marked his auction debut in Asia.



Scott Kahn, *Cadman Plaza*, 2002 Sold by Phillips Hong Kong, 30 November 2021, for HK\$7,510,000 (Premium)

<sup>i</sup> Scott Kahn, quoted in 'Interviews we love: Scott Kahn', *RDN Arts*, 2 June 2021, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> Katya Kazakina, 'How Septuagenarian Artist Scott Kahn Went From Living in His Cousin's Attic to Selling Out Solo Shows in Just Three Years', *Artnet*, 3 May 2022, [online](#)

**Provenance**

François Ghebaly, Los Angeles

Private Collection

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



5

### Hernan Bas

*Who Told Them We Were Coming?*

signed with the artist's initials, titled and dated 'HB  
2013 "who told them we were coming?"' on the reverse  
oil on canvas

183 x 152 cm. (72 x 59 7/8 in.)

Painted in 2013.

#### Estimate

HK\$4,000,000 — 6,000,000

€486,000 — 728,000

\$513,000 — 769,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*“I’ve always sort of thought of [my works] as being... at the end of the day, when I’m off the planet, it will be like an encyclopedia of the strange course of my life.” —  
Hernan Bas*

## The Southern Gothic

Growing up in a small backwater town in upstate Florida, a place that American artist Hernan Bas described as living in an episode of the X-Files, the artist enjoyed a unique childhood that was littered with paranormal sightings and other bizarre encounters with the unearthly. These formative years, coupled with an affinity for the nefarious yet decadent writings of Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde, fomented a practice that displays a penchant for morbidity, isolation and off-kilter humour that are made manifest in compositions weave together stories of adolescent adventures and the paranormal with classical poetry, religious stories, mythology and literature.

Despite being in the contemporary spotlight for years now, Bas has always sought to dodge the bright lights of Miami’s burgeoning art scene, away from its Wynwood art district and the annual hordes of Basel. He treats the city’s ascendance in the art world constellation with ambivalence, and moved to Detroit in 2010 where he owns a studio, before returning to Florida at the beginning of the pandemic. Bas’ oeuvre could be defined by his androgynous dandy aesthetic, where men and boys of various ages engage in acts and rituals of courtship, love and death, the mannered ballads of heightened emotion. These visions are both alluring and ominous, in which his figures occupy the liminal boundaries of a man’s progression through life, what Bas calls the ‘fag limbo’ — projecting the 21st century’s answer to Ganymede and Tadzio<sup>i</sup>.



Installation shot of the present lot (right) at Frederic Snitzer Gallery, Miami, *Boys in Peril?*, 2013

However, the artist finds conflict in the traditional labelling of his oneiric compositions, explaining as such: ‘I don’t like to think of it as portraiture at all. I’ve been quoted as describing it as the state of where you don’t really know what or who you are. Or back to literature, a *Catcher in the Rye* type of thing. It’s all there. And I’ve always been drawn to that sort of in-between. I mean, no one wants to read a book where the character is so easily understood and defined.’<sup>ii</sup> Though here in the present lot, Bas takes a decidedly more macabre tone, one that delves further into the psychotropic.

## A Beautiful, Dark, Twisted Fantasy

*“My work has nothing to do with urban decay. What I was intrigued by was the fact was there were all these ‘haunted’ houses.” — Hernan Bas*

*Who Told Them We Were Coming?* initially strikes you as a commentary on urban decay, with the angular row of houses that crown the composition appearing more like the razor-sharp mandible



of the Cthulhu. Yet the artist's fascination lay more in the product rather than the process of the deindustrialisation he witnessed in Detroit, drawn to the abandoned, 'haunted' houses that lined the former capital of the automotive industry.



Charles Ephraim Burchfield, *Gateway to September*, 1946-1956

Swinging the double-edged sword that is his practice, elegance and desolation are balanced in Bas' sumptuous rendering of colour and form; a balance that recalls the peculiar forms of the American modernist, Charles Burchfield. The figure to the right of the composition is found isolated and enveloped by the cacophony of bleeding tones, ethereal beings, and an ever-encroaching phalanx of creaking mansions. In this work Bas projects, a sinister vision of an existential danger, the cause, effect and outcome left ambiguous. Bas alludes to a clairvoyant dimension within his painting, a supernatural presence that he denotes as such: 'Duchamp put it that painting is a form of automatic writing. You're not super conscious of what you're doing. There's an element of magic to painting'<sup>iii</sup>.

Within this composition, the artist triggers feelings of nostalgia for shared childhood fantasies and coming of age adventures. As such, it is a stage of life shrouded in uncertainty and malaise, a mood

reinforced through Bas' choice of colour palette. The tones remain noticeably desaturated and overcast with grey hues, comparable to a pervasive veil of angst that looms over our very being, both internally and externally, which is in turn signified by the house and exterior surroundings. Dark crooked houses in the background juxtaposes the warm reds and greenery in the foreground, further adding to a sense of cognitive dissonance. A prism of coded desire and self-discovery, the current work is representative of Bas' much explored theme of introspective reveries.

The lone figure in the foreground is not given particular motion or expression, positioning himself as a substitute for the viewer, allowing the whole piece to become a contemplative and engaging viewing experience; there is no explicit indication as to what the scene is seeking to convey. As Bas describes:

*"I've always pictured my figures as being in a choose-your-own-adventure book, and the person looking at the painting can choose where the story is going."* — Hernan Bas

### Collector's Digest

Hernan Bas is a key figure within the world of contemporary art, and has held numerous successful solo exhibitions in recent years. This includes at the Rubell Museum in Miami, which opened on 18 November 2020 and closes soon on 12 December 2021; *Creature Comforts* at Perrotin in Paris (17 October 2020 – 30 January 2021); *Venetian Blind* at Victoria Miro in Venice (8 February – 14 March 2020); and *TIME LIFE* at Lehmann Maupin in New York (7 November 2019 – 4 January 2020).

Bas was honoured with a retrospective last year, *Choose Your Adventure* at the Yuz Museum in Shanghai, marking Bas' debut in China.

His works are held in numerous prestigious public collections around the world, including: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Saatchi Collection, London; Samuso: Space for Contemporary Art, Seoul; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; and the Brooklyn Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

<sup>i</sup> Hernan Bas, quoted in artist biography on the Galerie Perrotin website, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Hernan Bas, quoted in Evan Pricco, 'Hernan Bas: A Certain Southern Gothic', *Juxtapoz*, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Hernan Bas, quoted in Kate Abbey-Lambertz, 'Hernan Bas, Painter, Talks Growing Up In Haunted Florida, Working In Detroit', *Huffington Post*, 11 April 2012, [online](#)

**Hernan Bas**

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**Provenance**

Frederic Snitzer, Miami

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Miami, Fredric Snitzer, *Hernan Bas: Boys in Peril?*, 12 April - 27 May 2013

**Literature**

Matt Price, Martyn Richard Coppel and Dung Ngo, eds., *Hernan Bas*, New York, 2014, pp. 260, 273 (illustrated, p. 261)



6

**Shara Hughes**

*Pleasure House*

signed, titled, dated and inscribed '2017 SHARA HUGHES "Pleasure House" NYC' on the reverse; further signed and inscribed 'Shara Hughes Greenpoint Ave' on the stretcher

oil and acrylic on canvas  
173 x 152.5 cm. (68 1/8 x 60 in.)  
Painted in 2017.

**Estimate**

HK\$3,000,000 — 5,000,000

€367,000 — 612,000

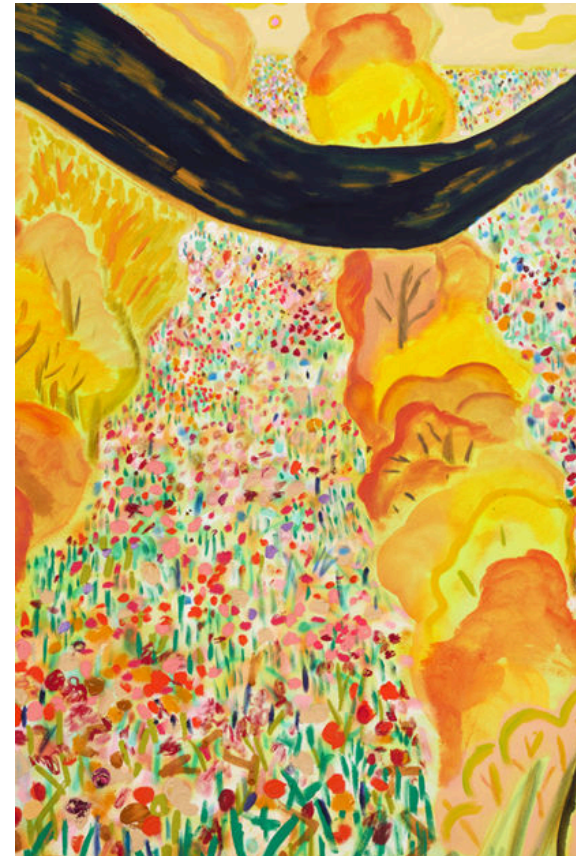
\$385,000 — 641,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*“It’s an epic idea of pleasure, a landscape of flowers and bright orange bushes leading you down a long floral hallway to the horizon – almost as if you’re asked to willingly walk down the aisle to heaven.” — Shara Hughes*

Featuring American artist Shara Hughes’s signature electric colour palette, dizzying brushwork and shifting perspectives, the passionately cheerful *Pleasure House* (2017) is a paradisiacal example of Hughes’s internationally celebrated landscape series. The word ‘mindscape’ appropriately describes Hughes’s whimsical, dream-like scenes. Through immersing and detaching herself from the painting<sup>1</sup>, the artist concerns herself with bringing to life an imaginary and emotionally charged space that makes each piece an intimate and unique experience for both the viewer and herself.



Detail of the present lot

## Heavenly Delight

Referencing a myriad of artists that she admires, Hughes juxtaposes these elements are seemingly uncorrelated and mismatched, calling attention to her unique painterly intuition and feminine sensibility. The compositional emphasis of *Pleasure House* is the over scaled charcoal-coloured tree in the foreground, partially framing the scene. Its trunk becomes the left boarder of our view, while its willowy branch extends from top left to right. Spontaneous, staccato brushstrokes in the foreground suggests an intimate viewpoint that extends up towards the glorious blazing sun. Two rows of golden trees rendered with swirling clouds of butterscotch yellow, honey orange and

chestnut brown in free-handed stokes plunge into the depth of the background, leading the viewer's gaze to into a dynamic, fantastical landscape. In between them lie a green grassland comprised of dense, feathery strokes, and flowers in full bloom, rendered with lively dots of pink and red. The idea of immense pleasure radiates out of the image with life and warmth and is irresistibly inviting to anyone who wishes to immerse into this uplifting space of delight and joy.



Joan Mitchell, *Sunflower*, 1969 Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York © Estate of Joan Mitchell

For Hughes personally, the colour yellow marks a special phase in her life. She became spellbound with Joan Mitchell's 1969 *Sunflower* after first seeing it at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 'That

one changed my life for a long time', the artist recalled during an interview, '... It goes in phases, but it was almost my entire life for like three years. Now that I think about it, I'm going to look again into that work.'<sup>ii</sup> Ideas that stand the test of time have the capacity of blossoming into various depths of reality when revisited at different stages of one's life. For Hughes, Joan Mitchell's characteristic confidence that come through within the swirling explosion of yellow is one of those far-reaching marks that is embedded in her mind.

### A Room with A View

Featuring a vertical composition favoured by the artist, the current example acts as a visual indication for the viewer to journey into the depth of the pictorial plane. Interestingly, it makes an evident reference to perspective paintings that are known for rendering a realistic impression of spacial depth, which is rare in Hughes's oeuvre. The setting of looking from a particular point outward in the composition recalls classic paintings of window scenes that many famous artists across genres had explored over the span of their careers, such as Henri Matisse and David Hockney.



Lot 12, David Hockney, *Painted Landscape (Or Red and Blue Landscape)*, 1965 Phillips Hong Kong Evening Sale, 22 June 2022 Estimate: HKD16,000,000 - 24,000,000

The compositional approach of this work, in which the canvas serves as window frame for the viewer to look ‘out of’, is very comparable to that favoured by David Hockney, as both artists plays with perspectives that draw parallels to theatrical scenes. In his 1965 *Painted Landscape (Or Red and Blue Landscape)* (Lot 12), Hockney frames the seascape with drawn curtains and raw canvas space around them. He decreased the impression of depth by employing geometric forms as substitute for figurative representations, and thus bringing the background from the pictorial plane to the viewer. The figure in white facing out at the window paves ways for an experience of differentiating between the foreground and background, the real and the abstract, which in and of itself is multidimensional and profound.

Both Matisse and Hockney have conducted their masterful explorations with colour and form in their own window scene depictions, the flattened and layered composition of which share conspicuous similarities with *Pleasure House*. Yet, having another possibility for interaction in mind when creating this piece, Hughes elevated the experience of space through a definite perspective to another level of intimacy and individuality.

### An Intimate Viewing Experience

*“Looking through a meandering vertical slot in a painted wooden partition, the view takes you through a forest of sculptural layers towards a vision of a paradisiacal garden.” — Dodie Kazanjian*

*Pleasure House* was the centre piece of the Rhode Island School of Design graduate’s installation at the Redwood Library Athenaeum on Rhode Island in 2017 (July 1 – September 21) — the same year when the work was executed. The inspiration for the installation, as the artist recalls, is ‘the idea of a church and an altarpiece, of walking up to something and having a special experience with it alone.’<sup>iii</sup> Intended for individual viewing, the work can be viewed through a meandering vertical slit in a painted wooden partition installed inside the 18th Century octagonal Athenaeum from the exterior. This playful thinly slot only allows one person to peek into a line of the painting that depicts a heavenly garden, placing emphasis on the deeply personal viewing experience that Hughes aims to deliver with her work.

*“[My paintings] start from a place of playfulness. It’s usually about the material and color in the beginning, then they kind of evolve into psychedelic type spaces that almost seem to occupy your mind more than a real space.” — Shara Hughes*

The space within and without Hughes’s paintings, in reality, is an arena that the artist prepares for colours, shapes and textures to collide and spark. In the *Pleasure House* installation, the sculptural elements the resembles design props on a stage, drawing attention to the theatricality of the work itself. The momentum generated by the movement of the golden trees in the work seems to be the stage curtains that are drawing apart, unveiling the story that was hidden prior to this moment and kindling an excitement for the unknown.

### Trusting The Unknown – A Shift in the Creative Process

*“If I had decided where the painting was gonna go, or how it would end up before I*

*started the painting, it almost felt like, ‘what’s the point of making it?’ So being more of a painter and being active with the painting in it telling me where it’s gonna end up more than I control it, is important for me, and that’s what keeps me going with the work.” — Shara Hughes*

Beginning in 2014, Hughes’s move from painting dazzling symbolic interiors to whimsical landscapes marks a shift in her creative approach. The artist begins a landscape painting with no preconceived notion and an open mind, pouring, splashing, or dripping acrylics onto the canvas, leaving spontaneous marks, posing as a visual riddle for Hughes to paint her way out [iv]. What lies at the core of this poetically conversational and free-flowing process is the artist’s sense of security whilst facing the unknown: she releases herself from the constraints of maintaining control, allowing the organic development of colour and form to guide her along and become a co-creator of her work.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlkXExxQ1qA>

The artist talks about her creative process in her studio

## Collector’s Digest

In 2022, Shara Hughes’s solo exhibitions include *Spotlight: Shara Hughes* at FLAG Art Foundation, New York (March 12 – April 16, 2022) and *Shara Hughes: Time Lapsed* at Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland (September 17 – November 10, 2022). Her other recent solo exhibitions were held at the Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2021-2022), *Shara Hughes: On Edge* at Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (2021-2022), *Shara Hughes*, the artist’s first UK museum exhibition at Garden Museum, London (2021), *Shara Hughes* at Aspen Museum of Art, Colorado (2021), and Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2021).

Hughes’ work is in the permanent collections of institutions including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum Denver Art Museum High Museum of Art in Atlanta, and X Museum in Beijing.

<sup>i</sup> Shara Hughes, quoted in ‘Shara Hughes Gets Lost in Paint’, *In The Studio | ArtDrunk*, 20 February 2020, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Shara Hughes, quoted in Ian Alteveer, ‘Shara Hughes in Conversation’, *Shara Hughes/ Landscape*, 20 August 2019, p.24

<sup>iii</sup> Shara Hughes, quoted in Redwood Library & Athenæum Rhode Island, ‘Shara Hughes – Pleasure House’, 2017, [online](#)

<sup>iv</sup> Shara Hughes, quoted in Ian Alteveer, ‘Shara Hughes in Conversation’, *Shara Hughes/ Landscape*, 20 August 2019, p.9

## Provenance

Eva Presenhuber, Zurich  
Private Collection, Chicago  
Acquired from the above by the present owner

## Exhibited

New Port, Redwood Library and Athenæum, *Pleasure House*, 1 July - 21 September 2017



7

**Loie Hollowell**

*Linked Lingam in Red and Blue*

signed, titled and dated 'Loie Hollowell "Linked Lingam" "Linked Lingam in Red and Blue" 2015 Loie Hollowell' on the reverse

oil on linen mounted on panel

70.9 x 52.9 cm. (27 7/8 x 20 7/8 in.)

Executed in 2015.

**Estimate**

HK\$1,800,000 — 2,800,000

€219,000 — 341,000

\$231,000 — 359,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*"My work is an expression of my core sensuality. I'm a body experiencing desire, experiencing pleasure. It is sensual and needy and dirty and expressive." — Loie Hollowell*

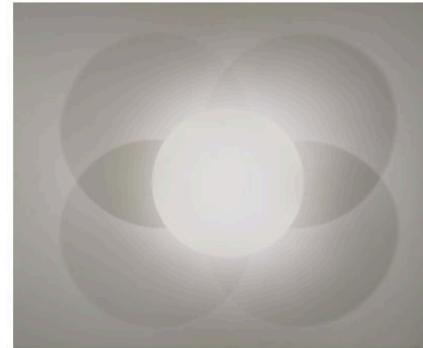
One of the most sensational artists in the contemporary art scene today, Loie Hollowell's pulsating, almost psychedelic paintings explore themes of sexuality through allusions to human forms, evoking bodily landscapes and transforming figures and movements into abstraction.

Characterised by luminous, contrasting colours and voluptuous biomorphic forms that are mysteriously hypnotic, Hollowell's *Linked Lingam in Red and Blue* is an unapologetic celebration of the female bodily landscape. Utilising abstract forms, clean lines and graduated shading, Hollowell creates works that are uncanny and unsettling, with shapes resembling plants, portals or futuristic monoliths. Showcasing the artist's classic *Lingam* motif, the symbol is an abstract representation of the Hindu deity *Shiva* – the supreme force who creates, protects and transforms the universe.

### 'Searing Source of Intense Light'

*"Light has become a central character in my work. Often there will be a light source, a stream of light that penetrates the entire dimension of the canvas. The light moves through the action in the painting, or the action is coming out of the stream of light. Those areas of chiaroscuro and high-intensity light are places of arousal. The pulsing light is like the body's energy — the pulsing of sex or the pulsing of the heart. During climax it feels like there's a bright light pouring out of me, like I'm going to explode. That's the kind of light energy I want to create in my paintings." — Loie Hollowell*

Growing up in sunny California, Hollowell cites the state's flooding light as the source that drives her creations. The sharp contrasts of light and dark, forms protruding from the surface of the canvas within her oeuvre – at times enhanced by or hidden from the illusory depictions of light – are all in service to the form of the painting, as the artist attempts to grasp the 'searing source of intense light' that 'lies deep in her soul'<sup>1</sup>. In *Linked Lingam in Red and Blue*, a glowing almond shape of teal emanates a soft glow from within, complimented by the pair of red Lingams that swirl outwards towards the edge of the canvas. The dark blue background is carefully rendered in graduated hues, echoing the luminous centre.



Left: Robert Irwin, *Untitled*, 1968, acrylic and cellulose nitrate lacquer on aluminium and light Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York © Robert Irwin / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York Right: Agnes Pelton, *Light Centre*, 1947-48

Hollowell's paintings share a similar devotion to the exploration of light and shadow as seen in works by Robert Irwin and Agnes Pelton, both cited by Hollowell as her sources of inspirations. As the pioneering artist of the Light and Space movement in Southern California, Robert Irwin's *Untitled* (1968) is a mixed media piece that challenges the viewer's perception of physical space. Its subtle surfaces fade gently outwards, overlapping into a soft cloverleaf pattern. Set against a white wall and softly lit from four angles, the work encourages the eye to spend more time in understanding what it sees – what is nearer and what is further, what is solid and what is immaterial light.

Creating a similar visual effect with the use of different mediums, Hollowell's canvases often employ carefully planned shading that creates an optical illusion, blurring the boundaries between the flat plane and the three-dimensional. Simultaneously beautiful and confusing, the shapes in both Irwin and Hollowell's works join and separate into one another, creating an ethereal sense of light and volume. Meticulously rendered, Hollowell's works showcase her technical prowess in manipulating constructed shadow and constructed light versus real light and real shadow.

### Inside Out

*"... (How I) come about composing a work, is trying to think of a way to articulate an experience that is so internal, but put it out onto the skin of the canvas, and*

*externalise it.” — Loie Hollowell*

Derived directly from the artist’s personal, corporeal experiences in life, Hollowell’s paintings make thinly veiled references to the female sex organ, and the physical and emotional experience of pregnancy and childbirth. Her work is created in direct correlation with the proportions of her own body, be it the head, breasts, or a pregnant belly.



Georgia O’Keeffe, *Blue Flower*, 1918 Collection of the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe © Georgia O’Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Through breaking down her own experiences of sex, menstruation, or being pregnant, the artist transforms physiological sensations into personal blueprints within the rectangular landscape of a canvas. Deconstructing her personal life through the formal vernacular of light, space, colour and texture, Hollowell situates her painting within the art historical lineage of fellow American female artists such as Georgia O’Keeffe and Judy Chicago, who also countered the idea of pure abstraction with references to the human body. Elevating flat geometric expression with autobiographical analogies of the physical and psychological, Hollowell’s creations are visceral, honest, and seductive.

*“I realised the abstraction can hold within it that sensation or that emotion by its colour, its composition, its texture.” — Loie Hollowell*

### Collector’s Digest

Born 1983 in California, Loie Hollowell lives and works in New York. Known for her oeuvre that transforms the female nude into abstraction, Hollowell quickly rose to global prominence after being discovered by Marc Glimcher, president of PACE Gallery, who praised her as a ‘truly rare talent’<sup>ii</sup>. PACE quickly held several solo exhibitions for Hollowell across their international locations, including London in 2018; Hong Kong in 2018; New York in 2019; and PACE online in 2020. Notable recent exhibitions include a solo show at the Long Museum in Shanghai, titled *Loie Hollowell: Recalibrate*, which ran from 24 April – 11 July 2021, and *The Sacred Contract* with Konig Galerie, lasting from 28 April to 13 June, 2021, and *Starting from 0*, PACE Seoul, 13 May – 25 June, 2022.

Hollowell’s works are in the collections of Arts Council England, London (UK); He Art Museum, Shunde (CN); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (US); Long Museum, Shanghai (CN); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA (US); Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (CH), amongst others. The artist is represented by PACE Gallery.

<sup>i</sup> Loie Hollowell, quoted in Katy Hessel, ‘Loie Hollowell’, *The Great Women Artists Podcast*, August 2020, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Marc Glimcher, quoted in Nate Freeman, ‘How Newly Minted Art Market Star Loie Hollowell’s Prices Rose More Than 1,200 Percent in Just Three Years’, *Artnet News*, 15 September 2019, [online](#)

**Provenance**

Feuer/Mesler, New York

Viana Art, New York

Phillips, New York, 8 December 2020, lot 406

Acquired at the above sale by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



8

### Anna Weyant

#### *Chest*

signed and dated 'Anna Weyant 2020' on the reverse  
oil on canvas

45.7 x 60.6 cm. (17 7/8 x 23 7/8 in.)

Painted in 2020.

#### **Estimate**

HK\$500,000 — 700,000

€60,800 — 85,200

\$64,100 — 89,700

[Go to Lot](#)



*“I can remember being a little girl and wanting boobs and craving the power of womanhood. I imagined a level of agency and confidence that I would one day inhabit, which — if I’m being honest — eludes me even now.” — Anna Weyant*

## A Private Moment

A timeless capsule of female sensuality, a vignette set against a cinematic sombre setting, *Chest* eternalises femininity with charm, elegance and grace. Breath-takingly sensual yet tantalisingly voyeuristic, an undressed, porcelain female torso is presented before us in *Chest*: a work which encapsulates Canadian artist Anna Weyant’s most celebrated painterly fantasies - a gem of her popular figurative women paintings imbued with psychological decadence. Painted with a muted palette of neutral hues, the female body glows with skilled application of chiaroscuro in shades of sepia. The smoothly painted brushstrokes portray the light tinges of purple and blue on human flesh realistically. The position of the woman hints at her full awareness of being naked and observed, yet she shies and leans away to cover her breasts with her arm. We are met with a quiet sight simultaneously coy yet undeniably vulnerable: by veiling herself the torso accentuates her chest, her bosom constricting and heightening her femininity. The presentation of a realistically painted female body, anonymity, and self-conscious reaction to the spectator’s gaze on her nudity charge the painting with fantasy and imagination.

*“[Weyant] conveys an understanding of her work’s roots while eliciting an immediate and emotional response.” — Gagosian*

## Instagram Meets Old Masters



Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus* (detail), 1485–1486 Uffizi Gallery, Venice

Drawing upon centuries of Western painting, Weyant references an eclectic range of art historical influences in *Chest*: she remodifies Venus’ pose in Renaissance masterpiece *The Birth of Venus*; utilises the palette of the seventeenth-century Dutch Old Masters; even extending her sources to present the human body to Contemporary artists John Curin, Jenny Saville and Francesca Woodman. Weyant particularly admires how Woodman captures the bends and folds of a woman’s physique against the light in photography, as demonstrated in *Providence, Rhode Island from Space2*. Clearly taking Woodman’s style in her stride, Weyant portrays the covered up female body

without full revelation, thoughtfully crafting an indirect pose in a deep psychological state, with a bit of darkness cast on their psyche.



Francesca Woodman, *Providence, Rhode Island from Space2*, 1976 © Woodman Family Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

*“I like it when there's something that's not quite right in the image, something that doesn't fit... sometimes I have fun playing with the 'Instagram meets old painting' type of clash.” — Anna Weyant*

In art making, Weyant also throws in contemporary social influences from pop culture, such as

American cartoons and Instagram. The compositional arrangement of the present work has a zoom-in and cut-off effect like an Instagram post that conceals the identity of the woman, bringing the naked body to the fore. Another work by the artist, *Stepped on a Spider* also takes a similar approach on a pair of feet. The whimsical title of the work shows the artist's sense of humour that encourages imagination while viewing her works. The artist has remarked, 'A little creepiness can save a painting sometimes. And then the gravity of the candle flicker behind her is off which makes you question the reality of the narrative.' The strange, almost eerie beauty in *Chest* is arresting, its imagery feels close to heart due to its referencing of cultural influences from history to the present day. A surreal, still image of an unknown female is thus tinged with an obscure kind of darkness, hinting at desire, while juxtaposing humour and solemnity, rebellion, and repression.

### Collector's Digest

Born 1995 in Calgary, Canada, Anna Weyant lives and works in New York. She received her BFA from Rhode Island School of Design. Propelled into international stardom only within the past few years, Weyant has had multiple solo shows, beginning with her first high profile show, *Welcome to the Dollhouse* at 56 Henry, New York (2019), followed by *Loose Screw* at Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2021) which sold out instantly; and *Splinter* with Blum & Poe, Tokyo (29 January - 12 March 2022) which has just closed.

In June 2021, Phillips New York had debuted Weyant's work at auction with a work on paper that sold for more than five times its low estimate; in May 2022, her 2021 painting *Buffett II*, sold for [US\\$730,800 \(premium\)](#), more than seven times its low estimate.

In the same month, Gagosian [gallery announced their solo representation of Weyant](#), making her the youngest artist to have joined the gallery's roster at 27 years old. Her first solo exhibition with Gagosian, New York will be in the fall of this year.

### Provenance

WOAW Gallery, Hong Kong

Acquired from the above by the present owner

### Exhibited

Hong Kong, WOAW Gallery, *Allegory of Painting*, 6-15 November 2020

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



9 ♦♦

### George Condo

#### *Transparent Female Forms*

signed and dated 'Condo 09' on the reverse  
acrylic, chalk and pastel on linen  
198.1 x 289.2 cm. (77 7/8 x 113 7/8 in.)  
Executed in 2009.

#### Estimate

HK\$25,000,000 — 35,000,000

€3,010,000 — 4,220,000

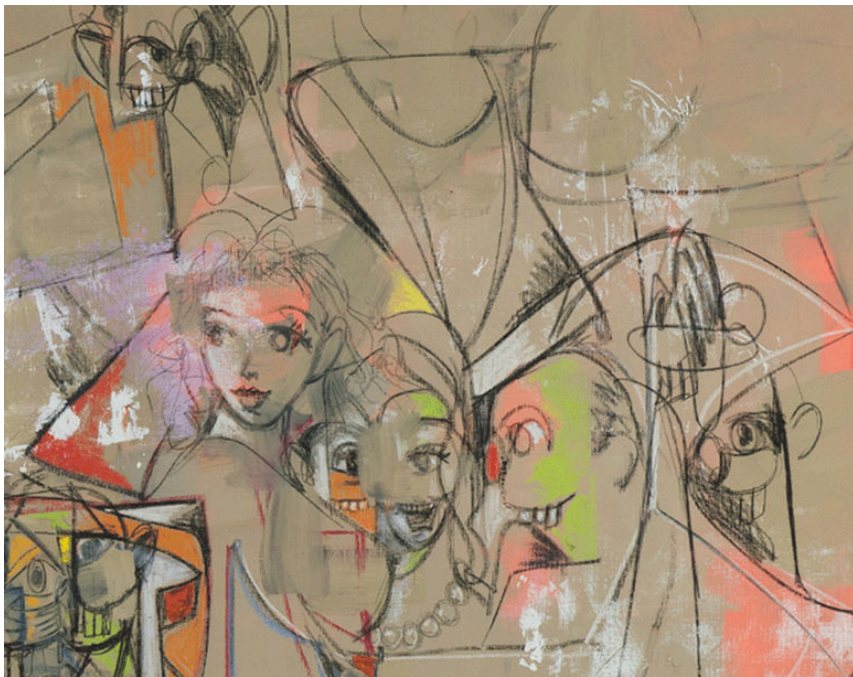
\$3,210,000 — 4,490,000

[Go to Lot](#)



Manifested on a large canvas, *Transparent Female Forms* is a masterpiece from American visual artist George Condo's seminal *Drawing Paintings* series, capturing a group of gorgeous female nudes in a delicate state of glitching between figuration and fragmentation. Marking the beginning of what would become a decade-long preoccupation with the *Drawing Paintings*, this exquisite work from 2009 synergises the traditionally disparate processes of drawing and painting, rendered in Condo's trademark style of 'psychological cubism' and 'artificial realism'.

In *Transparent Female Forms*, a kaleidoscope of neon-pastel hues drizzled across a neutral ground, are superimposed with gestural improvisations that lend the work to a sense of rhythm invoking Condo's preoccupation with music, which he studied alongside art history in university. Sensuous female figures that traverse the composition appear in and out of the picture plane: their faces adorned with elegant pearls, full lips and luscious hair are rendered with astonishing fluidity. Yet in signature Condo fashion, grotesque characters with snarled grimaces, wild-eyes, and disfigured heads loom in the background. With these juxtapositions, Condo expertly bridges the cacophonous with the sensual and the recognisable with the alien, probing at our most primitive human instincts of desire, disgust and intrigue.



Detail of the present work

© 2022 George Condo/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

*“The Drawing Paintings’ are about freedom of line and colour and blur the distinction between drawing and painting. They are about beauty and horror walking hand in hand. They are about improvisation on the human figure and its (previously it’s) consciousness.” — George Condo*

## A New Milestone

Executed one year before the artist's inclusion in the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York's 2010 Biennial, and two years before his monumental mid-career retrospective at the New Museum, *Transparent Female Forms* marked both a professional and a formal turning point for the artist. Not only indexing a transition from solo portraits to canvases with several figures, this period saw Condo employing a diverse array of techniques and aesthetics. “The canvases are noteworthy not only for their mix of acrylic, charcoal, and oil pastel, almost indistinguishably integrated, but for their fusion of styles, resulting in what might be called an expressionistic surrealism or, perhaps more pointedly, an expressionistically grotesque surrealism,” American art critic and art historian (wasn't here before) Donald Kuspit elucidated. “In comparison with the solo portraits for which Condo first became known, they suggest his painting has outgrown goofy comic-strip caricature, however sardonic it remains.”<sup>i</sup>

## Drawing According to Condo

*“I try to depict a character’s train of thoughts simultaneously—hysteria, joy, sadness, desperation. If you could see these things at once that would be like what I’m trying to make you see in my art.” —George Condo*

Condo's drawings serve as a surface on which to visualise his research rather than to depict specific people, noting that ‘They’re really not so much subjects in themselves as they are observations of the emotional content of human nature, so they’re variables in that sense. They’re sort of interchangeable.’<sup>ii</sup> Through his unique drawing and painting process Condo retains his signature style, claiming, ‘What’s possible with painting that’s not in real life is that you can see two or three sides of a personality at the same time, and you can capture what I call a psychological cubism.’<sup>iii</sup>





George Condo, *Collision Course*, 2009 Sold by Phillips, New York, 17 November 2021 for USD 2,450,000 (Premium)

© 2022 George Condo/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

According to the artist, “*Drawing Paintings*...were a reaction to the consistent hierarchy that supposedly exists between drawing and painting. What I wanted to do was combine the two of them and make drawing and painting on the same level, that there was no real difference between drawing and painting and by combining pastel, charcoal, pencil, and all these various different drawing mediums on a canvas, it would be an experience for the viewer to see that drawing and painting together can exist in one—I would say—happy continuum.”<sup>iv</sup>

## Engaging the Past

Condo studied the work of his idol, Pablo Picasso, as a young painter while living in Paris in the late 1980s and early 1990s, absorbing much of the Cubist master’s syntax—both in technique and in composition. Like Picasso, Condo sought to reinvigorate portraiture through the process of dismantling and putting back together, with the somewhat counterintuitive goal of more accurately—or fully—representing his subject. In *Transparent Female Forms*, Condo pays homage to the modernist master through a muted neutral palette which is reminiscent of his forebearer’s Analytical Cubist works. However, this monochromatic expanse is fractured by the prismatic hues that seem to tear through the canvas—the “psychological” side of Condo’s trademark “psychological cubism.” “I don’t want to simply look at Picasso on the wall or read about Picasso,” Condo mused, “I want to actually paint through him, I want to paint into Picasso.”<sup>v</sup>



Left: Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)*, 1935 Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York

© 2022 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York Right: Detail of the present work

© 2022 George Condo/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

In the present work, the composition, and the provocative poses of the female nude, as well as the Cubist fragmentation of the background at once recalls that of Picasso’s iconic *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)*, with the tonal quality of the linen canvas being reminiscent of the earthy, fleshy colour palette by Picasso. However, the rounded, idealized indication of the nudes allude to the influence

from Classical Allegory paintings.



When looking at *Transparent Female Forms*, references to a variety of art historical periods including Classicism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Expressionism come to mind. One of the conspicuous evocations is of the iconic compositional elements of Renaissance paintings, such as Sandro Botticelli's famous *Primavera*, in which the Three Graces forms a separable part of a larger ensemble scene. Condo too renders three female nudes—perhaps the most iconic motif in Western art history—on the left side of the composition, alluding to this trope in Old Master's pictures.

## Jazz It Up

*“Music is such a huge part of my life, without it I don’t know if I’d ever have painted anything.” — George Condo*

Condo approaches his creative process like a great jazz musician reinterpreting popular melodies to express their own unique sensibilities. Music, particularly jazz and classical music have been a great source of inspirations for the artist. As he describes himself, ‘Music is such a huge part of my life, without it I don’t know if I’d ever have painted anything... My favourite thing is to put on a record in the studio and to still be painting without noticing the fact that the music has stopped playing for hours and is just running through my head.’<sup>vi</sup>

The amorphic transitional states captured in the painting calls to mind the kind of vitality, transience, and fluidity associated with jazz improvisation. Condo’s smooth, freely rendered lines, complemented by the seemingly accidental applications and superimpositions of paint vividly capture in visual terms the enlivening energy delivered by jazz music. This energy is also made palpable by American visual artist Archibald Motley Jr.’s iconic depiction of a vibrant scene of a jazz nightclub in Chicago’s South Side neighbourhood in *Nightlife*. Both artists’ passionate creative impulse is delivered by complex overlapping of forms and colours, as well as dark and light contrast, with distinct style reference of their periods. Inspired by American Realist painter Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks*, Motley’s choice of colours keyed to darker shades evoke the ambience of the intimacy of the night, whilst Condo’s contemporary neon-pastel palette frames his creation specifically to our era.

<sup>i</sup> Donald Kuspit, “George Condo”, *Artforum*, vol. 48, no. 9, May 2010, pp. 252-253.

<sup>ii</sup> Ann Binlot, ‘George Condo Creates Portraits in Action,’ *T Magazine*, 7 November 2014, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Julie Belcove, ‘George Condo interview’, *Financial Times*, 21 April 2013, [online](#)

<sup>iv</sup> George Condo, quoted in “Blurring the Line Between Drawing and Painting,” *The Phillips Collection* blog, May 18, 2018, [online](#)

<sup>v</sup> George Condo, quoted in Thomas Kellein, “Interview with George Condo 2004,” *George Condo: 100 Women*, exh. cat., Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Salzburg, 2005, p. 34.

<sup>vi</sup> George Condo, quoted in ‘George Condo’s Muse Music’, *Phaidon*, 8 December 2011, [online](#)

**Provenance**

Skarstedt Gallery, New York

Private Collection

Phillips, New York, 7 December 2020, lot 26

Acquired at the above sale by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



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11 \*

### **Matthew Wong**

*Pink Wave*

signed, titled and dated "'PINK WAVE" Wong 2017 [in Chinese]' on the reverse

oil on canvas

121.9 x 152.4 cm. (47 7/8 x 60 in.)

Painted in 2017.

#### **Estimate**

HK\$16,000,000 — 26,000,000

€1,950,000 — 3,170,000

\$2,050,000 — 3,330,000

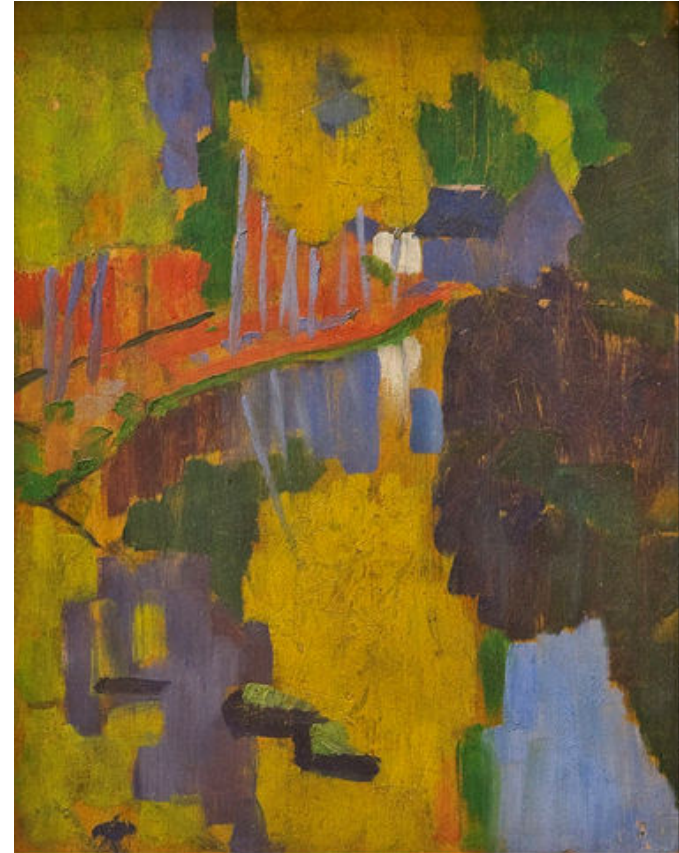
[Go to Lot](#)



*"I'd like to think of my art practice as an open-ended dialogue between myself and other painters, both living and dead." — Matthew Wong*

### Prostrating to The Past while Carving A Path to The Future

Phillips is proud to present a monumental work by the revered Canadian-Hong Kong painter, Matthew Wong. More Nabi than Impressionist, Wong shared in the mystical dispositions of the hermetic Post-Impressionist group, and his virtuosic symphonies of pigment and rejection of tonal modelling in favour of autonomous fields of colour ally his practice with that of Paul Sérusier — in particular his fabled *The Talisman*. Furthermore, he shared in the modernist conviction that the application of oil onto canvas could elicit intimate yet innovative forms of expression, producing works that are lyrical, whimsical, cerebral but most importantly, sincere.



Paul Sérusier, *Le Talisman, l'Aven au Bois d'Amour*, 1888 ©Musée d'Orsay

Wong's paintings are not quite surrealist, but rather the children of reverie; porticos into primordial worlds sourced directly from the artist's complex imagination, as he eschewed preliminary drawings or photographs from which to base his scenes, taking inspiration instead from daydreams, movies and long walks. In a 2013 interview, Wong explained this process: 'I'm just going with my gut...but often times my gut also cancels itself out and I keep painting over an image with a totally different image, and work like this can go on for months before a single surface is resolved' <sup>i</sup>. His imagined landscapes are suffused with a poetic sorcery that ignites the surfaces of his compositions, an eternal dance that permits midnight forests to burn in the darkness, stretches ivory tundra infinite, and make flora and fauna become interchangeable. His Edenic tableaux ascend to become contemporary agalma, their wondrous features coaxing quiet meditation from

the chaos of the quotidian.

As much tactile as spiritual, Wong would combine thick impasto strokes with sweeping tracks of pattern and expanses of black canvas in a harmony that demanded incongruity yet delivered harmony. This is brilliantly exhibited in *Pink Wave* where teal and navy horizontals are broken up by the sweeping burgundy coastline and the speckled beach, while the golden tributary is crowned by a floral explosion of fuchsia. The dream dialectic that charges through the painting creates modal ambiguity. We question ourselves — what exactly are we looking at here, flower or wave? Representational elements become undermined and give way to flickerings of pure abstraction; compositional anxieties that are settled only by the solitary figure sat in the corner, almost swallowed by the chromostereopsis of red and white. Such rich detail removes a singular focal point, though lends the busy arrangement a ritualistic quality, and though one could feel overwhelmed by the painting's granulated atmosphere and contrasting textures and colours, it in fact elicits a meditative tranquility, one of serenity and contemplation. Despite seeming to be set adrift amongst the undulations of pigment, the figure acts as an anchor against the abyssal depth of *Pink Wave* and allows an empathetic presence to flourish within the work.

These figures, staffage for his preternatural scenes, are a constant feature in Wong's paintings. Whether included directly or referenced by an empty chair, a trail of footprints or a plume of smoke rising from a house, they are inevitably swallowed by nature. Highlighting the deep well of influences that Wong drew from, the incorporation of a solitary figure into a landscape recalls the forms of Chinese landscape painting, which used such figures as a kind of vanitas for the impossible forces of nature. Ultimately, this allows *Pink Wave* to act as a bridge between Western and Asian artistic traditions and sensibilities.



Ma Yuan, *Poet Drinking by Moonlight*, Song Dynasty

### Love Letters to *Terra Firma*

This worship of the natural world forms a hallmark of Wong's practice as a landscapist, yet this love took on a much more profound meaning. Like the English Romantics J. M. W. Turner and John Constable, the depiction of nature was a celebration of life itself, a profusion of devotion to that which lay before the artist's eyes. Wong's alchemy of poetry into pigment likewise places him alongside Victorian poets. With the presence of the figure against the power of Poseidon in *Pink Wave*, the artist evokes the musings of Wordsworth:

*“The gentleness of heaven is on the sea: Listen! the mighty Being is awake, And doth with his eternal motion make A sound like thunder — everlastingly.” — ‘By the Sea’, 1904, William Wordsworth*

He also shared practical similarities with the painterly nemophilists – applying thick dabs of opaque hues, like Constable, or working directly from imagination, like Turner. Although Wong would share in the former’s quixotic renderings of the world, it would be with Turner where undeniable kinship is found. Both artists embraced the power of nature in their paintings and sought visceral connection rather than scientific approach, bestowing primacy on the unity of environment through harmony of form the transmutability of compositional elements.

Ultimately for these two analogous painters, the genre of landscape was simply a vehicle through which to profess their unbound love for nature, and thus, the universal state.



J. M. W. Turner, *Wreckers — Coast of Northumberland, with a Steam-Boat Assisting a Ship off Shore*, 1883-84 Courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, New Haven

## Artist Interrupted

Wong knew what it meant to be unrooted from the world; the grandson of a wealthy industrialist who fled the Cultural Revolution for Hong Kong, he would flit between his birthplace and Toronto for much of his childhood before settling in Hong Kong after studying Anthropology at the University of Michigan. Professional life would prove difficult as he bounced around white-collar jobs, unable to settle down and carve out a career in ‘Asia’s global city’. Neither local (his Cantonese was only passable) nor expat and without friends, he turned to poetry as a release and calling before taking up photography and receiving a master’s in the medium from City University HK. With insatiable creative appetite he was soon hungry a higher register of expression, and so adopted painting to fulfil such desires, the catalyst being a visit to a Julian Schnabel retrospective. A child of the modern age, he took to Facebook to further his education, engaging in lengthy debates with figures like gallery owner John Cheim and artist Paul Behnke. This fascinating journey to becoming an artist makes his works all the more absorbing, while underlining the exceptional intuition of a practice that was unbounded by traditional teachings and institutional formation.

*“I do believe that there is an inherent loneliness or melancholy in much of contemporary life, and on a broader level I feel my work speaks to this quality in addition to being a reflection of my thoughts, fascinations and impulses.” — Matthew Wong*

The wild exuberance that would come to lie at the core of his work — a certain joie de vivre — was tempered by the artist’s inner turmoil. Diagnosed with depression, Tourette’s Syndrome and autism, Wong struggled with his mental health throughout his life, a conflict that his mother has spoken of candidly: “He would just tell me, ‘you know, Mom, my mind, I’m fighting with the Devil every single day, every waking moment of my life’”<sup>ii</sup>.

Suicide was a regular thought for the artist, often referring to it with friends or online. In his first forays as an artist, he became particularly interested in Yves Klein’s famed *Leap into the Void* (1960), a photomontage of a man leaping off a building. We can see these forms juxtaposed in his 2019 painting, *See You on the Other Side*, where a figure looks out into a blank void while encircled by a phoenix.



Left: Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void*, 1960 © Yves Klein, ADAGP, Paris Right: Matthew Wong, *See You on the Other Side*, 2019

© 2022 Matthew Wong Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

In early October 2019, Wong would lose the fight he described to his mother, and take his life. He was 35 and on the cusp of immortality. Yet his story should not be diluted into the perverse caricature of *yet another* tortured artist, in the mode of Basquiat or Van Gogh. Instead his oeuvre should be celebrated for vivacity and singular creative vision; the life of a man who navigated the troubles of his inner and outer worlds through an honest dialogue between pigment and canvas.

*“The soul that sees beauty may sometimes walk alone.” — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

In Paris' Pere Lachaise Cemetery, the tombstone of the great Amedeo Modigliani reads, 'Struck down by death in the moment of glory'. On Wong's, a simple line from one of his poems is inscribed: 'I am that which is idle on a summer day. I am the mouth that does not move'. We may forever ask what would have become of this great artist, what masterpieces awaited our devotion further on in his career, but what is certain is that in *Pink Wave*, as in all his works, where he will live on — immortalised for eternity in its bewitching elegance, and powerful resonance.

## Collector's Digest

Wong's works reside in notable public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Dallas Museum of Art; Estée Lauder Collection, New York; and the Aishti Foundation, Beirut.

Continuing the momentum around the artist's acclaim, this October the Dallas Museum of Art will host Wong's first museum retrospective in the United States, *Matthew Wong: The Realm of Appearances*, on the heels of the painter's institutional debut, *Matthew Wong: Blue View*, which took place at the Art Gallery of Ontario from August 2021 to April 2022.

<sup>i</sup> Matthew Wong, quoted in interview with Studio Critical, 4 November 2013, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Monita Wong, quoted by Neil Genzlinger in 'Matthew Wong, Painter on Cusp of Fame, Dies at 35', *New York Times*, October 2019

## Provenance

Karma Gallery, New York

Private Collection

Sotheby's, New York, 8 December 2020, lot 6

Acquired at the above sale by the present owner



## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



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12 \*

**David Hockney**

*Painted Landscape (Or Red and Blue Landscape)*

acrylic on canvas  
152.2 x 151.1 cm. (59 7/8 x 59 1/2 in.)  
Painted in 1965.

**Estimate**

HK\$16,000,000 — 24,000,000

€1,940,000 — 2,910,000

\$2,050,000 — 3,080,000

[Go to Lot](#)



## Introduction

A lyrical fusion of geometric Cubism, Surrealist abstraction and still life, *Painted Landscape (Or Red and Blue Landscape)* showcases British artist David Hockney's unparalleled ability in creating an utterly intriguing composition. Containing a dazzling variety of brushstrokes – from long blended marks to short, staccato touches – Hockney represented each area of the image, from the curtains and flooring to the figure and the seascape, with a distinctly different handling of the brush, creating an overall surface effect of pulsating cross-rhythms.

Bearing witness to the artist's early travels across the Atlantic, the current work was painted right before he travelled to London for his solo exhibition with Kasmin Ltd.; the exhibition was titled *Pictures with Frames and Still Life Pictures*, and included ten paintings Hockney made in 1965.

As the artist embarked on these journeys filled with gleaming sunlight and rippling seas, he was prompted to create works inspired by the delicate play of flickering light upon the ever-changing surfaces of water:

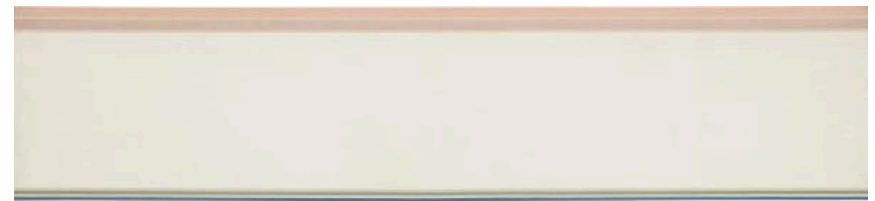
*"[...] I felt challenged by all that water and the clouds. Crossing the Atlantic by aeroplane, the view appears like a white bubbly sea, just as monotonous but a different colour. [...] At the same time I painted two theatrical pictures: A Painted Landscape (or Red and Blue Landscape) and A Theatrical Landscape." — David Hockney*

Demonstrating his deep appreciation for art historical influences, Hockney pushes the boundaries of painting through his unique vision. In the current example, hues of vermilion and cerulean blue create impressions of floating clouds and serene waters under a splendid sunset. In stark contrast, the emerald curtains on both sides are meticulously rendered, acting as the focal point of the composition as its opacity stands out from the thinly veiled washes of colour beyond the window. In the foreground, sprinkles of geometric lines evoke abstract elements from painters such as Kenneth Noland and Pablo Picasso; whilst the use of colour and subject matter recalls works by Henri Matisse.

## 1960s Abstraction

*"In the 1960s the subject had been completely played down; abstraction had begun to dominate everything, and people firmly believed that this was the way painting had to go. There was no way out, people thought. Even I felt that, and I still felt it even when I began to reject it in action; in theory I still couldn't reject it at all." — David Hockney*

During this watershed period in his career in the 60s, Hockney explored extensively with a myriad of artistic influences, absorbing elements from disparate aesthetics of Minimalism, Modernist Abstraction or even Pop art to arrive at cohesive and harmonious compositions. His contemporaries, artists Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella were both under the umbrella of Kasmin Gallery at the time, influencing his desire for exploration. The current work, created when the artist was only 28 years old, is an early example of Hockney's objective in engaging in dialogues with other artists through layers of complex imagery.



Kenneth Noland, *Dawn-Dusk*, 1968 Sold by Phillips, New York, 8 December 2020 for USD195,300 (Premium)

© The Paige Rense Noland Marital Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

As Hockney has further elaborated: 'The "artistic devices" are images and elements of my own and other artists' work and ideas of the time... All the paintings were, in a way, influenced by American abstractionists, particularly Kenneth Noland, whom I'd got to know through Kasmin who was showing him. I was trying to take note of these paintings... they're all done the same way as Kenneth Noland's, stained acrylic paint on raw cotton duck, and things like that.'<sup>i</sup> After seeing Pablo Picasso's exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1960, works such as *Still Life with Head of a Bull* and its Cubism model also became crucial for Hockney<sup>ii</sup>.



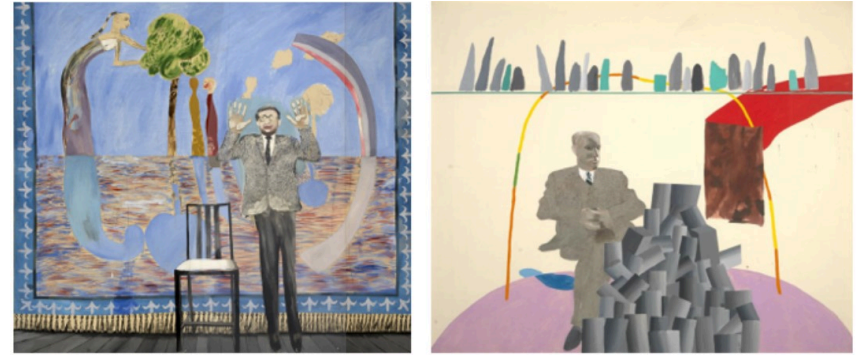
Left: The current lot Right: Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Head of a Bull*, 1958 © 2022 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

## Ever-evolving Perspectives

*“I believe that the problem of how to depict something is [...] an interesting and a permanent one; there’s no solution to it. There are a thousand and one ways you can go about it. There’s no set rule.” — David Hockney*

Painted in 1965, the current work is an early example of the artist’s ever-evolving inquisition into the conventions of perspective in painting. Highly self-aware, Hockney’s paintings are explorations of the nuanced relations between the viewer, painter and the painting itself. Throughout his career, many of Hockney’s works demonstrate this intention, highlighting the assumptions of the viewer when gazing upon a painting.

Created right around the same year as the current work, both *Play Within a Play* (1963) and *Portrait Surrounded by Artistic Devices* (1965) demonstrate Hockney’s endeavour in exploring with optical illusions and different mediums, whilst juxtaposing minimalism with figurative elements in his work.



Left: *Play Within a Play*, 1963 © David Hockney Right: *Portrait Surrounded by Artistic Devices*, 1965 Collection of the Arts Council, Southbank Centre, London © David Hockney

In *Play Within a Play* (1963), John Kasmin, Hockney’s gallerist at the time is shown pressing himself against the door of his gallery. Hockney plays with the illusions of reality and painting – while Kasmin and the backdrop are painted directly on the canvas, the points where his body touches the glass are made with paint on a ‘glass’ panel mounted on the painting.

In *Portrait Surrounded by Artistic Devices* (1965), which was created the same year as the current work, curtains also appear as a motif. The arrangement of the figure and objects are akin to a stage set, and comparable to the placement of fruits and vases in a still-life painting, which simultaneously subverts the traditional genre. A frame is also added within the painting, giving the work another layer of meaning that prompts the viewer to reconsider where reality lies.



*Self-Portrait on the Terrace*, 1984 Sold by Phillips London, 3 March 2022, for £4,862,500 (Premium) © David Hockney

Both these paintings and *Painted Landscape (Or Red and Blue Landscape)* bridges earlier works within the artist's oeuvre with later paintings such as *Self-Portrait on the Terrace* (1984), which is characterised by a more vibrant colour palette and sharp black outlines that Hockney is renowned for. Combining three disparate viewpoints into one wide angle shot, *Self-Portrait on the Terrace* depicts a strikingly Cubist approach in its composition. Hockney sharply tilted the garden scene beyond the terrace, so we are at once looking out and directly down onto the circular pool, transforming his Californian ranch-style home into a lively theatrical set.

## Intimate Theatres

*"I'd become interested in the still life or the arrangements of still life. The idea grew from the curtain motif of previous pictures. The reasoning went something like this: curtains are associated with theatricality; visually the theatre is an arrangement of still life." — David Hockney*

Defining the current work as a 'theatrical picture'<sup>iii</sup> himself, Hockney has had a long-standing preoccupation with theatre and stage-set design, which is also demonstrated in aforementioned works such as *Play Within a Play* (1963) and *Portrait Surrounded by Artistic Devices* (1965), where the use of curtains and frames evokes a stage-like arrangement and a sense of theatricality.

Similar to Hockney, artists such as Shara Hughes also employ a theatrical compositional approach, where the viewer is positioned in front of the canvas that acts as a window frame, looking on. Hughes' *Pleasure House (Lot 6)*, initially part of an installation piece that can only be viewed one person at a time, is a deeply intimate and participatory work. In *Pleasure House*, Hughes incorporates wooden partitions similar to stage props, constructing a forest of sculptural layers that culminates into a paradisiacal garden.

In the 1970s, Hockney became actively involved in [theatrical productions](#) such as *The Rake's Progress* and *The Magic Flute*, which informs the increasingly flattened perspective in his representation, traces of which can be seen in *Painted Landscape (Or Red and Blue Landscape)*. In the current work, Hockney blurs the distinction between foreground and background with overlapping ambiguous geometric forms. The canvas surrounding the curtains are left in its natural state, creating an ambiguous blank space that can be interpreted as extending indefinitely beyond the edges of the frame. Consequently, the white figure is positioned as a surrogate for the viewer in front of the painting, perpetrating the illusion of depth whilst being aware of its physical properties as paint on a canvas.

## Theatrical Works by Hockney in Public Collections



*Ordinary Picture*, 1964 Collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC © David Hockney



*The Actor*, 1964 Collection of the National Museum (of) Wales, Cardiff © David Hockney



*Cubist Boy with Colourful Tree*, 1964. Collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC © David Hockney

## Collector's Digest

Born 1937 in Yorkshire, United Kingdom, David Hockney is one of the most influential and widely recognised artists of our time. An important contributor to the pop art movement of the 1960s, Hockney is also a stage designer and photographer. Hockney travels between his residences and studios in Bridlington and London, as well as California.

In 2022, the artist has several ongoing and upcoming solo exhibitions, including *David Hockney: People, Places & Things* at the Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, 18 December 2021 - 15 September 2022; *David Hockney: INSIGHTS* at Art Forum Vienna, 10 February - 19 June 2022; *Hockney's Eye: The Art and Technology of Depiction*, at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 15 March - 29 August 2022 (which will travel to the Teylers Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands, 23 September 2022 - 29 January 2023); *David Hockney - Landscapes in Dialogue* at the Staatliche Museen Berlin, 9 April - 10 July 2022; and *David Hockney Love Life: Drawings 1963 to 1977*, The Holburne Museum, Bath, 27 May - 18 September 2022.

Upcoming exhibitions include: *Hockney - Matisse. Un paradis retrouvé*, Musée Matisse, Nice, 9 June 2022 - 18 September 2022; and *David Hockney Moving Focus*, Kunstmuseum Lucerne, 9 July - 30 October 2022.

<sup>i</sup> David Hockney, quoted in Christopher Simon Sykes, *Hockney: The Biography. Volume I. 1937-1975*, London, 2011, p. 43

<sup>ii</sup> The David Hockney Foundation, *Chronology: 1960*, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> David Hockney, quoted in Nikos Stangos, ed., *David Hockney by David Hockney*, New York, 1976, p. 102

### Provenance

Kasmin Ltd., London (acquired directly from the artist in 1965)  
 Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris  
 Private Collection, Belgium (acquired from the above in 1969)  
 Christie's, London, 21 June 2007, lot 371  
 Acquired at the above sale by the present owner

### Exhibited

London, Kasmin Ltd., *118 Show*, August - September 1965

Literature

Nikos Stangos, ed., *David Hockney by David Hockney*, New York, 1976, no. 132, pp. 102, 300 (illustrated, p. 119)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM AN IMPORTANT COLLECTOR

13

### Ed Ruscha

*Spied Upon Scene: Window*

signed, titled and dated "'SPIED UPON SCENE:  
WINDOW" Ed Ruscha 2017' on the reverse  
acrylic on museum board paper  
100.4 x 151.3 cm. (39 1/2 x 59 5/8 in.)  
Painted in 2017.

#### Estimate

HK\$3,500,000 — 5,500,000

€427,000 — 671,000

\$449,000 — 705,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“There are things that I’m constantly looking at that I feel should be elevated to greater status, almost to philosophical status or to a religious status. That’s why taking things out of context is a useful tool to an artist. It’s the concept of taking something that’s not subject matter and making it subject matter.” — Ed Ruscha*

Internationally celebrated for his uniquely witty manifestations of American archetypes, Ed Ruscha is one of the most iconic contemporary artists. In a career spanning over six decades, Ruscha has dutifully chronicled the West Coast vernacular in an almost documentarian fashion, frequently referencing consumerist iconography and Hollywood culture. Although widely considered a Pop Art pioneer, Ruscha's impressive oeuvre is one that defies simple categorisation, delving into a constellation of styles and media. However, be it slang phrases stylized in gunpowder or photographs of gas stations on desert highways, his works are all infused with a distinct California cool, evoking the casual nostalgia of 1960s and 70s Americana.

Emblematic of his distilled, deadpan aesthetic, *Spied Upon Scene - Window* comprises a view of a mountain obstructed by a window grid as if we were observing the scene from inside a house. Here, Ruscha reimagines traditional landscape painting with a theatrical twist, the window frame isolating and confining the painter’s view like a stage curtain or the fading vignette over a silent film. Ruscha demonstrates landscape and nature to be abstract ideas drawn from the depths of his memory and imagination, rather than strict, photographic replications of reality. Much like the rest of his repertoire, the present work is imbued with an air of sentimentality and strangeness, enticing the viewer to immerse themselves in his dream-like plane of visual storytelling and American zen. With an optimism unique to the post-war generation, the Los-Angeles based artist creates works that are simultaneously unexpected and familiar, oscillating between ironic and sincere.

### *Spied Upon Scene*

*“I’ve been influenced by the movies, particularly the panoramic-ness of the wide screen.” — Ed Ruscha*

As denoted by the title, the present work is part of the *Spied Upon Scene* series, which Ruscha began in 2017. Characterised by majestic mountains and idyllic ranges, the series depicts stunning natural scenery that one would find within the pages of travel books, on postcards, and in Hollywood blockbusters. Recalling the paintings of his earlier *Mountain* series, *Spied Upon Scene* also seems to be a play on the Paramount Pictures logo, a nod to the American film industry and Los Angeles culture, both of which are themes that heavily inform Ruscha’s works. In the present series, the mountains are partially restricted from view, and we observe the landscape as if looking through a window or peering through the camera lens. Describing this framing technique as a ‘halo

effect’, the artist explains: ‘When using that halo effect, of the frame or the peephole, it can be like looking into a window or out of a window. And mine, more or less, look out the window. You might say his look into the window. That makes him a peeping tom. And that makes me just a common observer of landscape.’<sup>i</sup>

As suggested by the exhibition *Ed Ruscha: Eilshemius & Me* (2019), a solo show at the Gagosian in London that featured the present work, American artist Louis Michel Eilshemius was one of Ruscha’s major inspirations behind *Spied Upon Scene*. Despite being a rather obscure painter from the turn of the century, Eilshemius’ works have been collected by many American museums and big names in both modern and contemporary art, such as Louise Bourgeois, Jeff Koons, and Peter Schuyff, among various others. Displayed alongside Ruscha’s paintings, the connection between *Spied Upon Scene* and the Eilshemius works from Ruscha’s own collection is instantly elucidated — his enrapturing portrayals of arcadian imagery are semi-obstructed by painted frames, a clear source of inspiration for the telescopic views present in Ruscha’s mountainous depictions. ‘My drive in this series was not to create a picture frame but to create an idea that you would be focusing on a trapped vision, like you’re being shown something,’ muses Ruscha.<sup>ii</sup>



Installation view of the present work (left) at Gagosian, London, *Ed Ruscha: Eilshemius & Me*, 18 June - 2 August 2019 © Ed Ruscha. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian The present work is pictured alongside *A Scene Through a Window* (2018), which recently sold for HK\$6,048,000 at auction in April 2022

## Collector's Digest

Heralded by Tate Gallery as 'one of the world's most important artists'<sup>iii</sup>, Ruscha's career has spanned over six decades. Having been represented by Gagosian since 1993, the gallery has honoured Ruscha with a phenomenal 21 solo exhibitions, the most recent ones being *Ed Ruscha: Paintings* (2020-2021) in New York and *Ed Ruscha: Dedication Stories* in Saanen.

The present work, *Spied Upon Scene - Window*, has been widely exhibited. It first appeared as part of the solo show, *Ed Ruscha: New Works on Paper* (2017), with Peder Lund in Oslo, then *Ed Ruscha - VERY Works from the UBS Art Collection* (2018-2019), a travelling exhibit that was held at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek and KODE Museum in Bergen. Finally, Gagosian in London featured the present work as part of *Ed Ruscha: Eilshemius & Me* (2019).



Installation view of the present work (left) at Oslo, Peder Lund, *Ed Ruscha: New Works on Paper*, 1 June - 9 September 2017 © Ed Ruscha. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian

Ruscha's expansive oeuvre has been shown at countless solo and group exhibitions at prestigious galleries and institutions. His works are held in numerous prominent public collections, including but not limited to The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington

D.C.; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Tate Gallery, London. In 2005, Ruscha represented the United States at the 51st Venice Biennale with *Course of Empire*, an installation of ten paintings that was later shown in 2018 at the National Gallery in London.

<sup>i</sup> Edward Ruscha, quoted in Leta Grzan, Viet-Nu Nguyen and Ed Ruscha, 'Eilshemius And Me: An Interview With Ed Ruscha', *Gagosian Quarterly*, Fall 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> 'Ed Ruscha and the Art of the Everyday', *Tate Gallery*, [online](#)

### Provenance

Gagosian, Hong Kong

Acquired from the above by the present owner

### Exhibited

Oslo, Peder Lund, *Ed Ruscha: New Works on Paper*, 1 June - 9 September 2017

Humblebaek, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; Bergen, KODE Art Museums and Composer Homes, *Ed Ruscha - VERY Works from the UBS Art Collection*, 17 May - 16 December 2018, p. 109 (illustrated)

London, Gagosian, *Ed Ruscha: Eilshemius & Me*, 18 June - 2 August 2019, pp. 17, 47-49 (illustrated)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



14 ж

### Huang Yuxing

*Pearl Shore*

signed and dated 'HUANG Yuxing 18'

acrylic on canvas

200 x 150 cm. (78 3/4 x 59 in.)

Painted in 2018.

#### Estimate

HK\$1,500,000 — 2,500,000

€183,000 — 305,000

\$192,000 — 321,000

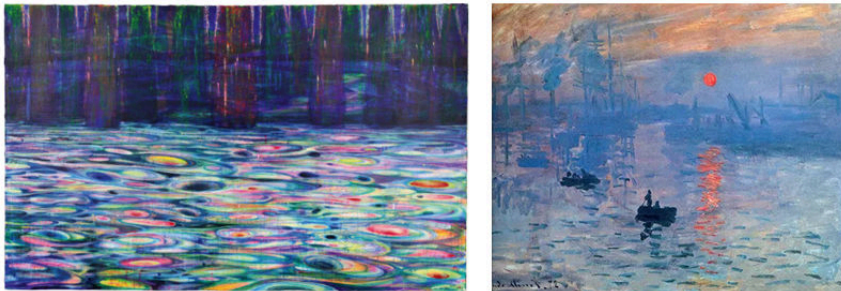
[Go to Lot](#)



Recognised for his unique and fantastical painting style, Beijing native Huang Yuxing is one of the most acclaimed Chinese painters within the landscape of Chinese Contemporary Art. By exploring his own imagination and being true to his creative voice within, Huang established his unique and recognisable painterly aesthetic. Light, colour, movement, and depth are central to his visual expression. Huang's unrestrained neon palette speaks to the vivacious, fast-paced nature of the contemporary era; the sensory impact of fluorescence colours is at once powerful and mesmerising. Through the lens of the individual in his constantly reinvented visual narrations, Huang keeps bringing about his investigations and discussions of universal themes concerning humanity.

*“As an artist, as an individual, I discuss the problems shared by human beings. From my own individual perspective, the problems I discuss are those that our ancestors and future generations will encounter as well. So, it's not something that can be narrative particularly thorough. Even if you think you've thought it through, people will continue to discuss these issues a hundred years from now. Because this is a proposition that will trouble the individual human life and the flesh.” — Huang Yuxing*

### Transcending the Boundaries of Time and Space



Left: Huang Yuxing, *River*, 2013 Sold by Phillips, Hong Kong, 9 July 2020 for HK\$1,375,000 (Premium)  
Right: Claude Monet, *Impression, soleil levant (Impression, Sunrise)*, 1872 Collection of the Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris

The flamboyant and uplifting *Pearl Shore* finds its place amongst Huang Yuxing's signature *River* series, evoking masterpieces by Impressionist artists such as Claude Monet's *Impression, Sunrise* with a similar compositional division and textured depictions of flowing waters. Featuring a signature symbol in Huang's oeuvre — water, this series reflects on the artist's musings about time, as he considers water to be a visual representation of time. In this painting, tiny spiky islands

of deep violet and rock-like formations rise from the florescent orange, pink and violet water in the fore and middle grounds. Also emerging from this glowing fluid are the illuminated neon bubbles afloat. Light permeates the pictorial plane — what bubble up on the surface adds to the mystery of the unseen world underneath. This magical, life-giving liquid radiates warmth and energy, calling to mind how molten lava brings about new landscape through its exceptional heat and steady movement.



Underwater Volcanic Eruption in the Tonga Islands, South Pacific, January 2022

In Huang's signature style, this work is loaded with concentrated visual information. Upon first glance, one is greeted by the onslaught of multitude of colours, forms, along with their movements and illusional textures. The treatments of the upper and lower half of the painting are noticeably different: the depth conveyed by the horizontally moving water and the scattered substances amidst, comes to a sudden end at the midline, where it meets a flat, wallpaper-looking background. This division introduces a subtle shift in perspective in terms of space and direction: from three dimensional to two dimensional, and from horizontal to vertical.

*“Fluorescent colour is the colour of our generation. There is no such colour system in traditional easel paintings. It is special, like a kind of vigorous vitality being compressed or unleashed. Since this was the colour and the feeling that I needed, I*

*was able to find it.” — Huang Yuxing*

Compositionally, the vertical alignment of this work is very rare within Huang’s oeuvre. The multidimensional quality in his work that is normally achieved by overlapping of space — or space within space, is rendered here through a vertical balance of the upper and lower spaces in the composition. The tie-dye patterns in the background seem to be a wave washing out from the midline upwards, echoing that of the growing islands while being perpendicular to the movement of water in the front. Shades of blue, green, teal, and pink that infuse the background of the pictorial plane, recall the drip glaze effect found on Tang dynasty *Sancai* wares, and thus allow the representation to transcend the boundary of time.



Tang Dynasty *Sancai*-glazed Amphora, Late 7th Century Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

## The Flow of Water and Paint

Not only a symbol in Huang’s artistic repertoire, but water is also an indispensable creative mediator for his applications and manoeuvring of paint. The artist’s potent use of colour is complimented by his choice of working with transparent acrylic paint, creating more breathable space on the pictorial surface. Looking closely at *Pearl Shore*, one will notice that semi-transparency of the deep violet islands reveals the layer of water patterns underneath. The method of layering has been in Huang’s creative repertoire since his monochrome painting phase. The choice of acrylic, according to the artist, is in keeping with his process of layering different-coloured paints. In addition, due to its high sensitivity to water, acrylic allows him to realise the process of breaking and reconstructing a painting by the interference of water.<sup>i</sup>

When the viewer finally breaks through the fascinating retinal stimuli from the vibrant colour palette, Huang’s focus and interest that lie in the discussion of life itself surface to the fore. His fascination with organic life forms and phenomenon on this planet, such as water, mineral, bubble, sunrise and sunset, become the vehicle of transporting audience into his multidimensional and otherworldly realms, just to journey back to the deep diving of the individual and his experience in life and in the world.

## Collector’s Digest

Born in 1975 in Beijing, Huang Yuxing graduated from the Department of Mural Painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2000. He was the first guest artist at the Yuz Museum Project Room in 2015 and has been extensively holding solo exhibitions since. Most recently, this includes *Heaps of Brocade and Ash* at Almine Rech in Brussels (3 June – 31 July 2021), *Essence of Landscape* at König London (29 August – 18 September 2019), and *Huang Yuxing – The Lake of Barking Infants* at Whitestone Gallery in Tokyo (9 March – 7 April 2019).

Huang was recently invited to collaborate with Louis Vuitton for their 2021 ‘Artycapucines’ collection, joining the likes of Urs Fischer, Tschabalala Self, Liu Wei, Henry Taylor, Jonas Wood, and Alex Israel – who have all too, introduced their innovative aesthetic visions to the brand.

<sup>i</sup> Huang Yuxing, ‘Huang Yuxing: the fear of “And Ne Forthetodon Ná”’, *CoBo Social*, 11 October 2016, online

Provenance

Private Collection, Asia

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM A DISTINGUISHED EUROPEAN  
COLLECTION

16

### Nicolas Party

*Two Portraits*

signed and dated 'Nicolas Party 2016' on the reverse  
pastel on linen

140 x 140.3 cm. (55 1/8 x 55 1/4 in.)

Executed in 2016.

#### Estimate

HK\$6,000,000 — 8,000,000

€731,000 — 974,000

\$769,000 — 1,030,000

[Go to Lot](#)



Fantastical, magnetic and lusciously vibrant, Swiss artist Nicolas Party's captivating paintings are bricolages of art history. Engaging in dialogues with disparate epochs of art history, Party adapts pictorial elements from artists such as Felix Vallotton, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Rosabla Carriera, Giorgio Morandi, Milton Avery, and Georgia O'keeffe, culminating into his own idiom and formal vocabulary.

*"It's a nice idea that your painting could somehow have a dialogue with another one. Vallotton and I can't have a conversation. But if you hang a Vallotton painting in the same room as one of my paintings, the two works will speak to each other. I don't know if they will get along, that's up to them."* — Nicolas Party

Devoting himself entirely to traditional painting genres, Party's biomorphic still lifes, uncanny landscapes and androgynous portraits showcase his painterly precision and astounding technique. Reducing these classical subjects to their essence, Party creates works that are a refreshing spin on traditional genres with a distinct visual language that focus on the interrogation of the medium, colour, form, and composition.

### *Two Portraits*

*"Pastel scatters with the lightest breath, like dust from a butterfly's wing."* — Théophile Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France, 1859*

In true celebration of pastel's unique tactile visual quality, Party utilises intensely saturated, scintillating bright shades of citrus hues in *Two Portraits*, amplifying the physical presence of the two figures. The intense opacity of the colours contrasts the impermanence and fragility of soft pastel – a material that is so delicate and ephemeral, it could be blown away like coloured dust in the wind.



Detail for the present lot

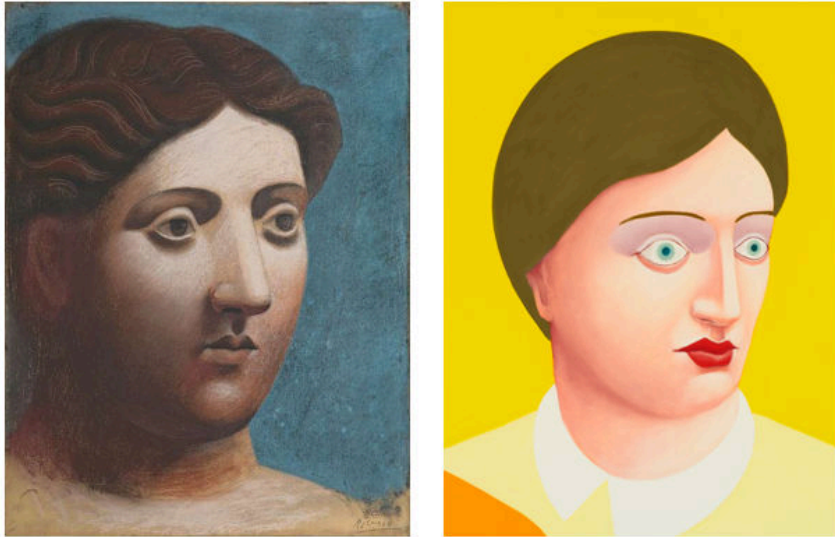
Devoid of extraneous details, Party's protagonists are androgynous, anonymous and timeless, varying only slightly in physiognomy. Embodying a unique sense of duality and ambivalence, these characters evoke tension between familiarity and strangeness. In *Two Portraits*, both protagonists wear crimson lipstick and lilac eyeshadow in classic Party fashion; the left figure gazes directly at the viewer, clad in a shade of rich orange, in contrast to the right figure in pale yellow, who glances to the side. Everything from their almost pencilled in, thinly lined eyebrows to their sharp cupid's bow and luminously highlighted cheeks heightens the ambiguity of their gender.

*"It felt very natural to depict those faces with make-up, making them look androgynous, I didn't know it at the time, but pastels have a distinctive relationship to make-up."* — Nicolas Party

### Perfect in Pastel

Central to Party's practice is his distinct focus on the pastel medium. One of the few artists currently using it almost exclusively as their primary creative material, Party first became enamoured with pastel in 2013, after being struck by Picasso's 1921 work, *Tête de femme* at an exhibition: 'My first reaction was that I wanted to do the same portrait, so I bought the postcard and the next day I went to the art store and bought a pastel set and some paper. I started to draw portraits using pastel for the first time, regularly looking at the Picasso Portrait for inspiration.'<sup>1</sup>





Left: Pablo Picasso, *Tête de femme*, 1921 Collection of Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel © 2022 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York Right: Detail of the present lot

A clear homage to Picasso's original piece, the right figure from the present work shares unmistakable characteristics with the former example – from each character's facial structure, to their almond shaped eyes, sharp contours, to even the faint highlight on the tip of their chins. Fascinated by Picasso's enigmatic depiction of the human face, Party plays with the innate powder-like quality of the pastel medium. Working directly with his hands, the creative process is highly sensual and immediate. Party labours arduously over the painterly surface with his fingertips to reveal an immaculately rendered canvas that glows with a velveteen sheen that is unique to the material.

*"I fell in love with the fact that pastel is super fragile. There's a poetic edge to an artwork that can so easily become nothing more than 'dust in the air'."* — Nicolas Party

## Other Dynamic Duos

A highly ubiquitous motif throughout art history, many artists have presented their own interpretation on the double portrait. This particular compositional approach conveys disparate

relationships between the protagonists, hinting towards shared intimacies or detachment, reinforced by the touch of a gently resting hand on another, or cold, estranged expressions.



Lot 45, Emmanuel Taku, *Brothers in Red*, 2020 Phillips, Hong Kong Evening Sale, 22 June 2022  
Estimate HKD300,000 - 500,000



Lot 25, Zhang Xiaogang, *Bloodline Series - Big Family*, 2006 Phillips, Hong Kong Evening Sale, 22 June  
2022 Estimate HKD7,500,000 - 10,000,000



Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930 Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, Friends of American Art  
Collection



Alice Neel, *Geoffrey Hendricks and Brian*, 1978 Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art ©  
The Estate of Alice Neel



Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939 Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Mexico © 2022 Banco de  
México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

## Magritte | Party

*“Art is basically embracing that feeling and energy of needing to raise questions but only capturing that, and trying to create objects that can't be resolved. Magritte is a master at that: he creates this very clear enigma, but there are no answers. That to me is a successful artwork.” — Nicolas Party*

Evoking the formal vernacular of René Magritte, Nicolas Party’s portraits encapsulates the same enigmatic, uncanny quality as seen in the works by the Belgian Surrealist master. Playing with optical illusions, Magritte’s *The Secret Double* depicts a male bust in a puzzling double visual. Floating atop a hazy sea horizon, Magritte’s protagonist is similarly androgynous as the figures in Party’s portraits, sharing the same reddened lips and stark contrast shading that imbues his works with a graphical quality.

Engendering a seductive tension and disquieting ambience, *The Secret Double* draws the viewer in with an unexpected juxtaposition of expectation of where the figure’s face should lie, unsettling as he creates a sense of confusion through the use of non sequiturs.



René Magritte, *The Secret Double (Le Double secret)*, 1927 © 2022 C. Herscovici / Artists Rights Society

(ARS), New York

Sharing a similar passion in exploring the concept of representation in his portraits, Nicolas Party’s *Two Portraits* emits an equally Surrealist intrigue, echoing Magritte’s means of visual expression. Juxtaposing their radiantly smooth skin, the eyes of both protagonists in *Two Portraits* are uncannily flat, as if painted on the surface of a mask, allowing the work to oscillate between an optical illusion and eerie deception. However, rather than focusing on the presentation of a particular subject or concept, Party is more concerned with the relationship between the materiality of pastel and paper, grounding his practice in the possibility of the medium itself.

## Collector’s Digest

Born in 1980 in Lausanne, Switzerland, Nicolas Party lives and works in New York. Beginning first as a graffiti artist, Party is famed for his major mural commissions for the Dallas Museum of Art and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, which influences his approach in the installation and presentation of his works, resulting in dazzlingly immersive and site specific exhibitions, including the artist’s latest solo show, *L’heure mauve (Mauve Twilight)*, which opened 12 February at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and will last until 16 October, 2022. The exhibition brings together watercolours, pastels and sculptures by Party, including around 20 previously unexhibited works.

The artist’s latest mural protect, *Draw the Curtain* (2021), was unveiled at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C., covering the entire facade of the museum’s renowned cylindrical building. Other highly immersive and critically acclaimed solo museum exhibitions include *Boilly*, Le Consortium Museum, Dijon (2021-2022); *Rovine*, MASI Lugano (2021); *Pastel*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2019); *Arches*, M WOODS, Beijing (2018-2019); and *Magritte Parti*, Magritte Museum, Brussels (2018), amongst others.

Party’s work is represented in over 30 public collections worldwide, including K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Long Museum, Shanghai; Fondazione Fiera Milano, Milan; M WOODS, Beijing; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; and the Rubell Family Collection, Miami.

<sup>i</sup> Nicolas Party, quoted in ‘Stéphane Aquin in conversation with Nicolas Party’, Michele Robecchi, ed., *Nicholas Party*, London, 2021, p.40

**Provenance**

Xavier Hufkens, Brussels

Private Collection, Hong Kong

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



17

### George Condo

*The Strangers*

signed and dated 'Condo 09' on the reverse

oil on linen

122 x 112 cm. (48 x 44 1/8 in.)

Painted in 2009.

#### Estimate

HK\$5,000,000 — 6,500,000

€609,000 — 791,000

\$641,000 — 833,000

[Go to Lot](#)



## Introduction

*“It’s what I call artificial realism. That’s what I do. I try to depict a character’s train of thoughts simultaneously – hysteria, joy, sadness, desperation. If you could see these things at once that would be like what I’m trying to make you see in my art.” — George Condo*

Featuring his signature carnivalesque caricatures with their distinctive bulging eyes and compressed and contorted faces, George Condo’s clownishly grotesque characters stare maniacally and confrontationally from his canvases at the viewer, simultaneously comical and unsettling. Described by the artist to be composites of various psychological states, these macabre portraits reflect the abject and the absurd, exploring ideas of madness and metamorphosis by compacting a plethora of emotions within a single expression. This is the aesthetic of ‘artificial realism’ — a term coined by Condo to describe his own painterly style, defined as ‘the realistic representation of that which is artificial’<sup>1</sup>.

Despite drawing upon a vast array of art-historical sources, incorporating everything from American graffiti to Old Master portraiture into his practice, Condo manages to craft a revolutionary, inventive oeuvre that is uniquely his own. *The Strangers* was executed in 2009 and is emblematic of his outlandish, whimsical style, and was featured in a solo exhibition, *Family Portraits*, with Sprüth Magers, Berlin in 2010.

Reflecting the title of the exhibition, the current work depicts the artist, his wife, and their two daughters — though they are barely identifiable, having been mutated beyond recognition. This family portrait is an undeniably unorthodox one; reimagining the realist genre with a bizarre, surreal twist. *The Strangers* demonstrates Condo’s virtuosity in absorbing the genius of the great masters before him, and his success in ventriloquizing and reworking historical painting styles, translating them into his own pictorial vocabulary.

## Eclectic Inspirations

*“What’s possible with painting that’s not in real life is you can see two or three sides of a personality at the same time, and you can capture what I call a Psychological Cubism.” — George Condo*

After a brief stint at Andy Warhol’s Factory in the early 1980s, a young Condo emerged onto the budding East Village art scene, soon finding himself a fixture in New York City’s artistic landscape. Amidst a creative climate that was undergoing rapid reshaping by New Wave music and graffiti

culture, it came as no surprise that Condo, alongside friends and fellow artists Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, adopted pop art and graffiti aesthetics into their personal styles. Condo’s works are a hybridization of contemporary techniques and art historical influences, fusing a constellation of inspirations gleaned from the innumerable subject matters he interacted with while living and working in both America and Europe.



Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of a woman*, 1940 © 2022 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

In the breadth of art historical canon, Condo finds his greatest inspiration in Pablo Picasso, whose work prompted Condo to inaugurate the concept of ‘psychological cubism’. Discussing the impact

Picasso has had on his art, Condo explains: 'I'm exaggerating and personifying some of their extreme emotional vicissitudes [...] And I love the freedom to capture that in painting, where it's like, these are the limits of hysteria, these are the limits of humanity, this is how far people really take it, and how far I see them take it. And I guess that was the other thing I got from Picasso. It's the idea of Cubism —but rather than seeing and depicting this coffee cup, say, from four different angles simultaneously, I'm seeing a personality from multiple angles at once. Instead of space being my subject, I'm painting all of someone's emotional potentialities at once, and that's what I'd call Psychological Cubism.'<sup>ii</sup> Indeed, Condo's work recalls the Surrealist and Cubist elements of Picasso's oeuvre and the uncanny and contemplative facial expressions in his portraits.



Detail of the present work

The painterly style of Francisco Goya, a constant source of inspiration for Condo, is evident in the present work. Condo channels the Spanish master's dark portraits with his empty, ambiguous backgrounds, drawing focus to his subjects using lighting of varying saturation in a method evocative of Goya's Chiaroscuro techniques. Known for his ability to capture complex feelings and personalities within a single facial expression, Goya's sitters are sensitively and realistically rendered — Condo's subjects are the same, their visages an amalgamation of emotions that are often open to the viewer's interpretation. Mimicking the macabre sensibilities of Goya's works, *The Strangers* delves into darker narratives, hinting toward a tale of conflict and a split family.



Francisco Goya, *Charles IV of Spain and His Family*, 1800-1801 Collection of Museo del Prado, Madrid

An erudite artist, Condo proves himself to be a master puppeteer of perception and emotion. In his prodigious manipulation of the human psyche, he plunges viewers into a curiously complex narrative, shocking his audience in a fashion that is as abrasive as it is entertaining.

*"I like people to walk into one of my exhibitions and say 'What happened?'" —  
George Condo*



## In Conversation



Detail of Francisco Goya, *A Pilgrimage to San Isidro (from The Black Paintings)*, c. 1819-1823 Collection of Museo del Prado, Madrid

In 2017, Christopher Lyon interviewed George Condo about the inspirations behind his works, particularly in relations to Francisco Goya.

**Christopher Lyon:** *And you were mentioning when we were talking during a break earlier about, you know, this limb from Velasquez and that one from Tiepolo, and so on. I mean, when you think of memory, are you thinking of your memory of encounters with, you know, actual works that —*

**George Condo:** I'm thinking of how do you—what language in painting you use to describe the memory of just somebody riding by on a bicycle screaming on their cellphone, and that expression on their face reminding me of something from one of those black Goya paintings.

CL: *Got it.*

GC: You know?

CL: *Okay.*

GC: The distortion and the sort of madness in —

CL: *So, you'll see something in your contemporary world that will, like —*

GC: Spark a —

CL: *— spark a connection with —*

GC: *— a need to find the way to, you know, materialize that thing.*

CL: *Got it. Got it. Okay. Okay.*

Click [here](#) to read the complete interview.

## Collector's Digest

Born in New Hampshire in 1957, Condo is one of the most celebrated artists today. He studied Art History and Music Theory at the University of Massachusetts, and he received his first major award in 1999— the Academy Award in Art from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, followed by further accolades including the Francis J. Greenberger Award in 2005.

Over the years, Condo has been honoured in a myriad of shows and retrospectives, many of which have been toured internationally. In 2021, Condo's largest Asian solo exhibition, *George Condo: The Picture Gallery*, was held at the Long Museum, Shanghai. This exhibition brought together more than 200 paintings, sculptures and drawings made throughout his career. Condo's work was also included in the 58th Venice Biennale, *May You Live In Interesting Times* in 2019 — six years after he first participated in the Biennale in 2013.

Condo's work has been extensively collected by prestigious institutions in New York City, including The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. His work can also be found in renowned public collections internationally, such as Tate Modern, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo; Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona; The Broad Collection, Los Angeles; and The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, amongst numerous others.

<sup>i</sup> George Condo, quoted in Emily Nathan, 'George Condo Sees Faces and Screaming Heads Everywhere', *Artnet*, 14 October 2015, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

## Provenance

Sprüth Magers, Berlin

Private Collection

Simon Lee Gallery, London

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Berlin, Sprüth Magers, *Family Portraits*, 30 January - 1 April 2010

**Literature**

Roberto Bolaño, 'The Writer is Gravely Ill', *Harper's Magazine*, August 2010, p. 18 (illustrated)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



18 ♦

### Ernie Barnes

#### *Life After Sundown*

signed 'ERNIE BARNES' lower right  
acrylic on canvas  
90.5 x 120.5 cm. (35 5/8 x 47 1/2 in.)  
Painted in 1979.

#### Estimate

HK\$1,500,000 — 2,500,000

€181,000 — 301,000

\$192,000 — 321,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*"I hate to think had I not played sports what my work would look like." — Ernie Barnes*

### Ernie Barnes: Trading Cleats for Canvases

Executed in the 1970s, *Life After Sundown* is an arresting example of Ernie Barnes' expressive canvases. Narrating a scene full of life and movement, this work embodies the artist's exploration of the Black identity within 20<sup>th</sup> Century Americana, both as what it means to be an artist of colour and also as subject matter within the artistic canon.

A widely celebrated painter of his time, Barnes' journey to becoming an artist was remarkable as he was first renowned for being a former NFL player. Having been injured from a sport which defined his life, he looked inward and focused his passion on what was thought to be a forgotten vocation. His love for drawing was thus transformed into a full painterly practice. He once described, 'one day on the playing field, I looked up and the sun was breaking through the clouds, hitting the un-muddied areas on the uniforms, and I said, 'That's beautiful!' I knew then that it was all over being a player. I was more interested in art. So I traded my cleats for canvas, my bruises for brushes, and put all the violence and power I'd felt on the field into my paintings.'<sup>1</sup> Little did he know that this would be the start of an exploration into something bigger than himself. As a painter of the minority, he became an advocate for racial justice within an unbalanced socio-political climate.

### Fellow Champions of the Black Body



Jacob Lawrence, *The Brown Angel*, 1959 Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston © Museum of Fine Arts, Houston / museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Foundation, with additional funds provided by the African American Art Advisory Association and ExxonMobil / Bridgeman Images, Artwork: © 2022 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Comparable to African American painter, Jacob Lawrence, Barnes was intentional in his portrayal of the Black body. Growing up, he only attended racially segregated schools and relied on athletic scholarships to secure his education. At North Carolina College, he majored in art and discovered that there was little to no representation of African Americans within contemporary context

amongst the college's collection. Wanting to change this, he painted with an intensity to champion equality within visual culture. In the present work, *Life After Sundown* is painted with an overwhelming wash of neutral tones. Similar to Lawrence's preferred use of black and browns, sections of the canvas are highlighted through isolated use of brighter colours. Although more rounded in shape and form, figures in Barnes' works are reflective of Lawrence's style in fluidity, rhythm and social activity. Both *The Brown Angel* and *Life After Sundown* manifest a community and an analogous narrative.



Charles Wilbert White, *Card Players*, 1939 Collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri © Saint Louis Art Museum / Gift of the Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration / Bridgeman Images, Artwork: © Charles W. White Archives

*Life After Sundown* is also evocative of African American painter, Charles White's style. White was preoccupied with creating 'images of dignity.' He once expressed, 'I am interested in the social, even the propagandistic angle of painting that will say what I have to say. Paint is the only weapon I have with which to fight what I resent.'<sup>ii</sup> In both works, figures congregate around the pool table.

Whereas Barnes' figures are each engrossed in their own moment, whether enjoying the last drop of the bottle, mid-motion in strike or lifting a fist in expression, the players in White's scene is focused on the cards at hand. However, in both paintings, the dim light overcasting the tables create drama and a sense of dynamism.

### Closed Eyes and Lithe Limbs

*"I began to see, observe, how blind we are to one another's humanity. Blinded by a lot of things that have, perhaps, initiated feelings in that light. We don't see into the depths of our interconnection. The gifts, the strength and potential within other human beings. We stop at colour quite often."* — Ernie Barnes

A distinct and consistent feature of Barnes' figures are their closed eyes. The artist recounted of a time where he showed his works to fellow African Americans to gauge a reaction. Receiving negativity, he suddenly realised the difficulty in overcoming racial prejudice and how resistance was deeply rooted in the community.<sup>iii</sup> By painting their eyes closed, Barnes highlights the importance of togetherness without expectation. Another physical aspect to his characters is the movement borrowed from athletes. Drawing inspiration from his days as a football player, he was well aware of how expressive the body can be through elongated and lithe limbs. By staying true to his background as an athlete and using his honed skills as a painter, Barnes was able to tell stories of the Black community and translate them into everyday scenes as deserving unequivocal placement in the history of art.

### Collector's Digest

There is a revival of interest in Ernie Barnes's body of work as *The Sugar Shack* (1976) achieved unparalleled results for the artist at auction in New York's Spring Season.

As the darling of the moment, Barnes is being recognised as an immensely popular figure in the worlds of sport and art, operating outside the normal parameters for an artist to become an instantly recognizable figure in the American public towards the end of the century – providing the artwork for Marvin Gaye and being the official painter of the 1984 Olympics, and thus paving the way for artists like Daniel Arsham and Takashi Murakami to fuse seemingly divergent industries, and blur the lines between artist, creator and influencer.

*Life After Sundown* holds incredible provenance as it has been enjoyed and protected by the same family for decades since its conception and execution. The current owner's grandfather had initially met Barnes in Los Angeles whilst working as a screenwriter in the film industry and had

**Ernie Barnes**

---

shared a circle of common friends. As a token of friendship, the artist had gifted this painting to the aforementioned screenwriter.

Barnes' most recent solo show was with Andrew Kreps Gallery which exhibited from 24 September – 30 October, 2021. Barnes is represented by Andrew Kreps, New York and Ortuzar Projects, New York.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QBJ726-bwl&t=41>

Ernie Barnes: An American Story

<sup>i</sup> David G. Oblender, *Contemporary Black Biography*, Boston, 2000, p. 6

<sup>ii</sup> Jeffrey Elliot and Charles White, 'Charles White: Portrait of an Artist,' *Negro History Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 41, Chicago, 1956

<sup>iii</sup> *Ernie Barnes*, [online](#)

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**Provenance**

Private Collection, Italy (gifted by the artist)

Thence by descent to the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



19

### Javier Calleja

1971

signed, titled and dated "'1971" 2017 Javier Calleja' on the reverse

acrylic on canvas

100.1 x 80 cm. (39 3/8 x 31 1/2 in.)

Painted in 2017.

#### Estimate

HK\$3,500,000 — 5,500,000

€428,000 — 673,000

\$449,000 — 705,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*“Sometimes, you are painting, and your mind, your emotions, are all in the painting. This is the moment when you can find something new. It’s an emotional moment.” — Javier Calleja*

Hailing from Málaga, Spain, Javier Calleja captivates the hearts and souls of millions across the globe with his adorable, wide-eyed characters. Round, rosy cheeks and saccharine-sweet stares populate the artist’s celebrated oeuvre, a tribute to childhood wonderment that evokes nostalgia for simpler days. Since the beginning of his career in the 1990s, Calleja has been constantly developing and refining his artistic signature. In 2016, his current trademark came to life, characterised by a cast of roly-poly children with exaggerated eyes, manifested in velvety pastel shades. Playing into the nostalgic *Kawaii* aesthetic pioneered in the art world by celebrity artists like Yoshitomo Nara and Takashi Murakami, it comes as no surprise that Calleja’s repertoire has amassed an enormous following, garnering particular attention in the Asian market.

The present work, *1971*, is meant to be a self-portrait, doubling as a tongue-in-cheek parody of a mugshot, and the title is a nod to Calleja’s year of birth. A boy with a head of fluffy chocolate hair stands against a sandy wash, dressed in a numbered, orange shirt reminiscent of a prison jumpsuit. Yet a ruby blush adorns his cherubic cheeks, and his shiny, emerald eyes blink at us earnestly — the boy more of an endearing toddler than a criminal as the portrait suggests. The faint, dark rings under his eyes convey tiredness at best, ineffective in dissuading the viewers of his harmless, delightful nature. Executed in 2017, *1971* is an early and captivating example of Calleja’s visual aesthetic.



Installation view of the current work at *Hi*, 13 May – 10 June 2017, AISHONANZUKA, Hong Kong. Courtesy AISHONANZUKA.

## Windows to the Soul

*“I think there is something really important in their eyes, and it’s with only two drops, white colour, and the shadows. So you get the sensation of real.” — Javier Calleja*

Calleja boys are instantly recognisable for their watery, marble-like eyes that have transfixed and enamoured the art world since their debut in 2017. Their pooling gazes have become synonymous with Calleja’s artistic trademark, enhanced in contrast by the simpler elements that frame them. Meant to evoke the delicate sensation that merges sadness and relief, Calleja was compelled to visualize the tender moment when a child stops crying, about to break into a smile once again. Regarding this source of inspiration, the artist muses: ‘That is the moment I paint — when experiencing something bad and you just had a breakthrough. I think when a child is crying and then stops to cry — they’re a hero. Because he or she decided to overcome the pain.’<sup>i</sup>

## A Delightful Optimism

A former apprentice of Yoshitomo Nara, Calleja’s work is frequently compared to that of the renowned Japanese artist. Indeed, both share conceptual and aesthetic similarities, but Calleja’s oeuvre distinguishes itself with its playful optimism and endearing innocence. Both Nara and Calleja explore themes of childhood in their work, however, Nara is known for imbuing his creations with pervading darkness and cynicism. His protagonists are often depicted as angry or injured, regarding the viewers with rude sneers and disdainful, half-lidded stares unbecoming of an adorable little girl. Nara’s children are solitary and vulnerable in a universe that simmers with undercurrents of danger and violence — a sinister expression of the artist’s lonely childhood.

In contrast, Calleja chooses simplicity over complexity, celebrating the more light-hearted aspect of growing up. His macrocephalic children don pleasant smiles and button noses, cheeks tinted with a rosy, velvety blush. Most striking of all are their wide eyes, glistening with joy and curiosity, yet to be burdened with the stress and preoccupations of the adult world. Though the artist’s body of work has an undeniable satirical edge to it, his pieces come across as cheeky and comical, diverging from the snarky, cynical humour that permeates his mentor’s oeuvre.

Another connection can be made to contemporary Spanish artists such as Edgar Plans and Rafa Macarrón, whose works employ similar elements of expression to Calleja. These artists are highly



influenced by nostalgic reveries and childhood reminiscences, evoking sentimentality with a cast of childlike figures and cartoonish creatures. Their comparable approaches and shared aesthetic illustrate a current trend of the *Spanish New Wave* in the contemporary art scene.



Lot 48, Edgar Plans, *Night Creatures*, 2020 (Detail) Phillips Hong Kong Evening Sale, 22 June 2022  
Estimate HKD1,200,000 - 1,800,000

In our time of chaos, unrest, and uncertainty, Calleja's aesthetic is a breath of fresh air, spreading much-needed warmth and delight through his beloved big-eyed children, brimming with youthful exuberance and infectious positivity. Refusing to overcomplicate and overanalyse his artistic themes, the artist believes in the values of simplicity and childlike naivety that his works carry, stating: 'Every character is like my son. At the end of my life, I might have thousands of children.'

<sup>ii</sup> Indeed, Calleja's affection towards his protagonists evidently translates onto his canvases, reminding viewers of the more innocent motivators behind the making of art: adoration and posterity.

## Collector's Digest

One of the biggest names in contemporary art today, Calleja's works have been widely exhibited at numerous prestigious galleries and institutions worldwide, including solo exhibitions at Almine

Rech in Shanghai (2021), Bill Brady in Miami (2020), and AISHONANZUKA in Hong Kong (2019, 2017), among many others. 2022 sees an incredible line-up for the artist, most notable being the upcoming solo shows with [Almine Rech in Paris](#) (2 June - 25 June 2022), PARCO Museum in Tokyo (30 June - 18 July 2022), and with [Almine Rech in Shanghai](#) (8 July - 6 August 2022).

Calleja set his personal auction record with Phillips Hong Kong in 2021 when his multi-part installation, *30 Works: Untitled* sold for HK\$12,108,000. It is an early example of the artist's signature aesthetic, having been created in 2017—the year he first debuted his beloved big-eyed children at AISHONANZUKA in Hong Kong. Collectors have been clamouring for Calleja's work ever since, and demand, particularly in Asia, is at an all-time high as his popularity continues to skyrocket.



Javier Calleja, *30 Works: Untitled*, 2017 Sold by Phillips Hong Kong, 30 November 2021, for HK\$12,108,000 (Premium)

<sup>i</sup> Javier Calleja, quoted in Sasha Bogojev, 'Javier Calleja: Finding That Magic Moment', *Juxtapoz*, 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Javier Calleja, quoted on *Avant Arte*, [online](#)

## Provenance

AISHONANZUKA, Hong Kong

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Hong Kong, AISHONANZUKA, *Hi*, 13 May - 10 June 2017

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM AN IMPORTANT PRIVATE  
EUROPEAN COLLECTION

20

### Yoshitomo Nara

*Untitled*

signed 'Yoshitomo Nara' lower left and dated '1991'  
lower right; further signed 'NARA' on the reverse  
acrylic on canvas

70 x 69.9 cm. (27 1/2 x 27 1/2 in.)

Painted in 1991, this work is registered in the  
Yoshitomo Nara Online Catalogue Raisonné under  
registration number YNF7093.

#### Estimate

HK\$6,000,000 — 8,000,000

€731,000 — 974,000

\$769,000 — 1,030,000

[Go to Lot](#)



## Introduction

A Pioneering figure in the contemporary art scene today, Yoshitomo Nara's portraits of young girls embody a plethora of emotional complexities -- including grief, pain, loneliness and rebellion. A celebration of introspective freedom and child-like imagination, *Untitled* (1991) appears to be *Kawaii* (cute) at first glance, yet a closer look reveals a sense of quietude and contemplation, representative of the artist's time living in Germany from 1988 to 2000 as a foreign student and artist.

This pivotal time overseas had a profound impact on Nara's creations, during which he began to create deeply existential and introspective works that engaged in dialogues with both traditional Japanese art and popular Western culture, as seen in the current work.

Painted in 1991 and fresh to the market, the current work is an early example from Nara's oeuvre, revealing the nascent stage of his young girl portraits and commanding canonical importance with the development of the artist's signature motif. Featuring characteristically flat colours, bold black outlines, and an absence of traditional perspective, *Untitled* crystallises the psychological state of isolation and nostalgia. A lone girl stands upon a puddle within an empty void, reflecting emotions of estrangement felt by the artist in a foreign land that is universally relatable.

## German Days

*"When I went to the school in Germany, I found myself again feeling alone, facing my canvas. Again, the inadequacy of the outer world enriched my inner world."* —  
Yoshitomo Nara

Graduating from Aichi University of the Arts with a master's degree in 1987, Nara subsequently moved to Germany in 1988 to further his studies at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Neo-Expressionist A. R. Penck. Completing his studies in 1993, Nara then settled in Cologne, staying in Germany up until 2000. As a foreign student, the language barrier in Germany forced Nara to explore the depths of his subconscious in search for his identity. It was during this period where Nara began to eliminate details in the backgrounds of his works, narrowing its perspective to be increasingly flat and neutral. This allows us to focus completely on Nara's subjects and their emotional worlds, and in turn asking for self-reflection on the part of the viewer.



michinara3 1991 Düsseldorf Kunstakademie.  
6 years in D'dorf and 6 years in Cologne. those  
were the days. . . . photo by Sanaka Okamoto.

View all 59 comments

8 March 2017

Yoshitomo Nara in his studio, 1991

Symbolic of the sense of emptiness felt by Nara in an unfamiliar environment, these void-like spaces are prevalent within the artist's oeuvre at the time, typified by *Untitled*, and works such as *The Girl with the Knife in Her Hand*, 1991 (Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art).

*"I don't paint when I am happy. I only paint when I am angry, lonely, sad, when I am able to talk to the work. So there is a need for storytelling before I paint."* —  
Yoshitomo Nara

## East Meets West

As a culmination of his past and present, Nara's paintings are influenced by Japanese manga and pop culture, but also Western punk rock music and artists. Merging influences from ukiyo-e woodblock prints and illustrations by Japanese artist Takeshi Motai, Nara outlines his protagonists with opaque, black paint, as seen in the current work.



Takeshi Motai, *I am a wild bird*, 1946

With comparable subjects and visual imagery, Takeshi Motai's illustrations, such as *I am a wild bird* (1946), often depicts a lone child standing within abstract dreamscapes, devoid of traditional perspective. Both artists are drawn to the imagery of children that reflects an underlying sense of uncertainty and fear for the future on a personal level, but also within the wider contemporary Japanese society.

*"Or maybe for me, the reason why I continually create works depicting children is because I desire to forever remain childlike, as opposed to merely wanting to be the 'selfish child'."* — Yoshitomo Nara

Under the advice of A. R. Penck at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Nara pared down the simplicity of his paintings, reflecting influence by contemporary artists such as Donald Baechler, whose childlike aesthetic shares distinct similarities to Nara's work at the time. As he sharpens his vision, Nara begins to steer towards a more pastel-hued colour palette, transitioning away from the thick outlines of this period and towards a more refined aesthetic with softer hues that have since become synonymous with the artist.



Donald Baechler, *Painting with Two Balls*, 1986 Collection of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles © 2022 Donald Baechler / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

## Neither Land Nor Sea

*“The six years that I spent in Germany after completing my studies and before returning to Japan were golden days, both for me and my work. [...] My living space/ studio was in a dreary, concrete, former factory building on the outskirts of Cologne. It was the centre of my world... In that space, standing in front of the canvas sometimes felt like travelling on a solitary voyage in outer space – a lonely little spacecraft floating in the darkness of the void. My spaceship could go anywhere in this fantasy while I was painting, even to the edge of the universe.” — Yoshitomo Nara*

In the current work, Nara creates a blurred distinction between the sky and ground. Soft blue pigment is seen blending and fading into the horizon line behind the protagonist, further enacting a flat perspective. This effect is created through applying several layers of impasto in subtly varied subdued hues, allowing the protagonist to appear as if she is floating in space, existing outside the constraints of time. The little girl's feet sink deep within the puddle below, unable to move away from her physical position, whilst simultaneously implying an inability to change one's psychological state. She gently grasps onto a ship – a vehicle that can hopefully whisk her away towards the place of her heart's desire.



Detail of the present work

The recurring motif of ships and puddles appear in numerous paintings throughout his oeuvre, evoking an ambivalent in-between state, no doubt alluding to the artist's own experience of alienation in a foreign country as he lives between two worlds and two cultures. This was especially prominent during his years in Germany, with [8 paintings](#) and [6 drawings](#) created in the year 1991 alone. These works capture the artist's deepest, most inner hopes and fears, revealing a deeply poignant sense of homesickness.

Whilst some of these portraits are devoid of facial expressions, others such as the current example feature cheeky smiles where the young girl sticks out her tongue in protest. These conniving and rebellious grimaces act as a coping mechanism, as the protagonist defends herself – and in turn the artist by extension – against feelings of sadness and isolation in a remote nation.

Resonant with millions of people who stand on the same uncertain social and cultural grounds as he, Nara's portraits embody the collective feelings for people who inhabit the same in-between state, conveying a moving visual narrative of nostalgia and longing.

## Collector's Digest

Born 1959 in Hirosaki, Japan, Yoshitomo Nara stands as one of the defining icons in contemporary art today. After completing his master's degree at Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music in 1987, Nara lived in Germany from 1988 to 2000, returning to Japan in 2000, where he lived and worked in Tokyo and moved to Tochigi in 2005.

In 2021, Nara was honoured with a well-received monumental museum show at the [Dallas Contemporary, Texas](#) (20 March - 22 August 2021). His current major touring museum exhibition, *Yoshitomo Nara*, is the artist's largest retrospective to date, featuring more than 100 major paintings, ceramics, sculptures and installations, and 700 works of paper that span over 36 years of the artist's career. The exhibition started from the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#) (2021-2022) and is currently exhibiting at the [Yuz Museum](#) in Shanghai until 4 September, 2022. The exhibition will then travel to the Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain and the Kunsthall Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

**Provenance**

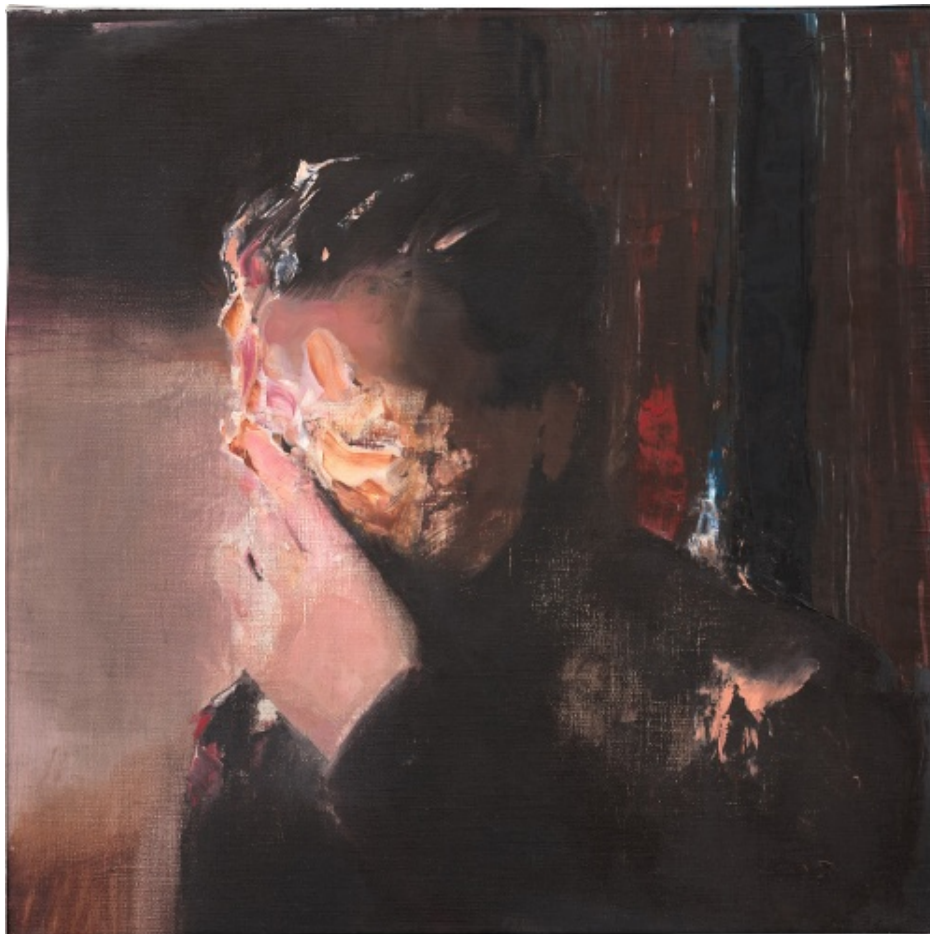
Gallery D'Eendt, Amsterdam

Private Collection, Amsterdam (acquired from the above in the 1990s)

Thence by descent to the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



22

### Adrian Ghenie

#### *Pie Fight Study 4*

signed and dated 'Ghenie 2008' on the reverse  
oil on canvas

52 x 52 cm. (20 1/2 x 20 1/2 in.)

Painted in 2008.

#### Estimate

HK\$3,500,000 — 4,500,000

€426,000 — 548,000

\$449,000 — 577,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“I seek images that go straight to your brain, which you can't help but submit to.” — Adrian Ghenie*

Commingling comedy and tragedy, dream and reality, *Pie Fight Study 4* powerfully embodies the tantalising theatricality that underpins the core of Ghenie's oeuvre. Hues of auburn, ochre, deep mauve and soft pink are smeared across the canvas, creating gentle contours that are deftly modelled through light and shadow, lending a fleshy plasticity to his work. Capturing the mixture of shock, confusion and surprise at the split-second when the cream pie hits the man's concealed and congealed face, the present work showcases Ghenie's technical prowess as he manipulates the rich impasto with a dynamic sense of energy. Juxtaposing a classically smooth background, the unnamed protagonist's face is rendered with brisk and abstract strokes, creating a dreamlike aura that is heightened by a ray of gentle flooding light on the left.



Detail of the current lot

Conjuring distortions of memories that resemble cinematic vignettes, Ghenie's portraits are visceral and vulnerable, saturated with historical references that unearth feelings of frustration or desire. Often drawing on human experience and ideas of the collective unconscious, the artist provides a wry and satirical portrait of humanity as a whole, and the dark folds it occasionally reveals.

## Cinematic Consciousness

*“I think consciously and unconsciously I want to master in painting what David Lynch has done in cinema. It was with Lynch that I started to build the visual language of my paintings.” — Adrian Ghenie*

Belonging to Adrian Ghenie's *Pie Fight* series from 2008-9, *Pie Fight Study 4* coalesces a well-known trope from slapstick cinema with a wide-ranging umbrella of human emotions - including vulnerability, excitement, frustration and desire, encapsulating a filmic quality with suspense, freezing the protagonist mid-frame. The viewer is propelled into a state of heightened anticipation, eagerly awaiting the next act of the drama; as the artist himself explains: 'My work is less sociological, and more psychological.'<sup>i</sup>



Film Still from *Mulholland Drive* (2001), directed by David Lynch

In *Pie Fight Study 4*, Ghenie masterfully captures the unnamed man in an allusive 'in between' gesture. Stunned into a solitary silence, the protagonist raises his left hand to his brow as if transfixed in time, attempting to wipe the thick, gelatinous custard cream - or rather smeared paint - from his caked face, as if smearing away the very impasto that constitutes his skin, transforming the tragicomic scene into a study of the act of painting.

Depicting the difficult, ambivalent feelings that must be rushing through the protagonist's mind in the moment, the artist appropriates tropes from slapstick films which manifests into the

characters in his *Pie Fight* painting series.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gKnQ8nG2ik>

Scene from *The Three Stooges* - Three Sappy People - Pastry Fight

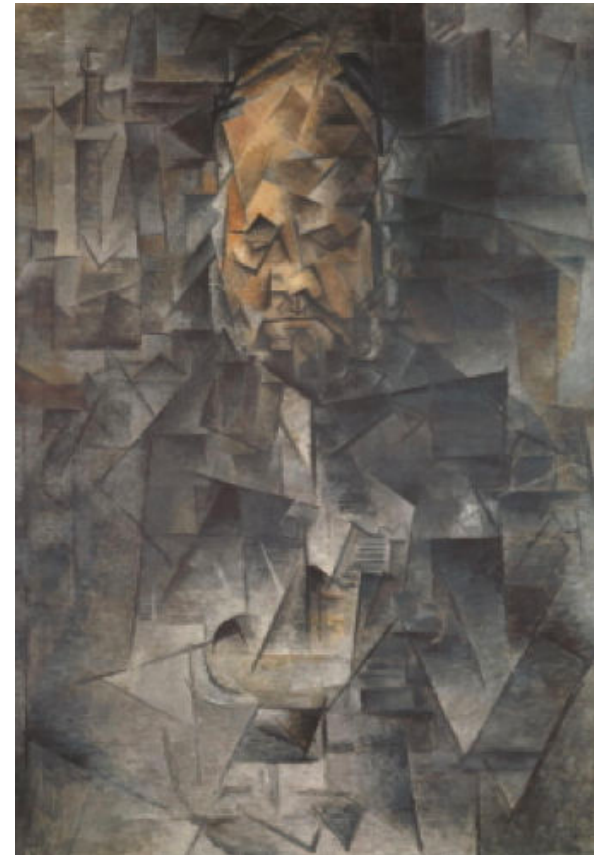
Culling imagery from film shorts such as *The Three Stooges*, *Pie Fight Study 4* additionally recalls the movie's comedic scenes, revelling in the arena of cliché whilst simultaneously betraying a sense of idle anarchy. The darkness entailed by Ghenie's portrayal of ridicule and historic suffering is thus somewhat alleviated by the humorous subject matter he chose; the envelope with which he has decided to deliver his message. Indeed, *Pie Fight Study 4* employs contemporary filmic codes that de-dramatise the heaviness of the image's connotations, therefore allowing the viewer a short instant of comedic relief. The multi-layered approach with which Ghenie composes the image verges on the philosophical; in this perspective, Ghenie has said about the series:

*“An image like that is based on the very common human experience of frustration. It's not exclusive to a specific culture or education. If I ask people what they remember about my work, they typically remember this image. I believe that art, especially figurative art, [has] responsibility. If an image is not loaded with symbolic meaning on a Jungian level then it's an empty image.” — Adrian Ghenie*

## Erasure of Identity

The anonymous faces featured in Ghenie's *Pie Fight* series contain traces of familiar figures that hide deep within the collective unconsciousness, restless and unsettling. Using key historical figures and moments as structural references, Ghenie conjures a nightmarish mood that finds its foundations in the viewer's collective reservoir of feelings, thoughts, memories and instinctual anguishes.

An admirer of Francis Bacon and Pablo Picasso, Ghenie has spoken about his fascination in their approaches of identity erasure in their works: 'In the 20th century, the people who did it really radically were Picasso and Bacon. They took elements of the face and rearranged it. There is no nose, there is no mouth, there is no eye—no sense of anatomy' <sup>ii</sup>. Following Picasso's technique of deconstruction, Ghenie's *Pie Fight Study 4* shares a similar colour palette with Picasso's *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*, achieving a similar visual effect with a more tactile surface on the protagonist's face. Rich in texture, Ghenie's works capture a sense of psychological Cubism, conveying a multitude of layered emotions in one frame.



Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*, 1910 Collection of the Pushkin Museum, Moscow © 2022 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Similar to Ghenie's psychologically charged works, Bacon's *Self Portrait* (1969) exudes a similar sensation of ambivalence and turmoil. Lush strokes of paint are slathered in a vigorous manner with reckless abandon, forming the face of the subject with thick layers of impasto. Bright yellows highlight the composition's foreground, illuminating the entire painting.



Francis Bacon, *Self-Portrait*, 1969 © 2022 Estate of Francis Bacon/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/DACS, London

While Bacon's paintings may come from the artist's own bleak existentialist outlook, Ghenie's works instead focuses on the sense of collective alienation and angst that was felt by the public in a post WWII era. Both wielding a sense of darkness as a creative force, Bacon and Ghenie capture the viewer's eye into an inherently enigmatic environment, as the abstract ground against which the unnamed protagonist is set seemingly absorbs him in a chromatic haze.



Left: Yukimasa Ida, *End of today - 12/12 2018 Self Portrait*, 2018 Sold by Phillips Hong Kong, 30 July 2021, for HK\$693,000 Right: Tomoo Gokita, *Tokyo Shyness Girl*, 2015 Sold by Phillips Hong Kong, 8 July 2020, for HK\$2,500,000

Interestingly, the effacement technique in portraiture is also seen in the works by a younger generation of artists such as Yukimasa Ida and Tomoo Gokita. By visually distorting and obscuring any individuality of his subjects, Gokita opens the identity of the protagonist to interpretation; contrastingly for Ida, the same approach emphasises the transience of life. In both cases, this approach allows only for ruminations on the unseen face itself – allowing the viewer to delve deep into the subconscious, an effect for which Ghenie has become known.

### Collector's Digest

Born 1977 in the city of Baia Mare, Romania, Adrian Ghenie spent his formative years living under the regime of Romanian dictator Ceaușescu, eventually witnessing the revolution which would culminate in the political leader's execution, consequently inspiring the visual allusions to historical events that saturates the artist's oeuvre. Sombre and gritty, his canvases bear gestural, abstract brushstrokes that are exhaustive in their historical references.

Adrian Ghenie's recent exhibitions include: [We Had Everything Before Us](#), Galerie Judin, Berlin, 1 May - 10 July 2021; [The Hooligans](#), PACE New York, 20 November 2020 - 11 March 2021; and his major museum solo exhibition at The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, [I have turned my](#)

**Adrian Ghenie**

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[only face...](#); 21 November 2019 - 2 February 2020. Ghenie represented Romania at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, and is represented by PACE Gallery, Nicodim and Thaddaeus Ropac.

<sup>i</sup> Adrian Ghenie, quoted in Stephen Riolo, 'Adrian Ghenie, Pie Eater', *Art in America*, 26 October 2010, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Adrian Ghenie, quoted in Andy Battaglia, "Every Painting is Abstract": Adrian Ghenie on His Recent Work and Evolving Sense of Self', *Artnews*, 17 February, 2017, [online](#)

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**Provenance**

Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp

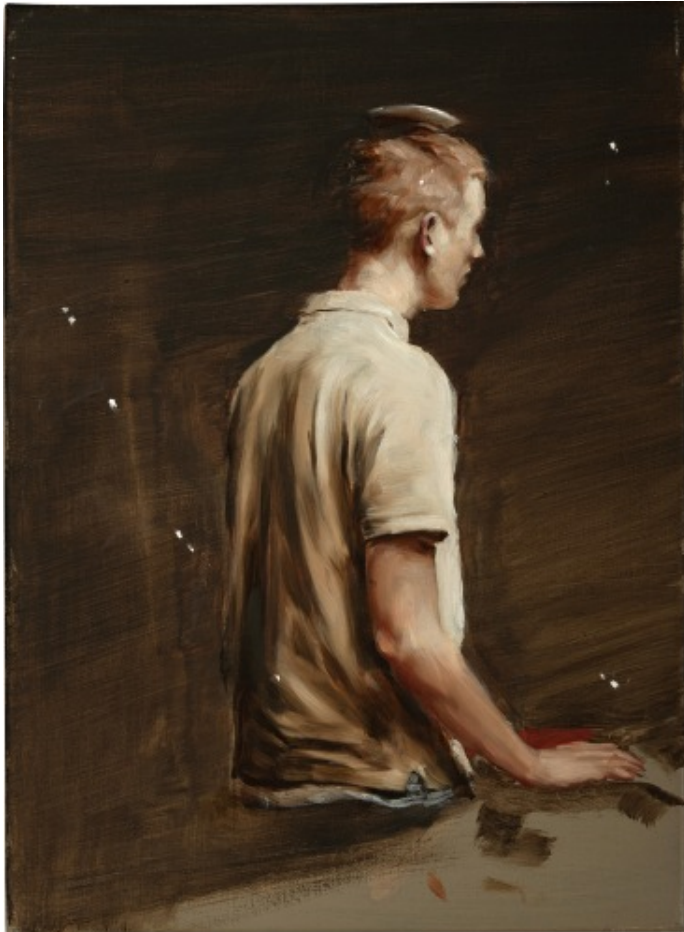
Private Collection (acquired from the above in 2008)

Christie's, London, 7 March 2018, lot 120

Acquired at the above sale by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM AN IMPORTANT ASIAN  
COLLECTION

23

### Michaël Borremans

#### *Stars*

signed, titled and dated 'MICHÄËL M.C.G.  
BORREMANS "-THE STARS-" 2008' on the reverse  
oil on canvas

52 x 38 cm. (20 1/2 x 14 7/8 in.)

Painted in 2008.

#### Estimate

HK\$2,000,000 — 3,000,000

€243,000 — 364,000

\$256,000 — 385,000

[Go to Lot](#)

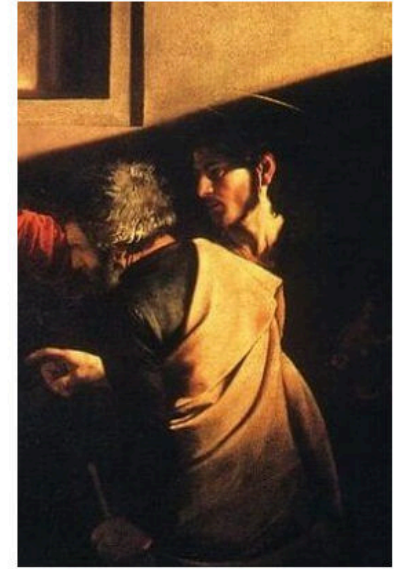
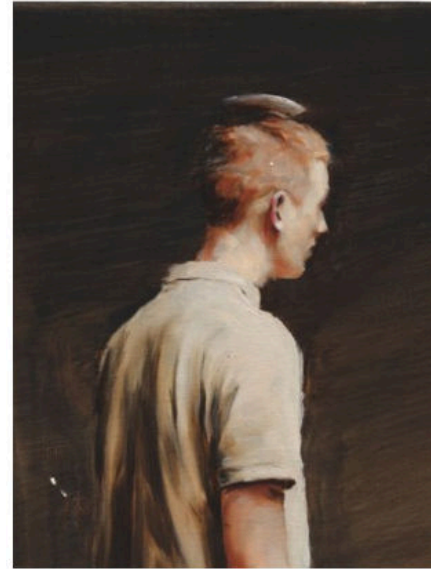


*“My images must have two characteristics: to be irresistible and irritating at the same time.” — Michaël Borremans*

Recognised for his moody paintings that are charged with psychological suspense, whilst portraying dark and uncanny narratives with an irresistible appeal, Belgian artist Michaël Borremans’ portraits depict his protagonists in characteristic sepia hues, steeped in ambiguous, alluring symbolism.

Rendered with tonal softness and pictorial precision in light and texture, Borremans situates an enigmatic young man with his back against the viewer at the centre of *The Stars*, standing within a dark, peculiar void with unknown depths. Finding himself in a pensive state, the intensity of the figure’s focus cuts through the painting surface even though the view of his eyes is hidden from the audience. A few sprinkles of white dots are dispersed across the canvas, in addition to the slightly blurred outline of the figure, which gives rise to the impression of a pixelated old photograph that was taken in the distant past.

Having a background in draught making, printmaking, and photography, Borremans is a self-taught painter who only forayed into the realm of painting in the 1990s. Looking to Old Masters painters such as Goya, Manet, and Caravaggio for inspiration and eventually adapting those techniques as his own, Borremans’ paintings display an air of quietude that is associated with classical portraits. The delicate chiaroscuro effect in his oeuvre immediately calls to mind works by Caravaggio, whereby a stark light-and-dark contrast creates a sensual and irresistible quality to the portrait, heightening psychologically charged undercurrents.



Left: Detail of the present work Right: Caravaggio, Detail of *The Calling of Saint Mathew*, c. 1599-1600  
Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome

## Photographic Reference

*“Through the lens I can see how to use colour and light effectively, and translate the photo into a painting. Photography is my drawing board and research medium.” — Michaël Borremans*

The reference to photography is evident in the current work, evoking images such as the *Reader* by Gerhard Richter, yet it is saturated with theatrical elements and psychological suspense. To achieve this effect, Borremans starts by taking photographs of studio models, whilst playing with the possibility of different staged settings during this process, the results of which become sketches for his paintings. ‘These photo shoots are a crucial step in my process,’ he explains; ‘I try a lot of things in them; they allow me to check whether a composition is working in terms of space and light.’<sup>i</sup> Carefully selecting unsaturated colours that help to build up the scene whilst not overpowering it<sup>ii</sup>, Borremans places the figure within their own psychologically charged world, reinforcing a sense of distance between the viewer and the pictorial plane.

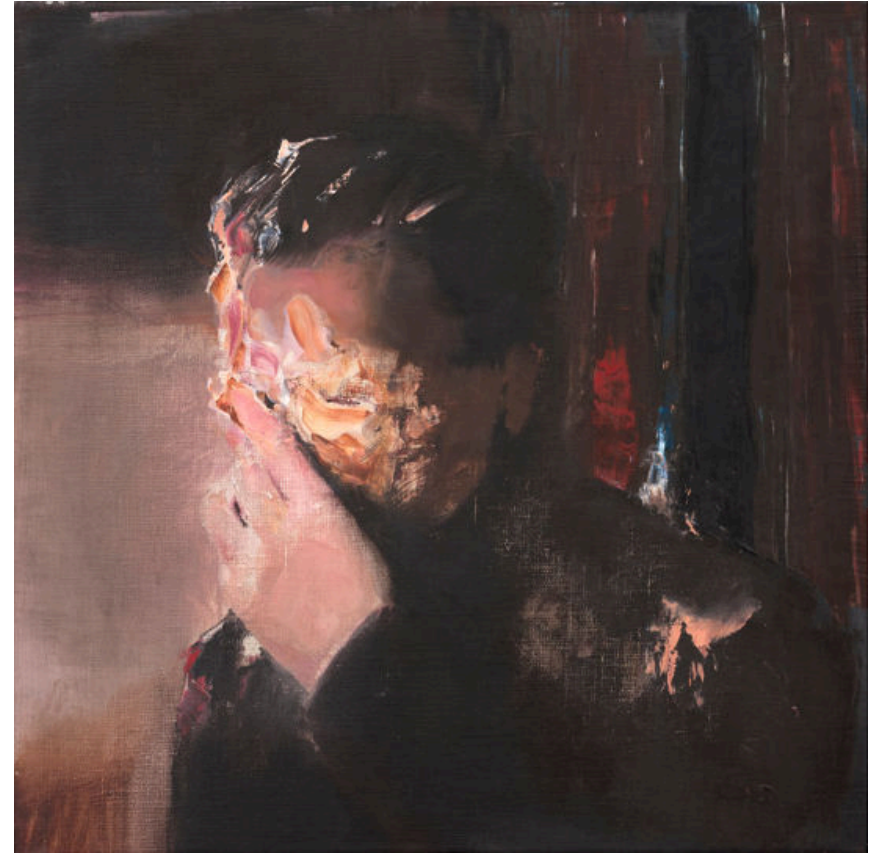


Gerhard Richter, *Reader*, 1994 Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art © Gerhard Richter 2022

## Theatrical Flare

*“With the paintings, at first you expect a narrative, because the figures are familiar. But then you see that some parts of the paintings don’t match, or don’t make sense. The works don’t come to a conclusion in the way we expect them to. The images are unfinished: they remain open. That makes them durable.” — Michaël Borremans*

The allure of Borremans’ narratives lies in the development of one’s experience of the work as one begins to examine in detail. Due to the conspicuous photographic reference, at first glance, *The Stars* appears naturalistic, with the subject matter being familiar and recognisable to the viewer. However, scanning further down, one would be shocked to discover the human portrayal abruptly ends at the upper torso -- what was considered to be the partial depiction of the figure turned out to be a disturbing image of an incomplete body. This incompleteness declares the work as a glimpse into an alternative reality of uncanny similarity to the one we live in. The suspense is disquieting and compelling simultaneously, working as a disruptor to reset the viewer’s lens of reading into this painting.



Lot 22, Adrian Ghenie, *Pie Fight Study 4*, 2008 Phillips Hong Kong Evening Sale, 22 June 2022 Estimate: HKD3,500,000 - 4,500,000

The intended understatement of the young man’s identity in *The Stars*, achieves a similar effect as the effacement technique favoured by artists such as Adrian Ghenie. In *Pie Fight Study 4*, Ghenie is able to zoom in onto the emotional experience of the moment by diluting attention to the identity of the character. In the current example, Borremans highlights the presence of the figure by positioning the young man away from the viewer.

To delve into the artist’s narratives is very comparable to looking at one’s internal reflection in the mirror, as the narratives acts as prompts, and any meaning or significance ascribed to them is likely to be a projection stemming from the viewers own psyche. Curator Michael Bracewell’s attempt of

encapsulating Borremans' oeuvre yields the following statement, 'The art of Michaël Borremans seems always to have been predicated on a confluence of enigma, ambiguity, and painterly poetics—accosting beauty with strangeness; making historic Romanticism subjugate to mysterious controlling forces that are neither crudely malevolent nor necessarily benign.'<sup>iii</sup> The beauty of his artistic exploration lies in the direct contact with the multifaceted human nature that is much easily perceived than articulated or analysed.

### Collector's Digest

Born 1963 in Geraardsbergen, Belgium, Michaël Borremans received his M.F.A. from Hogeschool voor Wetenschap en Kunst, Ghent. Borremans's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at a number of prominent institutions, including *Michaël Borremans: The Advantage*, the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2014); *Michaël Borremans: Fixture*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga (2015–2016); the artist's major museum survey, *Michaël Borremans: As sweet as it gets*, which included one hundred works from the past two decades, at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (2014), which travelled to the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and the Dallas Museum of Art (2015).

Work by the artist is amongst prestige public collections, including Art Institute of Chicago; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The artist's most recent exhibition, *The Acrobat*, had just closed at David Zwirner New York, which lasted from 28 April - 4 June 2022.

<sup>i</sup> Annick Weber, 'Day in the Life: Michaël Borremans', *Kinfolk: Artist Profile*, September 2019, p. 58, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Michael Borremans, quoted in: David Coggins, 'Michael Borremans: An Interview', *Art in America*, 1 March 2009, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Michael Bracewell, *Michaël Borremans: Fire from the Sun*, exh.cat., David Zwirner, Hong Kong, 2018, p. 42

### Provenance

Private Collection (gifted by the artist)  
Christie's, London, 30 July 2020, lot 5  
Acquired at the above sale by the present owner



## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY OF A PROMINENT COLLECTOR

24

### Li Chen

#### *Angelic Smile*

incised with the artist's seal, signature and number 'Li Chen [in Chinese] Li Chen 1/8' on the reverse; further dated '2010' lower right side

bronze

163 x 63 x 71 cm. (64 1/8 x 24 3/4 x 27 7/8 in.)

Executed in 2010, this work is number 1 from an edition of 8, and is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity issued by Asia Art Centre, Taipei.

#### Estimate

HK\$2,000,000 — 3,000,000

€242,000 — 363,000

\$256,000 — 385,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*“Every piece of work is like a child... Most of the pieces carry emotional attachment. They tell the story of my life.” — Li Chen*

Born in Taiwan in 1963, Li Chen is known internationally as one of the most accomplished contemporary sculptors, honing the remarkable skill of creating divine figures that delicately mesh the spiritual and the sculptural. Characters of all sizes populate his magnificent oeuvre, ranging from the miniature to the monumental. While they may vary in shape and size, there is a common thread that runs through Li’s repertoire — the union of heaven and man. Li’s works are informed by his intense, dedicated commitment to Buddhist philosophy, Taoist teachings, and Chinese literature. He explores higher realms and spiritual meaning, seeking to enlighten viewers through his ethereal aesthetic. Indeed, Li’s art truly expresses the core values of simplicity and purity— his sculptures possess a meditative quality, evoking a sense of inner peace and joy. They resemble celestial, otherworldly beings, leaving behind a lasting impression of their wisdom and vitality.

Executed in 2010 as part of the artist’s *The Beacon* series, the present work, *Angelic Smile*, embodies his ongoing search for serenity and mindfulness. The figure is that of a woman, round and full, her head tilted towards the sky. Her expression is modest and honest, embraced by an air of bliss and tranquillity. In her hands is a golden lotus flower, a Buddhist symbol of spiritual awakening and purity that stems from the plant’s ability to rise from murky waters, clean and untainted. Behind her head floats a cloud shaped like a pillow, or even a surreal face, lending a touch of whimsicalness and humour to the otherwise thought-provoking work. Instilled with spiritual verve and a light-hearted sensibility, *Angelic Smile* is an emblematic piece that enlightens and entertains.

### When Night Light Glimmers: *The Beacon*

*“Behind the Beacon is a ceremonial process; its essence lies in ‘Yinze’— the full or diminishing glory of the sun and the moon.” — Li Chen*

Amidst a hectic schedule of staging exhibitions both at home and abroad, Li enjoyed a rare moment of peace and quiet one evening in 2009. He lit a long-unused candle that had been left idle on the family’s Buddhist altar, and instantly he felt his mood transform, a surge of subtle but genuine joy washing over him. Overwhelmed with feelings of warmth and solitude, Li was inspired to create the *The Beacon* series, which includes the present lot.



Detail of the present lot

For the artist, lighting the candle not only illuminated his surroundings but his mind and soul as well. It constituted an act of recuperation, the ritualistic nature of it bringing him a calm state of mind, which in turn allowed him to communicate with his inner self. Works in this series draw a connection between people and higher places such as towers, pavilions, and the heavens, symbolising the desire to spiritually ascend and reach higher planes of understanding. Blessed with refined skill, constant inspiration, and keen observation, Li provides the modern man, who is often so busy with life that he forgets the feeling of rest, a chance to be invigorated by spirituality and art.

### Abundance and Weightlessness

*“In the Tang dynasty, the Buddhist sculptures were round and complete. Instead of being empty, they were full. To me, the fatness of my sculptures means tolerance and diversity. They are big and include all human beings... They are filled with the abundance of the world.” — Li Chen*

Prodigiously conceived and superbly executed, Li masterfully strikes a balance between the heavy bronze of the sculpture and the tranquil weightlessness it conveys, creating pieces that transcend time and space. Human forms are portrayed with well-rounded abundance, their rotund figures suggesting lightness and buoyancy that cleverly juxtaposes the mass of the bronze medium. With their eyes closed in peaceful contemplation and faces rendered in blissful contentment that easily

elicits a smile from the viewer, Li's characters appear as ethereal beings that exist between heaven and earth, floating through life without any attachment to the physical world. The smooth darkness of the sculpture's surface carries a certain brightness and illumination, stemming from its richness and reflective quality, expressing the virtue of minimalism and simplicity. An investigation into the beauty of contrast, Li's works are captivating and harmonious, evoking calmness while inviting introspection.



Left: *Figure of Padmapāni*, Tang Dynasty, China, 8th Century Collection of the British Museum, London  
© The Trustees of the British Museum Right: Detail of the present work

'I am not just making sculptures. I am creating a sense of happiness, a creation that people can enjoy,' says Li<sup>i</sup>. Indeed, Li's sculptures are able to comfort, rejuvenate, and delight the viewer with gentle humour, boundless energy, and a generous spirit, embracing the qualities of zen and transcendence in a confusing, turbulent age. Imbued with childlike innocence and curious wisdom, Li's works are ideologically an amalgamation of Buddhist and Taoist teachings. Yet, they convey a timeless message of strength and serenity that resonates across all religious and cultural borders.

## Collector's Digest

Internationally and critically acclaimed, Li has received prominent recognition from both critics and collectors alike. In 2007, Li was invited to exhibit his works in a solo show at the 52nd Venice Biennale, an outstanding achievement as he was the first artist from Taiwan to accomplish this, cementing his status in the contemporary art scene as one of the most sought-after sculptors.

Li Chen's work has been presented in prestigious galleries and museums, with recent solo shows including: *Being: In/Voluntary Drift Li Chen Solo Exhibition* (2017) at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei; *Through the Ages - Li Chen Solo Exhibition* (2018-2019) at the Aurora Museum, Shanghai; *Ethereal Cloud - Li Chen New Works* (2019) at the Asia Art Center, Beijing, among numerous others. The present lot, *Angelic Smile*, was part of the *Greatness of Spirit - Li Chen Premiere Sculpture Exhibition in Taiwan* (2011), Taipei, and *Monumental Levity: Li Chen 2013 Place Vendôme Premiere Solo Sculpture Exhibition in Paris* (2013) — a large-scale outdoor display at the historic Place Vendôme in Paris.



Installation view of a larger example of the present work at Place Vendôme, Paris, 2013

<sup>i</sup> Li Chen, quoted in Li Chen, *When Night Light Glimmers - The Beacon: Li Chen*, Taipei, 2010, p. 35, [online](#)

**Provenance**

Asia Art Centre, Taipei

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Taipei, Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall & Freedom Square, *Greatness of Spirit: Li Chen Premiere Sculpture Exhibition in Taiwan*, November - December 2011, pp. 34-35, 116-119, 201 (another example exhibited and illustrated)

Paris, Place Vendome, *Monumental Levity of Li Chen: Premiere Sculpture Exhibition in Paris*, September 2013, pp. 108-109 (another example exhibited and illustrated)

**Literature**

Li Chen, *When Night Light Glimmers - The Beacon: Li Chen*, Taipei, 2010, pp. 79-85 (another example illustrated)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



25 ж

### Zhang Xiaogang

*Bloodline Series - Big Family*

signed and dated 'Zhang Xiaogang [in Chinese] 2006'

lower right

oil on canvas

160 x 200.5 cm. (62 7/8 x 78 7/8 in.)

Painted in 2006, this work is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity signed by the artist.

#### Estimate

HK\$7,500,000 — 10,000,000

€913,000 — 1,220,000

\$962,000 — 1,280,000

[Go to Lot](#)



## Introduction

As one of the defining painters of his generation, Zhang Xiaogang is widely recognised for his series of *Bloodline* paintings that are instrumental in shaping the discourse of Chinese contemporary art, catapulting the artist onto the purview of the international art world. Questioning contemporary notions of identity and navigating the construction of memory, Zhang's portraits are extraordinarily poignant. Inviting his viewers to fill the void within each image with their own experiences and reflections, Zhang's celebrated oeuvre succeeds in reinterpreting the artist's intimate familial memories, as well as giving a voice to the collective dreams and psychological unrest of an estranged generation.

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2yklinruL0&ab\\_channel=MPlus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2yklinruL0&ab_channel=MPlus)

The artist on the inspiration behind the Bloodline series: 'Zhang Xiaogang: Bloodlines and Family'

Video courtesy M+ Museum, Hong Kong

## From the Personal to the Collective

*"I am more concerned with personal memories. I believe that large memories are accumulated from small memories and that is why I chose to approach my work from a familial angle. Families are basic units of little memories but they contain the memories of the entire nation and its people." — Zhang Xiaogang*

Triggered by the discovery of his own family photos, Zhang started his Bloodline series inspired by the personal history and associated emotions they encapsulate: 'So many things are embodied in history that we have neglected in the past. When I looked at the family photo, I saw my parents in their youth which contrasted with ours, and I was deeply moved.'<sup>1</sup>



Zhang Xiaogang's elder brother with their parents, on the occasion of his 100th Day Celebration, 1950s

Zhang Xiaogang's works are also anchored firmly in art historical traditions. Citing Frida Kahlo as the inspiration behind the 'red line' motif in his portraits, Zhang adapts this idea into his own, threading his protagonists together. However, as opposed to Kahlo's choice of representing relationships between blood relatives with a straightforward family tree composition, Zhang wanted to make connections between people who were unrelated as well: 'They might be relatives, friends or unrelated. I wanted to string them together like a network to create the feeling of a family'<sup>ii</sup>. Zhang's scarlett lines are also noticeably thinner than Kahlo's example; they coil and tangle around each person in soft, delicate lines, capturing the fragile nature of human bonds.



Frida Kahlo, *My Grandparents, My Parents, and I (Family Tree)*, 1936 Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York © 2022 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Zhang's choice of connecting unrelated people acts as metaphors for the legacy of China's Maoist era, reflecting a greater societal status quo:

*"For me, the Cultural Revolution is a psychological state, not a historical fact."* —  
Zhang Xiaogang

Zhang's portraits are a cultural product of a specific era, symbolic of its time. In contrast to his peers such as Fang Lijun or Wang Guangyi, Zhang Xiaogang diverges away from Social Realism depictions in portraiture, instead creating solemn characters that share the same large, watery eyes, pale skin, only differing slightly in hairstyles. Their individuality is almost indiscernible, suppressed under social conformity, each wearing a similarly restrained, stoic expression; their stifled emotions only conveyed delicately through subtle variations. In works such as *Bloodline Series - Big Family*, Zhang brings together ideas of personal heritage, collective history and cultural inheritance, crystallising snippets of the past onto the canvas, creating works that reflect on the social undertones of a bygone era that is able to resonate with the viewer emotionally and psychologically.

## Between Painting and Photography: The Chinese Family Portrait

With distinct painterly prowess, Zhang labours arduously over the surfaces of his works with delicate brushstrokes, creating stippled textures and carefully shaded backdrops in a muted colour palette. Using very thin paint, the artist adds layer upon layers, with a final touch of dry paint on top to create a diffused, spotty texture that is reminiscent of mottled old photographs.

Inspired by old family photos during the Cultural Revolution, Zhang Xiaogang's portraits adapts the compositional framework of these photographs. Drawing from the generic poses of formal photo studio poses and a monotone palette, Zhang's figures are rendered perfectly smooth, lacking in any visible brushstrokes, illustrating the artist's interest in re-touched photographs, translating the language of photography into paint.



A retouched studio photograph showing a group of young factory workers, dated 12 January 1967  
Collection of the Thomas Sauvin Archive © Beijing Silvermine

Ubiquitous to a whole generation, these standardised poses and styles in his portraits resonate

with a whole generation, as one can easily find several albums of similar shots taken in the same style with their own families, colleagues and friends. Based around this concept of a 'family' that is immediate, extended and societal, the artist is able to allude to nameless and timeless figures with individual histories and unnerving nuances. The occasional splotches of colour interrupts the otherwise perfectly rendered image, reminiscent of aged film or old tape that were used in photo albums, introducing a lingering sense of nostalgia and hazy emotional undercurrents.

*"I am seeking to create an effect of 'false photographs' — to re-embellish already 'embellished' histories and lives." — Zhang Xiaogang*

Before the commencement of the *Bloodline* series in 1993, Zhang had spent three months in Germany in 1992, studying Western art and experiencing artworks he had only seen in books before in person. His encounter with the works of Gerhard Richter irrevocably altered Zhang's approach in painting, pushing him to consider how to bring an added dimension of psychological resonance into his work, creating unsettling distance.



Gerhard Richter, *Familie Ruhna* (*The Ruhna Family*), 1968 The Doris and Donald Fisher Collection at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art © Gerhard Richter 2022 (0115)

In 2018, Zhang Xiaogang sat down with Phillips in an exclusive interview to further elaborate on how Richter had inspired his *Bloodline* series:

**Phillips:** *We are curious about the photographs on which the Bloodline series are based and how old photos impact your work. You have cited Gerhard Richter as an artist who greatly inspires you; has his use and manipulation of photography influenced your work?*

**Zhang Xiaogang:** In 1992, when I travelled throughout Germany, Richter inspired me the most as a contemporary artist. I was not expecting this; at the time, Richter had little exposure in China. It was also impossible to gauge his level of influence and social standing. When I was in Germany, where Expressionism prevailed, Richter's works were truly a breath of fresh air. In the past, artists used photographs in the painting process, but only as informational tools and reference points. Richter, however, looked at photos and saw their history and meaning, which greatly inspired me. I started to pay attention to the history, culture and aesthetics behind pictures and distilled these things into my own artistic language. Through old pictures, I was able to learn about the ideas of traditional Chinese aesthetics, including how people delighted in the process of taking and developing film. They also went to great lengths to beautify the subjects of their pictures, just like how we still are constantly refining history and polishing memories. I also went through my own process of refining old photos—though, my purpose was to reconstruct old memories. For me, the journey from old photos to my *Bloodline* series was a process of re-embellishing.

Read the full interview [here](#).

## Collector's Digest

Beginning his artistic career in the 1980s, Zhang Xiaogang had taken part in instrumental exhibitions in Chinese art history, namely *China Avant-Garde* in National Art Museum of China in Beijing in 1989, and the *Neo-Realism* exhibition held in Shanghai and Nanjing in 1985. An active painter of over four decades, Zhang has witnessed and influenced the development of contemporary art discourse in China and his work, in particular his *Bloodline* series, is regarded highly within the international collecting community.

*"The 'Bloodline' series represents one of the most important periods and turning points of my artistic career." — Zhang Xiaogang*

Beginning in 1993, the *Bloodline* series marked the year in which Zhang Xiaogang abandoned expressionism and moved away from Surrealism and personal existentialist meditations, and towards investigations on national and collective history. In June 1994, four paintings from the *Bloodline* series debuted at the São Paulo Biennale, winning the artist a bronze medal. The following year, 13 large *Big Family* paintings were exhibited at the Venice Biennale, marking the beginning of Zhang's distinguished and prolific career.





Another work from Zhang Xiaogang's *Bloodline* Series (Right), *Bloodline: Big Family No. 17*, 1998 M+ Sigg Collection, Hong Kong, 2021 Courtesy: M+, Hong Kong; photograph: Los Cheng

Widely collected, Zhang's work has also found places in the permanent collections of institutions such as: HOW Art Museum, Shanghai; Long Museum, Shanghai; M+ Sigg Collection, Hong Kong; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum, Japan; and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, amongst others.

<sup>i</sup> Zhang Xiaogang, quoted in M Plus Museum Hong Kong, 'Zhang Xiaogang: Bloodlines and Family', 28 November 2018, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Zhang Xiaogang, quoted in Zhang Wenjia, 'Zhang Xiaogang: In Conversation', *Phillips*, March 2019, [online](#)

#### Provenance

Private Collection  
 Sotheby's, Hong Kong, 7 April 2007, lot 157  
 Private Collection  
 Ravenel, Hong Kong, 30 May 2011, lot 46  
 Private Collection  
 China Guardian, Hong Kong, 29 May 2017, lot 616  
 Acquired at the above sale by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY OF A BELGIAN COLLECTOR

26 ж

**Zhang Enli**

*Things*

signed and dated '2016 Enli [in Chinese]' lower left;  
further signed, titled and dated "'Things" 2016 Zhang  
Enli [in Chinese]' on the reverse

oil on canvas

249.5 x 300 cm. (98 1/4 x 118 1/8 in.)

Painted in 2016.

**Estimate**

HK\$2,200,000 — 4,200,000

€269,000 — 513,000

\$282,000 — 538,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*"I consider my 30 years of painting has all been about portraits." — Zhang Enli*

## The State of Constant Floating Flux

Executed in 2016, *Things* is a thought-provoking, monumental masterpiece exploring the state of impermanence and human entanglements employing the artist's most signature motif – lines – which straddles the distinction between his renowned 'object' series and his latest 'abstract' series. A compelling example, *Things* displays Zhang's stylistic transition from representational to abstract paintings, marking a milestone period in the artist's oeuvre. The lines depicted break free from the previous conspicuous association with objects such as wires, pipes, ropes, and trees. Instead, they are presented simply as motifs, abstracted out of the context of everyday life, and thus are more elusive to any concrete definition.



The artist with the current work, in his studio Image from K11 Art Foundation Documentary, 2018

Lines as a subject matter in both its objectual manifestations such as ropes and strings, as well as its abstracted form, as seen in the current example, is crucial to Zhang's oeuvre. His special attention in the expressive possibilities of this motif results in his repeated explorations and reinventions of this seemingly common element.

In *Things*, layers of sinuous, free-flowing lines overlap and intertwine with one another, filling up the canvas. Shades of navy blue, teal and charcoal seem to have infused into the background, creating a murky appearance that reveals no sense of clarity. The strong movement conveyed by the twirling lines create the sense of an expanse, to the point where it pushes outside the pictorial surface, whilst the colour palette brings out a sense of elusiveness and melancholy, as if the lines are retreating from the surface into the blurred depth of chaos. An energy of unrest shrouds the painting. Everything seems to be constantly morphing and changing -- each individual look at the painting yields the same impression.



Willem de Kooning, *East Hampton V*, 1968 Sold by Phillips, New York, 23 June 2021 for USD\$3,055,000 (Premium) © 2022 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The emotional potency of this work is very comparable to what renowned Abstract Expressionist Willem de Kooning is known for. Melded fluidity of lines and freedom of colour that culminate into an emotionally powerful presence is one of the characteristics of de Kooning's work. In comparison, the colour palette of *Things* is more subdued, complimented by the dramatic tension of movement conveyed, echoing his focus on the extraordinary quality of ordinary life.

Trained in traditional Chinese brush painting, Zhang adapts traces of this in his technique of diluting paint until it is almost glaze-like. Veiling paint onto the canvas allows him to explore with variations in density and gravity to convey complex relationships of his chosen object. Intentionally rendering no distinct perspective in this painting, the artist employs the dry brush technique from Chinese ink painting to imbue an airy quality to the lines, as they each float around the pictorial plane like chiffon ribbons, creating chance encounters with one another.

*“My focus on lines has to do with my painting of traditional Chinese styles when I was younger. I think those lines have a lot of power. On a certain level, they are very chaotic and alive, but imperfect. You can feel that they are bound up and entwined, which is close to how people often feel inside.” — Zhang Enli*

## Abstraction of Human Experience

Vivid, pulsing life has always been Zhang's creative fountain. Instead of following art historical traditions, movements, and styles, the focus in his work has always been on reflecting upon human experiences, even when his subject matters move from figurative representations to still life. His choice in the latter echoes the inherent quotidian quality of us and of our daily lives, which comes through in this work in an abstracted rendition. Though seemingly simplified, objects and abstracted motifs are free from obvious personality traits, and thus open up the possibility for discussion that transcends the context of confinement of space and time,<sup>1</sup> penetrating into the essence of perception and experience.

*“These lines are very closely related to our life. The curbside iron wires and the electric wires above roads, I simplified then extracted them, and they became symbols and lines corresponding to human emotions. Chinese have rich expressions and unique understanding of lines. When painting, (I focus on) how to intertwine and eventually present them, so that everyone will have direct psychological dialogue with the work.” — Zhang Enli*

Zhang's explorations with lines conveys his understanding of the entanglements and bonds of human beings and invites the audience to make their own interpretation on the narrations in his work. He transforms what is abstractly perceivable into tangible form, while blurring the boundary

of the two. A sense of *deja vu* strikes when one lays eyes on the painting: the hustle and bustle of modern cities, a sense of mental and emotional overload, and the lingering mood of fuzziness that haunts many on a daily basis. Interpretations that exist within the space of lines is immeasurable; these flowy lines are just as human as us.



Zhang Enli, *The Nylon Rope*, 100.5 x 100.5 cm., 2014 Sold by Phillips, Hong Kong, 4 December 2020 for HK\$604,800 (Premium)

In this perspective, *Things* become a rather intimate work: it confronts the viewer with an introspective journey within that goes as deep as one allows. In some way, the work almost represents the headspace of a modern human. In the midst of the bombardment of sensory stimuli during daily life, there seems to never be an end to the information we receive and thus the train of

thoughts that runs nonstop in our heads. In this respect, Zhang has tapped into a similar state of mind as Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota. The latter uses strings in her sculptures and installations to achieve a tangible representation of that intangible haze and cocoon surrounding distant memories and experiences. There are many ways to read into line as a symbol, and one of them is that it represents a basic component of one's experience, forming up the trajectory of his/her life. A line may seem insignificant, yet build-ups of which make up something that is larger than life. This deeply philosophical work brings to our attention that perhaps no one is consciously aware of just how many such lines exist within us, and how complex our day-to-day experience has become.

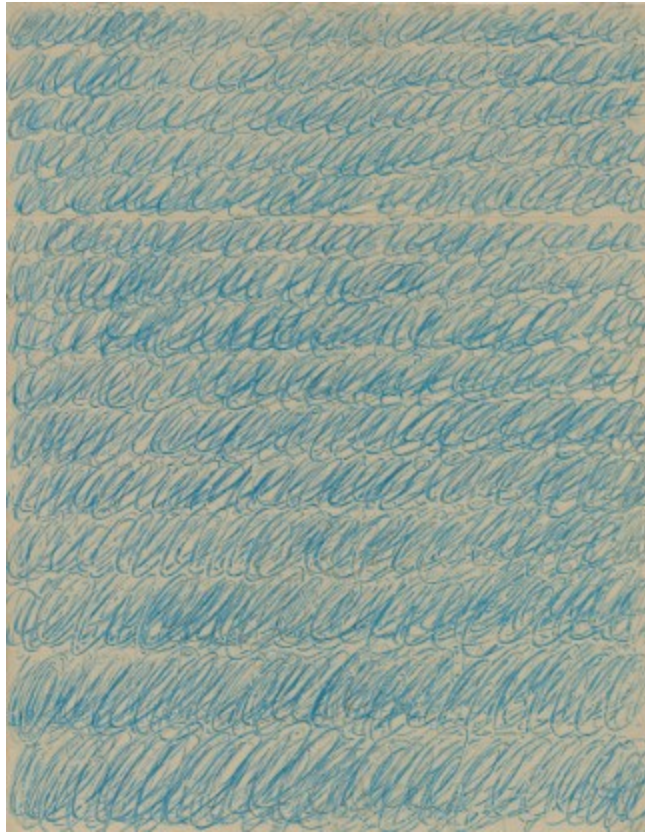


Chiharu Shiota, *Trauma / Alltag*, 2007 Sold by Phillips, Hong Kong, 7 June 2020 for HK\$1,890,000 (Premium)

© 2022 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

## A Multifaceted Creation

Though a simple motif, the malleability of a line as a symbol lends itself to the explorations of much more dynamic and complicated topics. A line could be many things to many people -- where Cy Twombly saw the beauty of the kinaesthetic progressions of cursive writing, Zhang sees how draping, swirling, and overlapping of lines allow for the exploration of human perceptual nuances. Both angles engage the heightened dramatic impact that is inherent to the expressive potential of lines.



Cy Twombly, *Untitled*, 1969 Sold by Phillips, New York, 14 November 2019 for USD\$3,740,000 (Premium) © Cy Twombly Foundation

In contrast to Twombly's organized representation of lines as writings, Zhang broke down any sense of control in the present work. The unrestrained execution opens up the possibilities of interpretation to an immense degree, resulting in an unexpected yet strong sense of freedom that seems contradictory to the image. Another interesting juxtaposition comes from the playful pun contained in the title. The words for 'things' in Chinese can also mean 'East-west'. Rather different from the ambiguous reference to 'things', 'East-west' gives a clear directional indication, or perhaps even alluding to 'Eastern' and 'Western' cultures. This element not only leaves a taste of philosophical rumination to the overall viewing experience, but also allows for diverse personal narratives to emerge, reflecting Zhang's mastery in deeply engaging the audience on both sensory and psychological levels.

Transcending the ordinary appearances of his chosen subject matters, Zhang infuses in his work with cultural and societal innuendos that are surprisingly stirring and multifaceted. The common objects and their abstractions bridge shared sensibilities to that of an individual, imparting much impact in people's hearts in whatever ways that they allow for.

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xn5Kk9Vnd64&ab\\_channel=K11ArtFoundation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xn5Kk9Vnd64&ab_channel=K11ArtFoundation)

Zhang Enli speaking about his creative phases and focuses with K11 Art Foundation, featuring details of the present lot

### Collector's Digest

Zhang Enli was born in Jilin, China in 1965. He has been honoured with many solo exhibitions at important institutions and galleries around the world, including the Long Museum Chongqing (2020), Hauser & Wirth Zurich (2020), Xavier Hufkens Belgium (2019), Museo e Galleria Borghese (2019), and the K11 Art Foundation Shanghai (2019).

The current work was featured in the exhibition *Shanghai Painters*, shown at N3 Contemporary Art in Beijing (9 June – 12 August 2018). The artist's new exhibition, *Looking Outwards*, will be on view at Hauser and Wirth St Moritz starting 9 July to 10 September 2022.



Installation view of the current work at N3 Contemporary Art, 2018

<sup>1</sup>Hao Ke, 'Interview| Zhang Enli: Painting is Everywhere"', *99 Art*, 22 September 2021, online

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**Provenance**

ShanghArt Gallery, Beijing

N3 Contemporary Art, Beijing

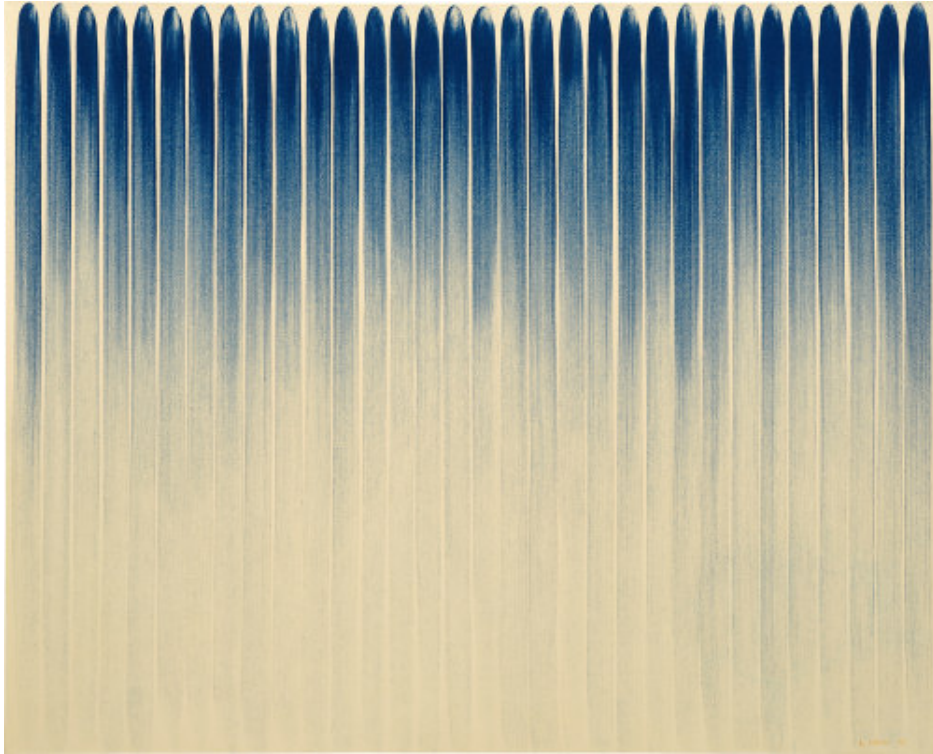
Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Beijing, N3 Contemporary Art, *Shanghai Painters*, 9 June - 12 August 2018

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



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### Lee Ufan

*From Line No. 790372*

signed and dated 'L.UFAN 79' lower right; further signed and titled "'From line NO. 790372.'" Lee Ufan' on the reverse

oil and mineral pigment on canvas  
135.2 x 166.8 cm. (53 1/4 x 65 5/8 in.)  
Executed in 1979.

#### Estimate

HK\$9,000,000 — 14,000,000

€1,090,000 — 1,700,000

\$1,150,000 — 1,790,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“The object before the eyes and the image in the mind are all constructed of points and lines, expressed in rhythm with the rising and falling of the breath. Because of this, the viewer...can observe the dynamic relationship between the painting and the canvas, the condition of the painter’s body, the movement of his heart, his character, and the atmosphere of the age.” — Lee Ufan*

## Line by Line

Vertical and horizontal movements, fluctuation between positive and negative spaces, a constant choice of marking or unmarking, the simple composition of thirty-two repeatedly painted blue vertical lines reflects an art form that captures a constant contemplation on the truth of reality. Responding to the rapid industrialization of Japan during the 1970s, Korean Minimalist artist Lee Ufan turns away from Western notions of representation. He returns to calligraphy and Japanese *Nihonga* style of painting for inspiration, which traditionally uses ink and mineral pigments on paper or silk. *From Line No. 790372* of 1979 is a great example of the artist’s early celebrated series concentrating on the method of repetition, of which he dedicated over ten years of his life between 1973 and 1984 in creating. This series has been exhibited internationally, including at the Guggenheim Museum, New York and the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.



Installation shot of Lee Ufan’s retrospective, *Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity*, 24 June - 28 September, 2011, Guggenheim Museum, New York

*“Before working, I calm my breathing, correct my posture, and hold my brush quietly.” — Lee Ufan*

As a leading member of the Japanese avant-garde movement *Mono-ha* (School of Things), Lee steers away from figurative pictorial imagery and creates minimalistic forms instead. The artist prepares simple raw materials by himself and specially hand mixes cobalt pigment with glue to create the rich blue hue. The artist rotates the canvas in 90 degrees and pulls horizontally from left to right. In the correct viewing orientation, the simultaneous calligraphic brushstrokes become vertical starting at the top, diminish gradually at the bottom as it runs thinner and fall off the lower edge of the canvas. The artificial hair of the brush maximises the friction between the brush and canvas to create the contrasting dragged textures of wet and dry paint. Following Japanese ink painting’s strict philosophical principle of *ikkaisei* (irreversibility), Lee sweeps his brush with momentum in one single breath for each stroke. Fused with the artist’s rhythmic breath, the synchronising brushstrokes transcends the whole art making process to be a meditative ritual about being at the moment.

*“When the artwork feels like a living thing, that's when I let it go.” — Lee Ufan*

## Man, Matter and Mind

'A line must have a beginning and an end. Space appears within the passage of time and when the process of creating spaces comes to an end, time also vanishes.' Lee is a philosophical enthusiast on both Eastern and Western ideals, he sets up his unique theoretical point of view and artistic methodology. Along with Mono-ha, he explores the interaction and hierarchical relationship between man as the author and matter as his subject. In this dominating world of illusionary representations, the mind constantly changes which affects the artist and the matter he creates. From this constant flux, Lee liberates the materiality of the painting and the metaphysical space beyond that materiality through painterly absolution. The composition of *From Line No. 790372* literally reflects a faithful recording of the artist applying paint stroke by stroke in front of a canvas, but not a crafted image on how his mind perceives the world. It is raw, a canvas of truth that captures an emptied mind.

*“(A) mediating effect that empties out its surroundings and brings some kind of transcendence to the place where it is.” — Lee Ufan*

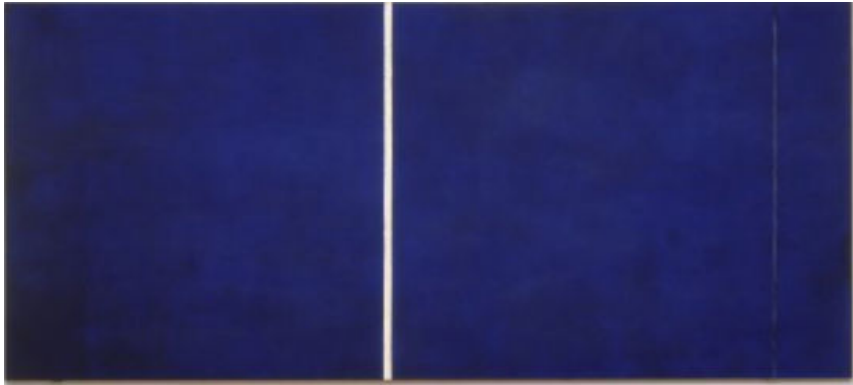
In search of a minimalistic expression, Abstract Expressionists are a source of inspiration for Lee Ufan. For example, Mark Rothko's colour field paintings. The hues of different shades of blue sitting on top of reds and oranges in *Untitled (Red, Blue, Orange)* forms a certain tranquil atmosphere that consumes the viewer - the longer they stare at the work, the more it stimulates imagination. Alive with individuality, each line *From Line No. 790372* is unique with its own importance varying in thickness, rhythmically tracks constant new beginnings. The dynamic strokes form a simple yet emotional composition, similar to Rothko creating a space of its own and a relationship between the viewer - man, matter and mind.



Mark Rothko, *Untitled (Red, Blue, Orange)*, 1955 © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Growing up in a Confucian household in Korea, Lee started practising calligraphy when he was a child and developed a sophisticated skill for his artistic career. Painted with care, a thin strip of unpainted canvas is always left in between the lines. This brings to mind another important Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman's 'zip' paintings as a source of inspiration, which Lee encountered during his visit to New York in 1971. In *Cathedral*, Newman strives to create a space with a certain atmosphere. The white vertical line defines the spatial structure of the painting and splits the condensed blue canvas asymmetrically by a vertical line. The 'zip' creates a holy space with a tension that unites the two divided sides of the canvas, yet at the same time, splits them apart. In comparison, the unpainted canvas strips that are left blank in between the painted lines

are Lee Ufan's version of the 'zip' space in *From Line No. 790372*. They create a fluctuation between positive and negative spaces, a space between existence and non-existence. The act of painting thus creates a ritualistic meditative ambiance in a work of art that possesses a dramatic, yet exquisite simplicity and holy gracefulness.



Barnett Newman, *Cathedra*, 1951 Collection of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam © 2022 Barnett Newman Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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#### Provenance

Takagi Gallery, Nagoya

Himawari Gallery, Tokyo (acquired from the above in 1996)

Private Collection (acquired from the above in 1998)

Private Collection (acquired from the above in 2009)

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



29 ♦

### Pierre Soulages

*Peinture 102 x 130 cm, 11 mars 2016*

signed, titled and dated 'SOULAGES "102 x 130 11 03 2016"' on the reverse

acrylic on canvas

102 x 130 cm. (40 1/8 x 51 1/8 in.)

Painted 11 March 2016, this work is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity signed by the artist.

#### Estimate

HK\$7,500,000 — 10,000,000

€904,000 — 1,210,000

\$962,000 — 1,280,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*“I like the authority of black. It’s an uncompromising color. A violent color, but one that encourages internalization. Both a color and a non-color. When light is reflected on black, it transforms and transmutes it. It opens up a mental field all of its own.”*

— Pierre Soulages

## From Ancient Beginnings

Born in Rodez in the south of France in 1909, Soulages was inspired by the region’s rich artistic heritage, from the Neolithic menhirs – large, ethereal standing stones, and some of the oldest in Europe – to the 20,000-year-old cave paintings in nearby Lascaux and Chauvet-Pont-d’Arc. He would balk at the rigid parameters that defined art, or in particular ‘great art’, reflecting on such as: ‘I have always revolted against this foolishly evolutionary conception of art which leads one to believe that there are at first awkward gropings, then that technique becomes more and more skillful and mastered, and that finally we arrive at the apotheosis of a perfectly imitative art. It must be said and repeated: there is no progress in art, only techniques that are perfected and which can lead you where you do not want to go. The painters of Lascaux or Chauvet brought art to a summit from the very start.’<sup>i</sup> Though it would be standing underneath the barrel vault ceiling of the famed Romanesque abbey, Sainte-Foy de Conques, that would ignite his desire to become a painter (he would return in 1986 to design windows for its renovation), his palette has never strayed far from the elemental reds, blacks and ochres used by the caves’ ancient magicians

## The Master of Black

*“A painting by Pierre Soulages is like a chord on a vast piano struck with both hands simultaneously — struck and held.” — Former director of the Guggenheim, James John Sweeney*

As Abstract Expressionism exploded across the world following the end of the Second World War, from its epicentre in New York to movements like Gutai in Japan and Dansaekhwa in South Korea, his early work would preempt this seismic shift in artistic production, and bestow credence to the truth that Soulages has always been his own artist.



Pierre Soulages, *Brou de noix*, 1946 © Archives Soulages/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

Soulages’ attention to black has been a lifelong preoccupation for the artist, one that he has mined for over 70 years in his creative production, and since 1979 with exclusive devotion. It would be in April of that year where Soulages would achieve theoretic and existential breakthrough. Up to that point, he had used black in conjunction to colour in order to elevate their brilliance, however after working on a painting only for it to be swallowed by black paint, he left it angrily; yet the next day, he saw it differently. ‘I saw that it was no longer black that gave meaning to the painting but the reflection of light on dark surfaces. Where it was layered the light danced, and where it was flat it lay still. A new space had come into being.’<sup>ii</sup>

What unfolded was a chromatic opulence, offered by the single tone of black. He labels this practice as *Outrenoir* (Beyond Black), where employing a varied apparatus (spoons, rakes, spatulas) to build his compositions, scraping, layering, etching depending on the desired surface. The artist denotes concrete spatial autonomy to the black paint, describing it as a different ‘country’.

The present lot is a shining example of the artist’s mature practice, Soulages creates a patchwork of bold horizontal strokes, whose crevasses and extrinsic tonalities producing angles and contours that allow for a latent subterfuge to emerge, where light bounces between each panel, resulting in a transcendent compositional dialogue. It is here in this balance between light and pigment that

the beauty of the painting's nuances reveals itself, and the sensitivity of the artist's tonal intuition. As he explains in a 2019 New York Times interview, 'Black is never the same because light changes it. There are nuances between the blacks. I paint with black but I'm working with light. I'm really working with the light more than with the paint.'<sup>iii</sup>



Installation view of the present lot (far right) *Une Expérience au présent*, Opera Gallery Paris, 2021 © Archives Soulages/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

Rejecting studies, drafts, or even concerted planning – 'painting from his head' – Soulages focuses on the inert materiality of paint as he applies it directly onto canvas, responding to it in real time to his own automatic reactions. Further subtleties are forged by literal variations in the paint itself. Starting in 2013 he began to mix pigment with acrylic resins, a combination of matte and glossy finishes that completes a sumptuous register of painterly matter.

Though it would be easy to place Soulages in the tranche of Abstract Expressionist monochromatics like Rothko or Franz Kline, such an association proves imperfect, and would betray the fundamentals of his compositions. Instead of using pigment and surface to express emotions, the artist seeks to create experiences that overwhelm the viewer, who is invited to delve head first into his obsidian lagoons to uncover their own emotions and determine their own essential conclusions from the work; 'A window looks outside, but a painting should do the

opposite—it should look inside of us', the artist declares<sup>iv</sup>. Indeed, this is an act of subtraction, edging away from contemporary history and the modernist tradition to something more direct, pure and primal. As such, Soulages connects his works to cave painting: 'during thousands of years, men went underground, in the absolute black of grottoes, to paint with black.'<sup>v</sup>

*"I always say his paintings are 51 percent light and 49 percent black. You see different colours in them at different points of the day: reds, blues, whites. They are constantly changing." — Benoit Decron, founder of the Soulages Museum*

Testament to his insatiable hunger for expression and despite his 102 years of age, Soulages works without assistants, applying every stroke of paint himself and thus marking every canvas with his indelible signature. It seems right that Soulages has lived in a Sète, a regional port town in Occitanie, since 1960 - from which he can soak up the light of the Mediterranean to distil into his cavasses; to imbue his paintings with the same kind of *provinciale* essence that he surrounds himself with, in the creation of introverted yet fathomless worlds.

## Collectors Digest

Pierre Soulages' oeuvre is revered round the globe, and is held in the collections of Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Honolulu Museum of Art; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Tate, London.

He has been awarded the Carnegie Prize, United States, 1964; Grand Prix for Painting, Paris, 1975; Rembrandt Award, Germany, 1976; Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1979; Praemium Imperiale for painting, Japan, 1994; Austrian Decoration for Science and Art, 2005; La Légion d'honneur, Paris, 2015; and the Grand prix du rayonnement français France, 2019.

In his birthplace of Rodez is located a museum dedicated to the artist, holding over 400 pieces of his work, the largest collection of Soulages' in the world. He is only the third artist after Picasso and Chagall to be bestowed a retrospective at the Louvre during their lifetime, in 2019.

<sup>i</sup> Pierre Soulages, quoted in Deborah Wilk, 'Pierre Soulages: Beyond black', 19 September 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> Pierre Soulages, quoted in Nina Siegal, 'Black Is Still the Only Color for Pierre Soulages', *New York Times*, 29 November 2019, [online](#)

**Pierre Soulages**

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<sup>iv</sup> Pierre Soulages, quoted in Zoe Stillpass, 'Pierre Soulages', *Interview Magazine*, 5 August 2014

<sup>v</sup> Pierre Soulages, quoted in Ben Davis, 'Pierre Soulages, Happy to Stay in the Dark', *Artnet News*, 19 June 2014

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**Provenance**

Private Collection, Switzerland (acquired directly from the artist)

Private Collection, Singapore

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Paris, Opera Gallery, *Une Expérience au présent*, 6 May - 12 June 2021, pp. 22-23 (illustrated)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



30

### Ouattara Watts

#### *Intercessor*

signed, titled, dated and inscribed '2003 N.Y. OuattARA WAtTS NEW YORK "iNTERCESSOR" OuattARA WAtTS Ouattara 2003' on the reverse  
mixed media on canvas  
181.6 x 151.1 cm. (71 1/2 x 59 1/2 in.)  
Executed in 2003.

#### Estimate

HK\$800,000 — 1,200,000

€97,400 — 146,000

\$103,000 — 154,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“My vision is not bound to a country or a continent; it extends beyond borders and all that can be found on a map. While I use identifiable pictorial elements to be better understood, this project is nevertheless about something much wider. I am painting the Cosmos.” — Ouattara Watts*

In a world of compromise, Ouattara Watts has not. Boasting a prolific career spanning five decades, his practice is distinguished by monumental canvases, alongside watercolours, gouaches, drawings, and collages, that connect West African aesthetics with Western modernist sensibilities, a consummate melange of his native graphic traditions with Neo-Expressionism. Naturally, he draws inspiration from the indigenous arts of Africa, but also draws from the pool of post-war abstraction — in particular the work of Rothko, who Watt says ‘touches upon the omniscient, unfolds life, death, man’s place with regards to the deepest of realities’<sup>i</sup>.



Mark Rothko, *White Center (Yellow, Pink and Lavender)*, 1950 © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Born Bakari Ouattara in the Ivorian capital Abidjan (referred to all as simply Ouattara), he would study at the esteemed l'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, in Paris, before a chance encounter with Basquiat would take him to New York, where he has lived and work since. The two quickly became close friends; one could even call them kindred spirits, separated by only 4 years and with their backgrounds intertwining as Ouattara was born in the Ivory Coast, and Basquiat to a Haitian father and Puerto Rican mother in Brooklyn. It of course would be Basquiat who gave him his start in New York, introducing him to his network of friends, curators and collectors and crucially landing him the infamous dealer, Vrej Baghoomian.

## A Powerful Constellation

*Intercessor* is an accomplished later work by Watts, where we see his diverse practice mature into an assemblage of chromatic variations and a diverse lexicon of geometric shapes and symbols balanced by biometric figures: an intoxication of colour, line and form. Here he departs from the more obvious African iconography of his earlier work — tribal masks, ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics — and establishes the vocabulary that would become paramount in his late stage career: mathematical equations (where Basquiat's influence begins to emerge), diagrams of atoms, earthly tones balanced with brighter accents, and intricate cosmic bursts. Indeed, it is the latter in this compositional agenda, Ouattara's oneness with the divine, that makes the present lot so bewitching. Bearing the stigmata of this spiritual maximalism, the artist leaves the door open in *Intercessor* for its audience to draw their own conclusions from its universal consciousness.

Music forms a considerable component of his artistic process, listening to the likes of John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Fela Kuti to seek out new modes of expression and enabling him to enter a meditative state while painting. Like the notes of a song, Watt then demarcates an analogy of sequences on the canvas, an automatic interaction between artist and medium.

Ouattara works quickly in his replete Bushwick studio, often on multiple pieces at once in relentless explosions of his creative drive. 'It's a kind of dance with the canvas all night in the studio', he explains <sup>ii</sup>.

## Ouattara's Time Is Now

Like [Ernie Barnes \(Lot 18\)](#), Ouattara is an artist who is undeserved a passing over in the canon of art history. Eschewing strict association with groups or institutions, his story has not been told from the auction lectern nor the lofty white cubes of museum retrospectives, but rather from the principled and virtuous works of a creative ethos that has always marched to the beat of its own drum. Anti-colonial, pure and showered with the mantle of cultural memory, the artist bends for no man or movement. As with all his compositions, *Intercessor* is a defiant battle cry against the assumed pre-eminence of the Western world, one that rips through the cosmos with a mastery over colour and form, and a profound spirituality.

## Collectors Digest

Watts has been involved in notable exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art (2021); Espace Paul Rebeyrolles, France (2019); Galerie Cécile Fakhoury, Abidjan (2018); Dakar Biennale of Contemporary African Art, Dakar, Senegal (2018); Venice Biennale, Venice (2017); La Villette, Paris

(2017); National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C. (2006); Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany (2002); and the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial, New York (2002), among others.

His work can be found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; Smithsonian National Museum of African American Art, Washington, D.C.; The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; Collection Mohammed IV, Morocco; Fondation Dapper, Paris, France; Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Saratoga Springs, New York; and the UC Berkeley Museum of Art and Film Archive, Berkeley, California, among others.

Currently, Watts has a solo show at Karma Gallery, who he is represented by, [Paintings](#), in New York.

<sup>i</sup> Ouattara Watts, quoted in Hafida Jemni, 'Sounding Out Painting: A Conversation with Ouattara Watts' for *Ouattara Watts: Before Looking at This Work, Listen to It*, Galerie Cécile Fakhoury, Abidjan, 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Ouattara Watts, quoted in 'Maximum Impact: Kaelen Wilson-Goldie on the art of Ouattara Watts', *Artforum*, September 2021, [online](#)

## Provenance

Karma, New York

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY OF AN IMPORTANT ASIAN COLLECTOR

31

### Sam Francis

#### *Untitled*

inscribed by studio assistant '1974 Tokyo 36 1/2" x 72"  
SFT74 92' on the reverse; further stamped with the  
Sam Francis Estate logo and facsimile signature stamp  
on the reverse

acrylic and gouache on paper  
92.7 x 182.9 cm. (36 1/2 x 72 in.)  
Executed in 1974.

#### Estimate

HK\$1,500,000 — 2,500,000

€184,000 — 306,000

\$192,000 — 321,000

[Go to Lot](#)



The 1970s were a pivotal time in Sam Francis' career, and arguably the decade where he reached the peak of his abilities as an artist. By the time the decade came about, Francis had already established himself as an imposing figure in the art world. Having already shown at MoMA and helped engineer the Tachisme movement in Europe, he worked extensively with artists all over the world, from Joan Mitchell to Walasse Ting.

*Untitled* could be considered to be a transitional piece between the white expanses that defined his late-60s *Edge* series towards the Greenbergian formalism present in his works from the 80s and 90s, where he aligned his practice more with the conventional abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey. However, considering this era in Francis' career to be 'transitional' is somewhat disparaging to an artist that was in constant evolution, experimenting with new ideas and techniques in a revolution of painting, redefining the parameters of the medium. Moreover, transition implies stylistic interruption, when Francis' oeuvre could only ever be considered as a layered concentration of the following key elements: sumptuous control of colour, a masterful employment of thinned-out paint and most importantly, a profound preoccupation with negative space.



Left: Installation view of the present lot at Los Angeles, Nicholas Wilder Gallery, Sam Francis, June 1975 © 2022 Sam Francis Foundation, California / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York Right: Left: Installation view of the present lot at Paris, Galerie Jean Fournier, Sam Francis, de 1947 à 1988, sur papier, October - November 1988 © 2022 Sam Francis Foundation, California / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

## The Country of Oblivion

Each of these concerns are brilliantly exhibited in the present lot, where Francis employs ballads of teal to form intersecting bands that divide the composition into a poetic balance of pigment and

canvas. The artist flexes his technical abilities here, using a range of techniques from a roller to create bands, then adding pools, drips and splatters of paint — producing an accomplished variation in the materiality of paint. Indeed, what underlies this concerto of forms and hues is a dedicated, almost architectural approach to compositional space. Francis used water and tinted gesso to demarcate the nexus of beams, over which he would apply paint on already dampened areas, working wet-on-wet and revisiting the surface before it had been given the opportunity to dry and develop chromatic agency.

*“Painting is about the beauty of space and the power of containment.” — Sam Francis*

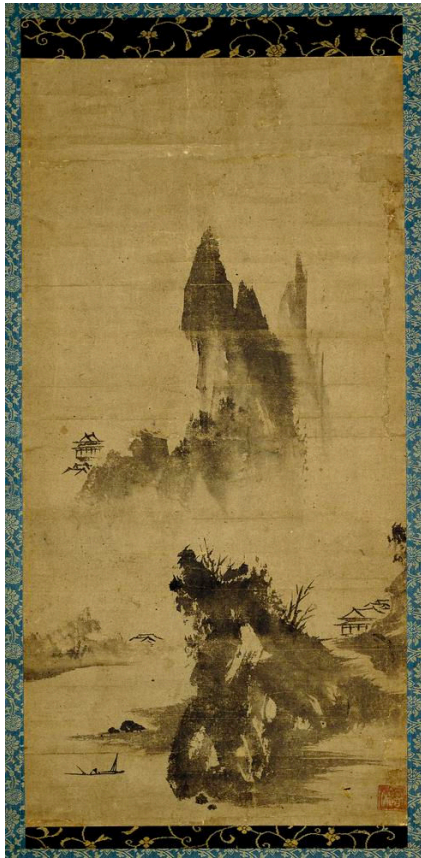
## One Foot in the West, the Other in the East, Straddling the World in Tradition



Francis painting in a studio borrowed from Teshigahara Sōfū in Tokyo, 1957 © 2022 Sam Francis Foundation, California / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York Photo: François-René Roland, Paris

Francis had always been fascinated with the concept of white space, though upon his first visit to Japan in 1957 upon commission from Teshigahara Sōfū, who was the master of the Sōgetsu School of ikebana (Japanese flower arranging), this preoccupation took on new bearings and a heightened sense of urgency. This can be seen in his *Japan Line* series of the late decade where long lines of dripped paint and nucleated forms that climb across the canvas create new fields of perspective for the swells of uninhabited white oceans that envelop them. The works here, which form the

theoretical and functional foundations of *Untitled*, and display striking semblances to two of the finest eras of Japanese art: the splashed ink *Haboku* scrolls of the Muromachi period and the monochromatic divergences of the Azuchi-Momoyama period Kano School. Francis demonstrated an exceptionally intuitive grasp of the concept of ‘*ma*’ — the dynamic interchange between form and non-form, object and void, mass and space. He would manifest *ma* through existential white holes that allow the accompanying forms to breathe, these mini universes assume primacy within the composition, offering a footpath through the composition and a blueprint for reaching a state of zen — rendering infinity, tangible. His finely attuned sensibilities paved the way for a close relation to some of the country’s leading post-war figures: for poet Takahiko Okada, the artist’s lyrical white was ‘straining, tense, a magnetic field’; for writer/artist Shūzō Takiguchi, it was ‘the space of effusion, filled with amorous tenderness’; while for critic Yoshiaki Tōno, one of his closest devotees in Japan, Francis had summoned ‘a white world that spells a rumbling, sensual, and fatal horror.’<sup>1</sup>



Sesshū Tōyō, Hanging Scroll, 15th Century Property of the British Museum, London

This would bring the art historian Peter Selz to posit that 'Japan, with a tradition that considers art, above all, as meditative experience, almost immediately responded with sympathy to Francis's work.'<sup>ii</sup> Such a position was shared by many critics in Japan, who aligned the quality of absence in his painting with further Asian theoretical concepts, such as *mu* (nothingness) in Zen Buddhism, and *yohaku* (unpainted space) in ink painting. Devotion to the aesthetic sensibilities of Buddhism was underpinned by a long-standing interest in the religion — during his time at UC Berkeley before the Second World War, he studied Zen texts at length. His attachment to Japan was made consecrate by two marriages and divorces with Japanese artists Teruko Yokoi and Mako Idemitsu, fathering two sons by the latter — and learning to speak and write basic Japanese, which reinforced his understanding and connection to *ma*.

## A Psychological Temperance

Through the 1970s, Francis' exploration of the interior, the spiritual, was tempered by a furthering commitment to science, and thus a balance between intuition and method. A student of psychology at college, the artist took this one step further when he began Jungian analysis in '71 — a detailed, analytical approach to talk therapy that seeks to bring balance and union between the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. Indeed this turn to psychology has been credited for the incredible creative surge and flowering in innovation that Francis enjoyed during the decade; the exploration of the psyche uncovering a well of boundless productivity and vision.

<sup>i</sup> Yoshiaki Tōno, quoted in Richard Speer, *Points of Entry: Sam Francis — The 70s*, ext. cat., Jonathan Novak Contemporary Art, September 2019, online

<sup>ii</sup> Peter Selz, quoted in Debra Burchett-Lere, 'Sam Francis: A Biographical Timeline', in *Sam Francis: Catalogue Raisonné of Canvas and Panel Paintings 1946–1994*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2011, p.179

### Provenance

Estate of the artist, California  
 Private Collection, Belgium  
 Guy Pieters Gallery, Saint-Paul-de-Vence  
 Private Collection, Belgium  
 Christie's, Hong Kong, 11 July 2020, lot 271  
 Acquired at the above sale by the present owner

### Exhibited

Los Angeles, Nicholas Wilder Gallery, *Sam Francis*, June 1975  
 Paris, Galerie Jean Fournier, *Sam Francis, de 1947 à 1988, sur papier*, October - November 1988

### Literature

D. Burchett-Lere, ed., *Sam Francis: Online Catalogue Raisonné Project*, plate SF74-92, online (illustrated)



32

**KAWS**

*UNTITLED*

signed and dated 'KAWS.. 13' on the reverse  
acrylic on canvas  
diameter 243.8 cm. (95 7/8 in.)  
Painted in 2013.

**Estimate**

HK\$3,500,000 — 4,500,000

€426,000 — 548,000

\$449,000 — 577,000

[Go to Lot](#)





The artist with the current work (left)

Being socially rebellious, internationally acclaimed contemporary American artist KAWS first found his unique artistic language in the streets of New York City during the 90s. Graffitiing and reworking over advertisements liberated his creativity, where his artist's signature 'XX' motif came to life and unique figure motifs like COMPANION and BENDY were born. KAWS adds his own era-specific cartoon creations into his compositions and infuses his iconic symbolism into them. Taking on the legacies of Andy Warhol, Keith Haring and Jeff Koons for including elements of contemporary pop culture, cartoons and graffiti into his artistic vocabulary, KAWS expands his presence beyond bus stop and phonebooth into the globe.

## Art for All



KAWS, *COMPANION*, 121 foot, Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong

KAWS artworks drastically vary from collectible plushies for homes, tondo canvases for museums, 2 foot tall sculptures for parks and monumental 121 foot floaties for major cities, such as one in Hong Kong Victoria Harbour in 2019. The artist strives to create non-exclusive art and a social symbol that fuses part of contemporary culture and consumerism. Furthermore, the ambitious artist collaborates with commercial brands like UNIQLO, Bearbrick and Campana brothers. This expands his outreach further and transforms his art with unlimited possibilities in forms of multiple mediums, like daily clothing, collectibles and furniture, etc. KAWS makes sure his art is accessible for all classes and his presence is everywhere in the world.



### Iconic Circular Tondo



Raphael, *The Alba Madonna*, c. 1510. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

From 2010 onwards KAWS started painting circular tondo canvases, this form dates back to the Renaissance. The rounded canvas circulates and centralises the direct focal point of the viewer onto the composition, a format that great Masters like Raphael excelled in. For example in *The Alba Madonna*, the focus is brought to the figures side-eyeing across the canvas. The present work features the same motif with KAWS' contemporary touch. UNTITLED portrays a side view of a dark

blue freckled face with the iconic X eye in teal with bright pink pupils. As the grey eyeball rolls across the centre of the canvas, the character charges on the viewer with a confrontational side-eye stare. KAWS paints with bold blocks of contrasting dark and sharp neon colours to outline the character's features, the zoomed-in face is flattened and conveys a distinctive sense of abstraction with three-quarters of an eye and a quartered face. As such, the piece demands active engagement to re-associate the represented features of the work with the character it represents.

The large scale tondo format makes the work monumental, for example, another 96 inches KAWS tondo was exhibited in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2013. The work bulges out with a full front view of a pair of XX eyes against an adjacent 1920s-era Hamilton grand environment. This sets up a sharp contrast between a contemporary fashionable icon and a National historic landmark site, elevating this type of large scale tondos to the status of high art. The present lot *UNTITLED* encapsulates the artist's idiosyncratic brand of Pop Art that bridges the worlds of art, popular culture and commerce.



Installation view of the current work at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *KAWS at PAFA*, 2013

### Collector's Digest

*"KAWS is not just referring to Pop culture, he is making it."* — Michael Auping

PHILLIPS

Considered as one of the most iconic and forward-thinking artists of his generation, KAWS is celebrated for his multi-disciplinary practice that subverts the traditions of fine art with street art influences, satirising consumer culture.

Breaking the ideological hierarchies between the avant-garde and kitsch, KAWS gives his characters life through a variety of mediums including clothing, limited-edition toys, and large-scale sculptures. His works can be found in prominent public collections around the world, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; CAC Malaga; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; and the Rosenblum Collection, Paris.

KAWS has exhibited extensively around the globe, most recently with solo exhibitions at the Serpentine, London: [KAWS: NEW FICTION](#) (digital exhibition) from 18 January - 27 February, 2022; the High Museum of Art in Atlanta: [KAWS PRINTS](#), from 3 December 2021 - 27 March 2022; and Skarstedt Gallery in New York (5 November - 11 December 2021), [KAWS: SPOKE TOO SOON](#). KAWS also recently exhibited a monumental retrospective in his hometown, [KAWS: WHAT PARTY](#), which was hosted by the Brooklyn Museum in New York between 26 February - 5 September 2021. Other recent solo exhibitions also include the [Mori Arts Centre in Tokyo](#) (16 July - 11 October 2021), and a retrospective at the [National Gallery of Victoria, Australia](#) (2019-2020).

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#### Provenance

Private Collection, Hong Kong

#### Exhibited

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *KAWS at PAFA*, 12 October 2013 - 5 January 2014

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



33 ♦

### Kohei Nawa

*PixCell-Deer #21*

mixed media and glass beads

139.5 x 75.6 x 68.1 cm. (54 7/8 x 29 3/4 x 26 3/4 in.)

Executed in 2009, this work is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity issued by SCAI The Bathhouse.

#### Estimate

HK\$2,800,000 — 3,500,000

€341,000 — 426,000

\$359,000 — 449,000

[Go to Lot](#)



Embellished with a teeming layer of translucent glass beads, Kohei Nawa's iconic *PixCell* deer is an effervescent spin on traditional taxidermy wall-mounts. A play on 'pixel', the smallest element of a digital image, and 'cell', the smallest unit of a living organism, the *PixCell* series is a marriage of polarities, exploring the complex relationships between the natural and the artificial, the real and the virtual, the singular and the whole. *PixCell-Deer #21* is a sophisticated embodiment of Nawa's shimmering oeuvre, composed of a meticulously 'PixCellized' taxidermy deer head, emerging from the wall in a sea of mesmerising, crystalline orbs that distort not only the object's original form but perhaps its meaning as well.

### The *PixCell* Series

*"What interests me is the parallel relationship between the object used as the motif and the object after it that has been transformed into a PixCell work. I am always thinking about how a person viewing the work perceives and becomes aware of image and materiality, and of the icon and the virtual image, and I also think about sight and the paralysis of touch. At the foundation of my works is life and the environment that envelops it." — Kohei Nawa*

Covered in foam and froth, the artist creates for his subject a new layer of skin -- an element which he cites as vital to the theme of his works. On the importance of skin to his *PixCell* series, Nawa explains: 'To our senses of vision and touch, the world is a continuum of surfaces, and all things are covered with some sort of skin. Because we sense and become aware of objects through their skin, it is the quality of the skin that determines whether or not we feel something to be real. The skin becomes an interface that links sensibility with matter, and images are produced through this interplay of sensibility and matter.'<sup>1</sup>



Detail of the present lot

Indeed, Nawa's deer are a compelling translation of a virtual object into reality, blurring the lines between the organic and the synthetic. Imbuing the supposedly solid form with an air of lightness and weightlessness, the artist makes the work dynamic, as if it could float into the air and transcend dimensions. Further, the glass orbs vary in size, placing an emphasis on the smaller units that comprise the whole -- the beads magnify and distort the deer's form, and the viewer observes the deer as if it were going through a metamorphosis, crossing the threshold from the virtual world into ours. Mirroring the way that Nawa first encounters the deer in pixel form as a photograph on the internet, the viewer is presented with the deer that the artist has 'PixCellized', altered and warped by a boundless sea of airy glass.

## The Sacred Deer

Deer are of great significance in Japanese tradition and culture, considered sacred animals and messengers of the gods in the Shinto faith. Nawa's works borrow heavily from this religious idea, further amalgamating his polarising exploration of the natural and artificial by incorporating elements of the spiritual.

In the Shinto religion, there exists a type of painting known as *Kasuga Deer Mandala*, which typically depicts a deer standing, gaze cast over its shoulder. As conduits between heavens and earth, deer are protected in Japan and regarded with respect by the people. Indeed, there is an ethereal, powerful quality to Nawa's PixCell deer— perhaps, much like the *Kasuga Deer Mandala*, they are tributes to these divine creatures, albeit with a distinctly contemporary twist.



*Deer Mandala of Kasuga Shrine*, Nanbokuchō period (1336–92) Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

## In Conversation: The Digital and The Real

In 2021, Kohei Nawa spoke to Marie-Charlotte Burat in an interview, sharing the inspirations and significance behind his *PixCell* series and its conceptual relations to the digital sphere.

**Marie-Charlotte Burat:** *How did this series come about? It encompasses the notions of pixels, cells, and selling. Is making purchases online to create artwork a way of questioning our current consumption patterns?*

**Kohei Nawa:** In the *PixCell* series of sculptures, transparent spheres (cells) are used to cover the surface of an object, transforming it into a PixCell (pixels + cells). The object is acquired through the Internet, and then given a skin of a large, indeterminate number of cells, resembling an image on a computer monitor. When the object is completely covered with spheres (cells) of various sizes, dividing its skin into individual cells, it is ready to be 'viewed' through lenses that enlarge and distort it.

This series, whose origin was influenced by globalism and the growing significance of data, produces a visual and tactile experience that queries the reality of the skin of the object, while reflecting the relationship between the digital camera lens and the object that is digitised by it. The term 'PixCell' was coined from a combination of 'pixel' and 'cell.' 'Sell' is not part of the concept at all. When I first got my own Internet connection as a graduate student, I had the idea of collecting sculpture motifs by searching the Internet using a number of conceptual terms as the search keywords. Looking at the many images suggested by the search engine, I tried to obtain those that I found particularly interesting or that produced some sort of reaction in me. Those occasions were the starting points for new works. In some cases, the encounter with a new motif came not from purchasing, but from someone giving it to me.

**MCB:** *Why did you want to create this mise en abyme with an object purchased online that would become a pixel again in real life?*

**KN:** When computers seeped into our lives, bringing a major transformation to society, I could physically sense the swelling wave of information, advanced information. At the same time, I felt that to some extent I was just a bystander in the process. That led me to think seriously about the question of why people would convert something into information and want to possess it. To turn that question into physical form, I created the sculpture format that I call *PixCell*. The fabrication process involved an irrational procedure (directly covering an object with spherical lenses) that would never become widespread on computer platforms. This optical format is not simply pixels returning to life as *PixCell* works. Rather, it resembles the relationship between an object observed by a telescope or microscope, or the subject photographed by a camera, and the photograph or image that results.

Click [here](#) to read the complete interview.

## Collector's Digest

One of the most prolific Japanese artists today, Kohei Nawa's impressive oeuvre has been celebrated with innumerable awards and exhibitions. Currently an Associate Professor at the Kyoto University of Art and Design, Nawa was most recently awarded the 32nd Kyoto Art Culture Award in 2019, an international award that recognises the highest achievements of individuals who have made great contributions to the fields of Advanced Technology, Basic Sciences, and Arts and

Philosophy, with only one Prize awarded for each of the three categories.



Kohei Nawa, *PixCell-Deer #24*, 2011 Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Nawa's multidisciplinary works are frequently presented by prominent galleries worldwide, and they are displayed in the public collections of numerous prestigious institutions, including but not limited to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, USA); The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (Tokyo, Japan); Daimler Art Collection (Berlin, Germany); and the National Gallery Victoria (Melbourne, Australia). Notably, works from the *PixCell* series appeared at the [Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature](#) in Paris in 2018, following the success of his [Throne](#) project being exhibited at the Louvre that same year.

**Kohei Nawa**

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The artist's current exhibition, [PixelCell\\_Moment](#), is currently on view at Palo Alto, with Pace Gallery from 13 May to 1 July, 2022.

<sup>i</sup> Kohei Nawa, quoted in Donata Marletta, 'Kohei Nawa. A Japanese Artist Beyond Cultural Stereotypes', *Digicult*, 13 January 2016, [online](#)

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**Provenance**

SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

London, Saatchi Gallery, *The Franks-Suss Collection*, 28 January - 28 March 2010

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

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### Anna Park

*I to I*

charcoal and graphite on panel  
182.8 x 121.4 cm. (71 7/8 x 47 3/4 in.)  
Executed in 2019.

#### Estimate

HK\$300,000 — 500,000

€36,600 — 61,000

\$38,500 — 64,100

[Go to Lot](#)





Working almost exclusively within a monochromatic palette, Anna Park's charcoal and graphite creations are visually arresting, kaleidoscopic stills, ones which dangle at the precipice between reverie and memory, straddling figuration and abstraction. Each work contains angular, fragmented bodies stuffed to the brim, as we are met with familiar scenes from shared memories of parties, barbecues, musical performances—vestiges of 'humanity at its finest', according to the artist.<sup>i</sup> Though still in her twenties, Park's mature oeuvre has already become part of the collection of Brian Donnelly (KAWS) (having seen Park's work displayed at the New York Academy of Art), as well as that of institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. The artist has also had recent solo exhibitions at Blum & Poe Gallery in Tokyo, and Half Gallery, New York.



Installation from Anna Park's recent show *Hello, Stranger* at Blum & Poe Gallery, Tokyo, 1 September – 9 October 2021

*“Rather than depicting any specific moments, I want to present instances of uncertain chaos... I guess it's kind of how I feel with a lot of things that happen; where a level of anxiety goes hand-in-hand with the unpredictable nature of life.” — Anna Park*

### Chaos Through the Looking Glass

Anna Park's pieces remind one of giddy mirages from a night of unfettered debauchery—each image possesses the qualities of peering through glass, as characters and objects become warped or exaggerated. According to the artist, she first trawls the internet for stock imagery as inspiration, then zeroes in on aspects of the photos that draw her in the most, and finally integrates imagination with the pieces she finds: 'I find it funny how searching up such benign statements on the internet provides an endless amount of unexpected (and at times disturbing) content.'<sup>ii</sup> The results are not unlike that which can be found in *I to I*. In the present work, a pair of women seem to be swaying arm in arm, as a male figure can be seen off to their side, either trying to engage in the pair, or to clasp onto one of them. It is unclear whether this attention is unwarranted, and an onlooker peers in the background, their eyes darting towards the scene.



Detail of the present work

Though ever so subtle, Park's work is embedded with a clever cynicism that perhaps even critiques our contemporary society. *I to I*, so reminiscent of an intrusive, unplanned paparazzi-angled shot,

forces its viewer to confront an uncertain setting: are we looking at two celebrities in varying levels of inebriation, stumbling out of or into a limousine, clutching their jewellery and purses, firmly steered by their bodyguard? Or, are we to fret for the unsteady women, scantily clad, being cajoled by a male bystander? Park's puzzling work is filled with intrigue and deliberately so—her work quite literally captures the 'grey areas' of society, provoking us with their ambiguity. Even in her vague title, *I to I*, one thinks of the homophonic 'eye to eye'—who is *not* seeing eye to eye, then? Or are we to believe that someone is suffering from some sort of internal turmoil, not seeing "I to I" with themselves?

## Blurring the Divide

Born in South Korea in 1996, the artist moved to the US with her family as a child. Drawing was a constant in her childhood, and into adulthood, after having left Pratt's illustration and animation programme in favour of the New York Academy of Art's more traditional art school education, Park's work became wholly dedicated to the use of charcoal. She was drawn in to 'the quickness, the forgivingness' of charcoal, remarking on its malleability. Citing Cecily Brown as an early influence, Park would often create her own work with Brown's catalogues open near her, her interviews playing in the background.

Like some other abstract artists, Park's works began more figurative and loyal to their source material before they became their current iterations. Speaking on her creative process, the artist has commented: 'In the past, my work had been a lot more tightly rendered and it rarely deviated from the references I was working from. Gradually, I began to distort and abstract certain parts of the pieces that seemed to celebrate the mark making of charcoal more. It was only in the most recent body of work that I introduced a cartoon/caricature element, which reminded me of the characters I would draw as a little kid.'<sup>iii</sup> By rendering her figures' faces in cartoonish, ghoulish ways allows for an exaggerated treatment of the emotions and gestures of her characters—thrown into drastic contrast against the realistic backgrounds they are placed in. This juxtaposition can be keenly felt in *I to I*, where hyper-realistic details such as a clasped phone, the outlines of a hair scrunchie, a pronounced acrylic nail, all heavily differ from the smeared and drawn out faces of the individuals portrayed. All the above is paired with the artist's reclaiming of charcoal—perhaps more associated with draftsmanship and sketching—a medium that specifically allows for the whimsical, dreamlike effect of Park's style.

*"[F]or now, charcoal and graphite are my primary mediums. I feel as though the immediacy of charcoal really allows me to see my ideas come to life as soon as I conceive it. Being such a simple, straight forward medium, it presents a challenge to myself in how many different possibilities I can create visually with it." — Anna*

## Park

Having garnered increasing attention, Anna Park has spoken about her need for introspection: she has indicated dedicating time to hone her technique, or perhaps to explore her Korean heritage in future works. Curiously, in Park's affinity for using charcoal as her chosen means of creation, she has engaged with a Korean tradition that views the material as possessing the power to keep out evil forces. The cultural significance of this comes as an unexpected link to exorcising "the chaotic, suffocating side" of society which has become part and parcel of Park's work. Beyond the mere prowess of the artist's hand, Park's feverish compositions tiptoe close to social commentary, their evocations of various cultural moments sparking the imaginations of so many viewers.

## Collector's Digest

Excerpt from Sasha Bogojev, 'A Conversation With Anna Park', Juxtapoz, 13 May 2019:

**Sasha Bogojev:** *Could you please describe your work process in terms of composing an image as well as a technical approach to drawing it on paper?*

**Anna Park:** From the time I find an image that I like to the time I start drawing is not a very long time. I rarely do a lot of preliminary sketches; I think due to the fact that I'm just antsy to get started on a big sheet of paper. I begin by laying things out in a very gestural way and then I'll add in elements from other references if they seem to fit the composition. How I want the viewer's eye to travel around the piece is something that is always in the back of my mind.

**S.B.:** *Do you see your work as humorous, provocative, a critique, or something else?*

**A.P.:** I would see my work like snapshots into things we are all pretty used to; just in a demonic (and hopefully funny) light.

**S.B.:** *What is the type of reaction or feedback you're hoping to get from the viewer?*

**A.P.:** I hope to elicit some sense of familiarity with the viewer. Whether this reminds them of a party they've been to, or just being able to recognize any of the characters as their own self or someone they know. Or if anything, I hope they get a bit of a laugh out of it.

**Anna Park**

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<sup>i</sup> The artist quoted in Tess Thackara, 'Anna Park's Charcoal Drawings of the End of the World Have Earned Her Fans From Top Curators to KAWS. At 25, She's Just Getting Started', *Artnet News*, 12 October 2021

<sup>ii</sup> The artist quoted in Sasha Bogojev, 'A Conversation With Anna Park', *Juxtapoz*, 13 May 2019

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

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**Provenance**

Over the Influence, Los Angeles

Private Collection, Paris

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



36

### Trey Abdella

#### *Some Things Aren't Worth Waiting For*

signed and dated 'TREY ABDELLA 2019' on the reverse  
acrylic, spray paint, modelling paste, Plexiglas, glitter,  
velvet, rhinestones and plastic gold chain on canvas  
122 x 172.7 cm. (48 x 67 7/8 in.)  
Executed in 2019.

#### Estimate

HK\$600,000 — 900,000

€72,700 — 109,000

\$76,900 — 115,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*"I make work that is really reflective of things that I'm going through and just like my life." — Trey Abdella*

## Meaning in Life, Meaning in Art

Virginia-born American artist Trey Abdella lives and works in New York. The challenges of living in a complex cosmopolitan city has served as the inspiration for his artworks, although the paintings themselves are not specifically about New York. The expressive boldness of Abdella's works originates from the artist making art because he was grounded by his parents as a child, left only with paper to draw cartoons. Branching from this, a sense of self-correction if not vindication is persistent in the artist's work; as can be seen from the artist's portrait, the painting on the right shows a figure ironing his own arm - as in ironing things out - trying to literally straighten things. An ironic sense of misfortune present in the artist's childhood continues to the present, as Abdella's artworks invite his viewers a glimpse into his conflicted internal world of dilemmas.



Installation view of the current work at Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, 2020

Trey Abdella's art strives to resonate with human experiences and feelings, and daringly confronts the spectator with the artist's struggles in life without filter. Abdella utilises simple

universal iconography referenced from internet memes, movies and cartoons found in contemporary culture. He blends these icons with various aspects of anxiety he or his friends experienced from different scenarios encountered in daily life, portraying the underbelly of society. As can be seen in another piece, *Dead Man Walking* illustrates a dark story in which love brings a deadly ending to its main character. Abdella's paintings express insecurity, embarrassment, fear, terror, disgust, unspeakable desires and emotions that we must conceal everyday in order to abide with social conventions and expectations.

## *Some Things Aren't Worth Waiting For*

Within a legal framework, identity is conferred through officially issued documentation rather than power of personality. The present work, *Some Things Aren't Worth Waiting For*, portrays possibly the artist himself awaiting official documentation at a government agency: the character's ennui is palpable, as the almost-comedic title of the painting suggests that it is not something that he looks forward to receiving. Societal recognition of one's identity is in a sense self-effacing, as one loses their individuality by becoming a part of it. This feeling is all the more ironic when one considers that the main character sports a branded Rolex, in itself another form of identity crafting through status symbolism. This torment of losing one's identity is fully expressed by the character dragging his face in an extreme rendition of what is colloquially known as 'facepalming', wounding himself in the process as he drastically carves deep grooves into his face.

His eyes are lost, leaving only four deep red tracks. The carefully constructed composition magnifies the power of this imagery and emotion, where the figure is disproportionately large in the foreground against a relatively obscure office that fades out with perspective in the left background. Attention is not brought to the busy office surroundings, but rather to the frozen moment of internal melancholy and self-destruction. The overall effect is reminiscent of exaggerated Looney Tunes scenes, in which characters' emotions are caricatured to ridiculous extremes for comedic effect, oftentimes zoomed in or highlighted disproportionately.



Left: Detail of the present lot Right: *Looney Tunes* character

## Skilled Painting Techniques

*“(A) big focus on traditional technique made me want to try different mediums, playing with different types of technical languages, like things that are flat like cartoons, and mixing that with reality.” — Trey Abdella*

Similar to American contemporary artist Jamian Juliano-Villani, Abdella also uses projectors to construct the composition of his artworks. Although Abdella is well trained in realism, he branches out from traditional form and textures of painting, and explores simplistic expressions in drawing in the style of cartoon. The current work exhibits the artist’s skilful application of a varied mixture of brushstrokes and painting techniques. The figure’s coarse face is illustrated with fluffy patches of thick paint contrasting with a cartoonish hand. In contrast, the Rolex Submariner watch is hyper-realistically sculpted with layers of paint, set against a highly textured painted sleeve reminiscent of the feel of cloth. The artist also uses found objects, like a rhinestone and a gold-coloured chain, injecting verisimilitude into the painting. Abdella playfully builds up multiple layers in the composition to stimulate the viewer’s eye to simultaneously process multiple messages within one glance. The highly charged internal emotions packed behind the highly skilled painting techniques blurs the divide between the worlds of reality and illusion.



Lot 273, Jamian Juliano-Villani, *Golden Girl*, 2015 Phillips Hong Kong Day Sale, 21 June 2022 Estimate HKD 300,000-500,000

## Collector’s Digest

Born in 1994 in Manassas, West Virginia, Trey Abdella graduated from School of Visual Arts, New York for his BFA in 2016 and furthered his studies with a master’s degree at New York Academy of Art.

The artist’s latest solo exhibition, *Almost Heaven*, is currently running at the X Museum in Beijing (17 April to 17 July 2022), which marked the artist’s debut in China. Trey Abdella held solo exhibitions internationally at KÖNIG GALERIE, Seoul (2021); KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin (2020); T293 Gallery, Rome (2021, 2019), amongst others. His work has been included in recent group shows at Vito Schnabel Gallery, Los Angeles (2022) and Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles (2021). He also joined the Chubb artist fellowships at the New York Academy of Art (2019-2020). His art is included in important collections such as the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Perez Museum, Miami; Albertina Museum and X Museum, Beijing. The current work was included as part of the *To Paint Is To Love Again* exhibition at Nino Mier Gallery Los Angeles in 2020.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbnK-ixZVEk>

The artist speaking on his practice

**Provenance**

Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles

Private Collection

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Los Angeles, Nino Mier Gallery, *To Paint is to Love Again*, 18 -28 January 2020

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



37

### Szabolcs Bozó

*One Bird, A Cat and A Man*

signed, dated and inscribed 'BOZÓ 2020 LONDON

Bozó' on the reverse

acrylic and oil stick on canvas

130.5 x 160.5 cm. (51 3/8 x 63 1/4 in.)

Executed in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$400,000 — 600,000

€48,700 — 73,100

\$51,300 — 76,900

[Go to Lot](#)





*“My characters are like forms to me. It’s the randomness of them that I like — the more ridiculous or outlandish they are, the better.” — Szabolcs Bozó*

Standing before the vivid works created by Szabolcs Bozó, one feels as if they are stepping inside the pages of a colourful children’s book populated by absurd yet adorable characters. Channelling the joyful exuberance of simpler days, the Hungarian artist’s oeuvre comprises bright, bizarre creatures, often manifested on large canvases and murals. The present work is emblematic of Bozó’s iconic style, depicting a falcon-like creature with wings painted in rich shades of royal blue and gold. As the title suggests, the character is a hybrid of a bird, a cat, and a man -- its front leg seems to be that of a human’s, while its hindleg is a brown paw with sharp talons characteristic of birds of prey. It is the ridiculousness and joyousness of Bozó’s creations that makes them all the more lovable and endearing to critics and collectors alike.

### A Nostalgic Narrative

While Bozó is hesitant to make an intentional connection to his homeland, perceiving his work as a tribute to childhood and imagination rather than a reflection of culture and history, Hungarian pop culture has had an indirect influence on his aesthetic. In regard to this, Bozó reflects: ‘...my figures are mostly not tied to local pictorial traditions. Of course, there are a character or two that I bring from home. For a previous show, for example, I made a Süsü, the dragon, but the Czech figure Krtek, the Mole is also a recurring character.’<sup>i</sup> Born in 1992, the artist grew up in a newly post-communist Hungary — a time when local creatives and productions flourished. Eastern Europe had their own animations and cartoons, and Bozó’s incorporation of beloved characters into his oeuvre is a nod to nostalgic children’s entertainment, which often intersects with the region’s rich folkloric culture.



Still from Hungarian Animated Film, *Johnny Corncob*, 1973, directed by Marcell Jankovics

Painted in a bold, bright palette that looks as if picked straight out of a crayon box, a cast of delightful, animal-like creatures dance merrily across Bozó’s canvases. Their eyes, reminiscent of googly eyes used in arts and crafts, peek playfully at something outside of the frame, brimming with curiosity and mischief. The characters appear to be endearing little troublemakers, all donning cheeky, knowing smiles. Their round, bubbly bodies recall the form of a twisted balloon animal one would likely find at a child’s birthday party, imbuing the works with lively energy and sentimental feeling. Bozó’s art-making process plays into the nostalgic narrative of his works as well — he rolls out his canvases on the floor, filling in the outlined forms with large, loose strokes as if the surface were a giant colouring book<sup>ii</sup>.

*“Funnily, I used to say that instead of Cubism, I represent the Cuteism movement.”  
— Szabolcs Bozó*

*faux naïf*

Bozó's understanding of colour is profound, his paintings brimming with varying textures and tones despite the use of single-colour blocks. Opting for a looser hand instead of strict, solid planes of pigment, Bozó's surfaces are erratic, mottled, and full of surprises. In the current work, traces of fingerprints and even footprints are sprinkled throughout; smudges of colour and stray specks of paint stain the white backgrounds, purposely clumsy yet exuding a juvenile charm.



Detail of the present work

Impulse and imperfections are integral to his paintings, mirroring the excited and uninhibited way that children create artwork, focusing on enjoying themselves, instead of fixating on details and errors. His brushstrokes are unpredictable and wide, intentionally messy and instilled with unparalleled enthusiasm.

Unmediated in his expression of creativity, Bozó's zoomorphic characters are chimeric and fantastical, often sporting extra limbs and wearing unsettlingly human expressions. His creations are refreshing in their honesty and naivety, possessing a boundless imagination that one typically associates with the pure, untainted childhood experience. Bozó's deliberately cartoonish style is

best described as *faux naïf* — French for 'falsely naïve' — which connotes art that eschews traditional painting techniques in favour of simpler, intuitive visual cues. Born out of the desire to seek out authenticity, this movement has been popular since the early 20th century, pioneered by artists such as Henri Rousseau and Paul Klee. More recently, *faux naïf* has been characterised by juvenile art styles and childhood imagery, noticeable in works by those such as Edgar Plans, Katherine Bernhardt, and Robert Nava.



Left: Lot 38, Katherine Bernhardt, *Laundry Day*, 2017 Phillips Hong Kong Evening Sale, 22 June 2022 Estimate HKD800,000 - 1,200,000 Right: Lot 40, Robert Nava, *Shark Wing Pegasus*, 2019 Phillips Hong Kong Evening Sale, 22 June 2022 Estimate HKD1,200,000 - 1,800,000

### Collector's Digest

Currently based in London, Szabolcs Bozó's work has been widely exhibited in numerous cities, such as New York, Miami, Palma de Mallorca, Madrid, Paris, and Shanghai, among many others. His recent solo exhibitions include *The Explorer* (2021) with Carl Kostyál, London; *Kawaii* (2021) with Almine Rech, Shanghai; *Busójárás (Carnival)* (2021) with Almine Rech, Brussels.

The artist's first solo museum exhibition, *Must You Dance*, will open at M Woods Beijing, 9 July, closing 9 October 2022. The exhibition will include paintings, works on paper, and site specific installations and sculptures.

<sup>i</sup> Szabolcs Bozó, quoted in Adam Hencz, 'A Perfect Antidote to Disquiet Times: The Goofy Creatures of Szabolcs Bozó', *Artland*, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> 'SZABOLCS BOZÓ', *CASE STUDYO*, [online](#)

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**Provenance**

L21 Gallery, Palma

Private Collection, Macau

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM A DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE  
COLLECTION

38

### **Katherine Bernhardt**

#### *Laundry Day*

signed, titled and dated "'Laundry Day" 2017 Katherine  
Bernhardt Katherine Bernhardt 2017' on the reverse  
acrylic and spray paint on canvas  
306 x 245 cm. (120 1/2 x 96 1/2 in.)  
Executed in 2017.

#### **Estimate**

HK\$800,000 — 1,200,000

€97,400 — 146,000

\$103,000 — 154,000

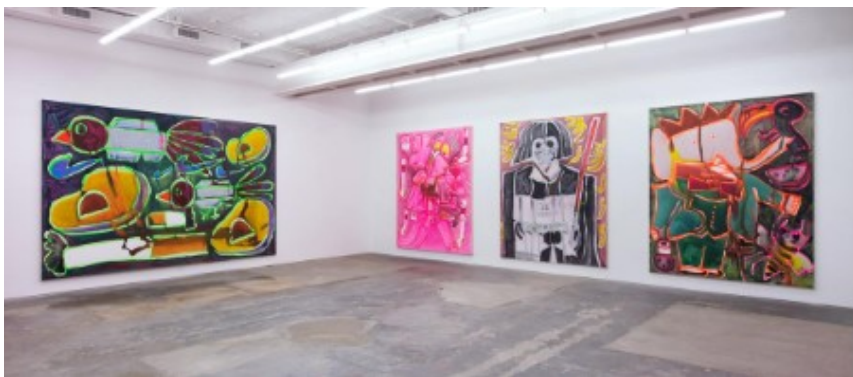
[Go to Lot](#)



*“I never feel like I have enough paintings and need to make more and more. It’s an obsession to need to make an image. I also like humour in art and try to paint the most mundane thing I can find, like toilet paper or cigarettes, something that you would never think to paint, but that could be funny.” — Katherine Bernhardt*

Electrifying, obsessive, and unabashedly fun, American artist Katherine Bernhardt’s characteristically energetic paintings are celebrations of colour and form. A fusion of pop iconography, graffiti technique and the formal vernacular of Colour Field artists, Bernhardt’s oeuvre is a personal catalogue of the quotidian of everyday life. Repeatedly painting images of common objects with strong outlines and vibrant hues in an almost frantic frenzy, Bernhardt forms her own visual language that is akin to calligraphy or graffiti tags.

Gathering diverse and unrelated imagery such as watermelons, cigarettes, pizza slices and sharks into cohesive compositions, the artist jumbles with an endless roster of motifs from daily life whilst culling characters from classic American pop culture such as E.T., Garfield, Darth Vader, and most notably, the Pink Panther — as seen in the current work.



Installation view of the current work at *Katherine Bernhardt: GREEN CANADA*, New York, 5 January 5 - 11 February 2018 © Canada, New York

## A Maximalist Aesthetic

Featuring her most iconic motif of the pink panther, *Laundry Day* dazzles with its large scale, bright shades of fuchsia, and brushstrokes full of verve and tenacity. Evoking Hawaiian sunsets and tropical drinks, Bernhardt’s first paintings of her signature panthers were inspired by her son, Khalifa’s love for the cartoon, and their stay at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Honolulu. The resort

was overflowing in pink decor; from pink towels, pink sheets, pink carpeting, pink beach chairs, pink stationery, to the Pink Panther on TV:

*“Everything was pink. I thought, Oh my God, that’s awesome. I should start making all-pink paintings.” — Katherine Bernhardt*

Pulling inspiration from a myriad of sources, Bernhardt’s spontaneous and visually arresting compositions are assembled into collage-like compositions that are representative of a collective cultural memory. Over-saturated and overstuffed, Bernhardt’s paintings reflect the cluttered and layered space of her own house, depicting objects she discovered at local thrift shops, from her parent’s home, or during her travels:

*“My work is directly related to the house where I grew up and the maximalist aesthetic that is within it. Space filled up everywhere with no space to breathe, my work kind of copies that. Filling every inch of the canvas with symbols and things.” — Katherine Bernhardt*

## Fields of Colour

*“I love everything about painting: I love colour and I love mixing it, I always have. I love putting a brush to a canvas and making a line. I love Morris Louis and his stain painting, and Mary Heilmann and her colours. [...] It’s an impulse to make things and for me that impulse is in painting.” — Katherine Bernhardt*

Inheriting the visual lexicon of Colour Field artists such as Morris Louis, Helen Frankenthaler and Mary Heilmann, Bernhardt’s begins her paintings by outlining with spray paint on upright canvases, later placing them onto the floor where she paints with thinned down acrylics, allowing the colours to overflow and interact with each other in chance encounters.



Left: Morris Louis, *Untitled*, 1959-1960 Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art © Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York Right: Mary Heilmann, *Primalon Ballroom*, 2002 © Mary Heilmann. Courtesy of the artist, 303 Gallery, New York, and Hauser & Wirth

Blending seamlessly together, the washes of intense colour in works such as *Laundry Day* demonstrates the magnetic quality of using a wet-on-wet technique. In Morris Louis' *Untitled*, the fellow American artist also utilises board bands of running colour that gravitate and cascade towards the centre of the canvas. Though sharing a similar technique, Bernhardt's style is distinctive in its more saturated vibrancy. Additionally, Bernhardt looks to Mary Heilmann's diverse selection of colours for inspiration. Similar to Bernhardt's approach, Heilmann also demonstrates a clear autobiographical dimension in her oeuvre, evident from the pieces related to her memories, places, and friendship.



Detail of of the present work

## Collector's Digest

Born 1975 in St. Louis, American artist Katherine Bernhardt reviewed her BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago and her MFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York. First gaining momentum in 2017, Bernhardt held her first institutional solo exhibition at [the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth](#), also creating a 60 foot long mural, *XXL Superflat Pancake*, for the St. Louis Contemporary Art Museum in the same year. Bernhardt's notable recent exhibitions include: ['Ahí donde no has llegao' sabes que te llevaré](#), Diablo Rosso, Panama City (2021); [Katherine Bernhardt, José Luis Vargas: VOODOO MAYO KETCHUP](#), Carl Freeman Gallery, Margate (2020), and [Garfield on Scotch Tape](#), Xavier Hufkens, Brussels (2019).

In 2021, David Zwirner [announced joint representation](#) of the artist along with CANADA Gallery. The artist's first solo exhibition with Zwirner will be forthcoming in 2022 at their London gallery.

Work by the Bernhardt is found in prominent public and museum collections, including the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Knoxville Museum of Art, Tennessee; Portland Museum of Art, Maine; Rubell Museum, Miami; and San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas. Bernhardt lives and works in St. Louis.

**Provenance**

Canada, New York

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

New York, Canada, *Katherine Bernhardt: GREEN*, 5 January - 11 February 2018

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



39

### Issy Wood

*Dog With Pendants (Not as Close)*

oil on velvet

100 x 140 cm. (39 3/8 x 55 1/8 in.)

Executed in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$1,200,000 — 1,800,000

€146,000 — 220,000

\$154,000 — 231,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*Dog with Pendants (Not as Close)* is a shining example of Wood's magnificent desolation, who presents a double portrait of surreal domesticity. Two dogs stand proud if not bemused, their cubic haunches turning form into foundation as they are suspended against a Magrittesque backdrop of swirling clouds - a crepuscular oblivion. Tension is rife in the composition as the dogs stand guard, gargoyles against our presence, while the cropped snapshot of this gravity-defying scene elevates this unease to a debasing sense of claustrophobia.



Rene Magritte, *Torse nu dans les nuages*, c. 1937

### A Haunting Malaise

*"I'm convinced the way I configure these otherwise alluring products and garments often lowers them, literally, in tone, or happily switches them from being an advert to an expression of perversion, in the way painting can do."* — Issy Wood

Wood projects derisive visions of vanitas, combining elements of the past and present in an unlikely marriage that the artist labels 'medieval millennial', infusing contemporary anxieties into a classical lexicon where ideals are rendered non-existent by consumerism and where heritage is levied as a transaction<sup>1</sup>. With a humour as cynical as battery acid is corrosive, she scalds the genre of still life not only through her subject matter, but also - tellingly - with the titles that she bestows onto her works. Asphyxiated of allegorical markers, the artist leaves the door open for interpretation and mixed messages that can realise themselves as dark and murky as the atmospheres projected onto her canvas. The similarly brooding work of Belgian painter Michaël Borremans holds instant parallels, both him and Wood imbuing their compositions with atmospheres that are not quite nostalgic or melancholic but macabre, an element of danger simmering beneath their beguiling layers of pigment.



Michaël Borremans, *What Else Could They Do*, 2019 Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery

Wood works quickly on her works, prohibiting procrastination and allowing her limitless creative vision to manifest itself as a stream of consciousness. This is not to say that her compositions are superficial or insular, but rather form a narrative where they function as loci for automatic reactions between subject, pigment, and surface. Wood denotes this as such: 'I only deal in extremes - either doing something almost pathologically quickly or overanalysing to the point of

paralysis, not just in the studio but in my day-to-day life.’<sup>ii</sup>

## Fading Luxury

Her practice holds an obsession with texture and surface, their contents and tonalities, recalling the forms of the Dutch Golden Age tradition of *pronkstilleven*. Like Nicolaes van Vererndael or Abraham van Beijeren, the artist creates opulent phantasms that ooze resplendence yet impermanence, acting as a reminder that not everything is as it seems. Paint becomes an embalming fluid for her seductive pictorial modes – what the noted American critic Barry Schwabsky calls ‘perverted realism’<sup>iii</sup>. With the present lot this resplendence is heightened by the use of velvet stretched to form a canvas, allowing the white and creamy palette to be made glorious.



Abraham van Beijeren, *Banquet Still-Life*, c. 1660

An intriguing facet of Wood’s practice is how she sources her material from auction catalogue, an approach that began during her studying at the Royal Academy. Ranging from works by Old

Masters to family-heirlooms – items that are very rarely in the public eye and out of private hands – Wood views them more as crucibles for distortion, combining their advertising language and financial condition with her oblique palette and foreboding countenance, creating a juxtaposition between the decorative and the dreadful. In this way the artist takes these objects of desire, refined and symmetrical in their majesty, and grants them essential honesty.

## Collector’s Digest

Wood has held solo shows at Carlos/Ishikawa, London; X Museum, Beijing; and JTT Gallery, New York. She has also been included in group exhibitions such as *Fire Figure Fantasy*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2022); *Artists Inspired by Music: Interscope Reimagined*, LACMA (2022); the critically acclaimed *Mixing it Up: Painting Today*, Hayward Gallery (2021); *Must Dream About Blue Tonight*, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing (2020); and *The Rest*, Lisson Gallery, New York (2019), amongst others.

Her work has been highly sought after by collections and institutions, and is now held at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Miami; Start Museum, Shanghai; X Museum, Beijing; Tate Modern, London; and the Zabłudowicz Collection, London.

The artist was featured as part of ‘The Artsy Vanguard’ in 2020, a prestigious annual feature that selects 20 emerging artists.

Wood is represented by Carlos/Ishikawa and JTT, and next year will form part of the group exhibition, *Brave New World: 20 Painters for the 21st Century*, at Museum De Fundatie, Zwolle.

An established musician, Issy Wood is signed with producer Mark Ronson’s Zelig Records, with her second EP *If It’s Any Constellation* released earlier this year.

<sup>i</sup> Issy Wood, quoted in Artsy artist page, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Issy Wood, quoted in Sarah McCrory, ‘In conversation with Sarah Wood’, *Luncheon*, 2019

<sup>iii</sup> Barry Schwabsky, ‘Issy Wood’, *Artforum*, April 2020

## Provenance

Carlos/Ishikawa, London

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM A DISTINGUISHED SCANDINAVIAN  
COLLECTION

40

**Robert Nava**

*Shark Wing Pegasus*

signed, titled and dated "'Shark wing Pegasus" Nava  
19' on the reverse

acrylic, spray paint and grease pencil on canvas  
182.2 x 213.2 cm. (71 3/4 x 83 7/8 in.)

Executed in 2019.

**Estimate**

HK\$1,200,000 — 1,800,000

€146,000 — 219,000

\$154,000 — 231,000

[Go to Lot](#)



*“Randomness and absurdity can be the seeds to new things.” — Robert Nava*

Informed by a plethora of sources from Vincent Van Gogh to Jean-Michel Basquiat, and from Egyptian glyphs to Sumerian symbols, the works of American artist Robert Nava are unequivocally and unapologetically absurd, showcasing the artist’s indomitable creative force.

Embodying the idea of ‘errors’ during creation, Nava also became obsessed with the ‘mistakes’ he discovered in his vast library of source materials: ‘And even looking at a Renaissance painting, I would be looking for error[s], like mistakes were more alive to me. By drawing things “incorrectly”, I found more things to do in that realm,’ Nava explained; ‘So that’s why I find it more interesting and why I draw and paint like this. It’s been like that since probably 2007 or 2008, but now it’s getting really refined, and I know what I want to do more.’<sup>i</sup>

*“I know what I’m doing. It’s carefully done wrong.” — Robert Nava*

### ‘Seriousness in Play’

Completing his paintings within a few short days or even a few hours, Robert Nava developed his current expressive style through the idea of ‘seriousness in play’<sup>ii</sup>, after exploring different modes of artistic expression in university. The complexity of the artist’s paintings is not immediately discernible to the viewer’s eye at first glance, as he plans his designs over many varied sketches before arriving at a canvas: ‘I think the zone comes by continuously drawing in my sketchbook. It’s like an athlete practising a three-point shot—when the game comes, he can just hit the shot without thinking about it.’<sup>i</sup> Nava would spend hours rigorously sketching out the forms he wants to create in his sketchbooks, allowing him to confront the canvas with unbridled confidence.

Nava’s signature fantastical world of mythical creatures defies the black and white distinction between the avant-garde and kitsch, introducing a skilfully planned playfulness that is reminiscent of children’s drawings. Deceptively simple, it however took Nava ‘a lifetime to learn how to draw like a kid again’<sup>iii</sup>. Interestingly, the compositional technique of imitating children’s drawings and returning to simple visual cues is commonly adopted by other contemporary artists such as Edgar Plans, Katherine Bernhardt, Aboudia, and Szabolcs Bozó.

### The Graffiti / Children's Drawing Aesthetic



Lot 38, Katherine Bernhardt, *Laundry Day*, 2017 Estimate HKD800,000 - 1,200,000



Lot 46, Aboudia, *Take Me II*, 2011 Estimate HKD500,000 - 700,000



Lot 37, Szabolcs Bozó, *One bird, a cat and a man*, 2020 Estimate HKD400,000 - 600,000



Lot 48, Edgar Plans, *Night Creatures*, 2020 Estimate HKD1,200,000 - 1,800,000

## Modern Myths

*"I wanted to return to my childhood interests. I wanted to see these fabled creatures in my studio. I'm interested in a new kind of mythmaking, even though there are no real stories behind them yet." — Robert Nava*

Transporting the viewer to a childlike world of imaginary hybridised creatures, works such as *Shark Wing Pegasus* feature Nava's most iconic motif – two sharks, engulfing a turquoise pegasus in the foreground. Bursts of neon yellow curl around the bodice of the pegasus like flashes of lightning, whilst spritzes of blue entwine the creatures as one, as shark fins pierce through the chest of the pegasus. Exemplifying his enthusiasm in the creation of fantastical animal hybrids, Nava often divides the compositions of his paintings, fragmenting forms of different creatures, as he did in *Shark Wing Pegasus* with a horizontal split, adding a subtle layer of complexity and ambiguity to his chimeric figures. The forthright arrangement of these simple motifs of shark heads, wings, fins and legs capture the remarkable speed of the artist's creative process. Indeed, the artist has once cited that his quickest work only took a mere 27 seconds to complete.



Detail of the present lot

With a slapdash aesthetic that is deliberately cartoonish, Nava's enigmatic paintings draw comparisons to works by fellow Brooklyn based artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat. Also drawing from a myriad of sources such as religious iconography, music, art and cultural history, Basquiat creates a unique visual vocabulary of symbols and cyphers, often incorporating symbols he found in Henry

Dreyfuss's Symbol Sourcebook. As opposed to Basquiat's more immediate references to old masters, jazz musicians and boxing champions in his works, Robert Nava is more cryptic in his use of symbolic motifs. Nava exploits the creative potential of free association by inviting viewers to make their own interpretations, demonstrating the artist's raw, unhindered imagination.



Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Beef Ribs Longhorn*, 1982 Collection of The Broad, Los Angeles © The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artstar

## Collector's Digest

Born in Indiana and based in Brooklyn, American artist Robert Nava has captured the attention of

the international art scene ever since the Art Institute of Chicago had acquired four of his works on paper into their collection in early 2020.

In July 2020, Phillips New York debuted Nava at auction with [The Tunnel](#), 2019, which sold for 4 times its low estimate at 162,500 USD (Premium). It was then when Pace Gallery had quickly announced representation of the artist later in the same year, holding two solo shows for Nava that sold out at a blink of an eye.



Robert Nava, *Angel Shark*, 2020

Sold by Phillips Hong Kong, 30 November 2021 for HK\$4,410,000 (Premium)

The next year in 2021, Vito Schnabel Gallery announced joint representation of Nava, holding a solo

exhibition for him in the same year. Nava has recently been honoured with another solo show hosted by Night Gallery in Los Angeles, [Bloodsport](#), which ran from 19 February to 26 March 2022, focusing on works on paper by the artist. His solo exhibition with PACE London, [Thunderbolt Disco](#), has just opened 13 May and will close 25 June, 2022.

Nava's works have found places in prominent collections such as the Art Institute of Chicago, the ICA Miami, and Zuzeum Art Centre in Latvia.

<sup>i</sup> Robert Nava, quoted in Sasha Bogojev, 'In Conversation with Robert Nava', *Juxtapoz*, 18 September 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Robert Nava, quoted in Lance De Los Reyes, 'Robert Nava's Secret Friends', *Office Magazine*, 22 April 2020, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Keith Estiler, 'Robert Nava's New Mythologies', *Hypebeast*, 19 March 2020, [online](#)

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#### Provenance

v1 Gallery, Copenhagen

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM A DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE  
EUROPEAN COLLECTION

41

### **Ayako Rokkaku**

*Untitled*

signed and dated '2019 Rokkaku Ayako [in Japanese]'  
lower right

acrylic on canvas

121 x 190 cm. (47 5/8 x 74 3/4 in.)

Painted in 2019.

#### **Estimate**

HK\$2,000,000 — 3,000,000

€244,000 — 365,000

\$256,000 — 385,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“It was as if it was full of light and wind, explosive and calm at the same time. The whole room was electrified by that depiction of energy.” — Ayako Rokkaku*

Smearing dazzling swirls of colour directly with her fingertips onto the canvas, Japanese artist Ayako Rokkaku creates captivating works that features her iconic motif of adolescent girls, drawing inspiration from Japanese Kawaii culture as well as Western masters such as Claude Monet. Utilising a wide range of colours, shaped canvases and mediums such as cardboard and handmade wooden vases, Rokkaku’s work is characterised by its rich hues and palpable energy, created through a direct application of paint to the canvas with the artist’s bare hands, introducing a playful, almost performative aspect to her oeuvre: ‘I just remember this squishy, squelchy mess of paint all over my hands... I don’t feel I’m really painting unless my hands are in direct contact with the paint. It’s more fun that way.’<sup>i</sup>

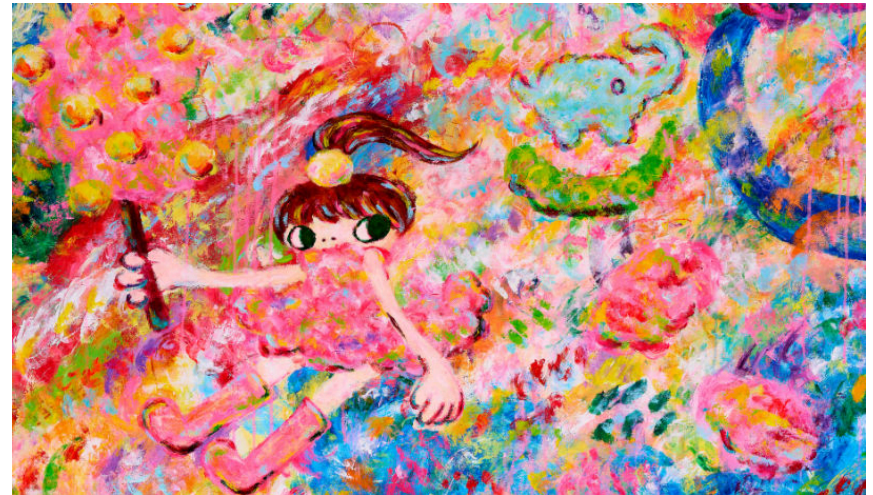
Created in 2019, *Untitled* is beautifully emblematic of Ayako Rokkaku’s cartoon-like painterly aesthetic with her signature rainbow colour palette. First shown at the Museum Jan van der Togt, Amstelvee, in Netherlands the year it was created, *Untitled* (2019) features an endearing little girl dressed in pastel pink, holding cotton candy in her right hand and glancing to the side with a shy, mischievous smile.



Installation view of the current lot (centre) at Museum Jan van der Togt, *Fumble in colors, tiny discoveries*, 2019 Courtesy of the Artist’s Studio

## Landscapes of Living Colour

A whirlwind of fantastical colour and texture, layers upon layers of impasto build atop of each other in *Untitled*, coalescing into a fairytale landscape that blurs the distinction between the subject and the abstract, foreground and background. The edges of the young girl’s pink dress seem to blend seamlessly into the flora and fauna behind, as if swaying gently along in the wind. Expressing a child-like carelessness and innocent curiosity, our protagonist is wearing pink socks that matches her dress, shoes nowhere to be seen. Treating the world as her playground, the young girl is seen frolicking within the flowers with a unique zest for life, bringing along her blue elephant friend to accompany her on her escapades through the vivid, whimsical meadow.



Detail of the present lot

At 13 years old, Rokakku had stumbled upon the idyllic, rural landscapes of French painter, Jean-François Millet. Inspired by the stark contrast of light and shadow that typifies Millet’s painterly aesthetic, Rokkaku incorporates the same techniques into her work, creating similar landscapes with fantastical colour: ‘I became aware, for the first time, that reality and feelings can find expression in paint in a way that is not possible in words.’<sup>ii</sup>



Jean-François Millet, *Spring*, 1868-1873 Collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris

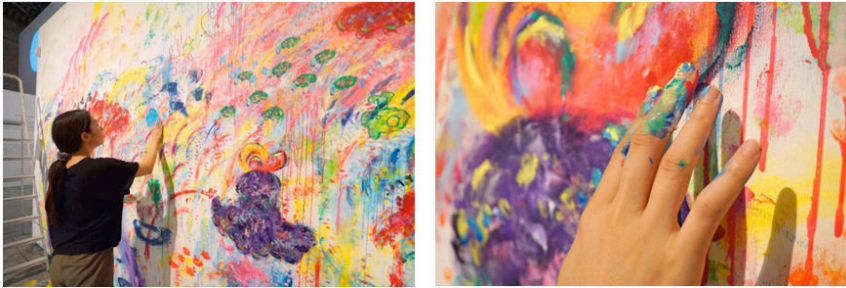
Evoking formal elements of impressionism, Rokkaku employs a technique of carefree mark-making. Thickly applied streaks of impasto commingle and combine into vast, fantastical worlds, each stroke rippling beneath the artist's fingers. Inspired by artists such as 'Claude Monet, Henry Matisse, Cy Twombly, and Jackson Pollock' <sup>iii</sup>, Rokkaku seeks a sense of expression and freedom in her dreamlike landscapes. Sharing similar tones and subject matter, Rokkaku's *Untitled* is comparable to Monet's *Le Jardin de Monet à Giverny*, both creating floral landscapes that brims with energy and movement, yet is soft and loose in their execution.



Claude Monet, *Monet's Garden at Giverny (Le Jardin de Monet à Giverny)*, 1895 E.G. Bührle Collection, Zürich

### The Artist's Hand

Intuitive, free and whimsical, Rokkaku's idiosyncratic oeuvre defies conventional techniques of art creation, as the artist developed her finger-painting approach independently as a self-taught artist. The artist first discovered the magic of painting with her own hands when she was 20 years old, whilst participating in an event for amateur artists in Tokyo. At the time, she had prepared numerous tools to paint with: 'I was painting on the used cardboard on the floor with acrylic paint on my hand and it came to me. I felt that I was able to leave a trace of something like an improvisational and primitive impulse on the cardboard'. <sup>iii</sup>



Ayako Rokkaku creating in-situ at the Venice Biennale, 2015 © Gallery Delaive

The act of painting directly with one's body is a technique shared by other artists such as Amoako Bofo and Kazuo Shiraga. As one of the founders of the *Gutai* art movement in Japan, Shiraga's practice is rooted in a freedom of expression and creativity. At times fastening himself to a rope above the painting, Shiraga spreads thick mounds of paint with his feet, fully immersing himself into the creative process, as if creating the work through dance, unrestrained and fully engaged with the physicality of the work.

Sharing the same passion for a performative and immersive creative process, Rokkaku paints free hand; with a preference to work on large canvases, giving her room to lean in or dash across to the opposite end of the canvas, resulting in lyrical, hypnotic paintings where colours swirl intricately around each other to form a sweet symphony.



Left: Kazuo Shiraga, *Zuisouhen*, 1986 Sold by Phillips, Hong Kong, 24 November 2019 for HK\$9,750,000

(Premium) Right: Amoako Bofo, *Golden Frames*, 2018 Sold by Phillips, Hong Kong, 29 November 2021 for HK\$3,024,000 (Premium)

Similarly, Ghanaian artist Amoako Bofo's distinctive oeuvre places emphasis on the artist's touch, as he also chooses to paint with his fingertips. Embedded into the very flesh of his subjects in his paintings, Bofo's fingerprints are stamped within each streak of thick impasto. However, instead of focusing on creating movement and energy, Bofo's mark-making technique aims to find a new way to represent and celebrate Black identity as he literally leaves imprints of his identity within art history.

As a powerful means of artistic expression, Rokkaku, Shiraga and Bofo each devised different approaches to paint with their bodies. Each visible, tangible mark brings the artist's touch to life, emphasizing their presence within the painting and the painting process itself, bridging the gap between the viewer, artwork, and the artist.

## Collector's Digest

Born 1982 in Chiba, Japan, Ayako Rokkaku began her artistic career in 2002, during her early twenties. Rokkaku quickly established herself on the international art scene after exhibiting at the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Geisai art fair in 2006 and was awarded the prestigious Akio Goto Prize, founded by Kaikai KiKi Studio which is led by art world giant, Takashi Murakami.

In 2018, Phillips Hong Kong was the first to bring Rokkaku to the eyes of the market with selling exhibition, *Sam Francis, Walasse Ting & Ayako Rokkaku: Perpetual Colours*, selling out before the first day of the opening.

Since then, demand for the artist had exploded internationally. Rokkaku's works are included in the permanent collections of the Powerlong Art Museum, China; Sehwa Museum of Art, South Korea; the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan; and the Voorlinden Museum, Netherlands, amongst others. Rokkaku's recent exhibitions include solo presentation, *Born in the Fluffy Journey* with Konig Galerie, Berlin (2021) and her institutional show with the Chiba Prefectural Museum of Art, *Magic Hand* (2021). Rokkaku currently lives and works in multiple cities, travelling between Porto, Berlin, Tokyo, and Amsterdam. She is represented by Gallery Delaive, Amsterdam.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofHoZzdK5CI>

The artist speaking about her practice and inspiration behind her works, 2020

Video courtesy Chiba Prefectural Museum of Art

<sup>i</sup> Ayako Rokkaku, quoted in 'Rokkaku Ayako: An Artist with the World at Her Fingertips', *nippon.com*, 3 October 2011, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Ayako Rokkaku, quoted in Arjen Ribbens, 'Playing with colors, small discoveries', exh. cat., Museum Jan van der Togt Amstelveen, 2019, p. 65

<sup>iii</sup> Ayako Rokkaku, quoted in 'Ayako Rokkaku: The Spirit of the Artist', *Autre Magazine*, 15 February 2022, [online](#)

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**Provenance**

Gallery Delaive, Amsterdam

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Exhibited**

Amstelveen, Museum Jan van der Togt, *Playing with colors, small discoveries*, 8 June - 25 August 2019, pp. 8, 23, 24-25, 144 (illustrated)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



42

### Allison Zuckerman

#### *Bullseye*

signed and dated 'allison zuckerman 2020' on the overlap

acrylic and archival CMYK ink on canvas

152.4 x 236.5 cm. (60 x 93 1/8 in.)

Executed in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$550,000 — 750,000

€67,300 — 91,800

\$70,500 — 96,200

[Go to Lot](#)



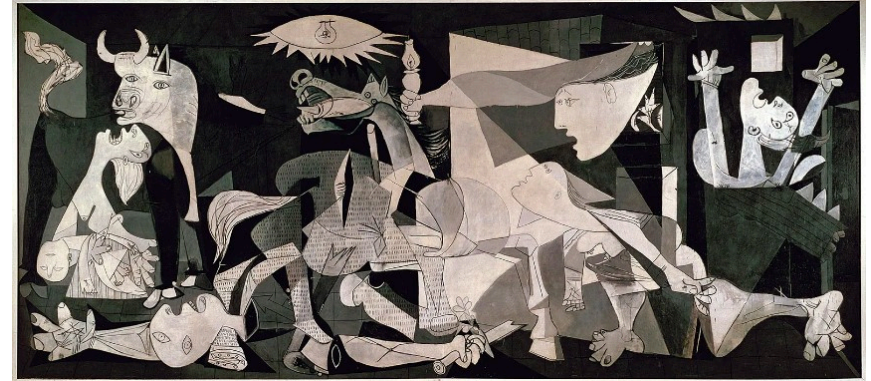
Allison Zuckerman is undoubtedly one of the most coveted artists working right now; like Artemisia Gentileschi or Frida Kahlo before her she is here to reconquer, reclaim and redefine what it means to be a woman through her canvases — a visceral, Feminist subversion of the traditional medium of painting. Equipped with a Boudiccan spirit and unabashedly anti-establishment, she seeks to take women from the echelons of the male-dominated art history canon and drag them into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, bestowing agency and authority to the once-subjugated. Zuckerman highlights the importance of such: ‘It is my goal to embolden my female figures to be active participants in their own representation.’<sup>i</sup>.

### A Generation-Defining Creative Spirit

Zuckerman relays her artistic process akin to that of a DJ — sampling and remixing images with collage and her own painting to create works that are fresh, vivacious, and entirely singular works of art in the creation of her own alternative universe away from the chauvinism of the male gaze. However, these lofty ambitions and objectives are tempered by a sense of humour, which indeed holds fulcrum to the essence of her work, balancing the ‘low’ culture of the internet culture and the ‘high’ culture of Renaissance painting. ‘Work that is sad and funny is my favourite kind. Comedy as the flashy side of tragedy provides a mood for my making’, says the artist<sup>ii</sup>. The result? A postmodern wet dream, or in the words of the titan critic Jerry Saltz, ‘an orgy of art history’<sup>iii</sup>.

*“I’m usually most excited about moments in the paintings that surprise me and transcend my own intentions. Sometimes it’s the way that a graphic element, like a solid circle, lays against a voluminous Cezanne inspired apple. In other instances, the rendered eyes directly painted on blue sunglasses do something uncanny while evoking sympathy.” — Allison Zuckerman*

*Bullseye* is no different, incorporating elements of Picasso’s *Guernica* (the lightbulb crowning the composition and the reclining/tortuous minotaur figure are instantly recognisable) with a splintering of pixelated squares, a captivating melange of tradition and modernity. This electrifying blend of painting and collage takes its roots from her years spent Chicago School of Art Institute while completing her MFA, where upon discovering collage and becoming enamoured with its immediacy she sought to create a disparate imagery that would create ‘unexpected psychological leaps and arrivals’<sup>ii</sup>.



Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937 Collection of the Prado Museum, Madrid © 2022 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### No Holds Barred Attitude to Succeed

*“These paintings are like candy. We were almost embarrassed to love them because they’re so easy to like. But then when you dig into the work, and you spend time with Allison, you understand that it’s extremely sophisticated.” — Esteemed American collector Don Rubell*

Being a Millennial and thus the first generation of artists to grow up with Web2, Zuckerman is indebted to the internet age and culture, not only for providing a foundation for her intuitive tableaux, but also for propelling her career to stardom. Working as a gallery assistant in SoHo, she used photoshop in her spare time to recharge her old paintings. Frustrated by a lack of opportunities to show her work, she turned to her Instagram page in an inspired move to promote her paintings on her own grounds. What’s important to note that this was in 2016, long before it became an established norm for artists to upload their work onto their Instagram and allowing their virtual presence to function as an extension of themselves as a creative. Fortune favours the bold, and it didn’t take long for attention — and destiny — to come knocking. The dealer Marc Wehby, famed for his deft ability for uncovering fresh talent, sent her a DM and arranged a studio visit; a studio that measured one corner of her small apartment in Williamsburg. Instantly hooked, he booked in three of her works, standalone collages printed on thick aluminum boards, for his next group show. Soon after, following a chance encounter with the influential patrons and collectors Don and Mera Rubell, she was invited to become the artist in residence at their foundation, following in the footsteps of Lucy Dodd, Cy Gavin, Sônia Gomes, and most notably Oscar Murillo (the couple subsequently bought 22 of her works from her studio, and all those completed during her residency).



Zuckerman working at the Rubell Family Collection in the summer of 2017 Courtesy of Kravets Wehby Gallery and the Rubell Family Collection

## Collector's Digest

Zuckerman's acclamation has not been contained to the art world, and has crossed the boundary into music and fashion, with Creative Director of Moschino Jeremy Scott writing the foreword to her second museum solo show, *Pirate and Muse*, at the Akron Art Museum in 2018, and collaborating with Tods last year. She has also designed cover art for the pop superstar Charli XCX.

Since her first show with Kravets Whelby Gallery, she has held solo shows at Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Herzliya, Israel (2019); University Gallery, Gainesville (2019); and Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2017). She has been included in group exhibitions at Albertz Benda, New York (2020); Unit London (2019); Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, New York (2018); Pizzuti Collection, Columbus (2018); and Brand New Galery, Milan (2017).

Her work is held in the permanent collections of Marval Collection, Milan; and the Rubell Collection, Miami; Pizzuti Collection of the Columbus Museum of Art; Emergentes Art Foundation, Beirut & Zurich; and the Marval Collection, Berlin & Milan.

Zuckerman is part of an ongoing group exhibition at the Flint Institute of Art, *Being Human: Contemporary Art from the Rubell Museum*. She will be included in a forthcoming solo exhibition with Koenig Gallery, October 2022.

<sup>i</sup> Allison Zuckerman, quoted in Felicity Carter, 'Allison Zuckerman Rewrites Art History To Reclaim Famous Females', *Forbes*, 9 August 2018, [online](#) .

<sup>ii</sup> Allison Zuckerman, quoted in Emma O'Neill, 'How to Make an Art Star. The Rise of Allison Zuckerman', *Vault Magazine*, August 2018, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Jerry Saltz, quoted in Emma O'Neill, 'How to Make an Art Star. The Rise of Allison Zuckerman', *Vault Magazine*, August 2018, [online](#)

## Provenance

Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM A DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE  
COLLECTION

43

### Serge Attukwei Clottey

*Valentine's Day*

signed and dated 'AttukweiClo 2020' on the reverse  
duct tape, acrylic and charcoal on cork board  
148.4 x 120.4 cm. (58 3/8 x 47 3/8 in.)  
Executed in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$250,000 — 450,000

€30,400 — 54,800

\$32,100 — 57,700

[Go to Lot](#)

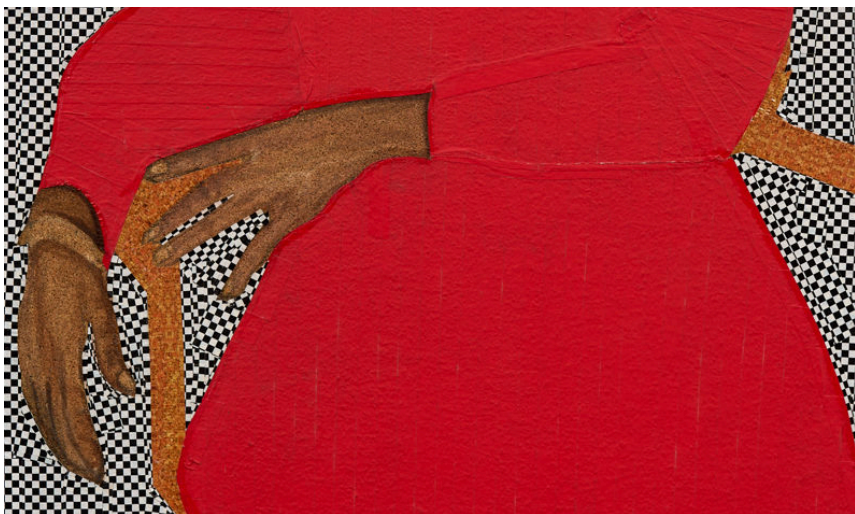




## Introduction

Set against a hypnotic patterned backdrop, a lone woman is dressed in an alluring shade of crimson in Serge Attukwei Clotey's *Valentine's Day*, echoing the romantic atmosphere set by the work's title. Thick impasto and duct tape are layered onto a corkboard support, creating rich, visceral textures that shift and shimmer with the changing light. Seating gracefully on a minimalist wooden chair, the protagonist's relaxed limbs and averted eyes captures the sentiment of a first date; her skin glows from within with a sweep of blush pink illuminating her cheeks, exquisitely rendered through light and shadow; her lips partially parted, as if about to speak.

Empowered and confident, Clotey's protagonists stand tall and proud. The artist's distinctively flamboyant portraits redefine racial identity within the genre via a diverse implementation of found materials. Utilising flattened Kuffuor gallon, jute sacks, discarded car tires and wood pieces, Clotey elevates these materials into a powerful symbol of Ghana's informal economic system of trade and re-use. Patterns and clothing found on his protagonists resemble *Kente* – Ghanaian handmade textiles, along with references to new economic power rising in the region by incorporating barcodes or Chinese characters.



Detail of the present lot

Material History

*"I'm always looking at how materials can significantly influence a work, and how it fits in the ideas I explore [...] instead of using paint to design the dresses of the characters, I use a material, [like duct tape] that will let me cut and join materials like the designers, tailors and seamstresses do in their shops and fashion houses."*  
— Serge Attukwei Clotey

In *Valentine's Day*, Clotey juxtaposes a material that is traditionally seen as a tool of violence – duct tape – with a romantic subject matter and a blushing date. The material is transformed into a symbol of pride that celebrates the black body, overriding the original dark connotations of oppression. Similarly, the corkboard used in the artist's works are rooted in trade politics of the Accra region, and a highly emotionally resonant material for Clotey himself. The warm, soft tones of the material 'can change with exposure to the sun, mimick[ing] the look of black skin'.<sup>i</sup>



The artist in his mother's clothes Photographed by Dennis Akuoku-Frimpong, Image Courtesy Vogue Magazine

Clotey's most notable performance work, [My Mother's Wardrobe](#), also focused on textiles, elevating clothing into a literal form of material history. Inspired by the aftermath of the death of his mother, *My Mother's Wardrobe* is a poignant and personal work. Traditionally, a mother's wardrobe is distributed to her daughters after her passing; yet as an only son, Clotey cannot

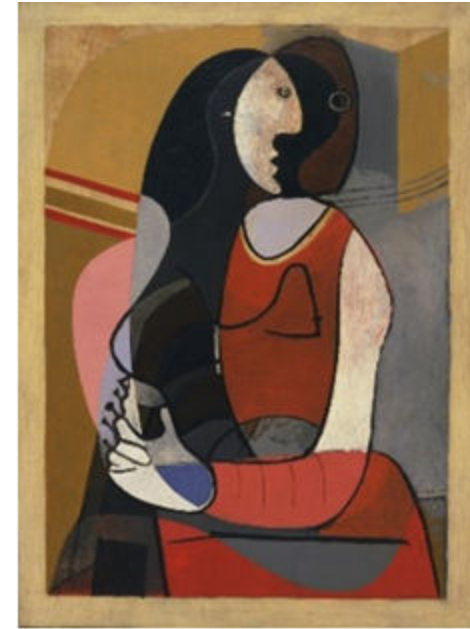
inherit a single piece of his mother's legacy. As a protest, the artist marched along the streets of Accra in 2016, dressed in the clothing he was denied custody of. Using performance, the artist addressed gendered traditions existing around death and inheritance in Ghana, as well as exploring the construction of one's identity through fashion and highlighting entrenched ideas about gender and sexuality within society.

### The Lady in Red

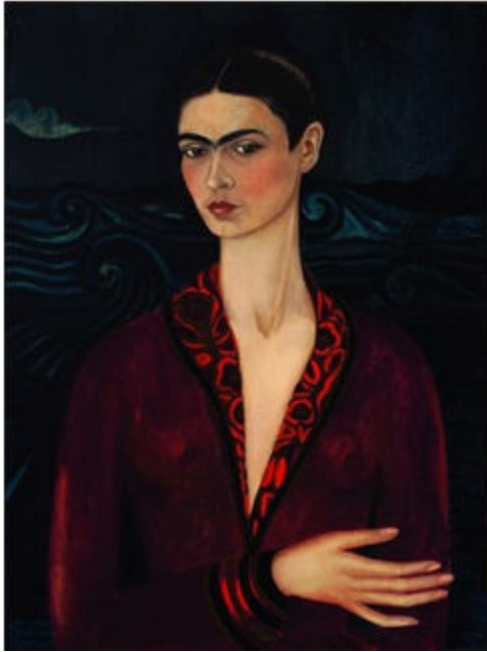
As a symbol of mystery and seduction, the 'woman in a red dress' is a ubiquitous motif in the art historical cannon, with examples by master painters such as Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani, and Frida Kahlo.



Charles Henry Alston, *Girl in a Red Dress*, 1934 Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
© Estate of Charles Henry Alston



Pablo Picasso, *Seated Woman*, 1927 Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York © 2022 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



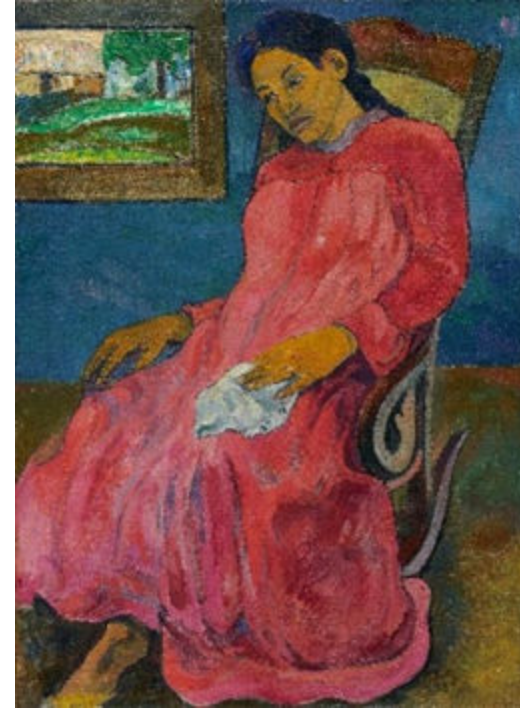
Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait in a Velvet Dress*, 1926 © 2022 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Chaim Soutine, *Woman in Red*, c. 1923-1924



Amedeo Modigliani, *Jeanne Hebuterne in Red Shawl*, 1917



Paul Gauguin, *Melancholic (Faaturuma)*, 1891 Collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas

Traditionally, the female subjects portrayed in the genre reflected a larger, Caucasian dominated canon of art history that has been gradually reclaimed by painters of colour in recent decades. Charles Henry Alston's *Girl in a Red Dress*, for example, depicts a young African woman that is emblematic of the artist's own interpretation of the Harlem Renaissance aesthetic, recalling African beauty ideals that incorporate elements of expressionism with the stylisation of African sculpture, representative of the artist's signature style. The sitter's elongated neckline lends the subject an enigmatic aura of grace and beauty, as she glances to the side in contemplation.

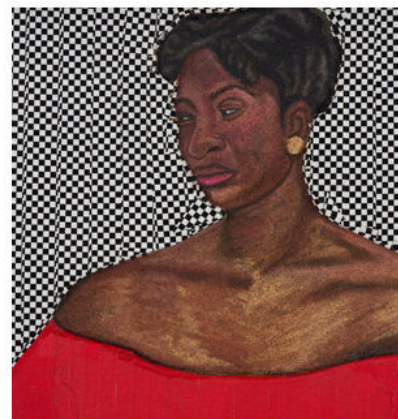
Alston's work was described by art historian Richard Powell to be 'defiantly black, beautiful, and feminine, yet also unsettled, mysterious, and utterly modern'<sup>ii</sup>, reclaiming the 'woman in red' image in a modern context. Similarly to Alston, the composition of Clotney's *Valentine's Day* also accentuates the protagonists' neck and décolletage visually, emphasising her sensuality. Clotney's choice of utilising duct tape in the background – a material that is traditionally associated with violence – subverts antiquated associations that come with the medium.

With the rise of African portraiture in recent years, Clotney's *Valentine's Day* demonstrates a shift in art historical discourse, as an increasing number of artists such as Amoako Boafo, Emmanuel Taku and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye places the black body in the forefront of the genre. Propelling this paradigm into change, Clotney's works reclaims the black body in portraiture by placing a Black woman in an assertive position of desire, empowering the subject with a sense of control as he reconsiders the classic archetype of the 'woman in red' that began with his predecessors.

*"The conversation starts with our histories and how we [Africans] have evolved in terms of how we present ourselves. I won't say I'm juxtaposing the classical with the unexpected, but I'm throwing light on the evolution of image-making; who makes the image, and where are these images shown."* — Serge Attukwei Clotney

## Rethinking the Past through the Lens of the Present

Compositionally inspired by mid-century African photographers such as Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keita, Clotney's striking portraits employ non-traditional found materials that explore the relationship between national identity and material culture. Clotney cuts, drills, stitches and adheres his mediums with the canvas, creating almost sculptural works that are bold in their execution and imbued with vibrancy.



Left: Detail of the present lot Right: Malick Sidibé, *Woman in a Checkered Dress*, 1971 © Malick Sidibé Estate

Often incorporating similar ornate patterns and costumes in his work, Malick Sidibé's photographs of contemporary Mali are infused with bursts of excitement and liveliness, changing the idea of black beauty in fashion and inspiring a whole generation of African artists, including Clotney himself. Witnessing the transition of his country from French colonial rule to independence in the 1960s, Sidibé's practice played a role in shaping and expanding local youth culture. Robert Storr had praised Sidibé saying that 'no African artist has done more to [...] increase our awareness of the textures and transformations of African culture in the second half of the 20th century.'<sup>iii</sup>



Left: Seydou Keita, *Untitled [Seated Woman with Chevron Print Dress]*, 1956, printed 1997 Collection of the Metropolitan Museum, New York © Seydou Keita/SKPEAC - Courtesy The Jean Pigozzi African Art Collection Right: Mickalene Thomas, *Looking Up*, from the *She Works Hard For the Money Pin-Up* series, 2004 Sold with Phillips Hong Kong on 30 November 2021, for HK\$3,780,000 (Premium)

In parallel, a clear symmetry can be found between the works of Seydou Keita and Clottey in terms of compositional arrangement and a juxtaposition of pattern which blurs the spatial relationships between figure and background, exemplified by works such as the present lot, or *Fashion icons* (2020-2021), currently the artist's top auction record. Seydou Keita's photographs were a great source of inspiration for a whole generation of African artists, including Mickalene Thomas, Amoako Boafo, and Serge Attukwei Clottey, as seen through the prevalent use of patterns and textiles in their oeuvres. With an emphasis on pattern and contrast, Clottey's portraits draw key cues from West African visual and material culture, embodying the same sense of freedom and vibrancy as seen in Keita's work. Yet instead of commenting on the legacy of colonialism, Clottey is re-evaluating the notions of gender and sexuality in contemporary society, adapting images of the past in order to rethink the present.



Artist's Top Auction Record Serge Attukwei Clottey, *Fashion icons*, 2020-2021 Sold with Phillips London on 15 October 2021, for 340,200 GBP (Premium) (468,014 USD)

### Collector's Digest

Born in 1985, Ghanaian artist Serge Attukwei Clottey's vibrant portraits are characterised by rich colour, bold patterns and a variety of found materials. Based in Accra, Ghana, Clottey is one of the region's most significant contemporary artists who works across various mediums in his exploration of ideas around migration, identity, materiality, and the environment.

First beginning with the 2020 exhibition *Beyond Skin* hosted by Simchowit Gallery in Los Angeles,

Clotey has since presented an ongoing series of duct tape paintings, including *Valentine's Day*. The first of Clotey's duct tape paintings that came to auction was *Fashion icons* (2020-2021), sold by Phillips London and currently the artist's top auction record. The artist's 3rd top auction record, *Glow girl* (2020-2021), was also sold by Phillips London this year in 2022.



Artist's 3<sup>rd</sup> Top Auction Record Serge Attukwei Clotey, *Glow girl*, 2020-2021 Sold with Phillips London on 3 March 2022, for 151,200 GBP (Premium) (201,412 USD)

Receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Brighton in 2019, Clotey has exhibited widely internationally. Recent exhibitions include solo presentations with Gallery 1957 in both London and Accra, Simchowitz Gallery in Los Angeles, Feuer/Mesler in New York and Vestfossen

Kunstlaboratorium Foundation, Oslo.

<sup>i</sup> Beyond Skin exhibition press release, Simchowitz Gallery, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Richard J. Powell, quoted in 'RE/BIRCH OF A NATION', *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, London, 1997, p.19

<sup>iii</sup> Robert Stoor, quoted in Pryia Elan, 'Malik Sibibé: The Photographer Who Changed the Idea of Black Beauty', *The Guardian*, 15 April 2016, [online](#)

#### Provenance

Gallery 1957, Accra

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



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### Genieve Figgis

*Pink Ballroom*

signed and dated 'Genieve figgis 2018' on the reverse  
acrylic on canvas

150 x 150.2 cm. (59 x 59 1/8 in.)

Painted in 2018.

#### Estimate

HK\$1,500,000 — 2,000,000

€183,000 — 244,000

\$192,000 — 256,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“The process of being in a state of continuous unconsciousness allows me to make choices that are my own unrestrained thought. The figures are in a constant state of flux and they are limitless.” — Genieve Figgis*

Striking a unique balance between the comical and the gory, the historical with the modern, the figurative and the abstract, Irish painter Genieve Figgis’ captivating works are satirical reinterpretations of traditional aristocratic family portraits with a distinct Rococo flair, rendered in vibrant pastel colour palettes.

With a penchant for the theatre and period costumes, Figgis often takes compositional inspiration from historic photographs and portraits. Featuring snapshots of the daily life of the upper class in their stately mansions, the protagonists in Figgis’ portraits are seen posing in plush gardens, riding horses, playing the piano or indulging in sumptuous feasts. Figgis creates a juxtaposition between the figures’ ghoul-like, melting faces with the opulent interiors of Bourgeois decadence, positioning the characters as caricatures in front of gaudy backdrops. Such exaggerated theatricality ridicules the extravagant excess of the genteel class, at once humorous and subversive.



Detail of the present lot

## Creamy Pools of Colour

*“Ms. Figgis favours rich colours that bubble, ooze and marleize as if alive.” — Roberta Smith*

Transfixing to the eye, Figgis works with the immediacy of watered-down acrylics, completing each painting in one sitting that might range from two to eight hours. In *Pink Ballroom*, striations of thick, meringue-like acrylics swirl into an amalgamation of a lavishly embellished pink backdrop. Patterns of velvet curtains and gilded windows seem to melt into each other, creating a wet-on-wet effect – like a buttery tiered cake that has been left out in the rain.

*“For a long time I’ve been pouring paint – the medium’s unpredictability is the addiction for me...” — Genieve Figgis*

Referring to painting as ‘a giant liquid puzzle’<sup>i</sup>, the artist revels in the unpredictability of her medium. Preferring acrylic over oils, the artist explains: ‘I enjoy using acrylic because it just needs water [...] I like how acrylic feels to work with, how it looks when it’s wet, and how anything is possible when working with a material that battles with me.’<sup>ii</sup> Working with pre-prepared acrylics, the artist thins her paint with water to achieve a ‘wishy washy’ effect, inspired by artists such as Marlene Dumas<sup>iii</sup>. Highly experimental, Figgis’ paintings are free of restrictions, allowing the artist to take a chance on the medium itself and let it take the lead.

In parallel, the works of Cecily Brown also draw inspiration from the Old Masters with a distinct focus on figures and forms that evolve in a state of flux. Dynamic, energetic and gestural, Brown works extremely quickly with dashes of thick impasto, just like Figgis. Yet in comparison, Brown works with paints that are more substantial, thick, and dry, as opposed to the fluidity showcased in Figgis’ portraits. Capturing loosely rendered forms in the moment they marbelise into solidity, Figgis creates a mesmerising visual effect that is hauntingly fresh.

## Humorous Spin

*“I love looking at ideas of the past in Old Masters. They were made to tell you a story. Some of the portraits have the authority and theatricality... I enjoy looking at people from the past and how they portrayed themselves.” — Genieve Figgis*

Often looking to masterworks by Francisco Goya, Diego Velázquez and Hans Holbein, Figgis’ is

drawn to the theatricality of the setting and costumes from these distant pasts: 'I love the faces and costumes staring back from another time and place. They seem to be from another world and yet only a few hundred years separate us.'<sup>i</sup>



Francisco Goya, *Charles IV of Spain and His Family*, 1800-1801 Collection of Museo del Prado, Madrid

Poking fun at the 'stiff' family image that is illustrated in works such as Francisco Goya's *Charles IV of Spain and His Family*, Figgis knocks down the 'dignified' traditional ideal. Following the precedent of artists such as George Condo who makes deliberately 'bad' reinterpretations of Old Masters paintings, Figgis' eccentric melted neo-Rococo portraits are musings of the upper class life, putting a distinct contemporary spin on the classical genre of portraiture.

## Collector's Digest

Born 1972 in Dublin, Genieve Figgis' works were first launched into the purview of the public eye in 2013, when Richard Prince discovered her 'cover versions' of eighteenth-century paintings on Twitter. Beginning her artistic career only at the age of 30, Figgis began studying Fine Arts at the Gorey School. Her works are influenced by a variety of fellow female artists such as Jenny Saville, Marlene Dumas, and Cecily Brown.

The works of Genieve Figgis have received acclaim internationally, inspiring the costume design of TV series *Bridgerton*. She has had numerous solo exhibitions at notable institutions including Almine Rech Gallery, Paris; Half Gallery, New York; Almine Rech Gallery, London; Gallery Met, New York; Talbot Gallery, Dublin; among many others. Group exhibitions include Gallery Target, Tokyo; Flood Gallery, Dublin; London Art Fair with Transition Gallery, London; and more. Figgis' work has featured in international art fairs in Europe and the United States, including Art Brussels in 2017. Figgis is represented by Almine Rech Gallery in London and Half Gallery in New York.

<sup>i</sup> Gemma Tipton, 'Genieve Figgis: The figures are in a constant state of flux', *WePresent*, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Katy Hessel, 'Genieve Figgis', *The Great Women Artists Podcast*, 11 February 2020, [online](#)

## Provenance

Half Gallery, New York

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

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### Emmanuel Taku

*Brothers in Red*

signed and dated 'TAKU 2020' on the reverse

acrylic and newspaper on canvas

211.8 x 143.2 cm. (83 3/8 x 56 3/8 in.)

Executed in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$300,000 — 500,000

€36,500 — 60,900

\$38,500 — 64,100

[Go to Lot](#)



*“Anyone who sees my painting, what I want them to understand is unity.” —  
Emmanuel Taku*

Characteristically flamboyant, Ghanaian artist Emmanuel Taku’s subjects are resplendent in their floral print flares and striking poses, setting the tone of his portraits with dramatic compositions. Sporting matching paisley suits, the two siblings in *Brothers in Red* stand with their legs in synchronicity, meeting the viewer’s gaze unashamedly. Capturing the human body in an almost abstract form, Taku’s subjects stand in various intertwined, overlapped, and dynamic poses that exude intensity and power, bestowing them with supernatural grace.

In November 2020, Taku was selected to be Accra based residency programme – Noldor’s first artist in residence, garnering instrumental international acclaim and success for the artist during this process. The current work, *Brothers in Red* was created during this period, and was exhibited during his first solo exhibition with the residency, *Temple of Blackness – It Takes Two*.



Installation view of the present lot (right) at *Temple of Blackness – It Takes Two*, Noldor Artist Residency, Accra 4 December 2020 - 17 January 2021 Image courtesy Metal Magazine

## Temple of Black Deities

Growing up as a child, although Taku was enamoured by colourful comics about superheroes, he was never able to find representation of his own image in these stories. In negation, the artist creates his own Black superheroes, or as he calls them – ‘deities’, as a way to capture Black people as demi-gods or heroes in their unapproachable splendour. Just like Superman, Taku’s protagonists have vacant, white eyes that represent the ‘very essence of power and strength’<sup>i</sup>.



Detail of the present lot

Always pictured as duos or in groups, these deities are consistently linked physically with no space or gaps in between, becoming anthropomorphic silhouettes as Taku’s signature floral motif blends them together on the canvas, consolidating their bodies into one. As such, the artist’s figurative surrealist approach revisits and reclaims a Black narrative that has been politicised in the past, overturning this by affirming a new identity that is rooted in a sense of unity and empowerment, echoing the Ghanaian proverb: ‘A broomstick [alone] can be broken easily, but when it’s put together [with others], it becomes very difficult to be broken.’<sup>ii</sup>

*“In capturing the layered essence of the black bodies in my work, I seek to capture a sense of balance and conflict within a single entity captured as a demi-god. I have always looked to push the boundaries of representation and I believe it is important*

*to celebrate the complexity of existence that black people turn to internalise.” —  
Emmanuel Taku*

## Rooted in Heritage

Taku’s distinctive creative approach begins from designing the underlying form and structure of the composition. Often inspired by fashion poses in magazines and even from Instagram, Taku selects subjects of interest, highlighting the figurative elements by selecting colours that best capture the spirit of his subjects. Taku’s silk-screening technique reflects his love for Ghanaian textiles: patterns which were often worn by his mother and sister and has been a prevalent presence in his life since youth – whether as tablecloth or in garments. Moreover, Taku’s floral motifs are a symbol of strength. The artist’s own mother represents strength in his life – and she loves to wear paisley. Taku thus considers the pattern to be the natural visual representation of power and strength, incorporating it in his work unconsciously.

The use of newspapers in Taku’s work further emphasise his Ghanaian heritage. The artist cuts and pastes fragments of local newspapers to highlight the skin of his subjects, thereby including traces of the country’s history on the canvas. With this technique, Taku is hoping to document what is happening currently around him as he is creating, explaining that he hopes that ‘anyone who sees my paintings a hundred years to come will still be able to have an idea of what happened during Taku’s era’<sup>iii</sup>.

*“The importance of capturing two figures in juxtaposition was to create a sense of consolidation, synergy and unity.” — Emmanuel Taku*



Left: Malick Sidibé, *Pretending to Smoke*, 1976 © Malick Sidibe Estate Right: The present lot

Drawing inspiration from fellow artists such as Toyin Ojin Odutola and Frida Kahlo, to the works of Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, Taku’s portraits capture Black subjects that radiate vitality, emphasising the strength of an united community. Reminiscent of Sidibé’s *Pretending to Smoke* (1976), Taku’s *Brothers in Red* adapts a similar compositional arrangement, with two men posing in an unified, confrontational stance. Following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Taku’s paintings also depict a generation of black youth that are adorned with vivid colour and hypnotic patterns, pushing the boundaries of representation in black portraiture and reclaiming a collective visual identity, as he elevates his subjects into mythical heroes: ‘I think I am deeply excited about our re-possessive narrative and that this idea of black people depicting black bodies feels like an awakening of sorts. And what I mean by “re-possessive” is reclaiming the way we are depicted as black people and is a juxtaposition that stems from being a person of colour, and African myself.’<sup>iv</sup>

## Collector’s Digest

Born 1986 in Accra, Ghana, Emmanuel Taku graduated from the Ghanatta Institute of Art and Design alongside well-known figurative painters Amoako Bofo, Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe, and Kwesi Botchway, and has been painting for over a decade. With a degree in Visual Arts and Textiles, Taku uses a variety of materials in his work, such as acrylic, textiles, and newspaper on canvas, culminating into distinctive portraits that draw on figurative Surrealism.

In 2021, Taku signed with [Maruani Mercier Gallery](#) for worldwide representation. The artist's inaugural show with the gallery, *The Chosen Few*, had featured works made during his residency at Noldor in Accra, Ghana. Taku's first solo exhibition in Asia, *It Takes Two - Temple of Deities*, was held at the M Art Foundation, Shanghai from 12 November - 18 December 2021, also in collaboration with The Noldor Residency, Accra. *Embodiment*, the artist's current solo exhibition with LGDR Hong Kong, opened 19 May and is onling till 30 June, 2022.

Most recently, Taku's *Sisters in Lilac* (2021), sold on 4 March 2022 for £214,200 at Phillips London, breaking the artist's previous auction record:



The artist's current top auction record Emmanuel Taku, *Sisters in Lilac*, 2021 Sold for £214,200 (Premium) at Phillips London, 4 March 2022

<sup>i</sup> Emmanuel Taku, quoted in M Art Foundation, 'M Art Foundation "Emmanuel Taku: It Takes Two - Temple of Deities": A Story about Superheroes', 23 November 2021, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iv</sup> Emmanuel Taku, quoted in Institute Museum of Ghana, 'Gideon Appah interviews Emmanuel Taku - Noldor Fellow', 2020, [online](#)

#### Provenance

Noldor Residency, Accra

Acquired from the above by the present owner

#### Exhibited

Accra, Noldor Artist Residency, *Temple of Blackness - It Takes Two*, 4 December 2020 - 17 January 2021

#### Literature

Melanie Gerlies, 'Magritte bought for £6,000 could fetch £15m', *Financial Times*, 3 December 2020, [online](#) (illustrated)

Romina Román, 'Emmanuel Taku: Ghana's Finest and Brightest', *Metal Magazine*, 7 January 2021, [online](#) (illustrated)

Meghan Grech, 'Black Identity and Power: Emmanuel Taku's Mixed Media Portraiture', *Casper Magazine*, 10 February 2021, [online](#) (illustrated)

'Noldor Residency Offers Boost for Artist's Mind and Body of Work', *FLYafrica*, Issue 10, April - June 2021, p. 23 (illustrated)

Cristina Samper, 'Feel Hypnotised with the Gaze and Clothes in Emmanuel Taku's Subjects', *artofchoice*, 28 June 2021, [online](#)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

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### Aboudia

#### *Take Me II*

left panel: signed and dated '07 08 2011 aboudia' lower right; titled "'take me'" upper centre; further titled and dated '4.8.2011 "TAKE ME II"' on the reverse  
right panel: titled and dated '7.8.2011 "TAKE ME II"' on the reverse

acrylic and mixed media on canvas, diptych  
each 117.5 x 137 cm. (46 1/4 x 53 7/8 in.)  
overall 117.5 x 274 cm. (46 1/4 x 107 7/8 in.)  
Executed in August 2011.

#### Estimate

HK\$500,000 — 700,000

€60,900 — 85,200

\$64,100 — 89,700

[Go to Lot](#)



One of the biggest names in the African art scene today, Aboudia is best known for his unsettling chronicles of chaos and violence in his hometown of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. *Take Me II*, executed in 2011, is an early embodiment of the artist's signature graffiti style. Through layers of bold, heavy outlines and an ominously bright palette, intriguing details fade in and out of focus, fervently demanding close attention. Initially appearing guileless and spirited, Aboudia's paintings reveal themselves to be a brutally honest commentary on a war-stricken childhood and stolen innocence.



The artist with his work



Detail of the present work

## The Children of Abidjan

*"The place of children in my work is very important, in that it is these children I love the most, who inspire me, and who are at the foundation of what I create." — Aboudia*

Aboudia's repertoire first attracted international attention in 2011, during the devastating civil war that ravaged Abidjan following a post-electoral conflict. Instead of fleeing the city, Aboudia stayed in his studio, painting amidst the gunfire. It was during this time that the present work was painted, born out of the unspeakable horrors the artist witnessed first-hand. For Aboudia, children are the pillars of society and subsequently the biggest victims of war — they serve as the driving inspiration of his oeuvre, which draws from local *Nouchi* culture and graffiti created by the youth on the capital's streets<sup>1</sup>. The focus of his works shifts from grappling with the horrors of armed violence to struggling with the day-to-day hardships and social inequality, however, the enduring theme of children remains a constant throughout.

Aboudia's subjects are childlike figures, purposely executed with a crudeness reminiscent of crayon drawings created by young children. The use of vivid colour evokes a youthful exuberance, yet the work simmers with unmistakable undercurrents of danger - its vibrance is almost lurid, imbuing the seemingly playful piece with ironic darkness, and one closer look at the figures will bring to attention their hollow eyes and petrified expressions. The artist skilfully juxtaposes imagery of childhood and war, reconciling the convoluted dichotomy of innocence and naivety with trauma, aggression and violence unbecoming of juvenility. Amidst the devastation, however, emerges a beacon of hope, as Aboudia portrays today's children as a catalyst for change. He incorporates clippings of newspapers and magazines into his pieces, mirroring the artistic practices of the 'street kids', a nod to the socio-political awareness of the modern-day youth. By depicting the vulnerable in positions of unspeakable oppression, the present work fully demonstrates Aboudia's ability to weave a sinister yet uninhibited narrative, its rich pathos leaving viewers empathetic and outraged.

## A Homage to African Culture

*"My inspiration comes from the streets and from the fact that children are writing their stories on the walls." — Aboudia*



Aboudia's imagery recalls an explosive synthesis of traditional African art, North American graffiti aesthetics, and abstract expressionism. For most viewers, the artist's work instantly brings to mind the iconic mixed-media masterpieces of Jean-Michel Basquiat.



Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Untitled*, 1982 Sold by Phillips New York on 18 May 2022 for US\$85,000,000 (Premium) © The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artestar

While Aboudia acknowledges the similarities and expresses admiration for the late contemporary art icon, he cites his only source of inspiration to be the graffiti artists of his hometown— the 'street children' of Abidjan. Not having been aware of Basquiat's work when he began his career, Aboudia developed his signature based on *Nouchi* street culture -- a representation of boyhood and the youth of Côte d'Ivoire. Moved by children expressing their hopes and dreams through graffiti, Aboudia paid tribute to their persistence and resolve by transposing their ideas onto his canvas, combining the children's horrifying reality with their innocent optimism.



Streets of Abidjan, Aboudia's hometown

Aboudia's characters have their roots in African culture, with features comparable to Voodoo iconography as well as masks from the Dan and Igbo cultures in West Africa. Despite the artist's works being a revolt against the corruption and violence that plagues the continent to this day, he highlights the beauty of African culture by representing traditional imagery in his art, reminding viewers of Africa's rich heritage that is often undermined and overshadowed by negative portrayal in Western media.

### Collector's Digest

Born in 1983, Abdoulaye Diarrassouba, known professionally as Aboudia, is an American-Ivorian contemporary artist. He was born in Côte d'Ivoire and is currently based in Brooklyn, New York, working between Abidjan and New York City. In 2003, he graduated from the School of Applied Arts in Bingerville and in 2005, he graduated from the Institut des Arts in Abidjan.

Aboudia has enjoyed increasing success at auctions in recent years, having set all of his top 10 auction results in 2021. Beginning in 2007, Aboudia's work has been widely exhibited at prestigious institutions and galleries. Recent exhibitions include *Aboudia: Nouchi Graffiti* at Ethan Cohen Gallery, New York (2021-2022) and *Aboudia: Enjaillement à Babi* at Galerie Cécile Fakhoury, Paris (2022). His repertoire has been internationally showcased in numerous cities as part of both

**Aboudia**

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solo and group exhibitions, including London, New York, Paris, Basel, Miami, Singapore, and Hong Kong, amongst others.

<sup>i</sup> Orlando Reade, 'How to Paint Ghosts', *Africa Is a Country*, 4 October 2013, [online](#)

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**Provenance**

Jack Bell Gallery, London

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT

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### José Parlá

*Writers' Bench: Grand Concourse & 149th Street, The Bronx*

signed, titled and dated "149th Street & Grand Concourse Writer's Bench" 2020 J Parlá' on the reverse  
acrylic, ink, collage, enamel, and oil paint on canvas  
153 x 244.3 cm. (60 1/4 x 96 1/8 in.)  
Executed in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$800,000 — 1,200,000

€97,700 — 146,000

\$103,000 — 154,000



[Go to Lot](#)

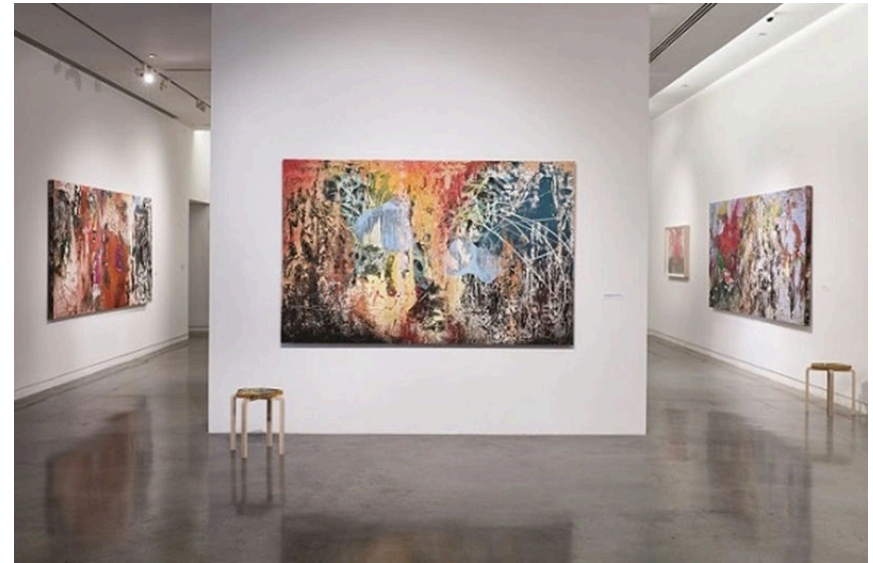


*“I think what I am trying to go for in most of my work is that there is a language, visually, that unifies people. A global language that doesn’t look like English, Chinese, Arabic... etc. It’s a universal language. My message is not nationalistic, it is universal. I want people to be understanding of different cultures. I want to spread unity.” — José Parlá*

Unpacking memories of urban spaces, José Parlá’s enigmatic works lie between the boundary of abstraction and calligraphy. With a distinct focus on rapidly executed mark making, the artist channels the unruly energy of rugged city landscapes onto the canvas, capturing the specific characteristics of the streets and reflecting the passage of time through the physicality of his gestural paintings.

Composed of layers of paint, drawing and found objects and texts, Parlá’s works resemble dilapidated building walls, translating ephemeral qualities of urban life onto his canvases. Utilising cities across the world as blueprints, the artist reflects accumulated memories and cultural histories, documenting the history of our neighbourhoods.

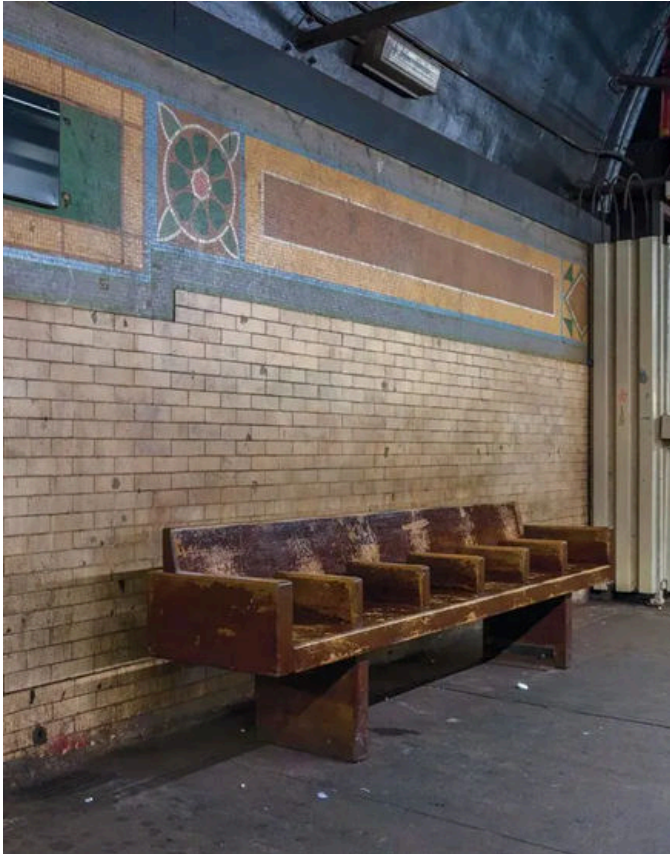
The energy of New York’s dense city life plays out on the surface of *Writers’ Bench: Grand Concourse & 149th Street, The Bronx*, which was exhibited at the artist’s first Institutional solo exhibition at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York in 2020. The series of works exhibited evokes the artist’s personal connection to the Bronx area, encapsulating the neighbourhood’s hip-hop energy and celebrating its historical significance within graffiti and street art culture.



Installation view of the current work at *José Parlá: It's Yours*, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, 2020-2021

## Straight from the Streets

Conjuring formal elements of gestural painting and graffiti, the rich build-up of surfaces within Parlá’s works resemble city walls, reflecting the marks and traced people leave behind in these rapidly changing neighbourhoods. Citing Urban Realism and Abstract Expressionism as catalysts for his creations, Parlá’s works are rooted in the context of ‘subway art, wall textures, cities, psycho-geography, and abstraction’<sup>1</sup>. The title of the current work, *Writers’ Bench: Grand Concourse & 149th Street, The Bronx*, directly references a New York landmark that is a popular meeting spot for graffiti artists across the city, located underground inside the metro station.

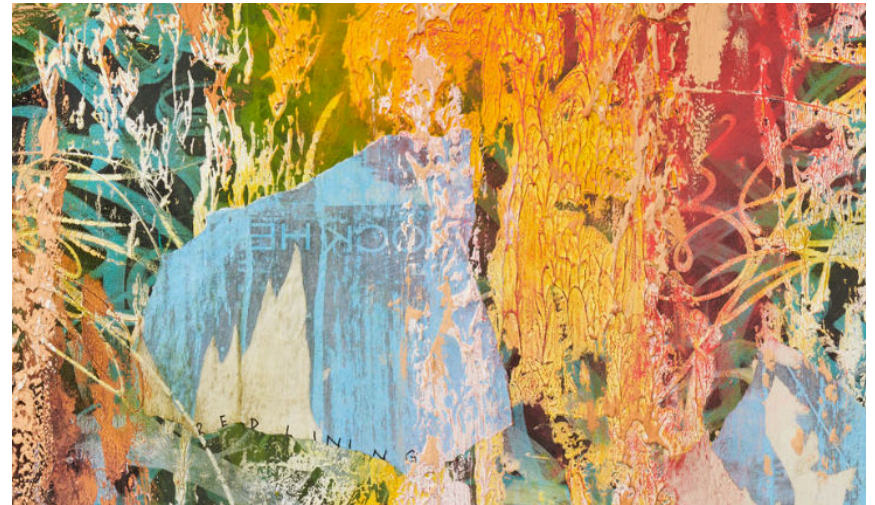


The Writers' Bench at 149th Street-Grand Concourse, New York

Working off serendipitous inspiration, Parlá often ventured onto the streets with a map in different cities, ending up in new, strange places that are completely random. He collects photographs and selects artefacts as starting points, whilst adapting visual elements from torn advertisements, or colours and texts from the streets that work for his compositions. From there, layers of paint are added and subtracted, carved and accumulated, piecing together fragments of nostalgia and culminating into visual time-capsules that explore identity, socio-economics and history.

## Documenting Urban Histories

*Writers' Bench: Grand Concourse & 149th Street, The Bronx* is beautifully emblematic of Parlá's signature abstraction. His unique painterly aesthetic extends beyond gestural painting, allowing the viewer to peel away from their preconceived notions of communication, and instead to step back, contemplate and resonate with the work with an open mind. As the artist explains himself: '...think about it with space acting as an entryway. It's not so direct. It's an expansive landscape of ideas.'<sup>ii</sup>



Detail of the present lot

Impossible to absorb at one glance, *Writers' Bench: Grand Concourse & 149th Street, The Bronx* demands movement from its viewer, compelling them to lean in and move back across its breadth to take in each miniscule detail. Eclectic textures intermingle on the canvas, with layers of intricate text overlapping restlessly above each other, creating not only physical layers but conceptual ones as well, portraying the passage of time, emanating the ambience of a lived-in city. As if plucked straight from the corners of the street, slivers of posters, adverts, and slogans peer through the crevices of the canvas in the current work. Hues of milky whites, burnt oranges and rosy reds dance and bounce off each other like neon lights at a crowded night market, palpating with rhythm.



Left: Cy Twombly, *Untitled (Bacchus)*, 2008 Tate Collection, London © Cy Twombly Foundation Right: Jackson Pollock, *One: Number 31, 1950*, 1950 Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York © 2022 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Rooted in gesture painting and graffiti, Parlá's compositions evokes the works of Cy Twombly and Jackson Pollock. Parlá's works build on the visual foundation of a city's urban environment, intertwining rhythmic linework with painstakingly accumulated layers. Labouring over these surfaces arduously, Parlá develops each layer in his paintings extensively, weaving traces of personal narratives and observations onto the canvas, each stroke of impasto represents a continuous memory.

### Collector's Digest

Primarily known for his large scale murals, José Parlá (b.1973) is a Cuban artist who is based in Brooklyn with a painterly style that is rooted in graffiti and street art, attracting His notable mural projects include *ONE: Union of the Senses* in the lobby of One World Trade Centre; *Nature of Language* at the James B. Hunt Jr. Library at North Carolina State University; and the mural *Diary of Brooklyn* at the Barclays Centre.



José Parlá's work in the personal collection of Jay Chou

Parlá's recent exhibitions include: *José Parlá: It's Yours*, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (2020-2021); *José Parlá: Entropies*, Gana Art Ninone, Seoul (2020); and *José Parlá: Textures of Memory*, Ben Brown Fine Arts, Hong Kong (2019).

Garnering international acclaim, Parlá's works are in the public collections of The British Museum, London; The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; POLA Museum of Art, Hakone, Japan; and The National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba. The artist is represented by Ben Brown Fine Arts.

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=803TYESOK3s&ab\\_channel=RxARTInc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=803TYESOK3s&ab_channel=RxARTInc)

The artist's gestural creative process

<sup>i</sup> Sarah Osei, “‘RANDOM ACTS ARE MY STARTING POINTS;’ ARTIST JOSÉ PARLÁ ON CREATING TEXTURES OF MEMORY”, *highsnobiety*, 2019, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> José Parlá, quoted in Ambrose Leung, ‘José Parlá Walks Us Through His “TEXTURES OF MEMORY” Exhibition’, *HypeArt*, 25 September 2019, [online](#)

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#### Provenance

Ben Brown Fine Arts, London

Acquired directly from the above by the present owner

#### Exhibited

New York, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, *José Parlá: It's Yours*, 9 September 2020 - 10 January 2021, pp. 28, 68-69 (illustrated)

#### Literature

Max Lakin, 'José Parlá: Bronx Museum of the Arts', *ArtForum*, vol. 59, no. 5, March 2021, online (illustrated)

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



PROPERTY FROM A DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE  
EUROPEAN COLLECTION

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### Edgar Plans

#### *Night Creatures*

signed 'Plans' lower left; further signed, titled and  
dated "'Night Creatures' Plans 2020' on the reverse  
mixed media on canvas

150 x 280 cm. (59 x 110 1/4 in.)

Executed in 2020.

#### Estimate

HK\$1,200,000 — 1,800,000

€146,000 — 219,000

\$154,000 — 231,000

[Go to Lot](#)





*“If I am asked when I started to paint or indeed why, well that’s something I can’t define so easily. I can say how and where, using pencils and crayons on every wall within reach, outside the house in Majadahonda, on the nursery walls and the pavements.” — Edgar Plans*

Spontaneous, playful and charming, Spanish artist Edgar Plans’ compositions feature his signature characters, ‘Animal Heroes’. Blending graffiti, comic books and children’s book illustrations, Plans evokes the visual rhetoric of works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Cy Twombly, and Keith Haring, creating a spirited world that is uniquely his own. Wearing colourful capes, masks, and expressive big eyes – the artist’s protagonists communicate his observations of socio-political issues and criticism, as well as stories from his imagination.

### Creatures of the Night

Monumental in scale, *Night Creatures* is the largest work by the artist to come to auction. Intentionally playful, Plans harnesses the boundless creativity of children’s drawings in the current work, returning to simple visual cues that reflect a form of pure artistic expression. Yet, the intricate layering of a variety of mediums and interwoven visual planes demonstrate a refined practice that references Plans’ historical influences and showcases his ingenious improvisational skills.

Central to Plans’ practice is the ‘Hero’ figure, defined by their mouse-like round ears and colourful masks. Often holding spray paint cans and torches, these little heroes wander through the night, scribbling on the walls. Shadows of these characters are sometimes mismatched from their actual silhouettes, introducing a playful and surreal element to the artist’s composition.



Detail of the present work

In the current work, a blue multi-eyed creature stands against a towering abstract backdrop filled with intricate doodles, as it sputters glowing neon bubbles upwards in the air. A whole cast of figures above are running along a labyrinth-like ladder system that is evocative of fellow Spanish artist Joan Miró’s Surrealist landscapes, passing paint brushes to each other or running open armed with a tube of red paint. Alluding to a wide array of references to the night, Plans scrawls words such as ‘MOON’, ‘3m<sup>2</sup> dream area’ (with a bed), ‘dracula’, ‘Hooo Hooo’, ‘dark dark choo’, ‘night coffee’ (with a figure holding a cup), echoing the works title. These scribbles unfold across the surface, conveying an unbridled sense of freedom.



Joan Miró, *The Escape Ladder* (from the *Constellation* series), 1940 Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York © 2022 Successió Miró / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

### Returning to Childhood Simplicity

*“I really like Children’s art, the freedom of expression, the gestures, the strokes and the free use of colour. I’m worried about losing those qualities someday. It’s very difficult to paint as a child when you are an adult.” — Edgar Plans*

Typified by expressive characters, lively compositions and bright colours, Plans’ paintings are fantastical encounters with whimsical childhood reveries. Growing up surrounded by art around his home, Edgar Plans was encouraged to explore his creativity from a young age by his father, who is a science fiction and fantasy author. Surrounding himself with all sorts of pencils, pens, and brushes, Plans was able to explore freely and independently on painting and drawing, fuelled by his fascination with graffiti, urban art, and comic books.

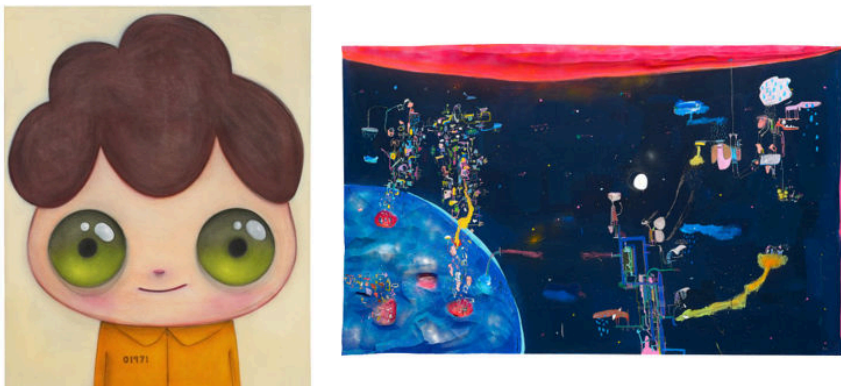
*“I never faced any restrictions, only encouragement for my need to draw and paint.”  
— Edgar Plans*

In *Night Creatures*, a small red house is seen in the lower right corner, glowing warmly from within, with papers and pencils lying outside its door, possibly alluding to the artist’s own childhood living room that was brimming with scattered manuscripts, sketches, and painting tools, imbuing the work with a sense of nostalgia.



Detail of the present work

Sharing a comparable conceptual and visual approach, fellow Spanish artists such as Javier Calleja and Rafa Macarrón also employ a similar mode of expression where the artists create childlike ideations of their own cast of creatures and characters to combat senses of loneliness, injustice or nostalgia, demonstrating a current trend of the *Spanish New Wave* within contemporary art.



Left: Lot 19, Javier Calleja, 01971, 2017 Estimate HKD 3,500,000 - 5,500,000 Right: Lot 49, Rafa Macarrón, Sin título (Cosmos), 2015 Estimate HKD 700,000 - 1,000,000

## The Everyman Hero

First coming into fruition in 2006, Plans' *Animal Heroes* series reflects the artist's outstanding ability in portraying instant visual narratives in his oeuvre, typified by the variety of expressions and actions of the little heroes. These characters encompass a range of emotions such as joy, mischief and play – elements that define Plans' celebrated oeuvre. Seemingly innocently at play, these light-hearted illustrations are in fact a commentary on socio-political issues of racism, gender equality and climate change. Through the creation of his personal heroes, the artist demonstrates a yearning for the ability to make one's dreams come true with heroes of his own creations. Plans also aims to empower and urge everyone to take action against injustice, becoming heroes in their own right.

*“The Animal Heroes arise from my intention to create pictures of denunciation in favour of the environment, to denounce the human actions that contaminate, destroy and poke the planet. In turn these heroes have simple powers that today's society is losing as they are solidarity, companionship, respect... and these animals through art and their actions want to reintroduce people.” — Edgar Plans*

## Collector's Digest

Garnering increasing international popularity in recent years, Edgar Plans' latest solo exhibition

focused on his Animal Heroes characters, [The Freedom to Dream and Want to Be](#), and was held at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art in 2021. He has also held solo presentations with Almine Rech, Paris (2021) and Alzueta Gallery, Barcelona (2019), along with an exhibition pop-up in Hong Kong at the K11 Musea (2021). Launching his first collection of NFTs this year, Edgar Plans collaborated with Phillips for his [Lil' Heroes NFT Online Auction](#) in March 2022.

Plans' works are also in the public collections of the Museum of Fine Arts of Asturias, the Caixa Foundation, the Cristina Peterson Foundation, and the Masaveu Foundation, amongst others. Edgar Plans is represented by Alzueta Gallery, Barcelona and Padre Gallery, New York & Moscow.

## Provenance

Galeria Cuadrada, Bogota

Acquired from the above by the present owner

## 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Hong Kong Auction / 22 June 2022 / 6pm HKT



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### Rafa Macarrón

*Sin título (Cosmos)*

signed and dated 'RM 15' lower right  
mixed media on aluminium and PVC  
183 x 296 cm. (72 x 116 1/2 in.)  
Executed in 2015.

#### Estimate

HK\$700,000 — 1,000,000

€85,200 — 122,000

\$89,700 — 128,000

[Go to Lot](#)



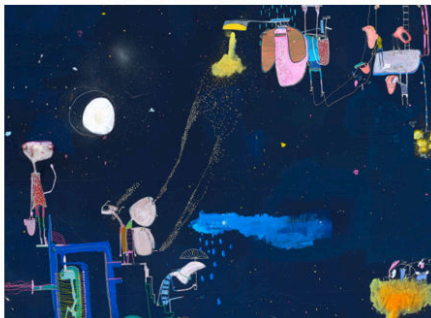
## Introduction

Characterised by the host of surreal, whimsical characters that populate his work, Spanish artist Rafa Macarrón's *Sin título (Cosmos)* exudes a stylistic flair that resembles artists such as Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso and Jean Dubuffet. Carrying a sense of tranquillity, tenderness and wonder, Macarrón's fluid, dreamlike realms seem to be suspended in time, free from the restraints of literal interpretation.

As his compositions unfurl in expansions of colour and fleeting lines, Macarrón presents an inventive futuristic cosmos inhabited by a cast of peculiar creatures, building bridges and houses across the Earth and sun. With his work, Macarrón seeks a freedom of expression through a variety of materials: 'The spray gives modernity, dynamism, and colour. The pencils and the marker create the weft, the waxes, the acrylics and the gouaches, nuanced transparencies and the oil brings complexity.'<sup>i</sup>

### 'Fantastic, Surreal, Expressionist Figuration'

In playing with deformity, Macarrón emphasises the idea that no two people are alike, and that each deserves to be celebrated for their uniqueness. The artist designs his characters with a consideration for their background stories, elevating everyday activities with mysticism and provocation. Amidst the dazzling detail in *Sin título (Cosmos)*, Macarrón's flawed, imperfect characters are living their ordinary lives: holding an umbrella to shield themselves from cosmic showers or smoking a cigarette off their balconies. Seemingly mundane activities are distorted with outlandish figures with eyes that pop out of their heads or legs that cannot hold up the weight of their bodies. Macarrón's colourful characters are reminiscent of childhood doodles, projecting a playful view of the world that is limitless and full of imagination.



Left: Jean Dubuffet, *Site aux paysannes (Site for peasant women)*, 1966 © 2022 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris Right: Detail of the present lot

Illustrating a similar child-like painterly aesthetic, Jean Dubuffet's enigmatic, almost primitive works are defined by their vivid colours, rough brushwork and pronounced outlines, allowing the artist to achieve an unnerving impact with his work. Dubuffet began painting during WWII and coined the term *Art Brut* (raw art) to describe the raw, untrained qualities he was emulating in his paintings. Similar to Dubuffet, Macarrón's works infuse creative aspects from children's drawings and human anatomy.

However, in contrast to Dubuffet, Macarrón's approach is much more carefree in nature. Despite the deformity of his protagonists, Macarrón's figures are rendered with tenderness and compassion. With a background in physiotherapy, Macarrón utilises his understanding of human anatomy in portraying his characters, showcasing his detailed observation of everyday life and existence. He found that depicting the imperfections of the human body is 'like creating your own body characters, each with their own soul and personality', providing him an enriching source of inspiration<sup>ii</sup>:

*"They are born from a fantastic, surreal, and expressionist figuration. I consider them hybrid characters that are closely related to my admiration for Dubuffet, Bonifacio, and Alfonso Fraile. My characters live in a transcended daily life, clean days, sunsets, and fresh air."* — Rafa Macarrón

### Cosmic Expanse

Depicting a fancifully coloured, poetic galaxy, Macarrón's *Sin título (Cosmos)* encapsulates the same lyrical and surreal qualities as works by fellow Spanish painter, Joan Miró. Featuring some of Miró's first biomorphic forms, *Carnival of Harlequin* depicts a crowded scene at a festival, where abstract characters seem to be caught up in a celebration. Though a simple horizon line is employed, Miró's characters seem to be floating in mid-air, with the depth of the space indiscernible to the viewer. Placed before a sleek background, the figuration of the characters is enhanced, giving their personality more prominence.



Joan Miró, *Carnaval d'Arlequin (Carnival of Harlequin)*, 1924-1925 Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York © Successió Miró / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Despite the suggestion of an expansive field through a comparison of scale between the sun and Earth, Macarrón also reduces the unfathomable depth of the galaxy into a shallow flat background in *Sin título (Cosmos)*, yet the sense of an expansive field can still be felt by the viewer. Macarrón is able to achieve such an effect by creating backdrops before carefully placing the figures, juxtaposing the extremities of the figures, textures, or background elements with the flatness of the space, generating volume, texture, and a sense of perspective. In addition, depth is constructed through a unique, three-dimensional canvas with dynamic protrusions and depressions formed with geometric lines, transforming the work into a tactile landscape, enhanced as light and shadow reflect and refract from the surface. Colour also helps to construct the surrounding atmosphere, evident through Macarrón's use of luminescent oranges and bright magenta 'to generate warmth' <sup>iii</sup>, as in the present lot. The dynamic ambience of his space metropolis is animated with a sense of motion and energy that transcends reality with an ethereal aura.



Detail of the present lot (profile)

### Collector's Digest

Born 1981 in Madrid, Rafa Macarrón is a self-taught artist who lives and works in Madrid. First gaining momentum internationally after winning the BMW Painting Award in 2010, Macarrón has since held his first institutional museum exhibition at the [Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga](#), 26 March - 6 June, 2021. Other solo exhibitions include his two-part exhibition with [Nino Mier Gallery](#) in Los Angeles (2022) and [Allouche Gallery](#) (2019) in New York.

Macarrón's works are in the public collections of the Hudson Valley Centre for Contemporary Art,

**Rafa Macarrón**

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New York; Foundation BMW, Spain; Caja Campo, Valladolid, Spain; and Collection Mercadona, Spain, among others.

The artist's debut solo exhibition in Asia, [Afternoon Delight](#), had just closed at the CVG Foundation in Beijing, which lasted from 22 April - 19 May, 2022.

<sup>i</sup> Rafa Macarrón, quoted in 'Artist Interview: Rafa Macarrón', *Street Art News*, 26 October 2021, [online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Rafa Macarrón, quoted in Melissa Mui, 'Rafa Macarrón Explores Shape-Shifting Characters at La Nave', *Whitewall*, 20 July 2021, [online](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Gabrielle Leung, 'Rafa Macarrón's Dream-Like Characters to Take Over NYC's Allouche', *Hypebeast*, 27 August 2019, [online](#)

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**Provenance**

Private Collection, Madrid (acquired directly from the artist)

Acquired from the above by the present owner