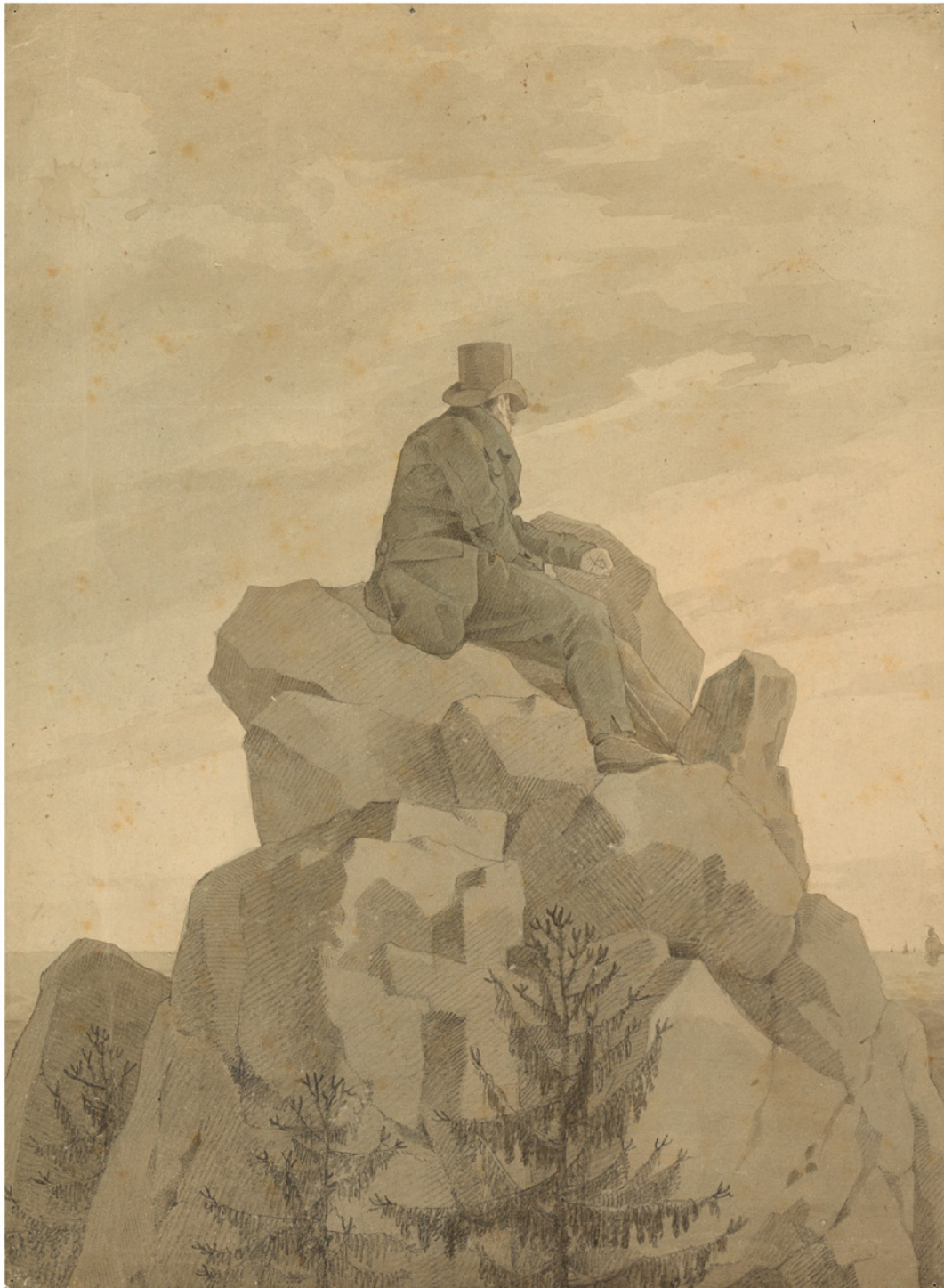


**Georg Friedrich Kersting** Caspar David Friedrich on the rock ("Ausblick aufs Meer"). Circa 1809/10



**GRISEBACH**

# 105 Georg Friedrich Kersting

From our auction 19th Century Art, Thursday, 30 May 2024, 3 p.m.

Georg Friedrich Kersting

Güstrow 1785 – 1847 Meissen

Caspar David Friedrich on the rock ("Ausblick aufs Meer"). Friendship portrait and early realisation of a programmatic pictorial idea by Caspar David Friedrich. Circa 1809/10

Pencil, washed with grey watercolours, on wove paper and mounted on light cardboard.

30,2 × 22,2 cm. (11 7/8 × 8 3/4 in.) Catalogue raisonné: Schnell A 20. [3170]

Provenance

Estate of the artist (thence by descent to the present owner)

EUR 150,000–200,000

USD 161,000–215,000

Exhibition

Ausstellung von Bildern aus Karlsruher Privatbesitz. Karlsruhe, Badische Kunsthalle, 1922, cat. no. 499 („Vom Felsen ausblickender Mann“) / Kunst in Sachsen vor 100 Jahren. Dresden, Saxon Kunstverein, 1928, cat. no. 227 („Ausblickender Mann auf Felskuppe“)

Literature and Illustration

Oskar Gehrig: Georg Friedrich Kersting. Ein mecklenburgischer Maler aus der Zeit der Freiheitskriege. Schwerin, Mecklenburgische Gesellschaft, 1931/32, p. 20–21, ill. p. 19 / Oskar Gehrig: Bei den Kerstings. In: Mecklenburgische Tageszeitung, 116. Vol., 10.1.1932, unpaginated / Kurt Karl Eberlein: Caspar David Friedrich, der Landschaftsmaler. Ein Volksbuch deutscher Kunst. Bielefeldt-Leipzig, Vehlhagen & Klasing, 1940 [2nd edition], p. 67, ill. p. 101 (attributed to Caspar David Friedrich) / Clara Wolf-Kantmann: Georg Friedrich Kersting. Freiheitskämpfer und Maler. In: Dresden Neue Presse, 1942, no. 26, p. 6 / Nikolaus Zaske: Zur Ikonographie und Motivatik im Werk Caspar David Friedrichs. Das Bildmotiv des Berges und der Stadt. In: Werner Imig (ed.): Caspar David Friedrich. Bildende Kunst zwischen der Französischen Revolution von 1789 und der bürgerlich-demokratischen Revolution von 1848. 1. Greifswalder Romantik-Konferenz anlässlich der Caspar-David-Friedrich-Ehrung in der DDR 1974. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald. Special

edition. Greifswald, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität, 1974, S. 53–56, here p. 54 / Hans-Joachim Neidhardt: Caspar David Friedrichs Wirkung auf Künstler seiner Zeit. In: Exhib.-cat.: Caspar David Friedrich und sein Kreis. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Albertinum, 1974/75, p. 34–61, here p. 36, ill. p. 11 / Peter Rautmann: Caspar David Friedrich. Landschaft als Sinnbild entfalteter bürgerlicher Wirklichkeitsaneignung. Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien, ed. by A. Perrig, vol. 7. Frankfurt a.M./Bern/Las Vegas, Lang, 1979, p. 164, note 24, p. 204, ill. pl. 22c / Peter Holzweg: Wanderdarstellungen und andere Wegthemen in der deutschen Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts. Cologne (Diss. 1986), 1988, p. 87, 214

**Paying homage to Friedrich**

**“Later on, Friedrich took this idea further – and the result was his *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*.”**

The influence that Caspar David Friedrich had on Georg Friedrich Kersting was considerable. It is likely that Kersting met Friedrich in late 1809 or early 1810 in Dresden. Kersting, having recently completed a good three years of studies at the prestigious Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, had arrived in Dresden from his North German hometown of Güstrow with the intention of traveling on to Italy. But Friedrich, who disapproved of Italian influences as deeply unwholesome, convinced Kersting to abandon his travel plans and to stay in Dresden instead in order to attend the local fine arts academy.

In mid-1810, Kersting and Friedrich took a joint hiking trip through the Giant Mountains. Both of them made drawings, taking turns to pose for each other as models. Thus, Friedrich seems to have used Kersting as a figure in a number of landscapes, particularly in several of his more elaborated, watercoloured drawings. On one drawing dated 12 July 1810, Kersting is shown climbing onto a rock. Friedrich captured this scene somewhere between the source of the River Elbe, which the two men visited on 10 July, the Schneekoppe Mountain, where they had been on 11 July, and Warmbrunn, which they reached on 13 July. In a drawing from 14 July, Kersting is depicted standing at the foot of a pyramid-shaped rock formation, evidently also to serve as a dimensional benchmark. On 17 July, they

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had reached the Kochelfall waterfall, and on the appurtenant drawing – to mention just one more – we see Kersting sketching while seated on a broad, flat rock. In each instance, the figures are placed relatively far off, their physiognomies only vaguely rendered.

But Kersting, who obviously had a gift for figurative drawing, got his opportunities as well. In one watercoloured drawing, he captured a full-body view of Friedrich from behind wearing a satchel and peaked cap. Though Friedrich is turning his head slightly away in lost profile, we recognize his curly muttonchop whiskers. This was a rather uncommon form of facial hair during the Romantic period – long sideburns being the norm – and thus almost is a hallmark feature identifying Friedrich (though his identity is also confirmed by the image's caption).

Several of Kersting's portrait drawings of Friedrich from the time just after the excursion into the Giant Mountains have come down to us. There is one from 1811, for example, which shows Friedrich about to embark on a trip through the Harz Mountains with his travel companion Gottlob Christian Kühn, the sculptor who had carved the frame for his *Tetschen Altar*. Most importantly, Kersting painted no less than three oils of Friedrich working at the easel in his studio in the period following their hiking trip.

The decidedly programmatic nature of these works suggests that Friedrich must have introduced his artistic principles to Kersting while traveling, particularly the systematic use of the Golden Mean. Thus, in Kersting's second atelier portrait from 1812, the vertical and horizontal lines of the Golden Mean intersect precisely where Friedrich's paintbrush protrudes from his hand. Elongating this horizontal line leads exactly to a small booklet lying on the sill of the atelier's shuttered window. This evidently is one of Friedrich's numerous sketchbooks, and we can assume that it will was one of the sketchbooks he had taken along on their hike through the Giant Mountains. The reason is that given its landscape format, the large painting on the easel – visible only from the back – that Friedrich is pondering probably is *Morgen im Riesengebirge* from 1811. It is generally supposed that Kersting painted the small figures on the mountaintop. Most likely, Friedrich used the sketches made during the trip for his painting's composition.

The drawing by Kersting being offered for sale originates from his estate. All things considered, it stands to reason that the person depicted sitting on the rock is none other

than Caspar David Friedrich and that the work is directly linked to their outing into the Giant Mountains. What is more, it seems as though Kersting intended it as a practical illustration of his friend Friedrich's principles as a draftsman.

It is easy to imagine that Kersting and Friedrich, having retired to an inn after the day's excursions, would spend the evenings looking over their drawings together, while also discussing how to further intensify their aesthetic exchanges. It is entirely conceivable for Friedrich to have proposed the idea for a drawing showing a wanderer seated atop a rock and for Kersting to immediately have provided a draft version of the motif under Friedrich's supervision, seeking to create it in line with the latter's concepts, also in technical terms. At no other time did the two artists' approaches converge so closely. Later on, Friedrich took this idea further – and the result was his *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*.

In this drawing, Kersting repeats the lost profile and we again recognize the luxuriant whiskers of Friedrich's muttonchop beard. The rock formation seems assembled from a number of compartments and features hatchmarks all across its surface. Just as Friedrich would do in his innumerable rock studies, Kersting has accentuated it with narrowly spaced parallel lines running diagonally from the upper right to the lower left. The two partially cut-off spruce trees in front of the rocks reference a standard motif used by Friedrich. And the glimpses of a far-off ocean on both sides of the picture – with tiny boats on the right – are yet another recurring visual element of Friedrich's work. Small wonder then, that some have sought to attribute the drawing to Friedrich himself.

Yet the image also evinces key differences between the conceptual approaches of each artist. The person sitting on the rock in a frock coat and top hat and holding a walking stick is confidently drawn, bespeaking Kersting's particular talent in this regard; Friedrich's figure drawing was less assured. The rock formation seems put together somewhat artificially rather than taken from nature – a *sine qua non* for Friedrich, who moreover would not have used hatchmarks on the sunlit surfaces. And the rock-hewn cross that appears in the middle looks rather ostentatious, particularly since its inclusion was probably an afterthought, given that the dark shadows forming the cross were hatched in over the original delineation of the rock's base. Friedrich would have depicted only what he saw in nature, also when it came to cross-shapes in the

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crevices of boulders, such as the one in a drawing from 1799 (Grummt 109). And finally, the tops of the spruces: These are elements that during this period (around 1810), Friedrich would draw in much greater detail and directly from nature. While Friedrich aimed for absolute botanical accuracy, Kersting was satisfied with capturing a more general impression of a tree.

What remains is this: The drawing is a showcase piece of Romanticism, telling of the friendship between two artists with a shared contemplation of far-off vistas and documenting their joint activities. It pays homage to Friedrich's art and testifies to how well Kersting understood Friedrich – and the high esteem in which he held him.

Werner Busch