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Johannes Hänsch (1875-1945), War Landscape, 1918 / - Bleeding Flowers -

1 200 EUR



Signature : Johannes Hänsch (1875-1945)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Paper

Length : 24,5 cm

Height : 15 cm

Description

Johannes Friedrich Heinrich Hänsch (1875-1945),  
Red blooming war landscape with dead soldier,  
1918. Watercolor and gouache on paper, 15 x  
24.5 cm (image), 27 x 37 cm (sheet size / frame),  
monogrammed and dated "19JH18" at lower left.  
- Paper slightly darkened

Dealer

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- Bleeding Flowers -

Despite the relatively small format, the watercolor with an internal frame depicts a panoramic view of a flat landscape stretching to the horizon. As far as the eye can see, the poppies bloom in flaming red. The flowers are not

rendered individually, however, creating an almost cohesive red surface. The bright red is interspersed with vegetal green. A complementary contrast that creates an intense color effect. In this color contrast, a white area breaks through from the middle ground, widening towards the foreground and surrounding a brown hole. Next to it, in blue, is the actual protagonist of the painting, the first thing that catches the eye: a dead soldier. Next to him is his helmet, revealing the empty interior. The brown, hollow shape corresponds to the hole in the ground. A shell funnel is surrounded by bright ash, which, like the inverted helmet, becomes a sign of death. The soldier's arms point to the funnel, while the empty helmet paraphrases the calotte of the skull and, like the funnel, thematizes the empty darkness of death.

The soldier's body, however, is intact and not - as in Otto Dix's triptych "The War" - a dismembered corpse. Instead, Johannes Hänsch activates the landscape, especially the color, to illustrate a blooming landscape of death that extends from the shell funnel in the foreground to the rising column of smoke on the horizon. If the soldier's body is intact, the tangle of barbed wire emblematically placed over the empty helmet also appears tattered. On the right side of the picture, the barbed wire even seems to stretch its arms to the sky in horror. Against the background of this allegory, the content of the bright red also becomes clear: the landscape is drenched in blood, literally a sea of blood, and the single unknown soldier stands pars pro toto for all those who died on the battlefield. Dying in war is not dying in community, but in solitude. In order to emphasize the isolation in death, Johannes Hänsch has set the blue of the soldier in the axis given by his body in the middle ground of the picture into the red sea.

A master of landscape painting, Hänsch succeeds in creating a natural-looking landscape allegory that illustrates the horror and death of war, without depicting the brutality of war itself. This

singular 'war memorial' of the unknown soldier is the opposite of heroization and yet the dignity of the deceased soldier is preserved through the integrity of his body.

### About the Artist

As the son of the sculptor Adolf Haensch, the young Johannes received his first artistic training in his father's Berlin studio. However, he eventually decided to become a painter, and in 1897 he entered the Berlin Academy of Arts. He initially studied under Paul Vorgang and Eugen Bracht, and was particularly influenced by Bracht's increasingly colourful landscape painting. In 1901 he moved to the class of Friedrich Kallmorgen, with whom he spent several weeks on excursions into nature. In 1905 he became a master pupil of Albert Hertel, who taught him watercolour painting.

From 1903 to 1933 he exhibited annually at the Great Berlin Art Exhibition, the exhibitions of the Berlin Artists' Association and the Munich Glaspalast. In 1905 he was awarded the Carl Blechen Prize. From 1917 until his death in 1945 he spent every year in Silesia, where he rented a studio in Seitendorf an der Katzbach. He also travelled almost every year to paint in the Ore Mountains, to Merano and to the North and Baltic Sea. But he also remained faithful to the Brandenburg landscape, which he - along with Walter Leistikow - painted in a completely new way, earning him the nickname "painter of the Märkische landscape".

### Selected Bibliography

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