

KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts



ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER

(1880 Aschaffenburg - 1938 Davos)

Dancer, c. 1930

India ink on paper

47.5 : 35.1 cm

Estate stamp with number on verso: "467"

Provenance:

Private collection, Zurich

Private collection, North Rhine-Westphalia

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Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1921

As the *spiritus rector* of the artists' association *Die Brücke*, which existed from 1905 to 1913, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner was one of the key figures of German Expressionism. After fruitful and restless years in Dresden and Berlin, the artist, traumatised by his experiences during the First World War, moved to Davos in Switzerland in 1917 to regain his strength in the seclusion of the Alpine mountains. This was accompanied by the search for a new artistic style. The works created from the 1920s onwards mark a calmer phase of Kirchner's Expressionism with abstracting tendencies.

The drawing *Tänzerin (Dancer)* is a characteristic example of Kirchner's style during his years in Davos. In a tightly framed picture, the artist shows a darkened room leading towards a stage. Three spectators are seated in front of it, facing away from the viewer. They are spellbound by the performance of a young woman raising her arms, balancing on the tips of her left foot while waving her right leg in the air. This is the

expressive dancer Gret Palucca, recognisable by her bobbed head, a student of Mary Wigman, whom Kirchner had already met in 1925 during a stay in Dresden and who performed at the Kurhaus in Davos in January 1930. Her physical presence is emphasised not only by her central position within the composition, but also by the artist's sweeping lines, which focus on capturing the contours of her body. One almost feels as if one is witnessing the performance itself.

Typical for Kirchner is the limitation to the essential elements of the depicted moment. Without losing himself in details, the artist outlines the figures in a few swift strokes of the pen. He does not strive for depth and plasticity. Instead, washes applied with a brush create the impression of flatness. Through the interplay of these elements, Kirchner developed a style between figuration and abstraction that was unique in the German art of those years. He was inspired by international art movements, such as the synthetic cubism developed in France by Pablo Picasso and George Braque. The expressive dance, which had fascinated many artists since its emergence at the beginning of the 20th century, became one of Kirchner's favourite motifs in the Davos years. He was to capture the equally attractive and graceful Gret Palucca in further drawings, watercolours and paintings.



Kurhaus Davos, postcard c. 1900

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A young Gret Palucca while solo dancing,
c. 1920