

Wassily Kandinsky, **Small Worlds III**, lithograph.

Despite only beginning his artistic career at the age of thirty, Wassily Kandinsky was the first European painter to employ total abstraction to widespread acclaim, which he had accomplished no later than 1913. A prominent art theorist, artist, and deeply spiritual man, Kandinsky is a preeminent modernist and one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer **Wassily Kandinsky, Small Worlds III, lithograph** (\$10/12,000) for sale in our Summer Fine Sale, held on Monday, June 17th.

The print consists of an irregular white oval filled with marks in various colors set against a black

field. The most noticeable of these marks are the strong black lines that meander from the top to the middle of the canvas and from the center-left to the bottom right, each culminating in a sharp point. There are also two more geometric forms, a rectangle at the



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bottom facing towards the upper right, and a rhombus at the bottom left with its sharpest angle facing the center. There are two larger forms filled with additional markings and color at the left of the frame, extending from top to bottom, and several shaded areas throughout. Additionally, the work features groups of scratched lines that cross each other on the perpendicular in several areas, as well as a small eye within a triangle motif at the left. Finally, there is red, yellow, and green coloring placed behind the black marks in abstract or geometric shapes of varying sizes.

A highly spiritual man, Kandinsky aspired to reach a transcendental means of expression with his works, which he believed were hindered by overt references to nature. As such, he aimed to create a universal visual language that would overcome

cultural and language barriers, allowing the artist to express their inner world in a direct sense. We can see evidence of this effort in this work, where Kandinsky uses a simple palette of colors, originating in Slavic folk art, and a collection of marks, each reminiscent of traditional human symbols and mark making, to create a composition that reaches towards a universally understandable expression of the artist's conception of the world.

This work, created in 1922, was created during the first year of Kandinsky's residency at the famed Bauhaus modernist design school, located first in the central town of Weimer, before its move to Dessau in 1925. One of his most productive periods, Kandinsky was especially interested in the geometric shapes and the effects of forces on straight lines during this time. The emphasis on non-

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organic forms distinguishes this work from his earlier and later periods, in which the artist often utilizes busy compositions and biomorphic forms. The work on offer at Michaan's Auctions shows evidence of these newly burgeoning interests while retaining features of his older works, including the organic elements and unstructured, chaotic compositions.

Wassily Kandinsky was born in December of 1866 in Moscow, the son of tea merchants and distant relative to Sino-Siberian royalty. He was raised in Odesa, modern-day Ukraine, before returning to study at the University of Moscow, eventually earning a professorship in law and economics at an Estonian university. He only began painting at thirty, enrolling in the Munich Academy, before returning to Moscow with the outbreak of World War I. He helped establish the Museum of

the Culture of Painting, working with the early Soviet Union but ultimately chose to leave the country for good due to his spiritual beliefs, which conflicted with the disposition of the state. He taught at the Bauhaus School of Art and Architecture from 1922 until 1933, when it was closed by the Nazis. Following this closure, he moved to the suburbs of Paris, becoming a French citizen in 1939 and painting prolifically until his death in 1944 at seventy-seven.

Wassily Kandinsky, Small Worlds III, lithograph (\$10/12,000) will be offered in Michaan's Auctions Summer Fine Sale on Monday, June 17th. This sale features an incredible selection, full of the season's most esteemed items. The sale is headlined by historically important works in the Asian Art Department, exquisite jewelry in the desirable Art-Deco style, and important works from notable American

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and European modernist artists. Also featured are fine examples of Persian carpets, sterling silver dishware, and an extremely rare book by an icon of American poetry.

Also on June 17th, (Michaan's Auctions will be presenting an initial selection from the vast estate of the notable New York artist and antiques dealer, Vito Giallo, who is finally offering the most treasured items from his Madison Avenue store, in a special auction preceding our Summer Fine Sale. This collection, titled "Chapter I" to commemorate the recent publishing of

Vito Giallo's memoir, features exceptional pieces across every department, headlined by bronzes and painted works in the Fine Art Department, as well as impressive collections of Silver & Objects de Vertu. Also included are important collectibles, quality decorations, and admirable pieces in glass.

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