

C. A. JENSEN

1792–1870

51. *Portrait of History and Genre Painter Ferdinand Flachner, c. 1815*

(*Ferdinand Wolfgang Flachner*)

Oil on canvas, 17½ x 13⅔ in. (44,5 x 35 cm)

PROVENANCE: Charlottenborg, 1815, no. 38 (described as *En herværende Kunstners Portræt*); Konservator P. H. Rasmussen's Auction, 19.3.1889, lot 34; H. H. I. Lynges Auction, 20.4.1898, lot 62; Winkel & Magnussen, auction 114 (M. Grosell), 1932, lot 59, ill. p. 13; Kunsthallen, Auction 462, 1996, lot 11, ill. p. 9.

LITERATURE: Sigurd Schultz, *C. A. Jensen*, I–II, Copenhagen, 1932, no. 3, ill. p. 119.

The German painter Ferdinand Wolfgang Flachner (1792–after 1847) was born in the town of Zirndorff in Bavaria and was admitted to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 1809. In 1813 he won both the minor and the major silver medals; three years later he won the minor gold medal. During the seven years he spent in Copenhagen, Flachner worked in the office of a wealthy merchant, Johann Friedrich Zinn (1779–1838). In 1818, after exhibiting at Charlottenborg for five years in a row, he gained a considerable reputation, especially as a history painter, Ferdinand Flachner left Copenhagen. He settled in Munich under his baptismal name of Flachenecker and made a living mainly as a lithographer. During his time at the Academy in Copenhagen, Flachner established a friendship with, among others, the Norwegian-born landscape artist Johan Christian Dahl (1788–1857), who was later to become a professor in Dresden, the sculptor Herman Ernst Freund (1786–1840) and the portraitist C. A. Jensen. Jensen's portrait of his friend stems from the time spent by the two artists at the Academy. Jensen's work here shows clear traces of the teaching he received from the ageing Professor C. A. Lorentzen (1746–1828), who had assumed Jens Juel's professorship after Juel's death in 1802. Though far from being as good an artist as his eminent predecessor, Lorentzen was probably as knowledgeable and meticulous a teacher.

In his extensive monograph on C. A. Jensen, Sigurd Schultz provides a very instructive description of 19th-century portrait painting as it was still taught in the Academy until Eckersberg's neo-classical teaching took the lead. One example used by Schultz is the Flachner portrait, which might possibly have been executed in Lorentzen's studio as a practice piece. We are told that a lively and attentive facial expression plus a certain out-turned and mobile physical posture in the figure portrayed were taught as factors necessary for attracting the attention of the viewer. These elements are both present in this portrait of Flachner, in which the eyes express openness while the impression of a quick turn of the head is achieved by placing the model's right shoulder at right angles to the front surface of the picture. A very important ingredient in Lorentzen's instruction in portraiture was the significance of shade and color in creating shape.

The basis of the composition was constituted by the artificial source of light falling obliquely from high up on the left and dividing the oval of the face into gradually alternating areas of strong light and deep shade. A more subdued light is shining on the background to the right of Flachner; the area behind and to the left of him is unlit. In this way an effect of enclosed space is achieved, giving depth to the painting and adding a sense of air behind the model. Through the use of chiaroscuro, further heightened by reflections

in the shadows, the facial features are endowed with an appearance of movement, resulting in a certain psychological effect.

Jensen chose colors determined on the basis of the model's complexion for his portraits; here the colors appear in more or less concentrated form dispersed across the picture in many nuances of brown and beige. He used color to model the figure and give it plasticity. This was done with contrasting hues and cold and warm colors.

The 17th-century school of portraiture set great store by a decorative pictorial effect linked to an artistic tradition emphasising dignity and decorum and the happy lives of the upper classes. Such stylistic features were still to be found at the time when C. A. Jensen was an art student, as was an appreciation of domestic life. Both can be seen in the characterisation of Ferdinand Flachner. He is portrayed as elegant in appearance but with carelessly tousled hair and a loosely fitting stock in a portrait genre described by Schultz as "the dressing gown style."

S.L.