

Press release **A world sensation at Grisebach:**
Max Beckmann's "Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa" from
1943 is coming up for sale in Berlin on 1st December



„Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa“. 1943. Oil on canvas. 94.5 x 56 cm. Catalogue raisonné 645. Estimate on request

GRISEBACH

grisebach.com

Max Beckmann's "*Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa*", a self-portrait created in 1943, is a masterpiece of international rank – no comparable artwork has been offered on the German auction market since 1945. Created by the artist during his exile in Holland and gifted to his wife Quappi, the painting has been privately owned since the day it was made. As the top lot of the international auction market's Autumn calendar, it will be the absolute highlight of our upcoming Winter Auctions.

"When I first laid eyes on this museum-quality painting – which for me numbers among the most beautiful and striking of Max Beckmann's self-portraits – I, too, was fascinated by its allure. For a work of such importance to come onto the art market is a major event, not to mention a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for collectors and museums all over the world."

(Bernd Schultz, Senior Partner at Grisebach)

"*Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa*" is one of the few self-portraits by Max Beckmann to have remained in private hands until the present day. The ones most recently offered on the international auction market, in each case in New York City, were "*Selbstbildnis mit Trompete*" in 2001 (sold for \$22.5 million) and "*Selbstbildnis mit Glaskugel*" in 2005 (sold for \$16.8 million) in 2005. Beckmann's self-portraits rank among the top draws at some of the world's most prominent collections, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Harvard Art Museum, Vienna's Albertina Museum, the Art Institute in Chicago, Neue Galerie in New York, Detroit's Institute of Arts, the Art Museum in Saint Louis, and Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie.

Max Beckmann (who was born in 1884 in Leipzig and died in 1950 in New York) is recognized as one of the major international artists of the 20th century – a genius whose contribution to the history of modern art was singularly original. First and foremost, the self-portraits he created during his period of exile are emblematic expressions of the spiritual crisis the artist endured in finding himself trapped in circumstances threatening his livelihood. However, "*Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa*" from 1943 is more than a window onto Beckmann's inner state during parlous times; it is also an open avowal of his will to overcome them. Indeed, the work stands markedly apart from the other explorations of the self that came before and after: Defying the spirit of resignation that threatens to engulf him during the darkest days of World War II, Beckmann eschews his usual somber hues and paints himself in surprisingly bright colours. The dominant black is missing, for example, and the yellow fabric and bright fur trim of his attire – possibly a dressing gown – suggest the environment of a home or studio. The truncated red frame of a mirror is the only hint of an interior the artist shows us, who intentionally has positioned himself outside of any social context. Nothing in this image is a reference to the global turmoil of 1943, or to Beckmann's exile in Amsterdam, in a country forcibly occupied by German troops.

The hands resting flat on crossed arms seem to betoken an attitude of prayer. Beckmann's gaze and his knowing, ever so subtle smile are directed at something in the far distance to the left, past the viewer, that seems to be accessible solely to the inner eye, without any symbolic clues giving an indication of what it might be. By his general appearance, garbed in traditional orange-yellow, with his nearly bald head and arms in a position found in meditational practice, Beckmann reminds us of a Buddhist monk. The self-portrait is an expression of monumental calm and longed-for inner peace. And it is also a work of singular pictorial power.

GRISEBACH

Fasanenstraße 25, 10719 Berlin

T +49 30 885915 0, F +49 30 88241 45, auktionen@grisebach.com
grisebach.com

In its past auctions of works by Max Beckmann, Grisebach has achieved top prices, such as EUR 5.5 million for "Ägypterin" in 2018, which to this day remains the highest winning bid ever obtained at auction for a painting in Germany. For a private collection in Switzerland to now entrust us with "Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa" is further confirmation of our outstanding, market-leading expertise in this artist's oeuvre.

Micaela Kapitzky
Berlin, 20 October 2022

Beckmann's "Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa" will be shown in:

New York
5 to 10 November 2022
18 East 64th Street, Suite 3 F, New York

Berlin
23 to 30 November 2022
Grisebach, Fasanenstrasse 25

Auction in Berlin on 1 December 2022, 6pm.



GRISEBACH

Fasanenstraße 25, 10719 Berlin
T +49 30 885915 0, F +49 30 88241 45, auktionen@grisebach.com
grisebach.com