



YVES KLEIN (1928-1962)

Untitled (IKB stamps)

IKB pigment on 6 postal stamps

2 1/8 x 1 7/8 in. (10 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 1 1/4 in.)

c. 1958

26067

PROVENANCE:

Gift from the artist

Private Collection, Sweden

Borje Bengtsson Fine Art, Sweden

Artnet Auctions: Thursday, May 26, 2011 [Lot 48533]

Private Collection, Arizona

Yves Klein was born in Nice in 1928 to parents who were both contemporary French painters in their own rights. He attended several of the Grandes ecoles, and even began practicing judo, between the years of 1942 and 1946. Following the artistic precedent set by his parents, Klein also started painting during this time. He composed his first Symphonie monotone in 1947 before traveling throughout Europe and Japan in the following years. He returned to France in 1954 and settled permanently in Paris, focusing on the cultivation of his artistic career. Although Klein exhibited before this time, his first public showing was the publication of the artist's book *Yves: Peintures* in 1954. The book featured a series of intense monochromes inspired by the various cities he had lived in and anticipated the artist's subsequent shows of monochrome pieces.

Klein's 1957 exhibition, "Proposte Monochrome, Epoca Blu," featured eleven identical blue canvases of ultramarine pigment suspended in a synthetic resin rather than the traditional linseed oil. Effectively Klein preserved the brilliance of the hue, which was generally dulled in a linseed oil suspension. In 1960, this pigment was patented as "International Klein Blue," or IKB. The exhibition was Klein's first great international success, originating in Milan and traveling to galleries in Paris, Dusseldorf, and London. At the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris, the release of 1001 blue balloons marked the opening and blue postcards sent with blue stamps announced the show. Klein saw IKB as a way of expressing the immateriality of his unique utopian vision of the world, an "open window to freedom."

Though best known for his emblematic IKB monochromes, Klein produced a great variety of works distinct from his canvases. His work was intended to be a quest for immateriality and therefore his monochromes are merely a tangible face for his deeper project. The artist is quoted as saying, "my paintings are but the ashes of my art." He delved into performance art, using nude models as "living paintbrushes," and undertook design projects including the decoration of the entrance hall of an opera house in Germany. Klein also explored other mediums, with pieces such as relief sculptures using sea sponges and plaster casts of classical sculpture painted in his trademark IKB, and prints of the human body. Klein is even recognized for a specific

photograph, *Leap into the Void*, which is a still of a performance of the artist jumping off a wall with arms outstretched. Klein cites this photograph as a representation of a nirvana-like state void of worldly influences, which he describes simply as “le Vide,” or the “the Void.” This piece and Klein’s work in general illustrates the artist’s efforts to make his audience simultaneously “feel” and “understand” an idea.

Although his career was cut short by an early death, Klein achieved great success in his lifetime, earning the reputation as a vanguard of post-war European art. Even today, his work continues to garner fame with record auction prices and international exhibitions.

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