

CHRISTIE'S

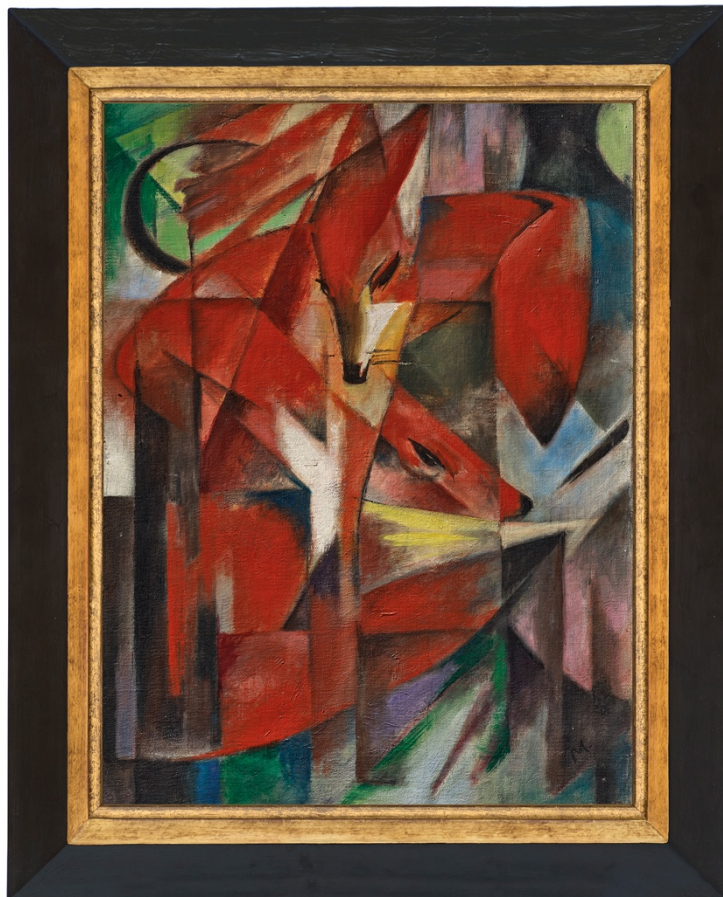
PRESS RELEASE | LONDON | 28 JANUARY 2022

FRANZ MARC'S ICON OF MODERNISM, *THE FOXES*, TO BE THE CENTREPIECE OF CHRISTIE'S GLOBAL AUCTION SEASON

1 MARCH 2022

20TH / 21ST CENTURY: LONDON EVENING SALE
20/21 SHANGHAI TO LONDON

- *The Foxes (Die Füchse)*, a seminal, museum quality work by a father of 20th Century Modernism, Franz Marc, will be offered for sale by Christie's on 1 March, with an Estimate on Request in the region of £35 million. In 2021, *The Foxes* was restituted to the heirs of Kurt and Else Grawi of Berlin, victims of Nazi persecution, who owned the painting from 1928 to 1940
- Franz Marc died during the First World War. His oeuvre is relatively small and many of his greatest pictures are housed in major museums. With so few remaining in private hands, the occasion of the public sale of one of his most important paintings is an exceptional event. *The Foxes* is poised to achieve a new world record for the artist
- *The Foxes* was painted in the artist's landmark year of 1913. Other major 1913 paintings by Marc are housed in museums including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich
- *The Foxes* has graced important 20th century collections including those of Herwarth Walden (*Der Sturm*), Franz Kluxen (previous owner of the Guggenheim Museum's *Yellow Cow*), Kurt and Else Grawi, William and Charlotte Dieterle and Helmut Horten, who gifted the work to the Städtische Kunstsammlung, Düsseldorf in 1962



Franz Marc, *The Foxes* (1913), Estimate on Request (in the region of £35,000,000)

SHANGHAI AND LONDON – Franz Marc’s 1913 masterpiece *The Foxes*, will be offered for sale at Christie’s on 1 March 2022 with a pre-sale estimate on request (in the region of £35,000,000). It will be the centrepiece of Christie’s 20th / 21st Century: London Evening Sale, a key auction within the 20/21 Shanghai to London series, which launches our major international sales of 2022.

Filled with a vivid play of vibrant colour and prismatic form, *The Foxes* is a masterpiece of German Expressionism, which has graced several great collections over the course of its life, most recently the Kunstpalast Museum in Düsseldorf, before its restitution to the heirs of Kurt and Else Grawi. Painted in 1913, at the critical moment when Modernist movements were booming across Europe, it is among the most accomplished of the artist’s pioneering avant-garde paintings. *The Foxes* reveals the bold experimentation of Marc’s revolutionary artistic idiom in the last full year of his artistic career, before his untimely death in the First World War.

Jussi Pylkkänen, Global President, Christie’s: “It is a huge honour for Christie’s to be entrusted by the Grawi family with the sale of a painting of such art-historical importance. Marc, along with Wassily Kandinsky, was a trailblazer of the European avant-garde at the beginning of the 20th century who challenged and completely overturned many of the accepted maxims of classical painting. *The Foxes* encapsulates everything that we find inspiring about Marc’s work: it has dynamism, sensational colour, incredible balance and a spirituality in its sublime subject which completely draws the viewer into the painting. Aside from its unquestionable beauty, it is a work with an extraordinary history, both of ownership and of exhibitions, having featured in so many important avant-garde shows over the past 100 years. I have had the pleasure in my career of handling several extraordinary Modernist paintings from this period, including Kirchner’s *Berliner Strassenszene* of 1913 and Modigliani’s *Nu couché* of 1918. This magnificent Franz Marc stands shoulder to shoulder with those celebrated paintings, which both made such extraordinary records when they came for sale over the past twenty years. This is a painting that will be chased by the world’s greatest collectors.”

Keith Gill, Head of Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie’s London: “There is a long tradition of Christie’s selling the very best German art in London, continuing this March with the sale of Franz Marc’s *The Foxes*, a work that truly defines Modernism in the 20th century. A painting by Marc of this pedigree, date and quality has not appeared on the open market for over fifty years. There is no doubt that Marc sits alongside the masters of Western art, his visionary paintings paving the way for the artists who followed in his steps, from the 1920s through to the contemporary artists of today. We are delighted to offer our colleagues and our clients an opportunity to view this iconic painting as it is toured internationally for the first time in more than 20 years.”

Depicting a seemingly idyllic scene, in which two foxes are woven together in a kaleidoscopic pattern of brightly-hued interpenetrating and intersecting lines, *The Foxes* illustrates the important developments that were occurring in Marc’s *oeuvre* during this period. 1913 marked the penultimate year of one of the most daring, revolutionary epochs in the history of art, as the seismic shifts that had transformed creative thinking since the beginning of the 20th century reached new heights. From the Cubists and Orphists in France, to the Futurists in Italy, the Rayonists in Russia, and the Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter movements in Germany, the European avant-garde was at its inventive peak between 1910 and 1913. A founder of Der Blaue Reiter with Kandinsky, Marc was deeply familiar with all of these new movements, tracking their latest evolution and progress through exhibitions, avant-garde journals and a rich network of friends and colleagues across the continent.

From late 1912 onwards, Marc began to adopt an increasingly dynamic, geometric approach to form in his paintings, most notably in response to the work of Robert Delaunay and the Italian Futurists. He sought to overcome a static, fixed view of the world and bring us closer to an understanding of the hidden forces of nature. His works from 1913 are imbued with a distinct spirit of innovation and experimentation and convey the artist’s unique ability to marry these new vocabularies with his own distinct vision. Writing to his friend August Macke shortly after *The Foxes* was completed, Marc proclaimed of his latest paintings: ‘I truly believe I’ve made progress.

It must be something. I feel very differently about things; I believe there is more absolute compulsion in them...' (letter to Macke, 22 May 1913).

Marc clearly felt that *The Foxes* stood as a key example of his most recent painterly achievements and chose to include it in a number of early exhibitions, from his travelling solo-exhibition in 1913, to the major *Moderne Kunstkring* show at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam later that year. After the artist's death at Verdun in March 1916, *The Foxes* passed into the possession of his widow, Maria Marc, who would later write that the painting was one of her "very special favourites" among her husband's work, and of her regret at selling the painting in the same year to the esteemed avant-garde gallerist Herwarth Walden. During Walden's ownership it featured in the pivotal 1916 exhibition *Expressionisten, Futuristen, Kubisten: Dreiundvierzigste Ausstellung*, curated by Walden at *Der Sturm*, and was also included in the major retrospective exhibition of Marc's work organised by the Munich Neue Secession immediately after his death.

In the decade that followed, *The Foxes* passed through the esteemed collections of Franz Kluxen, who also owned Marc's famous composition *Die Gelbe Kuh* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York), and Max Leon Flemming, a Hamburg-based art patron and businessman. In 1928 Flemming sold *The Foxes* to Kurt Grawi, a German-Jewish banker living in Berlin, and his wife Else. The painting became the highlight of their collection. Following the National Socialist rise to power in 1933, the Grawi family suffered immensely under the repressive anti-Jewish measures imposed by the regime. Forced to flee Germany after the Kristallnacht pogrom and a period of internment in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1938, Kurt successfully smuggled *The Foxes* out of the country to the United States in 1939. He then made concerted efforts to sell it, in order to facilitate his family's survival and emigration. In 2021, the painting was restituted to the heirs of Kurt & Else Grawi from the Kunstpalast Museum in Düsseldorf.

Five Things You Should Know About Franz Marc

1. Born in 1880 and raised in Munich, Marc had initially studied theology, with the intention of becoming a priest. After briefly studying at the city's art academy, a decisive trip to Paris encouraged him to break away from tradition. He worked largely in isolation until 1910, before coming into contact with the leading figures of the avant-garde firstly in Munich and then across Europe.
2. The search for the spiritual, for a truth that lay beyond our perceived reality, lay at the heart of Marc's art, rooted in his desire to overcome what he saw as the toxic materialism of the industrialised, modern world. To this end, he focused almost exclusively on pantheistic subjects in his painting.
3. He was a close collaborator and colleague of Wassily Kandinsky, with whom he co-founded the Blaue Reiter in 1911. Through their ground-breaking exhibitions and legendary publications, Marc and Kandinsky were at the centre of a rich network of artists that spanned the European avant-garde, from Cubism to Futurism, and Orphism to Constructivism.
4. Marc's painting came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of the First World War. Deployed to the Western Front, he was killed near Verdun in March 1916.
5. Paintings by Marc are held in the collections of some of the most prestigious museums around the world, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Franz Marc's *The Foxes* will be on view in New York from 4 to 8 February 2022 and in Hong Kong from 15 to 17 February 2022 before being exhibited in London from 23 February to 1 March 2022.

PRESS CONTACTS:

London: Sara Macdonald | +44 (0)20 7752 3136 | saramacdonald@christies.com
Shanghai: Zhongwei Qin | +86 18501671367 | zqin@christies.com

About Christie's

Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business. Renowned and trusted for its expert live and online auctions, as well as its bespoke private sales, Christie's offers a full portfolio of [global services](#) to its clients, including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's has a physical presence in 46 countries, throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, with flagship [international sales hubs](#) in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. It also is the only international auction house authorized to hold sales in mainland China (Shanghai).

Christie's [auctions](#) span more than [80 art and luxury categories](#), at price points ranging from \$200 to over \$100 million. In recent years, Christie's has achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction (Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvador Mundi*, 2017), for a single collection sale (the Collection of Peggy and David Rockefeller, 2018), and for a work by a living artist (Jeff Koons' *Rabbit*, 2019).

Christie's [Private Sales](#) offers a seamless service for buying and selling art, jewellery and watches outside of the auction calendar, working exclusively with Christie's specialists at a client's individual pace.

Recent innovations at Christie's include the groundbreaking sale of the first NFT for a digital work of art ever offered at a major auction house (Beeple's *Everydays*, March 2021), with the unprecedented acceptance of cryptocurrency as a means of payment. As an industry leader in digital innovation, Christie's also continues to pioneer new technologies that are redefining the business of art, including the creation of viewing and bidding experiences that integrate augmented reality, global livestreaming, buy-now channels, and hybrid sales formats.

Christie's is dedicated to advancing [responsible culture](#) throughout its business and communities worldwide, including achieving sustainability through net zero carbon emissions by 2030, and actively using its platform in the art world to amplify under-represented voices and support positive change.

Browse, bid, [discover](#), and join us for the best of art and luxury at: www.christies.com or by downloading Christie's apps. The COVID-related re-opening status of our global locations is available [here](#)

###

Images available on request

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:

