

CARL THOMSEN

1847–1912

118. *The Newly Betrothed*, 1888

(*De nyforlovede*)

Oil on canvas, 21¼ x 26 in. (54 x 66 cm)

Signed and dated lower right: 18 CT (monogram) 81/88; inscribed on reverse: *Nørrebrogade 9*.

PROVENANCE: Overretssagfører Mygind (1901); Kunsthallen, Auction 434, 1993, lot 125, ill.

EXHIBITED: Town Hall, Copenhagen, *Raadhusudstillingen*, 1901, no. 1775 (inscribed in catalogue *Replica of the painting from 1881*); Bruce Museum of Art and Science, Greenwich, Connecticut, and The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, New York, *Danish Paintings of the Nineteenth Century from the Collection of Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr.*, 2005, no. 17, ill.

Carl Thomsen was one of Marstrand's last group of pupils and like Marstrand himself was interested in genre-like paintings. He was also deeply interested in literature, so he often sought his motifs in the literature and figures of the Danish Golden Age. In addition, he created a number of illustrations for books from the same period.

In *The Newly Betrothed* we encounter features relevant to all these factors. The genre motif is seen in the narrative content of the picture, which as always invites the viewer to elaborate on the situation depicted, in this case the portrayal of the handsome young couple apparently surrounded by a small group of family members. There is the admiring younger sister on the bench to the left and the blissfully smiling parents, also seated, the father holding a cup of coffee in his hand. At the back, in semidarkness, the other sister, perhaps spurned, stands with a sorrowful face, almost in silhouette against a window opening on to a sun-drenched garden.

The figures are wearing costumes from the first half of the 19th century, and stylistically the scenery is reminiscent of Thomsen's drawings illustrating a new edition of Johan Ludvig Heiberg's cycle of poems *De Nygifte* (*The Newlyweds*), which, however, was not published until 1891.¹

Carl Thomsen painted this motif both in 1881 and 1888, as he carefully makes clear in the monogram-like form of the signature. The first version of the painting was exhibited at Charlottenborg in 1881, no. 248, and was purchased by the Copenhagen Art Society, Kunstforeningen. It was then disposed of by lottery to the solicitor's clerk H. Hansen, reappearing in the Winkel & Magnussen Auction 330, 1946, lot no. 289, ill. p. 25.

S.L.

¹Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791–1860) was an important literary figure in the Danish Golden Age. His works included vaudevilles such as *Kong Salomon og Jørgen Hattemager* (*King Solomon and Jørgen the Hatter*) (1825) and plays of such varying nature as *Elverhøj* (*The Elfin Mound*, 1828) and *En Sjæl efter Døden* (*A Soul after Death*, 1840). For a number of years Heiberg was the director of the Royal Theatre, and from 1831 he was married to the leading actress in the theatre, née Johanne Luise Pätges (1812–1890).