



Henrik Wivel

Hammershøi in the David Collection

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A new book tells the story of the “secret” Hammershøi collection in the heart of Copenhagen.

The David Collection, in the center of Copenhagen, is best known for its unique holdings of art from the world of Islam, but the museum actually also has an exceptional treasure of works by Vilhelm Hammershøi. With its 14 paintings and chalk drawings, the museum’s Hammershøi collection is one of the world’s four largest and finest.

Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916) is among the most important painters in the history of Danish art. He has also gained international recognition through important exhibitions — for example in Paris and New York — and his works are sold for sky-high prices the world over. Those at the David Collection, however, still live a fairly secret life. *Hammershøi in the David Collection* will change that now.

In *Hammershøi in the David Collection*, the Hammershøi expert Henrik Wivel writes empathetically about the artist’s life and art and provides an in-depth study of the 14 pieces in the David Collection in relation to his life and times. Hammershøi was a member of the radical Copenhagen middle class at the turn of last century. He maintained close ties to his family throughout his life, and especially his wife, Ida, his sister, Anna, and the family’s homes were his favorite motifs. The best-known are his many interiors from Strandgade 30, kept to a palette of gray, green, and russet.

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Hammershøi also painted landscapes and portraits, however, and the David Collection has exquisite examples of all these genres.

The book moreover presents the story of the founder of the David Collection, Christian Ludvig David (1878-1960), a lawyer by profession, and how he transformed the building at Kronprinsse-gade 30 into a unique art collection. C. L. David was especially fond of Danish painting from the period 1890-1920, and his holding included works by Vilhelm Hammershøi. Among them is *Open Doors*, considered one of the artist's masterpieces.

The Hammershøi collection is not better known to the public because after C. L. David's death in 1960, a decision was made to focus on other aspects, primarily Islamic works of art. As a result, art from C. L. David's own time was not even exhibited for an extended period. Not until 1995 was a selection shown at a special exhibition on the occasion of the museum's 50th anniversary, and finally — after the museum underwent extensive remodeling in 2009 — large parts of the collection of Danish Early Modern Art emerged once again.

Most of the 14 works by Hammershøi will be on display at the David Collection until August 2018, after which several will be lent out to a major Hammershøi exhibition in France.

About the author

Dr. Henrik Wivel is senior editor at Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, University of Copenhagen, and art critic for the daily *Kristeligt Dagblad*. He is moreover the author of a large number of books about literature and visual art.

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