

FRITZ SYBERG

1862–1939

117. *Autumn Ploughing*, 1928

(*Efterårspløjning*)

Oil on canvas, 53¼ x 81½ in. (135 x 207 cm)

Signed and dated lower right with monogram 1928

PROVENANCE: Generalkonsul Ernst Carlsen (1961); Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 138, 1961, lot 23, ill. p. 55; Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 453, 1983, lot 183, ill. p. 61.

Fritz Syberg was one of the principal figures in the group known as *Fynboerne* (the Funen Artists), a common name for a number of painters born—for the most part—on the island of Funen and who began to make names for themselves in the 1890s gradually achieved a reputation that still lives on with undiminished importance in the history of Danish art. Typical of their work was a certain social realism combined with the use of strong colors and a blunt-stroked painting they developed with teacher Kristian Zahrtmann (1843–1917) and later artist Theodor Philipsen (1840–1920), the man responsible for promoting French Impressionism in Denmark.

The Funen Artists were plein air painters, and they found most of their motifs in the landscapes around the Funen towns of Faaborg and Kerteminde and in the home life they knew from their families and friends. The most important works of all the Funen Artists can be seen in Faaborg Museum, which was opened in 1910. The best known of them are Peter Hansen (1868–1928), Fritz Syberg, Johannes Larsen (1867–1961), and Poul S. Christiansen (1855–1933).

During their youth, most of the male artists earned a living as artisan painters during the summer months; during the winter they went to Copenhagen to follow instruction by the painter Kristian Zahrtmann, who ran the Artist's Free Study Schools (*Kunstnernes Frie Studieskoler*) from 1885. These had been established in reaction to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, where in many people's opinion the teaching had congealed in theories and narrow rules that were no longer applicable. Subsequently, the Funen Artists became members of Den Frie Udstilling (the Free Exhibition), created in 1891 as a counter to the spring exhibitions in the Academy, where all submissions were subject to expert approval.

In 1902 Fritz Syberg and his family moved from a house in Svanninge near Faaborg in southern Funen to Kerteminde in the northern part of the island, and this became his home for the following 37 years. There he could observe the alternating seasons and constantly paint the changes that were repeated year after year. *Autumn Ploughing* was undoubtedly created in this fertile coastal region, where the reflected light from the Kattegat in the west and Storebælt in the east illuminates the harvest fields and the heavy brown plowed earth in a broad swath of light.

S.L.