

Koller Auktionen - Lot 3217

A187 Impressionist & Modern Art - Friday 07 December 2018, 04.00 PM



OTTO DIX

(Untermhaus b. Gera 1891 - 1969 Singen)

Wintertag in Randegg (Winter Day in Randegg). 1933.

Mixed media on panel.

Signed and monogrammed lower right: 19 dix 33.

60 x 80 cm.

Provenance: Private collection Schaffhausen, by descent to the present owners.

Exhibition: Schaffhausen 1935, Kunstverein Schaffhausen 1935, no. 4. Literature: Löffler, Fritz: Otto Dix 1891-1969, Oeuvre der Gemälde, Recklinghausen 1981, no. 1935/9 (with ill.; erroneously listed under the works from 1935). In 1933 Otto Dix was one of the first artists dismissed from his teaching post immediately after the rise of the National Socialists. The reason announced was:

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"that among his pictures are such which seriously violate the moral feeling of the German people, and others which are likely to impair the will of the German people." (quoted in: Otto Dix. *Zeit, Leben, Werk*, p. 143, translated from German) In September of the same year, the exhibition "Spiegelbilder vom Verfall der Deutschen Kunst" (Reflections of the Decline of German Art) was held in the atrium of the Dresden City Hall, where two paintings by Otto Dix, among others, were shown in order to defame him as a degenerate artist. When the defenders of his paintings in that exhibition were arrested, the artist realised that the situation was no longer safe for him in Dresden and decided to leave the city together with his family. He moved to Singen, living at Schloss Randegg, which belonged to his brother-in-law. It turned out to be an ideal escape for the artist— far from political events, located in the middle of nowhere and surrounded by pure countryside. Dix had already employed the landscape as a background in his famous works from the previous years, among them the large-format triptych *Der Krieg*. A complete devotion to nature, however, first took place in 1933. It was the precarious circumstances of the time and his simultaneous preoccupation with Old Master examples that finally led Dix to landscape painting in 1933. Between 1933 and 1946, around 160 landscapes were created, which the artist painted in the self-described "Inneren Emigration". "It was a real escape, an escape to the countryside. And then this cowering and anxious looking around, perhaps it would have been better if I had emigrated then. But emigration was not my thing. [...] That this whole cowering has of course also affected me internally and also the style of my painting, is clear. [...]. I fled to the countryside, painted and painted. I did not want to know about the whole war. I only wanted to have my peace until it all of a sudden grabbed me and plunged me into the political events: first the confinement by the Gestapo, then the Volkssturm and imprisonment. Today I see that it was good. Escape is always wrong." The present painting "Wintertag in Randegg" from 1933 marks the beginning of Otto Dix's landscape period and is one of his first winter landscapes altogether. Here, the artist uses a special technique of glaze painting and in the process refers to his bygone role models. He ignores the contemporary insights of the Impressionists

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and Expressionists and draws on the Old Masters. He is inspired by the painters of the Danube School around Albrecht Altdorfer, the Romantics such as Caspar David Friedrich, and the technique of Peter Bruegel the Elder, which is unmistakable in the conception of the landscape. (Comparison). The Old Master glaze technique, with its effects of coolness and hardness, particularly accentuates the mood of winter. An important stylistic device, especially in the first years of his landscape depictions, is the exaggeration of the highest points, which can be beautifully seen in the present painting. The tree also plays a central role and is often used by Dix as a compositional element placed in the foreground or as a lateral backdrop. In a letter to his painter friend Ernst Bursche, Dix described his practice as follows: "I mainly do landscapes, many studies of trees and houses, so that I am independent of the motif and free to invent landscapes. It is rare that one finds motifs that can be used unchanged for a painting. One has to create many overlaps and contrasts so that a painting comes alive. [...] In the end, the essence is the artistic expression, not the true-to-nature depiction." The present work is also not a real landscape, but rather a staged view which he created on the basis of sketches made outdoors. Dix was fascinated by the seasonal and atmospheric play of colours. Banks of forming clouds or dramatic downpours as well as sunrises and sunsets are the central subjects of his works. Dix is said to have once stated that everything one paints is a self-depiction, which could also apply to his landscapes. Thus, from 1933 onwards, Otto Dix was forced to find a new form of pictorial expression and he succeeded in transforming his inner mental state into atmospheric and profound landscapes. "I have never given any confessions in writing, since, as inspection will show, my pictures are confessions of the sincerest kind that you will seldom find at this time. Nor am I willing or able to talk about aesthetic and philosophical matters, and anything else would be vain and stupid verbiage. Nor am I willing to reveal to the astonished citizens and contemporaries the depths or shallows of my soul. He who has eyes to see, sees!" (quoted in: "Otto Dix. Landschaften", p. 19, translated from German).

CHF 70 000 / 100 000

€ 61 400 / 87 720

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