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VILHELM KYHN

1819 Copenhagen – Frederiksberg 1903

Portrait of an Artist; 1859

Oil on board. Monogrammed and dated lower right: VK. (18)59.
24,8 x 20,8 cm

PROVENANCE: Bagermester (Burgomaster) H. Svanberg, Copenhagen – Carl Møller, Copenhagen (acquired in 1915) – thence by descent

EXHIBITION: *Vilh. Kyhn 1819-1903, Hundredaars Udstilling*, Foreningen for National Kunst, Copenhagen 1919, no. 106 (as Portt af Kyhns Broder [Portrait of Kyhn's Brother, Ludvig Johan Kyhn], dimensions given: 26 x 21.5 cm) – *Die Kopenhagener Schule - Meisterwerke Dänischer und Deutscher Malerei von 1770 bis 1850*, Dirk Luckow and Dörte Zbikowski, Kiel 2005, p. 148 – *Vilhelm Kyhn & det danske landskabmaleri*, Randers Museum, Fuglsang Kunstmuseum, Ribe Kunstmuseum, Heart Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012-14, not in the cat.

LITERATURE: Dirk Luckow and Dörte Zbikowski, *Die Kopenhagener Schule - Meisterwerke Dänischer und Deutscher Malerei von 1770 bis 1850*, exhib. cat., Kiel 2005, p. 250, repr. p. 148

Originally baptized with no fewer than three Christian names, Kyhn is generally only known by the more manageable name Vilhelm. At an early stage he was appreciated for his many depictions of the Danish landscape, painting it from north to south, from east to west. Several of his works were bought by the Royal Danish Collection of Paintings in his own lifetime, and by fellow artist's and private collectors. He was admitted to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 1836 and trained mainly under J. L. Lund (1777 - 1867)¹, but he was also privately taught by C. W. Eckersberg (1783 - 1853).²

Kyhn belongs to the same generation of artists as Thorald Brendstrup, Dankvart Dreyer, P. C. Skovgaard and J. Th. Lundbye, for all of whom landscape painting was the preferred mode of expression. He was thus artistically active at a time of artistic upheavals around the middle of the nineteenth century when the Danish Golden Age and National Romanticism were still interwoven and when artistic expression had many faces.³

Portraits played a very small part in Kyhn's *œuvre*. Only two self-portraits dating from 1838 and 1844 [Fig. 1] are known.⁴ The present portrait thus represents an important addition. The sitter, previously believed to be the artist's brother Ludvig Johan Kyhn,⁵ is depicted in a simple smock and straw hat.

¹ Henrik Bramsen, *Landskabsmaleriet i Danmark*, Copenhagen 1935, p. 34.

² C. W. Eckersberg og hans elever, exhib. cat., Copenhagen 1983, p. 59; and Kasper Monrad, *Hverdagsbilleder. Dansk Guldalder – kunstnerne og deres vilkår*, Copenhagen 1989.

³ Gertrud Oelsner and Karina Lykke Grand (eds.), in *Vilhelm Kyhn & det danske landskabmaleri*, exhib. cat., op. cit., 2012-14, p. 217.

⁴ Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, and private collection, Denmark. See, *Vilhelm Kyhn & det danske landskabmaleri*, exhib. cat., op. cit., 2012-14, fig. 1 and 2, p. 10 and 11.

⁵ Ludvig Johan Kyhn (1824 - 1913) was a clockmaker living in Copenhagen.

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This suggests he may have been a painter, perhaps Kyhn's pupil, the landscape painter Ernst Christian Laub (1839 - 1867).⁶ Eckersberg's influence is clearly visible in this attractive knee-length portrait.

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Fig. 1: *Self-Portrait*, 1844, oil on canvas, 21 x 38 cm.
Private collection, Denmark

⁶ A slightly larger-format portrait of Ernst Laub by Kyhn, also executed in 1859, is recorded. See *Vilh. Kyhn 1819-1903. Hundreedaars Udstilling*, Copenhagen 1919, op. cit., no. 104.