

Phillips to Offer Cuban-Chinese Artist Wifredo Lam's 1945 Painting

Sur les Traces (also known as Transformation) to be Included in the
20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale in Hong Kong in November



Wifredo Lam 1901 - 1982

Sur les Traces (also known as Transformation), 1945

155 x 125 cm

Estimate: HKD 12 – 16 million / USD 1.54 – 2.05 million

HONG KONG - 8 November 2018 - Phillips will offer Cuban-Chinese artist Wifredo Lam's representative work, *Sur les Traces (also known as Transformation)*, as a leading highlight of the 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale in Hong Kong on 25 November 2018. Painted in 1945, this work exemplifies the transculturation of the artist's practice, integrating Afro-Cuban and Chinese elements with imaginative and far-ranging freedom.

Isaure de Viel Castel, Head of Department, 20th Century & Contemporary Art Department, and Senior Director, said: "Phillips is thrilled to be entrusted with the sale of 'Sur les Traces' by Wifredo Lam. Working closely with the Lam family, we have been able to trace the creative path of the artist together in great depth. This black and white exemplary work is one of the finest examples from the 1940s executed at the peak of Lam's career, reflecting his Chinese heritage

intertwined with his enormous multicultural exposure. Lam's works have been exhibited widely internationally, most recently in the major retrospective at Tate Modern in London, Centre Pompidou in Paris and Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid. Following the 2016 Wifredo Lam travelling exhibition to Mainland China, the appearance of 'Sur les Traces' at auction serves as a rare opportunity to acquire one of the artist's most important works from the period and illustrates the growing popularity of his works in Asia."

Sur les Traces was painted in 1945 at the height of Lam's career. That same year, the work was among the sixteen paintings included in the artist's seminal solo exhibition, *Lam Recent Paintings*, at the acclaimed Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, and his iconic painting *The Jungle* (1943) was acquired by the MoMA, New York, making Lam the first Chinese artist to enter the museum's collection.

During 1945-1946, when the present painting was completed, Lam immersed himself in the study of religion and mysticism, drawing liberally from African, Caribbean and Asian sources. In *Sur les Traces* specifically, the exquisite, stippled surfaces of his black and white paintings from the mid-1940s recall the precision and nuanced tonality of ink wash painting, brought to expressive heights by Southern School painters in China. It further evokes the enigmatic script of Shang oracle bones, used in ancient China for divination, fortune telling and astrology; like Zao Wou-Ki a decade later, Lam may have channeled these inscriptions as a means of accessing his Chinese heritage. Influenced by Santeria and Cuban magic, *Sur les Traces* also distills the incantatory power of Lam's supernatural figures as they enter into a state of transformation. The spare monochromatic palette intensifies the sense of foreboding: gradations of black paint fade into a numinous ground, spectral presences that hover between states of being. Their imprint alone remains, indicated by vestigial and esoteric traces – votive candle, tapering horns, diamond-shaped faces, three egg-like forms – that denote the passage between physical and metaphysical worlds.

[Download Day Sale catalogue](#) and [Evening Sale catalogue](#)

Phillips Hong Kong Autumn Sales 2018

20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale, 25 November 2018, 6pm HKT

20th Century & Contemporary Art and Design Day Sale, 26 November 2018, 10:30am HKT

Jewels and Jadeite, 26 November 2018, 2:30pm HKT

The Hong Kong Watch Auction: SEVEN, 27 November 2018, 12pm HKT

Location: Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong, 5 Connaught Road, Central, Hong Kong

Asia Preview Tour - 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Singapore

Four Seasons Hotel Singapore, 190 Orchard Boulevard, 248646, Singapore

3 – 4 November, 2018, 11am – 6pm

Shanghai

Capella Shanghai, Jian Ye Li, 480 West Jianguo Road, Xuhui District, Shanghai 200031, China

9 – 10 November 2018, 11am – 6pm

Taipei

Bellavita Gallery, B1/F, No. 28, Songren Road, Taipei, Taipei City, Taiwan 110

17 – 18 November 2018, 11am – 6pm

Hong Kong

Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong, 1/F & 2/F, 5 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong

22 – 26 November 2018, 10am – 6pm HKT

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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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