

Lot 17



Auction Modern, Post War & Contemporary

Date 01.12.2021, ca. 10:14

Preview 26.11.2021 - 10:00:00 bis
29.11.2021 - 18:00:00

MOLZAHN, JOHANNES
1892 Duisburg - 1965 Munich

Title: August 1931.

Date: 1931.

Technique: Oil on canvas.

Measurement: 125,5 x 125,5cm.

Notation: Signed and dated lower right next to the feet: Molzahn 31.

Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

Verso is another oil painting: Strandszene mit zwei weiblichen Akten. 1930. Signed and dated lower left in the orange-coloured area: Molzahn 30. This one is not listed in Gries' catalogue raisonné.

Provenance:

- Johannes Molzahn Centrum, Kassel

Exhibitions:

- Katholische Akademie in Bavaria, Munich 1972, no. 20
- Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna 1973
- Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum Graz 1973, no. 16, ill.
- Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg 1974, no. 22, ill.
- Schlesisches Museum Görlitz 2019, ill; Cover of the publication

Literature:

- Gries, Christian: Johannes Molzahn (1892-1965) und der 'Kampf um die Kunst' im Deutschland der Weimarer Republik (Appendix: Catalogue raisonné of the paintings by Johannes Molzahn), Dissertation University of Augsburg 1996, cat. rais. no 181a
- Schade, Herbert: Johannes Molzahn, Munich/Zurich 1972, p. 8, 67, 119, ill; Cover of the publication

VAN HAM Art Estate will represent the artist's estate in cooperation with the Johannes Molzahn Centrum für Dokumentation und Publication Kassel. For more information, please visit the official homepage: www.johannes-molzahn.org.

- Unmistakable pictorial language of the artist
- Dense composition with complex colouring
- From the most fruitful period of his work between 1928 and 1932
- Works by the artist are rarely offered on the auction market

"I know I am august / I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood / I see that the elementary laws never apologize / (I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house by, after all.)" (Walt Whitman: "Song of Myself", version from 1892, excerpt from verse 20)

When Johannes Molzahn accepted a professorship for graphic arts at the Academy of Arts and Crafts in Breslau in 1928, he was already a well-known painter and commercial artist. The years up to the closing of the academy in 1932 are the most productive of his painting career, which he himself describes as the "rebirth of painting". Thus he developed three different figure styles in that short period. They, too, are based on his efforts to create a "cosmic image of the world," into which he integrates the rational and the irrational, the mythical and the religious, the human and the technical. He does this repeatedly in new ways, combining expressive forms, gestures, movements, and colors with geometric structures in his cubist-futurist-like works. In doing so, he reduces human figures to stencils and places them in a multi-layered, often indefinable environment.

A wonderful example of this is our painting "August 1931," which shows three bathers on the beach. Molzahn stylizes the female figures into biomorphic silhouettes in which he combines different views of the body. He also depicts the sky, water, and sand in simplified, more or less geometrically structured, broad stripes. An idiosyncratic dynamic emanates from this seemingly rigid and lifeless scenery. Molzahn achieves this through the complex use of color and the recurring straight line and wavy line structures in the densely packed pictorial elements.

For many artists of the early 20th century, the motif of the "Bathers" is an image of longing for the lost paradise in which man and nature form a harmonious unity. Molzahn's paintings also bear witness to this. He is always interested in depicting the "new man", integrated into the laws of nature and the cosmos, and in giving expression to his idea of a universally valid and thus future - metaphysical - order. In doing so, he takes up the view of the philosopher and artist Ernst Fuhrmann (1886-1956) of the influence of the forces of nature on the cultural history of mankind. For example, with the concentric lines he draws with a comb in the gray color area of the left woman, Molzahn refers to the growth of nature and the circular orbits of the planets. In addition, he does not use the title of the painting to refer to a beautiful sunny day by the sea in the month of August. Rather, he refers here to the line from the poem "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman (1819-1892): "I know I am sublime". Early on, Molzahn was fascinated by the works of the American lyricist and transcendentalist. In them Whitman contrasts the social upheavals of his time and the closeness to nature of past society. In doing so, he describes the utopian vision of a human being who frees himself from traditions and the materialistic view and thereby achieves independence of body and mind in order to become one with nature. How much Molzahn appreciates Whitman is shown by the fact that he owns three editions of the volume "Leaves of grass", which contains the famous 52-part poem "Song of Myself".

Estimate: 80.000 € - 120.000 €
