

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S WILL OFFER *ABSTRACTION BEYOND BORDERS* IN THE *IMPRESSIONIST AND MODERN ART EVENING SALE* AND *THE ART OF THE SURREAL* ON 27 FEBRUARY 2018

THE COLLECTION TRACES ABSTRACTION ACROSS EUROPE IN THE
20TH CENTURY

ARTISTS INCLUDE GEORGES BRAQUE, FRANTIŠEK KUPKA, FRANCIS
PICABIA, KURT SCHWITTERS AND GEORGES VANTONGERLOO



Left: Francis Picabia, *Sans titre (Pot de fleurs)* (circa 1924-26, estimate: £900,000-1,200,000) and
Right: Kurt Schwitters, *Das Richard-Freitag-Bild*, (1927, estimate: £500,000-700,000)

London – Christie's will offer a collection that traces the development of abstraction as artists across Europe redefined art in the 20th Century. *Abstraction Beyond Borders* will be included in the *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* and *The Art of the Surreal* on 27 February 2018, launching '20th Century at Christie's', a series

of sales that will take place in London from 27 February to 7 March 2018. A total of ten works represents the diversity of artists working in different cities across the continent, such as Georges Braque, František Kupka, Francis Picabia, Kurt Schwitters and Georges Vantongerloo, who shunned pictorial representation, instead creating unprecedented works that pushed the boundaries of what art could be. This group demonstrates the idiosyncrasy of these artists' restless invention. From line, colour and form, to medium and material, their curiosity, daring eclecticism and pioneering spirit of exploration nearly 100 years ago paved the way for artists and collectors today. Highlights include Francis Picabia's *Sans titre (Pot de fleurs)* (circa 1924-26, estimate: £900,000-1,200,000, *illustrated, page one*), an example of the series of ornate collaged paintings which occupied the artist during the mid-1920s and *Iris* (1929, estimate: £800,000-1,200,000). *Composition émanante de l'équation $y=ax^2+bx+18$ avec accord de l'orangé-vert-violet* by Georges Vantongerloo (1930, estimate: £800,000-1,200,000, *illustrated, below*) encapsulates his individual approach to the ideals of the De Stijl movement, adopting a mathematically constructed composition to explore the inter-relationship of a carefully selected group of colours. *Das Richard-Freitag-Bild* by Kurt Schwitters (1927, estimate: £500,000-700,000, *illustrated, page one*) is a rare Merz relief that dates from the height of his involvement with the International Constructivist movement, while *Series C, III, Elevation* (1935-38, estimate: £500,000-700,000) by František Kupka, one of the first truly abstract artists, establishes the radical simplification of form that characterises his late work. Georges Braque's cubist composition, *Cartes et cornet à dés* (circa 1910-11, estimate: £500,000-800,000), originally owned by the pioneering early modern collector Wilhelm Uhde, presents the origin of this move towards a new, non-representational artistic language. Highlights from *Abstraction Beyond Borders* will be on view in Hong Kong (10-12 January) and Taipei (15-17 January) before being exhibited in London from 20 to 27 February 2018.



Left: Francis Picabia, *Iris* (1929, estimate: £800,000-1,200,000)

Right: Georges Vantongerloo, *Composition émanante de l'équation $y=ax^2+bx+18$ avec accord de l'orangé-vert-violet* (1930, estimate: £800,000-1,200,000)

Picabia's playful collage *Sans titre (Pot de fleurs)* uses the very materials of art making to create a semi-abstract play of colour and line that parodies the mimetic traditions of art. He nimbly embedded the structures and tools which lay behind the act of artistic creation into the finished image. Far removed from any trace of the

recognisable world, Kurt Schwitters' *Das Richard-Freitag-Bild* combines both geometric and organically-shaped relief components. It was executed during a period when he was codifying Merz – the one-man art movement that he created in 1919 – into a utopian Constructivist language of form, taking the deconstruction of Dada and combining it with the aims of Constructivism.

Georges Vantongerloo's *Composition émanante de l'équation $y=ax^2+bx+18$ avec accord de l'orangé-vert-violet* embodies the tenets of geometric abstraction. A complex mathematical language underpins many of the artist's works from this period, with their titles often taking the form of long and complex algebraic equations whose meanings remain just beyond our comprehension. By employing this crisp, quasi-scientific aesthetic, Vantongerloo believed he could reconfigure the building blocks of the way in which we see the world. Kupka's *Series C, III, Elevation* is a work that marries his elegant abstract idiom with the deeper, spiritual dimension that was often the source of his abstractions. This painting is one of a series of 12 works, known as 'Series C'; five of which are housed in museums including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Národní galerie, Prague and the Museum Ludwig, Cologne. A gouache replica of the present work also resides in the Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Liberating colour, line and form from their centuries-old descriptive role, the pioneering artists included in *Abstraction Beyond Borders* overturned pictorial tradition, embarking on an abstract adventure that would come to define art of the 20th Century. Crossing geographical boundaries, encompassing a variety of media, and often blurring traditional boundaries of painting and sculpture, abstraction spread with an extraordinary speed, transforming artistic practice forever. From the initial steps towards a new artistic language, to the embodiment of this concept, this group of works embodies this varied, experimental and ground-breaking path of abstraction. This collection has been assembled with the rigorous eye of an aesthete, and encapsulates the multi-faceted nature, radical aesthetics and pioneering spirit of modernist abstraction throughout the 20th Century.

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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in first half of 2017 that totalled £2.35 billion / \$3 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Christie's offers around 350 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

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.

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