

. AGNEWS .

EST. 1817

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Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller
(Vienna 1793-1865 Hinterbrühl)

View of Lake Altaussee and the Dachstein

Signed and dated (centre right):
'Waldmüller 1834'

Oil on panel

12 ¼ x 10 ½ in. (31 x 26.5 cm.)

Painted in 1834



Provenance

Anonymous sale; Löscher, Vienna, 11-13 May 1863, lot 77.

Johann II. Fürst Liechtenstein, by 1907.

Dr. Hermann Eissler (1860-1953), Vienna, by 1930.

Banned from export under the Nazi regime and held in the apartment of the above, 29 October 1938.

Berta Morelli (1893 – 1975), Vienna, by December 1938, acquired as a gift from her father, Dr Hermann Eissler.

Purchased by Maria Almas Dietrich, Munich, together with two other paintings by Waldmüller from the above and Hortense Eissler for Reich Chancellery in May 1939.

Reich Chancellery, by whom acquired from the above as part of the collection for the planned Linz Museum (Linz no. 734).

Recovered by the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section for the Salt Mines, Alt Aussee (no. 6442), and transferred to the Central Collecting Point, Munich, 22 October 1945 (MCCP no. 11228).

with Galerie Nathan, Zurich.

Transferred into the custody of the Bavarian Ministerpräsident, December 1948, thereafter into the custody of the German federal government, June 1949.

On loan from the above to the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, 1966 (inv. no. Lg 755).

Restituted to the heirs of Dr Herman Eissler in 2020.

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Literature

- A. Roessler and G. Pisko, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller. Sein Leben, sein Werk und seine Schriften* (mit Werkverzeichnis), Vienna 1907, no. 91.
- A. Roessler, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller*, Vienna, 1908, no. 57.
- Federal Republic of Germany, Federal Art Administration, Property Card of the CCP Munich, Mü-Nr. 11228.
- B. Grimschitz, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller* (mit Werkverzeichnis von Bruno Grimschitz und Emil Richter), Salzburg, 1957, p. 311, no. 385, as: 'Der Altausseer See gegen den Dachstein', illustrated.
- Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg*, IV, Berlin, 1967, p. 128.
- H. Schwarz, *Salzburg und das Salzkammergut: Eine künstlerische Entdeckung d. Stadt u. d. Landschaft in Bildern des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Salzburg, 1977, no. 210.
- R. Feuchtmüller, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller - Leben, Schriften, Werke*, Vienna, 1996, p. 460, no. 429, as: 'Der Altausseer See gegen den Dachstein', illustrated.
- S. Lillie, *Was einmal war: Handbuch der enteigneten Kunstsammlungen Wiens*, Vienna, 2003, p. 111.

Exhibited

- Vienna, Künstlerhaus, 1890, no. 186.
- Vienna, Hagenbund, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller. Ausstellung des Hagenbundes und der Neuen Galerie in den Räumen des Hagenbundes*, 1930, no. 28 (31).
- Salzburg, Galerie Welz, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller*, Summer 1937, no. 9.
- Salzburg, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller. Gedächtnisausstellung. Residenz*, 1953, no. 57.
- Karlsruhe, Staatlichen Kunsthalle, Kat. Neuere Meister, 1971/72, no. 504.

The present work, painted in 1834, is a *tour de force* by Austria's leading painter of the Biedermeier. Primarily known for his genre paintings, Waldmüller himself considered his artist's calling to be the representation of nature. As he wrote in 1846: 'recognition that nature must be the only source and sum total of our study; there alone can be found the eternal truth and beauty, the expression of which must be the artist's highest aim in every branch of the plastic arts.' (quoted in A. Roessler, G. Pisko, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller: Sein Leben, sein Werk und seine Schriften*, Vienna, 1907, vol II, p. 9). It is worth noting that Waldmüller's theories about the significance of landscape painting mirror those of the great art critic of the Victorian era and champion of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, John Ruskin (1819 – 1900), who in his first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843), argued that the principal role of the artist is "truth to nature". The Pre-Raphaelites, a group of young English artists formed in 1848 to reject the Neoclassical assumptions of contemporary art schools, were greatly influenced by Ruskin's ideas and particularly the importance he placed on observing the reality of nature. Its members used great detail to show the natural

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world using bright and sharp-focus techniques on a white canvas, in an attempt to revive the brilliance of colour found in Quattrocento art. Thus, artists like William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais developed a technique of painting in thin glazes of pigment over a wet white ground in the hope that the colours would retain jewel-like transparency and clarity. It is hard not to imagine that the British painter John Brett, who was closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, in one of his works such as *The Val d'Aosta* (1858, fig.1) had seen the landscapes of Ferdinand Waldmüller, painted only a decade or two earlier.

View of lake Altaussee and the Dachstein belongs to a sequence of landscapes painted in the Salzkammergut, an area stretching from the city of Salzburg eastwards along the Alpine Foreland to the peaks of the Dachstein Mountains in which Waldmüller spent his summers from 1829 until 1843. This period is regarded as the climax of his development as a landscape painter and by 1834 the majority of his artistic output consisted almost entirely of landscapes painted in the Salzkammergut. These sojourns in the mountains seem to have giving him the opportunity to liberate himself from formal portraiture which had dominated his career so far. He quickly became fascinated by the untouched and pristine nature of the surrounding landscape: 'Waldmüller was captivated by the pristine green wilderness in its summery growth, the narrowly limited segment of nature with its cool shadows and the grasses and stones, branches and leaves, glowing in warm, sunlit colours..The lack of aerial perspective in the high mountains favoured Waldmüller's artistic intentions, making the faraway mountain chains and forest slopes appear as clear and as tangible as the foreground motifs, with no loss of definition in the distance, which for Waldmüller was an essential requirement.' (B. Grimschitz, *Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller*, Salzburg, 1957, p. 47)

Based on his own observation from a real vantage point, *View of lake Altaussee and the Dachstein* reveals Waldmüller's ability to create a remarkable sense of recession and depth using an extremely precise technique reproducing both the smallest background details and the principle foreground elements without losing definition. The landscape betrays the idiosyncrasy of a Biedermeier landscape with its luminosity, contrast of light and shadow, symphony of colour, the sunlit mountain peaks reflecting in the shimmering blue of the lake, and just a small cluster of houses to remind us of human existence. Dating from 1834, Waldmüller's *plein-air* landscapes from this period can be regarded as a milestone on the way to modernism.

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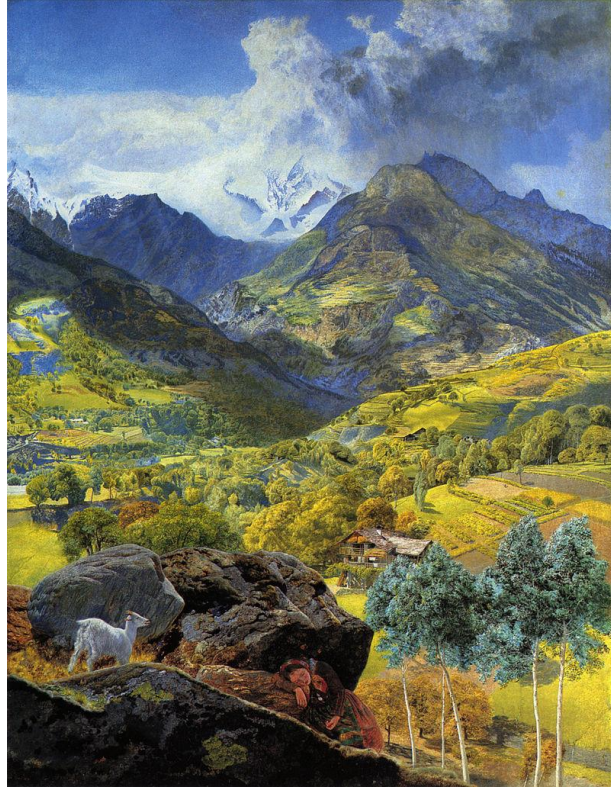


Fig. 1: John Brett, *The Val d'Aosta*, 1858, private collection.

A note on the Provenance:

In the early 20th century, the present picture is recorded in the possession of Johann II, Fürst Liechtenstein, who was the Prince of Liechtenstein between 1858 and 1929. His reign of 70 years and 91 days is the second-longest of any monarch in European history, after that of Louis XIV of France. Johann II was an art connoisseur and added much to the Liechtenstein Princely Collections and is considered a prominent patron of the arts and sciences during his long reign. Johann II ordered extensive renovations at Vaduz Castle, the home of the princely family, despite the fact that he never lived in the castle or even in Liechtenstein. He also was generous in his support of science, culture, and charities for the needy, and for this support, he was given the nickname Johann the Good. By 1930, *View of lake Altaussee and the Dachstein* was owned by the Jewish business man and distinguished art collector Dr Hermann Eissler (1860-1953), whose collection was renowned for its exceptional number of works by

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Austrian and German 19th century artists such as Rudolf von Alt, August von Pettenkofen., Arnold Böcklin, Franz von Lenbach, Adolph von Menzel and Ludwig Richter. Eissler was one of the first collectors of French Impressionism in Austria owning an oil sketch of Édouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, Paul Cézanne's landscape *Village derrière des arbres, Ile de France* and Vincent van Gogh's *Self-portrait* from 1887 (now in the Emil Bührle Collection).