



FRANZ GERTSCH

(Mörigen 1930–lives and works in Rüschegg)

Gräser I. 2000.

Woodcut in colours. ea 4/7, artist's proof outside an edition of 27. Image 136 x 125 cm on Kumohadamashi japan paper by Heizaburo Iwano 172 x 153 cm. Printed by Nik Hausmann, Franz and Maria Gertsch. Unique in colour. In the original artist's frame.

We thank Albrecht Gertsch for his kind support. Provenance: Purchased directly from the artist in 2002, since then private collection Rhineland. Catalogue raisonné: Masson, no. 22b. "Even as an adult, he has preserved the ability to recognise in the immediate given situation, even in the banal, what will make a good picture."

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(Affentranger- Kirchrath, Angelika: Franz Gertsch. Die Magie des Realen, Bern 2004, p. 209) With his monumental woodcuts, the Swiss artist Franz Gertsch is one of the most important and influential printmakers of the second half of the 20th century. "From the beginning, the intention with the woodcuts was to fulfil an old dream – to create a realistic picture in monochrome" (quote. Franz Gertsch, in: Exh Cat. "Franz Gertsch. Holzschnitte und Malerei auf Papier", Kunstmuseum Bern, September – November 1994, p. 56) So, in 1986 he decided to dedicate himself exclusively to the woodcut. "One November morning in 1990 I was walking with my camera along the river. It was foggy and we had the first frost. As the fog cleared the sun came through, and the rays caused the frost to melt. Water and small bits of ice dropped from the trees into the water, and that is how this play of light and water came about." (Franz Gertsch) This experience of nature formed the basis of Gertsch's large format triptych "Schwarzwasser" (Black Water) , from which we are offering Detail 1 from the right-hand wing (Lot 3746). Here he powerfully demonstrates his masterful handling of the woodcut. In the present work the different arrangement and intensity of the cut dots and strokes create a wave movement, which stretches from the upper right edge to the centre. The dynamics and plasticity of this image are created only by the play of light and shade. Although this is only a small part of the entire triptych, which measures 276 x 597 cm in total, the tense movement of the entire work is present even in this tiny detail. "Gräser I" (Grasses) also shows Gertsch's fascination with the banal in nature. In 1995/96 he produced the painting "Gräser I" based on a photograph. As is typical of his work, he took this "core image" as the basis for further works, which are to some extent close-ups or detailed views. In 1999-2001 he decided to make a woodcut triptych from this motif. The present work "Gräser I" shows a close-up, a snapshot from a meadow with towering blades of grass and stalks. In this case, he uses the contrast of light and dark in the woodcut in order to show the sun's play of light and shadow on the leaves. Both large format works show on the one hand Franz Gertsch's unique handling of the woodblock. With the simplest means, but with a masterful hand, he creates in his work an incomparable plasticity and dynamism. In

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addition, both pieces show the extent to which the artist works with one motif: he creates overall views, makes close-ups and finds extracts, which function both in the whole work and as autonomous works of art. A further aspect of his work is the colour: he prints all his woodcuts in different colour variants, so that each work possesses its entirely own expression. "The motifs from nature are painted with the natural colour of the chosen pigments. This consonance does not serve however to increase the illusionistic effect. It raises the picture to an absolute level. Despite all the concentration and reduction, the grass pictures are sensual and direct, so that the woodcuts seem like apparitions, immaterial and intangible." (Affentranger- Kirchrath, Angelika: Franz Gertsch. Die Magie des Realen, Bern 2004, p. 211)

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