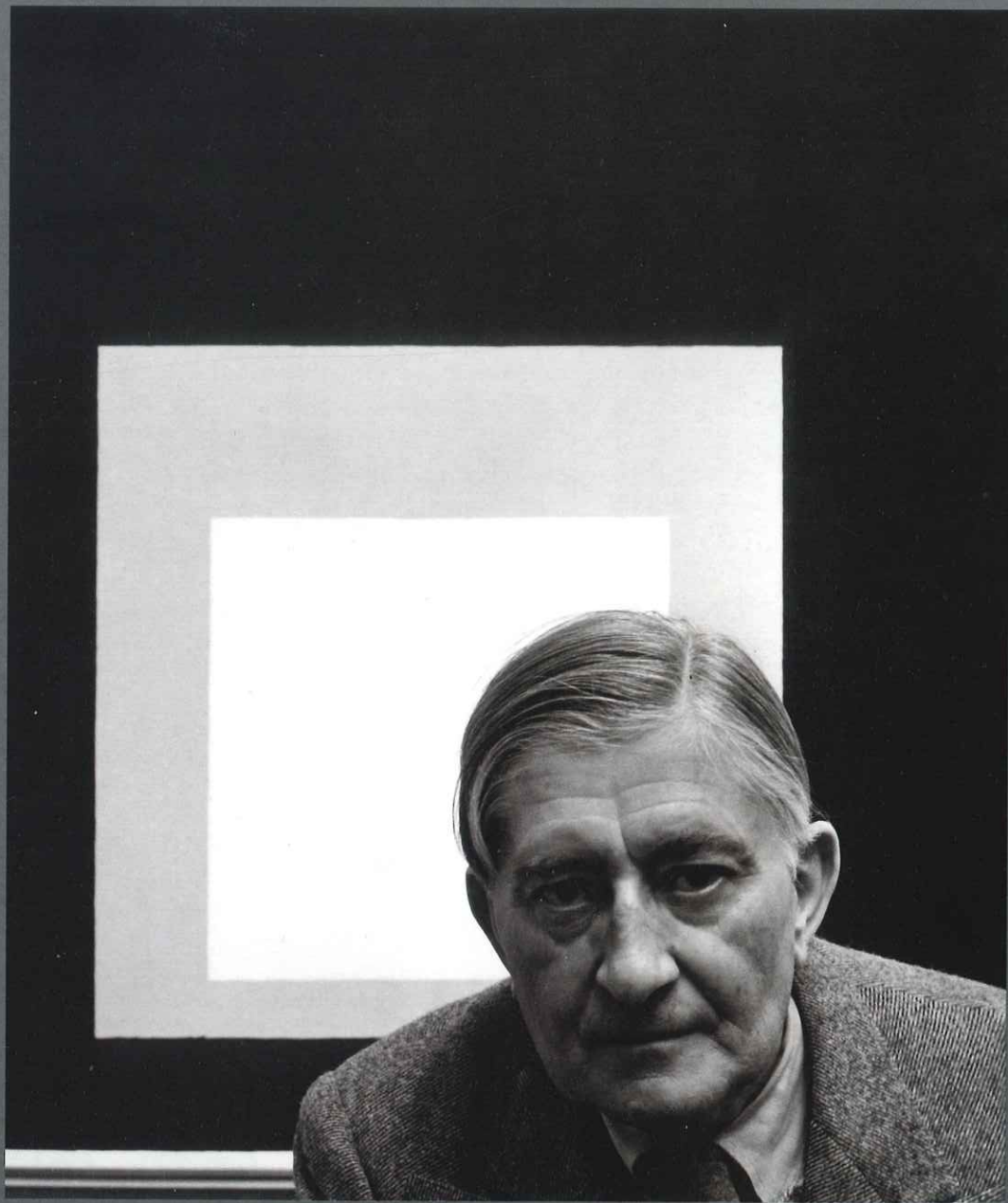


PAINTINGS BY JOSEF ALBERS FROM THE COLLECTION OF MAXIMILIAN SCHELL

Christie's is honored to present an extraordinary group of works by Josef Albers from The Collection of Maximilian Schell. Mr. Schell, whose aesthetic integrity is well known from his legendary performances in film, theatre, music, writing and directing, shared with Josef and Anni Albers a love of theory, discourse and beautiful pictures. In 1996, Christie's sold a rare and important diptych by Josef Albers, *Homage to the Square: Despite Mist*, also from the Schell Collection, setting a world auction record for the artist which remained unbroken for nine years.

— LAURA PAULSON, SENIOR INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR



MAXIMILIAN SCHELL DISCOVERED JOSEF ALBERS'S *HOMAGES TO THE SQUARE* AT the Sidney Janis Gallery in the early 1970s, where, every two years, Albers, by then an octogenarian, would present his latest "platters to serve color". This was the deliberately unpretentious term the artist applied to his unique forays in color presentation that evoked the mysterious interaction of one hue beyond its boundary and into its neighbor's territory, and that held the film and theater man captive to the poetic possibilities of pure paint applied with technical virtuosity to the panel.

Schell instantly realized that he had found a level of mastery and subtlety and nuance akin to his own ideals as a director and actor, even in his lesser-known territories of interest as a pianist and an athlete. Schell would point out to people that the difference of less than a split second could distinguish a gold medal winner from one who took a bronze medal in the Olympics, and that an equally minuscule unit of time was the decisive factor in Pollini's or Abato's playing of a Mozart piano sonata as opposed to that of a hack. That attention to a mere particle of a second of time represented the level of perfection that Schell sought in every arena of his own life, and he recognized that Josef Albers achieved it, to a tee, in the realm of color.

Albers's insight that a Grumbacher Mars Yellow was a totally different thing from a Winsor & Newton Mars Yellow - that a Reilly's Gray No. 8, by one manufacturer or another, seemed one tone next to one of those yellows and an entirely other tone adjacent to another gray - betrayed the depth of knowledge and the diligence of exploration that was, and remains, Maximilian Schell's ideal.

He began to collect Albers's work from those exhibitions. That choice reflected the actor's very singular vision. Schell already owned work by Paul Klee, Jean Dubuffet, and Mark Rothko - he even had a tiny *El Greco* - and he assiduously avoided all that was trendy, most of the so-called big names of American painting, in favor of artists of timeless, consuming pursuit of their private goals.

Sidney Janis then had the idea that Schell should meet the reclusive painter/printmaker/polemicist who so fascinated him. And Schell, at about the same time, realized that one of Albers's gray or black *Homages* might be the perfect basis of a set for a staging of *Hamlet* which he was directing and in which he would play the title role. For what other work of art so truly affirmed the profundity of Hamlet's questioning, or the affirmation of what it means "to be"?

Josef Albers was intrigued by the idea. He decided he was too old to take on the task, but he felt a tremendous rapport with Schell. The engaging Swiss actor/director would regularly rent a car in New York and drive northward to Anni and Josef Albers's modest house in Connecticut, and the three of them would sit around the white Formica kitchen table in the Alberses' austere kitchen with its bare white walls. Speaking German, they would fill the space with animated conversation, discussing the passions that consumed the three of them to make art of universal qualities, to give the world work that would endure, to be diligent as well as poetic.

By the end of Josef Albers's life, Maximilian Schell was an important new friend. At the same time, for Schell, Albers was on some level of a heroic father figure, and, specifically, the subtlety and beauty of Albers's explorations informed some of Schell's own masterful work, like the movie *The Pedestrian*.

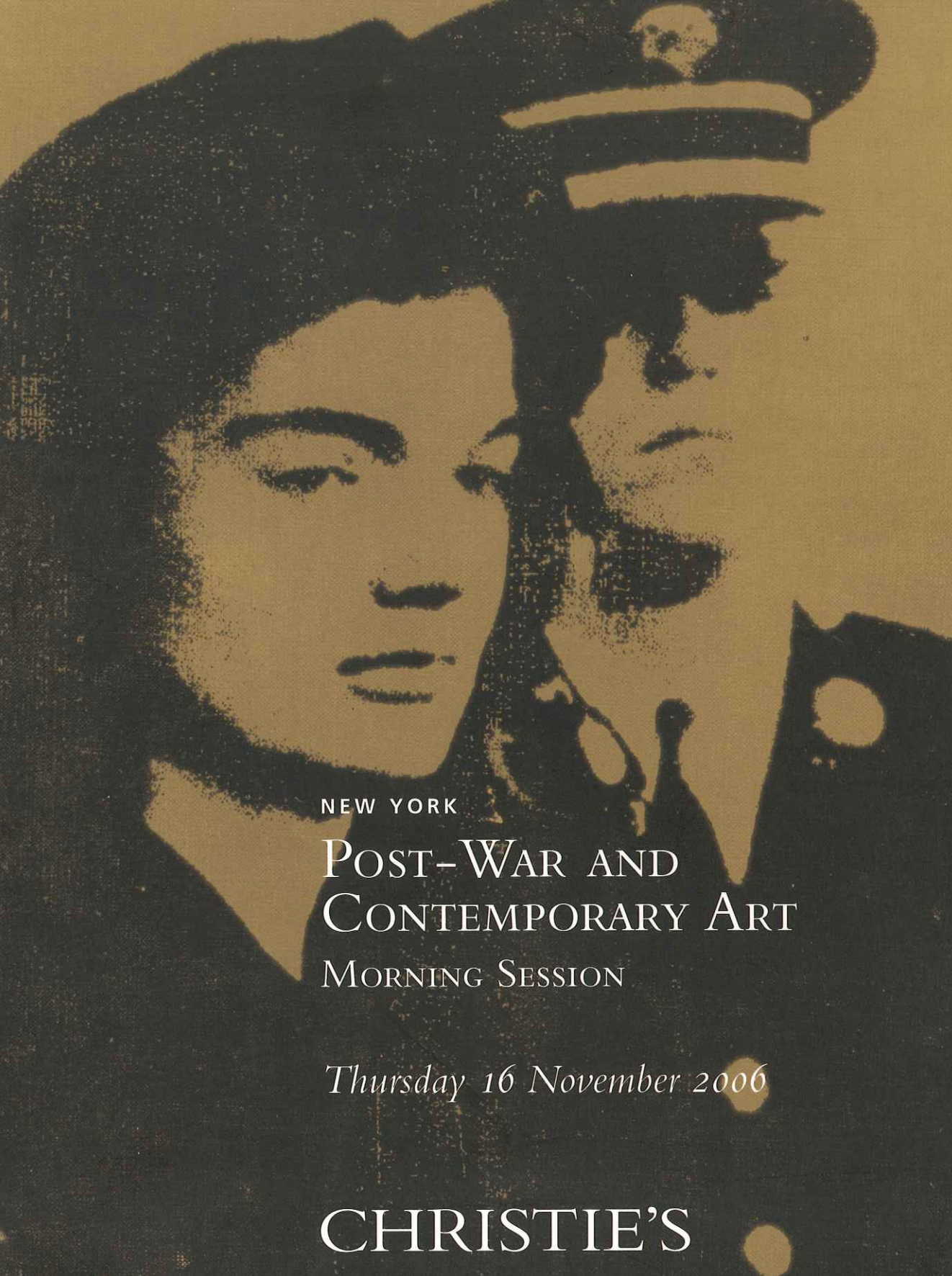
With his sharpness of eye, the intimacy of that relationship, and the real understanding of Albers's goals, Maximilian Schell formed a collection of *Homages to the Square* and other work of unique caliber, the largest private holding of the artist's work to have been formed during Josef Albers's lifetime, a tribute to the mutual passion for art in its truest form.



Josef Albers and Maximilian Schell



Maximilian Schell with Josef and Anni Albers



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