

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

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CARL FREDERIK AAGAARD

1833 Odense - Copenhagen 1895

*Clouds Scudding across the Skyline*

Oil on cardboard, executed c. 1855-60.

34 x 52 cm

PROVENANCE: The artist's grandson – Private collection, Denmark (inscribed on verso)

Carl Frederik Aagaard moved to Copenhagen at the age of nineteen to join his elder brother, the printmaker Johan Peter Aagaard (1818–79), who specialized in woodcut. While attending classes at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen, Carl Frederik honed his skills in etching and woodcut under his brother's guidance. He was also taught decorative painting by Georg Christian Hilker (1807–75). However, he wasted no time in abandoning classes at the Academy to take up landscape painting. He studied under Peter Christian Skovgaard (1817–75), whom he credited with being a decisive influence on his artistic development [Fig. 1].<sup>1</sup> Aagaard worked with Hilker on murals for the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University (1858-9) and the entrance hall of Copenhagen University (1860). He also collaborated with the painter Heinrich Hansen on a decorative scheme for the chapel of Christian IV in Roskilde Cathedral.

Aagaard's breakthrough as a landscapist came in 1857 when he first publicly exhibited examples of his work. He was awarded the 'Neuhausenske' prize for his painting *Fritvoxsende Markblomster*. In 1865, he won the 'Sødning' prize for a landscape titled *Efteraarsmorgen i Dyrehaven* [Autumn Morning in Jægersborg Dyrehave Forest]. The painting was purchased for the Royal Art Gallery in Copenhagen. In 1866, he exhibited in Stockholm. He undertook extended study tours of Italy in 1870-71 and again in 1875-6 – funded this time by a travel bursary from the Ancker Bequest. He was in Norway in 1876. He produced a large body of travel sketches which served him as the basis for later studio paintings. In 1874, he was elected a member of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art.

Aagaard's career as a landscapist spanned some forty years. His landscapes brought him popularity and widespread recognition. His woodland scenes and coastal views of Møn and Hellebæk constitute some of his most important work.

This depiction of clouds situates Aagaard firmly in the tradition of thematically comparable works by the Norwegian artist Johan Christian Clausen Dahl, whose cloud studies had an important influence on the artists of the Danish Golden Age.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the centuries, landscape painters

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<sup>1</sup> Gertrud Oelsner and Karina Lykke Grand, *P. C. Skovgaard – Dansk Guldalder revurderet*, exhib. cat., Aarhus 2010, pp. 335 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Himlens spejl – Skyer og vejrlig i dansk maleri 1770 – 1880*, exhib. cat., Fyns Kunstmuseum & Storstrøms Kunstmuseum, 2002-3, p. 64-7 and 112 – Kurt Badt, *Wolkenbilder und Wolkengedichte der Romantik*, Berlin 1960, pp. 45-56.

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were always intrigued by the observation of skies, because clouds and changing light and atmosphere situations play a major role.<sup>3</sup>

An inscription by the artist Franz Henriques (1882-1956) on the verso of the present painting confirms the authorship of the work and dates it between 1855 and 1860.



Fig. 1: Peder Christian Skovgaard (1817–75), *Cloud Study*, oil on cardboard, 29.3 x 37.0 cm. Fyns Kunstmuseum

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<sup>3</sup> The reference on the importance of cloud studies *en plein-air* plays a role in all important tracts and painters' treatises of landscape painting since the 16th century. See, Barbara Hardtwig, *Johann Georg von Dillis and the European Cloud Study*, in: *Cloud Studies – Johann Georg von Dillis*, cat. XI, Thomas le Claire Kunsthandel, Hamburg 2002, pp. 11-17.