

COLNAGHI



Wilhelm Leibl
Study of a skull

WILHELM LEIBL
(Cologne 1844-1900 Würzburg)

STUDY OF A SKULL

Oil canvas.
34.4 x 31.4 cm.; 13 1/2 x 12 3/8 in.

Provenance

Johann Sperl (1840-1914), Munich;
Karl Zitzmann (1871-1956);
His sale, Hugo Helbing, Frankfurt am Main, 16 November 1926, lot 12 [repr. table 5];
With Galerie Heinemann, Munich, with the Gallery's labels on the back, until at least 10 May 1929;
Georg Schäfer (1896-1975) Schweinfurt (with Inventory number 0123 on the back);
Private collection, southern Germany.

Literature

E. Waldmann, *Wilhelm Leibl. Eine Darstellung seiner Kunst. Gesamtverzeichnis seiner Gemälde*, 2. Berlin 1930, Cat. no. 81.

Exhibitions

Wilhelm Leibl. Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Radierungen (Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, and Galerie Matthiesen, Berlin, Cologne-Berlin: 1929), p. 43, Cat. no. 29a.
Vor hundert Jahren: Dänemark und Deutschland 1846-1900. Gegner und Nachbarn. (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Kunstmuseum Århus, Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Orangerie Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin, 1981). p. 372, cat. no. 144 D.

COLNAGHI



LONDON

NEW YORK

MADRID

BRUSSELS

COLNAGHI

This small picture is one of three studies with skulls that Wilhelm Leibl painted towards the end of his time at the academy - a version dated 1868 can be found in the Karlsruhe Kunsthalle (Fig. 1).

While other artists resorted to more subtle symbols of transience, Leibl, fully committed to realism, simply confronts us with a human skull. The white shroud has been lifted and, sharply illuminated, reveals a gruesomely grinning skull in three-quarter view. The human skull, perhaps an exhibit in an anatomical display collection, rests on a plinth wrapped in black fabric, which gives it back its upright posture in life, as if it were still fused to the torso via the cervical vertebrae. At the same time, this gives the depiction a portrait-like quality, creating the impression of a direct counterpart, which distinguishes this skull from the skulls in seventeenth-century *vanitas* still lifes, which are seen as mere objects or remains.



Fig. 1. Wilhelm Leibl. *Skull with a Shroud*. Oil on canvas, 1868. Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle.

COLNAGHI

COLNAGHI
London

26 BURY STREET, LONDON SW1Y 6AL
UNITED KINGDOM
MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM
+44 (0)20 7491 7408
contact@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI
Madrid

CALLE GENERAL CASTAÑOS 9
PLANTA BAJA, DCHA.
28004 MADRID
MONDAY TO FRIDAY
BY APPOINTMENT
spain@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI
New York

23 EAST 67TH STREET, FOURTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10065
USA
MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM
+1 (917) 388-3825
newyork@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI
Brussels

RUE JACQUES JORDAENS 30
1000 BRUXELLES
BELGIUM
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY
brussels@colnaghi.com