

AMERICAN ICONS



OPERA GALLERY

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21 JUNE - 5 JULY 2019

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PREFACE

Opera Gallery marks its 25th anniversary with a new exhibition titled *American Icons* – a vibrant and energetic interpretation of 1980s New York street culture, with mixed media works by world-renowned 20th century artists including Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Andy Warhol and Alexander Calder.

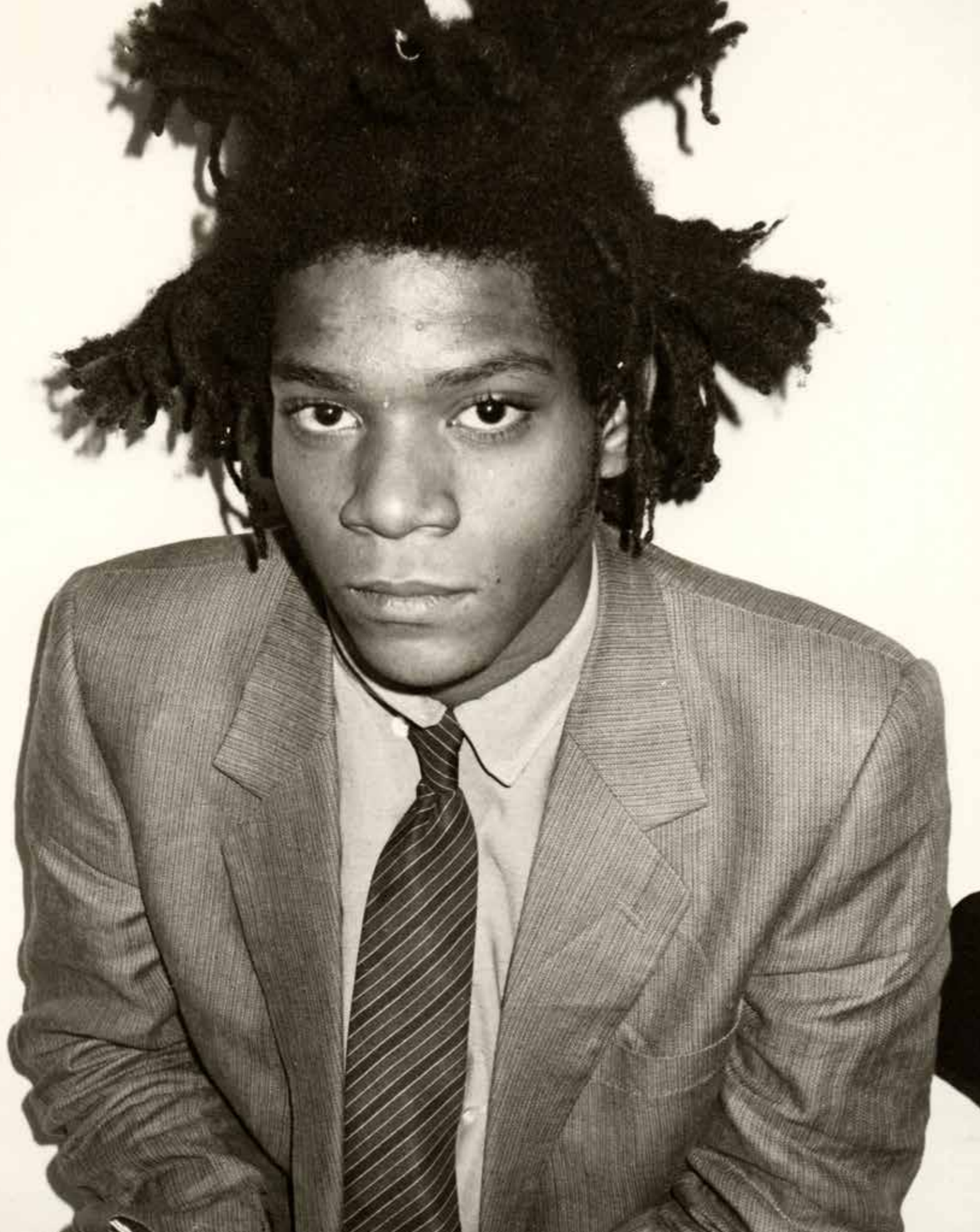
The artworks included in this exhibition reflect a period that saw a growing drugs epidemic, the AIDS crisis, the Cold War, widespread capitalism, space races alongside high unemployment and rising inequality. It also saw the rise in technology and new trends in fashion and music. A hugely influential moment in history, this Post-War period saw artists from Europe and Asia migrate to the United States as they searched for cultural emancipation, seeking to challenge the world through their art. Forty years later, the work of these American Icons is more relevant than ever as we see their activism in light of the social politics that has taken over modern America.

On a path of self-discovery, these artists have all left their mark on art history, revolutionising the art world by pushing boundaries as they reimagined the form and function of sculpture and painting, whilst exploring and exploiting taboo subject matter and making stark social commentary, appropriating popular imagery and giving it a new lease of life.

American Icons is a provocative and uplifting exhibition, celebrating the leading protagonists of this period. This is the occasion to revisit these artists, who have formed a key part of Opera Gallery's history for now a quarter of a century. Visionary artists, who excelled in a changing the world through experiment and innovation. We hope you enjoy the carefully curated display of these emblematic and most intimate works of art.

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Federica Beretta
Director
Opera Gallery London



JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

1960 - 1988

Jean-Michel Basquiat was born in Brooklyn, New York, USA in 1960. Basquiat's mother was Puerto Rican, his father Haitian. Basquiat started really to draw in the street with the four letter SAMO (short for "Same Old Shit"), topped by a crown. He made a living by selling postcards made with collages of photocopies and T-shirts that he painted himself, with the words "Man Made". In 1980, he took part in his first shows. His works won instant critical acclaim. He attracted the attention of influential art dealers, and his works were included in major international exhibitions. In no time his work was in great demand - and his prices soared. He spent all his money on travels and drugs. Basquiat mixed countless illustrative sources together: anatomy manuals, newspapers, comic strips, album covers, portraits of jazz musicians. When he faced his canvases, he behaved like a painter, poet and tagger. He worked out his compositions with great care, wrote words and snippets of sentences and covered them with graffiti. Basquiat died of an overdose at 27. His art was one of the rare forms to circulate freely through all social strata and attract enthusiasm from all sorts of people who were usually marked more by the abysses between them.

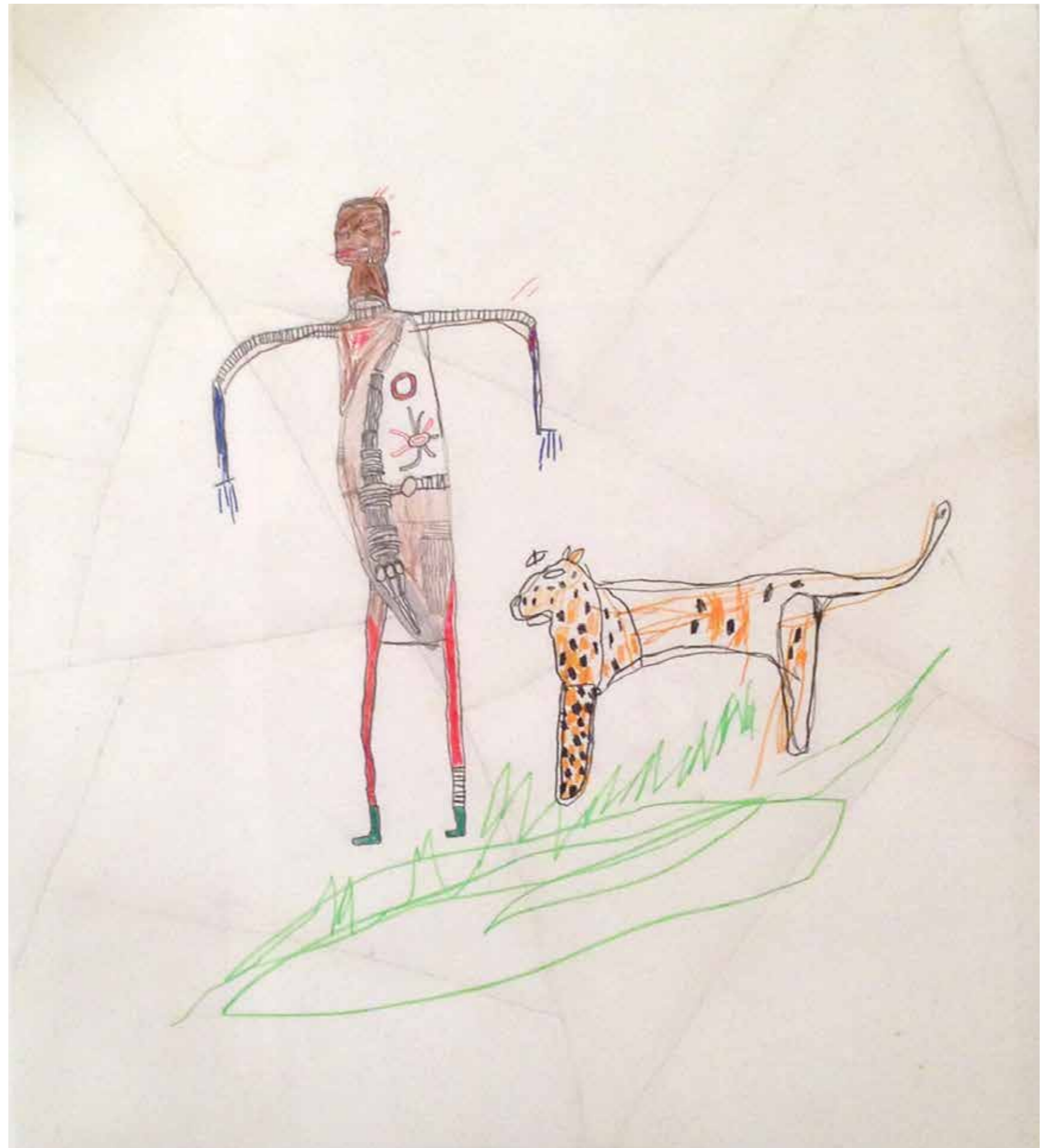
Basquiat is represented in many prominent museum collections all over the world included the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart in Berlin or the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona in Spain.

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960 - 1988)

Untitled, 1985
Oil stick on paper
22.2 x 18.5 in – 56.5 x 47 cm

Provenance
Artist's studio
Private collection, New York

Certificate
The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat has confirmed the authenticity of this work





ALEXANDER CALDER

1898 - 1976

Alexander Calder was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA in 1898. He was the son of Alexander Stirling Calder and grandson of Alexander Milne Calder, both well-known sculptors. After obtaining his mechanical engineering degree from the Stevens Institute of Technology, Calder worked various jobs before enrolling at the Art Students League in New York City in 1923. It was here that he finished his first miniature travelling circus and began making a name for himself as an innovative abstract sculptor. Calder is known as the originator of the suspended or standing kinetic sculpture made from delicately balanced shapes and set in motion by air currents; a device Marcel Duchamp named 'mobiles'. He was awarded the main prize for sculpture at the Venice Biennial in 1952 and first prize for sculpture in the 1954 Pittsburgh International. Calder created a series of paintings in gouache during a yearlong stay in Aix-en-Provence, France in 1953 in parallel to his sculptural practice. The gouache allowed Calder to quickly translate the vocabulary of his sculpture into something more immediate, using an angular figuratism, which often served as inspiration for later sculpted works. Presenting a synthesis of geometric forms, Calder's lines convey, with considered simplicity, the abundance and diversity of nature and the spontaneous impressions it evokes.

His works are held in almost every major museum collection worldwide including the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin or the Fondation Beyeler in Basel.

Alexander Calder (1889 - 1976)

Mirobolant, 1974

Signed dated on the lower right

Gouache and ink on paper

29.1 x 43.5 in – 74 x 110.5 cm

Provenance

Galerie Maeght, Paris

Private collection, New York, 1974

Herbert B. Palmer & Co., Los Angeles

Estate of Sara and Sherman Feinstein, Wilmette, Illinois, 1981

Certificate

This work is registered in the archives of the Calder Foundation, New York, under application no. A12730





KEITH HARING

1958 - 1990

Keith Haring was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, USA, in 1958. As a child he was heavily influenced by the drawings of Walt Disney and Dr. Seuss, and as a teen by the Beat writings of William S. Burroughs. He was enrolled in the Ivy School of Professional Art in Pittsburgh shortly after graduating from high school, dropping out after two semesters to move to New York City. There he became associated with the thriving alternative art community developing outside the commercial art world. He first received public attention with his public art in the subway, and by the 1980s was organising exhibitions at the arts nightclub Club 57. Propelled to quick success with the help of influential figures such as Andy Warhol, Madonna and Jean-Michel Basquiat, Haring's work nonetheless expressed pertinent social and political themes at the time. Openly gay, his work was heavily impacted by the AIDS epidemic and the underground street culture of New York City in the 1980s, with sexuality, death and war being central themes to his oeuvre. Haring died at age 31 of AIDS-related complications.

Since his death he has been the subject of several major retrospectives, and his imagery has become a widely regarded visual Zeitgeist of New York City in the late 20th century. Fellow emerging artists Kenny Scharf and Jean-Michel Basquiat shared Haring's interest in the colourful, absurdist and transgressive graffiti art of the subway and city streets, and the three often explored an aesthetic that combined images of art, music and fashions. His works feature in important public and private collections, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the François Pinault Collection at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and many more.

Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Untitled, 1988

Signed and dated on the overlap

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 36 in – 122 x 91.5 cm

Provenance

Skarstedt Gallery, New York

R. Smith collection

Vedovi Gallery, Brussels

Private collection

Exhibited

Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, *Keith Haring, The Political Line*, 2013, p. 313, no. 195, ill. in colour, p. 286

Literature

Germano Celant ed., *Keith Haring*, Presel-Verlag, Munich, 1992, p. 198, no. 120, ill. in colour p. 149





Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Sneeze (via Picasso), 1984
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 in – 152.5 x 152.5 cm

Provenance
Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York
Christie's, New York, 17 May 2000, lot 157
Gallery Enrico Navarra, Paris

Literature
Luxembourg, Dexia Banque Internationale, *Keith Haring*,
texts by Tony Shafrazi, Fred Hoffman, Barry Blinderman,
2007, p. 143
Mons, Beaux-Arts Mons, *Keith Haring. All over*, 2009, p. 166
Milan, Vecchiato Art Galleries, *Keith Haring*, texts by
Tony Shafrazi, Luca Beatrice, 2009, p. 59
Milano, Palazzo Reale, *Keith Haring About Art*, texts by
Gianni Mercurio, Marina Mattei, Giuseppe di Giacomo,
Demetrio Paparoni, 2017, p. 181

Certificate
The Foundation Keith Haring has confirmed the
authenticity of the work under no. 051605A1

Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Untitled, 1985

Signed and dated on the overlap

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 48 in – 121.9 x 121.9 cm

Provenance

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Pearlstein, Milwaukee

Sotheby's, New York, 4 October 1990, lot 279

Private collection

Exhibited

Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin Collects, September-
November 1987





Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Mangeur de grenouilles, 1985
Signed and dated on the overlap
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in – 121.9 x 121.9 cm

Provenance

Artist's studio
Roger Nellens collection, Knokke, Belgium
Private collection, New York
Van de Weghe Fine Art, New York

Exhibited

Ostende, Museum voor moderne kunst, *Keith Haring*, 1991
Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'arte contemporanea; Malmö
Konsthall; Amburgo, Deichtorhallen; Tel Aviv Museum of Art,
Keith Haring, February 1994 - February 1995, no. 96, p. 164, ill.
New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, *Keith Haring*,
June - September 1997, p. 187, ill.

Literature

Elisabeth Sussman, *Keith Haring*, exhibition catalogue, Whitney
Museum of American Art, New York, 1987, p. 187, ill.
Germano Celant, ed., *Keith Haring*, Presel-Verlag, Munich, 1992,
no. 73, ill.

Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Untitled, 1986

Signed and dated on the lower right

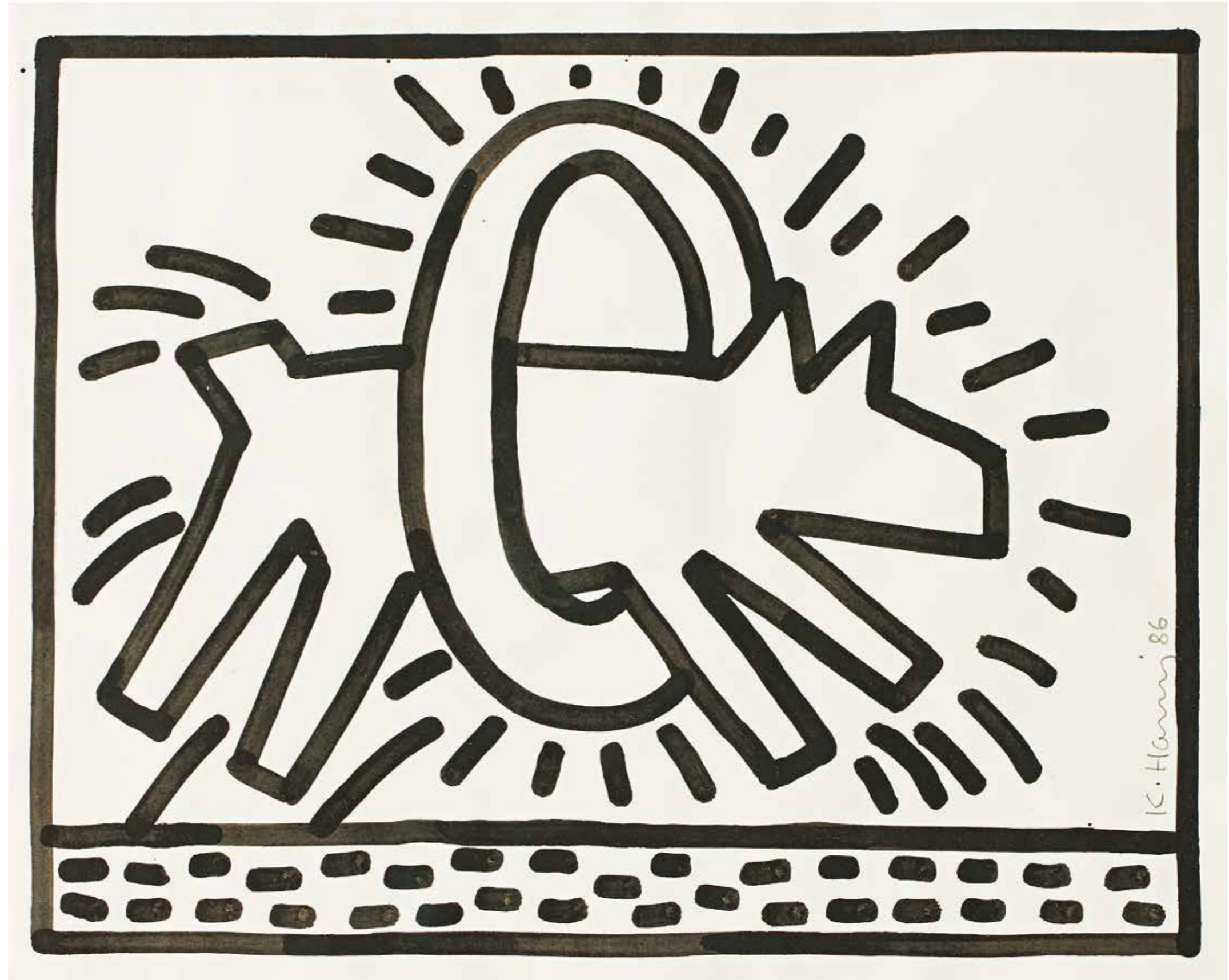
Sumi ink on paper

12.8 x 15.8 in – 32.4 x 40.2 cm

Provenance

Private collection, Sweden

Private collection, Europe



Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Dessins pour les ballets de Monte-Carlo, 1989

Signed and dated on the reverse

Acrylic on canvas

30.3 x 22.4 in – 77 x 56.9 cm

This artwork is a study for the poster of the Christmas season shows of the company "Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo" at the salle Garnier in 1989

Provenance

Galerie Serge Laurent, Paris

Private collection, Paris



Keith Haring & LA II

Untitled, 1984
Spray paint on wood
35.4 x 137.8 in – 90 x 350 cm

Provenance
Elio Fiorucci, Milan, Italy, acquired directly from the artist
Martos Gallery, New York

Certificate
The Estate of Keith Haring has confirmed the authenticity
of the work under no. 111092A5



Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Untitled, 1986

Signed and dated on the right
Sumi ink on Japanese paper
27.6 x 53.5 in – 70 x 136 cm

Provenance

Private collection, Japan
Private collection, Europe

Certificate

The Estate of Keith Haring has confirmed the
authenticity of the work
under identification number 050108A8



Keith Haring (1958 - 1990)

Untitled, June 10, 1984

Acrylic on canvas

Dptych, 94 x 188 in – 238.8 x 477.5 cm

Provenance

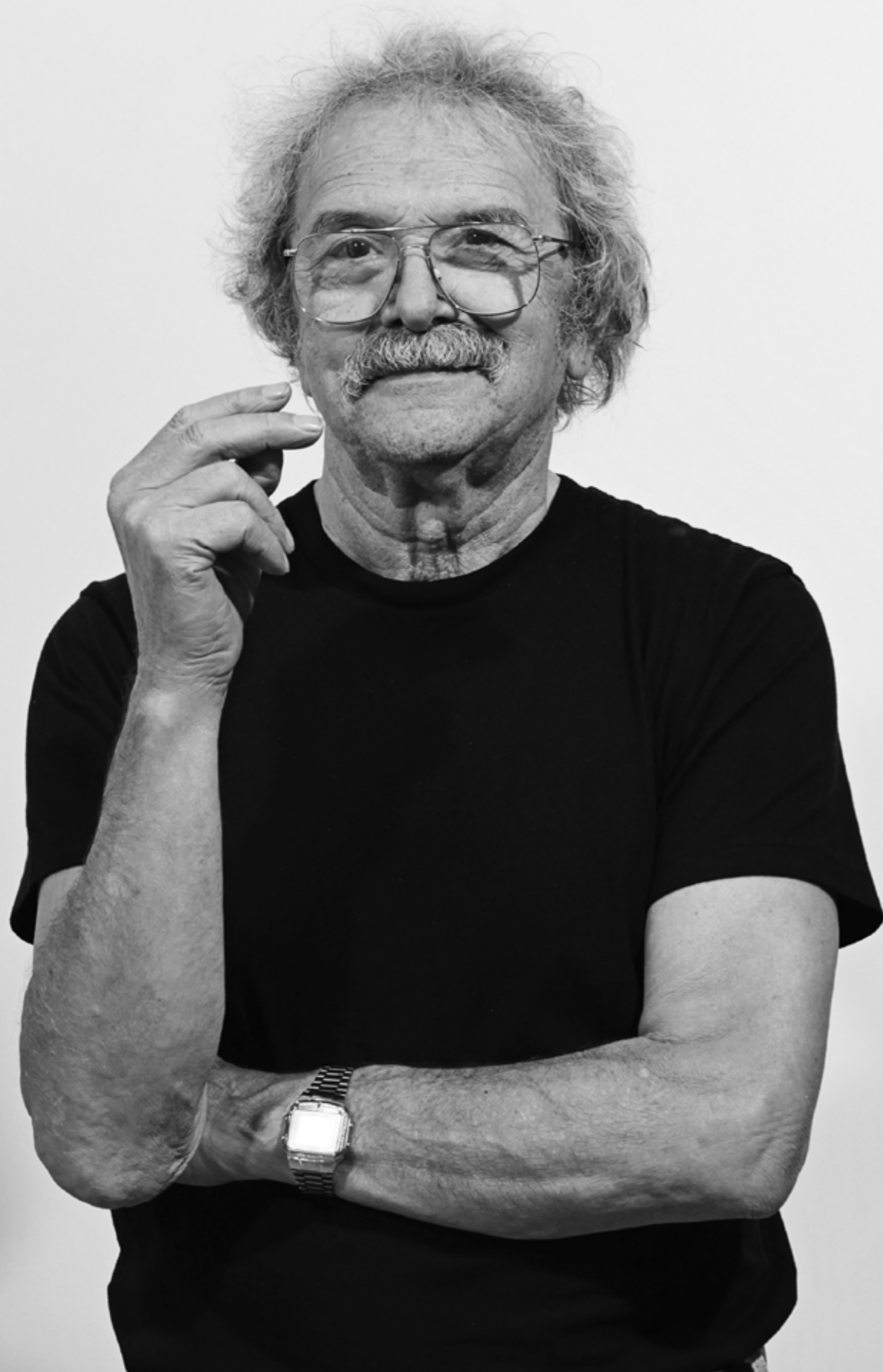
Private collection, California

Private collection, New York

Certificate

The Estate of Keith Haring has confirmed the authenticity of this work under identification number 052705A11





MEL RAMOS

1935 - 2018

Mel Ramos was born Melvin John Ramos in Sacramento, California in 1935. He studied art at the Sacramento State College and was inspired by Pop Art artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. He is also influenced by popular culture elements such as comic books Wonder Woman and Superman as well as pin-up posters. Known for his depiction of female nudes associated with brand logos that he couples with familiar subjects like the martini glass or the bag of M&M candies, Ramos states that he always depicts women with humour. Mel Ramos is both a painter and a sculptor. He works in various medium from lithographs to resin. Most of his works are modern and realist, often featuring a voluptuous female and vivid colours. His art is a statement commenting on the ways capitalism has employed the female body. Ramos' work has been interpreted in different ways throughout the years vis-à-vis its potential consumerist and sexist message.

Ramos' work can be found in a number of public collections ranging from the Albertina in Vienna to the Guggenheim Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. He has been exhibited extensively in the United States and Europe, in addition to holding teaching positions at California State University, Syracuse University and the University of Wisconsin.



Mel Ramos (1935 - 2018)

Emin Emma, 2013
Signed and numbered
Polychrome resin
Edition of 8

36.6 x 18.9 x 10.6 in – 93 x 48 x 27 cm

Provenance
Estate of the artist

Certificate
The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work
(with incorrect measurement)



FRANK STELLA

b. 1936

Frank Stella was born in Malden, Massachusetts in 1936. After studying history at Princeton University, he moved to New York in 1958. Stella still lives and works in New York. His work was influenced by Abstract Impressionism and artists such as Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns and Franz Kline. Recognition came very early in Stella's career. By 1959-60, he was already included in collective exhibitions at the MoMA and a key figure in minimalist painting defined by the flat and austere styled paintings he created at the time. Stella was interested to investigate perception and perspective – the physicality of the two-dimensional surface of the artwork, and renounced using the traditional rectangular shaped canvas. He questions conventional configurations and eventually started to create sculptures in the 1980s. He also experimented with printmaking, sets and costumes as well as collages and maquettes. Stella's work varied from fully flat to three-dimensional sculptural paintings integrating different geometric elements such as cones and waves that gradually became more baroque. He believes that geometrical forms and the interaction between shapes can have a narrative meaning. Since the 1990s, Stella also worked on monumental outdoor mural and sculptural commissions.

Stella exhibited frequently at important museums, galleries and art fairs internationally since 1960. Recently in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art dedicated a retrospective to Stella's work in 2015, so did the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2007. His work can be found in most important public contemporary art collections worldwide, including the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, Tate Gallery in London and MoMA in New York. He was also awarded a National Medal of Arts by the President of the United States.

Frank Stella (b. 1936)

Atvatabar 1, 1995

Signed and dated

Acrylic, resin, formed paper and fibreglass

53.7 x 54 in – 136.5 x 137.2 cm

Provenance

Galerie Jamileh Weber, Zurich

Private Collection, Switzerland

Exhibited

Valencia, IVAM (Institut Valencià d'Art Modern), *Frank Stella, From Strictness to Baroque*, 12 July - 14 October 2012

Literature

IVAM (Institut Valencià d'Art Modern), Frank Stella, *From Strictness to Baroque*. Valencia, 2012, pp. 62-63, ill.

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Magazin. no. 6, 9.2.1996. *Vorsicht, frisch gestrichen, Ein Besuch im Atelier Frank Stella*, p.31, ill.





ANDY WARHOL

1928 - 1987

A leading figure in the American Pop Art movement, Andy Warhol is one of the most exalted artistic and public figures of the 20th century. He was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1928 and moved to New York in 1949 where he began working as a commercial artist making drawings for advertisements during the Post-War consumer boom. His first solo exhibition at the Hugo Gallery, New York in 1952 was met with a mixture of acclaim and derision. Interested in popular culture and the mass-produced language of advertising, Warhol began integrating these elements into his work from the 1960s, producing during this time his iconic Campbell's Soup Cans screen prints. In 1962 Warhol participated in the New Realists exhibition in New York, which was hailed as the first significant survey of Pop Art. Exploring the relationship between artistic expression, celebrity culture and mass media through television, magazines and advertisement that flourished in the 1960s, Warhol's multi-media works have become iconic representations of a major shift in American cultural and social mentalities. His blatant commerciality in his lifetime became a brilliant and revealing mirror of contemporary consumerism and the Zeitgeist of American culture in the 1970s.

As per his desire, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts was established after his death. Many of Warhol's works are in the permanent collections of most of the museums of modern art around the world, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museo Guggenheim in Bilbao, the Tate Modern in London and the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, France, and many more.

Andy Warhol (1928-1987)

Dollar Sign, 1981

Stamped and numbered on the overlap
Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas
19.7 x 15.7 in – 50 x 40 cm

Provenance

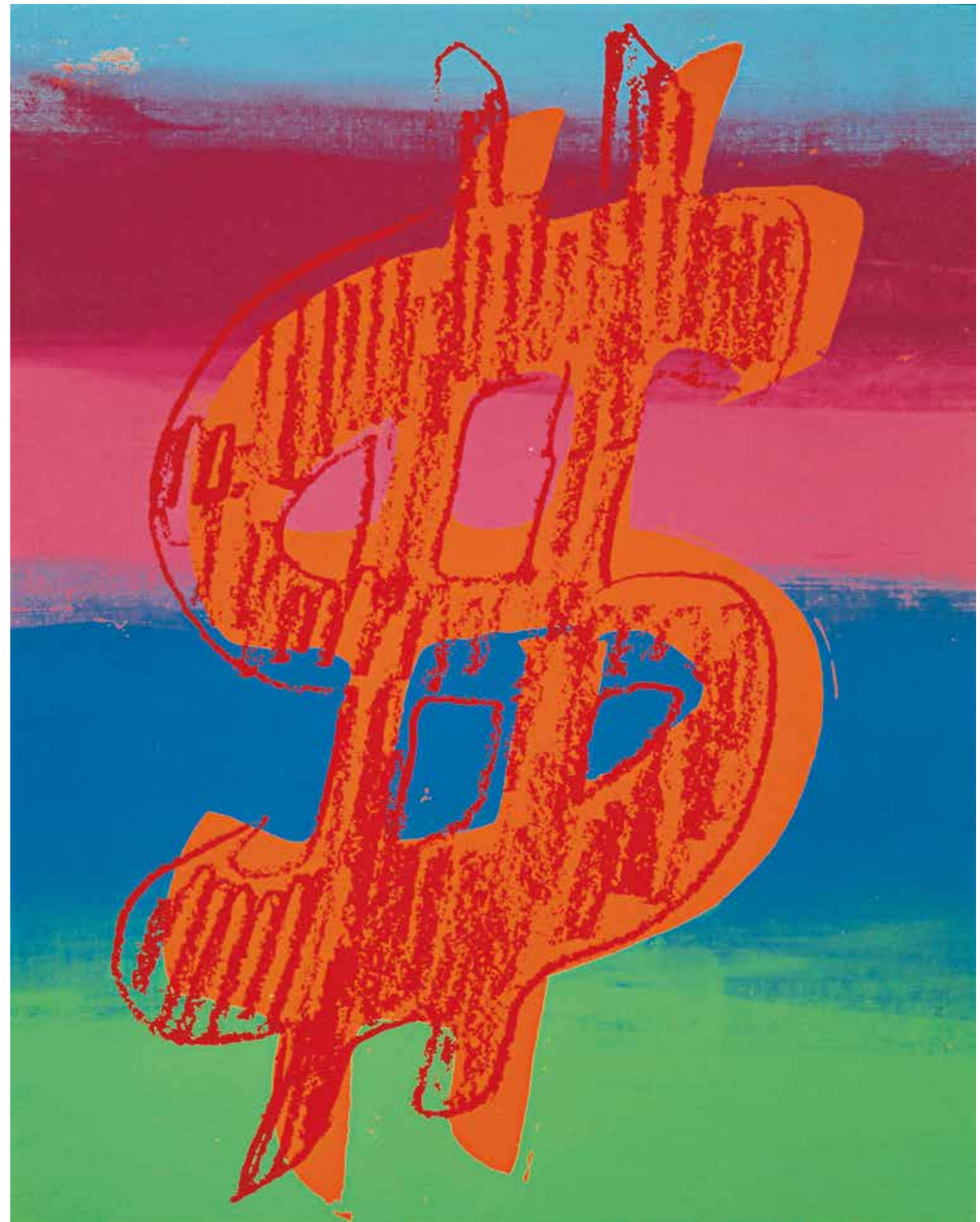
Gagosian Gallery, New York
Sotheby's, New York, 16 May 2007, lot 218
Private collection, Korea

Exhibited

Maastricht, The Netherlands, TEFAF, 2015

Certificate

This work is stamped by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. on the reverse and is stamped by the Estate of Andy Warhol, New York and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. and numbered PA30.088 on the overlap



Andy Warhol

Campbell's Chicken Rice Soup Box, 1986

Signed and dated on the overlap
Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas
14 x 14 in – 35.56 x 35.56 cm

Provenance

Martin Lawrence Galleries, New York
Private collection
Heritage Auctions, New York, 22 May 2017, lot 77046
Private collection, New York





Andy Warhol

Eagle, 1983

Signed and dated on the overlap
Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas
60 x 60 in – 152.4 x 152.4 cm

Provenance

Artist's studio
Alexander Iolas
Private collection, Greece
Private collection



TOM WESSELMANN

1931 - 2004

Tom Wesselmann was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA in 1931. He began producing cartoons while serving stateside in the US Army in 1952, and after his discharge completed degrees in psychology and drawing from the University of Cincinnati. He moved to New York shortly after graduating and became a founding member of the Judson Gallery, where he first exhibited his seminal piece *The Great American Nude*. Over the next few years he experimented with patriotic motifs, advertising images, found objects and assemblages in an aesthetic that juxtaposed contrasting elements and depictions. While most closely associated with the Pop Art movement, Wesselmann often distanced himself from the group in the claim that his works incorporated, rather than critiqued, the consumerist object in his art.

In 2005, the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma held a retrospective of his work, followed by a major exhibition the following year at L&M Arts in New York. His works are also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among numerous other museums and institutions.

Tom Wesselmann (1931 - 2004)

Sunset Nude (Variation #1), 2002

Signed on the reverse

Oil on canvas

67 x 76 in – 170.2 x 193 cm

Provenance

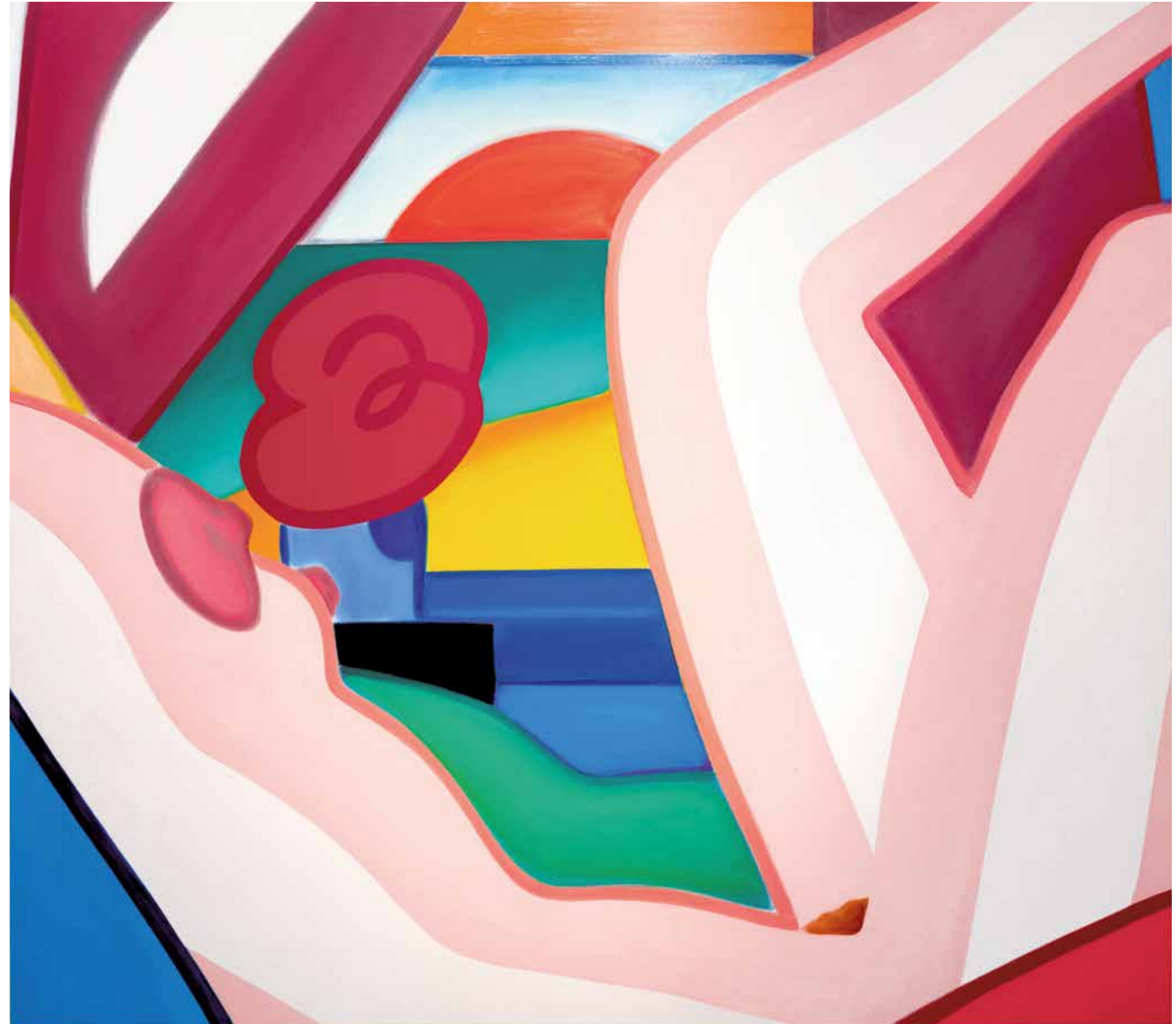
Private collection, USA

Certificate

Claire Wesselmann, executor of the Estate of Tom

Wesselmann, has confirmed the authenticity of this work

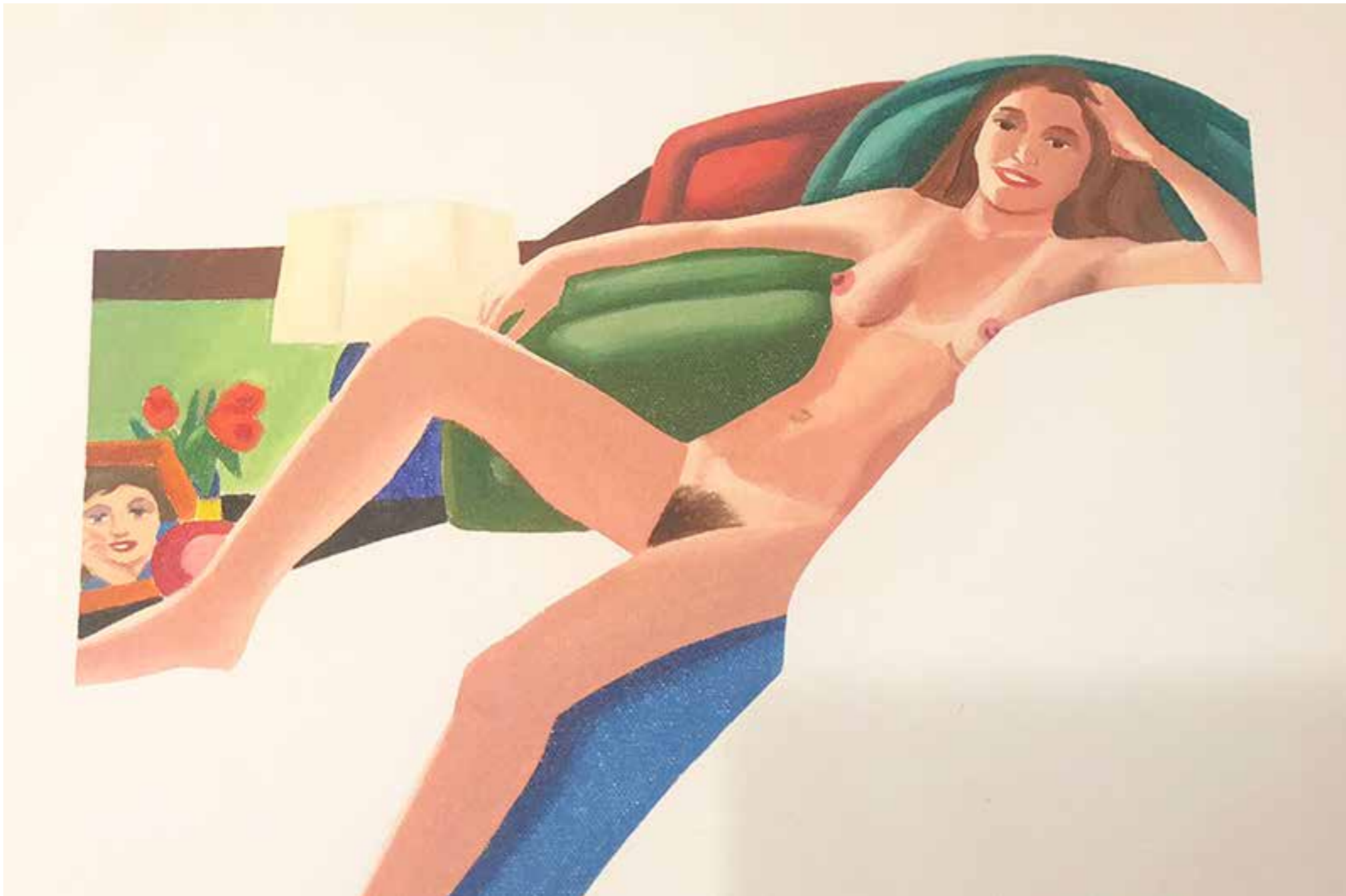
This work is referenced in the Wesselmann studio Archives
under no. CD85



Tom Wesselmann (1931 - 2004)

Study for Nude with lamp, 1977
Oil on canvas
12.6 x 15 in – 31.9 x 38.2 cm

Provenance
Private collection



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