

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



JOHANN ELIAS RIDINGER

1698 Ulm - Augsburg 1767

A Huntsman taking Aim at a Stag

Pen and brown ink, brown and grey wash over black chalk

Signed in pen and brown ink in the lower left margin and dated: *Joh: Elias Ridinger inv: et delineavit 1763.*

28. 9bris

222 x 360 mm

PROVENANCE: From the library of a European private collector

Depicted to the left on a slight elevation in a forest clearing is a hart of 10 points that has just emerged from dense undergrowth. The animal raises its head in defiance as it scents, or perhaps hears, its pursuer. A stalker stands against a boulder behind a large tree depicted at the centre of the image, his shotgun in firing position. A hound tethered to a bush quietly waits in the lower right corner. Dated 1763, the drawing was executed only four years before Ridinger's death, almost certainly a reason why the image did not find its way into a print.

Ridinger had handled the theme once before, in a series of etchings titled *Die Fangarten der wilden Tiere* [Methods of Hunting Wild Animals] published in 1750. The third sheet in the series, titled *Wie das hohe Wild mit beschleichen auf der Weyde gepürschet wird* [How by Stealth Big Game is Stalked while Grazing]¹ [Fig. 1], bears close comparison with the present drawing: a hart is depicted at the left, grazing in a woodland clearing while the stalker, shotgun at the ready, lies in wait and his hound quietly stretches its neck to sniff the scent. The legend beneath the image could almost be used to describe the present drawing: *When the huntsman explores where red deer or big game are grazing he stalks the thicket with his hound [...] observant of the area and seeking to overcome his quarry from the side, having the wind against him so that his prey shall not get wind of him [...]; as long as his quarry grazes he may advance in safety yet with caution, but should his quarry raise its head high or listen, so shall the huntsman forthwith remain motionless [...], should he be so near that he might almost be capable of firing a shot then he should moreover remove his shoes to lighten his step and hinder twisting or crushing, through which sound the quarry might take flight [...].*

A drawing of a similar subject in almost the same format depicts a stalker in firing position with a helper shown roaring into a *hohler Hafen* [large hollow jar] to attract the stag. The animal's head and its left foreleg are raised.² Like the present sheet, this drawing is also a late work and it, too, was never reproduced as an etching.

¹ Georg August Wilhelm Thienemann, *Leben und Wirken des unvergleichlichen Thiermalers und Kupferstechers Johann Elias Ridinger. Mit dem ausführlichen Verzeichnis seiner Kupferstiche, Schwarzkunstblätter und der von ihm hinterlassenen grossen Sammlung von Handzeichnungen*, Leipzig 1856, no. 71 – Ignatz Schwarz, *Katalog einer Ridinger-Sammlung* [R. v. Gutmann], Vienna 1910, I, no. 71.

² Ute Bopp-Schumacher, *Schöne Beute*, Dr. Hanns-Simon-Stiftung (ed.), exhib. cat., Kulturhaus Beda, Bittburg 2013, pp. 40 f., repr.



Fig. 1: *Wie das hohe Wild mit beschleichen auf der Weyde gepürschet wird* [How by Stealth Big Game is Stalked while Grazing], 1750, etching; sheet 3 of the series *Die Fangarten der Wilden Tiere* [Methods of Hunting Wild Animals], (Thienemann 71)