

CARL HOLLSØE

1863–1935

45. *Artist's Wife Setting Table*

(*Kunstnerens hustru dækker bordet*)

Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 25½ in. (73 x 65 cm)

Signed lower right: C. Holsøe

PROVENANCE: Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 682, 2000, lot 1449, ill. p. 49 and cover.

EXHIBITED: 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. 19.

EXHIBITED: 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. 16, ill.

LITERATURE: Patricia G. Berman, *In Another Light, Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 2007, p. 244, ill. p. 248.

The charm of soft indirect light in an interior household setting never failed to intrigue Carl Holsøe throughout his long career of depicting domestic tranquility. Here we have an example of his ability to capture the play of light and use it to illuminate indirectly the subject of his painting, Mrs. Holsøe.

We see Holsøe's wife, Emily Heise, his favorite and most frequent model, setting the table sometime after 1886 in their minimally furnished dining room in Lyngby, Copenhagen. "Less is more" was a decorating choice typical of well-to-do homeowners at the turn of the century in Denmark. That choice is epitomized here by the couple's two handsome mahogany chairs, corner cupboard and side table, a softly sparkling Swedish crystal chandelier, glowing white porcelain plates above the doorway, and a woven pastel rug, the colors of which echo the pinks and muted greens in the flower vase. Though few in number, the objects in the room are tasteful and placed with an artist's eye for composition.

The linen tablecloth, illuminated by summer light filtered through white muslin curtains, is the focal point of the painting; nevertheless, though she is more dimly lit, Holsøe has made sure we are mindful of how important the woman is to the composition.

The Artist's Wife Setting the Table gives evidence that Holsøe was a master of the interior setting, as do his many studies of women such as *Reading by Window*, *Standing by Window*, *Sewing by Chair*, and *Woman Standing near Cello*, which hang in national collections throughout Scandinavia.

B.H.