

CARL BLECHEN

1798 Cottbus - Berlin 1840

*Fisherman's Cottage by a Lake*

Pencil on paper with watermark: *J. Whatman 1830*.

Stamped on the verso with the artist's name (Lugt 263 b) and bearing the mark of the collector H. F. W. Brose (Lugt 307 c).

260 x 408 mm

PROVENANCE: Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Brose (1807-69), Berlin – By descent to his son, Carl Brose, Berlin – Walther Heinrich [pseudonyms: Walther Unus; Walther Heinrich-Unus; Walther Ehrenfried] (1872-1939), Berlin – Gertrud Heinrich (1940), Berlin – Private collection, Germany

LITERATURE: Paul Ortwin Rave, *Karl Blechen. Leben, Würdigung, Werk*, Berlin 1940, p. 501, no. 2002

This remarkably large drawing by Carl Blechen – once described by Johann Gottfried Schadow as a *draughtsman of unparalleled skill* – depicts a landscape with a small lake and includes a number of staffage elements. The boat, the lake edge, the willows, pines and the cottage all display distinctive features of Blechen's idiosyncratic draughtsmanship – where forms and objects appear to meld and merge but still retain their individual integrity. Two figures, one of them seated, are depicted on a hillock at the right of the image. The seated figure has an air of deep contemplation – perhaps even a reference to Blechen himself [sein 'Künstler-Ich']. Many comparable examples are to be found in his *oeuvre*. The lake depicted cannot be identified with topographical accuracy but it is almost certainly one of the many lakes in the Märkische region of Brandenburg to the east of Berlin. Blechen made regular excursions from the city into the surrounding countryside. He had been appointed professor of landscape painting at the Berlin Academy in 1831 and often invited pupils to accompany him on sketching trips outside the city. The present sheet cannot be precisely dated but it is likely to have been executed in the early 1830s.

This drawing displays a number of parallels with other drawings by Blechen. The delineation of the willows – their bare, spiky branches emerging like fingers from their trunks – recalls two drawings titled *An Ancient Willow* and *Willows beside a Cart Track* [fig. 1]. Both were at one time owned by Walther Heinrich.<sup>1</sup> The motif of a boat recurs frequently in Blechen's *oeuvre*, particularly in the important body of drawings he produced on his visit to Rügen. Helmut Börsch-Supan convincingly posits a revised dating of this body of drawings to the period after Blechen's journey to Italy in 1828-9. A pencil drawing now held at the Kurpfälzisches Museum in Heidelberg titled *Bay with a Wooded Coastline, Baltic Sea*<sup>2</sup> [fig. 2] displays the same Blechenesque inward sweep of the waterline so characteristic of his drawings – although in the Heidelberg sheet the sweep is to the left and the shoreline densely wooded. Both the present drawing and the Heidelberg sheet feature a boat with

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<sup>1</sup> Rave, op. cit., p. 168, no. 234 and p. 500, no. 1984. Both drawings are today in the collection of the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum in Braunschweig. See Peter Klaus Schuster (ed.), *Carl Blechen. Zwischen Romantik und Realismus*, exhib. cat., Berlin 1990, p. 167, nos. 205 and 206.

<sup>2</sup> Rave, op. cit., p. 246, no. 681; Schuster, op. cit., p. 145, no. 125.

fishermen. Jens Christian Jensen described the Heidelberg drawing very succinctly in 1978. Despite the slight differences in detail, his interpretation of the compositional handling is entirely applicable to the present sheet: *The fluid delineation follows nature but in the process of execution [Blechen] invests it with his own clearly identifiable style – with a striking, almost abstract linearity in his depiction of the sea, the wooded coast, the Romantic motif of a shipwreck, and the figures as they launch the boat into the waves.*<sup>3</sup>

The nineteenth-century collector Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Brose, a Berlin banker, was renowned for his collection of work by Carl Blechen. The present drawing was once part of this collection. Other leading nineteenth-century collectors of Blechen's work were Rudolf Ludwig von Decker of Schloss Dittersbach in Silesia and Karl Ludwig Kuhtz. Two prominent twentieth-century collectors, also Berlin-based, were Julius Freund and Walter Heinrich. It is probable that the present sheet was acquired by Walther Heinrich from Carl Brose, before the Brose Collection was dispersed at auction by Hollstein & Puppel in Berlin on 10 November 1928.

Kilian Heck



Fig. 1: *Willows beside a Cart Track*, pencil, c.1829-30, 193 x 245 mm.  
Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Brunswick [inv. ZL 81/5848]



Fig. 2: *Bay with a Wooded Coastline, Baltic Sea*, pencil, c.1828, 174 x 291 mm.  
Kurfürstliches Museum der Stadt Heidelberg [inv. Z 4525]

<sup>3</sup> Cited after Schuster, op. cit., p. 145.