Hermann Robert HIRZEL (Buenos Aires 1864 - Berlin 1939)

Steps in the Garden of the Casa Baldi, Olevano

Pencil.
Signed, dated and inscribed Olevano 93 / Casa Baldi. Hzl. at the lower right.
244 x 325 mm. (9 5/8 x 12 3/4 in.)

According to the artist's inscription at the lower right, the present sheet was drawn in 1893 on the grounds of the Casa Baldi in the hill town of Olevano Romano, about fifty kilometres east of Rome. In the 19th century the Casa Baldi was a country inn popular with artists painting and sketching the mountainous landscape around Olevano, who included Camille Corot, Friedrich Overbeck, Albert Bierstadt, Joseph Anton Koch and Anselm Feuerbach. In the 1930's the Casa Baldi was acquired by the German state, and today houses an extension of the German Academy in Rome, with studios where artists can spend three months on scholarships.

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

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.