



Willem de Kooning, Monet, Kandinsky & Dubuffet Paintings Smash Artist Auction Sales Records at Christie's

November 20, 2016

by Pat Rogers

Willem de Kooning's abstract painting *Untitled XXV*, 1977, broke a world record at auction when the painting sold for \$66.3 million at Christie's evening sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art on November 15, 2016 in New York. After a two-way bidding war, the painting sold for \$66,327,500 surpassing the \$40 million top estimate for the art work. The painting had been sold previously at Christie's in November 2006 for \$27.1 million, which was also record-breaking for the artist.

The painting was made in de Kooning's home in The Hamptons in Springs, located next-door to East Hampton Village. Inspired by the waters and landscapes of nearby Louse Point, de Kooning spent hours observing the water and the merging of land, sky and figures. This fluidity is emulated in his work through shifting colors and form in his abstract paintings.



"Untitled XXV" by Willem de Kooning, 1977. Oil on canvas, 77 x 88 inches. Courtesy of Christie's Post-War & Contemporary Evening Sale.

The years from 1975 to 1978 were a fruitful period for de Kooning and are now viewed by scholars as the apex of the artist's oeuvre, with 1977 a particular highpoint, according to Christie's. *Untitled XXV* represents de Kooning's return to painting from sculpture and to the medium that had defined his career. Somehow rooted in nature yet seemingly devoid of any figurative form, *Untitled XXV* articulates a landscape brought alive with a sense of the human through the length, scale, form and emotive power of de Kooning's vigorous brushwork.

"The success of this work is a benchmark for the current marketplace, which is exceeding receptive to works of the highest quality across a range of prices," stated Sara Friedlander, SVP, Head of Department, Post-War & Contemporary Art New York, in a wrap up announcement for the evening sale.

Another artist record at Christie's evening sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art was Jean Dubuffet's *Les Grandes Artères*. Selling at \$23.7 million, it sets a record at auction for Dubuffet and surpasses its high estimate of \$20 million placed by Christie's. The painting was considered an

[early highlight for the auction.](#)



“Les Grandes Artères” by Jean Dubuffet. Oil on canvas, painted in July-August 1961.
Courtesy Christie’s.

Christie’s Post-War and Contemporary Art sale on Wednesday, November 15, 2016 established four new world auction records for artists Willem de Kooning, Jonathan Horowitz, John Currin and Giuseppe Gallo, according to Christie’s. The evening sale resulted in total sales of \$276,972,500 with sell-through rates of 89% by lot and 94% by value, reported the auction house.

The next day at Christie’s Impressionist and Modern Auction, held Thursday, November 16, 2016, the Claude Monet painting *Muele (Grainstack)* fetched the highest auction price of the week and achieved a new world auction record for the artist, announced Christie’s. Part of Monet’s “Haystack” series, the painting sold for \$81.4 million, breaking the artist’s previous record by nearly \$1 million that was set in 2008 at Christie’s London.



“Muele (Grainstack)” by Claude Monet, 1891. Oil on canvas, 28 5/8 x 36 1/4 inches. Courtesy Christie’s.

Also setting a record at Christie’s Impressionist and Modern Auction was Kandinsky’s *Rigid et courbé*. Selling for \$23.3 million, it marks a new world auction record for the artist.

The combined sales for the Christie’s November 2016 auctions of Impressionist, Modern, Post-War and Contemporary Art are \$618.4 million (\$618,397,125) representing around 750 individual works sold. At the high-value Evening Sales, the majority of works offered sold within or above estimate, according to Christie’s.