

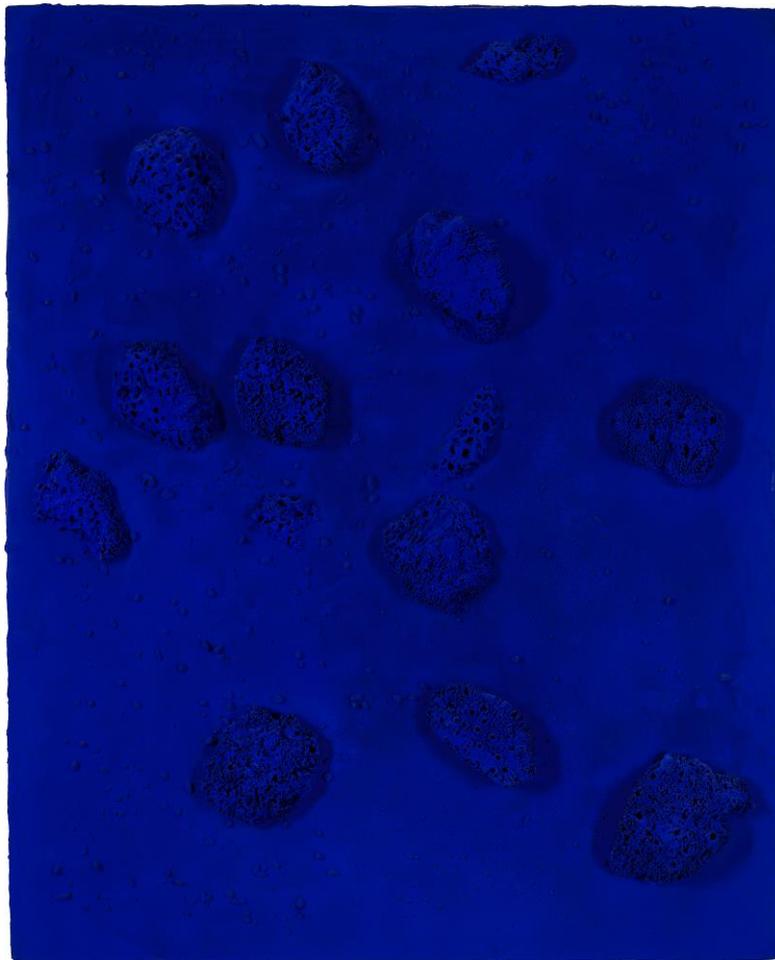
PHILLIPS

PRESS RELEASE

Historic Yves Klein Announced as Highlight of Phillips' 20th Century and Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Relief Éponge bleu sans titre (RE 49) to be Offered on 18 May, Estimated at \$14-18 Million

Exhibition Opens 30 April at 432 Park Avenue



Yves Klein

Relief Éponge bleu sans titre (RE 49), 1961

Estimate: \$14,000,000 - 18,000,000

NEW YORK – 19 APRIL 2022 – Joining Phillips' 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale lineup is Yves Klein's *Relief Éponge Bleu Sans Titre (RE 49)*, 1961, a masterwork from his monumental *Relief éponges* series of 1958-1961. Dedicated to Klein's close friend and legendary photographer Charles Wilp, the work was created in the pivotal year of the important exhibition *Yves Klein: Monochrome und Feuer* at the Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, which marked the only institutional retrospective of the artist's lifetime. *Relief Éponge Bleu Sans Titre (RE 49)* will be offered at Phillips on 18 May with the estimate of \$14-18 million, marking the first time that the work will be exhibited and offered in over a decade.

Cheyenne Westphal, Global Chairwoman, said, “*Relief Éponge Bleu Sans Titre (RE 49)* is a masterpiece of the artist’s most sought-after series with its grand scale and historic provenance. Unifying the two most important material discoveries of the artist’s career – International Klein Blue and the incorporation of sponges on canvas – the work is the perfect embodiment of Klein’s enduring legacy and profound impact on post-war art. We are delighted to showcase it along with the other 20th century masters in Phillips’ most exciting sale to date.”

In *Relief Éponge Bleu Sans Titre (RE 49)*, natural sponges and pebbles are drenched in Klein’s signature color, the topography appearing to infinitely evolve before the viewer’s eyes as light and shadow play across the velvety surface. Conjuring the mysterious depths of the ocean floor or the graveled lands of extraterrestrial worlds, the accumulation of sponges and pebbles in *Relief Éponge Bleu Sans Titre (RE 49)* reflect Klein’s advancement of his two-dimensional IKB monochromes into the next dimension with the *relief éponges*. For Klein, sponges were the perfect vehicle to encapsulate his lifelong inquiries into materializing the immaterial. With their porous and absorbent qualities, sponges embodied the artist’s endeavor of subsuming the viewer into his mystical realm of color.

Following its execution in 1961, Klein gifted the work to his friend, Charles Wilp. A student of Man Ray, Wilp was an innovative German photographer, film editor, artist, and advertising designer at the center of the post-war avant-garde milieu. His multifaceted endeavors led him to closely befriend Klein, Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, Lucio Fontana, and ZERO group founders Otto Piene, Heinz Mack, and Günther Uecker—among many other celebrated figures. Wilp notably documented Klein working on his monumental project of sponge relief murals for the foyer of the Gelsenkirchen Opera House from 1958-1959, as well as the artist’s iconic performance spectacle *Anthropométries de l’époque bleue* at the Galerie Internationale d’Art Contemporain in March 1960.

Klein dedicated the present work to Wilp on a label on the reverse: “d’abord il n’y a rien, ensuite il n’y a un rien profond, puis une profondeur bleue chez Wilp!” (“first there is nothing, then there is a profound nothing, then a blue depth in Wilp!”)—a play on his famous quoting of Gaston Bachelard’s *Air and Dreams* at his 1959 lecture at the Sorbonne: “First there is nothing, then there is a deep nothing, then there is a blue depth.”

Auction: 18 May 2022

Auction viewing: 30 April - 18 May

Location: 432 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022

Click here for more information: <https://www.phillips.com/auctions/auction/NY010322>

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**Estimates do not include buyer’s premium; prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer’s premium.*

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