

“Fair and Just Solution“ for an Artwork from a Private Collection

KETTERER KUNST SELLS NOLDE WITH REMARKABLE PROVENANCE

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- Rare Picture from the South Seas - privately owned for more than 60 years, now subject to a “fair and just solution“ between the owners and the heirs of the renowned art collector Dr. Ismar Littmann
- Inimitable masterwork: Palm trees in a blaze of tropical colors - the basis for his later watercolors
- After 1935 part of the important collection of Ida Bienert, Dresden
- This is the ninth time in 2023 alone that Ketterer Kunst realizes a solution for Nazi plunder in private hands



Emil Nolde
Palmen. Oil on canvas. 1915. 74 x 88 cm
Estimate price: € 600,000-800,000

Emil Nolde's “Palms” was privately owned for over 60 years - however, the heirs of the Jewish collector Dr. Ismar Littmann lost it through Nazi persecution in 1935. In 2023, the anniversary year of the “Washington Principles”, an agreement is reached through the mediation of Ketterer Kunst: The work from 1915, which is considered of seminal importance for Nolde's later gaudy watercolors, is offered in an amicable agreement with the heirs of Dr. Ismar Littmann subject to a “just and fair solution”.

Germany's leading auction house for art from 1900 to today is going to call it up with an estimate price of € 600,000 – 800,000 in its Evening Sale on December 8, 2023.

*“Works of this quality and with such an outstanding provenance are absolute highlights on the auction market”, says **Robert Ketterer, auctioneer and owner of Ketterer Kunst.** “The fact that this meaningful restitution case finds an end in an amicable agreement is very fortunate for the art trade. We are happy about the successful mediation and feel highly motivated to offer the work the international stage it deserves.”*

“Palmen“ used to be part of the progressive collection of the Wroclaw lawyer and patron **Dr. Ismar Littmann**, who was driven into suicide by the Nazis in 1934. After they had seized power in 1933, the wealthy jurist and generous supporter of modern avant-garde art faced an occupational ban that drove him into suicide in 1934. His widow and their four children also suffered repressions from the Nazi regime and had to sell the art collection to raise funds for their flight.

The auction of the Littmann Collection at the Berlin **auction house Max Perl** in February 1935 comprised two Nolde paintings: The work “Buchsbaumgarten“, in 2021 returned by the Lehmbrock-Museum in Duisburg to the heirs after Ismar Littmann accompanied by international press coverage ([Ketterer Kunst, Evening Sale on December 10, 2021, lot 213](#)), and Nolde's “Palmen“. Initially, both works became part of acclaimed Dresden collections: “Buchsbaumgarten“ found a new home with Heinrich Arnhold, while the “Palmen“ went into the hands of the renowned Dresden art patron and collector **Ida Bienert**.

She was a courageous woman open for reformatory ideas, a feminist of a new type. With a sure taste, Bienert compiled one of Dresden's most important collections of modern art. In the family villa on Würzburger Straße, where Piet Mondrian had designed the “ladies room“ in 1925, she presented her masterpieces to her avant-garde guests. There was a continual coming and going of artists and intellectuals at the Bienert's house. In addition to French artworks by Cézanne and van Gogh, the walls were adorned by important works from Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, Edvard Munch, Franz Marc, Lyonel Feininger and Emil Nolde. The painting “Palmen“ remained in Bienert's family until 1962. Nolde's masterpiece came into possession of the family of its current owners through an auction at the Stuttgarter Kunstkabinett the same

year.

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The owners proactively turned to Ketterer Kunst to attain a “fair and just solution” for Nolde’s “Palmen” in accordance with the ‘Washington Principles’. This is the ninth time in 2023 alone that Ketterer Kunst realizes a solution for Nazi plunder in private hands, and the fourth time for a work from the legendary collection of Dr. Ismar Littmann.

“As an auction house, we are an important point agent for the clarification of works with a problematic origin in the private ownership,” says Robert Ketterer. “We highly value the trust private collectors put in us, and we generally negotiate an amicable settlement free of charge. The sensitive and solution-oriented handling of Nazi plunder is of enormous importance to us.”

“Palmen” is a contemporary document from the eventful German history:

Made by an artist sympathizing with the ideology of his time and acquired by a Jewish collector, the dramatic story finds a good ending in a “fair and just solution”.

ON THE WORK’S ORIGIN

Back from the trip to the South Seas (1913/14), the artist made this landscape with palm trees grown crooked by the wind, which Nolde lets appear like a silhouette in backlight in front of the dramatically staged natural spectacle of a sunset that bathes the entire sky red and yellow. A strong blue mixes with the green of the palm leaves, held by twisted trunks that head in the same direction like a choreographed ballet.

This work undoubtedly marks a turning point in Nolde's work at the beginning of the First World War: the pictures from the South Seas confirmed Nolde on the artistic path

he had chosen and increased his self-confidence as a free, innovative representative of modern, pure painting. This landscape shows Nolde's effort, indeed ability, to painterly reinvent the quality of the South Seas with the help of a tiny color sketch, as if he were still there, a magnificent encounter in the form of the elements of wind and earth.

*The unique exotic motif
already impressed the legendary art collector Ida Bienert.*

With the auction at Ketterer Kunst in December, a whole new chapter will be opened for Emil Nolde's masterpiece with best provenance.

"Works by Emil Nolde from this creative period are very rare on the auction market," says *Countess Nicola Keglevich, Senior Director at Ketterer Kunst*. "The fact that the important collector and patron Dr. Ismar Littmann, who was acquainted with Emil Nolde, acquired "Palmen" in the 1920s, testifies to the importance these pictures from the South Seas had even back then. Ismar Littmann also had oil paintings like "Buchsbaumgarten" and many watercolors by Nolde in his collection. I am convinced that this great painting with its eventful history and provenance will be met with international interest and continue on a fascinating path."

"Palmen" will be on public display in Frankfurt, Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin and Munich in November / December 2023, before they will be called up at Ketterer Kunst in Munich on Friday, December 8th.

DATES

AUCTIONS IN MUNICH

December 08	Contemporary Art / Evening Sale
December 09	19th Century Art / Bunte Collection / Modern Art

PREVIEW EXHIBITION OF SELECT WORKS

Frankfurt: November 11 - 12, 2023
Cologne: November 17 - 19, 2023
Hamburg: November 22 - 23, 2023

Berlin: November 25 – 30, 2023

Munich: December 02 – 07, 2023 (all works)

[Learn more here](#)

AUCTION IN HAMBURG

November 27, 2023 Rare Books

ONLINE ONLY AUCTIONS

October 15 – November 15, 2023: Young Collectors

November 15 – December 10, 2023: All I want for Christmas is Art

December 10 – December 15, 2023: Masterclass Young Art Award

find the current auction here: onlineonly.kettererkunst.de

KETTERER KUNST

Ketterer Kunst (www.kettererkunst.com and www.ketterer-internet-auctions.com) with headquarters in Munich and branches in Hamburg, Cologne and Berlin, as well as with a global network of experts, was founded in 1954. Robert Ketterer is the second generation to run the family business. The auction house has a focus on Fine Art from the 19th to the 21st Centuries and on Rare Books. In its market segment, Ketterer Kunst is the number 1 in the German language region and in the global top ten of the strongest-selling art auction houses (artprice.com). Ketterer Kunst is the specialist for German art, as well as for many international artists sought-after in Europe, the USA and Asia, where they realize international record prices.

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