

Picks

What's That Provenance? Looking at 8 Historic Artworks at Frieze Masters 2014

By Andrew M. Goldstein

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ARTIST: Hans Bellmer

TITLE & DATE: *Untitled* (1940)

PRICE: \$210,000

GALLERY: Galerie Berinson (Berlin) and ubu Gallery (New York)

PROVENANCE: During World War II, Hans Bellmer was interned in the Camp des Milles in Aix-en-Provence, a brick and tile factory that was converted into a concentration camp, along other German artists and intellectuals including Max Ernst and Ferdinand Springer, and some years after his release he gave this drawing—with its prominent use of bricks, which became a recurrent motif in Bellmer's work—to Springer as a gift. It then transitioned into a private collection in Hamburg, from which the gallery obtained it.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: The drawing is part of a series of compositions on bright pink paper—long since faded—with highlights of white wash that today are rare and highly coveted by collectors. Also, the inscription to Springer is notable for more than just its wartime associations: Springer was the nephew of Rudolf Springer, who in 1953 gave Bellmer his first show at Berlin's Maison de France, at the opening of which the artist met Unika Zürn, who became his lover and muse and whom he encouraged to become an artist.

WHY SELL IT NOW: The gallery opted to bring a survey of works by Bellmer and Zürn to the fair, and the drawing's relevance to both his biography and their relationship led them to include it in the display.