

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



PETER CHRISTIAN SKOVGAARD

1817 Ringstedt - Copenhagen 1875

*Summer Landscape at Sandgraven near Vejby; 1843*

Oil on canvas; monogrammed and dated *PS 1843*.

26.7 x 34.6 cm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Copenhagen [anonymous sale, Kunsthallen, Copenhagen, 7 September 1994, lot 117] – Private collection, Germany

LITERATURE: Bente Skovgaard et al., *Sommerrejsen til Vejby 1843 – J. Th. Lundbye og P. C. Skovgaard*, exhib. cat., Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen 1989, no. 82, p. 77, repr.

EXHIBITION: *Sommerrejsen til Vejby 1843 – J. Th. Lundbye og P. C. Skovgaard*, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen 1989, no. 82

Peter Christian Skovgaard began his training at the Royal Danish Academy of Art in Copenhagen in 1831, where he struck up lasting friendships with fellow students J. Th. Lundbye and Dankvart Dreyer. They did not come into direct contact with C. W. Eckersberg's teachings at the Academy but studied under Johan L. Lund (1777-1867). In his youth Lund had been a close friend of Caspar David Friedrich at the Academy and travelled with him to Dresden in 1799. Friedrich's painting had a significant influence on his work and his teaching. Lund's romantic idealism was an important source of inspiration for the young Skovgaard and his colleagues. Greater still, however, was the impact of the romantic realism of the Norwegian painter J. C. Dahl on their approach to landscape. Dahl had trained at the Academy in Copenhagen from 1811 to 1818 and maintained close contact with Denmark throughout his life.

Like Lundbye and Dreyer, Skovgaard created a style of landscape painting that triggered a powerful response in the contemporary viewer.<sup>1</sup> So-called Danish Romantic nationalism in landscape painting established itself in earnest following the Charlottenborg exhibition of 1838.<sup>2</sup> The quintessential Danish landscape was a much-loved subject for painters from the mid 1850s onwards.

Skovgaard and Lundbye shared a tendency to monumentalise their subjects but frequently chose motifs that in themselves were remarkably simple. They produced striking views of woodlands, forest interiors, pure meadows and park-like landscapes, focusing on sparse ground cover and the effects of natural light. In the present painting the eye is led from a vantage point on a path at the edge of a tree-lined meadow towards sunlit, open countryside where cattle are grazing. The painting documents Skovgaard's visit to his native Vejby in the summer of 1843. He often spent the summers there, accompanied by Lundbye. Gribskov, the largest forest in Denmark, lies to the south of Vejby. To the north is the bleak Zealand coast.

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<sup>1</sup> Torsten Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Singapore 1998, pp. 37 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Johnston, Helmut Börsch-Supan, Helmut R. Leppien and Caspar Monrad, *Baltic Light – Early Open-Air Painting in Denmark and North Germany*, exhib. cat., National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Hamburger Kunsthalle; Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen, 1999-2000, p. 204.

In the summer of 1843 Skovgaard stayed with his mother<sup>3</sup> while Lundbye lodged with Morten Jensen, a local farmer. The two friends spent their days painting and making sketches of the farms, fields and paths in and around Vejby. They often painted the same views, although from slightly different angles [Fig. 1]. Over the summer Lundbye chronicled their painting excursions meticulously – his diary provides a day-by-day record of the sites they chose and the motifs they depicted.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 1: Johan Thomas Lundbye (1818–48), *Fields near Aagerup, South of Vejby*.  
oil on canvas, 1843. 15.5 x 26.0 cm.  
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (inv. 3112).

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<sup>3</sup> Skovgaard's parents had formerly been farmers in the area but were obliged to give up farming for financial reasons. From 1823 onwards, his mother ran the village shop in Vejby. See Skovgaard, op cit., pp. 10–13.

<sup>4</sup> Ead, op cit., pp. 11, 22, 54–8.