



MARK TOBEY

(Centerville 1890–1976 Basel)

Aspects. 1965.

Tempera with monotype on thin paper, firmly laid down.

Signed and dated lower right: Tobey 65.

51 × 101.7 cm.

Provenance: - Galerie Beyeler, Basel (verso with the label). - Auction Sotheby's New York, 6 November 1985, Lot 118. - Purchased from the above by the present owner, since then private collection Switzerland. Exhibition: Krefeld 1975, Mark Tobey. Rückblick auf harmonische Weltbilder. Museum Haus Lange, 15 June - 3 August, no. 21 (verso with the label). "Since I try to make painting organic, I feel that there is a Relation with nature. I wanted to experience through the Medium of

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Paint a feeling of the movement of grass and floating seeds." Mark Tobey Mark Tobey's pictorial world is complex and characterised by an almost inexhaustible potential for creativity, love of experimentation and the power to innovate. His works are an expression of his spirituality and perception of the world. The impressive materiality and stylistic diversity of his works reveal and make possible a broad spectrum of themes, such as nature, civilisation, cities, movements, the heavens and the cosmos, rhythm and music, emptiness and contemplation. He is inspired by his surroundings, where he seeks an abstraction in which a profound, rhythmic plasticity is concealed. Born in 1890, Mark Tobey grew up in the American Midwest on the shores of the Mississippi River in Wisconsin. At the age of sixteen he moved to Chicago, where he attended courses in oil and watercolour painting at the Art Institute and earned his living as an industrial designer in 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 embraced the spiritual teachings of Bahā'ullāh, which sought to bring together the great world religions in all their diversity to form a common wisdom. From 1925, he began to travel and stayed in Paris and the Middle East, and then made a longer journey to China and Japan, where he studied Zen teachings and painting as well as calligraphy at a Zen monastery. From then onwards, he sought to combine the linear flow inspired by the Far East, with the European concept of mass and volume, and to create a balance between the outlook of these two worlds. Through his many years of involvement with calligraphy, Mark Tobey developed his own pictorial script. The present magnificent work in landscape format, "Aspects" from 1965 (lot 3413), consists of and inhabits a wide variety of planes. The complexity of the technique becomes apparent to the viewer, depending on their distance from the work. To begin with, when seen from a distance, it is possible to discern the colour planes and surfaces. If the viewer comes a little closer to the work, squiggly forms appear in the middle, and black and white strings enliven the image. If the viewer comes very close to the work, tiny brushstrokes emerge and decorate the entire surface of the picture in a systematic calligraphic arrangement. These are redolent

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of vertical Chinese characters. Underneath this multi-layered universe of different character levels, the thin paper is primed with a monotype.

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