

# LE CLAIRE KUNST SEIT 1982

MAX LIEBERMANN

1847 - Berlin - 1935

## *Der Birkenweg im Garten des Künstlers in Wannsee*

Pastel on paper (from a sketch block); c.1924.

Signed lower right: M Liebermann.

234 x 299 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Switzerland

EXHIBITIONS: Max Liebermann, *Der Birkenweg*, Ein Motiv zwischen Impressionismus und Jugendstil, ed. by Martin Faass and Petra Wandrey, Liebermann-Villa am Wannsee, Berlin 2008, cat.-no. 11, repr. p.65 – Dena M. Woodall, *Drawing from Nature – Landscapes by Liebermann, Corinth, and Slevogt*, exhib. cat. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston 2010, no. 16

On the estate Liebermann acquired in Wannsee near Berlin was a small birch wood that was to be partly cleared. But a line of trees remained along the southern border, leading from the house to the lakeshore. A deadstraight pathway now leads through these trees, with some standing on the way and thus partly blocking way and view. Liebermann created this appealing effect of interplay of the original nature and the cultured garden architecture. It became one of his favourite motifs over the years.

Liebermann painted this hybrid of a grove and an alley, the so-called birch alley several times, at least in 22 paintings and 13 pastels. Only one other image shows this same view.<sup>1</sup> But even here the standpoint is not the same. The artist was closer to the pathway than to the lake and looked a bit further to the west. Therefore the trees seem to be situated differently. Moreover the atmosphere of the painting exudes summer and shadow, when the pastel with its bright and light green breathes a springy spirit. Very probably the pastel was made in the same year, but earlier in the year than the painting.

The photograph of 1914 portrays the birch-alley seen from the east to the west [fig. 2]. The pastel's viewpoint is towards southwest [fig. 1]. A glimpse of orange shows the neighbour's house that is seen through the trees.<sup>2</sup> The present pastel is a study of sheer light: sunshine glints upon the light birch trunks, various shades of soft greens describe the lawn and shrubbery. It make this present work an impressionistic masterpiece par excellence.

Drs. Margreet Nouwen will include this work in her forthcoming catalogue of pastels, watercolours and gouaches by Max Liebermann.

---

<sup>1</sup> Die Birkenallee im Wannseegarten nach Südwesten, 1924, oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm, Städtische Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz. (Matthias Eberle, no. 1924/25.)

<sup>2</sup> Villa Hamspohn of industrial (AEG-Director) and deputy of the Reichstag, Johann Hamspohn. Since March 2006 Villa Hamspohn is used as the private museum „Kunstsalon Berliner Secession“. Today's address: Am Großen Wannsee 40.

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



Fig 1: Reinald Eckert, Landschaftsarchitekt, Berlin: Plan for the reconstruction of Max Liebermann's garden in Wannsee, as of 1927. Red dot and red lines mark the viewpoint of the artist.



Fig. 2: The birch alley in Liebermann's garden in Wannsee; c.1914; photograph