Hermann Robert HIRZEL (Buenos Aires 1864 - Berlin 1939)

A Winter Landscape, within a Decorative Border

Pen and black ink, with touches of white heightening, on two joined sheets of card.
Signed Hirzel at the lower right and Hzl. in the lower right of the decorative border.
247 x 301 mm. (9 3/4 x 11 7/8 in.) [image, with border]
320 x 364 mm. (12 5/8 x 14 3/8 in.) [sheet]

ACQUIRED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, DC.

This drawing may be dated to c.1902, by stylistic comparison with Hirzel's landscape illustrations for the magazine Teuerdank, published between 1901 and 1903 in Berlin and Düsseldorf. Hirzel's landscapes for the magazine, entitled 'Stimmungen' ('Moods'), are characterized by a sense of stillness and calm, tinged with melancholy. Much of Hirzel's graphic work is characterized by stylized ornamental elements, in the form of plants, flowers and other organic motifs, displaying something of a Jugendstil, or Art Nouveau, aesthetic.

The present sheet belonged to the writer and collector Walther Heinrich (1872-1939), who wrote under the pseudonym Walther Unus.

Provenance:

Walther Unus [Heinrich], Berlin
Anonymous sale, Munich, Ketterer Kunst, 23 October 2009, part of lot 106.

Artist description:

Born in Argentina of Swiss parents, Hermann Robert Catumby Hirzel was active as a painter, engraver, graphic designer and illustrator. He began his career as a pharmacist and studied chemistry in Geneva and Berlin. In the late 1880's, however, Hirzel decided to give up his studies become a painter. Although he took classes at the Berlin Kunstakademie with the landscape painter Karl Hagemeister, he seems to have been largely self-taught as both a painter and etcher. In the 1890's he travelled on study trips to Sicily and Rome, and in 1893 won a silver medal for a landscape etching at an international exhibition in Rome. Apart from a period of some six years in Russia between 1904 and 1910, Hirzel worked for most of his career in Berlin, occasionally exhibiting with the association of artists known as the Berlin Secession. While he produced a number of landscapes, particularly of the area known as the Mark Brandenburg, around Berlin and Potsdam, much of his work took the form of commercial projects as a graphic designer, producing bookplates, sheet music covers, advertisements and book illustrations. Etchings and lithographs by Hirzel are today in the collections of the museums of Berlin, Leipzig and Breslau, as well as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.