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FOR LIMITED RELEASE
November 17, 2016

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From Ellsworth Kelly to Christopher Wool, Swann Galleries' Contemporary Art Auction Delivers

New York—Works from the post-war period to today found new homes at the biannual auction of **Contemporary Art at Swann Galleries**. The sale reflected the great diversity of materials and philosophies espoused in the current art world, and bidders responded with enthusiasm.

The top lot of the sale was a pencil drawing by Ellsworth Kelly titled *Milkweed*, 1969, which sold to a collector for \$125,000*. This tied a previous record for a single plant study in pencil by the artist. A lithograph from 1965-66 titled *String Bean Leaves II* sold for \$13,750, a record for that print, while *Camellia II*, a lithograph from 1964-65, reached \$12,500, tying the previous record for that print. All offered works by Kelly sold above their estimates, including the solid geometric forms for which the artist is known.

A highlight of the sale was *Cold Mountain Series, Zen Studies 2*, a 1991 etching and aquatint by Brice Marden, which sold for \$60,000, a record for the print. Another work by Marden also performed well: the color etching and lithograph *L.A. Muses*, 1999, sold for \$8,750. Additional abstract prints received much attention, including Robert Motherwell's color aquatint *Lament for Lorca*, 1981-82, which achieved \$20,000, and *Holland Hotel*, a 1980 color screenprint by Richard Estes that reached \$15,000.

Works by women artists did especially well, led by Helen Frankenthaler's *Skywriting*, a color screenprint from 1997, which sold for \$10,625, a record for the work. Other highlights included works by Alice Baber, Louise Bourgeois, Joan Mitchell, Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson and Dorothea Rockburne. An undulating Op Art color screenprint by Bridget Riley titled *Elapse*, 1982, sold for \$7,020, while *Abstract Composition*, a circa 1960 gouache painting by Irene Rice Pereira, reached \$2,750.

The sale broke several auction records, including that of *Jean Genet Masturbating in Metteray Prison*, a 1984 screenprint by David Wojnarowicz, which reached \$10,000, a record for any print by the artist. An untitled set of five inkjet prints by Christopher Wool, 2003, tied the standing record for the work at auction, reaching \$37,500. Similarly, Roy Lichtenstein's *Against Apartheid*, a 1983 color lithograph, tied its previous auction record with \$10,625.

In its auction debut, Wayne Thiebaud's hardground etching and drypoint *Snack Counter*, 1966, brought \$12,500. Another work by the artist, *Suckers, State II*, a 1969 lithograph, sold for the same price.

Each of the four prints by Zao Wou-Ki sold to the same collector after intense bidding. The price of his color etching *Paysage au Soleil*, 1950, was pushed past its estimate to \$5,750.

Todd Weyman, Swann Galleries' Vice President and Director of Prints & Drawings, said, "We were thrilled by the interest in important female artists, especially Frankenthaler and Catlett, proving that their presence has certainly been felt in the contemporary art market. An eager market for post-war abstraction is extending to more recent computer-age artists like Christopher Wool, indicating a growing diversity in bidders' interests."

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