

# KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen  
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts



## ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER

(1880 Aschaffenburg - 1938 Davos)

### Elbe steamboat, 1910

Ink in pen and brush on paper

22 : 32.5 cm

Signed lower right: "E L Kirchner"

Estate stamp on verso

Study for the etching with the same motif from 1910 (Gercken WVZ No. 426).

#### **Provenance:**

Blohm Collection, Bremen

#### **Exhibitions:**

*Ernst Ludwig Kirchner – Aquarelle und Zeichnungen*, Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig, Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal 1992-93, cat. no. 1

*Im Zentrum: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kirchner Museum, Brücke Museum, Berlin/ Davos 2002, cat. no. 26

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There is a lot of activity on the Elbe near Dresden: cargo ships pass by, a steamer blows its rising smoke into the sky, a rower steers a smaller barge, the foreground is dominated by a large, wide freighter with towering, dark funnels, on whose deck a mate gestures towards the rower. Harbour buildings and warehouses line the opposite shore. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner captured this lively scene in landscape format in 1910 with the rapid, expressive strokes of his pen and broad, flat brushstrokes. As a member of the Brücke group of artists founded in Dresden in 1905, he was one of the leading avant-garde artists in Germany in the years around 1910. In their life and work together, the young painters strove for a new freedom in art, detached from academic conventions and creative traditions. They found their motifs in the studio, in the great outdoors and in the urban environment and sought to realise the spontaneous visual experience as directly and unadulteratedly as possible.

In addition to his subjects on the streets, squares and parks of Dresden, Kirchner repeatedly devoted himself to the charming theme of shipping traffic on the Elbe from around 1908 onwards and captured the hustle and bustle of tugboats, barges, boats and steamers in numerous paintings, watercolours, drawings and prints. Drawings, executed in ink, pencil or coloured chalks, were the ideal medium for expressing what he observed in an authentic and original way with the heightened energy of line movements. Kirchner favoured the scenery on the banks of the Elbe in Dresden's Neustadt district, where the typical cargo barges - the so-called Elbzillen - transported the material from the factories there (see also: exhib. cat. *Die "Brücke" in Dresden 1905-1911*, Galerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden 2001, pp. 368-369).

With a seemingly scriptural drawing style, Kirchner succeeds in sketchily capturing the scene in the sense of a sensual-vital snapshot and a fleeting momentary impression. The focus of his artistic intentions here is the moment of continuous movement on the water. The confident, swift and sometimes broadly applied ink takes on a dynamic life of its own and emancipates itself from the mere reproduction of the representational. The present depiction, which Kirchner also used as a drypoint etching with the same motif in 1910 (Günther Gercken: *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Kritisches Werkverzeichnis der Druckgrafik*, Vol. 2, 1909-1911, Bern 2013, no. 426, p. 442), is an example of the increasingly harder, more angular drawing style that particularly characterises Kirchner's late Dresden creative years of 1910/1911 (see Magdalena M. Moeller: *Von Dresden nach Davos. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, drawings*, Munich 2004, p. 70 ff. ). His stroke style obeys a heightened inner desire for expression and transforms the power of feeling outwards with an energetic gesture. Rough formal reductions and a strict concentration on the essentials as well as the tense contrast between filled and free parts of the sheet characterise the expressive pictorial language. In this context, Kirchner himself speaks of a "hieroglyphic" drawing style: "Kirchner draws like other people write" (Louis de Marsalle (= Ernst Ludwig Kirchner): *Zeichnungen von E.L. Kirchner*. Quoted from: Lucius Grisebach: *Ernst Ludwig Kirchners Davoser Tagebuch*, Stuttgart 1997, p. 221).