

CHRISTIE'S

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GERHARD RICHTER'S ICONIC ABSTRACT WORK, *PRAG 1883* From The Steven A. Cohen Collection



Gerhard Richter (B.1932)
Prag 1883
1983
250 cm x 250 cm
Oil on canvas
Estimate on request

POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART 14 November 2012

New York - Christie's is honored to present *Prag 1883*, one of Gerhard Richter's earliest abstract masterpieces, as the highlight of the fall season in New York. Painted in the breakthrough year of 1983, when Richter first began to explore his dazzling abstraction on a monumental scale, the work celebrates the centenary and birthplace of famed author Franz Kafka. Estimated in the region of \$15 million, *Prag 1883* is coming from the prestigious collection of Steven A. Cohen, one of the world's leading collectors of modern and contemporary art.

Few of Richter's large-scale *Abstraktes Bild* paintings can match the majesty of *Prag 1883*—the chromatic intensity, innovative nature of its execution and the completeness and balance of its composition remain unrivalled within the artist's extensive abstract oeuvre. "*Richter is certainly the greatest abstract painter working today and Prag 1883 contains the genesis of all his ideas on abstraction,*" says **Brett Gorvy, Chairman and International Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art.** "*With this picture, Richter shows himself to be the rightful heir to an abstract tradition that includes Kandinsky, Rothko and de Kooning. The market for such a rare and historic masterpiece is probably our most global and we anticipate museums and private collectors to strongly compete to own this.*"

Epic in scale and in appearance, *Prag 1883* demonstrates an incredible confidence and ambition on the part of the artist. It was executed at a time when there was a universal return to painting amongst artists, after a period in art history when expressive painting had been largely discredited. Richter consciously delights in the conflicts between darkness and light, figuration and abstraction, destruction and creation. This struggle plays out in the swirling colors and forms that articulate so much of the surface of *Prag 1883*. Richter applied his brilliant colors at times with vivid brushstrokes, at other times with firm squeegees, all over a soft, almost photographic background.

Richter rarely titled his abstract paintings and *Prag 1883* is a reference to the birthplace and birth date of Franz Kafka, a hero to the artist. Richter had first included a portrait of Kafka in the early 1970s, as part of forty-eight black and white portraits of famous composers, writers and other illustrious male figures for the German Pavilion in the 1972 Venice Biennale.

Prag 1883 has a prestigious provenance. It was once part of the esteemed collection of the Duke of Bavaria, Franz Bonaventura Adalbert Maria von Wittelsbachas. The work was on loan at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, before it was acquired by Steve A. Cohen.

Christie's hold the overall world auction record prices for Gerhard Richter along with the top price for any work by the artist, with *Abstraktes Bild (798-3)*, sold for \$21,810,500 at Christie's in New York in May 2012. As well as the highest price for a 1960's photo realist work by the artist with *Seestück*, 1969, sold for \$19,346,500 in May 2012 in New York and for a 1980's photo realist work with *Kerze (Candle)*, 1982, sold for £10,457,250 / \$16,480,626 in London, in October 2011.

Preview

London
New York

6-11 October 2012
10-13 November 2012

Auction

Post-War and Contemporary Art, Evening Sale

14 November 2012

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**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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