

KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

Unbekannt, artist

unsettled attribution

Marcel Janco (*24.5.1895 Bukarest, +21.4.1984 Tel Aviv)



Die Nachlassvertretung konnte nicht gefunden werden. Die
Rechteinhaber:innen mögen sich melden.

Title	Figurenszene
Also known as	Figure Scene
Date	c. 1915
Medium	Oil on canvas
Dimensions	image: 95.8 x 85.4 cm
Signature	-
Inscription	stamp on verso, wooden frame: Atelier Nachlass / Otto Morach / Zürich 1974 / No. 194
Catalogue raisonné	-
Edition / number	-
Edition	-
Inv. No.	ZKG.2020/0021
Credit line	Kunsthau Zürich, Donated by Hugo Stüdeli, 2020
Accession year	2020
Object type	painting
Classification	D 1[1] art 20th century CHE
Description	<p>A strange scenery opens up to us. Are we looking at a stage, or is it the theatricality of a maze that makes us jump from one figure to another? Each person is sufficient to themselves, even the duo in the centre of the picture is not a couple. Who is the woman whose light, bluish dress centres our restlessly wandering gaze, what does the medallion at waist level point to (as does the figure close to her on the floor)? And what is the pole pointing to her, around which the whole installation seems to revolve like a merry-go-round? Perhaps this prop is also an easel next to which a painter is taking eye measurements with two brushes - or perhaps this sky-gazer is just gesticulating ahead, as does the figure with his hat on and the declaiming person in the foreground. Someone is running against the fiery horizon, which resembles an ornamental frieze, but where the curiosity finds an exotic equal as dance and shadow theatre. In front of it, enthroned like a guard, is a man masturbating, more like a mask than a grimace; below, a person is fingering his buttocks; both of them, like the other persons or their performers, are</p>

completely with or out of themselves, as is the drummer, who gives this grotesque a muffled sound: Boum-boum-boum.

The picture puzzle is twofold: what are these twelve apostles all about, and what demiurge painted them? For decades, the oil painting reproduced here for the first time lived in a cellar. It was part of the estate of the Swiss painter Otto Morach. It became clear, at the latest during the compilation of his oeuvre catalogue [1], that this work did not originate from him. Enquiries by Hugo Stüdeli, Morach's nephew, administrator of the estate and donor of the painting to the Kunsthaus Zürich, have strengthened the vague assumption that the 'Painting by Unknown' could be a work by Marcel Janco from his Zurich years.[2] Even ex negativo, this lead remains, since no painter of 'Cubo-Futo-Expressionism', as it shaped a generation of Swiss artists and networked them internationally, offers himself as the author. But the opinion of Marcel Janco's daughter, who describes the work as 'in the style of Janco', but who ultimately judged apodictically: 'Je ne sens pas Janco', speaks strongly against an attribution. [3] Her assessment is contrasted with a detailed report by the Janco monographer Harry Seiwert, who concludes that the work is by Janco with an 'extraordinarily high degree of probability'.[4] Both in the artistic style and in motifs, there are many parallels and affinities with his few surviving paintings from around 1915/1916, but also with the woodcuts, linocuts and masks from the Dada period. [5] If one takes into account that Janco and Morach were active side by side in the artists' group 'Das Neue Leben' (1918 -1920) and in the Zurich circle 'Radikale Künstler' (1919), and that Morach described his relationship with Janco as 'friendly', biographical notes also make this authorship plausible.

Provenance

Unbekannt (Künstler/-in)

[Verbleib unbekannt?]

o.D. – 25.12.1973, Otto Morach (*1887 Hubersdorf, +1973 Zürich)

25.12.1973 – 7.7.2020, Hugo Stüdeli (*1924, +2022), Solothurn, Nachlass

2020, Raimund Meyer (*1954 Wohlen) (Vermittler/-in)

ab 7.7.2020, Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft | Kunsthaus Zürich (Museum), Zürich, Geschenk

Provenance category

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About the provenance

Literature

- Jahresbericht 2020, hrsg. von Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, Zürich, 2021.

- Raimund Meyer: «Unbekannt. Figurenszene, um 1915», in: Jahresbericht 2020, hrsg. von Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, Zürich, 2021, S. 21-23.