

## Lot 385



**Auction** From a Universal Collector - The Olbricht Collection

**Date** 26.09.2020, ca. 16:28

**Preview** 19.09.2020 - 10:00:00 bis  
24.09.2020 - 18:00:00

COPLEY, WILLIAM NELSON  
1919 New York - 1996 Key West

Title: Untitled (Think).

Date: 1961.

Technique: Mixed media on canvas.

Measurement: 65 x 81cm.

Notation: Signed. bottom centre left in the base of the streetlight: Cply 61. Inscribed verso: ALPHABET.

Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

Provenance:

- Private collection (directly from the artist)

Exhibitions:

- me Collectors Room, Berlin 2019

William Copley, who also operated under the moniker CPLY, began his career as a gallerist and exhibited the greats of Surrealism. Among the artists he represented were names such as René Magritte, Max Ernst, and Man Ray, whom he also supported as a collector. Though it is unimaginable today, he did not manage to successfully market these artists. The artist Copley is often referred to as a representative of Surrealism himself and a forerunner of Pop Art. His style, however, is too unique to be assigned to a specific group. With his unmistakable manner of expression - graphic and comic-like - he portrays American stereotypes such as cowboys or pin-ups and quotes art in a parodying way. His works are often suggestive, some of them even pornographic.

In the offered work from 1961, two worlds face each other that could not be more different. In the left half of the picture, a world illuminated by a street lamp appears, in which a policeman with a raised truncheon maintains order and a scaffold looms menacingly in the background. In the right half of the picture a sinful nightlife scene appears as a dark world.

Alcohol, gambling and the perspectively distorted beds so typical of Copley's work indicate the path the woman in the centre of the work might choose. Encouragingly, a policeman stretches out his hand to her. He seems ready to lure her to the dark half of the work, past alcohol and men. The work retains a critical character through these references, as the true intention of the policeman remains hidden. Through negatively connotated objects such as the guillotine and

the truncheon, the viewer is ultimately encouraged to rethink the role of the executive branch in society. The instruction "think" also underlines this intention of Copley. With just a few brushstrokes, Copley creates a pictorial world that is both ironic and critical, and which is still relevant today.

Estimate: 35.000 € - 45.000 €; Hammer: 60.000 €

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