

“The Rudolf Zwirner Collection: Works on Paper” – A Highlight of the Upcoming Summer Auctions



Photo: Wolfgang Stahr

Grisebach is delighted to announce a first highlight of the upcoming Summer Auctions (30th and 31st May 2024). A pioneer of the Cologne art market, Rudolf Zwirner ranks among the most important and trend-setting gallery owners of the 20th century. A fine selection from his private collection of 29 works on paper spanning four centuries will be sold at Grisebach on 30th May in the special auction “The Rudolf Zwirner Collection: Works on Paper.” With a total median estimate of EUR 700,000, this curated selection testifies to Zwirner’s refined sense for exceptional quality and his keen eye for beauty.

Over the course of some 300 exhibitions, the passionate art dealer’s Cologne gallery has showcased works by icons like Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, and Sigmar Polke. Acting on behalf of Peter Ludwig, his most important collector-client, Zwirner also acquired numerous treasures of modern art. To this day, they are among the most significant exhibits at the Cologne museum bearing Ludwig’s name. Another of Zwirner’s contributions towards elevating the city to a leading art center was his role in co-founding its first fair for contemporary art in 1967, an event which set standards throughout the world. Since 1996, Zwirner has been living and working in his home city of Berlin again.

This said, the Zwirner Collection is focused not so much on the works that marked his professional career as an art dealer, and instead is dedicated first and foremost to artists whom he hardly ever represented or sold. This is a “collector’s collection” in the best sense of the term: Unencumbered by any kind of systematic approach or claim to completeness,

it is devoted exclusively to the collector's personal preferences and desire for discovery, having been compiled with an unrivalled understanding of artistic quality.

The auction's top lot will be the gouache by **Pierre-Paul Prud'hon** *L'Enlèvement de Psyché* (estimate: EUR 200,000 to 300,000), a preliminary study created around 1808 for the major painting *Psyché exposée sur le rocher est enlevé par les Zephyrs qui la transportent dans la demeure de l'Amour*, which can be admired in the Louvre. Rudolf Zwirner feels that in this gouache, the sense of lightness and the wind's breath are even more palpable and perceptible than in the large oil version created later. Another rarity on offer will be *Carnet Guernesey* from 1856, an almost abstract image by the great French novelist **Victor Hugo**. One of his few large-format works (EUR 100,000 to 150,000), it epitomizes the interplay between writing and drawing, language and image so typical of Hugo's paintings, not to mention his deep-seated fascination with dark and somber scenery.

Other highlights of the collection include **Rembrandt's** etching *Landscape with a Cottage and Haybarn: Oblong* from 1641 (EUR 50,000 to 70,000) and the watercolour print by **Max Ernst** *Plantation farcineuse hydrique parasite* from 1921 (EUR 40,000 to 60,000).

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Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn
 "Landscape with a cottage and haybarn: oblong". 1641
 Etching on laid paper, laid down on Japan paper. Plate: 12.7 × 32 cm
 (paper: 13 × 32 cm, 20.5 × 38.4 cm)
 Estimate EUR 50,000–70,000



Pierre-Paul Prud'hon
 "L'Enlèvement de Psyché". Circa 1808
 Black chalk over pencil, washed grey and heightened with opaque white,
 on heavy paper. 53.6 × 44.3 cm
 Estimate EUR 200,000–300,000



Victor Hugo
 Carnet Guernesey. 1856
 Ink, gouache and opaque white in black on paper, laid down on paper.
 24.4 × 38.2 cm
 Estimate EUR 100,000–150,000



Max Ernst
 "Plantation farcineuse hydrogique parasite". 1921
 Watercolour and pencil, overpainting of a print, laid down on cardboard.
 7.8 × 11.8 cm (17.9 × 22.9 cm)
 EUR 40,000–60,000