

# CHRISTIE'S

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## ROMAN OPAŁKA: THE END IS DEFINED AND DARREN ALMOND: PRESENT FORM

*An exhibition exploring the progression and flow of time*

PRESS PREVIEW OF THE EXHIBITION  
29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY AT 10AM AT CHRISTIE'S MAYFAIR,  
103 NEW BOND STREET W1S 1ST



**Darren Almond (b.1971)**  
Chance Encounter 004  
Executed in 2012  
Acrylic on linen  
86 ½ x 142 ½ in. (220 x 362 cm.)  
42 panels: each 14 ¾ x 19 ½ in. (35 x 50 cm.)



**Roman Opałka (1931 – 2011)**  
Opalka 1965/1-∞  
Détail 918,554 – 943,954  
oil on canvas  
77 ⅞ x 53 ⅞ in. (196 x 135 cm.)

On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015, Christie's Mayfair will present an exhibition that explores how we measure and perceive the passing of time. In entirely different ways, the artists Roman Opałka (1931-2011) and Darren Almond (b. 1971) explore the ways in which we grasp the progression and flow of time itself. Touching on the concepts of the finite and infinite, their works exist on the border of the perceptible, fading in and out of existence.

*'The end is defined by the death of the artist. Death as an instrument (organ) of finitude, of the work of a lifetime, in the form of the Détails, the paintings that branch off from the single, overall work: Opalka 1965/1-∞.'* — Roman Opałka

Coinciding with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of when Opałka painted his first *Détail* work in 1965, **The End is Defined** will present an overview of the long and illustrious career of an artist whose work came to define his existence. Working towards counting to infinity, Opałka began in 1965 by painting the number one with white paint at the top left hand corner of a black monochrome, embarking on a journey that would gradually lead him to a completely white canvas as he introduced one per cent more white pigment into each successive *Détail*.

Documenting this progression through photographic self-portraits, one for each canvas that he worked on, as well as recording his voice as he counted, Opalka surpassed his goal of an all-white painting when he exceeded 5 million in 2008. Subsequently counting in a realm of white, his death ultimately determined the last number that he would paint, as he reached 5,607,249 when he passed away in 2011.

The very idea of death as a finite moment is called into question in Opalka's 1965/1-∞ series, whilst also suggesting that his own work has entered into a realm where it continues to exist beyond his life and the picture plane.

*'I'm fascinated by the idea that whenever anything seems too far away we turn to numbers. We'll say: a million, billion, trillion, but we can't really grasp the actual scale of them I'm naturally drawn to numbers...I love the abstract quality of maths and the idea that within the abstract realm everything needs to be in balance. You need to have nothing otherwise you can't have anything.'* -- Darren Almond.

The works by London based **Darren Almond** in *Present Form* include a set of photographs collectively titled *Present Form*, a grouping of sculptures entitled *Apollo*, two works composed of flip-style clocks titled *Perfect Time* and two paintings, each titled *Chance Encounter*.

Each of the photographs in the series *Present Form* are given a cardinal number in Gaelic and depict the standing stones on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. They are wrought out of the oldest known rocks in the British Isles which, ravaged and partially covered with vegetation form part of a stone circle dating from 3,000 BC. The works confront the viewer with totem-like rock formations that are charged with an almost sacred mystique, withstanding the natural elements through centuries while having been touched by people through the ages.

The series of hand-polished bronze sculptures titled *Apollo* are juxtaposed with these photographs to form an antipode to the rugged and naturally shaped rocks, while similarly standing as objects for the ages. Filled with lead and engraved with astronauts' initials, much like the standing stones in the photographs, these bronzes represent a sculptural connection between man and moon – a meditation on the space between the visible and invisible, the landscape and the skies.

The relationship between the macro and the micro, between nature and man and the dynamic between the infinite – space and time – and the finite – the inevitability of the end of human life – are all explored through Almond's work. In contrast, the jumbled and broken clock works titled *Perfect Time* and the paintings *Chance Encounter*, both seemingly created by chance, reflect upon our digital modern age, and how, subjected to timetables and restrained by time, we become victims of our own technological progression.

The works by Almond can be seen as objects through which we are able not only to quantify and grasp the relative distance of time and space, but also recognise that we are in the end not the masters of the passing and flow of time as we believe.

**Co-curators Darren Leak and Jacob Uecker, specialists in Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art Department, comment:** "This exhibition presents two entirely distinct methods to explore the progression and flow of time. Grasping the relative space and distance of time, the works by Roman Opalka and Darren Almond fade in and out of the perceptible, as the artists embark on an inward journey."

**Exhibition:** *Roman Opalka: The End is Defined* and *Darren Almond: Present Form*

Christie's Mayfair, 103 New Bond Street, London, W1S 1ST

29<sup>th</sup> January – 18<sup>th</sup> April

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***Images available on request***

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**Editors Notes:**

*Christie's Mayfair gallery lies in the heart of London's Mayfair district. Established with an aim to present carefully curated exhibitions that highlight and explore links between exceptional artists who have championed the art of their time, Christie's Mayfair brings together works of extraordinary quality in order to explore how artists of the past and present respond to fundamental aspects of life. With a large focus on artists of the Post-War period, Christie's Mayfair opened to the public in 2013 with an exhibition on British Pop Art entitled When Britain Went Pop. The gallery has since then staged three further exhibitions: Turn Me On: European and Latin American Kinetic Art 1948-1979, Richter/Polke Polke/Richter and most recently The Bad Shepherd. Christie's Mayfair is pleased to open an ambitious program for 2015 with an exciting exhibition highlighting the works of the artists Roman Opalka and Darren Almond.*

**About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.

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