



Inv. no. B 322

CONSTANTIN HANSEN
CHRISTIAN NATHAN DAVID, 1861–1862
OIL ON CANVAS

39 X 31.5 CM

Constantin Hansen has portrayed the politician and economist Christian Georg Nathan David (1793–1874), grandfather of the founder of The David Collection, C.L. David.¹ The portrait is not a commissioned by the sitter. Rather, it is a preliminary study for Constantin Hansen's monumental history painting *The Danish Constituent Assembly*, which the artist created in 1860–1864.²

The painting shows the first meeting of the Danish Constituent Assembly at Christiansborg Palace on 23 October 1848. The assembly had been tasked with drafting Denmark's constitution. C.N. David, who had not been elected to his seat on the Assembly, had been appointed by the king. In the large painting, he appears in the middle distance on the right, behind other, important members such as A.F. Tscherning, Orla Lehmann and D.G. Monrad. As part of the Constituent Assembly, C.N. David fought against universal suffrage, as he was opposed to people outside the bourgeoisie having influence.

When it was time to vote on the final constitution the following year, C.N. David abstained from voting. He believed that the new constitution went too far in its changes and that too much power was transferred to the common people – a power that, in his view, belonged to the king.³

In December 1849, C.N. David was elected as a member of the Folketing – the lower chamber of the Danish Parliament at the time – for the Conservative Party. He did not stand again in the 1852 election, but a few years later – in 1854 – he became a royally appointed member of the newly established Council of State, which was to be an advisory body for the entire monarchy and have decision-making authority over common taxes and state loans. In C.A. Blume's conservative government 1864–1865, C.N. David served as Minister for Finance. In the following years he was a member of the Landsting, the upper chamber of Parliament, until he withdrew from Danish politics in 1870.⁴

C.L. David inherited Constantin Hansen's portrait from his father's sister, Adelaide Marie Antonie David (1832–1932). She was married to colonel Wilhelm Lehmann (1817–1894), brother of the politician Orla Lehmann (1810–1870) who also once lived at Kronprinsessegade 30, and he too had his portrait painted by Constantin Hansen in 1862.

In addition to this portrait, The David Collection owns another preliminary study for *The Danish Constituent Assembly*.

¹ <https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/cn-david-1793-1874>

² In addition to his political career, C.N. David is also remembered for championing the freedom of the press and for founding the weekly journal *Fædrelandet*, the first issue of which was published in September 1834.

³ The painting is at The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg. A sketch is on display in The Conversation Room in the Danish Parliament at Christiansborg Palace.

⁴ The name of C.L. David's paternal grandfather was originally David Albrecht Joseph David, but when he chose to be baptised in 1830, he changed his name to Christian Georg Nathan David. For more information, see Harald Jørgensen: *C.N. David, Copenhagen 1950*.

Published in:

Emil Hannover: *Maleren Constantin Hansen: en Studie i dansk Kunsthistorie*, København 1901, cat. 425, p. 333;

Erik Zahle: "Billedkunst" in *C.L. Davids Samling. Nogle Studier*, [1], København 1948, pp. 205-206, 242-243;

Harald Jørgensen: *C.N. David*, København 1950, p. 277;

Verner Jul Andersen: *Dansk kunst og kunsthåndværk, Davids Samling*, 2. ed., København 1983, cat. 422, p. 170;