

Press release

## A monument to modernism: Georg Kolbe's restored 'Tänzerinnen-Brunnen' as the highlight of the Summer Auctions



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Georg Kolbe. "Tänzerinnen-Brunnen". 1922. Bronze and limestone. 310 cm. EUR 1,000,000–1,500,000

With Georg Kolbe's 'Tänzerinnen-Brunnen', one of the most impressive and, at the same time, moving works of classical modernism is coming to the international auction market. It combines artistic mastery, an iconic formal language and a deeply moving story. The monumental fountain, crafted from bronze and travertine, will be offered at the Grisebach Evening Auction on 4 June with an estimate of EUR 1,000,000 to 1,500,000, following an amicable agreement between the Georg Kolbe Foundation and the heirs of Heinrich and Jenny Stahl. Last year, Grisebach achieved a world record price of EUR 1,416,000 for a work by Kolbe – the highest price ever paid for a sculpture by the artist. The 'Tänzerinnen-Brunnen' has the potential to surpass this record.

The figure of the 'Fountain Dancer' is one of the sculptor's most artistically outstanding bronze works. Following an initial smaller version, Kolbe created a life-size version of the figure, standing approximately 1.72 metres tall, in 1922 as a fountain sculpture for Heinrich Stahl, director of Victoria Insurance in Berlin. The dancer rises on a stone plinth above a stylised lotus flower carved from travertine. This is supported by three crouching figures. In this multi-layered composition,

Kolbe combines classical motifs with influences from non-European formal languages. Gestures, gender relations, the relationship to the body as well as to other cultural spheres define Kolbe's wide-ranging interest in dance and bodily movement, which is modelled in the figure's light, almost floating effect and makes one almost forget the materiality of the bronze.

Commissioned by Heinrich Stahl, the fountain was designed for the garden of his villa in Berlin-Dahlem. During the Nazi era, the Stahl family was persecuted on account of their Jewish heritage and was forced to sell not only their property but also their house, including the fountain. Heinrich Stahl, chairman of the Jewish Community of Berlin since 1933, did not survive the Theresienstadt concentration camp, to which he and his wife Jenny were deported in 1942. A few years after her liberation, Jenny Stahl was able to emigrate to the USA to join her son Bruno. The Stahls' villa, including the fountain, had been taken over in 1941 by Theodor Dimanow, who served as Bulgarian Minister-Counsellor in Berlin from 1942 to 1944. The sculpture was purchased from his heirs in 1978 for the Georg Kolbe Museum.

This spring, an amicable agreement was reached between the Georg Kolbe Foundation and the heirs of Heinrich and Jenny Stahl regarding the return of the work. For Grisebach, it is a privilege to be able to offer this exceptional work in the summer auctions on behalf of the heirs.

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