



Inv. no. B 453

JENS FERDINAND WILLUMSEN (1863–1958)
DESCENDING STREET IN ALORA, 1889
OIL ON CANVAS

98.5 × 80.5 CM

In 1888, J.F. Willumsen, who was 26 at the time, set out on his first trip abroad, which first took him to Paris and from there on to Spain. Extending across eight months, the journey had a crucial impact on Willumsen and his artistic development.

*'I reached the first artistic peak of my youth and understood that the old art meant nothing to me in light of my new communion with nature. only nature could teach me to paint. In Alora, the artist in me matured. I found myself and shaped the outlook on colour and overall idiom to which I would remain true throughout my life, even though I always continued to explore new possibilities, new paths.'*¹

Street in Alora is one of the first pictures which see Willumsen painting by strong daylight, imbuing the scene with a distinctive intensity of light that affects the colours, making them bold and rich in contrast. *'The countryside of the South spoke to me in colours,'*²

Willumsen recollected several years after his visit to the small mountain town of Alora, not far from Málaga, where he found this scene with its peculiar perspective. Willumsen chose an elevated point of view from which the steep, almost dizzying downward course of the street is marked out by the descending lines of architecture. The background with its lush, expansive landscape and the mountain range in the distance raises the terrain again – all the way up to the picture frame.

Willumsen considered the painting among the best works from his journey: ‘*The most consistent, complete and also the most successful picture I painted in Alora was the street going downwards. Here, I had found a new subject. I have never seen another painter paint anything like this, neither before nor since. It really represents a large hole, and a hole will deter any painter, requiring him to paint something which is “nothing”.*’³

Today, *Street in Alora* merits attention as one of Willumsen’s early masterpieces. In the 1950s, C.L. David acquired it for his collection, which today comprises a total of nineteen works by Willumsen’s hand.

- ¹ Quote from J.F. Willumsen’s unpublished memoirs, 1929–1943, J.F. Willumsens Museum. Citation translated by René Lauritsen. See Lise Buurgård: J.F. Willumsen. *Bjerget, kvinden, selvet*, Odense 1999, p. 34. Nevertheless, the artist Anna Sophie Petersen, who travelled to Spain with Willumsen in 1889, created a painting sharing the same subject.
- ² Ernst Mentze: J.F. Willumsen. *Mine erindringer*, Copenhagen 1953, p. 50. Citation translated by René Lauritsen.
- ³ Ernst Mentze: J.F. Willumsen, København 1957, pp. 18–19. Citation translated by René Lauritsen.

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