

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Eric FISCHL (New York 1948 -)

Untitled (Standing Nude)

Watercolour on thick paper.

Signed and dated fischl 2000 at the lower right.

680 x 330 mm. (26 3/4 x 13 in.)

A gifted draughtsman and printmaker, Eric Fischl has noted that, 'I have over the course of my career used all kinds of different materials such as charcoal, crayons, watercolor, oil, the graphic techniques of etching, lithography and monotypes. Each one has its restrictions and its demands and I like using them for precisely those reasons. I have had better luck with some materials and less with others. For the artist, the properties specific to a material will unlock the creative flow or they will block it. It is essential that an artist finds the materials which will unlock and expand his imagination and express his feelings. I prefer to draw with a brush and my fingers rather than with a pencil or charcoal. I prefer to use color rather than black and white. Using color is like drawing with light. I prefer illumination over rendering...

The difference between drawing and painting for me has been that suspension of certain kinds of criteria I have for painting that I don't have for drawing. In so doing, my drawings tend to explore and express the more fluid erotic sensual aspects of life. I think of them as more gestural, as in body-language, and body-language includes bones and muscles as well.'

Fischl is particularly fond of the medium of watercolour, which he has used primarily as studies for his prints and paintings. The present sheet, dated 2000, displays a coloured background that is found more often in his watercolours of the late 1990s than in more recent works. As the artist has maintained, 'Certainly with the watercolors where there are only one or two colors, there is a nice play between the material and its demands and the figure and its demands. I like the tension that exists there. I like the tension between the very thin, very liquid, very transparent watercolor and the dense, muscular, physical body. Drawing is an act of reduction and liberation. With watercolor I am reducing the body to the most minimal language one can use to describe it and at the same time capturing something essential so that the spirit transcends the limitations of the body.'

Artist description:

Born in New York City and raised in Sag Harbour, an affluent town on Long Island, Eric Fischl is one of the finest American painters to emerge from the Neo-Expressionist movement in the 1980s. He studied at Arizona State University and the California Institute of the Arts, where he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1972. Two years later he accepted a position as a professor at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax; a post he held from 1974 until he relocated to New York City in 1978. Fischl's first solo exhibition was held while teaching in Nova Scotia in 1975, and a show at the Edward Thorpe Gallery in New York in 1980 launched his career there. The following year, his controversial presentation of the sizeable painting *Bad Boy* led to a degree of international renown. Fischl has since had numerous solo exhibitions in galleries and museums across the globe, notably at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1985 and the Whitney Museum of American Art the following year, as well as later exhibitions at the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek, the Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Yale University Art Museum in New Haven, the Saint Louis Museum of Art, the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto and elsewhere. Fischl's work is represented in numerous American, Canadian and European museums.

In the catalogue of an exhibition at the Waddington Gallery in London in 1989, the artist's impact on the art world was noted: 'When Fischl first entered prominence and notoriety as an artist – the initial shock of his subject matter, its patently sexual material, apart – the most astonishing feature was his willingness to conceive of the power of painting to tell stories, to be a form of fiction.'

Although Fischl is best known for his provocative and large-scale paintings, he is a prolific and talented artist across several media, including photography and printmaking as well as sculpture, and has also worked on projects from artist's books to stage designs. Characteristic of all of his work, in whatever medium, is an abiding interest in the human figure. However, as the artist has stated, 'I make a distinction between "pose" and "posture". I am not interested in poses. That is an abstraction. It is a concern of formalists. I am interested in posture. Posture is the shape the body takes with the accumulation of experience. Posture reveals in very explicit and precise terms the relationship an individual has with their soul. Posture is the externalization of the internal conflict we all experience.'