

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



CARL BLECHEN

1798 Cottbus - Berlin 1840

Waldinneres mit einem rastenden Wanderer vor einem Bildstock
[*Forest Landscape with a Resting Man in front of a Wayside Shrine*]

Pen and brush and black ink over pencil on paper; executed *circa* 1830-35.

171 x 274 mm

PROVENANCE: Max Silberberg, Breslau (his forced sale: Paul Graupe, Berlin, 12 October 1935, lot 5) – Sale: Galerie Gerda Bassenge, Berlin, 24-25 May 1984, lot 4905 – Freunde der Preußischen Schlösser und Gärten, Berlin (purchased at the above sale in 1984 and exhibited in Berlin, Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten, Schloss Charlottenburg) – Restituted to the Estate of Gerta Silberberg by the above in 2015

LITERATURE: Helmut Börsch-Supan, *Die Werke C. D. Friedrichs im Schinkel-Pavillon*, in *Berlin Schlösser und Gärten*, Berlin, 1987, p. 46 (dated *circa* 1830)

EXHIBITION: *Carl Blechen - Zwischen Romantik und Realismus*, exhib. cat., Nationalgalerie, Berlin 1990, no. 209, repr.

The present brush drawing was created by Carl Blechen in the first years after his return from Italy. "Having served as a professor of landscape painting at the Berlin Academy since 1831, he was at the height of his career. During his many years of painting stage scenery he had developed a sense for theatrical composition and light effects. Following his experience of Italian light during his 1828-1829 sojourn, he had also achieved a distinctly painterly concept of nature. In May 1829 he filled a sketchbook with sunlit views of Amalfi and environs, executed with a brush and washes over pencil, some drawn directly from nature."¹ That series documents his extraordinary talent for plein-air painting, and the Amalfi sketchbook belongs to the very best of 19th century German draftsmanship.²

While still under the spell of the light of Italy, Blechen made the present composition with swift brushstrokes. Especially the depiction of sunlight on the tree trunks and the foliage is still reminiscent to the Amalfi sketches. The depiction of the young tree in the left foreground is typical for Blechens technique. A field of white paper, circumscribed by darker wash, defines the outlines of the tree. It is partly filled with sketched foliage and some shadows of wash. It is the remaining white space of the paper towards the edges that gives the vibrant impression of bright sunlight on the tree. It is this virtuous play of light and shadows that our drawing has in common with the Amalfi sketches.

¹ Hinrich Sieveking, in his entry for Carl Blechen's drawing: *A Ruined Church in the Forest*, in *German Master Drawings from the Wolfgang Ratjen Collection 1580-1900*, exhib. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington 2010, p. 221, no. 81, repr. This drawing is dating from c.1834 comparable in style and subject to our's (fig. 1).

² The Amalfi sketchbook was completely published in: Rosa von der Schulenburg (ed.), *Carl Blechen. Mit Licht gezeichnet. Das Amalfi-Skizzenbuch aus der Kunstsammlung der Akademie der Künste*, Berlin, exhib. cat., Hamburger Kunsthalle, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and Casa di Goethe, Rome 2009-10, Berlin 2009.

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Carl Blechen varied the subject of a pilgrims or walkers in a forest at wayside shrine in several drawings and paintings. (For example: *Pilger im Klosterhof*, oil on panel, c.1830, 32 x 39 cm, Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin. *Pilger im Wald vor einer Bildsäule im Gebet knieend*, lithograph, 1825, 22,6 x 30,8 cm, Rave 480.)³ The figures are mostly shown in devotion, facing the shrines. In our drawing a man has reclined for a rest at the stairs of the shrine. He is contemplating nature, propping up his head on his hand. In this pose he is similar to the well-known *Portrait of Sir Brooke Boothby* by Joseph Wright of Derby, from 1781, in the Tate Gallery, London (fig. 2). His pose looks back to the melancholy tradition in Elizabethan portraiture. But different to Boothby who holds a book by Rousseau in his hand, Blechen's resting figure is depicted in the German romantic tradition, influenced by Caspar David Friedrich. Near to the shrine the figure is lying in the light, shining into the dark of the woods and bringing a divine element into the composition.

Drawings by Carl Blechen are extremely rare.

³ See Peter Klaus Schuster (ed.), *Carl Blechen. Zwischen Romantik und Realismus*, exhib. cat., Berlin 1990, p. 113, no. 39, repr. and p. 184, no. 262, repr.

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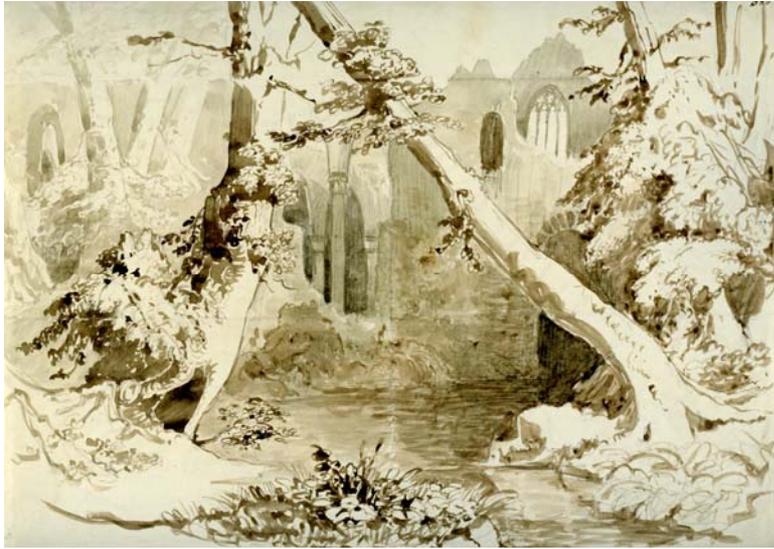


Fig. 1: *A Ruined Church in the Forest*,
brush with greenish-gray wash over graphite on paper, 248 x 343 mm.
National Gallery Washington, Wolfgang Ratjen Collection, [Patrons Permanent Fund 2007.111.5]



Fig. 2: Joseph Wright of Derby, *Portrait of Sir Brooke Boothby*; 1781,
oil on canvas, 148.6 x 207.6 cm.
Tate Gallery, London, [Inv. no. NG 4132]