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## SOTHEBY'S LONDON TO OFFER A RARE AND IMPORTANT PAINTING BY THE GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST, ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Strassenszene (Street Scene)*, Oil on canvas  
Estimate: £5-7 million\*

SOTHEBY'S is delighted to announce that one of the major highlights of its forthcoming sale of Impressionist and Modern Art, which is scheduled to take place in London on the evening of Tuesday, February 3, 2009, is *Strassenszene (Street Scene)*, 1913, by **Ernst Ludwig Kirchner** (1880-1938), estimated at £5-7 million. The painting captures a Berlin street scene – a theme which occupies a central position in Kirchner's *oeuvre* – and is directly related to the artist's monumental *Die Strasse* from 1913 in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. *Strassenszene* is one of the quintessential images of the German Expressionist movement.

Speaking about the painting, Helena Newman, Director of the Evening Sale and Vice-Chairman of the Impressionist & Modern Art department, Sotheby's Worldwide, said: "*The subject of the Berlin 'Street Scene' is the most celebrated theme in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's work and represents one of the most important German Expressionist images. This rare painting, which is the last remaining oil of this subject dating from 1913 still in private hands, will undoubtedly appeal to a broad spectrum of collectors around the world.*"

Kirchner produced only eleven Berlin street scenes in oil during the years 1913-15 and *Strassenszene* is the last of these important paintings from that series and dating from 1913 to remain in private hands. It remained in Kirchner's possession until his death in 1938 and has been in the same private collection since June 1997 when it was purchased at the sale of the renowned Charles Tabachnick collection at Sotheby's for a then world record price for the artist of £1.9 million. *Strassenszene* (70 x 51cm) shares many of the same compositional and stylistic elements as the painting in the Museum of Modern Art in New York (120 x 91cm). In 2006 Kirchner's monumental 1913 *Berliner Strassenszene* (*Berlin Street Scene*) (121 x 95cm), which had been restituted from the Brücke Museum, Berlin, sold for a record-breaking \$38 million to the Neue Galerie, New York.

Kirchner first visited Berlin in 1910 and moved there permanently the following year to join other artists of the Brücke group, which had originated in Dresden. The vibrant life of the metropolis provided him with a totally new and stimulating experience, contrasting both with his time in Dresden and his summer vacations in Fehmarn. Recently, the German artist has been the subject of a number of high profile exhibitions: The Museum of Modern Art in New York staged '**Kirchner and the Berlin Street**' in the autumn of 2008, which brought together all of the artist's monumental street scenes; the Brücke-Museum in Berlin opened '**Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in Berlin**' in December 2008.

The German Expressionist market has witnessed a period of extraordinary growth in recent years. In the February auctions last year Sotheby's achieved a record-breaking total of £39.6 million for German & Austrian Expressionist Art continuing its tradition of setting new price levels for rare and important Expressionist works. In February 2008 Franz Marc's *Weidende Pferde III*, the last remaining painting of the iconic subject of horses in private hands, sold at Sotheby's for £12.3 million – an auction record for the artist – and Alexej von Jawlensky's striking portrait *Schokko* (*Schokko mit Tellerhut*) achieved £9.4 million – also an auction record.

*Strassenszene* will be on display at Sotheby's New York from Tuesday, January 13 to Thursday, January 15.

\* Pre-sale estimates do not include buyer's premium

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