

VILHELM HAMMERSHØI

1864–1916

38. *Landscape from Virum Near Frederiksdal, Summer, 1888*

(*Landskab fra Virum ved Frederiksdal, sommer*)

Oil on canvas, 10¼ x 17¾ in. (26 x 45 cm)

Signed bottom left: VH

PROVENANCE: Grosserer Julius Hertz, Frederiksberg; Winkel & Magnussen, Auction 189, 15.2.1936 (Peter Hertz, art historian, son of Julius), lot 12; Overretssagfører Otto Bing; Sotheby's London 6.6.2001, lot 10, ill.

EXHIBITED: Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen, *Vilhelm Hammershøi*, 1916, no. 48; Liljevalchs Konsthall, Stockholm, *Nyere dansk kunst*, 1919, no. 20; Musée du jeu de Paume, Paris, *L'art danois fin XVIII^e siècle jusqu'à 1900*, 1928, no. 56; 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. 22, ill.; New York, Scandinavia House, *Luminous Modernism, Scandinavian Art Comes to America. A Centennial Retrospective 1912–2012, 2011–2012*; Scandinavia House, New York, *Danish Paintings from the Golden Age to the Modern Breakthrough, Selections from the Collection of Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr.*, 2013, no. 14.

LITERATURE: Alfred Bramsen, *Vilhelm Hammershøis Arbejder, Fortegnelse*, Copenhagen, 1900, no. 24; Sophus Michaëlis and Alfred Bramsen, *Vilhelm Hammershøi, Kunstneren og hans Værk*, Copenhagen, 1918, no. 70 (described as *Landskab, Sommer, Virum*); Poul Vad, *Vilhelm Hammershøi*, Copenhagen, 1988, p. 62 (English edition 1992); Susanne Meyer-Abich, *Vilhelm Hammershøi. Das malerische Werk*, Inauguraldissertation, Ruhr-Universität, Bochum 1995, no. 58 (described as *Landschaft bei Virum. Skizze*); Patricia G. Berman, *In Another Light, Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 2007, p. 227–228, ill. p. 226; Patricia G. Berman, *Luminous Modernism*, New York, 2011, p. 38, ill. p. 30 (detail), 39, cover.

Golden brown fields and a clouded, hazy sky separated by a narrow line of white houses surrounded by trees that are so distant that the details are almost entirely obscured—such is the motif of this picture. The simplicity is typical of Hammershøi's early landscapes, where, in addition, he was particularly preoccupied with horizontal lines. The locality is the village of Virum, about seven and a half miles (12 kilometers) north of Copenhagen with a row of farms and, on the left, Blæsenborg Mill, all seen from rather less than three-fifths of a mile (one kilometer) to the south.

The picture was painted in the summer of 1888 while Hammershøi was staying in the nearby village of Lyngby at the home of Karl Madsen (1855–1938), originally a painter and then the leading critic of the time and a warm spokesman for the new art. Madsen was one of Hammershøi's earliest admirers, one of the close friends whom he later portrayed in *Fem portrætter (Five Portraits)* (1905, Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm). Madsen was then living permanently in an 18th-century country house at Lyngby, and it was here Hammershøi painted his first interior with white doors.¹ From the house it was only just over three-fifths of a mile (one kilometer) to the place where he sat working with the present painting. The road leading there would take him through the forest and past the royal palace of Sorgenfri and also past one of Jens Juel's motifs, the high rise in the forest known as "Dansebakken," which was once a favorite spot for excursions and entertainments.²

The extensive meadows near Virum, which dominate Hammershøi's painting, were just to the east of the Furesø lake. The atmosphere can still be experienced today in the large protected area close to the lake, near Frederiksdal, a county seat dating from the 1740s, and the painter N. Abildgaard's country house, Spurveskjul, from 1805, where Hammershøi later rented rooms. The fields adjoin the large area of natural



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beauty around the Mølleå River (“Mill Stream”), which flows from Furesø lake through Bagsværd and Lyngby lakes and out into the Sound, bordered all the way by forest and marsh.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the water from the stream provided the power for various sizeable industrial undertakings in the area. The Mølleå valley and the forests have been preserved to the present day, while most of the open areas have been parceled out to private housing in areas that are now suburbs of Copenhagen.

Hammershøi also painted a larger version of this landscape with slightly different proportions and with a clearer sky and minus the mill.³ It was shown in Den Frie Udstilling in 1891 and belonged to the dentist Alfred Bramsen, who became known as the most important collector of Hammershøi’s work. During his stay at this place, Hammershøi also made several paintings of Lyngby Lake, of which he had a view when looking south from the very same spot.

A motif with so few elements and such a strictly limited scale of color gave Hammershøi the possibility of concentrating on the fine nuances, and he has thereby created space and atmosphere in the picture. To Hammershøi, simplicity was not a limitation but a choice.

E.F.

¹*Interiør. Den gamle bilæggerovn (Interior. The Old Stove)*, 1888, oil on canvas, 23³/₅ x 20¹/₂ in. (60 x 52 cm), Statens Museum for Kunst.

²Jens Juel, *Dansebakken ved Sorgenfri* (1800) (*A Party at Dansebakken near Sorgenfri*), oil on canvas, 16¹/₂ x 24 in. (42 x 61 cm), Statens Museum for Kunst.

³*Landskab fra Virum ved Frederiksdal (Landscape from Virum near Frederiksdal)*, 37⁷/₅ x 21¹/₂ in. (49.5 x 54.5 cm), private owner.