

JOHAN THOMAS LUNDBYE

1818 KALUNDBORG – BEDSTED 1848

Amaryllis, 1842

Watercolour, pen and black ink. Signed and dated lower right *Lundbye 1842*. Inscribed and dated in pen and black ink *Amaryllis af 22 Marts 1842*.

190 x 150 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Copenhagen – Thence by descent

Johan Thomas Lundbye was one of the youngest artists of the last generation of the Danish Golden Age painters. He began his training at the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen in 1835, finishing in 1842. A pupil of Johan Ludvig Lund and the animal painter Christian Holm, in his eventual decision to pursue landscape painting Lundbye was strongly influenced by his long exposure to the work of Christen Kobke, a fellow resident of Kastellet (the citadel) in Copenhagen, where Lundbye lived with his family.

In his paintings Lundbye pays homage to the natural beauty of the Danish landscape, to its expansive open spaces set beneath vast, cloud-filled skies. His subjective, emotional approach to the natural world, with its references to the past, recalls Romantic painting. But his work also reveals an appreciation of nature's smallest components, as the present meticulously executed *Study of an Amaryllis* demonstrates. Like his friend, the landscapist P. C. Skovgaard (1817–1875), he developed a profound interest in botany.¹ He executed several studies of flowers between 1839 and 1842.² A comparable *Study of an Amaryllis* dated 1840 is held in the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen (Fig. 1).³

In his monograph on Lundbye, Karl Madsen cites the following anecdote: *It is said that Lundbye once asked a little boy if he agreed that the flowers they had seen on their way were wonderful. The boy gave an honest answer and said that he couldn't see what was so wonderful. So Lundbye took one of them and drew it, and then the boy saw that it was beautiful*.⁴



Fig. 1: *Study of an Amaryllis*, watercolour, pen and black ink, dated 24. April 1840, 190 x 150 mm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen [inv. KKS10417]



actual size

¹ *Von Abildgaard Bis Marstrand – Meisterzeichnungen Der Kopenhagener Schule Aus Dem Besitz Der Königlichen Kupferstichsammlung Kopenhagen*, exhib., cat., Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich 1985, p. 73, under no. 83.

² *Tegninger & Huletanker – Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818 – 1848*, exhib. cat., Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen 1998-9, p. 192, no. 126 and pp. 201-2, nos. 135 and 137.

³ Watercolour, pen and black ink, dated 24. April 1840, 190 x 150 mm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen [inv. KKS10417].

⁴ Karl Madsen, *Johan Thomas Lundbye. 1818 -1848*, Udgivet af Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen 1949, p. 56 (first pub. 1895).