

C. A. JENSEN
1792–1870

144. *Portrait of the Flower Painter J. L. Jensen, 1828*

(*Portræt af blomstermaler J. L. Jensen*)

Oil on canvas, 25 x 19¾ in. (63,5 x 50 cm)

Signed and dated to the right by the shoulder: C.A. Jensen 1828

PROVENANCE: Royal Chamber Singer Emilie Ulrich, Copenhagen; Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 846, 2014, lot 32, ill.

EXHIBITED: Holmegaards Glasgalleri, *Udstilling af danske blomstermalere på H. C. Andersens tid*, 1983.

LITERATURE: Sigurd Schultz, *C.A. Jensen*, I–II, Copenhagen, 1932, no. 154, vol. I, pp. 230, 232, ill. p. 219.¹

This portrait of flower painter J. L. (or I. L.) Jensen was painted by C. A. Jensen. Having the same last name, these two Golden Age painters were sometimes confused with each other.

Flower painter J. L. Jensen looks elegant in his black coat and bright white cravat. He has thick, curly dark hair and fashionable sideburns. The subject seems a bit self-satisfied, perhaps having pleasant thoughts about his early success. Only 28 years old, he is already well established in the art world of Copenhagen. Two years earlier, he was appointed painter-in-chief at the Royal Porcelain Factory of Copenhagen, and, at about the same time, unanimously elected as a member of The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Jensen's flower paintings were already in great demand. As fast as he painted a picture, a buyer was waiting. A beautiful selection of his work can be seen in the Loeb collection.

The year is 1828, and the young J. L. Jensen is working on two prestigious commissions, both in connection with the forthcoming marriage of young Crown Prince Frederik (later Frederik VII). The flower painter is creating a magnificent wall decoration for the dining room of their future residence (now called the Frederik VIII Palace). At the same time, he is painting fruits and flowers on a set of dessert china that the king is giving the bride for her trousseau.

C. A. Jensen also painted J. L. Jensen's wife, Signe, and both portraits are in the Loeb collection. During the years following 1828 the masterful portraitist's reputation declined, primarily because of the malicious criticism of art historian, Professor N. L. Høyen. The truth is that C. A. Jensen was a masterful painter who could not only faithfully reproduce the faces of his clients, but also convey their inner selves.

The biographer of C. A. Jensen, Sigurd Schultz, describes the latter talent by comparing the Loeb collection's vivid portrait of the young J. L. Jensen with a slightly less spirited rendering of the same man painted six years later, where the flower painter is seen sitting by his work with palette, brush and maul stick (Fig. A). The unique artistic characteristics of portrait painter C. A. Jensen can be seen clearly in his Loeb collection paintings.

These include: *Portrait of History and Genre Painter Ferdinand Flachner* (no. 51) (Fig. B) and *Portrait of Joseph Hambro* (no. 52) (Fig. C) *Portrait of Flower Painter J. L. Jensen* and *Portrait of Flower Painter J. L. Jensen's Wife*. When comparing these paintings, Jensen's artistic development can be followed, and the relationship between the artist and his model can be detected.

When C. A. Jensen portrayed his friend Ferdinand Flachner, both artists were still students at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, and only twenty-three years old. They were inexperienced, and trusted the guidance



of an instructor, and they trusted each other. Jensen's finished portrait demonstrates that he followed professorial instructions. Ferdinand Flachner, no doubt posed as instructed, half-turned outward, facing the artist. He wears a pleasant, but slightly quizzical expression (cf. no. 51). The young C. A. Jensen completed this portrait of his Academy comrade quite beautifully for this stage of his artistic development. It is conceivable that the two students shared a feeling of secret amusement. Do we not see the hint of amusement in Flachner's expressive eyes?

Far different is his portrait of financier, trader and banker Joseph Hambro. After lengthy study trips to Dresden and Rome, where C. A. Jensen progressed in portrait painting, developing a personal painting style that, for a while, made him the portrait painter in highest demand in Copenhagen. This new technique can be observed in the Loeb collection's portrait of Joseph Hambro, as well as in the portraits of flower painter J. L. Jensen and his wife: Occasional quick, sensitive brush strokes without clear contours have been placed on the canvas in repetitive, transparent layers of paint. They catch the light and make the painting sparkle in numerous subtle nuances of color. It is an intuitive method of painting.

Jensen has shown us Joseph Hambro's somber and speculative eyes under handsomely arched eyebrows, his wide forehead bespeaking intelligence. He seems unapproachable, with a certain arrogance that does not invite conversation with the painter. Where there plainly existed humor and trust between Ferdinand Flachner and C. A. Jensen, here the portrait painter seems to feel respect but not warmth toward the prominent Joseph Hambro. Though there was a cool distance between model and painter, Jensen has certainly conveyed much of Hambro's character and personality. Three years later, C. A. Jensen was commissioned to paint another portrait of Joseph Hambro, this time perhaps with instructions to carry out a more academically defined portrayal, where no revealing brush strokes are visible. Somewhat larger, this oval painting now hangs at the Copenhagen Stock Exchange (no. 52, Fig. A).

With regard to the portraits of the flower painter and his wife, C. A. Jensen seems to have been completely in his element, without any kind of restrictive reverence. It probably particularly delighted him to paint Signe Marie Jensen. He was never immune to feminine allure, which is clearly felt here, where the sweetness and pride of the young Mrs. Jensen seems to have flooded out onto the canvas in joyful company with each of the painter's brush strokes. As for her husband's portrait, that also seems free of restrictions.

Almost all of the portrait painter C. A. Jensen's work conveys his deep understanding of the human soul. Because of this ability, combined with an extraordinary artistic talent, his paintings stand the test of time beautifully.

S.L.

¹After the publication of *The Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr. Danish Art Collection*, New York 2005, Marie-Louise Berner and Mette Thelle have collaborated on an upcoming literary work about J. L. Jensen. Suzanne Ludvigsen would like to thank the two researchers for their many new pieces of information about the flower painter, who, until now, has rarely been included in Danish art history.

²The palace of Frederik VIII (originally Brockdorff's palace, built 1750–60) is one of four rococo palaces that together form the complex Amalienborg in Copenhagen. It was designed by the Danish rococo architect in royal service, Nicolai Eigtved (1701–1754). In 2010, the palace of Frederik VIII was furnished as a residence for Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary with their children; Marie-Louise Berner, *J. L. Jensen - En dansk Guldaldermaler*, pp. 10–31, and Mette Thelle, *J. L. Jensens rum til Prinsesse Vilhelmine og Prins Frederik på Amalienborg*, pp. 32–45 in Jane Sandberg (ed.), *Dansk Blomstermaleri. J. L. Jensen og hans kvindelige efterfølgere*, Øregaard Museum, Copenhagen 2006; Lin Rosa Spaabæk and Mette Thelle, *Den naturlige påmindelse*, in Mads Falbe-Hansen (ed.), *Frederik VIII's palæ. Restaurering. Ombygning. Kunstnerisk udsmykning*, Copenhagen 2010, pp. 176–183.



FIG. A C. A. Jensen
The flower painter J. L. Jensen, 1835
Oil on canvas, 9⁴/₅ x 8 in.
(25.1 x 20.6 cm)
Signed and dated bottom right:
C.A. Jensen 1835
Present owner unknown
Sigurd Schultz 1932, no. 267



FIG. B C. A. Jensen
Portrait of History and Genre
Painter Ferdinand Flachner, c. 1815
Oil on canvas, 17½ x 13⅓ in. (44.5 x 35 cm)
Loeb collection no. 51



FIG. C C. A. Jensen
Portrait of Joseph Hambro, 1828
Oil on canvas, 9 x 7½ in. (23 x 19 cm)
Loeb collection no. 52