



Inv. no. B 310

VILHELM HAMMERSHØI (1864–1916)
THREE SHIPS, CHRISTIANSHAVN CANAL, 1905
OIL ON CANVAS

49.5 X 72.5 CM

In 1898, Vilhelm Hammershøi moved to Christianshavn – a district in Copenhagen distinctive for its maritime and industrial environment. The neighbourhood became very important to him, both personally and artistically: Hammershøi had found an apartment in Mikkel Vibes Gård at Strandgade 30, which would form the setting of his life until 1908. Here he painted some of the interior scenes for which he would later become so famous (B 307) (B 309) (B 312). He also created several works in which the architecture of Christianshavn, a mixture of old, historic buildings and modern houses, played a central role.

After 1900, Hammershøi began to paint ships,¹ and in 1905 he portrayed three ships moored along the Christianshavn Canal. At this point in time, the district was teeming with people, being home to major places of work such as the shipyard Burmeister and Wain, the harbour warehouses and the dock. According to Hammershøi, however, Christianshavn is a quiet, static and deserted world, one in which – as in his other paintings of architecture and urban settings – no people appear.

This painting exemplifies Hammershøi's keen interest in lines – vertical, horizontal as well as diagonal, distinctive as well as understated – that intertwine to form geometric patterns. Several have pointed out that *Three Ships. Christianshavn Canal* has a close kinship with the idiom of photography, and it's very likely that Hammershøi has used a photographic reference; however, no such photo has been

discovered as yet.²

- ¹ Poul Vad in Kjeld von Folsach and Nana Lund (eds.): *Dansk kunst i Davids Samling – fra Philipsen til Saxbo, The David Collection, Copenhagen 1995*, p. 102. and Annette Rosenvold Hvidt and Gertrud Oelsner: *Vilhelm Hammershøi: på sporet af det åbne billede, Copenhagen 2018*, p. 238.
- ² Henrik Wivel: *Hammershøi i Davids Samling, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2017*, p. 76.

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Alfred Bramsen: *Udvalg af Vilh. Hammershøis arbejder*, København 1930, cat.no. 26, pp. 7, 9;
Erik Zahle: "Billedkunst" in *C.L. Davids Samling. Nogle Studier*, [1], København 1948, p. 207;
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