

# KURT SCHWITTERS





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# KURT SCHWITTERS (1887-1948)

*Ohne Titel (Merzbild Mit Schuhsohle)*  
(Untitled, (Merz Picture with Shoe Sole))

1945

oil and relief assemblage on plywood

21 ¼ x 17 ¾ in. (53.9 x 45 cm)



**WATCH VIDEO**

## PROVENANCE

Ernst Schwitters, Lysaker, by descent from the artist in 1948  
Private Collection, acquired through Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne in 1981  
Sotheby's New York, May 11, 1994, lot 40  
Private Collection, Washington  
Private Collection

## EXHIBITION

Stockholm, Konstsalongen Samlaren im Konstnärshuset; Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst und Kunstforeningen;  
Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum und Kölnerischer Kunstverein & Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, *Kurt MERZ Schwitters. Retrospektiv*, 1962-64, no. 182 (in Stockholm); no. 255 (in Cologne and Rotterdam)  
Cologne, Galerie Gmurzynska, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1978, no. 97  
Paris, Grand Palais, FIAC, Galerie Gmurzynska, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1980, no. 54  
(possibly) Cologne, Germany, Museen der Stadt Köln, *Westkunst. Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939*, 1981, no. 113  
Cologne, Germany, Galerie Gmurzynska, *Klassische Moderne*, 1981, no. 181  
Madrid, Spain, Fundación Juan March & Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1982-83, no. 175  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Vancouver Art Gallery, *European Vision*, 1987

## LITERATURE

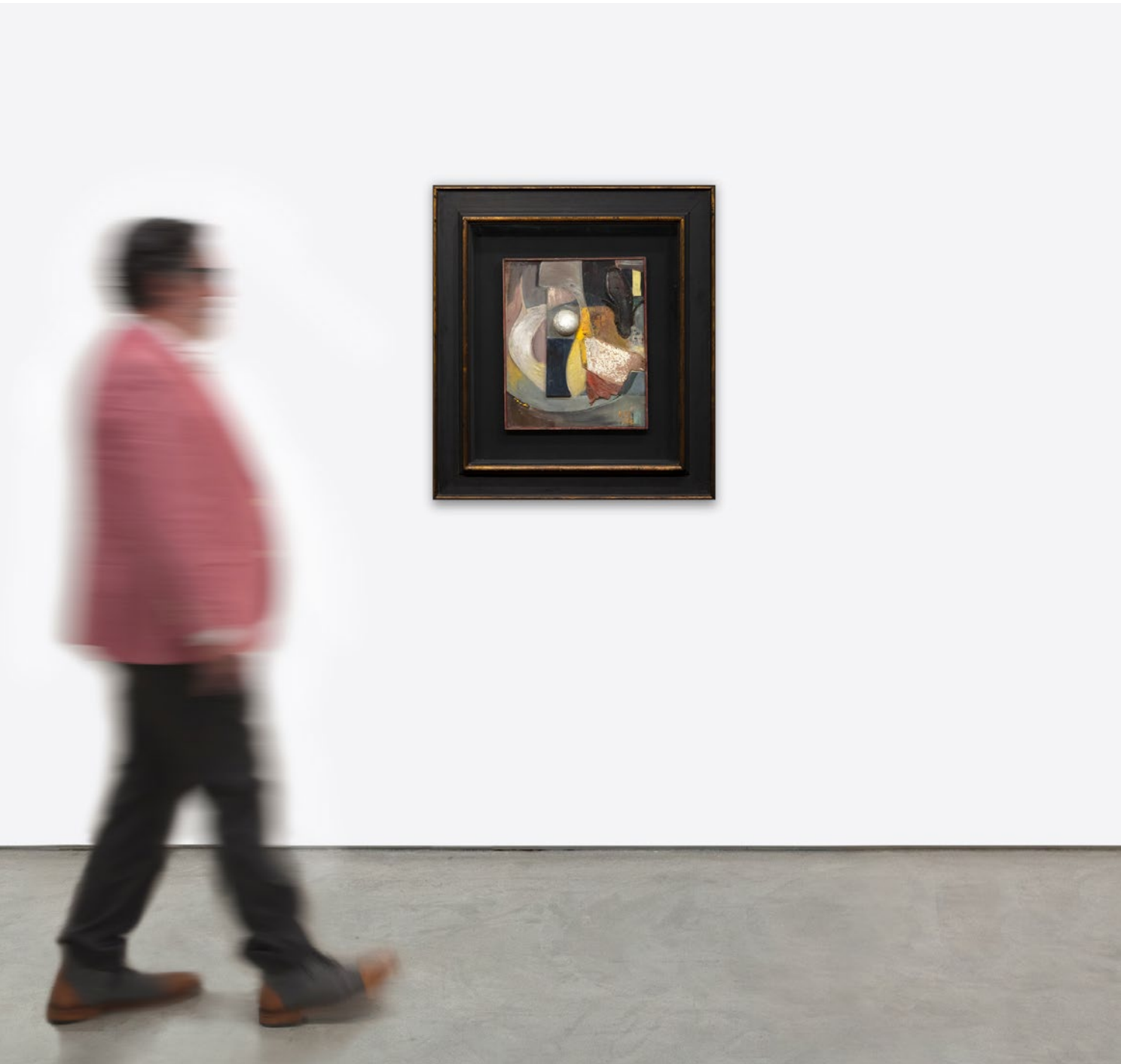
Marlis Grüterich, 'Kurt Schwitters. Galerie Gmurzynska, Köln', in *Kunstforum International*, vol. 30, 1978 (illustrated p. 220)  
Renato Maestri, 'ComMerzBankKurt-Schwitters. Una lezione rapsodica', in *Domus*, vol. 590, Milan, 1979 (illustrated in color p. 47)  
Yusuke Nakahara, 'From the Lifeless View of Scrapping', in *Bijutsu Techo*, vol. 31, Tokyo, August 1979 (illustrated in color)  
Galerie Gmurzynska, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1980, no. 54 (illustrated in color in the catalogue)  
Heidi Bürklin, 'Kurt Schwitters: Vom Bürger zum Bürgerschreck', in *Art. Das Kunstmagazin*, vol. 10, Hamburg, 1981 (illustrated in color p. 91)  
Galerie Gmurzynska, *Klassische Moderne*, 1981, no. 181  
Ernst Nündel, *Kurt Schwitters in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Hamburg, 1981 (illustrated p. 120)  
Karin Orchard and Isabel Schulz, *Kurt Schwitters, Catalogue raisonné, 1937-1948*, vol. 3, Hanover, 2006, no. 3136 (illustrated p. 455)



# IMPORTANT FACTS

- Kurt Schwitters invented *Merz* in 1919, a term born from the fragmentation of the word "Kommerz" in one of his early collages. At a time of significant social, political, and artistic upheaval, Schwitters embraced modernist movements such as Dada, Expressionism, and Constructivism yet forged his path, developing *Merz* as his personal artistic approach.
- Created in 1945 during his exile in England after fleeing Nazi persecution, *Untitled, (Merz Picture with Shoe Sole)* presents as an evocative example of his later "Merz" compositions. The work features a shoe sole as part of an assemblage whose topography includes two other raised elements: a textured scrap and a round white orb, creating an elevated terrain that brings physical depth to the piece.
- Through this assemblage, Schwitters reaffirms his belief in the transformative power of *Merz*: the ability to turn the discarded into something new, meaningful, and enduring.

# — DETAIL IMAGES



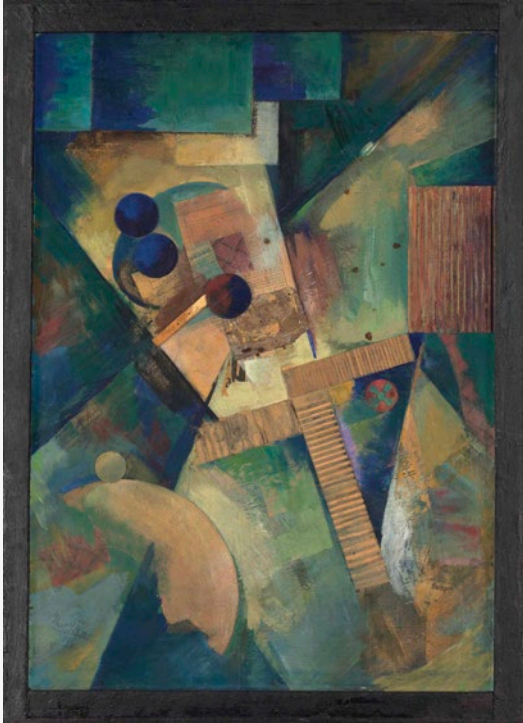








# TOP WORKS SOLD AT AUCTION



*Ja - Was? - Bild*

1920

oil, paper, corrugated card, cardboard, fabric, wood and nails on board; in the artist's frame

43 x 31 ½ in.

(109.2 x 80 cm)

**Sold at Christie's London:**

**June 2014 for \$23,710,964**

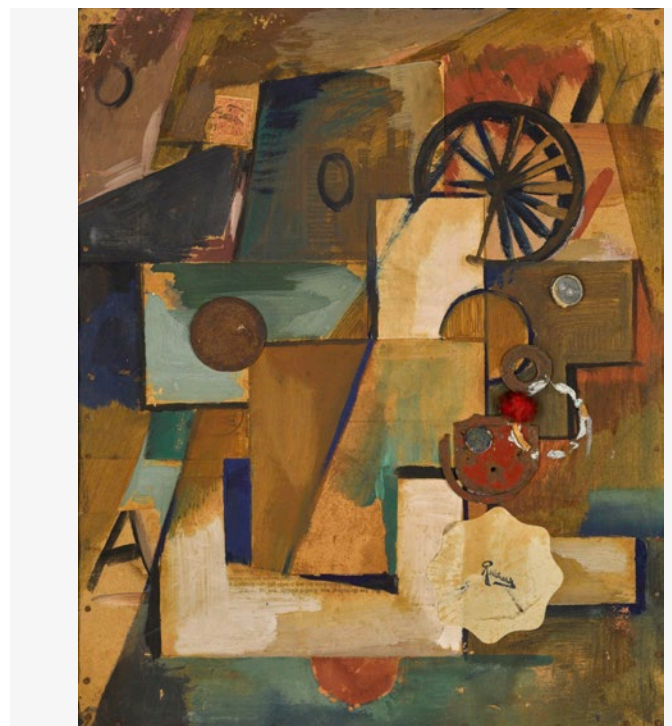
*Ohne Titel (Dein Treufrischer)*

1921

assemblage, oil, paper, metal, cotton wool and button on nailed board, in its artist's original frame

15 x 12 ⅛ in. (38.2 x 30.8 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's Paris:  
October 2021 for \$6,183,219**





# TOP WORKS SOLD AT AUCTION



*Für Tilly*

1924

oil and turning handle on panel

10 x 6 ¼ in. (25.7 x 16 cm)

**Sold at Christie's Paris:**

**June 2022 for \$2,044,815**

*Merzbild 9A Bild mit Damestein*

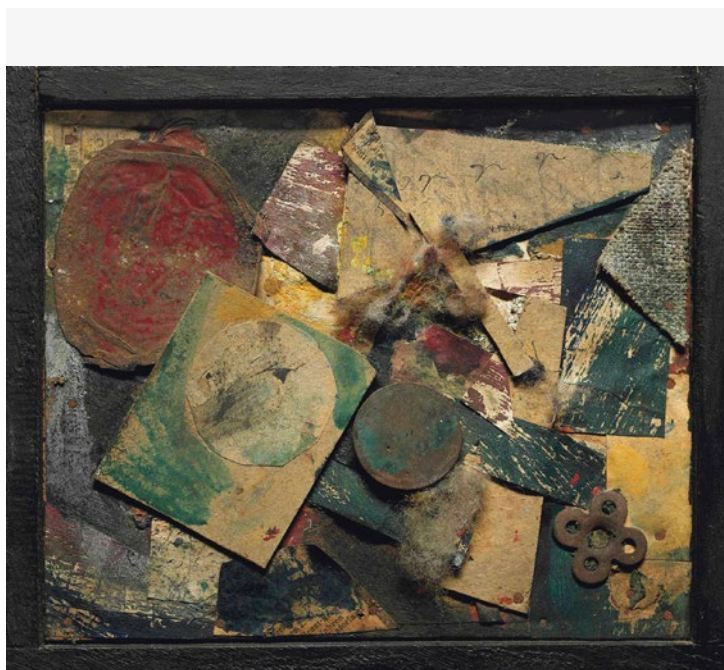
1919

oil, paper, card, canvas, metal and  
wool assemblage on cardboard in  
the artist's frame

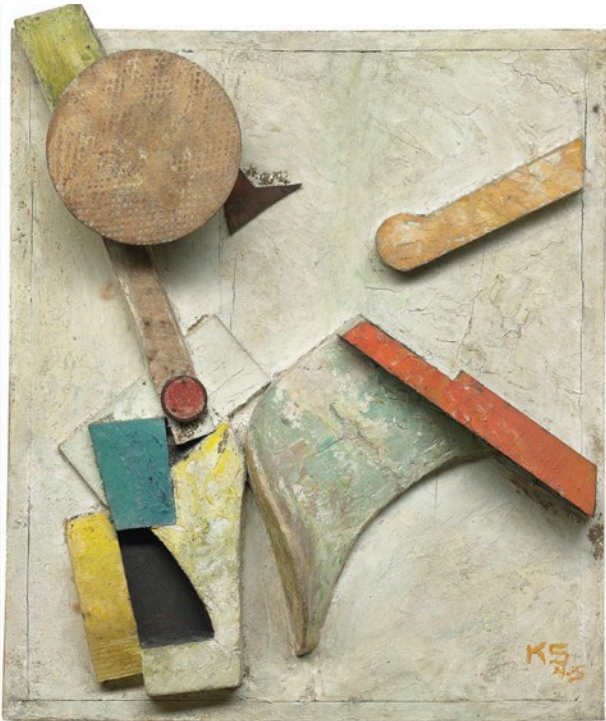
7 ¼ x 8 ½ in. (18.4 x 21.5 cm)

**Sold at Christie's London:**

**June 2012 for \$2,006,869**



# COMPARABLE WORKS SOLD AT AUCTION



*Ohne Titel (Schweres Relief)*  
1945

oil, cement, wood, leather, plastic  
and glue on joined panel  
21  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 17  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (54.2 x 45.5 cm)

**Sold at Christie's London:  
June 2012 for \$1,092,771**



# SCHWITTERS WORKS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



**Museum of Modern Art  
New York**

*C 35 paper clouds*  
1946

Cut, torn and pasted paper on corrugated  
cardboard

9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 8  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (24.6 x 21.1 cm)

**Museum of Modern Art  
New York**

*Untitled (OPENED BY)*  
1946-47

Cut-and-pasted paper, printed paper,  
and painted paper, pencil,  
and crayon on board

7  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 6  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (18.7 x 15.6 cm)



# SCHWITTERS WORKS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



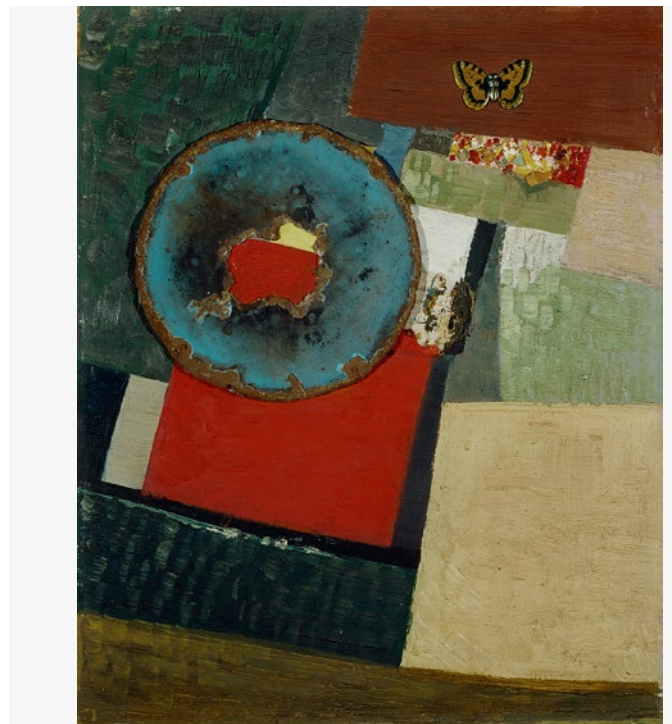
**Tate Modern  
London**

*(Relief in Relief)*  
1942-45  
oil paint on wood and plaster  
19 ½ x 16 ¼ in. (49.5 x 41.3 cm)

**Guggenheim Museum  
New York**

*Maraak, Variation I (Merzbild)*  
1930

Oil, rusted steel, laminate, enameled tin  
butterfly, paper, cork, and china,  
mounted on board  
18 ⅛ x 14 ⅞ in. (46 x 37 cm)





“Art is a spiritual function of man,  
which aims at freeing him from life's  
chaos.”

**Kurt Schwitters**

# HISTORY



Kurt Schwitters

Kurt Schwitters invented *Merz* in 1919, a term born from the fragmentation of the word "Kommerz" in one of his early collages. At a time of significant social, political, and artistic upheaval, Schwitters embraced modernist movements such as Dada, Expressionism, and Constructivism yet forged his path, developing *Merz* as his personal artistic approach. This idea of transformation, of elevating refuse into something meaningful, dominated his career and remained central to his creative practice until he died in 1948. *Merz* was not just a technique; it was a philosophy of creating art from the detritus of the everyday world, giving new meaning to objects independent of their original function.

Created in 1945 during his exile in England after fleeing Nazi persecution, *Untitled, (Merz Picture with Shoe Sole)* presents as an evocative example of his later *Merz* compositions. The work features a shoe sole as part of an assemblage whose topography includes two other raised elements: a textured scrap and a round white orb, creating an elevated terrain that brings physical depth to the



piece. These elevated elements give the work a sculptural quality, blurring the line between painting and relief. At the same time, the layered textures and muted palette of slate and blue-gray, browns, and ochre underscore Schwitters' ability to draw beauty from what might otherwise be overlooked or discarded.

The everyday experience, represented by the shoe sole, finds its place in an abstract landscape, much as Schwitters sought to create a sense of order from the disordered fragments of the world around him. The muted colors and rough textures of the assemblage suggest both scarcity—reflecting the limited materials available during wartime—and resilience, as Schwitters continued his artistic practice in the face of adversity.

Through this assemblage, Schwitters reaffirms his belief in the transformative power of *Merz*: the ability to turn the discarded into something new, meaningful, and enduring. *Untitled, (Merz Picture with Shoe Sole)* is a testament to Schwitters' unyielding vision, where even the most ordinary objects can become art, elevated literally and conceptually.

Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, 1933

