

Koller Auktionen - Lot 3411

A185 PostWar & Contemporary - Saturday 30 June 2018, 02.00 PM



MARK TOBEY

(Centerville 1890–1976 Basel)

Western Pagodas. 1953.

Tempera on cardboard laid down on cardboard.

Signed and dated lower left (difficult to read): Tobey 53.

45.5 x 60.6 cm.

With the confirmation of authenticity by Committee Mark Tobey, Münster, 24 March 2018. This work is recorded in the archives of the Committee Mark Tobey under: 24/03/18-69.24. We thank Dr. Heiner Hachmeister for his kind assistance. This work will be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Mark Tobey. Provenance: - Martha Jackson Gallery, New York (verso with the label). - Willard Gallery, New York (verso with the label). - Purchased from the above by

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the present owner, since then private collection Switzerland. At the beginning of his career at the age of 16, Mark Tobey moved to Chicago, where he attended courses in oil and watercolour painting at the Art Institute and earned money as an industrial designer at a steel mill. In 1911 he went to New York, where he worked as a portrait painter and fashion illustrator for Vogue magazine. During his time in New York Mark Tobey discovered and became a follower of the spiritual teachings of Bahā'ullāh, who strove to create a union from the multifarious great world religions and so find a common source of wisdom. He finally moved to Seattle, where he taught at the Cornish College of the Arts, and where he became fully involved in Chinese painting. From 1925 he began to travel and stayed in Paris, the Near East, and made a longer trip to China and Japan, where at a Zen monastery he became involved with Zen teachings and painting as well as calligraphy. At the same time, he also had a foothold in England, where between 1930 and 1938 he taught at Dartington Hall School in Devonshire. In 1960 Tobey settled in Basel. In the same year, the husband and wife collectors Ernst and Hildy Beyeler purchased 40 works from the artist. By then Tobey had already achieved international renown, had been awarded a number of prizes, and had participated successfully in the Biennale as well as Documenta II and III. Mark Tobey made every country his homeland and was one of the few artists of the 20th century who lived a truly cosmopolitan life. He lived between cultures and worlds, and in fact two exhibitions in 1989 at the Folkwang Museum in Essen and the Cantonal Museum in Mendrisio used this in the title: "Between Worlds". He himself stated that: "The art of the future cannot germinate in antagonism and nationalistic rivalry, but will spring forth with a renewed growth if man in general will grow to the stature of universal citizenship." (quote Mark Tobey in: Exh. Cat. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia Madrid, 1997, p. 17). Through his many years of involvement with calligraphy, he developed his own pictorial script; he never had the intention of imitating an East Asian pictorial language, but of finding his own personal style with a western influence. In addition, he never joined an artist group. "I have never tried to pursue a particular style in my work. From, the road has been a zig-zag into and out of old civilisations,

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seeking for new horizons through meditation and contemplation.” (ibid p. 68). Mark Tobey lived out his universalism as a lone agent and left behind the patterns and traces of his life in his works. Tobey’s artistic world is complex and characterised by an almost inexhaustible creative potential, love of experimentation and power to innovate. The impressive materiality and stylistic diversity reveal and enable a broad range of themes, such as nature, civilization, cities, movement, the sky and the cosmos, rhythms and music, emptiness and contemplation, free space etc. He finds inspiration in his surroundings, where he tries to see an abstraction, in which a profound rhythmic plasticity is concealed. “Since I try to make painting organic, I feel that there is a Relation with nature. I wanted to experience through the Medium of Paint a feeling of the movement of grass and floating seeds.” (Mark Tobey in: Exh. Cat. Mark Tobey. A Centennial Exhibition, Galerie Beyeler, Basel 1990, p. 58). His body of pictorial work generates structures and constellations in the subconscious of the viewer and manages to evoke an idea of a representation which lies beyond the boundaries between the abstract and the figurative. For this reason the present works are wonderful examples of his entire oeuvre: this pictorial association with nature, which he mentions in the above quote, can easily be recognised in these works (Lots 3409, 3421, 3422 and 3429) and in “Western Pagodas”, there is a possible association with architecture and civilization, which also often appears as a recurring theme. His abstract expressionist works with their fine, fleck- or thread-like dense style, create an effect which is both energetic, and yet exude unshakeable sense of harmony.

CHF 150 000 / 250 000

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