

CHRISTIE'S

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FIELDS OF VISION: THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF ARTISTS WOLF KAHN AND EMILY MASON

Sold to benefit the artists' foundations
Preserving their artistic vision through exhibitions, research, and philanthropy.

Live Auction: May 18
Online Sale: May 6-20



Emily and Wolf in their Venice Studio, 1958. Photographed by Tinto Brass.

New York—Christie's announces **Fields of Vision: The Private Collection of Artists Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason** comprising paintings, works on paper, prints and sculptures, which reflect the many friendships the couple developed with other artists in their lifetimes. This dynamic collection is characterized by the inquisitive and nurturing natures of Mason and Kahn who, outside of their own studio practices, acquired meaningful works of art by their peers and artists they deeply admired. Mason and Kahn belonged to a generation of painters and sculptors who, feeling unencumbered by the traditional academic system, were able to develop new languages of expression. Highlights of the collection will be offered in a dedicated live auction on May 18, in New York, alongside the American Art Auction, and a dedicated online sale of the collection will take place from May 6-20. The auctions will feature important works by Mason and Kahn as well other distinguished artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Richard Diebenkorn, Lee Bontecou, and Marsden Hartley.

Proceeds from the auctions will benefit the **Wolf Kahn | Emily Mason Foundation** and the **Emily Mason | Alice Trumbull Mason Foundation**. Established in 1998 by artists Wolf Kahn (1927–2020) and Emily Mason (1932–2019), the Kahn | Mason Foundation has consistently supported cultural organizations through grants for exhibitions, artist residencies, and community engagement with the arts. The joint expression of their philanthropy will continue as the Foundation expands its mission to serve

as the steward of Kahn's artistic legacy. The newly formed Emily Mason | Alice Trumbull Mason Foundation will spearhead the stewardship of Emily Mason's artistic legacy alongside that of her mother's, Alice Trumbull Mason (1904–1971) and embark on a philanthropic program dedicated to advancing opportunities for traditionally underrepresented artists. Together, these two Foundations preserve the vision of three artists—in one family—through exhibitions, publications, research, archives, and philanthropy.

Paige Kestenman, AVP Specialist, American Art, Christie's, comments: *"Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason were a true art world love story. From meeting at The Artists' Club in New York in 1956 to a summer courting at the art colony of Provincetown and a wedding abroad while studying in Venice, their relationship grew in parallel to the development of their own artistic styles. Throughout their sixty-two years together, the couple persistently supported each other's individual painting practice while together forming close connections from New York to Vermont to California with art world luminaries from Milton Avery to Richard Diebenkorn. Kahn and Mason's private collection is a celebration of their long lives and careers together, representing the best of their own work and that of their art world friends."*

Allison Immergut, Junior Specialist, Post-War and Contemporary Art: *"For artists, there is no more discerning critic than a fellow artist. Throughout their lifetimes, Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason amassed a highly impressive collection that reflected their lifelong art world friendships. Each piece offered for sale has exceptional provenance and a personal story behind it, making this collection a unique highlight of the year."*

In 1956, Emily Mason and Wolf Kahn met at The Artists Club in New York City and that summer, they worked in studios in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The following year, Mason was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study abroad in Venice. Kahn joined her in Italy and soon after, they were married. Mason and Kahn shared much in common – both grew up in artistic families and while they had formal educations, each had important and memorable artist mentors. Mason acknowledged valuable lessons from Jack Larsen and David Smith among others and Kahn studied under Hans Hofmann. Mason developed her individual approach to painting with veils of vivid pigments and spontaneous mark-making and found her place between Abstract Expressionism and Color Field Painting. Kahn became known for his unique combination of Realism and Color Field Painting, working across a range of media including oil, pastel and printmaking.

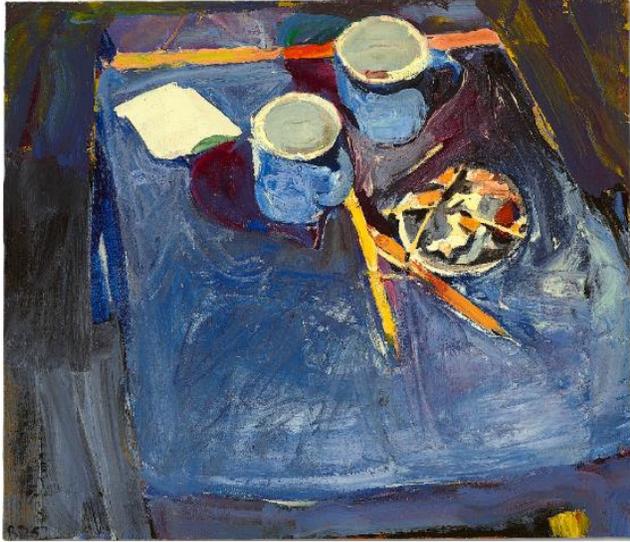
After a late-'70s Wolf Kahn solo exhibition at the Grace Borgenicht Gallery in New York, the couple celebrated its success by acquiring a painting by **Georgia O'Keeffe**, an artist they both held in the highest esteem, entitled *Autumn Leaf with White Flower*, 1926 (estimate \$3,000,000–5,000,000). Decades earlier, O'Keeffe had notably bought back the painting for her own personal collection. At a later encounter, Kahn and Mason would have the chance to share with O'Keeffe how pleased they were to acquire the painting for their collection.

Other highlights of this sale include two early canvas and steel sculptures by **Lee Bontecou**: *Untitled* (estimate \$180,000–250,000) and *Box* (estimate \$120,000–180,000). Both were created in 1959, a pivotal year for Bontecou when she first explored blackened voids and wall works. Bontecou was a Fulbright Scholar, studying in Italy at the same time as Mason, and the two artists formed a lasting friendship. While Mason and Kahn lived with all the art they acquired, either at home or in their studios, Bontecou's *Box* had special significance; for nearly fifty years it was installed on a wall of the family's Stuyvesant Square walk-up apartment where it was used as a secret piggy bank.

Also on offer is **Richard Diebenkorn: Cups II**, 1957 (estimate \$500,000–700,000) which was featured in an important Diebenkorn exhibition at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco in 1963. Kahn met Diebenkorn in 1960 when Kahn was appointed a Visiting Professor at University of California, Berkeley. The two artists would participate in group critiques together and corresponded later in life. In 1980, Diebenkorn wrote to Kahn about *Cups II*, "I like the picture + I am glad you have it... I had [it] on my wall at home for a year before sending it away."

Other highlights offered in the May 18 auction include **Charles Demuth's Cyclamen, 1918** (estimate \$50,000–70,000) which was a gift from Mason to Kahn, and **Milton Avery's Interior with Yellow Lamp, 1949** (estimate \$120,000–180,000). The Avery is another example of an artwork steeped in personal connection as the artist was a close family friend, introduced to Mason and Kahn by Mason's mother, Alice Trumbull Mason.

**FIELDS OF VISION: THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF ARTISTS WOLF KAHN AND EMILY MASON
HIGHLIGHTS | MAY 18**



RICHARD DIEBENKORN (1922-1993)
Cups II
oil on canvas
20 5/8 x 24 in. (52.4 x 61 cm.)
Painted in 1957.
\$500,000-700,000



GEORGIA O'KEEFFE (1887-1986)
Autumn Leaf with White Flower
oil on canvas
20 x 9 in. (50.8 x 22.9 cm.)
Painted in 1926.
\$3,000,000-5,000,000



LEE BONTECOU (B. 1931)
Untitled
welded steel, canvas and wire
8 x 10 x 2 1/2 in. (20.3 x 25.4 x 6.4 cm.)
Executed in 1959.
\$180,000-250,000



MILTON AVERY (1885-1965)
Interior with Yellow Lamp
oil on canvasboard
16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm.)
Painted in 1949.
\$120,000-180,000



EMILY MASON (1932-2019)
Aquifer
 oil on canvas
 56 x 52 in. (142.2 x 132.1 cm.)
 Painted in 2010.
 \$10,000-15,000



WOLF KAHN (1927-2020)
Down East Sunset I
 oil on canvas
 52 x 72 in. (132 x 182.8 cm.)
 Painted in 1997.
 \$50,000-70,000

Notes to Editors:

- To learn more, visit the [Wolf Kahn | Emily Mason Foundation](#)
- To learn more, visit the [Emily Mason | Alice Trumbull Mason Foundation](#)
- Learn more about [Wolf Kahn](#) and [Emily Mason](#).

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About Christie's

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**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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