

J. TH. LUNDBYE

1818–1848

147. *View toward Kullen, Sweden, from Julebæksbroen*
(*the Julebæk Bridge*), 1848

(*Udsigt mod Kullen fra Julebæksbroen*)

Oil on paper laid on canvas, 11 x 14½ in. (28 x 37 cm)

Signed lower left with monogram and dated: februari 48 Godt-Haab

Inscribed on the stretcher with black ink: J. Th. Lundbye, Julebæksbroen ved Hellebæk 1848 1½

PROVENANCE: The artist's mother, widow Cathrine Lundbye; Professor J. L. Ussing, acquired directly from the artist's mother; M. E. Ussing (1931); descendants of J. L. Ussing; Bruun Rasmussen Auction 857, 2015, lot 8, ill. p. 19 (described as *Udsigt mod Kullen fra Julebæksbroen*).

EXHIBITED: Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen, *Arbejder af Johan Thomas Lundbye udstillede i Kunstforeningen i København*, 1893, no. 150; Town Hall, Copenhagen, *Raadhusudstillingen af Dansk Kunst*, 1901, no. 1188; Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen, *Malerier af Johan Thomas Lundbye (1818–1848)*, 1931, no. 108.

LITERATURE: Karl Madsen: *Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818–1848*, Copenhagen 1895, no. 260, ill. (drawing by Karl Madsen) p. 264; Karl Madsen, *Malerier af Johan Thomas Lundbye*, Copenhagen 1931, no. 43, ill.; Viggo Madsen, Risse See (eds.), Karl Madsen, *Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818–1848*, Copenhagen 1949, no. 260, ill. p. 21818–184895; Marianne Saabye (ed.), *Tegninger & Huletanker, Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818–1848*, Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen 1998 (containing articles by Marianne Saabye, Jette Baagøe, Iver Kjær, Bente Skovgaard and Ejner Johansson); Bente Bramming, *Længsel hos Lundbye* in Bente Bramming, Hans Edvard Nørregård-Nielsen, Ettore Rocca (eds.), *Længsel, Lundbye og Kierkegaard*, Aarhus 2013, pp. 99–153; to be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné and biography on the artist by Hans Edvard Nørregård-Nielsen.

Here we have a sun bright winter's day, with two beech trees grown together and a primitive wooden bridge spanning a partially overgrown creek. Deep wheel tracks start in parallel courses in the matted soil between the railings of the bridge, then point in diverging directions across a flat landscape covered by withered grass, glowing with an unusual pale gold hue. A horizontal coastal line lies under a wide, clear blue sky. White waves splash in a bright blue sea that darkens as it reaches the Swedish shore, above which the Kullen headland appears.¹

This Lundbye oil study in the Loeb collection is a small piece that at first glance seems just a simple landscape. Looking closer, it captivates with its wonderful clarity and richness of color. The picture was a preliminary study for a larger exhibition painting. Along with six other works, this was the last piece the painter produced for the annual exhibition at the Royal Danish Academy of Art in the spring of 1848.

A short character study of J. Th. Lundbye and his art, including the last years of the artists's life, were written by one of his many good friends, archaeologist Johan Louis Ussing (1820–1905), who had met with the painter in Rome a few years before.² Among the comments he made about Lundbye were that though he had been reluctant to leave Denmark, Lundbye had wanted for a long time to see Italy's great art. The talented painter worked tirelessly depicting what he saw in Rome, but he longed to return to Denmark.

By mid-July 1846, Lundbye had come home from his time studying abroad, happy and grateful to see his beloved Denmark again and relieved because he felt freed from his recurrent depression and low self-esteem. During his stay abroad, he had begun the strange sketchbook *Trolldom og Hule-Tanker* (*Sorcery and Cave Thoughts*), in which he drew himself as a gnome or *tomte* (a mischievous creature). Under the

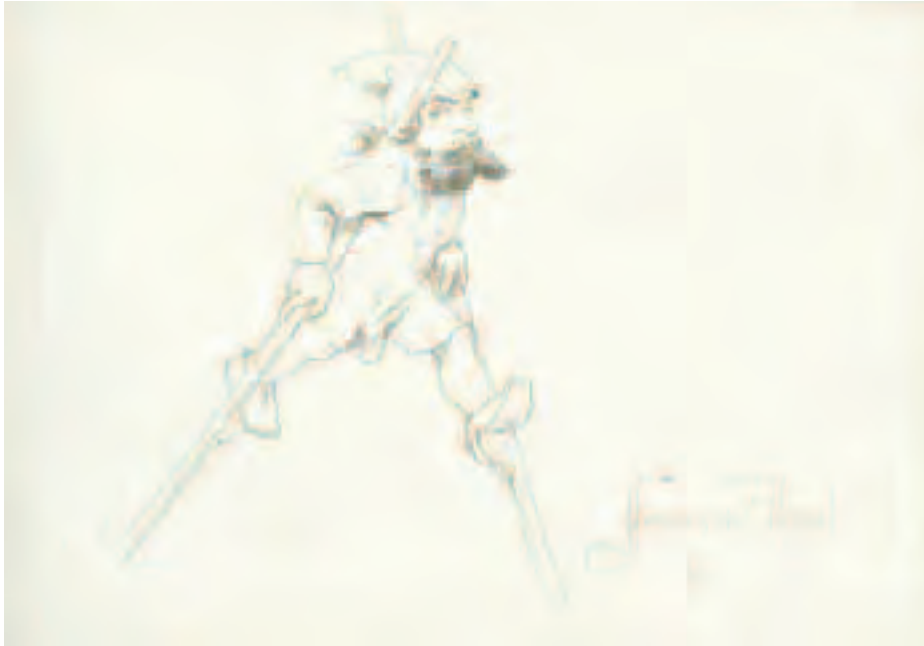


FIG. A *On High Stilts*, 1846
 Pencil, black ink, watercolor, 5¼ x 7½ in. (133 x 190 mm)
 Signed lower right: Florenz 14. April
 The sketchbook *Trolldom og Hule-Tanker (Sorcery and Cave Thoughts)*, 1846–48, leaf no. 3
 The Hirschsprung Collection



FIG. B *Rooted In Resignation*, 1847
 Pencil, brown ink, and wash, 5¼ x 7½ in. (133 x 190 mm)
 The sketchbook *Trolldom og Hule-Tanker (Sorcery and Cave Thoughts)*, 1846–48, leaf no. 27
 The Hirschsprung Collection

name “Bakketrollden Sindre” (“the hill troll Sindre”), Lundbye portrayed his alter ego in a long series of imaginary situations which were actually expressions of his frequent angst, shown with a unique mix of humor and melancholy.³

After his return in 1846, Lundbye had a productive and happy late summer in the region around the town of Kalundborg, where he was born,⁴ followed by an industrious winter in Copenhagen that resulted in, among other pieces, four large paintings for the spring exhibition at Charlottenborg in 1847, one of which was purchased by the Royal Collection of Paintings.⁵

However, after another good summer filled with drawn and painted studies from his favorite areas in northern Zealand, depression and self-reproach once again began tormenting Lundbye.

He had returned to Copenhagen in September 1847. Here he had, as so often before, been struck by infatuation, this time falling deeply in love with Georgia Schouw,⁶ ten years his junior, and his love was reciprocated. Lundbye, however, did not think himself deserving of this love-induced bliss. He had again begun to doubt his worth, both as a human being and as an artist. He felt unbearably torn between his longing for a woman’s love and his pursuit of heavenly joy: two strong feelings that could not be reconciled in his mind. Regarding this, for him a hopeless dilemma, he found some sort of comfort and encouragement in reading the writings of theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. They seemed to command him to cease relationships with women (currently Georgia) and focus on what he called the “next best”—his art and his profound belief in God. Again, Lundbye drew himself in the Sindre’s image, “on the ground of resolving to sacrifice the best thing in life by making the next best as good as the best—dear Soren! It looks so right in your book, but—29–30 Oct 1847 Copenhagen” (Fig. B).⁷

J. Th. Lundbye’s artistic need to communicate was not expressed solely in drawings and paintings. Throughout his life, he kept a journal about all that moved him, as well as many reflective, often joyful but also melancholy and much troubled, letters to friends and acquaintances, most especially to his mother, whom he treasured over anyone else. Lundbye was intellectually gifted and from his boyhood had avidly studied classical poetry and prose. Søren Kierkegaard’s thoughts on existence and belief consumed the young Lundbye with increasing intensity in the last years of his short life.

On January 20, 1848, King Christian VIII died suddenly and was succeeded by his son, Frederik VII.⁸ The violent political turmoil that immediately ensued would develop into the abolition of absolute monarchy and war with the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, but none of this distracted Lundbye. Unlike his comrades, he did not take any interest in politics but the noise and agitated mood of the city disturbed his peace. He wanted to get away from Copenhagen.

On February 9, Lundbye traveled to northern Zealand and took a fortnight’s lodging in the town of Godt-Håb (Good Hope), not far from the coastal town Hellebæk. While there, he produced a good number of exquisite drawings and oil studies, including this one in the Loeb collection, *View toward Kullen, Sweden, from Julebækbroen (Julebæk Bridge)*.

On the northern shore of Zealand, between Hornbæk and Elsinore, the small creek Julebækken runs out into Øresund. It was this view that Lundbye chose for his new painting. We can see how he delighted in the clear, cold air, the sea, the sky, and the lonely, sunlit landscape.

Lundbye returned from Godt-Haab with a large number of successful works that to his great joy were praised by both Professor Høyen and his painter friend P. C. Skovgaard. Subsequently, the two artists must

have been busy finishing their pictures for the Charlottenborg Exhibition, which as usual was to open on March 31. Lundbye's last great painting, *Winter landscape—the Julebæk bridge with view of Kullen and Höganäs*,⁹ was based primarily on his preliminary study, which is now in the Loeb collection. The larger painting, with some changes, is now in the Skovgaard Museum, Viborg, Denmark.

It was most likely without their usual excitement that the young painters showed up at Kongens Nytorv with their exhibition pieces that year; their thoughts were quite certainly with the war down in Schleswig-Holstein. Copenhagen had become a political hotbed; everyone was seized by national furor, including, by now, Lundbye. During February 1848, the turmoil of the French Revolution had spread to most of Europe, including the duchies of Holstein and Schleswig, where there was a push for a free constitution, independence from Denmark, and the merging of both dukedoms into the German Confederation without taking into consideration that the northern half of Schleswig was Danish-minded and Danish-speaking. In Copenhagen, agitated citizens went to the king, demanding the end of absolutism. With no resistance from Frederik VII, his old cabinet dissolved, and the new, popularly elected March Ministry was formed. However, more troubles loomed. An armed rebellion for secession had broken out in the duchies, whose allies, because of misleading rumors, considered the change in the constitution in Copenhagen to be a coup against King Frederik VII and the legitimate government.

Along with a large number of young volunteers—over a thousand, including the young archaeologist J. L. Ussing—Lundbye and Skovgaard enlisted for training in military service at the Central-Exercerskolen af 27. Marts for Studenter, Kunstnere og Polyteknikere (The Central Drill School of March 27 for Students, Artists, and Polytechnicians) in Copenhagen. After no more than about fourteen days of intense training, Lundbye could write in his journal on April 15 that he had enlisted in the army and would be speedily sent to the war scene. The entry in his diary ended that day with the prescient sentence, often quoted: “If a stray bullet—then it will only bring a heart to rest, that suffers from more painful wounds. God bless Denmark! And my mother!”¹⁰ Indeed, it was a stray bullet that killed him.

P. C. Skovgaard was rejected for active service and had to remain in Copenhagen. J. L. Ussing did not go either. As a royal official, he received an intractable rejection to his application by Monrad, Minister of Culture. Ussing recounts that episode in his previously mentioned memories, where he also described his last meeting with Lundbye: “My neighbor during the exercises was my dear friend, the painter J. T. Lundbye. It was the last time I saw him. At the end of April he departed for the army in Sundeved¹¹ along with Svend Grundtvig and Carlos Dalgas, and a few days later he was killed, a victim of the unhappy shooting accident at Bedsted Field.” Wrapped in the flag of Denmark, J. Th. Lundbye was buried at the nearby Bedsted Cemetery.

In January 1863—not many months before the outbreak of the Second Schleswig War, so fateful for Denmark—Lundbye's mother died. Despite all warnings, she had traveled to Southern Jutland in the hard winter to see her son's grave this one time. She was buried by his side. Presumably, several years earlier, J. L. Ussing had acquired Lundbye's beautiful little oil study from her, with the tracks in the road veering in divergent directions, as if they were the painter's questions about life choices.

S.L.



FIG. C *Winter Landscape. View toward Kullen, Sweden and Höganäs from Julebæksbroen, 1848*
Oil on canvas, 23½ x 36½ in. (60 x 93 cm)
Skovgaard Museet, Viborg

¹Kullen is the name of the long headland that lies by the entrance to Øresund in Höganäs municipality, in the northwestern Skåne, Sweden. The Kullen peninsula is situated across from the upper coast of northern Zealand.

²Johan Louis Ussing (1820–1905) was a Danish philologist and archaeologist who later became known for promoting Danish knowledge of ancient Roman and ancient Greek culture. J. L. Ussing, *Af mit Levned*, published by his sons, Copenhagen 1906.

³J. Th. Lundbye, *Trolldom & Huletanker, 1846–48*, Den Hirschsprungske Samling 1998. Sketchbook with a series of drawings with Lundbye himself in the shape of the hill troll Sindre as the recurring motif. Comprised of leaves produced mostly during the last part of Lundbye's travel abroad, and ended on April 15, 1848, eleven days before his death. On the last drawing, dated 30 March 48, the *tomte*. Sindre is featured as a volunteer soldier.

⁴Cf. *Ships in a Harbor at Kalundborg Fjord, 1846*. Loeb collection no. 142.

⁵*A Milking-Place near the Manor og Vognserup (Malkeplads ved Herregaarden Vognserup)*. Exhibited at the Charlottenborg Exhibition 1847, no. 120.

⁶Georgia Schouw (1828–1868). After the death of Lundbye, Georgia and P. C. Skovgaard got together, sharing their grief over the death of their mutual friend. The following year they were engaged, and in 1851 they were married. Cf. Loeb collection no. 143. *Driveway near Vejle, in the background the town*.

⁷Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), theologian and philosopher, father of Christian Existentialism.

⁸Christian VIII (1786–1848), king of Denmark from 1839, followed by his son, Frederik VII (1808–1863).

⁹*Winter Landscape with a View toward Kullen, Sweden and Höganäs from Julebæksbroen (Vinterlandskab. Julebæksbroen med Udsigt mod Kullen og Höganäs)*, 1848. Oil on canvas, 23½ x 36½ in. (60 x 93 cm). Signed lower right with monogram and "48 Mrtz."

¹⁰See further Ejner Johansson, "Den sidste måned i Lundbyes liv. Maleren i krig 1848" ("The last month in Lundbye's life. The painter at war 1848") in Marianne Saabye (ed.), *Tegninger & Huletanker, Johan Thomas Lundbye 1818–1848*, Den Hirschsprungske Samling 1998, pp. 91–120.

¹¹Sundeved is a peninsula between Aabenraa Fjord and Flensborg Fjord. Svend Grundtvig (1824–1883), son of N. F. S. Grundtvig. Carlo Dalgas (1821–1851) died after being critically wounded in the last battle of the war at Møllhorst in Schleswig-Holstein.