

## Press release

January 2024



Fritz Schaefer in the Wacholderweg Studio, Cologne.

## Return of an Expressionist – Fritz Schaefer at Van Ham Art Estate

Van Ham Art Estate is pleased to welcome a new addition to the estates of Modernist artists: **Fritz Schaefer (1888–1954)**. With Fritz Schaefer, Van Ham Art Estate has included an important representative of Expressionism in its portfolio since December 2023, thus at the same time providing yet another basis for research into art in the Rhineland region between the world wars. It is already the 13th artist's estate which is handled by the professional estate management of the Cologne-based auction house Van Ham. Van Ham Art Estate aims to preserve the reputation and value of artists effectively and for the long term.

### Oeuvre

Fritz Schaefer is one of the most significant German painters and graphic artists of the 20th century. He is especially known for his contribution to the Expressionist art movement. In terms of style, his oeuvre is characterized by strong and often dynamic brushstrokes and intensive colours. Schaefer often took a critical look at the social and political developments of his time. His artistic versatility is evidenced by his wide spectrum of subjects, ranging from portraits and landscapes through to sociocritical works.

### Life

Born in December 1888, Fritz Schaefer initially began to study architecture at the Technical University of Munich in 1905. From 1906 he attended the local School of Applied Arts and from 1908 the Academy of Fine Arts. He started out producing numerous paintings in a late Impressionist-Naturalistic style which were

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exhibited at the Secessions in Berlin and Munich. After his military service he again settled in Munich in 1917. His experiences during the Great War triggered a new phase with dramatic Expressionist graphic works. Subsequently Schaefer took part in the Munich Revolution, was a member and secretary of the *Aktionsausschuss Revolutionärer Künstler* (Action Committee of Revolutionary Artists) and produced woodcuts for the revolutionary journals *Der Weg* and *Süddeutsche Freiheit*. This period also saw the beginnings of numerous friendships with artists, such as Georg Schrimpf, Paul Klee, Erich Heckel or Heinrich Maria Davringhausen.

In 1920 Fritz Schaefer moved to Prien am Chiemsee with his family. A new work phase followed with Expressionist landscape and figure paintings in a highly animated and colourful style. His friendship with art historian Kurt Gerstenberg, who travelled to Italy with him in 1923 and was able to broker works of his to collectors, was significant. One of these collectors was textile manufacturer Joseph Heymann in Cologne who gradually became Schaefer's patron and probably was also an influence in the artist's move to Cologne in 1927.

In addition to getting more commissions, Schaefer's work also benefited from Cologne's lively art scene. He made new friends among the *Kölner Progressive* group around Heinrich Hoerle, Franz Wilhelm Seiwert and Anton Räderscheidt as well as the architects Wilhelm Riphahn and Hans Hansen. He took over Davringhausen's apartment and studio in Cologne-Bickendorf, the new housing development by Riphahn for which he now also worked as a colour designer. He subsequently received numerous public commissions – colour concepts for new housing estates, hospitals and the German Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden in 1930. The subjects of his works, which now showed firmer contours, were expanded by cityscapes and pictures of urban life itself.

During National Socialism, Schaefer's career as an artist experienced severe setbacks. The Jewish Heymann family emigrated to England in 1937 – approx. 80 works of Schaefer survived the war and destruction there. In Germany, Schaefer's works were confiscated from museums and shown in the *Degenerate Art* exhibition. After the end of the war he lived as a recluse in Cologne, where he died on 24 April 1954.

### **Successful consolidation**

The acquisition of Fritz Schaefer's artistic estate is a premiere for Van Ham Art Estate: for the first time an artistic estate is joined to a collection, as the works from the artistic estate are complemented by Schaefer's works from the Heymann Collection in London. This conciliatory consolidation of a Jewish collection that was displaced during the war means that a piece of Cologne and Jewish art history is returning to Cologne, where it serves further research of art in the Rhineland between the wars.

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## Further information

Today Fritz Schaeffler's works are shown in eminent international museums and collections, including the LACMA in Los Angeles, the MoMA in New York, the British Museum in London and the Hamburger Kunsthalle. The written material in the artist's estate will be preserved in the Rheinisches Archiv für Künstlernachlässe (RAK) in Bonn. Christoph Schaeffler, a grandson of the artist, has edited the catalogue raisonné of Schaeffler's oeuvre.

With the acquisition of the artist's estate Van Ham Art Estate also created the official homepage on Fritz Schaeffler which provides all important information: [www.fritz-schaeffler.org](http://www.fritz-schaeffler.org)



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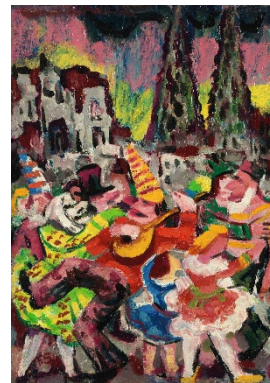
**Fritz Schaefer**  
c. 1927



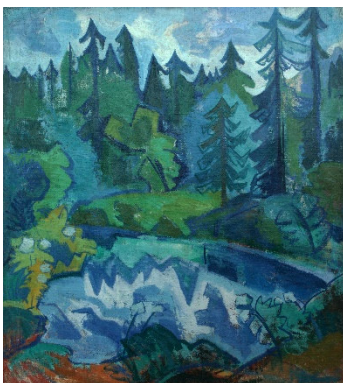
Fritz Schaefer in the Wacholderweg Studio  
with a portrait of Elsbeth on the easel



**Fritz Schaefer**  
*Vera and Mother in the Garden* | 1926  
Watercolour on paper | 58 x 50 cm



**Fritz Schaefer**  
*Rubble Carnival and Cathedral* | 1946  
Oil and egg tempera on cardboard | 35.6 x 25 cm



**Fritz Schaefer**  
*Forest Lake Green-Blue* | Around 1923  
Oil and egg tempera on burlap | 99 x 90 cm



**Fritz Schaefer**  
*Joseph Heymann* | Around 1926  
Egg tempera on canvas | 65 x 55 cm

**Van Ham Art Estate**, the artist's estate management of Van Ham Kunstauktionen in Cologne, handles the pre- and postmortem bequests of the important artists Bernd Berner, Karl Fred Dahmen, Friedrich Gräsel, Alfonso Hüppi, Jean Leppien, Brigitte and Martin Matschinsky-Denninghoff, Johannes Molzahn, Fritz Schaefer, Bernard Schultze, Ursula Schultze-Bluhm and Sarah Schumann, the estate of photo artist Tata Ronkholz and the partial estate as well as the archive concerning Karl Hofer, which are accompanied by scholarly and scientific committees.

**Van Ham Kunstauktionen**, founded in 1959, is a family business run by Markus Eisenbeis in the second generation. Around 20 internationally acclaimed auctions are held every year in the fields of Modern & Contemporary Art, Old Masters & Impressionism, Works of Art & Art Nouveau, Fine Jewels and Watches. With around € 53.8 million, VAN HAM celebrated the most successful auction year in its history in 2023 with an increase of around 40 percent compared to the previous year and is one of the leading auction houses in Germany with numerous auction records.