



ROBERT MANGOLD

(North Tonawanda 1937–lives and works in Washingtonville)

Red with Green Ellipse / Black frame. 1988/89.

Acrylic and pencil on canvas (diptych).

Signed, titled, dated and described on the reverse: R. Mangold Red with Green Ellipse / Black frame, 1988-89, Panel 1/2 of 2.

140 x 210 cm.

Provenance: - Annemarie Verna Galerie, Zurich (verso with the label). - Purchased from the above, privately owned Switzerland - By descent to the present owner, since then private collection Switzerland. Exhibition: Maastricht 1989/90, Robert Mangold. *Recente Werken/Recent Works*. Bonnefantenmuseum, 8 October 1989 - 28 January 1990, p. 56/57. Literature:

## **Koller Auktionen - Lot 3502**

### **A189 PostWar & Contemporary - Saturday 29 June 2019, 02.00 PM**

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- Lehman, Ulrike: Robert Mangold - Linie Form Farbe: Werkentwicklung von 1964-1994, Nürnberg 1995, no. 74 (with colour ill.). - Mangold, Robert und Rattemeyer, Volker: Robert Mangold. Träger des Alexej von Jawlensky-Preises. Gemälde und Zeichnungen 1984 - 1997. Exhibition Museum Wiesbaden 18 October 1998 - 21 February 1999 and Kunstverein St. Gallen Kunstmuseum 12 June - 22 August 1999, Nürnberg 1998, no. 711 (with colour ill.). "...I prefer to paint in abstract rather than representational, because it is the purest way to engage with content. I think that if Piero della Francesca had a choice, he would probably also have done so." Robert Mangold Robert Mangold, along with Sol Lewitt, Robert Ryman and Richard Serra is one of the most influential representatives of Minimal Art. His oeuvre is characterised by great independence and consistency. Born in 1937 in North Tonawanda, New York, Robert Mangold's talent for drawing was discovered at an early age, and hence his great interest in illustration. In 1956 he began his studies at the Cleveland Institute of Art, where for the first two years he focussed on illustration. A study trip in 1958 to the Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh brought him into contact for the first time with the works of Abstract Expressionism, which would change his view of art and painting for ever. "Abstract Expressionism....made me realise what abstract painting can be. Up to that point I had painted still lifes and worked with models and such like, and I was completely surprised by the power of painting to convey meaning. These pictures blew me away." (quote Robert Mangold). For the last two years of his studies he switched to painting. In 1959 he received a grant to study at Yale University for the summer and, after graduating from Cleveland in 1960, he attended Yale Graduate Art School in New Haven, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1961 and his master's degree two years later. Josef Albers was still a formidable influence in New Haven, but for Robert Mangold, Albers' teaching on colour and form was too dogmatic. Instead he made use of his time to study the history of art in the 20th century and examined closely the idea of monumentality and its effects. His artistic beginnings fell within that period of upheaval between Abstract Expressionism, which formed the basis of Robert Mangold's concept of art, and Pop Art, whose artists were Mangold's contemporaries

and peers. While with the former, painting and thereby the canvas took centre stage, with Pop Art new techniques and media took hold. For Mangold however, painting always took first place and the canvas was the primary pictorial support, yet he broke with the classic conception of the canvas. He turned away from standardised formats, created new pictorial formats, and individualised each element, which in turn is indispensable for the overall effect of the painting. Since 1964 in various series he has systematically explored the tensions between the outer and inner lines, colour and surface. These four stylistic elements are of equal importance in all his works and establish the cohesion of Mangold's oeuvre. Despite his love of experimentation, his series are always the result of objective research with the use of drawings and models. The planned and somewhat detail-oriented approach is powerfully demonstrated in the consistent use or application of certain fundamental characteristics: Mangold's works are not subject to any formula; you won't find any 90° angles; his forms are never strictly geometric; the inner drawing is always done by hand; monumentality does not depend on size; he uses only mixed colours in pastel shades, no pure primary colours; he strives for a harmonious interplay of calm and movement. The different elements are engaged in a dialogue and enter into a harmonious tension between themselves and with their surroundings. Robert Mangold is not dogmatic, but offers the viewer possibilities and heightens the viewer's awareness and therefore understanding of his works. The present diptych belongs to the series of "Ellipse-Frame paintings", which the artist was working on between 1987 and 1989. It consists of a combination of two differently formed rectangular canvases in portrait format, which are joined along part of the inner edge or, as in our example, only touch on one corner. This demonstrates his confidence in handling forms, since despite the disruption of the form, he keeps to the central axis, whereby the cohesion of the work is guaranteed. The open surface between the canvases becomes a conscious part of the work's design. The colour and surface design also reveal Mangold's artistic maturity. He reverts back to the use of paint stamped onto the surface, a technique which he employed for the first time a year before with the series of works "Irregular Area with a

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drawn ellipse". On the left half of the present work he combines a light green with red and allows the canvas to show through between the stamped colour accents as part of the colour scheme. In pencil he draws an ellipse. The right-hand side of the picture is determined at first by the recess of the centre of the picture – the frame. Here the stamped grey-black application of colour is much thicker and the canvas shimmers through only discreetly. The inner lines are extensions of the frame, but barely visible through the same application of paint. In this work Mangold engages masterfully with the interplay of contrasts – different colours, different treatments of surface, outlines and inner lines. Rattemeyer describes the works of this series as follows: "Calm and movement, inner and outer, surface and space, open and closed, pushing boundaries and delimitation, are presented here by means of a rich variety of forms, colours and painted structures and are at the same time bound together in a harmonious whole, from which the combined effect radiates." (ibid, p. 29)

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