

AUGUST ANDREAS JERNDORFF

OLDENBURG 1846 – COPENHAGEN 1906

August Jerndorff's father was a restaurateur and court painter in the grand duchy of Oldenburg in Germany. He died there only a year after the birth of his son, after which the mother and child moved back to Copenhagen, from where the family hailed.

Jerndorff received his first training from his uncle, the painter Just Holm (1815–1907) and then became a pupil and assistant to the painter Christian Hetsch (1830–1903), who was the son of the German architect and professor G. F. Hetsch (1788–1864) of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Even while training, Jerndorff attended classes in the Technical School. He qualified there in 1863 and was that same year admitted to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, where he qualified in 1868. Of further importance to Jerndorff's development was the fact that he was a pupil of the landscape artist P. C. Skovgaard.

Jerndorff belongs to the generation of Danish artists who were trained before the establishment of French-influenced naturalism and who throughout their lives dissociated themselves from this movement, in contrast to his contemporaries P. S. Krøyer and Theodor Philipsen (1840–1920), both of whom enthusiastically endorsed the new currents from Paris.

However, Jerndorff was not without an eye to the future. In 1880, together with the painters Laurits Tuxen and Frans Schwartz (1850–1917) he helped to establish an alternative life school in Søkvæsthuset in Christianshavn. This initiative later led to the creation of De frie Studieskoler (The Free Study Schools).

The artist's earliest works included biblical compositions; small, bright landscapes showing the influence of Skovgaard; and portraits. It was this latter genre that in time was to become August Jerndorff's hallmark as an artist.

In his commissioned portraits he usually presented his models in characteristic situations to which he added details of the milieu of the persons concerned. The year after painting Theodora Jacobsen (1886), Jerndorff executed a portrait—very grand in style—of the old brewer J. C. Jacobsen in his winter garden (Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle). In 1893 the brewer's son Carl had his portrait painted by Jerndorff. Carl Jacobsen is pictured standing in front of his desk, on top of which are shown a microscope, chemical containers, a plan of the brewery, and various drawing instruments. A door in the background opens into the hall of his art collection with dark red walls decorated with a classical frieze. Jerndorff produced a large number of such stately portraits.

Apart from a few interruptions, August Jerndorff spent the period from 1875 to 1878 in Italy, returning home via Paris. It is believed that it was impressions gained during this visit of 17th-century and Italian Renaissance portraiture that were of special importance for the artist and left their traces on his work. In 1882, Jerndorff was in Vienna and again in Italy; the following year he visited Munich.

During his not particularly long life as an artist, Jerndorff was made the recipient of various dis-

tinctions. However, he did not become a professor in the Academy until 1901. August Jerndorff exhibited at Charlottenborg from 1866 to 1893, interrupted by a brief period in Den Frie Udstilling, and then again from 1896 to his death. He also showed works in a large number of exhibitions both in Denmark and abroad, such as the world fairs in Paris in 1878, 1889, and 1900, exhibitions in Vienna 1882, Berlin 1891, and Chicago 1893.

Important elements in August Jerndorff's work were his interest in decorative art and design and his gifted and imaginative work as a book illustrator. The principal work in this latter genre was the illustration of Holger Drachmann's *Troldtøj* (Trolls), created 1889–1890. Jerndorff was responsible for various fine-quality ceramic works in the 1880s, together with others including the architect Thorvald Bindesbøll (1846–1908), the son of the designer of Thorvaldsens Museum, and the Skovgaard brothers, whose father was the landscape artist P. C. Skovgaard. Jerndorff's death in 1906 prevented him from carrying out his last commission, the restoration of Jørgen Sonne's (1801–1890) frieze on the Thorvaldsens Museum.¹

S.L.

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¹Between 1846 and 1850, Sonne executed the still existing frieze decorating the walls of the recently built Thorvaldsens Museum in Copenhagen. In stylized images, the frieze portrays the sculptor's return from Rome and the unloading of his sculptures from the ship that had brought them back.