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JOHAN THOMAS LUNDBYE

1818 Kalundborg - Bedsted 1848

Asnæs Skov, Bay at Kalundborg Fjord, 1839

Pen and black ink, pencil and watercolour on paper. Signed in pen and black ink *Johan Thomas Lundbye*, dated *Dec 1839* and inscribed: *Landskab ved Kalundborg Fjord. Asnæs Skov.*, and in pen and brown ink *2/1 1840 tilf: Fuldmægtig Secher I Randers.*

189 x 300 mm

PROVENANCE: Secher, Randers¹ – Private collection, Nordjysk, Denmark

LITERATURE: Karl Madsen, *Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818 – 1848*, Copenhagen 1949, p. 88 f., repr. p. 96 – Cat., Anonymous sale, Winkel and Magnussen, Copenhagen 1933, no. 25

EXHIBITED: *Kunstforeningen*, Copenhagen 1893, no. 497 [bearing the exhibition stamp *Kunstforeningen* on verso]

Johan Thomas Lundbye was one of the youngest members of the last generation of Danish Golden Age painters. He began his education at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen at the age of fourteen. He specialized in landscape painting, unlike his teachers Johan Ludwig Lund and Christian Holm, and was strongly influenced by extended exposure to the work of Christen Købke.

Lundbye developed a new genre of Danish landscape painting, together with his fellow artists Peter Christian Skovgaard and Dankvart Dreyer. The early Romantic style of the German painter Caspar David Friedrich, who had studied at the Copenhagen Academy,² was also to have a formative influence on the young Lundbye.³ The Romantic realism of Johan Christian Dahl was of greater importance in this context. Dahl maintained close contact with Denmark and with Danish artists throughout his life.

Lundbye was also a man of some literary talent. He was a meticulous diarist and a prolific letter-writer. In this, he was more productive than any of the other artists of the Golden Age. His diaries give a highly personal picture of his life and ideas. He was a deeply emotional man – sensitive, vulnerable and strongly inclined to melancholy. Studies have shown that these emotions were offset by a deep feeling for nature – his solace and source of calm and tranquillity.⁴

A wave of nationalistic enthusiasm came to a head in Denmark at the end of the 1830s and in the early 1840s. This was inspired by a pan-European movement stemming from the threat to national

¹ Bought from the artist by Kunstforeningen for 80 Rdl. Taken by the collector Secher, Randers.

² Kasper Monrad and Colin J. Bailey, in exhib. cat., *Caspar David Friedrich og Danmark*, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen 1991.

³ Torsten Gunnarson, *Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London 1998, p. 37.

⁴ The Danish psychiatrist Ib Ostfeld published two studies on Lundbye's psychology: *J. Th. Lundbye. Et Stemningslivs Historie*, Copenhagen 1937 and *Johan Thomas Lundbye: En kunstners kamp med sin skæbne. En epilog*, Copenhagen 1977.

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identities in the Napoleonic wars. Like the painters of the Eckersberg School, Lundbye worked in a classical idiom which had its roots in seventeenth-century art. However, he combined this approach with new national Romantic ideas, becoming the leading representative of a new national Romanticism in Danish art.

Many of Lundbye's landscape drawings mostly small sketches from sketchbooks were intended as preparatory works for paintings executed in his studio. Collecting and describing all the different aspects he struggled to create a single motif based on these large groups of sketches; although, we know of even finished watercolours and drawings of each sight as well. For Lundbye these studies were drawings in their own right with substantial meaning⁵. Contrary to Eckersberg's artistic theories he was not looking for repeating real nature, instead he believed in the emotions caused by observing nature. Inspired by colours, atmosphere, rustic windy nature, and gloomy spots this artistic process was the key for him enjoying the countryside and finding his motifs.

Prepared by a couple of small sketches [figs. 1 and 2] our drawing dated 1839 is an early example for inventing large scale paintings [fig. 3]⁶ for a "Bildergalerie" intended to summarise Lundbye's impression of the Danish countryside, a project which he embarked only in 1842. He wanted to paint a characteristic Danish motif, so he decided on a coast motive a natural choice when one considers the long stretches of coastline bounding all of the country's many islands.⁷ The main issue for him was to represent the quintessence of the Danish coastline showing that the Danish landscape could stand comparison with that of other countries. At the same time he depicted the finest selection of details to underline the highly atmospheric quality of each sight.

The present sheet was mounted with pale pink watercolour and with an arched top. A comparable finished drawing with grey wash *Vejrhøj og Adellersborg (Dragsholm) set fra Bjergsøe Mark*, belongs to the Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen [fig. 4]⁸. As far as we know, these two sheets are the only finished drawings to be preserved from this important project. Lundbye tried to achieve an impression for the audience looking through a large gate on to an idealistic Danish landscape most favourite for the artist's understanding of his art.

⁵ Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818-1848 – Ein Künstler des Dänischen Zeitalters – Zeichnungen und Aquarelle, in cat. Altonaer Museum, Hamburg 2000, p. 25.

⁶ Karl Madsen 1949, op. cit. p. 331 f., no. KM 71, repr. p. 95.

⁷ Kaspar Monrad, *En dansk Kyst*, in *Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818-1848. . . at male det kjaere Danmark*, exhib. cat., Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen 1994, p. 212 f.

⁸ 1839. 242 x 364 mm. Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen. See, Hans Edvard Nørregård-Nielsen, *Undervejs med J. Th. Lundbye*, Copenhagen 2004, p. 38, fig. 15.



Fig. 1: *Asnæs Skov, Bay at Kalundborg Fjord*, pen, black ink and grey wash.
Present whereabouts unknown



Fig. 2: *Asnæs Skov*, 1839, pen and black ink and watercolour,
100 x 170 mm. Den Hirschsprungske Samling [inv. no. 1086]



Fig. 3: *Asnæs Skov, Bay at Kalundborg Fjord*, oil on canvas. 94,5 x 122,6 cm.
Present whereabouts unknown

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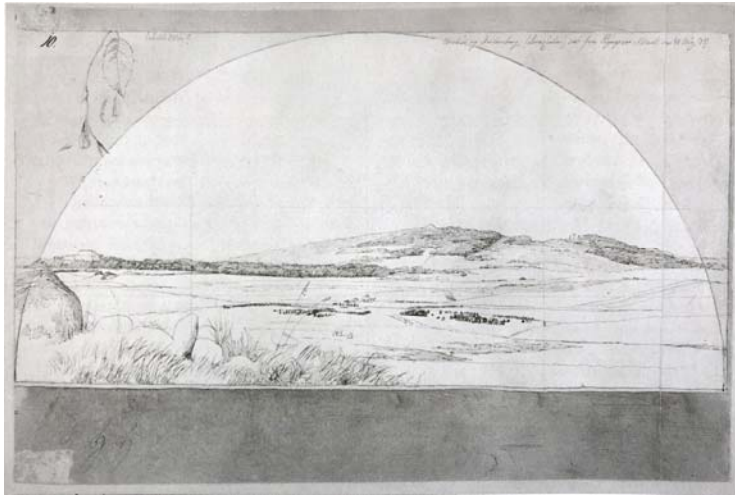


Fig.4: *Vejrhøj og Adellersborg (Dragsholm) set fra Bjergsøe mark*, August 1839,
black ink and gray wash,
pencil, pink wash, 242 x 364 mm.
Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen