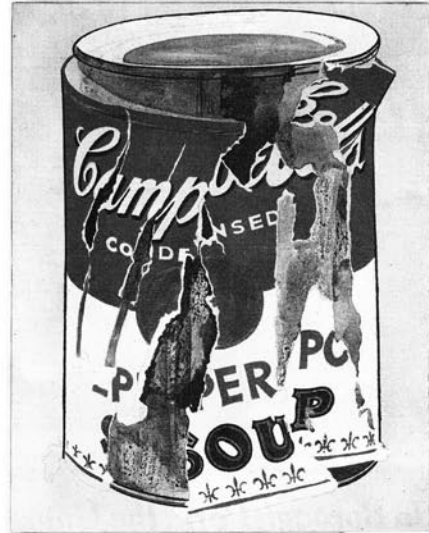


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Warhol and Judd Soar In \$143 Million Art Sale



Christie's

"Small Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot)," a 1962 Warhol, sold for \$11.7 million last night at Christie's postwar and contemporary sale.

By CAROL VOGEL

From a Campbell's Soup can to a dissected lamb split and submerged in formaldehyde, postwar and contemporary images straight out of the art history books rose to ever-higher price levels in more than two and a half hours of tireless bidding at Christie's last night. But the most memorable part of the evening came when Minimalism went mainstream.

The evening set records for 12 artists ranging from David Hockney and Damien Hirst to Richard Prince and Mike Kelley in a sale that totaled \$143.1 million, in the middle of its estimate, \$113.1 million to \$160.2 million. Of the 91 works, only 8 failed to sell.

The sale was unusually long because it included 26 works by Donald Judd that the Minimalist sculptor's foundation was selling to create an endowment to support its permanent installations in New York and Texas. Primarily late works from the 1980's and early 90's, they ranged in estimate from \$30,000 to \$40,000 (for a small wood block from the 1960's) to \$1.5 million to \$2 million (for a 1993

sculpture of stacked plywood). Before the sale, some experts feared the group might be too much of a good thing. But that was not the case: all but one of the works sold, for a total of \$24.4 million.

Obtaining the foundation's property for auction was highly competitive; experts said Christie's had given the foundation a guarantee — an undisclosed minimum sum promised to a seller regardless of the outcome of the sale — of more than \$20 million. The risk paid off for Christie's, showing there was more depth in this part of the market than anyone had imagined.

Among the Judd works, the biggest draw was "Untitled, 1993 (93-1 Ballantine)," a monumental wall piece made of plywood and plexiglass, which was expected to fetch \$2 million to \$3 million and sold to a telephone bidder for \$2.7 million. Four bidders wanted "Untitled 1970 (DSS No. 230) (70-13 Bernstein)," a horizontal aluminum sculpture that had been on extended loan to Dia: Beacon in upstate New York. It sold for \$2 million after a high estimate of \$1.2 million.

(Prices of record include Christie's commission: 20 percent of the first \$200,000 of the hammer price and 12 percent of the rest. Estimates do not reflect commissions.)

The sale also featured many interesting Pop works. By far the star of the evening was Andy Warhol's "Small Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot)," a hand-painted early work from 1962 estimated at \$10 million to \$15 million. Irving Blum, the Los Angeles dealer, was selling, and before the auction, experts said Christie's has guaranteed Mr. Blum about \$10 million. Only two bidders went for the painting, which ended up selling to Larry Gagosian, the Manhattan dealer, who was bidding for Eli Broad, the Los Angeles collector and financier, for \$11.7 million.

Two other Warhols brought particularly strong prices. "S&H Green Stamps (64 S&H Green Stamps)," also painted in 1962, was one of the evening's most sought-after works. Five people were willing to stretch, and the painting sold to an unidentified telephone bidder for \$5.1 million, more than three times its high estimate, \$1.5 million.

A 1974 silk screen portrait of Brigitte Bardot being sold by Gunter Sachs, the German industrialist who became famous as the playboy who

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married the actress in the 1960's, was sold to another telephone bidder for \$3 million, twice its high estimate. And yet another telephone bidder, described by Christie's as an Asian dealer, snapped up the artist's "Flowers" (1964), a grouping of 16 silk screens, for \$3.9 million, after a \$2.2 million high estimate.

After the high prices paid at Christie's in November for de Koonings from the estate of Lee V. Eastman, the entertainment lawyer who represented and collected the works of Willem de Kooning, among others, it was not surprising that several of that artist's works became big sellers. The dealer Virginia Dwan was selling the one with the highest asking price, an untitled 1961 painting estimated at \$8 million to \$12 million; Andrew Fabricant, the Manhattan dealer, paid \$10 million.

Another de Kooning, "Two Women (Study for Clamdigger)," an abstract rendering of two frontal nudes from 1961-62, was estimated at \$3.5 million to \$4.5 million. Robert Mnuchin of L& M Arts bought it for \$5.7 million.

A work that had one of the

An unusually long evening at Christie's shows depth in the market.

evening's highest estimates became its biggest casualty. Francis Bacon's "Man Carrying a Child" (1956), a full-length portrait of a man walking across a colorful carpetlike surface, failed to sell. One bargain-hunter tried to buy the painting but stopped at \$7.5 million, under the \$8 million low estimate.

Trendier art stars like Jeff Koons brought high prices. One of Mr. Koons's early pieces, "Aqualung," a breathing machine cast in bronze that was in the artist's first show in 1985, was being sold by the Daros Collection in Zurich. Estimated at \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million, it was sold to Mr. Gagolian for \$4.6 million. There still appears to be a market for Damien Hirst's dead animals submerged in formaldehyde. "Away from the Flock, Divided," a lamb sliced lengthwise in two and encased in two tanks, was expected to bring \$3 million to \$3.5 million. Three bidders went for the piece, which Dominique Levy of L&M Arts bought for \$3.3 million, a record for the artist.

With the Eva Hesse retrospective opening at the Jewish Museum on Friday, Norman and Norah Stone, San Francisco collectors, were betting that now was the right moment to test the waters for Hesse, the minimalist sculptor who died of a brain tumor in 1970 at 34. They were right: a Hesse set a record for the artist. "An Ear in a Pond," a 1965 painted relief with references to the human reproductive systems, was expected to fetch \$1 million to \$1.5 million; an unidentified bidder paid \$2.2 million. The Stones had bought it at Christie's in 1992 for \$93,500.

After the sale, the crowd loitered outside Christie's trying to make sense of the evening. "While there's extreme passion in the market," said Neal Meltzer, a Manhattan dealer, "often it's anyone's guess what things are going to sell for."