

JENS PETER MØLLER

FAABORG 1783 – COPENHAGEN 1854

J. P. Møller was born in Faaborg, the son of a potter. The boy was no more than eight years old when his father died, and he was then fostered with a family relative, a customs inspector by the name of Hansen living in Eckenförde in Schleswig, where Møller's future wife was also fostered.

The young Møller spent four years apprenticed as an artisan painter in the town of Schleswig from 1799 until 1803, when he was admitted to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. After training in the Academy, where he had both N. A. Abildgaard and subsequently C. A. Lorentzen (1746–1828) as his teachers, he left for Brussels in 1810, later going on to Paris to train as a conservator. In Paris he shared lodgings with his good friend from Academy days, C. W. Eckersberg, with whom he pursued the study of works including those of Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and especially the classical landscapes of Claude Lorrain (c. 1600–1682). J. P. Møller's Parisian teachers in conservation were Lavalier, Thomas Henry and Jean-Louis Anselin, the latter a conservator in the Musée Napoléon.

For most of his life as an artist, J. P. Møller enjoyed the favour of Prince Christian, the later King Christian VIII, (who once owned The Castle of Pløen now in the Loeb collection). The prince was deeply interested in art, and in his capacity as president of the Academy, supported Møller's journey abroad to further his training, though it was the Fonden ad Usus Publicos that financed his three years abroad. On the artist's return the prince made sure he was given a commission for four landscapes to decorate the re-built Christiansborg palace, and he was given recognition by the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, becoming a member two years later, in 1815. He was accorded a titular professorship in 1824. (Møller had already gained the post of conservator in the Royal Collection of Paintings in 1814, the same year as that in which he was appointed teacher of drawing in the Naval College. However, he only occupied this latter post for four years.) From 1834 he was a curator in the private art collection Den Moltkeske Malerisamling in Copenhagen. In 1842 he was awarded the distinction of Ingenio et Arti, and three years later he was given the title of Justitsråd. Thus it was an honourable and distinguished career that the artist enjoyed.

Møller originally went to Copenhagen to become a landscape artist and exhibited at Charlottenborg for the first time in 1807 with a view from Charlottenlund. He subsequently showed there almost every year until the year of his death with an enormous number of landscape paintings of Danish and foreign motifs. Before going abroad, Møller was influenced in part by Jens Juel's landscape art, but impressions from the French landscape artists encouraged him to idealise his portrayals of the countryside and to reinforce the affective elements in his pictures, partly by re-creating the various times of day. In time, Møller succumbed to the influence of the younger generation, and he is said to have been particularly interested in Købke's landscapes.

In 1835 he requested that the Academy establish a prize for the best study of “a characteristic group of trees painted on the spot.”

S.L.

LITERATURE: Henrik Bramsen, *Landskabsmaleriet i Danmark 1750–1875*, Copenhagen 1935, pp. 28, 32, 48, 60, 61, 67, 89, 90; Hannemarie Ragn Jensen in *Weilbach*, vol. 6, Copenhagen 1997.