

PRESS RELEASE

## Yoshitomo Nara's *Missing in Action* to Star in Phillips and Poly 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale



**Yoshitomo Nara**  
*Missing in Action*, 2000  
acrylic on canvas, 165 x 150 cm.  
Estimate on Request

HONG KONG – 22 April 2021 – Phillips is pleased to announce a seminal work by Yoshitomo Nara as a major highlight of the [recently announced](#) Hong Kong-Beijing dual-location 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale in collaboration with Poly Auction. Executed in the watershed year of 2000, as Nara finally returned to Japan following twelve years of artistic apprenticeship in Germany, *Missing in Action* is among the rarest works on canvas by the artist to come to auction. Created the same year as Nara's auction record work, which crowned him the position of the most expensive Japanese contemporary artist, it was also in 2000 that Nara was honoured with his first museum solo exhibitions in America, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and Santa Monica Museum of Art.

**Charlotte Raybaud, Head of Evening Sale, 20th Century & Contemporary Art, Phillips Hong Kong**, said: “We are truly honoured to be entrusted with yet another monumental painting by Yoshitomo Nara, following the successful sale of the artist’s *Hothouse Doll* last December, which set the second-highest auction price for his works at that time. *Missing in Action* is a prominent example of Nara’s huge body of works portraying children often depicted in solitary landscapes or against void-like monochrome backdrops. A distinguishing feature of the present work is the girl clothed in a dress that appears a few sizes too large, an endearing and rarer rendition than Nara’s depictions of children often in short-sleeved baby-doll dresses and pageboy haircuts. Nara is currently the subject of an international retrospective that began at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as well as his well-received solo exhibition in Taiwan and a monumental museum show at the Dallas Contemporary. We are very much looking forward to present this work in our first innovative dual-location auctions co-hosted by Poly.”

The series of works entitled *Missing in Action* serves as a valuable lens through which to examine Nara’s evolving style of compelling portraiture. The roots of these now iconic figures lie in the artist’s experimentation during the 1990s with removing extraneous elements from the composition in order to focus upon the emotional reality of the characters. *Missing in Action*, 2000, represents one extreme of this exploration, as a girl wearing a familiar green dress looks over her shoulder in an accusatory manner, expressing her irreverence and even dislike of an unknown entity and perhaps also of her audience, unequivocally highlighted by the bleakness of the beige background.

The whimsical harmony of colour and texture in the present work brings to mind the melodic simplicity of indie-folk; yet contrastingly, the mischievous child’s expression exudes a certain punk energy. The title *Missing in Action* used here is more commonly employed as wartime jargon and forms a striking contrast to the girl’s chubby-cheeked face and sweet features. What Nara masterfully encapsulates therefore, is *kimo-kawaii*, the cuteness with an edge, often with a hint of either ugliness, as here, or violence.

*Missing in Action* will be offered in the 20th Century and Contemporary Art Evening Sale on 8 June, alongside other important and in-demand works, including the recently announced star lot - [Gerhard Richter’s Abstraktes Bild \(940-7\)](#). The live auction will be streamed to audiences worldwide on [Phillips.com](#) and the [Phillips app](#), as well as on the Poly Auction app and WeChat Mini Program.

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#### **20th Century & Contemporary Art and Design Spring Sales**

Day Sale: Monday, 7 June, 11am | Evening Sale: Tuesday, 8 June, 6pm

Location: JW Marriott, 88 Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong

#### **Asia Touring Previews**

Date	City
3-4 May 10am to 6pm	<b>Beijing</b> Pavilion Ballroom, Rosewood Beijing, Jing Guang Center, Hujialou, Chaoyang District
8-9 May 10am to 6pm	<b>Shanghai</b> Jing An Grand Ballroom I, Jing An Shangri-La, 1218 Middle Yan’an Road, Jing An District,
22-23 May 10am to 6pm	<b>Shenzhen</b> Raffles Shenzhen, T7, One Shenzhen Bay, 3008 Zhongxin Road, Nanshan District
22-23 May 11am to 6pm	<b>Taipei</b> B1 Art Gallery, Bellavita, No.28, Songren Rd., Xinyi District, Taipei, Taiwan
26 May 11am to 6pm	<b>Taichung</b> Fong-Yi Art Gallery, B1, No. 110, Sec. 1, Wuquan W. Rd., West Dist., Taichung, Taiwan
4-7 June 10am to 7pm 8 June 10am to 6pm	<b>Hong Kong</b> JW Marriott Hotel, 88 Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong

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