

EDVARD (EDWARD) CHRISTIAN JOHANNES ERIKSEN (ERICHSEN)

COPENHAGEN 1876 – COPENHAGEN 1959

Edvard Eriksen's father was a shoemaker in Copenhagen, and his mother originally came from Iceland. As a young man, he trained as a woodcarver and then entered the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1894, advancing to the model class. He left the academy in 1899 without passing the finals. After holding a post with a casting company in the island of Funen, where he married in 1900, he moved to Copenhagen and earned a living as a stucco worker, proceeding with his art in his spare time. However, at the Charlottenborg Exhibition of 1904 he was successful with his first important figure group, Hope, of a mother holding her child. His model was his beautiful wife. The sculpture won the annual academy medal and was bought by the national gallery, Statens Museum for Kunst. Two years later, he produced a group work called The Sentence of Adam and Eve, which he sold to the same museum and years later carved in marble in Italy. A bursary in 1906 enabled him to live with his family in Florence, Rome, and Carrara with a stay in Dresden, Germany, before coming home in the spring of 1908.

In 1909 he entered an official competition to produce a monument in memory of King Christian IX (1818–1906) and Queen Louise (1817–1898) in the cathedral of Roskilde. Due to a shortness of time, he could not satisfy the conditions of the competition, but even so, he was nominated to finish the monument jointly with the architect Hack Kampmann (1850–1920). From 1913 to 1915, Eriksen produced three marble figures: Sorrow, Remembrance, and Love. The female faces, for which his wife was the model, are very similar to that of The Little Mermaid erected in 1913 at the waterfront of Copenhagen. Illustrating Hans Christian Andersen's (1805–1875) fairy tale, this figure is Eriksen's main work, which is now world-famous.

*In spite of his success, Eriksen eventually experienced hard times. His style—naturalism with a touch of symbolism—was outdated by the upcoming modernism, and commissions slowed to a trickle. Though he was forced to sell his villa in Copenhagen with its studio, he made a living creating small-scale tombstone monuments for private families. During the 1940–45 German occupation of Denmark he once again modeled a statue, illustrating a fairy tale by Andersen, Clumsy Hans (Klodshans), of a young man riding a goat. A cast of this, made in 1958, commemorates the Danish-born actor Jean Hersholt (1887–1956) and can be seen at the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Los Angeles. Hersholt had known Andersen well. In 1949, Hersholt had published his own English translation of Andersen's fairy tales, *The Complete Andersen*, in New York.*

E. F.

LITERATURE: Dorthe Falcon Møller in *Weilbach*, vol. II, Copenhagen 1993; Egon Eriksen, *Edvard Eriksen og Den lille Havfrue – liv og kunst*, Copenhagen 1998; Christopher Bramsen, *Hans Christian Andersen's the Little Mermaid, from Fairy-Tale to National Monument*, Copenhagen 2010.