Sotheby’s October Sale of Contemporary Art
To Be Headlined by Gursky and Warhol

SOTHEBY’S CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING AUCTION on Friday, 15 October, 2010, which coincides with the Frieze Art Fair in London, will present for sale 40 artworks that are estimated to realise in excess of £10 million. In addition to the outstanding pieces by leading artists such as Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach in the auction from the Collection of Jerry Hall, the world-famous American supermodel and actress (separate press release available), the sale will also feature important works by established artists such as Andy Warhol, Alexander Calder and Andreas Gursky, as well as pieces by a younger generation of artists including Bansky, Elizabeth Peyton and Ahmed Alsoudani, whose artworks have never before been offered at auction.

The auction record of £1.7 million for Andreas Gursky (b. 1955) was established by Sotheby’s London in 2007 for the artist’s 99 cent II (diptych), and the forthcoming October Evening Auction is to be headlined by — among other
works – a major cibachrome print by the artist, *Pyongyang IV*. Executed by the artist in 2007 and from an edition of 7, the work is one of a series of five images that Gursky made on this subject following his 2007 visit to North Korea. The work examines the same formal themes of surface ornament and pattern that pervade many of his best works, but in an entirely different corner of our globalised society; North Korea, the last outpost of communist dictatorship. The festival, held annually to commemorate the birth of North Korea’s former leader, Kim Il Sung, is recognised as the largest event of its kind in the world and is the showpiece of the country’s dictator, Kim Jong Il. In this painstakingly choreographed spectacle, tens of thousands of gymnasts, individually hand picked for their skill, execute with mechanical precision a sequence of synchronised moves which radiate waves of energy around the Rungrado May Day Stadium, the largest stadium of its kind in the world. In the background, thirty thousand strictly disciplined school children in white attire hold up sheets of paper of a different colour at the appointed time to create a succession of background images, each child an individual tile in a monumental human mosaic. To avoid any potential political gloss, Gursky’s photograph consciously avoids depicting portraits of Kim Il Sung, Korean slogans or propagandistic images of the happy proletariat which, in the course of the spectacle, variously appear on the human screen in the background. Instead, Gursky’s camera focuses on the abstract patterns that underpin this event. The work, illustrated on page one, is estimated at £500,000-700,000. Sotheby’s sold one other work from this edition in 2008, in the New York (AUCTION) RED, well above the estimate of $300,000-400,000 for the sum of $1,375,000.

Exhibited extensively since it was painted in 1997, *Arsenal (Prince Harry)*, illustrated left, is one of the most poignant and emotionally invested portraits in Elizabeth Peyton’s (b. 1965) oeuvre, which, together with the paintings of John Currin, has contributed in a significant way to the resurgence of figurative portrait painting at the dawn of the 21st century. Painted in the December of the year of Princess Diana’s tragic death, it reveals the personal emotions of a very public figure, a young boy grappling with the loss of his mother under the intense scrutiny of the world’s press. Like Andy Warhol’s images of Jackie Kennedy after the assassination of JFK in *The Week That Was*, 1963, Peyton’s painting takes as its inception an image in the public domain, a grainy photograph printed in the *Daily Telegraph* of the young prince surrounded by friends on the football terraces of Highbury. The source photograph captures Prince Harry in a moment of reflection, in which his expressionless face, staring into the middle distance, sets him apart from the crowd around him whose faces are animated by the sporting events on the pitch in front of them. Although Peyton never met Prince Harry, her painting of him resonates with all the emotional energy of a candid family snapshot. Prince Harry joins her highly personal
pantheon of subjects which include Kurt Cobain, Liam Gallagher and Jarvis Cocker. The oil on panel is estimated at £200,000-300,000.

The sale will also feature two of Andy Warhol’s (1928-1987) most iconic works: *Diamond Dust Shoes* from 1980 and *Flowers* from 1965. The acrylic, silkscreen ink and diamond dust on canvas *Diamond Dust Shoes* is the most impressive work of this spectacular series ever to be offered for public sale in recent times. For his entire career and life Andy Warhol was obsessed with shoes, and these high-heeled icons represent all the transformative promises of glamour and attraction proposed by 20th-century fashion. By the turn of the 1980s, when Warhol executed this work, he was looking back on his career and had just begun to develop a new silkscreen printing technique involving the use of diamond dust. Sparkling and glittering, the inherent qualities of diamond dust make a direct reference to movie star glamour, high fashion fame and money. The present work is one of the largest sizes he made and exhibits a harmonious horizontal composition with all the tips of the shoes pointing towards the right in a slightly disarrayed but organized fashion. The subject of shoes and the objects themselves always held particular power over Andy Warhol, and this late work, executed when he was 52, attempts to capture on grand scale his belief in the alchemical power of high-heels. *Diamond Dust Shoes* is testament to some of the most important of the themes that lie at the heart of Warhol’s output and carries an estimate of £1.3-1.6 million.

Warhol’s acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas *Flowers*, dated 1965, comes from a private European collection and is estimated at £650,000-850,000. A pure icon from the evolution of Pop Art, Flowers resides in the premium tier of the artist’s exceptional output. Along with his *Campbell’s Soup Cans* and *Marilyns*, this series ranks among the timeless artistic examples of 20th-century art. Warhol found the source image for this series in a photograph by Patricia Caulfield of seven hibiscus blossoms presented as a fold-out in the June 1964 issue of *Modern Photography*. As characterised by the present work, illustrated left, the twenty-four inch *Flowers* reflect the degree to which Warhol had honed and refined the screen-printing process throughout this crucial phase of his artistic development, when he
essentially made this revolutionary method his own. In the twenty-four inch *Flowers*, and with the present work a case in point, he began to use fluorescent Day-Glo acrylic paints to further enhance the artificiality of the image. It was the group of *Flowers* in this scale that also provided the material for Warhol’s first sell-out show at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. These paintings are the most abstract that Warhol produced in the 1960s.

A further auction highlight is Mark Grotjahn’s (b. 1968) oil on canvas *Untitled (Orange Butterfly Green MG 03)* from 2003, illustrated right, which is a captivating display of the perspectival reorientation and sumptuous colour immersion that has made this artist one of the most exciting painters working in America today. While the formative paintings of his early career were heavily dependent on text and derived much of their conceptual weight from home-made signs of the sort found in shop windows and consisting of different graphics or varying point size and font type, in the late 1990s he developed geometric paintings with multiple and independent vanishing points usually with three horizon lines in a single canvas. Shortly after the turn of the millennium he developed his aesthetic dialect further with compositions constrained by narrower, vertical format canvases, filled to bursting with the radiating orthogonals of so-called “butterfly” wings. The present work is an early and outstanding paragon of this body of works, and typifies the most important themes of method and concept of his best work. It is estimated at £350,000-450,000.

The inclusion of Iraqi artist Ahmed Alsoudani’s (b. 1975) oil, acrylic, ink and gesso on canvas *Untitled* represents the first time his work has appeared at auction. The painting, illustrated below, is highly complex and complete with the vestiges of memory and experience, as well as an immediacy that very much broadcasts the here and now. Born in Baghdad in 1975, fleeing to Damascus aged 20, studying in the States at Yale, and now living and working in Berlin, Alsoudani’s work fuses modes of figuration and abstraction to report on the complexities of today’s world, informed by a uniquely multi-faceted internationalist experience. Ahmed Alsoudani is one of five artists selected to represent Iraq in the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, the first time Iraq has had a pavilion since
1973. The work, which measures 182.9 by 213.4cm. and was executed in 2007, is a remarkable painting that embodies the salient tenets of this exciting artist’s output and is estimated at £70,000-90,000.

Also be offered for sale is Polish artist Piotr Uklanski’s (b. 1969) *The Nazis*, illustrated above, which consists of 164 chromogenic, black and white and colour photographs and was created in 1998. Number 5 of an edition of 10, it is Uklanski’s most renowned and significant work to date and affords an encyclopedic survey of the wildly divergent cinematic interpretations and treatments of the history of war in the 20th century. From the determinedly epic to the effusively sentimental; the overtly heroic to the outright comic, this extraordinary document of and response to 20th-century filmmaking issues an incredibly powerful analysis of the conflicting perspectives of directors, producers, actors, cinematographers and stylists that compiled this canon of “War Films” for more than six decades. In its truly monumental scale and the brilliantly glossy chromatic terms of its manufacture, *The Nazis* lucidly and succinctly reveals the dependence upon film in later 20th-century western societies to inform our emotional and psychological responses to the Past. The work comes from a distinguished American collection and is estimated at £400,000-600,000.

Extending in excess of three and a half metres across, the vast expanse of Mark Bradford’s mixed media collage on canvas *White Painting*, is the most significant work by the artist to be offered at auction, and this coincides with the major retrospective exhibition of his work that is scheduled to travel for the next two years. Forging together a structured geometric architecture with a poetic dispersion of colour through the torn debris of Bradford’s diverse found material, *White Painting*, illustrated right, encapsulates his inimitable response to the urban networks and topographies that he sees around him. Another major medium in his work emerges out of the detritus of advertising hoardings and homemade merchant posters marketing local businesses, which he mostly garners from the plywood structures and cyclone fencing that punctuate areas of Los Angeles, where he has always lived. The artwork was executed in 2009 and is estimated at £300,000-500,000.