

# bernard jacobson gallery

Kurt Schwitters

Collages and Assemblages, 1920 - 1947

28<sup>th</sup> January – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013

"I could see no reason why used tram tickets, bits of driftwood, buttons and old junk from attics and rubbish heaps should not serve well as materials for paintings; they suited the purpose just as well as factory-made paints... It is possible to cry out using bits of old rubbish, and that's what I did, gluing and nailing them together." - Kurt Schwitters

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is proud to announce its forthcoming exhibition of collages and assemblages by the German painter, sculptor, typographer and writer Kurt Schwitters (1887 Hanover - 1948 Kendal), one of the pioneers of European Modernism. The exhibition will run from 28th January to 3 April 2013 and coincide with the Tate's *Schwitters in Britain* exhibition opening to the public on 30th January.

Schwitters was a significant figure in European Dadaism. Influenced by Expressionism and Cubism, he created his own form of Dada in Hanover called *Merz*, after the syllable 'merz' taken from an ad for the *Kommerz- und Privatbank*. *Merz* soon became a catch-all phrase to describe all of his creative activities covering not only art, but also abstract drama and poetry, cabaret, music, photography and architecture. He was a noted performer and a prolific writer, also publishing the innovative *Merz* journal that appeared intermittently from 1923-32.

Schwitters is most famous for his abstract collages which he began to make in the winter of 1918/19 using found and everyday objects such as labels, bus tickets, fabric and bits of broken wood. They were born out of his post-war feeling: 'Everything had broken down and new things had to be made out of the fragments; and this is *Merz*.'

The exhibition will comprise around twenty works dating from 1920 to 1947. Highlights include his collages from the 1920s such as *Untitled (Katan or 703)*, c.1921; *Mz 26, 45 Sch.*, 1925-26 and *JOS.MA*, 1927. Works from this period are characterized by a gradual move to more rectilinear, simpler compositions with cleaner, sharper lines and the use of large blocks of single colours, taking inspiration from the new generation of Constructivists from Eastern Europe and the Netherlands, especially his friends El Lissitzky and Theo van Doesburg.

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Other highlights include later works such as *Collage with playing card*, 1940 and *C50 Last Birds and Flowers*, 1946, incorporating fragments from packaging and newspapers reflecting British life as well as assemblages such as *Eye on Cheese*, 1944-47 and *Golf Tee*, 1947 incorporating organic material and objects found on a beach, such as wax, drift wood and pebbles, replacing the mass produced ephemera of previous years reflecting his move away from London to rural Cumbria in 1945.

Schwitters' undogmatic and non-elitist art, by elevating the rejected, the discarded and the useless to fine art, inspired such post-war pioneers as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Eduardo Paolozzi, Richard Hamilton and Joseph Beuys; and he is now seen as the grandfather of many post-1945 art movements, from Pop Art to Conceptual, Installation and Performance Art.

Work by Kurt Schwitters can be seen in many art museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York; the Centre Pompidou in Paris; Museum Ludwig in Cologne; the Tate in London and the Armit Museum in Ambleside. The largest and most important collection of his work, along with a reconstruction of the first Merzbau room, can be found in the Sprengel Museum in Hanover, Germany, which also has an extensive Kurt Schwitters archive.

*Schwitters in Britain* can be seen at Tate Britain, London, from 30th January to 12th May 2013. The exhibition focuses on the artist's British period, from his arrival in Britain as a refugee in 1940 until his death in Cumbria in 1948 and includes over 150 collages, assemblages and sculptures.