

J. P. MØLLER

1783–1854

91. *The Castle of Pløen, Seen from the Park. Mild Autumn Day, 1842*

(*Slottet Pløn set fra parken, mild efterårsdag*)

Oil on canvas, 15½ x 21 in. (39.5 x 53.5 cm)

Signed and dated with initials lower right: IPM 1842 (On the reverse, a mark burnt into the stretcher: C VIII)

PROVENANCE: Commissioned by King Christian VIII, 1841 (61 Rd<sup>1</sup>), possibly identical to painting entitled *Landskab (Landscape)* owned by Queen Caroline Amalie; the Dowager Queen's Estate Auction, 24.4.1882, Amalienborg, lot 134; Fabrikant J. Adler (1882); Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 522, 1989, lot 22, ill. p. 25.

EXHIBITED: Charlottenborg, 1842, no. 15 (ownership described as His Majesty the King).

LITERATURE: Fortegnelse over Hans Kongelige Höihed Prinds Christian Frederiks Malerisamling. Første Deel. Arbejder af danske Kunstnere og Kunst Academiets Elever samt af Fremmede som have lært eller övet Kunsten i Danmark, no. 539 (Manuscript, The Royal Library, NKS 1811).

The Castle of Pløen (Plöen<sup>2</sup>), standing in the town of the same name, is situated in the province of Schleswig-Holstein, which when this picture was painted in 1842 was still Danish. Since 1761, both the town and the county had belonged to the Danish royal family by inheritance. J. P. Møller executed this portrayal of the castle and the park at the request of King Christian VIII, who was also president of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. His Majesty was very interested in art, especially topographical portrayals of regions of Denmark, and he owned a large collection of paintings with motifs of this kind.

Most of these pictures left the possession of the royal family in three auctions of the estates of, respectively, his son and successor Frederik VII (1864), Countess Danner (1874), who was born Louise Rasmussen and accorded the title of countess on becoming in 1850 King Frederik VII's morganatic wife, and finally Queen Caroline Amalie, the widow of Christian VIII (1882).<sup>3</sup>

It is probable that the Loeb collection painting of the Castle of Pløen came onto the open market as a result of one of these sales. However, the original title of the painting does not coincide with any in the printed catalogues for these auctions. The explanation for this might be that the motif was not recognised when the lists of the estates were drawn up, or perhaps there was a reluctance to print the correct title in the catalogue because, as a result of the 1864 war, the town and its castle were no longer in the hands of the Danish royal family.

*The Castle of Pløen, Seen from the Park. Mild Autumn Day* was exhibited at Charlottenborg in 1842. The following year another painting with a motif from Pløen, also owned by Christian VIII, was exhibited by Møller. The name Pløen is not encountered in any of the above catalogues, but it does emerge from a handwritten note in the 1882 inventory of Queen Caroline Amalie's effects that a manufacturer by the name of J. Adler bought two works from J. P. Møller painted in 1842, one of them titled *Parti af en By med et Slot (View of a Town with a Castle)*, the other *Landskab (Landscape)*. The same hand has added "Pløen" beside the word "town" in the first of these.

From Reitzel's register of the Charlottenborg exhibitions published in 1883, we know that at an auction in 1882 J. Adler bought a painting entitled *Pløen med dets Omgivelser; set fra Landevejen i Nærheden af Riksdorf*.



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*Formiddagsbelysning (Pløen and its Surroundings; Seen from the Highway near Riksdorf. Late Morning Light)* for 440 kroner, and that the original owner of the work was Christian VIII. The auction concerned was undoubtedly that of Queen Caroline Amalie's effects.

In contrast to the Charlottenborg records, the catalogue of the Dowager Queen's effects is furnished with measurements, while the sale prices are listed in both. From this, we gain the information that *Parti af en By* (i.e., Pløen) *med et Slot* cost 440 kroner and that the work's dimensions were not the same as those in the painting in the Loeb collection. But the measurements of the second purchase made by Adler, *Landskab*, were close to those of *Slottet Pløen, set fra Parken; mild efteraarsdag*.

So the possibility cannot be discounted that *Slottet Pløen, set fra Parken; mild efteraarsdag* was sold and left the possession of the royal family in 1882 under the title of *Landskab* at the auction of Caroline Amalie's effects, where it was acquired by J. Adler. *Landskab*, which was the lesser of Adler's two purchases, cost him 105 kroner. According to the catalogue of the estate auction of J. P. Møller,<sup>4</sup> the artist made a number of drawn studies of Pløen Castle and its surroundings in 1840, 1841, and 1842. These include a pencil drawing entitled *Pløen set fra Slotshaven (Pløen Seen from the Castle Park)*, dated September 17, but with no indication of the year.

S.L.

<sup>1</sup>The price in old Danish currency.

<sup>2</sup>Both spellings for this locality can be found.

<sup>3</sup>I am grateful to Charlotte Christensen for this information.

<sup>4</sup>J.P. Møller 1783–1854, *Deceased Landscape Painter, Justitsraad, Charlottenborg 30 October 1855*. Both the present catalogue of effects and the lists of the effects of the three royal personages are in Statens Museum for Kunst.