



ROBERTO MATTA (1911-2002)**Untitled**

oil on canvas

34 3/8 x 42 1/2 in. (39 3/8 x 47 5/8 x 2 in.)

1959

38167

PROVENANCE:

Sale, Sotheby's, Latin American Modern Art, 21 November 2017

Private Collection, California

Usually known by his surname, Matta was born in 1911 in Santiago, Chile. He studied architecture and interior design at the Sacre Coeur Jesuit College and the Catholic University of Santiago before leaving Chile to travel Europe. During this time, he met influential artistic luminaries including Salvador Dali, Rene Magritte, and Andre Breton. It was these relationships that helped foster Matta's artistic development and connect him to the Surrealist movement. In 1938, Matta transitioned from drawing to painting and moved to New York later that year following the outbreak of World War II in Europe. His first solo exhibition was at the Julian Levy Gallery in New York in 1940. He left New York in 1948 and divided his time between Europe and South America through the 1960s. Matta was an active participant in many social movements throughout the 60s and 70s, a theme frequently represented in his work. Throughout his lengthy career, Matta exhibited at major art institutions worldwide including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Museo de Bellas Artes in his native Chile, and is remembered today as a leading artist of the 20th century.

Much of Matta's work explores the visionary landscape of the subconscious. In his "inscape" series, the artist attempts to represent the human psyche in a visual form. Inspired by Freud's psychoanalytic writings, he busied his canvases with images of electrical machinery and distressed figures. Matta's work shows the clear influence of his friend Yves Tanguy, whose works recall the allegories of Bosch and Bruegel. Matta was similarly influenced by Picasso's socially and politically motivated work. Strong parallels between Picasso's Guernica and Matta's Crucifixion highlight this relationship. Matta was one of the first artists to integrate a blend of organic and cosmic life forms into his work, incorporating biomorphism with surrealism. In the 1960's Matta further innovated his style with the addition of clay to his canvases, adding a new dimension to his distorted imagery. Matta did not like to be thought of as a specifically "Latin American" artist. His unique style allowed him to directly address social, political, and spiritual themes in a Surrealist style alternative to social realism.

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