

Lot 21



Auction Modern, Post War & Contemporary, Evening Sale

Date 27.11.2024, ca. 18:15

Preview 22.11.2024 - 10:00:00 bis
25.11.2024 - 18:00:00

KIRCHNER, ERNST LUDWIG
1880 Aschaffenburg - 1938 Frauenkirch/Davos

Title: Liegende Dodo in der Badewanne (Girl in the Bathtub).

Date: 1909.

Technique: Watercolour and India ink on yellowish, slightly satinised paper.

Measurement: 49 x 59,5cm.

Notation: Estate stamp of the artist (Lugt 1570b) verso lower left with the listed number: A Dre/Bg 19. Here additionally inscribed: K 3668 and C 2032.

Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

The work is documented in the Ernst Ludwig Kirchner Archive, Wichtrach/Berne. We are grateful for the kind scientific support.

Provenance:

- Estate of the artist (Davos 1938)
- Basel Art Museum (since 1946)
- Stuttgarter Kunstkabinett Roman Norbert Ketterer (since 1954)
- Private collection South Germany (since 1980)

Exhibitions:

- Gallery Nierendorf, Berlin 1963
- Gallery Roman Norbert Ketterer, Stuttgart 1980

Literature:

- Exhib. cat. E.L. Kirchner on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, Galerie Nierendorf, Berlin 1963, p. 17, cat. no. 10, ill.
- Exhib. cat. The Work of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Malerei, Grafik, Plastik, Zeichnung, Galerie Roman Norbert Ketterer 1980, p. 76, cat. no. 50, ill.
- Presler, Gerd: Die Brücke, Rowohlt's Monographien, 2007, p. 52, ill.

- A wonderfully captivating and tender depiction of his lover Doris (Dodo) Große in terms of colour and radiance

- During Kirchner's time in Dresden until 1911, Dodo repeatedly modelled for the artist in his drawings and paintings
- From the best "Brücke" period

Kirchner and Dodo

A happy moment, perhaps the happiest moment in the life of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: 'Dodo', the quiet, devoted lover of his early days in Dresden, smiles at him, enveloping him in her charm, her devotion, her love. And he, the artist, draws her with a steel nib pen and the indestructible black of iron gall ink, capturing with bright watercolours what he sees – but above all, what he feels, what he senses: the beauty of this woman.

It is not known when he met her. Fritz Bleyl, co-founder of the artists' group "BRÜCKE", said that they had met for the first time before October 1903. At that time, Doris Armgart, the daughter of Friedrich August Große, the tenant of the railway station restaurant in Dürrröhrsdorf near Dresden, was just 19 years old. 'Gentle, delicate and affectionate by nature, she was also able to captivate the artist's stormy, quick-tempered nature, not without a certain natural sophistication.' (Presler, Gerd: E. L. Kirchner - Seine Frauen, seine Modelle, seine Bilder, Munich/New York, 1998, pp.19-25)

A charcoal drawing created at the same time, 'Liegender Mädchenakt' (1909, 34.5 x 44.5 cm, with the Basel estate stamp on the reverse), incorporates 'Dodo's' smile. Only here, in these two sheets, can it be found: the closeness between two people, written in the face, through an infinitely tender sign. Mutual trust condenses its depth and fervour into a few graphic abbreviations that hint at everything and open the door to what has not been said, to what should and must remain a secret. Kirchner calls them 'hieroglyphics', sacred signs. 'I have [...] unconsciously drawn [...] in moments of greatest intoxication, without my noticing it.' Kirchner created Expressionism from the depths of his soul, from the abundance of his passion for her.

The Mystery of Dodo

Their mutual intimacy found no fulfilment. At the end of 1911, Kirchner left provincial Dresden, which offered him and his art no future. Like Erich Heckel and Max Pechstein, he sought recognition of his creative mission in Berlin. 'Dodo' remained in Dresden. So they parted ways – but at the same time she never left his life. He later wrote: 'I know that you sometimes think of me.' And added: 'Guide me [...] with your love and patience [...] always.' (ibid., pp.19-25) 'Dodo': Her trail goes cold. At the end of 1935, she and her sister are registered as the owners of a shared apartment on Stephansplatz. She still had her maiden name, so she remained unmarried. She is last mentioned in an address book in 1938.

One mystery remains unsolved: Why didn't Ernst Ludwig Kirchner look for her when he first travelled to Dresden again at the end of 1925? Why didn't he, who met 'Fränzi' at Kleine Plauensche Gasse 60, do everything he could to find 'Dodo' as well?

Gerd Presler

Estimate: 80.000 € - 120.000 €, Hammer: 70.000 €

