

VILHELM KYHN

1819–1903

75. *Late Autumn Afternoon. Motif from Horneland Near Faaborg,* 1863

(*Sildig eftermiddag i efterhøsten. Motiv fra Horneland i nærheden af Faaborg*)

Oil on canvas, 34²/₃ x 51¹/₄ in. (88 x 130 cm)

Signed and dated lower left: V Kyhn 1863

PROVENANCE: Probably Dr. med. L. J. Mygge (1864); Frøken Ida Pouline Holst; Winkel & Magnussen, Auction 300, (Ida Pouline Holst) 1943, lot 13, p. 6 (incorrectly described as *Høstlandskab ved herregaarden Palsgaard*); Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 236, 1969, lot 19, ill. p. II; Fabrikant Hother Neckelmann (1969); Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 688, 2000, lot 1458, ill. (described as *Stille sommeraften i høstens tid; i forgrunden legende børn*).

EXHIBITED: Charlottenborg 1864, no. 70 (described as *Sildig Eftermiddag i Efterhøsten. Motivet taget paa Horneland i Nærheden af Faaborg. I Baggrunden sees Horne Kirke*); Charlottenborg, *Vilhelm Kyhn 1819–1903, Hundreårsudstilling*, 1919, no. 138 (measurements given, 47 x 68 cm, are incorrect). However, on the basis of subsequent information in the catalogue for the Centenary Exhibition, the landscape from Horneland exhibited there must be considered identical with the painting in the Loeb collection. The wording in the catalogue is “*Sildig Eftermiddag i Efterhøsten. Horneland ved Faaborg. Sign.: V. Kyhn 1863. Udstillet 1864. Tilh. Dr. med Mygge*” (Late Autumn Afternoon. Horneland near Faaborg. Sign.: V. Kyhn 1863. Exhibited 1864. Belonging to Dr. Mygge, M.D.). 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. 27.

In 1836, the year in which Kyhn was admitted to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, one of the leading figures of the Danish Golden Age, scientist Hans Christian Ørsted, gave a lecture on the Danish spirit, which he believed derived from the Danish countryside. In the distant past, he said, our forefathers settled in this gentle and kindly landscape “from which everything terrible is almost completely excluded. . . . Surrounded by this countryside, the people have now lived and developed over many centuries, so should it not be possible to find some consonance between the two?”

Late Autumn Afternoon is precisely such a “gentle and kindly landscape,” with no suggestion at all of anything “terrible.” It creates an image of the spirit of the people of Funen Island as many still think of it, and it is even more clearly defined by the presence of a pair of children playing peacefully in the wall of flowers in the foreground.

Horneland is a peninsula projecting out into the southern Funen archipelago to the west of the town of Faaborg. It is a fertile, area surrounded by peaceful waters teeming with fish and dotted with a large number of islands and islets, of which we here glimpse the small Illumø in the center and the larger Helnæs in the far distance on the horizon.

For the landscape artists of the Golden Age, the year had a regular rhythm. Their summers were spent in various parts of Denmark, drawing and painting outdoors, producing sketches and studies for use in the winter’s work, which was about creating large, well-composed landscapes for the spring exhibitions at Charlottenborg.

In the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Kyhn had been the pupil of two contrasting teachers. On the one hand there was the sober Professor Eckersberg, who had taught him to paint studies out in the open and to reproduce what was there to be reproduced, neither more nor less. On the other hand there was the

Romantic J. L. Lund (1777–1867), who had studied at the Copenhagen Academy together with Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) and at that time was still in contact with the German Romantic currents emanating from Dresden, where both Friedrich and the Norwegian J. C. Dahl (1788–1857) were professors.

Throughout his life Vilhelm Kyhn struggled in his art to unite the disparate teaching to which he had been exposed in his youth. In contrast to increasing numbers of his colleagues, even late in the century he remained loyal to the art historian N. L. Høyen's vision of a national Romantic painting that could reveal their country to the Danes and sing the praises of its special qualities. In 1844, Høyen had summed up his thoughts on this in a famous lecture titled *On the Conditions for the Development of a Scandinavian National Art* (*Om Betingelserne for en skandinavisk Nationalkunsts Udvikling*).

Although this scene from Horneland in Funen is apparently an example of a predominantly topographical presentation of a specific locality as it looked in reality, there is not much of Eckersberg about this painting. It is a typical Romantic work. With the diagonal line across a rolling landscape and its tall foreground vegetation—which both emphasizes the depth and brings our gaze back from its journey out into the picture's space—it reminds us of the source of the Romantics' inspiration: Dutch landscape painting of the 17th century.

S.L.