

CHRISTIAN MOURIER-PETERSEN

1858–1945

95. *French Landscape, Provence* (1888)

(*Fransk landskab, Provence*)

Oil on canvas, 20½ x 26⅔ in. (52 x 68 cm)

PROVENANCE: Civilingeniør Vagn Mourier-Petersen (1950); collection belonging to Christian Mourier-Petersen's family (1988); Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 510, 1988, lot 329, ill. p. 135 (described as *Å med træer, Provence, Sydfrankrig*); Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 593, 1993, lot 93, ill. p. 55.

EXHIBITED: Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen, *Christian Mourier-Petersen 1858–1945, Malerier*, 1950, no. 5 (described as *Aa med Træer, Sydfrankrig*).

At the end of the 1880s, Christian Mourier-Petersen visited the south of France, including Arles, where he struck up a friendship with Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), and the two artists met regularly in van Gogh's favorite café. In May 1888, Mourier-Petersen went to Paris and lodged with Theo van Gogh (1857–1891). Contact between the two Danish and Dutch artists was maintained in an exchange of letters.

Among the subjects painted in Arles by Mourier-Petersen were some flowering fruit trees, presumably inspired by van Gogh's example. The Danish artist met many of the French Impressionists in Paris, and he was influenced by their art, but he was also taken by the somewhat older Barbizon artists.

The landscape in the Loeb collection shows evidence of both sources of inspiration. The strong light and the glaringly beautiful play of color surrounding the calligraphically distributed fruit trees in the background, resplendent in their profusion of flowers, is reminiscent of the passion and genius of the Dutch painter. However, the stream in the foreground, in which everything—including the melancholy of the solitary girl—is reflected awakens memories of works by a painter like Corot (1796–1876).

French Landscape, Provence is an interesting and strangely divided work that in several ways heralds the radical expression of the coming century, though without being able to renounce the tradition of the past. It stands both as a record of a journey and a reminiscence of the way he saw the scene with his artistic soul.

S.L.