

For Immediate Release

4 January 2006

Contact:	Christina Freyberg	020 7389 2117	cfreyberg@christies.com
	Stephanie Manstein	020 7389 2962	smanstein@christies.com

OUTSTANDING GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN ART AT CHRISTIE'S THIS FEBRUARY



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938)
Frauenbildnis in weißem Kleid, 1908(recto); *Adam und Eva*, 1911(verso)
Estimate £3,000,000 - 5,000,000



Egon Schiele (1890-1918)
Kniender weiblicher Halbakt (Kneeling Female Semi-Nude), 1917
Estimate £1,800,000 - 2,500,000

German and Austrian Art Christie's King Street 6 February 2006

London – A previously unrecorded painting, *Cafészene* by George Grosz, leads Christie's offering of *German and Austrian Art* on Monday 6 February 2006. Recently discovered, it joins other outstanding works on offer by renowned artists such as Franz Marc, Heinrich Campendonk, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Max Pechstein. *German and Austrian Art* forms a dedicated section alongside *The Art of the Surreal* which is incorporated within the evening sale of *Impressionist and Modern Art*. Growing international demand for German Expressionist art has seen recent record prices established, such as Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's *In der Dämmerung*, 1912, which realised £2,472,000 (\$4,494,545) at Christie's London in June 2005.

"We are delighted to be offering one of the strongest selections of German paintings for sale in the last decade. This has prompted Christie's to recreate a separate German section within the Impressionist and Modern Art evening sale. Many of these works are fresh to the market, having been bought soon after they were painted, and have never been seen in public before," said Jussi Pylkännan, President of Christie's Europe.

The newly discovered oil by George Grosz, *Cafészene, Ober zwei kleine Pils*, 1915 (estimate: £400,000-600,000), is one of the highlights of the sale and is one of the artist's first oil paintings. The bustling café scene depicts the artist's vision of Berlin society. Degenerate figures and prostitutes enjoy themselves in stark contrast to the decaying capital around them. Here Grosz shows a society on the verge of collapse. Horrified by what he had seen of the war, he poured his passion into his work. This early work displays all the key characteristics of his signature style.

Another artist influenced by the outbreak of the First World War was Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. However, unlike George Grosz, Kirchner was fascinated with the glamour and bustle of Berlin at the outbreak of the conflict as can be seen in this important work, *Strassenszene*, 1913 (estimate: £1,800,000-2,500,000). One of his series of street scenes painted between 1913 and 1915, this powerful and energetic work, rich in colour with sweeping brushstrokes, depicts the prostitutes who were a regular sight on the streets of Berlin and captures the feverish atmosphere that existed in the German capital. This particular painting was to remain in Kirchner's possession until his death and was only sold in 1950 by his estate. It is one of the last major Berlin street scenes by Kirchner available at auction.

A masterful drawing by Egon Schiele, *Kniender weiblicher Halbakt* (Kneeling female half-nude), 1917 (estimate: £1,800,000-2,500,000) is another star lot of the sale. It is one of a small group of outstanding female nudes that Schiele painted in 1917 in which the overt eroticism and energy of his earlier work are toned down in favour of a more objective concentration on the human figure. Here set against an empty paper background, Schiele's confident modelling conveys a powerful sense of an isolated woman.

Also included in the sale is a double-sided canvas by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Frauenbildnis in weissem Kleid* (Woman in a white dress) 1908 (estimate: £3,000,000-5,000,000). The work is considered to be one of the artist's finest early paintings and was produced on the remote Baltic island of Fehmarn. Here Kirchner depicts his first girlfriend, Emmy Frisch, seated on the beach in a white dress and hat, in brilliant sunshine. A fusion of early influences led to Kirchner adopting a new, unique, though still composite style, with thick swirling layers of colour applied directly on to the canvas in such a way that the picture takes on a dynamic life of its own. On the reverse is another major work by Kirchner, *Adam und Eva*. Painted in 1911, and influenced by the elegant line and flat linear form of ancient Indian painting, a naked woman takes centre stage, dominating both the canvas and her male companion.

One of Franz Marc's finest early paintings, *Aktbild auf Zinnover*, 1910 (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000) is in the sale and shows a nude, thought to be Maria Franck, a painter who was later to become his wife. The work with its bold, almost monochrome background of brilliant vermilion that was to inspire the title of the work, represents the culmination of the young Marc's rapid artistic development. This was the year that he met and exchanged a series of letters with August Macke discussing the theories of painting and the symbolism of colour. Bought the year after it was painted, the work has remained in the same family's collection ever since.

Other celebrated artists in the sale include an important work by Emil Nolde entitled *Blumengarten, Frau und Mohn* (estimate: £600,000-900,000). Painted in 1908 during the artist's fourth stay on the island of Alsen, Nolde adopted a new, powerful use of colour and form to capture the natural beauty of the German countryside. A rare double-sided oil *Vier Badende (Moritzburg)*, 1910 (recto); *Baustelle in Schmargendorf*, 1913 (verso) by the artist Max Pechstein marks the highpoint of an important stage in the artist's career, and reflects the Brücke's group ambiguous relationship with modernity (estimate: £500,000-700,000). The earlier work encapsulates the spirit of the Brücke group, a pastoral idyll showing a primitive age of innocence and community. This is in stark contrast to his later work, *Baustelle Schmargendorf*, a rare and important painting of 20th century modernity, depicting the mechanised vitality and unstoppable energy of urban sprawl. In 1913, Berlin was the fastest growing city in the world.

An early still life by Bauhaus master Lyonel Feininger, *Stilleben mit Apfelsinen* (Still-life with Oranges), 1909, (estimate: £600,000-900,000) captures a carefully organised arrangement of elements studied as shapes and colours on a canvas. Originally a successful illustrator, Feininger's early paintings incorporate the dynamic forms and outlines developed in his caricature and illustrative work but also introduces elements from the still lifes of Paul Cézanne and decorative works of Henri Matisse and the *fauves*.

The sale also includes two works by Max Liebermann. Influenced by Impressionism, his work from the late 1890s onwards focuses on movement and light in nature, characterised by loose brush strokes and vivid colours. The sale includes a 1923 oil *Blumenstauden am Gärtnerhäuschen nach Osten* (estimate: £200,000-300,000) which shows a vibrant image of the artist's garden, and *Oude Vink* (estimate: £300,000-400,000) a striking work from 1911.

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Images available on request

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Notes to Editors

In 1993, Christie's was the first auction house to hold a theme sale dedicated to German and Austrian Art. Since then, Christie's has established the current auction record prices in the *German and Austrian Art* sales for paintings by George Grosz, Heinrich Campendonk and Oskar Schlemmer, among many others.