

JOHAN THOMAS LUNDBYE

1818 KALUNDBORG - BEDSTED 1848

*Two Self-Portraits**A. In Profile, to the Left, 1837*

Pencil. Inscribed in pen and brown ink *Castellet den 4 Februar (18)37* and signed in pencil *Th. Lundbye* lower right.

176 x 138 mm

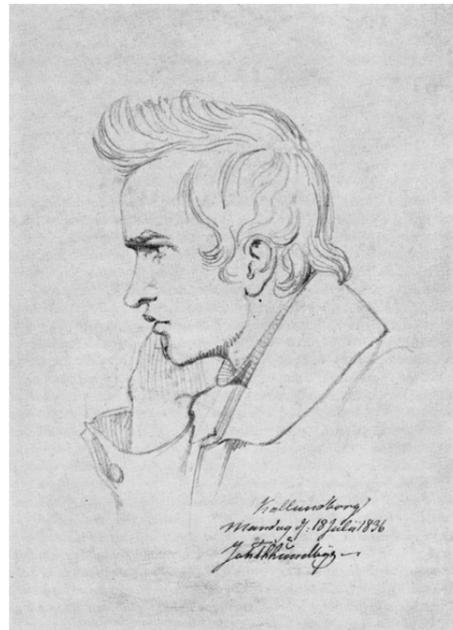
PROVENANCE: T. Vincent Nissen, Copenhagen – Private collection, Copenhagen – Thence by descent – Private collection, Germany

B. Frontal View, Eyes Downcast, 1839

Pen and grey ink over pencil. Inscribed in pen and black ink on the verso *EGET PORTRAET FRAN 1839 AF HAM SELF GENGIVET* (lit.: self-portrait from 1839 shown of himself). 215 x 170 mm

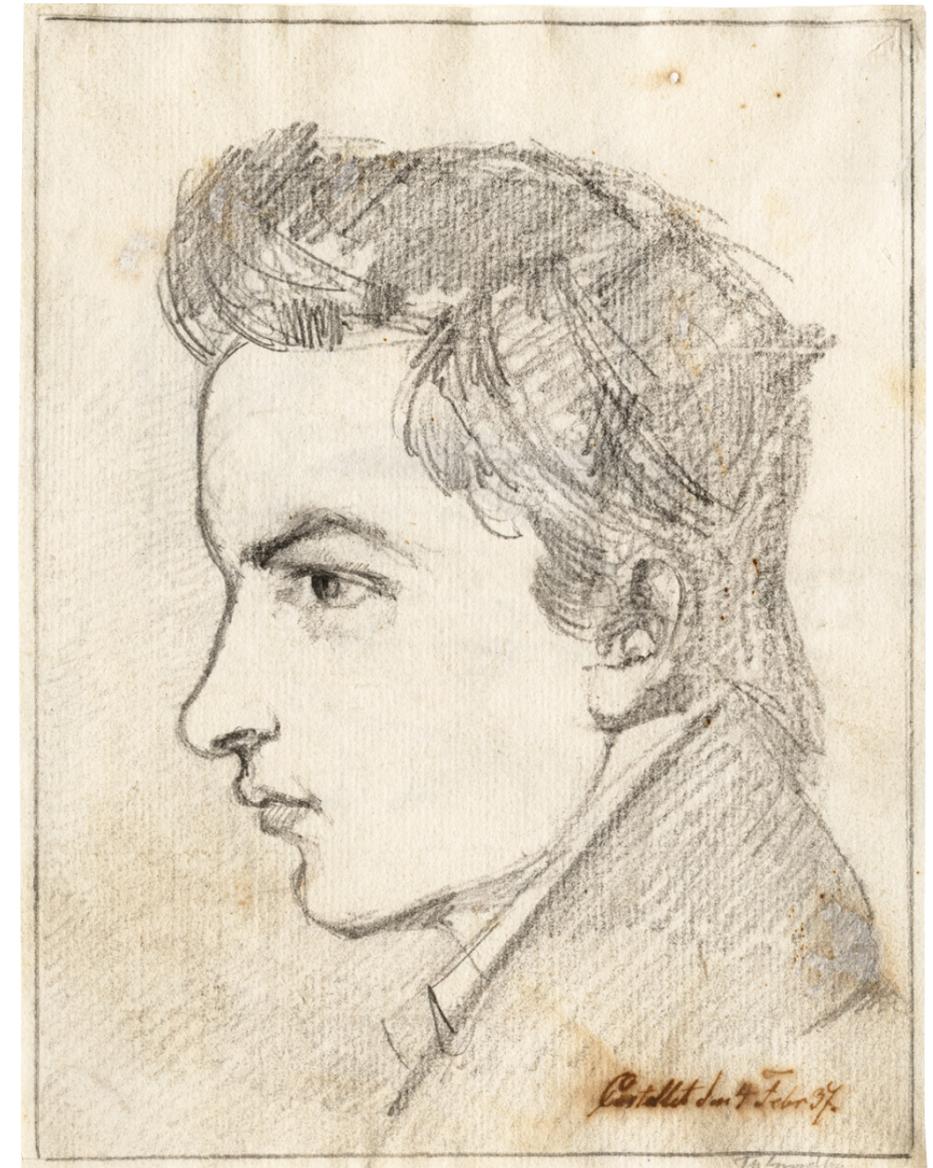
PROVENANCE: Private collection, Copenhagen – Thence by descent – Private collection, Germany

Johan Thomas Lundbye is considered the leading exponent of Danish romantic nationalism in landscape painting in the 1840s. He entered the drawing school of Johan Ludvig Lund (1777–1867) at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen in 1835. In his youth, Lund had been a close friend of Caspar David Friedrich and had lasting contacts to the Nazarenes, a group of German romantic painters in Rome. His artistic approach was diametrically opposed to the neoclassical realism of his colleague and rival at the Academy, C. W. Eckersberg (1783–1853). Lundbye did not come into direct contact with Eckersberg's teachings at the Academy and it is therefore no surprise that his art would reflect the romantic idealism of Lund.



Lundbye executed the present two self-portraits at the age of nineteen and twenty-one while an Academy student. His earliest-known self-portrait dates from 18 July 1836 (Fig. 1).¹

Fig. 1: *Self-Portrait*, pencil, inscribed, dated and signed Kallundborg, Mandag af: 18 July 1836, JohThLundbye, 180 x 130 mm. Private collection, Denmark



actual size

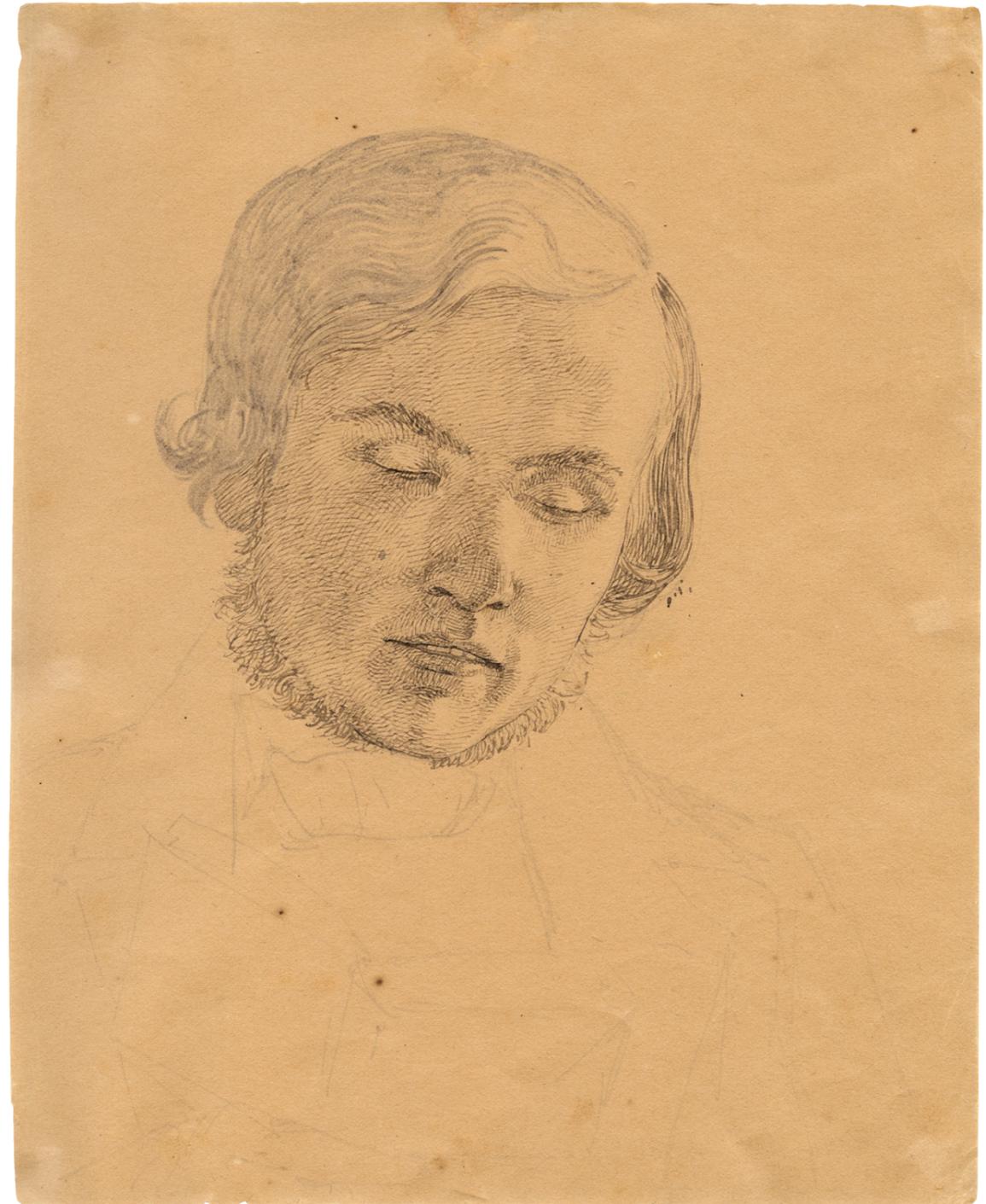
¹ *Self-Portrait*, pencil, signed and dated Kallundborg, Mandag af: 18 July 1836, JohThLundbye, 180 x 130 mm. Private collection, Denmark.

His output of self-portrait drawings is large. Over a period of approximately thirteen years he regularly studied his own physiognomy from different angles and with different facial expressions, registering mood swings and bouts of despondency over unrealised ambitions. These self-portraits form a unique, intimate biography – Lundbye felt a strong need to communicate his inner emotional responses and the mental anguish he experienced.² As a youth, his face reflects watchful optimism; later, his expression is pensive and has a hint of inner doubt; by the age of twenty-seven, wearied by his struggles, his features mirror anxiety, melancholy and even resignation.³

The second of the two self-portraits was executed in 1839 and is a frontal-view portrait. In a self-portrait of the same year Lundbye also shows himself in frontal view, but with his parting on the right (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: *Self-Portrait*, pen and black ink, inscribed, dated and signed in pen and black ink *Vedby-Gaard den 23 Aug 1839|JohThLundbye*; bearing a monogram in pencil at the lower centre *J:Th:L* (in runic script), 211 x 170 mm. Statens Museum for Konst, Kobberstiksamling, Copenhagen



actual size

² Hans Edvard Noorredård-Nielsen, 'The Golden Age in Denmark – Artists' in *The Golden Age of Danish Art : Drawings from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Copenhagen*, exhib. cat., The Frick Collection, New York 1995, p. 79.

³ Jens Peter Munk, *Tegninger & Huletanker – Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818 - 1848*, exhib. cat., Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen 1998-9, p. 124.

⁴ Pen and black ink, inscribed, dated and signed in pen and black ink *Vedby-Gaard den 23 Aug 1839|JohThLundbye*; bearing a monogram in pencil at the lower centre *J:Th:L* (in runic script, probably reflecting Lundbye's preoccupation with the historic past), 211 x 170 mm. Statens Museum for Konst, Kobberstiksamling, Copenhagen (inv. Td713.2a r). – See Munk, op. cit., 1998-9, p. 125, no. 3, repr.