

VILHELM KYHN

1819–1903

78. *Gathering Storm Near Ry*, 1896

(*Optrækkende uvejr ved Ry*)

Oil on canvas, 37²/₃ x 50 in. (96 x 127 cm)

Signed and dated lower right: Vil Kyhn 1896

PROVENANCE: Grosserer J. L. Dupont (1919); Winkel & Magnussen, Auction 73, 1929, lot 7 (described as *Optrækkende uvejr ved Ry*, the dimensions erroneously given as 24 x 126 cm); Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 453, 1983, lot 108, ill. p. 25.

EXHIBITED: Charlottenborg 1896, no. 227 (described as *Eftermiddag, Himmelbiærgaasen set fra Rye Station*); Charlottenborg, *Vilhelm Kyhn 1819–1903, Hundredeaarsudstilling*, 1919, no. 337.

Vilhelm Kyhn's close association with the landscape was legendary. Of his profound admiration and his humility in the face of the ever-changing light and profusion of color in nature there is ample evidence, for instance in letters from the aging artist to his young pupils, who looked up to him and considered him radical and modern.

Kyhn's main aim was to re-create the atmosphere in a landscape; he wanted, so to speak, to express the soul of nature, and to emphasize this he would sometimes put into his painting some detail that was out of proportion. Here we have an example with a dazzlingly white, tousled poodle in the left foreground; it seems far too big in comparison with a woman farther away in the picture, who is wearing a light-colored headscarf, and standing with another dog outside a small house with smoke rising from its chimney.

The viewer's eye is immediately caught by the poodle's radiance and then led on in a rapid diagonal movement across to the point where the rainbow starts. The unsettled, leaden sky and the flock of fluttering gulls underline the nervous quality of the weather and compel the viewer to look down as though to seek shelter among the undulating, heather-clad hills and the lush, green, low-lying land cutting through them.

It is impossible to say whether the disproportionate size of the dog was merely happenstance or whether Kyhn was working consciously, but with the animal's presence as a fixed point from which the viewer is forced to begin a peregrination through the picture's universe, the painter's apparent clumsiness achieves a telling effect. The sense of a gathering storm and of rapidly vanishing daylight makes all white features in the landscape shine as though floodlit, further intensifying the magnificent effect of the picture and adding a disturbing monumentality to it.

In the view of some scholars, Vilhelm Kyhn developed into an out-and-out naturalist in his later years. He painted his motifs as they were and as they can still be recognized to some extent. In this respect, his works differed markedly from the idealized national Romantic portrayals of the 1830s and 1840s, which were often pieced together from fragments of landscape from several different regions.¹

S.L.

¹Finn Terman Frederiksen, *Kunst og natur, Omkring et landskabsbillede af Vilhelm Kyhn*, Randers Kunstmuseum 1982.