

CHRISTIE'S

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SEMINAL DE KOONING PAINTING WILL HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK 20TH CENTURY EVENING SALE



Property from a Renowned Private New York Collection

WILLEM DE KOONING (1904-1997)

Untitled XXI

signed 'de Kooning' (on the reverse)

oil on canvas

70 x 80 in. (177.8 x 203.2 cm.)

Painted in 1977.

Estimate on Request

New York - Christie's is pleased to offer Willem de Kooning's *Untitled XXI* as a leading highlight in the 20th Century Evening Sale taking place during Spring Marquee Week at Rockefeller Plaza (Estimate on Request; in excess of \$20 million). *Untitled XXI* is fresh to the market, having been in the same important private collection for more than 30 years. This spring presents buyers with a rare opportunity to acquire a de Kooning of exceptional quality and significance.

Untitled XXI was painted in de Kooning's studio in East Hampton in 1977, a historic year when he turned out a group of radiant, large-scale abstractions that had a new level of mastery about them. Art historians regard 1977 as a highpoint of his career, his *annus mirabilis*, or "miraculous year," as the British critic David Sylvester wrote. The art market has confirmed that view: three of de Kooning's top four highest prices achieved at auction were for paintings from 1977.

Untitled XXI is a singularly compelling work. At first it looks like a glowing abstraction, with ribbons of color twisting against a pearly white ground. But if one looks closely, intimations of landscape and the female figure become apparent. *Untitled XXI* might be called a retrospective of sorts, encapsulating in a single painting everything that de Kooning had achieved in the decades before. Here we find an ecstatic combination of gestural abstraction and the light of East Hampton, much of it rendered in the sumptuous pink-and-white palette for which he is famous.

Barrett White, Christie's Executive Deputy Chairman, Post-War & Contemporary Art, remarks, *"This vibrant 1977 canvas by Willem de Kooning stands as a triumph of his career. With thick winding strokes of jewel-toned pigment, de Kooning successfully combines the passionate brushwork that characterized his New York paintings of the '50s with the serenity his work acquired after he moved to East Hampton. Contemplative and joyful all at once, this luminous canvas represents the very best of de Kooning."*

PRESS CONTACT: Jessica Stanley | 212 636 2680 | jstanley@christies.com

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**Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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Images available on request

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