

Lot 14



Auction The Kasper König Collection - His Private Choice

Date 01.10.2024, ca. 18:10

Preview 27.09.2024 - 10:00:00 bis
30.09.2024 - 18:00:00

COPLEY, WILLIAM NELSON
1919 New York - 1996 Key West

Title: Happy Birthday.

Date: 1974.

Technique: Acrylic on canvas.

Measurement: 117 x 89cm.

Notation: Signed and dated lower right: CPLY 74. As well as inscribed verso: HAPPY BIRTHDAY NEG # 19161.

We thank Mr. Anthony Atlas, William N. Copley Estate, New York, for the kind, scientific support.

Provenance:

- Sammlung Kasper König, Berlin (since 1992, directly from artist)

Exhibitions:

- Ulmer Museum, Ulm 1997

- Aargauer Kunsthhaus, Aarau 2000 (label verso)

Literature:

- Exhib. cat. William N. Copley: True Confessions, Ulmer Museum, Ulm 1997, ill.

- Omlin, Sibylle (ed.): Das Gedächtnis der Malerei, ein Lesebuch zur Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert, Cologne 2000, p. 392, ill.

A work as a symbol of friendship

William N. Copley's work "Happy Birthday" from 1974 was a birthday present from the artist to Kasper König and can be seen as a symbol of the friendship between the curator and the artist. In 1972, Copley took part in documenta 5, in which König also participated, in the department of individual mythologies alongside representatives such as A.R. Penck. In 1982, he also took part in documenta 7 in Kassel. In 1981, his works were selected for Kasper König's groundbreaking exhibition "Westkunst". Today he is represented in the collection of the Museum Ludwig. König is also involved in the catalog for Copley's 2019 exhibition "The Coffin They Carry You Off In". In Germany, Copley was popular among a small circle of collectors such as Hans Neuendorf, Reinhard Onnasch, Renate Fassbender, Fred Jahn

and Rudolf Springer, with whom Kasper König maintained close contact.

X-Rated series

"Happy Birthday" from 1974 is part of the 'X-Rated' series from 1972 to 1974, which was a turning point in Copley's career. The colourful, richly patterned works with their naive sexual symbolism are characterized by an exuberant and playful sense of humour and address sexual freedom away from social stigmatization. She was first exhibited at the New Museum in New York in 1974 and reconstructed by the Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York in 2010. Like "Reclining Nude" (Lot 12), the works from the "X-Rated" series are also included in the exhibition at the Fondazione Prada in Milan and The Menil Collection in Houston.

Happy Birthday

Even if the present work cannot be directly counted as part of the "X-Rated" series, it is nevertheless exemplary of this phase of Copley's work. In contrast to the intensely colored works of the "X-Rated" series, however, Copley limits himself here to contours in magenta on a white background. In addition to the color contrast, the painter also plays with the contrasts of the checkered background, which suggests the surroundings of a bathroom, and the round contours of the female figure. Through the reduced use of color and the exaggeration of the female attributes, Copley lends his work a comic-like, humorous undertone, which gives the painting a certain lightness and can be interpreted as a clear reference to Pop Art.

Estimate: 30.000 € - 50.000 €; Hammer: 55.000 €

