

**KURT SCHWITTERS (1887-1948)**

**Ohne Titel (Merzbild Mit Schuhsohle)**

**Untitled (Merz Picture with Shoe Sole)**

Signed in paint, lower right, "KS 45"

oil and relief assemblage on plywood

21 1/4 x 17 3/4 in. (39 1/2 x 34 1/2 x 4 1/2 in.)

53.98 x 45.09 cm (100.33 x 87.63 x 11.43 cm)

1945

31465.b

**PROVENANCE:**

Ernst Schwitters, Lysaker, by descent from the artist in 1948

Private Collection, acquired through Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne in 1981

Sotheby's New York, May 11, 1994, lot 40

Private Collection, Washington

Private Collection

**EXHIBITION:**

Stockholm, Konstsalongen Samlaren im Konsträrshuset; Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst und Kunstforeningen; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum und Kölnischer Kunstverein & Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Kurt MERZ Schwitters. Retrospektivt, 1962-64, no. 182 (in Stockholm); no. 255 (in Cologne and Rotterdam)

Cologne, Galerie Gmurzynska, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1978, no. 97

Paris, Grand Palais, FIAC, Galerie Gmurzynska, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1980, no. 54

(possibly) Cologne, Germany, Museen der Stadt Köln, *Westkunst. Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939*, 1981, no. 113

Cologne, Germany, Galerie Gmurzynska, *Klassische Moderne*, 1981, no. 181

Madrid, Spain, Fundación Juan March & Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1982-83, no. 175

Vancouver, British Columbia, Vancouver Art Gallery, *European Vision*, 1987

**LITERATURE:**

Marlis Grüterich, 'Kurt Schwitters. Galerie Gmurzynska, Köln', in *Kunstforum International*, vol. 30, 1978 (illustrated p. 220)

Renato Maestri, 'ComMerzBankKurt-Schwitters. Una lezione rapsodica', in *Domus*, vol. 590, Milan, 1979 (illustrated in color p. 47)

Yusuke Nakahara, 'From the Lifeless View of Scrapping', in *Bijutsu Techo*, vol. 31, Tokyo, August 1979 (illustrated in color)

Galerie Gmurzynska, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1980, no. 54 (illustrated in color in the catalogue)

Heidi Bürklin, 'Kurt Schwitters: Vom Bürger zum Bürgerschreck', in *Art. Das Kunstmagazin*, vol. 10, Hamburg, 1981 (illustrated in color p. 91)

Galerie Gmurzynska, *Klassische Moderne*, 1981, no. 181

Ernst Nündel, *Kurt Schwitters in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Hamburg, 1981 (illustrated p. 120)

Karin Orchard and Isabel Schulz, *Kurt Schwitters, Catalogue raisonné, 1937-1948*, vol. 3,

Hanover, 2006, no. 3136 (illustrated p. 455)

word "Kommerz" in one of his early collages. At a time of significant social, political, and artistic upheaval, Schwitters embraced modernist movements such as Dada, Expressionism, and Constructivism yet forged his path, developing *Merz* as his personal artistic approach. This idea of transformation, of elevating refuse into something meaningful, dominated his career and remained central to his creative practice until he died in 1948. *Merz* was not just a technique; it was a philosophy of creating art from the detritus of the everyday world, giving new meaning to objects independent of their original function.

Created in 1945 during his exile in England after fleeing Nazi persecution, "*Untitled, Merz Picture with Shoe Sole*" presents as an evocative example of his later *Merz* compositions. The work features a shoe sole as part of an assemblage whose topography includes two other raised elements: a textured scrap and a round white orb, creating an elevated terrain that brings physical depth to the piece. These elevated elements give the work a sculptural quality, blurring the line between painting and relief. At the same time, the layered textures and muted palette of slate and blue-gray, browns, and ochre underscore Schwitters' ability to draw beauty from what might otherwise be overlooked or discarded.

The everyday experience, represented by the shoe sole, finds its place in an abstract landscape, much as Schwitters sought to create a sense of order from the disordered fragments of the world around him. The muted colors and rough textures of the assemblage suggest both scarcity—reflecting the limited materials available during wartime—and resilience, as Schwitters continued his artistic practice in the face of adversity.

Through this assemblage, Schwitters reaffirms his belief in the transformative power of "*Merz*": the ability to turn the discarded into something new, meaningful, and enduring. "*Untitled, Merz Picture with Shoe Sole*" is a testament to Schwitters' unyielding vision, where even the most ordinary objects can become art, elevated literally and conceptually.

Kurt Schwitters (1887 – 1948) was born in Hanover, Germany and studied art at the Dresden Academy from 1909 to 1914. As a young artist, Schwitters experimented with Cubism and Expressionism, avant-garde styles in European art at the time. Schwitters' artistic career was interrupted, however, when he was conscripted into the military and served as a draftsman in World War I. After the war, he was introduced to members of the Berlin Dada art movement, including Jean Arp and Raoul Hausmann, and began making Merzbilder or Merz, a term he invented for collages and assemblages from found objects and scraps. Around 1922, Schwitters joined the Berlin Dada art movement and began to work on a large scale fantastical installations which he called Merzbau that took up much of his studio. In 1932, he joined the Paris-based Abstraction-Création group, a loose association of artists that pushed back against Andre Breton and Surrealist dogma. In 1937, the Nazi party banned Schwitters' work as "degenerate art" and, in the same year, he fled to the Norway. In 1940, after the Nazi invasion of Norway, he fled again to Britain. In London, Schwitters began work on another Merzbau, but the project was left unfinished upon his death in 1948.

Schwitters' work was featured in the seminal shows Cubism and Abstract Art and Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism exhibitions of 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Today, Schwitters' works are represented in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Tate Gallery, London; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., among many others. Additionally, many iconic artists including Robert Rauschenberg, Ed Ruscha, and Damien Hirst have listed Schwitters

as a major influence on their work. Art historians have noted that his work prefigures many of the most important 20th century art movements, including Pop Art, Happenings, and Postmodernism.

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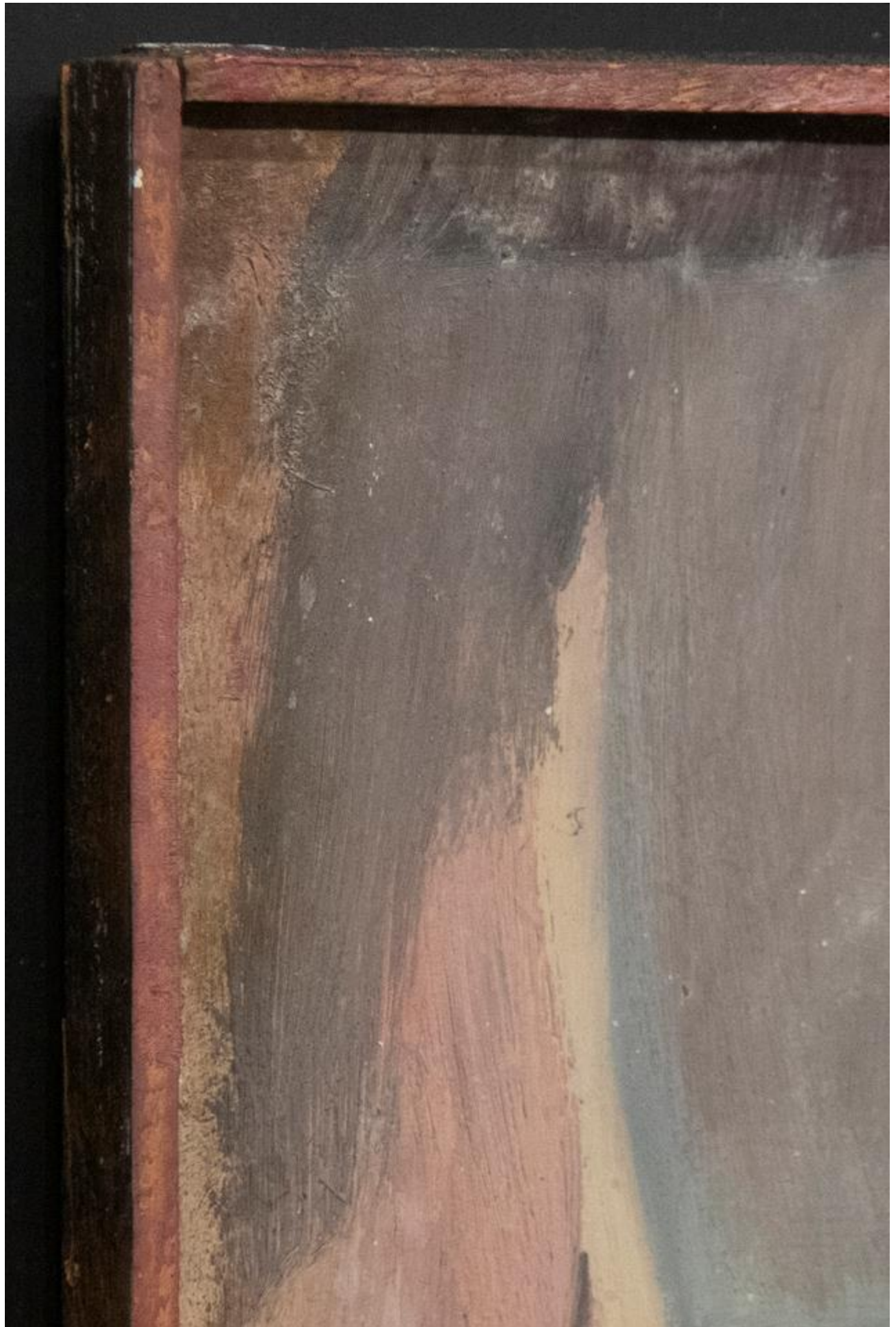


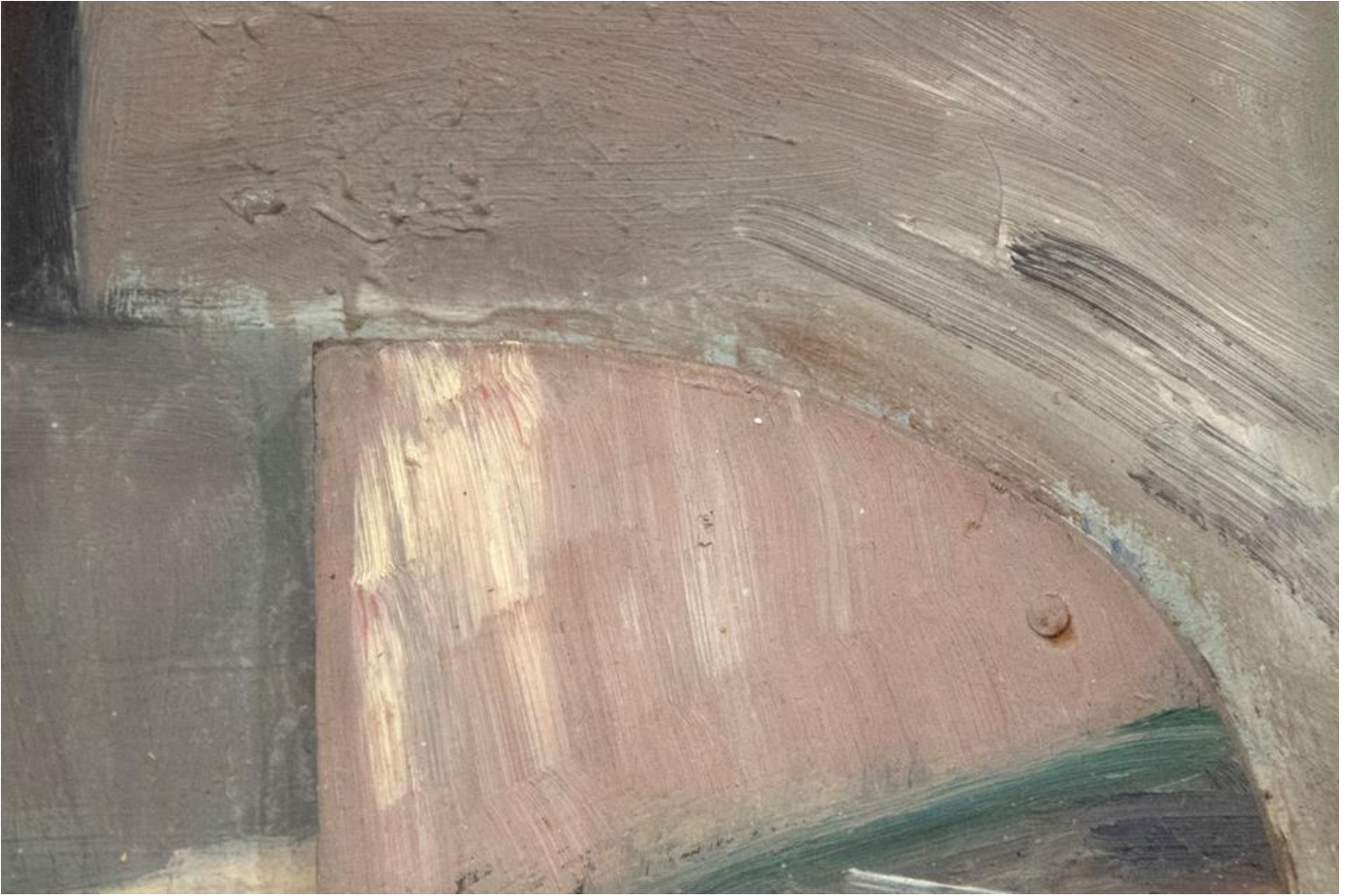


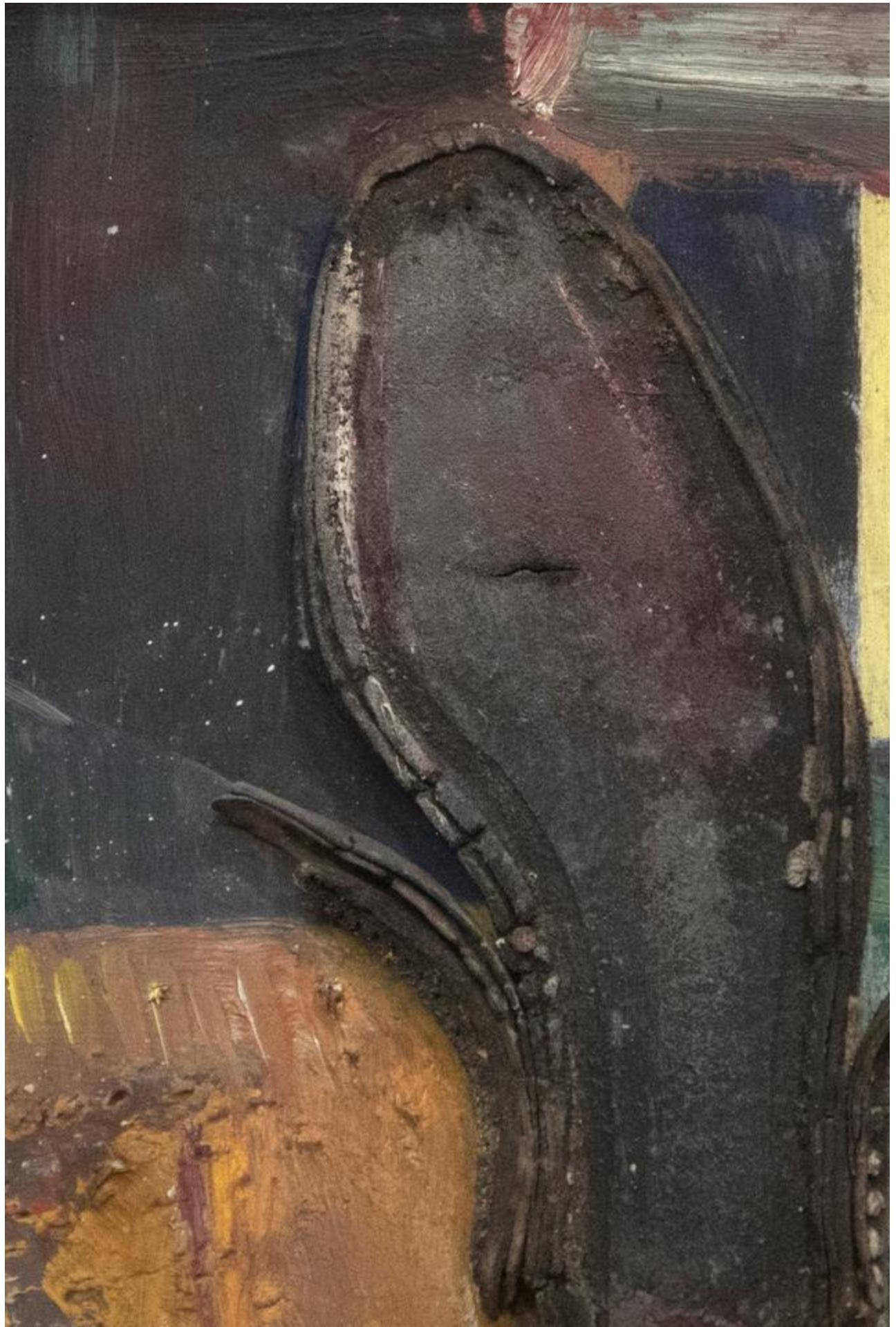


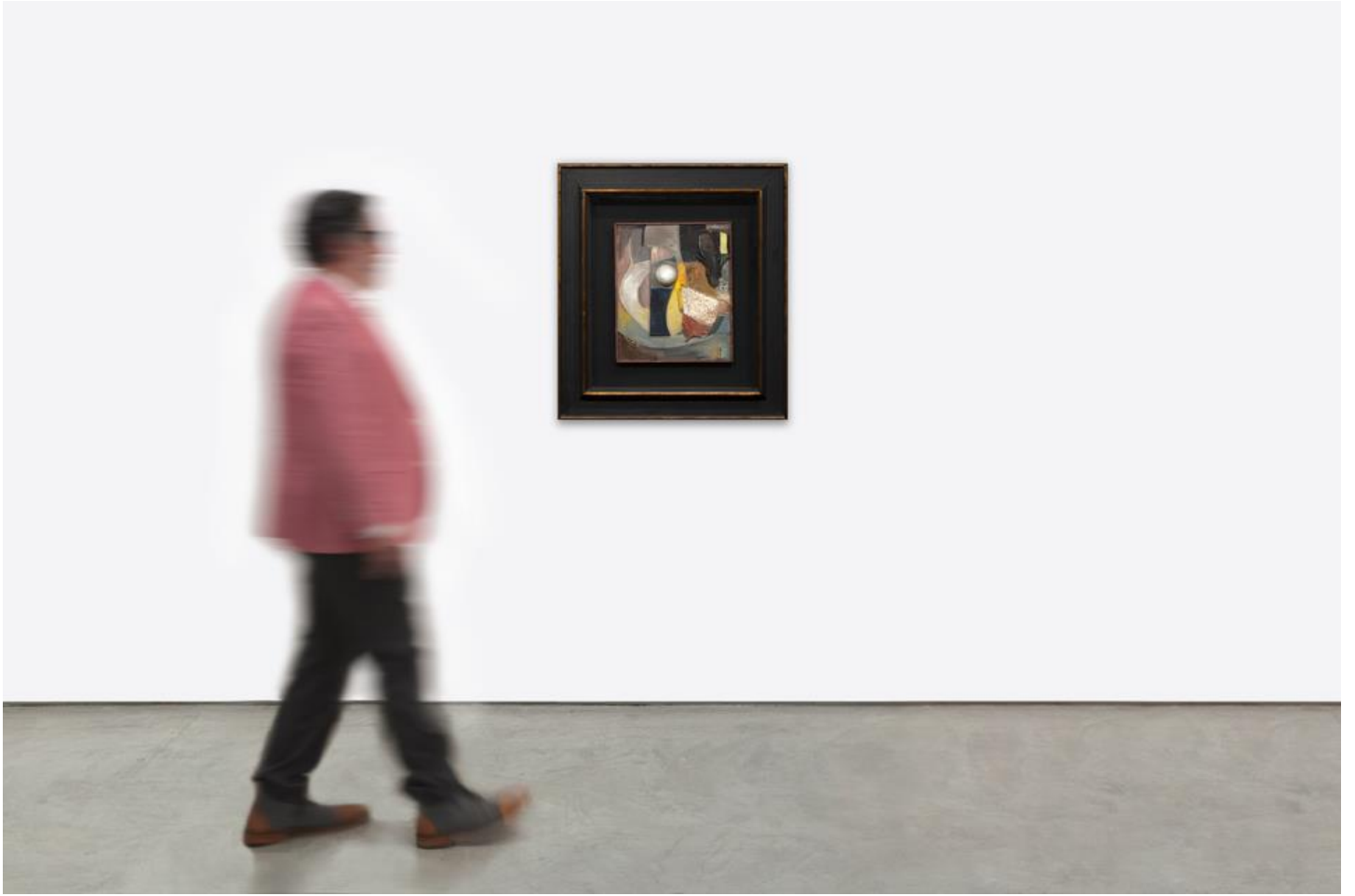












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