

KARL&FABER

Carl Spitzweg

Lot 30

The Hussar (Hussar on the street with girls looking after him)



Low estimate :

€ 30,000

High estimate :

€ 40,000

Buyers premium incl. VAT :

32 %

Artist

Carl Spitzweg

Additional description

Öl auf Leinwand. (Um 1870). 34,7 x 22,1 cm. Verso sowie auf der Keilrahmenrückseite mit dem Nachlassstempel (Lugt 2307). Verso auf einem fest aufgehefteten Papier die Echtheitsbestätigung von Adolf Alt, 1934. Gerahmt.

Period

(1808 - München - 1885)

Technique

Gemälde

Provenance

Bei der Erbauerteilung zwischen Otto und Eugen Spitzweg fiel das Bild an Eugen, der es 1911 expertisierte; Sammlung J. Meder, München; Hugo Helbing, München, Auktion, 11.6.1912, Los 154, Taf. 39 (mit dem Titel „Am Brunnen“), aus der Sammlung J. Meder, München; Lempertz, Köln, Auktion, 15.-17.5.1956, Los 199, Taf. 26; Privatsammlung, Nordrhein-Westfalen; Van Ham, Köln, Auktion, 17.11.2006, Los 1480 (€ 40.000); seitdem in Privatbesitz, Süddeutschland.

Like Adolph Menzel, Carl Spitzweg was also a great observer of his fellow human beings, whom he met with subtle irony, never with mockery, in their everyday lives. There is the postman, the cactus lover or the astronomer, who pursue their strange occupations. They are all loners and eccentrics and, in a way, so is our hussar, who walks through the narrow alley of a village, obviously without a destination or direction. One might be tempted to recognise in the motif of the narrow alley just an ordinary genre scene, but as so often with Spitzweg, it is full of symbolism. The hussar seems lost in the village, trapped in its narrowness, which is effectively emphasised by the towering mountain massif in the background. He is a stranger in an exotic costume who attracts the attention of two young women who have interrupted their work to watch him. They are wearing dirndls and, with their white blouses and blue aprons that stand out as splashes of colour, are dressed quite festively, perhaps ready to go out. They also seem to be interested in the hussar's exoticism and wonder where his path is taking him and what has prompted him to visit their village. Or is there more to it than that? The two young women are wearing white blouses - white is the colour of purity and virginity in Christian iconography, which is why the Virgin is often associated with something white. Spitzweg was certainly aware of the Christian symbolism, and to emphasise this even more, he has three white doves pecking around in front of the two women. The hussar has already passed by, but the event still resonates with the women - was it a missed

opportunity that love had in store even then? Should they be disappointed about what could have been, about not having approached him and that this opportunity has literally passed them by? It is such ambiguities, which the audience of the time certainly understood, that tell of how Spitzweg not only profaned Christian symbolism but also depicted the first, futile encounters between the sexes. The two young women, together with the viewer, become observers of a scene that resembles Spitzweg's townscapes, in which he often designed the composition as a narrow ravine. Here the rows of houses stand close together, clearly characterised in their appearance: While the shaded gabled houses of a southern German town predominate on the left, the sunny side on the right points to more southerly climes, such as those Spitzweg encountered on his travels to South Tyrol. Our small painting is the sketch for the finished painting "Der Husar", which is now in the Neue Pinakothek (inv. no. 15290). In contrast to the executed version created in the studio, our painting is conceived as a sketch that shows a different Spitzweg: The rows of houses are generously summarised with a broad brush, the light is used in greater contrast and the figurative elements are fixed with just a few strokes - particularly visible in the white doves or in the foreground, where the stream of water pours into the fountain. Here it becomes clear how committed Spitzweg's painting is to the moment and what an outstanding colourist he is. Dr Peter Prange