



**Willem de Kooning** (1904 - 1997)

*Untitled (Woman and a Man with Mustache)*, 1959

Oil on paper laid down on canvas

23 by 18 inches (58.4 x 45.7 cm)



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Signed "de Kooning" lower left

Provenance:           The artist  
                          Private collection, United States (Gifted from the artist)

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**EDWARD TYLER NAHEM**

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### *Untitled (Woman and a Man with Mustache), 1959*



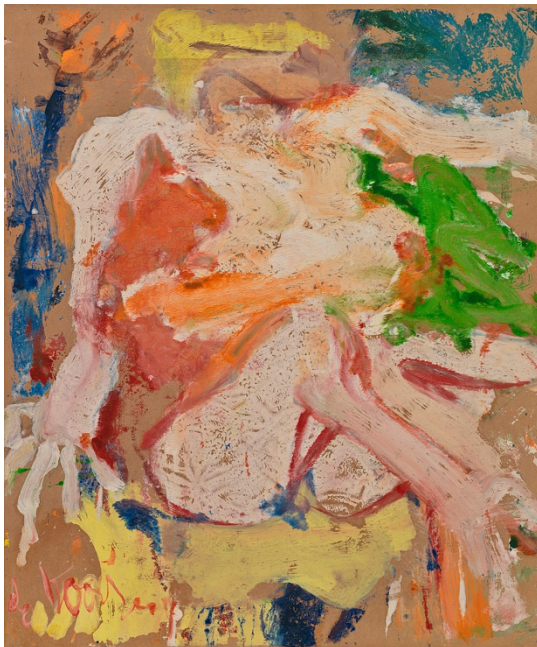
Exceeding the confines of the paper margins with a remarkable touch and energetic gesture, *Untitled (Woman and a Man with Mustache)*, 1959, showcases the inimitable force of Willem de Kooning's abstract lexicon. Through the sensuous display of brushwork, de Kooning produces amorphous forms that oscillate between figuration and abstraction, illustrating the inventiveness of his practice. De Kooning's gradual move from the bustling streets of New York City to the tranquil landscapes of eastern Long Island is reflected in the calm and thoughtful nature of the present work. Painted at the height of his career, *Untitled (Woman and a Man with Mustache)* exudes sophistication through its conflation of raw abstract energy, suggestions of figural motifs, and keen choice of color.

Moved by the brilliant light and natural colors of Long Island, de Kooning focused on rich hues inspired by the idyllic landscape of sun, grass, sand, sea, and sky. In contrast to the more urban works of the early 1950s, the whiplash line is replaced by areas of freely brushed color. This shift into a pastel-like palette borrowed from nature directly reflects his change in environment. Describing his relationship with Long Island, de Kooning reflects: "I wanted to get in touch with nature. Not painting scenes from nature, but to get a feeling of that light that was very appealing to me, here particularly... I got into painting in the atmosphere I wanted to be in." (the artist quoted in Harold Rosenberg, "Interview with Willem de Kooning," *ARTnews* 71, September 1972, p. 57)

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In the late 1950s through the 1960s, de Kooning created several renderings of abstracted women whose fleshy outlines melt into this seaside and sun-drenched landscape. In the present work, de Kooning describes a fragmented female and male figure. Crowning the mustachioed man and his amorphous female companion is a swath of blue evoking the tranquil seashore and a yellow passage that emulates the brilliant summer sun. Following the revelation of his celebrated *Women* paintings of the early 1950s, the rich layers of pigment in *Untitled (Woman and a Man with Mustache)* present the artist's iconic figural forms while introducing a glimpse into his later condensed abstraction. *Untitled (Woman and a Man with Mustache)* encapsulates de Kooning's career-long ability to conflate figuration and abstraction within the aesthetic purview of his endemic genre, Abstract Expressionism.

Similar works to *Untitled (Woman and a Man with Mustache)* can be found in museum collections around the world, including *Nude Figure—Woman on the Beach*, 1963, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and *Woman in Landscape III*, 1968, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



Willem de Kooning, *Nude Figure—Woman on the Beach*, 1963, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



Willem de Kooning, *Woman in Landscape III*, 1968, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York