

CHRISTIE'S

MEDIA ALERT | LONDON
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MAX BECKMANN'S
HÖLLE DER VÖGEL (BIRDS' HELL)
ACHIEVES WORLD AUCTION ARTIST RECORD
£36,005,000 / \$45,834,365 / €40,865,675

HIGHEST PRICE REALISED AT AUCTION FOR
GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

CHRISTIE'S *IMPRESSIONIST AND MODERN ART*
EVENING SALE
27 JUNE 2017



Max Beckmann, *Hölle der Vögel (Birds' Hell)*, Oil on canvas, 47 1/4 x 63 1/4 in (1937-38) (£36,005,000 / \$45,834,365 / €40,865,675)

London – Max Beckmann's *Hölle der Vögel (Birds' Hell)* (1937-38) achieved a new world record price for the

artist of £36,005,000 / \$45,834,365 / €40,865,675 in the *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* on 27 June. *Hölle der Vögel (Birds' Hell)* continues the Germanic tradition of using gruesome allegorical scenes at the same time as taking aspects of Classicism and mythology to turn reality into a timeless evocation of human suffering. In this sense, the painting transcends the time and political situation in which it was created to become a universal symbol of humanity like Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* of the same period. Begun in Amsterdam in 1937 and completed in Paris at the end of 1938, this work ranks amongst the clearest and most important anti-Nazi statements that the artist ever made, mirroring the escalating violence, oppression and terror of the National Socialist regime.

Adrien Meyer, International Director of Impressionist & Modern Art, Christie's New York: "The sale of such a historically significant painting as Beckmann's *Birds' Hell* demonstrates Christie's ability to lead with masterpieces that resonate on the international market. This emblematic picture has become unanimously recognised as the *Guernica* of Expressionism and the international appetite was evidenced in the spirited bidding witnessed in the saleroom and on the phone."

Painted with vigorous, almost gestural brushstrokes and bold, garish colours, *Hölle der Vögel (Birds' Hell)* envelops the viewer in a sinister underworld in which monstrous bird-like creatures are engaged in an evil ritual of torture. At the front of the scene, a naked man – the symbol of innocence within this reign of terror – is shackled to a table, held down by another bird that is slashing his back in careful, horizontal lines.

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Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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