

PETER VILHELM CARL KYHN

COPENHAGEN 1819 – FREDERIKSBERG 1903

The son of a Royal Greenland trade department supervisor by the name of Carl Gotlieb Kyhn, Vilhelm Kyhn first embarked on a training in commerce and then became apprenticed to a copperplate engraver and architect. Between 1836 and 1844 he was a student at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, where he received instruction from both C. W. Eckersberg, by whom he set great store, and J. L. Lund (1777–1867). He won the minor silver medal in 1843.

Kyhn made his first appearance at Charlottenborg that year, exhibiting there annually for the following sixty years. He also participated in the 1878 and 1900 world fairs in Paris; in 1845 he won the Neuhausen Prize. He spent 1850–51 traveling in France and Italy with funds from a two-year grant from the Academy, but the trip had to be curtailed on account of illness. He later visited Sweden and Norway several times and was in Paris again in 1878.

Vilhelm Kyhn was principally a landscape artist. His very extensive oeuvre varied in quality, especially in his early years, perhaps because he was torn between Eckersberg's teaching, with its emphasis on precise, balanced observations of nature, and the desire on the part of Lund's pupils to find freer, more emotional means of expression. In addition, like all landscape artists, he found it difficult to translate the immediate experience of the countryside into carefully finished works suitable for exhibition. Under the influence of the art historian N. L. Høyen (1798–1870), Kyhn gradually created his own version of national romanticism.

From the 1850s, Kyhn ran his own private school of drawing and painting, and from c. 1870, a school for women artists. (Anna Ancher spent three years as one of his pupils there, as female artists did not have access to teaching in the Academy.)

Kyhn was a driving force behind the setting up in 1853 of Den danske Radeerforening (The Danish Society for Etching). Between 1871 and 1879 his garden studio, under the name of Huleakademiet (The Cave Academy), became the meeting place for a group of young artists who were dissatisfied with teaching in the Academy. Although Kyhn was an implacable opponent of the new international influence on Danish art, especially French, he nevertheless appears in time to have been inspired by French plein air painting. (See Loeb collection, Summer Meadows.)

From 1873 he worked near Himmelbjerget in Central Jutland. In the 1880s, Kyhn appears to have alternated between purely studio works and large plein air paintings. However, in many of his works he continued throughout his life in the full-hearted Romantic mood he had aimed at since early youth.

S.L.

LITERATURE: Karl Madsen, Vilhelm Kyhn in *Tilskueren*, Copenhagen 1884, pp. 429–439; Hanne Westergaard, *Landskabsmaleri, original graWk og billeder i bøger, Om Vilhelm Kyhn, 1819–1903* in *Bogvennen* 1978, Copenhagen 1978; Finn Terman Frederiksen, *Kunst og natur, Omkring et landskabsbillede af Vilhelm Kyhn*, Randers Kunstmuseum 1982; *Vilhelm Kyhn*, Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen 1993 (with essays by Holger Reenberg and Jørn Guldborg); Holger Reenberg in *Weilbach*, vol. 4, Copenhagen 1996; Jørn Guldborg, Stedsans (eds. Lene Burkard, Jørn Guldborg and Karsten Ohrt), in *Stedsans—om tid, sted og rum i dansk landskabsmaleri*, Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense 1998.

