

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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SIX MAJOR WORKS BY
GERHARD RICHTER
AT CHRISTIE'S THIS SPRING

**THE MOST VALUABLE AND IMPORTANT GROUPING OF WORKS
BY RICHTER TO BE SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S**

A LANDMARK EVENT IN THE RICHTER MARKET



GERHARD RICHTER (B. 1932)
Abstraktes Bild (798-3)
oil on canvas
Painted in 1993.
Estimate: \$14,000,000-18,000,000

Post War and Contemporary Evening Sale – 8 May 2012

New York —Christie's is pleased to announce the auction of an exceptional selection of six important works by Gerhard Richter at its Post-War and Contemporary Sale on May 8, 2012. This major comprehensive grouping includes works from the 60's to the 90's and is estimate to realize more than \$40 million.

Robert Manley, International Director, Specialist Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art declared: “Christie’s is fortunate to be offering an outstanding group of major works by Gerhard Richter, including two unqualified masterworks, *Seestüeck (Leicht bewölkt)* and *Abstraktes Bild (798-3)*. The six paintings span 25 years of the artist’s career, from 1968 to 1993 and include his classic abstractions such as *Abstraktes Bild (798-3)* one of the most valuable Richters to come to market. From a breakthrough period of the 1960’s comes his sublime *Seestüeck (Leicht bewölkt)* one of a small series of Seascapes executed in the late 1960’s, most of which are in museum collections, including the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Bockmann Collection, Berlin and the Kunsthalle Hamburg. Rare to market is a 1968 large-scale painting *Farbschlieren*; sinuous, wide-brushed and vibrantly colored, it is integral to Richter’s development of his intuitive Abstrakte Bilders which would follow in the 1980’s. Rounding out the selection is a large *Abstraktes Bild Violett (600-2)* that was recently featured in the acclaimed Tate Modern retrospective, and two exquisite medium scale abstract paintings. With an aggregate low estimate of almost \$40 million, the six works are primed to be a landmark event in the Richter market.”



GERHARD RICHTER (B. 1932)
Abstraktes Bild (798-3)
oil on canvas
94 1/2 x 94 1/2 in. (240 x 240 cm.)
Painted in 1993.
Estimate: \$14,000,000-18,000,000

Rendered in a blazing palette, *Abstraktes Bild (798-3)* is a visually arresting masterpiece by Gerhard Richter dating from his finest period of abstraction. Acquired directly from Anthony D’Offay Gallery, this is the first time *Abstraktes Bild (798-3)* has been seen by the public for more than twenty years. Elaborated on a monumental scale, it

immediately captivates with its dramatic swathes of hot red oil paint, interrupted by palimpsests of midnight blue, alabaster white and verdant green. The canvas has a profound gravity to it, the viewer being drawn in by the painting’s luxuriant surface, monumental scale and enveloped by its sensual palette. In *Abstraktes Bild (798-3)*, Richter has truly perfected his technique, submitting himself to the hypnotic rhythm of painting with the squeegee. In this majestic work, there are no signs of conflict, but rather free flowing, intuitive gestures; the squeegee adding and subtracting layers of paint to reveal myriad colors through the beautifully worked surface. There is a palpable momentum and sense of dynamism inherent to the painting, derived from the artist’s physical journey across the canvas. From its hilt to the base, Richter has spread rich oil paint in majestic and vertiginous columns.



GERHARD RICHTER (B. 1932)
Seestüeck (Leicht bewölkt)
 oil on canvas
 78 3/4 x 78 3/4 in. (200 x 200 cm.)
 Painted in 1969.
 Estimate: \$10,000,000-15,000,00

Executed in 1969, *Seestüeck (Leicht bewölkt)* is a majestic photo-realist painting by Gerhard Richter from a small, seminal group of seascapes; the majority of which are now housed within international museum collections including: Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Musée départemental d'art contemporain, Rochechouart, Böckmann Collection, Berlin and Kunsthalle Hamburg. It is an awe-inspiring painting that projects a radiant horizon over a gently rippled sea, the eye travelling into the glowing and elusive distance. In *Seestüeck (Leicht bewölkt)* Richter has skillfully translated onto canvas the sublime air and atmosphere of the open water, his washes of color building to create clouds and reflective sea with a unique transparency. It is a masterful illusion, one which Dieter Honisch perfectly describes in his preface to Richter's exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1972: '[his] pictures are windows leading into the beautiful world; they bring us the idyllic, dramatic and elegiac response to our emotional desire; they carry it into the show-room, right through the wall in front of which we are standing'. In *Seestüeck (Leicht bewölkt)* Richter has combined two unmatched photographs: one of the sky and one of an unnamed sea, faithfully rendering them in paint. The artist's technique is captivating through his use of countless tonal adjustments that constantly manipulate the spectator's focus. Upon first glance the painting radiates with a sublime natural beauty. With closer inspection however, the illusion is shattered by the incongruity of the upper and lower portions of the painting.



GERHARD RICHTER (B. 1932)
Farbschlieren
 oil on canvas
 78 3/4 x 78 3/4 in. (200 x 200 cm.)
 Painted in 1968.
 Estimate: \$4,000,000-6,000,000

Proliferating with myriad colors of vibrant mauve, magenta, rose pink and cyan blue in broad and smoothly textured brush strokes, *Farbschlieren*, marks an important threshold in Gerhard Richter's practice. Dating from 1968, it embodies the artist's constructive, conceptual turn when he was fundamentally questioning the viability of painting, the morphology of the brushstroke and the supposed polarity of abstraction and figuration. Exceptionally rare, unique in its composition and very early in the context of Richter's color abstractions, the work is integral to the development of his intuitive Abstrakte Bilder. In *Farbschlieren* Richter freely employs the paint brush, marrying color in a chance manner and it is this highly contingent technique that was to become amplified with his use of the squeegee in the celebrated Abstrakte Bilder from the late 1980s onwards.



GERHARD RICHTER (B. 1932)
Abstraktes Bild Violett (600-2)
 oil on canvas
 78 3/4 x 70 3/4 in. (200 x 179.7 cm.)
 Painted in 1986.
 Estimate: \$5,000,000-7,000,000

Selected by the artist for inclusion in his recent seminal retrospective at the Tate Modern in London, Gerhard Richter's epic *Abstraktes Bild Violett* is positioned at the very heart of the artist's investigations into the fundamental nature of painting. Considered one of the pre-eminent painters of the Post-War period, Richter has spent his career putting the medium of painting under a microscope

and, painted in 1986, *Abstraktes Bild Violett* was executed at a point in his career when the artist was at his most contemplative. Through this multilayered work, Richter not only pays homage to paintings' past, but also projects forward as this work marks an important period when his oeuvre would become increasingly dominated by abstraction. The abstract paintings have become some of Richter's most celebrated, and this majestic example not only demonstrates the artist's supreme aesthetic vision and technical virtuosity but also scrutinizes the struggle between the dominance of abstraction and figuration within Richter's work, the result of which is a new way in which a deeper and more powerful view of the world is rendered.



GERHARD RICHTER (B. 1932)
Abstraktes Bild (646-3)
 oil on canvas
 47 1/4 x 39 3/8 in. (120 x 100 cm.)
 Painted in 1987.
 Estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000

Richter has stated that "*Painting is the creation of an analogy to the nondescriptive and unintelligible,*" but here in *Abstraktes Bild*, the turbulent atmospheres that arises from the artist's interventions, reside in their minute differentiations one from the other and the infinitesimal degree of interpretive choices open to the beholder. The chance operations Richter employs propose that all marks and pictorial incident are equally valid and that all results

are worthy of the viewer's interest. Richter's fusion, or rather democratization, of color also declares that no color is pre-eminent, nor does one color or other assert affective dominance. That these works are non-compositional in that their sense of a unitary field does not arise from traditional organization, the parts balancing a whole, makes them both compelling and baffling. And while the scrapes and smears record a physical presence at once mesmerizing and suggestive, the virility of their tactile presence draws the viewer in. There is in the present work, in its vertical scrapes and open fields, a sense of small seismic implosions that eviscerate



GERHARD RICHTER (B. 1932)
Abstraktes Bild (646-4)
oil on canvas
47 1/4 x 39 3/8in. (120 x 100 cm.)
Painted in 1987.
Estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000

Abstraktes Bild (646-4), 1987, presents Richter's work at its most immediate, for the literal impression of the artist's pressure and release of the squeegee leaves an extraordinary degree of pictorial incident, the vertical grid-like articulations of repeated markings tracing the path of Richter's manipulations in vertical rows across the span of the canvas. Paradoxically, a figure to ground relationship arises from a single point to the right of center through a series of

curving cascades of excavated paint layers, where the topmost layer of paint is released by the shaving motion of the blade from top downward and the palette knife has scored cavities and canyons of exploding pigment, creating the sculpted geological effect of white-hot lava pouring from fissures into the sea below and exposing bleeding clashes of jewel blues and greens. Jagged edges made by horizontal, vertical, and diagonal strokes, then knifed into slits and crevices create areas of illusionistic space.

Sale: Post War and Contemporary Evening Sale – 8 May 2012

Viewing: **4 May** **10am - 5pm**
 5 May **10am - 5pm**
 6 May **1pm - 5pm**
 7 May **10am - 5pm**
 8 May **10am - 12pm**

Christie's New York - 20 Rockefeller Plaza

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2011 that totaled £3.6 billion/\$5.7 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewelry, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.

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