

PEDER MØRK MØNSTED

GRENAA 1859 – FREDENSBORG 1941

Peder Mønsted was born in Jutland. His father was a boatbuilder and miller, but decided to earn his living as a photographer. The family moved to Århus, the biggest city in Jutland when Peder Mønsted was a boy. His father also painted.

Young Peder revealed signs of his skill at an early age (even as a child he ground his own colours and kept them in a pig's bladder) and achieved some amazing feats. As an old man he said in an interview that he had always painted for pleasure and had only undertaken tasks to which he had immediately felt drawn.

He attended the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen for four years, from 1875 to 1879. This was during the time when young artists were rebelling against the dyed-in-the-wool conservative teaching of the Academy, and Mønsted's fellow students were the painters L.A. Ring and H.A. Brendekilde, both of whom in their youth were fervent realists with a social purpose. Mønsted did not himself go through such a phase, and the time spent at the Academy was not a fertile period for him. He attended P.S. Krøyer's alternative study school for a time, commenting in an interview in the newspaper Berlingske Tidende on 17 October 1929 that: "It is a piece of good fortune for life to have met a personality like Krøyer."

Mønsted went to Rome at his own expense in 1882, travelling on to Capri, where he remained for several months, partly because he fell ill. A fortunate sale enabled him to continue his travels, so he went on to Paris where he received training from A. W. Bouguereau (1825–1905), learning from him his sweeping sketch-like use of the brush.

The Charlottenborg Christmas exhibition in 1874 saw Mønsted's first appearance in public. He showed a forest scene, and it was in fact the forest that was to be his preferred motif, portrayed at all seasons of the year, with spring and winter his favourites. This was perhaps because he spent the summers of his youth at home in Århus, which is surrounded by forests. His oeuvre is predominantly made up of landscapes, village scenes and small-size portraits.

Mønsted travelled widely and over several years he visited Capri, Switzerland, Algiers, Greece and Cairo, where he painted pictures of caravans and the pyramids. But he also travelled throughout Denmark, from Bornholm to Northern Jutland. As a young man he visited the home of a merchant by the name of Sommer, and there he met the author Gustav Wied (1858–1914). He painted a portrait of Sommer's daughter, whom he later married. Together they visited Gustav Wied at the mansion of Bangsbo near Sæby, where they were regular visitors for several years, meeting many other artists.

Mønsted sold a large part of his work abroad, and he sold well. He was on close terms with the royal family and sold paintings to all Christian IX's large European family. Thus King Georg of Greece was surrounded by Mønsted's paintings of his native country. Mønsted lived a princely life as

an artist and owned a large studio; in his last years this was at Fredensborg, where the royal family had—and still has—a summer residence.

Mønsted was a painter in search of “the world of yesterday,” not with a sense of bitterness, but with an honest, straightforward conception of and search for beauty as his guiding force.

M. T.

LITERATURE: P. Juul Madsen, *Danske genremalere*, Copenhagen 1888; P. Nørgaard Larsen in: *Weilbach*, Vol. 6, Copenhagen 1997.