

## **SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK TO SELL MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART FROM THE MILDRED AND HERBERT LEE COLLECTION IN NOVEMBER 1998**

**-- THE GROUP OF SEVEN WORKS REPRESENTS MAJOR ART MOVEMENTS OF THE POST WAR PERIOD --**

**-- Jasper John's famous White Numbers, one of three great works by the artist on the same subject, to be offered --**

New York, New York -- Sotheby's New York will sell seven works from the Mildred and Herbert Lee Collection in November 1998. This group, which is estimated to fetch around \$13.5 million, illustrates most of the important movements of the Post-War period and includes works by Picasso, Calder, Pollock, Johns, Rauschenberg and Warhol. "The remarkably synergistic collection of Mildred and Herbert Lee offers a comprehensive survey of 20th Century post war art, starting with Pablo Picasso's figurative painting through Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionism and ending with Andy Warhol's pop art," noted Tobias Meyer, Worldwide Head of Sotheby's Contemporary Art department. "We are thrilled to be selling such a wonderful selection from the collection of a couple who so presciently purchased works of art by major 20th century masters, very often from their first shows."

Mildred and Herbert Lee began their collecting of Contemporary art in the early 1960's and the works to be auctioned comprise signature works by six major 20th century artists, illustrating the Lee's acuity of vision. They were early advocates of Pop Art, and collected iconic images of the period by Warhol, Rauschenberg and Johns.

Featured in the collection is Jasper Johns' White Numbers (est. \$7/9 million), an encaustic executed in 1958 with wax, collage and oil on canvas, which is one of the most sophisticated of his numbers works. The Lees purchased this painting in 1962 and it has not been on the market since. Johns' numbers works along with his images of flags and targets, mark a radical break from gestural abstract expressionism. The present painting is one of three white numbers paintings by Johns, one formerly in the Ganz collection and another in the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. "It is a great pleasure to have such an extraordinary work of art that combines all the essential elements of Johns' work into one of the great paintings of this century," said Tobias Meyer.

Johns' new art challenged abstract expressionism and as artist Leo Steinberg noted "...Johns puts two flinty things in a picture and makes them work against one another so hard that the mind is sparked. Seeing them becomes thinking." Another early John's work Flag (est. \$500/700,000), a graphite drawing from 1959, epitomizes the best of the artist's early works on paper.

From an art historical perspective, Pablo Picasso's oil on canvas of Françoise Gilot, Tête de Femme (est. \$2/3 million), dating to 1952, is a fabulous example of Picasso's powerful deconstructed heads from the 1950's where the vibrant coloring bordered by thick black bands creates an effect of stained-glass. The present rendering of Françoise Gilot suggests a loving yet complex relationship between Picasso and his lover.

Alexander Calder's Polo Player (est. \$300/400,000) is a rare and playful wire sculpture dating to 1929. The present sculpture is extremely energetic in its animation, with its extended arms. Also in the sale is a classic abstract expressionist canvas: Fireworks by Jackson Pollock (est. \$2/2.5 million) which dates to 1950, explodes with a burst of red, green and yellow and makes interesting use of silver paint.

Robert Rauschenberg's Dry Run (est. \$900/1.2 million), from 1963, is a prime example of the artist's black and white silkscreen paintings using found imagery. The final work in the collection is Andy Warhol's Self-Portrait (est. \$300/400,000), which was exhibited in 1970 in one of the artist's earliest retrospectives, Andy Warhol, a traveling exhibition which originated at the Pasadena Art Museum in Pasadena, California.

###

For more information please contact Sotheby's Press Office at (212)606-7176.