

LE CLAIRE  
SEIT 1982  
KUNST

PAUL BAUM

1859 Meißen - San Gimignano 1932

*Weg zwischen Weinbergen durch eine Gruppe von Zypressen in der Toskana*

Oil on canvas; executed c.1912-4.

Signed lower right: *P. Baum.*

66 x 79 cm

PROVENANCE: Adalbert Colsman, Langenberg, acquired directly from the artist – Thence by descent

LITERATURE: Wolfram Hitzeroth, *Paul Baum (1859-1932). Ein Leben als Landschaftsmaler*, Marburg, 1988, cat. no. F.228, pp. 286 (repr.) and 545.

Paul Baum was born in Meißen. After two years as flower painter at the porcelain manufactory he enrolled in the Weimarer Kunstscole and studied under Theodor Hagen. Till the end of his studies in 1887 he regularly used the summer months for travelling to Northern Germany, the Netherlands and Flanders. After his return to Dresden and a short study with Friedrich Preller the younger he became part of the Dachau painter's colony around Fritz von Uhde in 1888. Baum encountered the works of the impressionists for the first time in Paris in 1890. Deeply impressed by their new approach in art he settled in Knokke-sur-mer, where the artists spent their summer holidays. Baum's style becomes impressionistic, mainly influenced by Camille Pissarro and Théo van Rysselberghe. 1894 Baum became a member of the Dresden Secession. 1895 he moved to St. Anna-ter-Muiden near Sluis, next to the Dutch-Belgian border. He travelled widely through Europe, with long sojourns in Berlin and San Gimignano and Florence. After the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 Baum returned to Dresden where he was made professor at the Academy. 1918 he became professor for landscape painting at the art academy in Kassel and moved to Marburg in 1921. From 1924 onwards Baum spent most of his time in San Gimignano, where he died in 1932.

Baum's early works are mainly influenced by the plein-air-painting by the Barbizon school. From 1890 onwards his colour palette becomes lighter and he paints landscapes in pointillist technique. Together with Curt Hermann Paul Baum must be regarded the protagonist of neo-impressionism in Germany. By disassembling the image into small colour sections, colour becomes the true and essential element of the pictures. According to Harry Graf Kessler, one of the main patrons of Neo-impressionism in Germany, it showed "a new way of creating beauty with colours".<sup>1</sup>

Neo-impressionism had a wide impact for the development of painting in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The image is divided into tiny colour accents. The artists used mainly spectral colours that are not found in

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Graf Kessler: *Über den Kunstwert des Neo-Impressionismus. Eine Erwiderung*, Berlin, 1903, p. 12. See Simone Wiechers, *Paul Baum – Von Weimar nach St. Anna ter Muiden*, in: *Hinaus in die Natur! Barbizon, die Weimarer Malerschule und der Aufbruch zum Impressionismus*, exh. cat. Klassik Stiftung Weimar, 2010, p. 277.

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nature. The long-term effect was the dissociation of colour and object. This development should culminate later in abstractionism.<sup>2</sup>

Baum had developed his compositorial principles during his years in Weimar. These elements remained valid in his complete oeuvre. His view on nature remained unchanged, untainted with his developing styles. The artist has radically decided to reduce himself to landscape painting. His landscapes are uninhibited, no living creature can be found, but civilization is represented by streets and buildings. For Baum, the landscape was a sort of portrait, in which he tried to reveal its character and made its individual being visible<sup>3</sup> A repeating element in Baum's works is a river or path that takes up the greater part of the foreground and diagonally leads into the depth, taking the beholder with him into the landscape.

Our painting dates to the years of 1912-4, when Paul Baum repeatedly stayed in Southern France and Tuscany, especially in San Gimignano. Here the artist produced a large body of paintings. The area around the small town with its characteristic high towers within a wide hilly landscape was an endless source of inspiration. Baum held his paintings from this time in very high esteem and regarded them among the best he ever achieved.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hans Vogel mentioned in 1952: *Er setzt und gruppiert zugleich die uralten Elemente alles Landschaftlichen so, daß aus Leicht und Schwer, aus Nach und Fern, aus Vegetativem und Kristallinischen eine neue, vom Künstler geschaffene Ordnung entsteht . . . So weist seine Komposition bei aller klaren Gegenständlichkeit der Motive schon auf die abstrakte Kunst hin.* [He places and groups all the old elements of landscape in a way, that light and heavy, close and far, vegetative and crystalline build a new order that is created by the artist. . . So, in all its graphic motifs his art is already pointing to abstract art.] See Wolfram Hitzeroth, *Paul Baum (1859-1932). Ein Leben als Landschaftsmaler*, Marburg, 1988, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Harald Busch, *Über Paul Baum*, in: *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, LVII, 1933, p. 264 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfram Hitzeroth, *Paul Baum (1859-1932). Ein Leben als Landschaftsmaler*, Marburg, 1988, pp. 49, 392 and 405.