

HANS ANDERSEN BRENDEKILDE

BRÆNDEKILDE 1857 – JYLLINGE 1942

*H. A. Brendekilde's father was a smallholder¹ and clog maker, and he himself was apprenticed as a stonemason. He then attended the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, graduating as a modeler in 1881, though he turned to painting immediately afterward. He exhibited for the first time at Charlottenborg as early as 1883 with *Fra landsbyen* (From the Village) and quickly gained recognition; in 1886 he was awarded his first academy scholarship.*

Brendekilde made the leap from countryside to city at the very moment when the painters of the Modern Breakthrough were discovering contemporary French painting: the Barbizon School and the peasant painters J. F. Millet (1814–1875) and Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884). Millet came from a farming family, which makes his figures far more vividly alive than those produced by the traditional genre painters of the time, for whom the farming community was only a subject for painting. During the upheaval of the 1880s, Brendekilde, like other young artists such as N. P. Mols (1859–1921) and L. A. Ring, with their roots as common folk, modeled himself after these French artists, becoming an exponent of a modern, realistic art created on the basis of his own personal background. In this he also resembles both Anna and Michael Ancher.

*Like Ring, Brendekilde often brought out social aspects and thus caused a stir with *Udslidt*, 1889 (Worn Out), in Fyns Kunstmuseum, which is so extreme in expression that it has been called high-flown. When the 1880s drew to a close, Brendekilde emulated developments in the 1890s by producing a number of religious paintings in which the narratives, in the spirit of realism, are set in the primitive surroundings of the common people. Brendekilde's motifs were always taken from life in the country districts. In a technical sense he was uncommonly gifted, as seen in his depictions of landscapes, houses, and flowers. At a time when his fellow artists considered genre motifs to be old-fashioned, Brendekilde experienced great popular interest in his idyllic narrative pictures, which he continued to paint for the rest of his long life.*

Brendekilde exhibited throughout his life at Charlottenborg and took part in official Danish exhibitions abroad, including the World Fairs in Paris in 1889 and Chicago 1893 and the Guildhall in London in 1907. Later, the Society for National Art (Foreningen for National Kunst) in particular has shown his works.

E.F.

LITERATURE: Herman Madsen, *Fynsk malerkunst*, Odense 1964; Peter Michael Hornung, *Realismen, Ny dansk kunsthistorie*, vol. 4, Copenhagen 1994; Erik Brodersen in *Weilbach*, vol. 1, Copenhagen 1994; Mette Thelle, *H.A. Brendekilde 1857–1942*, Fyns Kunstmuseum, Odense 1995; Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen, *Brendekildes billedverden*, Odense 2001.

¹A smallholder was an owner of a small piece of land detached from a cottage, hired or owned by a laboring man, and cultivated to supplement his main income.