

ERNESTINE SOPHIE HENCK

SORØ 1822 – NÆSBY 1893

Sophie Henck was a member of the Copenhagen bourgeoisie, the daughter of the regimental surgeon and hospital consultant, Professor Carl Ludvig Henck. She studied first under J.L. Jensen and subsequently O.D. Ottesen (1816–1892).

Her oeuvre is not large. She took part in the annual Charlottenborg exhibitions, but only at irregular intervals, showing between one and four flower paintings at a time. The first occasion was in 1858, when she exhibited Markblomster (Meadow Flowers), En ribs gren (A Redcurrant Branch), Frugtstykke (Fruit Piece) and finally a copy of a flower piece by the Netherlandish artist Jan van Huysum (1682–1749). Van Huysum's flower piece was acquired for the Royal Collection of Paintings in 1842 from a Norwegian collector, Prefect Thygeson. Ottesen painted a work in homage to that same piece that was purchased by the architect J.D. Herholdt (1818–1902).

Sophie Henck's copy of the van Huysum piece was sold to Aarhus Museum (now Aros, Aarhus Kunstmuseum). Between 1867 and 1870 she exhibited each year at Charlottenborg: Voksende jordbær (Growing Strawberries), Et glas med forårsblomster (A Vase of Spring Flowers), Rød og hvidtjørn (Red and White Hawthorn) and En æblegren i blomst (A Branch of Apple Blossom). This last was shown in the Women Artists' Retrospective Exhibition, Charlottenborg, 1920, now in the possession of Storstrøms Kunstmuseum, Maribo.

In 1869, the sole work she exhibited was a copy of another Netherlandish flower piece by Joris van Son (1623–1667) entitled En udhugget stenramme omgivet af frugter (A Carved Stone Frame Surrounded by Fruit). The original, a large picture measuring 67 x 47²/₃ in. (170 x 121 cm), dates from 1665. In 1875 and 1876, she exhibited strawberry pictures, one each year.

Sophie Henck went abroad twice, once to Dresden in 1848 (a violent year to travel, as it was the year of revolutions in Europe) and once to Paris, where she stayed between 1857 and 1858. She probably copied in the famous art collections in both cities. Paris offered special possibilities, as there were art schools there for women.

Unmarried, she lived with her parents; when her mother died in 1871, she moved to Kristiansdals Kloster near Sorø in Southern Zealand, where there was an establishment for unmarried women.

M. T.

LITERATURE: Laura Bjerrum in: *Weilbachs Kunstnerleksikon*, Vol. 3, Copenhagen 1995.