

THE JOAN STEWART CLARKE COLLECTION



Joan Stewart Clarke

Art is much less important than life, but  
what a poor life without it.  
—ROBERT MOTHERWELL

JOAN STEWART CLARKE lived an incredible life with a focus on the fundamentals—family, friends and things that sparked joy. Described by those who loved her as beautiful inside and out, she was intelligent, genuine and caring. Joan adored her circle, and was adored by many in return. Using her impeccable taste and an eye for beauty, Joan enriched her very full life with outstanding works of art. It is with great pleasure that Heffel presents the remarkable Joan Stewart Clarke Collection this spring, highlighted by some of the world’s most iconic artists—Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthaler, Paul-Émile Borduas and Sam Francis, among others.

Together with her excitement and appreciation for fine art, it was Joan’s gift of connecting with others that propelled her to amass such a collection. Her relationships with renowned Toronto gallerists led to formative friendships. Ben and Yael Dunkelman of Dunkelman Gallery would often invite Joan to their restaurant, and eventually to their home, where she would admire their recent acquisitions, and Goldie Konopny of Gallery One also became an important mentor. It was the Dunkelmans who facilitated one of Joan’s first major artwork purchases in the early 1970s, the stunning Motherwell canvas *August Sea #5*, which is a highlight of the Heffel sale this spring. It was then that the seed was planted, and Joan’s growing admiration for Abstract Expressionist and Colour Field artists sparked further exemplary acquisitions of the great artists of the time. Having grown up with very little, Joan always appreciated how special it was to own these works; the collection was something she took great pride in.

Joan found enjoyment everywhere throughout her 92 years. Having grown up on a farm in the Niagara Peninsula, she developed a passion for gardening. Specifically, she was interested in the colours and shapes that she could create with plants, much like



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the abstract masterworks she held so dear. Joan was also an avid reader and had a love of animals.

While in her 20s and working as a bank teller, Joan met and married the adventurous entrepreneur Thomas Alexander Rigby, who, for more than two decades, owned *Ripley’s Believe It or Not!* In the early days of their marriage, they purchased a Texaco gas station in Toronto, where Joan worked as a cashier. Together they started a family, and Joan made the decision to be at home with her growing children. Over the course of her life, she discovered beauty in all corners of the world. She traveled extensively with her second husband, Larry Clarke, who was known worldwide as

the founding chairman of Spar Aerospace. Larry was named to the Order of Canada for developing the famous Canadarm.

Always gracious and caring, and appreciative of the life she lived, Joan supported many causes, including the CNIB Foundation, after both her grandmother and mother went blind in their later years, the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada and CODE (Canadian Organization for Development Through Education).

Joan’s zest for life and her dynamic engagement with the art world shines through in the exceptional works on offer from her collection. These works present once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for collectors, and Heffel is honoured to share them.