

HANS HENRIK LERFELDT

1946–1989

79. *Sleepwalker*

Watercolor, 11¾ x 7¾ in. (30 x 20 cm)

Signed and dated: 83

PROVENANCE: Galerie Asbæk, Copenhagen (1983).

EXHIBITED: The American Scandinavian Society of New York at Privatbanken Gallery, *Selections of Contemporary Danish Art*, 1989, no. II.

A quite young woman stares at us, but she is actually looking into herself, and we are drawn along with her into an enigmatic universe through her wide-open, porcelain-blue eyes. On the other side, a small transparent girl is walks toward us with her eyes closed. A gigantic bluebottle fly has affixed itself to the child's skirt in the middle of her stomach.

It is left to spectators to interpret this vision, just as the artist himself presumably developed his own ideas only as his strange picture took shape.

As often happens in Lerfeldt's pictorial universe, we are confronted with a perfect female fixed in a glamorous attitude such as is seen in advertisements. In the Loeb collection work, she is Lolita-like, with skin that looks glazed; her shiny brown hair fits like a silk bonnet around a serious, doll-like face.

We are disturbed in this work by the presence of an intruding insect that is bigger than it should be, found where it does not belong. The intruding insect is not an innocent memory of childhood anymore because the girl is approaching adult life, and then such memories of childhood will not remain innocent; they will be transformed into nightmares.

Lerfeldt's stories within the stories take place behind brilliantly executed facades and are played out both in the artist's subconscious and in the ideas he is able to awaken in the mind of the viewer. In this case they are disturbing presentiments of an irrevocable and fateful confrontation between innocence and corruption.

S.L.