

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



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JOHANN GEORG VON DILLIS  
1759 Grüngiebing - Munich 1841

*A Mountain Stream near Ohlstadt*

Oil on paper on card, c.1820  
31.5 x 25.0 cm

PROVENANCE: Georg Schäfer, Schweinfurt

Dillis's extraordinary abilities set him well apart from painters working in the academic tradition. His gifts are particularly apparent in his *plein-air* sketches and watercolours.

The mountain streams, waterfalls and picturesque landscapes near Ohlstadt in southern Bavaria attracted large numbers of Munich artists in the years around 1800. They recorded their impressions in very numerous watercolours and drawings.<sup>1</sup> The present oil sketch is thought to have been executed at a somewhat later date. It appears to be closely related to a painting of 1821<sup>2</sup> given by Dillis to the Hanau Zeichenakademie to mark his nomination as a full member of the Academy. In this painting, a mill is depicted between trees at the left. Stylistically, the present sketch is remarkably reminiscent of another oil sketch executed by Dillis around 1820. This is now in a private collection.<sup>3</sup> A typical stylistic feature is the emphatic application of colour in short parallel strokes – to some extent prefiguring the techniques of late nineteenth-century divisionism.

Dillis derived his interest in *plein-air* painting from impressions gathered on his first journey to Italy in the years 1794-5. He visited Italy in the company of English landscape painters at the invitation of Sir Gilbert Elliot, Viceroy of Corsica, and bearing a letter of introduction from Lord Palmerston. Dillis's pioneering role in the development of *plein-air* painting in Germany is clear when his work is compared with that of his colleagues in Dresden, Hamburg and Copenhagen. Many of them were members of a younger generation of painters who turned to *plein-air* painting far later in their careers.

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<sup>1</sup> A sketch by Simon Warnberger, *Waterfall near Ohlstadt* (viewed from a point further downstream than in the present work), in the collection of the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung [SGS] in Munich is dated 1800 (inv. no. 593). A sketch by Dillis of the same subject also dates from this period (SGS, inv. no. 31254). Two further works by Dillis – a watercolour in the Ratjen Collection (see Rogner & Bernhard, vol. I, 1974, p.186) and an etching (Andresen 32) – are dateable to 1801.

<sup>2</sup> Hanau, Historisches Museum, inv. no. B 2131.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Hardtwig in *Johann Georg von Dillis – Landschaft und Menschenbild*, exhib. cat., Munich/Dresden, 1991-2, pp. 160-1, no. 60.