

## WILHELM MARSTRAND

1810–1873

### 87. *An Englishman Pursued by Beggars in Rome*, 1848

(*En englænder forfulgt af tiggere i Rom*)

Oil on canvas, 11 x 12½ in. (28 x 32 cm)

Signed and dated lower left with monogram, dated 1848

PROVENANCE: Professor E. Holm (1898); Director Max Lester; Winkel & Magnussen, Auction 26 (Max Lester, Part 2), 1924, no. 68, ill. p. 9; Director Gorm Rasmussen; Winkel & Magnussen, Auction 206 (Gorm Rasmussen), 1936, no. 19, ill. p. 28; Grosserer Jul. Tafdrup, Vedbæk (1945); Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 465, 1984, lot 56, ill. p. 44.

EXHIBITED: Charlottenborg 1850, Tillæg no. 234 (described as *Tiggere i Rom*); Charlottenborg, Kunstforeningen, *Wilhelm Marstrand*, Charlottenborg 1898, no. 226 (incorrect measurements); Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, *Danish Paintings of the Nineteenth Century from the Collection of Ambassador John Loeb Jr.*, 1994, no. 22.

LITERATURE: Karl Madsen, *Wilhelm Marstrand*, 1810–1873, Copenhagen 1905, p. 125, ill.; Kai Grunth, Max-Lester Auktionen in *Samleren* 1924, p. 176; Herman Madsen, *Kunst i Privat Eje*, I–III, Copenhagen, 1944–45, vol. III, p. 179, ill.; Peter Nisbet, *Danish Paintings of the Nineteenth Century from the Collection of Ambassador John Loeb Jr.*, Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994, discussed and ill. p. 9.

In 1898 Wilhelm Marstrand's first biographer, the painter and art historian Karl Madsen, assembled and arranged the Copenhagen Art Society (Kunstforeningen) Marstrand Exhibition, which he provided with appropriate details of the measurements and materials used by Marstrand. He then wrote a detailed monograph on the artist, published by the Society in 1905. The material was so extensive and apparently so difficult to encompass that in consultation with the Art Society administrators he abandoned the idea of furnishing his book with a complete list of Marstrand's works.

This might explain why the measurements of *An Englishman Pursued by Beggars on the Streets of Rome* were erroneously given in the 1898 exhibition catalogue as 47 x 37 cm (18½ x 14½ in.). Another explanation might be that it was reduced in height on a later occasion, before being reproduced in the monograph. The whereabouts of a drawing with the same motif, said to have belonged to the Henriques family (relatives of the painter Salomon [Sally] Henriques), are today unknown.<sup>1</sup>

Marstrand's main aim, following instruction in the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, had been to become a history painter, but as was the case with most of Eckersberg's gifted pupils, he soon began drawing and painting genre scenes from everyday life in Copenhagen.

Instead of executing unmarketable works with historical, religious, or mythological motifs set in an ideal, divine universe, the young artists selected as their motifs situations from everyday life, portraying the ways in which ordinary human beings related to each other. Marstrand's genre pictures often had a humorous or satirical content, sometimes bordering on pessimism, but never showed signs of social indignation.

His inspiration came from the English artist William Hogarth (1697–1764) and probably from the etchings titled *Scenes from Popular Life in Rome*, 1820–1821, by the Italian painter and graphic artist Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781–1835), works that enjoyed great popularity among the Copenhagen artists.

In Rome Marstrand continued largely in the same vein, though with a difference: in contrast to his painting in Copenhagen, he was no longer at home but was depicting as an observant tourist.

A quite different kind of tourist was the “English fop” in the Loeb collection painting, whom Karl Madsen characterises as “. . . wearing a tight-fitting light blue suit, his cigar stuck in the air, his top hat at the back of his head and his hands in his pockets, strutting past the entrance to a church unaffected by the beggars’ attempts to awaken his sympathy. And in addition they are almost speechless at his appearance. A little girl with a red shawl over her head and leading a blind beggar by the hand, stops in amazement and stares after the apparition with her mouth wide open—she can scarcely believe her own eyes.”<sup>2</sup>

S.L.

<sup>1</sup>I am grateful to Gitte Valentiner for her information regarding this painting.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Madsen, *Wilhelm Marstrand*, 1905, p. 125.