



Inv. no. B 278

POUL S. CHRISTIANSEN (1855–1933)
PORTRAIT OF JOHAN ROHDE, 1900–1903
OIL ON CANVAS

125 X 96.5 CM

In his numerous self-portraits, Poul S. Christiansen always experimented with form and colour. He took a different approach when painting portraits of family members and friends: Christiansen was a painstaking artist and worked slowly, which is why his portrait of the painter, graphic artist, designer, art critic and writer Johan Rohde (1856–1935) was no less than three years in the making.

Johan Rohde is depicted as a well-dressed gentleman, wearing a brown corduroy suit set off by a white shirt and blue butterfly. His relaxed attitude makes him appear open and confident, and his keenly alert, direct gaze conveys the impression that here is a man who is present in the moment. The most striking aspect of the well-composed and colouristically subdued painting is the way in which Poul S. Christiansen has reproduced Johan Rohde's skin, which has a mottled, almost transparent appearance, making the blood vessels and muscles underneath clearly visible. However, this does not disrupt the overall

coherence of the picture nor the fact that it is one of the best portraits from Poul S. Christiansen's hand. Here he has not only communicated the personality of the person portrayed, but also his own great admiration for him.

In the years around the year 1900, Johan Rohde was one of the most important figures on the Danish and Nordic art scene due to his gift for innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. He was one of the driving forces behind the establishment of The Artists' Independent Study Schools in 1882, where he would later teach.¹ In 1891, Rohde was a co-founder of the artists' association and exhibition venue The Free Exhibition, where many works by prominent contemporary painters from abroad were presented throughout the years – thereby greatly inspiring Danish artists, particularly the younger generation. In the fields of visual arts and crafts, Johan Rohde worked with a range of different styles and media, and as an art theorist and critic he had a particular affinity for introducing new, modern art to his audiences.

¹ *Johan Rohde took over all teaching at Laurits Tuxen's and P.S. Krøyer's departments in 1906. From 1906 he also took over Kristian Zahrtmann's department, and this continued until The Artists' Independent Study Schools were closed in 1912. See, for example, Gertrud Oelsner and Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen (eds.): *Ars Una. Johan Rohde 1856-1935*, Fyns Kunstmuseum and Storstrøms Kunstmuseum, Maribo 2006, pp. 13–16.*

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Fortegnelse over Kunstværkerne paa Den frie Udstilling, København 1903, cat.no. 17;

Fortegnelse over Arbejder af Poul Christiansen 1885-1910, Den Frie Udstilling, København 1910, no. 57;

Fortegnelse over Kunstværkerne paa Den frie Udstilling, København 1917, cat.no. 43;

Poul Christiansen – katalog over udstilling arrangeret af Den Frie Udstilling, i anledning af kunstnerens 70-års fødselsdag, oktober 1915, København 1925, cat. 57;

S. Danneskjold-Samsøe: *Maleren Poul S. Christiansen*, Copenhagen 1935, cat.no. 241, pp. 62, 87;

Erik Zahle: "Billedkunst" in *C.L. Davids Samling. Nogle Studier*, [1], Copenhagen 1948, pp. 209-210, 254-255;

C.L. David: *C.L. Davids Samling*, København 1960, p. 24 (mentioned);

Annette Stabell (ed.): *Johan Rohde (1856-1936). Maleren, formgiveren, møbeltegneren*, Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen 1987, cat.no. 55, p. 39;

Susanne Thestrup Truelsen in Kjeld von Folsach and Nana Lund (eds.): *Dansk kunst i Davids Samling – fra Philipsen til Saxbo*, Davids Samling, Copenhagen 1995, cat.no. 47, pp. 122-123;

Hanne Honnens de Lichtenberg: *Maleren Poul S. Christiansen 1855-1933*, Faaborg Museum and Sophienholm, Faaborg 1998, cat.no. 32, pp. 18-20;

Hanne Honnens de Lichtenberg: *Maleren Poul S. Christiansen*, Valby 2001, fig. 22, pp. 55-57;

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Copenhagen 2015, pp. 169, 173;