

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



JOHANN WOLFGANG BAUMGARTNER

1702 Ebbs - Augsburg 1761

Jonah Preaching at Nineveh

Pen and brown ink, black and grey wash, heightened with white, on blue prepared paper, with black ink framing lines.

180 x 291 mm

PROVENANCE: Dietzen collection, Cologne, their sale: Cologne, Heberle, 14 February 1910 (according to an inscription on the backing) - Heinrich Conrad, Essen (1868 - 1925)

The present drawing shows a rare scene from the Old Testament's *Book of Jonah*. After Jonah refuses Jehova's command to proclaim God's judgement on the city of Nineveh he tries to flee by ship, which, in the ensuing storm caused by God, nearly sinks. The ship's crew quickly identify Jonah as the source of their distress and throw him overboard. Swallowed by a whale he spends three days and nights praying until he is finally spewed out onto the shore. Jehovah orders Jonah again to remind the Ninevites of their city's impending destruction within forty days. Overcome with fear and in need of no further admonishment from Jonah, the Ninevites – led by the King and his courtiers – repent and do penance.

The present drawing shows that last scene with the king in the centre and Jonah, his back turned to the beholder, proclaiming his message to the Ninevites. The dramatic encounter of the two protagonists takes place just outside the city walls, allowing Baumgartner to combine the landscape with the impressive skyline of the legendary city of Nineveh. This includes the massive round tower of the city wall and an array of magnificent palaces, towers, and pyramid-like structures, all conjured up in Baumgartner's imagination. Evidently, he had little or no knowledge of the capital of the Assyrian Empire – it had been destroyed in pre-Christian times – but this type of highly imaginative architectural vocabulary played an important role in the reverse paintings on glass that the artist had first made at Salzburg. He was to produce these in greater numbers in Augsburg after 1733, basing them on images in Melchior Küssell's *Iconographia*. Baumgartner used similar motifs in his drawings, achieving rich tonal effects by his use of blue paper.

While the main protagonists are outlined with the pen, their forms are modelled with the brush and wash, creating strong contrasts of light and shadow. The blue paper, serving as an additional medium, adds depth to the composition, while the white heightening further enhances the strong chiaroscuro effect. The painterly handling of the drawing media is a distinctive feature in Baumgartner's *oeuvre*, while his use of blue tinted paper is unique in Southern German Rococo draughtsmanship.

The black ink framing lines, too, are often found in Baumgartner's drawings. They emphasise both the picture-like qualities of the drawing and underline their high degree of finish. As can be found in many of his drawings, part of the line is drawn over the outer edge of the image. The sheets were evidently

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cut down from larger formats before the framing lines were added. No engraving or painting of the subject is recorded.

Dr. Peter Prange