

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



JOHANN ELIAS RIDINGER

1698 Ulm - Augsburg 1767

The Huntsman Content with his Bag

Pen and brush in grey-black, grey-brown wash, heightened with white, over black chalk; on paper with a Lily watermark. On the verso rubbed with red chalk for transfer to a copper printing plate.

348 x 432 mm

PROVENANCE: Radulf Graf zu Castell-Rüdenhausen, Schloss Schwanberg, Rödelsee – Thomas le Claire Kunsthandel, Hamburg – German private collection

LITERATURE: See 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. 1112 – See Ignaz Schwarz, *Katalog einer Ridinger-Sammlung* [R. v. Gutmann], Vienna 1910, II, no. 1447 – *Ad vivum delineavit, Beobachtungen zu Mensch und Tier, Johann Elias Ridinger, 1698 Ulm - Augsburg 1767*, exhib. cat., Thomas le Claire Kunsthandel, Hamburg 2006, no. 15

This very fine, highly finished work is one of Ridinger's most important drawings. It depicts the full-length figure of a young huntsman standing against a massive rock. In his right hand he holds up the hare he has bagged. His shotgun is propped against the rock where two hounds are resting. Although Ridinger's chief artistic preoccupation was the observation and portrayal of animals - according to his *Weltanschauung* they were an expression of the divine order of things - in the present drawing he focuses on a human being. The drawing portrays the noble sentiments of a successful huntsman who practises his craft *virtute et ingenio*, with virtue and ability, and thus in harmony with earthly and divine instance.

The sheet belongs to a group of drawings portraying hunters (male and female) in contemporary dress depicted in landscapes. The drawings were reproduced as mezzotints, each with a three-line inscription in German and Latin likening the subject to a figure from the classical world, namely Diana, Actaeon, Adonis, Antiope, Marpesia and Nicander.¹ The mezzotint after the present drawing differs, however, from these. In the inscription, the subject is not revered as the incarnation of a figure from antiquity. That the hunter's pose should recall the much-lauded pose of one of the most celebrated sculptures of classical antiquity, the Apollo Belvedere,² may be no coincidence.

The present drawing was reproduced as a mezzotint by Johann Jakob Ridinger, the younger of Ridinger's two sons. Martin Elias and Johann Jakob later took over the printmaking and publishing business from their father. The mezzotint is listed in Ignaz Schwarz's catalogue under no. 1447 with a description and a full-page reproduction [fig. 1]. It is signed at the lower left in the plate: *Joh. Jac.*

¹ Thienemann, op. cit. (1856), nos. 1103-1104, 1112-1113, 1327-1328; Schwarz, op. cit. (1910), nos. 1443-8, with full-page repr.

² Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique. The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900*, New Haven and London 1981, p. 148 ff.

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Ridinger sculpsit, inscribed at the lower right: *Joh. El. Ridinger del. et excud. Aug. Vind* and lettered with the following text in German and Latin: *Der über seine Beute vergnügte Jäger. | Er freuet sich vergnügt im Wald, Gebüsch und Hecken, | Den Hasen und das Reh durch jagen zu entdecken.³ | Venator praeda Sylvarum delutatus. | Tum laqueis captareferas, circumdare saltus | Auritosque sequi lepores tum figere damas | Inventum. Virg..*

A further mezzotint of the same subject is listed under no. 1112 in the Thienemann catalogue. It bears the title: *Es suchet zwar der Haas, das furchtsamst' Wild auf Erden (...)*. It is to a large extent identical with Johann Jakob Ridinger's mezzotint, however the buttons on the left side of the jacket and waistcoat are missing. Thienemann considered it to be the work of Johann Elias Ridinger, citing a signature and address in the plate: *Joh. Elias Ridinger inv. del. sculp. et excudit. Aug. Vind.*, however Schwarz identified it as a copy after Johann Jakob Ridinger's mezzotint.



Fig. 1: Johann Jacob Ridinger after Johann Elias Ridinger, *Der über seine Beute vergnügte Jäger* [The Huntsman Content with his Bag], mezzotint (Schwarz 1447)

³The huntsman content with his bag. / He pleases himself joyfully in forest, thicket and hedgerow, / Through hunting, hare and deer to discover. / (...).