

Carl Blechen's Restituted Masterwork "Mühlental von Amalfi" to be Sold at Grisebach



Carl Blechen. "Mühlental von Amalfi". Circa 1830. Oil on canvas. 74.5 × 99 cm. EUR 100,000–150,000

Carl Blechen's *Mühlental von Amalfi*, one of the most important of the artist's key works, marks an apogee of 19th century art. It will be offered as part of the curated "Selected Works" evening auction to be held at Grisebach on 28 November at 6 P.M. Created around the year 1830, the painting's museum-rank quality is made all the more impactful by the impressive dimensions of its canvas (74.5 × 99 cm). The estimated price is between EUR 100,000 and 150,000.

Until 1938, this landscape painting was owned by the Goldschmidts, a Jewish family from Berlin. Shortly after the *Kristallnacht* pogroms which had raged that November, the two Goldschmidt brothers, Dr. Arthur Jacques and Dr. Eugen Carl, both decided to end their lives by their own hand. Their estate passed to their nephew Edgar Jacques Moor, who emigrated to South Africa that same year. In 1942, the assets Moor had left behind in Berlin – almost certainly including *Mühlental von Amalfi* – were confiscated by the Gestapo secret police. In 1944, the Berlin art dealer Hans W. Lange brokered the painting to the *Sonderauftrag Linz* organization tasked with securing artworks for the "*Führermuseum*" that Adolf Hitler was planning for his hometown of Linz.

Following the end of World War II, the painting resurfaced in 1946 at the Central Collecting Point (CCP) set up in Munich by the US military government and eventually passed into the possession of the German Federal Government. More than eight decades after the painting was seized, the Federal Art Administration (KVdB) has now returned *Mühlental von Amalfi* to the heirs of Edgar Moor as the beneficiaries of the restitution, who in turn have entrusted it to Grisebach for sale at auction.

Blechen is regarded as the pioneer of modern landscape painting in Europe. His travels to Italy, particularly the region around Amalfi, played a decisive role for his artistic development. The motifs he captured there, among them the valley with the mill, reflect his fascination with the striking play of light and the dramatic contrasts so characteristic of Mediterranean landscapes. His trip is documented in the sketchbook known as the *Amalfi-Skizzenbuch*, now held by the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and considered one of the most significant collections of drawings to survive from the 19th century. One particularly impressive folio depicts a "building spanning a stream" – a study for a later oil sketch, now exhibited at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, which can be regarded as a preparatory version of *Mühlental von Amalfi*.

Carl Blechen was among the leading figures of European art of the early 19th century. It is impossible to overestimate his influence on the history of art. Melding elements of Realism, Romanticism and even the luminous hues of nascent Impressionism, his signature style exudes a magic that holds viewers spellbound to this day. Among his admirers was Max Liebermann, who praised him as "one of the select few who not only ranked among the best of his time, but also decisively influenced the other best artists of the day."

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