

# PHILLIPS

PRESS RELEASE

## **PHILLIPS ANNOUNCES SELLING EXHIBITION *A GOOD SHOW FOR STRANGE TIMES: CURATED BY VITO SCHNABEL***

*A Good Show For Strange Times* to Feature Works from Artists Reflecting Schnabel's Artistic Orbit and Personal Collection

On view at Phillips Southampton on 10 October – 22 November



**Jean-Michel Basquiat**  
*Untitled (Plush Safe He Think)*, 1981

NEW YORK – 8 OCTOBER 2020 – Phillips is pleased to announce *A Good Show For Strange Times*, a selling exhibition curated by gallerist Vito Schnabel. The exhibition features a group of fifteen works, comprised of works by artists with whom Schnabel was raised and worked with closely including his father Julian Schnabel, Rene Ricard, Francesco Clemente, Walton Ford, Tom Sachs, Ron Gorchov and Pat Steir. Works by two young painters championed by Schnabel, Ariana Papademetropoulos and Robert Nava, will appear alongside masterworks by Jean-Michel Basquiat and Albert Oehlen. *A Good Show For Strange Times* will be on view at Phillips Southampton beginning on 10 October 2020.

**Miety Heiden, Deputy Chairman and Head of Private Sales at Phillips states:** “We are thrilled to partner with Vito Schnabel to present these remarkable works, particularly Jean-Michel Basquiat’s *Untitled (Plush Safe He Think)*. This exceptional painting hails from a pivotal year in the artists’ ascent from a graffiti artist to blue chip gallery. Once in the collection of Johnny Depp, *Untitled (Plush Safe He Think)* was part of the seminal exhibition *New York / New Wave* at PS1 Institute for Art and Urban Resources in 1981.”

Highlighting the exhibition is a painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Untitled (Plush Safe He Think)*, acrylic and oil stick on board executed in 1981, considered his breakthrough year and coinciding with the seminal *Artforum* article “Radiant Child” by fellow exhibition artist Rene Ricard. In *Untitled (Plush Safe He Think)* Basquiat translates his visceral graffiti style and poetic dualism in a starkly contrasting black and white image punctuated by text reading in grey on a dripping black field “PLUSH SAFE HE THINK” captioning a grey outline of a car; contrasting with a naively drawn cannon and pyramid of cannonballs on a white ground captioned “SPORTS OPERA WEAPONS”. The dual image’s cryptic foreboding implies that material comforts like cars cannot protect against a nearly comical implied violence, underscoring Basquiat’s anti-bourgeois sentiments. Furthermore, “Plush Safe – He Think” is a recurring text in Basquiat work: he is depicted scrawling this phrase in graffiti in the film *Downtown 81*, cementing the phrase in the cannon of his textual motifs.

The exhibition also includes two works from 2018 by Francesco Clemente: *Clouds II* and *Clouds IV*. Clemente’s cloud works interrogate the value of an image and the laden symbolism of this trans-historical motif. With a lineage dating back to Medieval and Renaissance painting, clouds manifested a devotional, spiritual presence evoking the miraculous and the divine. Challenging the limitations and possibilities of this artistic inheritance, Clemente’s paintings here foster an exchange between sensuality and spirituality, eroticism and ecstasy. In soft washes of color and dynamic strokes of the brush, these depictions of large cumulus clouds take on the bodily quality of embracing couples with their limbs entwined and morphing into a new whole.

Albert Oehlen’s 1986 painting *Rechtaberei in der Nahe II*, exemplifies the artists signature fusion of surrealism, figuration and abstraction couched in self-conscious amateurism as a response to the Neo-Expressionism of the 1980s. A large-scale work on paper by Walton Ford, *Ausbruch*, depicts a figurative scene of a black panther’s journey after escaping from the Zürich Zoo. Employing the visual language and narrative scope of traditional natural history painting, Ford’s work is a mediation on the often violent and bizarre moments that lie on the intersection of human culture and the natural world. Two paintings by the polymath critic, poet and painter Rene Ricard are included, *Untitled: Bikini Wax* and *Poison*.

#### **A Statement by Vito Schnabel:**

I was born at Stony Brook Southampton Hospital in 1986. I spent a lot of time on the East End of Long Island with my family while I was growing up. The area has a rich history of artists living and working here. Some say it’s the light that draws artists to the area, some say it’s the freedom of the landscape. Others might say it’s the sea. For most, a major reason is the history and the community created by other artists, primarily the postwar Abstract Expressionists. In the 1940s and '50s, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Alfonso Ossario moved out East and established their studios here. This is what drew my father, Julian Schnabel, and my mother Jacqueline, as well as many other artists, to this community, from Dan Flavin, John Chamberlain, Neil Williams, and Andy Warhol on occasion, to Mary Heilmann, Robert Wilson, and Cindy Sherman.

When asked by Phillips to curate an exhibition for their space in Southampton, I took this as an opportunity to reflect on what it means to grow up here within a culture of artists, an extended family of creativity. I thought about artists I’ve admired over the years— my own personal connection to their work, but also how their art and their ways of expressing themselves have inspired my life and the lives of so many others.

Some of the artists in this exhibition are people I’ve worked with closely, others are simply artists whose work I adore. Ron Gorchov and Rene Ricard were two of the artists I started my career with: one of the first exhibitions I presented was a solo show with Ron in 2005. Shortly after that I organized Rene’s first painting exhibition. Over the

last few years, I have had the privilege to present solo exhibitions with Francesco Clemente, Walton Ford, Tom Sachs, Julian Schnabel, and Pat Steir, at my spaces in New York City and St. Moritz.

For this exhibition, I'm happy to introduce some new voices to this area. I recently began working with Ariana Papademetropoulos and Robert Nava, young painters who I believe are among the most exciting talents working right now. I am thrilled to show their new paintings alongside masterworks from the 1980s by Jean-Michel Basquiat and Albert Oehlen, one of the very first painters whose work spoke to me in a way that remains as strong now as ever. While I've never exhibited Albert's paintings publicly, I have had the privilege of living with them at home and I'm excited to include an outstanding example of his painterly prowess from 1986, the year I was born.



**Albert Oehlen**  
*Rechtaberei in der Nahe II*



**Walton Ford**  
*Ausbruch*



**Tom Sachs**  
*Sandcrawler*



**Francesco Clemente**  
*Clouds IV*



**Julian Schnabel**  
*Untitled*

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