



Professor Dr. Michelle Facos

Alfried Krupp Junior Fellow
Oktober 2010 – September 2011

Kurzvita Michelle Facos was born in Buffalo 1955. She is professor of the History of Art and adjunct professor of Jewish Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington, where she has taught since 1995. She received her Ph.D. in 1989 from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University with a dissertation entitled *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s*. Her recent publications include: *Symbolist Art in Context*

(California, 2008) and *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Art* (Routledge 2011). Michelle Facos has received awards from the American-Scandinavian Foundation, the American Philosophical Society, Fulbright, and the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung.

The Copenhagen Academy and artistic innovation circa 1800

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries several painters and sculptors who studied at the Copenhagen Academy of Art (Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi) produce inventive art works that transgressed contemporary norms and anticipated broader artistic trends by decades. This was due in large part to the singular confluence of several factors:

1) a visual practice that emphasized carefully observing and recording the natural world (partly the result of the Institute for Natural History being housed in the same building, Charlottenborg Palace, as the Art Academy),

2) the interpretation of the influential teachings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann

(Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in Malerei und Bildhauerkunst, 1755) conceptually rather than literally, and

3) the political mandate to create a distinctly Danish school of art. The works of painters Nicolai Abildgaard, Jens Juel, Christoffer Eckersberg, and Caspar David Friedrich, and the sculptor and Winckelmann protégé Johannes Wiedewelt evidence the independent creativity that would later become the hallmark of modern artistic practice and which are often attributed to French artists.

Kurzbericht

Projektbericht My project seeks to explain the unusual number of atypical and innovative works of art created by teachers and students at the Copenhagen Academy around 1800. Inspired by the first royal academy of art, the French Academy, founded in 1648 and housed in the Louvre, Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi (Copenhagen Academy), was established in 1754 and housed in Charlottenborg Palace in Copenhagen. The mandate of art academies was to produce art that glorified the nation and its ruler and created a uniform and high standard of art training. To this end five acceptable categories of subject matter were established: history, portraiture, genre, landscape, and still life. By 1800, the public's ability to understand a painting or sculpture depended partly on how precisely it fit one of these categories. Copenhagen artists viewed these categories differently, often taking conceptual approaches that anticipated later artistic developments elsewhere. This becomes clear in the case of works of art produced by Jens Juel (1745-1802), Johannes Wiedewelt (1731-1802), Nicolai Abildgaard (1743-1809), Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), and Christoffer Eckersberg (1783-1853).

Jens Juel

While Jens Juel's *Stormy Weather* (1770s, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen) conforms to genre painting because it represents common people in an everyday situation, it is unusual because his fellow artists focused on awe-inspiring forces of nature rather than on human reactions to it. Juel recorded people running for shelter in a storm, a scene with no apparent academic precedent at a time when conforming to established patterns was the rule for artists seeking success. He also anticipated an important idea of Edgar Degas (1834-1917): to represent random but rarely recorded moments of everyday life. Juel communicates the visual effects of wind and fear. His scientific interest was inspired by a variety of experiences. In Hamburg, where he studied for five years, Juel began sketching landscapes and for 'my own pleasure'. Thus predisposition for the real was strengthened during his 1765-66 studies in Copenhagen, a time when the Institute for Natural History was also housed in Charlottenborg Palace. There researchers studied natural phenomena, an interest shared by Juel. Another influence came in 1776-77 when Juel lived in

Rome where outdoor sketching was a common artistic activity and another in Geneva beginning in 1777, when Juel befriended the naturalist Charles Bonnet. Bonnet published observations about the relationship between the nervous system and external stimuli. All of these experiences reinforced Juel's interest in natural phenomena. In paintings like *Stormy Weather* and *Landscape with Aurora Borealis*, Juel captured fleeting moments, a practice associated with the French Impressionists who began painting in the 1860s. Although primarily known as a portrait painter, Juel's interest in recording atypical moments with careful attention to the effects of light and atmosphere influenced a generation of students (including Eckersberg and Friedrich) who studied with him between 1786, when he began teaching at the Copenhagen Academy, and his death in 1802.

Johannes Wiedewelt

The memorial sculptures in made in Jægerspris Park in the 1770s by Johannes Wiedewelt were so radical that they had no impact whatsoever on art immediately following; sculpture historian Horst W. Janson has no-

ted that no comparably simple, geometric sculptures were produced until Minimalism emerged in the 1960s. The 54 commemorative sculptures in the park of the former hunting palace at Jægerspris are among the most singular commemorative projects in Western art. The sculptures were commissioned during a turbulent moment in Danish history and formed part of a xenophobic denigration of Danish culture and politics. The Jægerspris project commemorated great men in Danish and Norwegian history – Norway had been ruled by Denmark since the Kalmar Union in 1523. The project expressed a desire to honor significant accomplishments in the humanistic, political, and scientific fields and to keep these deeds a living part of Danish historical memory. It was also part of an effort to spread knowledge and to culturally enhance Denmark beyond the city limits of Copenhagen. These sculptures are rigorous in their geometry and restrained in their ornamentation. Just how unusual they are becomes apparent when they are compared to a similar project in France. In 1775 the Comte d'Angiviller, director general of the French Art Academy, initiated a project to commemorate the Great Men of

France, all of which were full-length portrait sculptures with the figure dressed in contemporary costume. Wiedewelt's monument to the 16th-century astronomer Tycho Brahe, for instance, is radically different, conceptual rather than descriptive: a sphere balanced atop a rectangular form in a manner that anticipates the elegantly abstract sculptures of Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) created more than a century later. Were it not for the now barely visible inscription on the sphere, one would never guess this to be a commemorative monument to Brahe. Wiedewelt's innovative approach could not be predicted based on his traditional training. However a scholarship enabled him to move to Rome in 1754 where he met Johann Joachim Winckelmann, whose 1755 essay *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* suggested to Wiedewelt the notion that art should represent ideas rather than actions, concepts rather than appearances. The Brahe monument exemplifies Winckelmann's ideals of 'edle Einfachheit und stille Größe' and is coincidentally similar to *Stein des guten Glücks*, designed by Johann Wolfgang Goethe and installed at his Gartenhaus in Weimar in 1777. Signifi-

cantly, however, Goethe's *Stein* represents an abstract concept with an abstract form, while Wiedewelt was apparently the first sculptor to commemorate an individual with a conceptual monument.

Nikolai Abildgaard

Nikolai Abildgaard's *Wounded Philoctetes* (1775, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen) is a hybrid work remarkable in several ways. First, the scene is reduced to a single monumental figure, a kind of reduction and pathos that do not occur again until 1793, when French artist Jacques-Louis David painted a memorial portrait of his recently-assassinated friend, the physician and politician Jean-Paul Marat (Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels). Abildgaard conveyed Winckelmann's idea that: "So wie die Tiefe des Meeres allezeit ruhig bleibt, die Oberfläche mag noch so wüten, ebenso zeigt der Ausdruck in den Figuren der Griechen bei allen Leidenschaften eine große und gesetzte Seele." Philoctetes grasps his snake-bitten foot with a power evident from his tensed muscles. His profound physical suffering, the result of the snake bite, and his psychological suffering, the result of

abandonment by his Troy-bound comrades, is evident in his teary and rolled back eyes, his open mouth and his wind-blown hair. Significantly, Abildgaard painted this image around the same time – 1776 – as Friedrich Maximilian Klinger coined the term *Sturm und Drang* in his play of the same name. Such an image of extreme psychological and physical torment in a figure compressed into such a small space does not occur again until Goya painted *Saturn Devouring His Children* on a wall in his house in the early 1820s (now Prado, Madrid).

Abildgaard did conform to contemporary expectations in three ways: choosing a classical subject (Homer), demonstrating mastery of human anatomy, and basing Philoctetes's posture on a famous ancient sculpture, the *Belvedere Torso*, then as now in the Vatican collection in Rome. The idea of depicting suffering was not unusual at the time, but the conventional pictorial mode for suffering was Baroque, with diagonal movement, twisting forms, and depictions of violence. Abildgaard was more innovative and deviated from contemporary expectations in his choice of subject: rather than choosing a typical Neoclassical moment of inspiring heroic behavior

or political intrigue, Abildgaard chose a moment of despair – the protagonist is abandoned, alone, and in pain. *Philoctetes* is a hybrid anomaly in the 1770s that anticipates a trend which became increasing popular during the nineteenth century as artists and patrons became dissatisfied with the expressive limitations of academic standards and categories.

Caspar David Friedrich

Der Wanderer über dem Nebelsee is one of Friedrich's most familiar paintings. Joseph Leo Koerner has analyzed the back-facing figure as one who draws the viewer's imagination through the picture plane into the fictive space of the painting. But it is not only the viewer who imaginatively occupies the subject's space and gazes at his view, but the painter of the picture, Friedrich himself. This is his magisterial view of a constructed landscape composed of either the Zittauergebirge or Elbsandsteingebirge in the middle ground and perhaps the Riesengebirge in the distance. They are shrouded in fog, resulting in another of Friedrich's innovations: a spatial disjunction between the subject's space in



Caspar David Friedrich, *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelsee*, about 1818

the foreground and the view, with no connecting elements allowing plausible physical access to that space. Friedrich used this device in many of his paintings. Some explain the purpose of the missing connective space and the dimly viewed distance as symbolic of the unbridgeable spiritual gap between this world and the next. But it might simply result from careful observation of nature: in Greifswald, for instance, fog creates and exaggerates the distance between objects that are near and those that are a bit further off, although certainly not distant: some days the east end of the Nikolaikirche is clearly visible from Lappstraße but the west tower is shrouded in fog. Friedrich's ability to notice and utilize this common perception and to transform it into a carrier of meaning may be indebted to his training with Juel and Wiedewelt in Copenhagen. The ideas of Winckelmann taught by Wiedewelt to imitate the Greeks by stripping away unnecessary detail and exuding "edle Einfalt und stille Größe" impressed Friedrich, as did Juel's enthusiasm for careful description of nature and everyday experiences. Friedrich combined these ideas to create an innovation startling in its simplicity and profound in its possibilities.

Christoffer Eckersberg

This synthesis of conceptual simplicity based on Winckelmann's Neoclassical ideal and an Enlightenment fascination with careful observation of natural phenomena were the chief hallmarks of Copenhagen Academy art. They were expressed and perpetuated by Denmark's most famous early nineteenth-century painter, Christoffer Eckersberg, the so-called father of Danish Golden Age (Biedermeier) painting. The earliest and most remarkable example of this distilled and detailed realism is Eckersberg's painting of a beggar, painted during his stay in Rome from 1813 to 1816 (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen). From a compositional and technical point of



Christoffer Eckersberg, *Roman Beggar*, 1815

view Eckersberg's Roman beggar is comparable to David's 1788 portrait of Marat. Both are

detailed, realistic depictions of a single figure situated in an unarticulated empty space, where dramatic lighting creates a mood of seriousness, monumentality, and three-dimensionality. In fact, Eckersberg studied in Paris with David from 1811 to 1813 and was undoubtedly familiar with the Marat painting. What is extraordinary about Eckersberg's image is the fact that he applied this treatment to an anonymous and unimportant person. It is a painting whose subject falls between the cracks of genre – the depiction of common people in unremarkable situations – and portraiture. For it to be a portrait, this beggar would have to be given a name – the Roman Beggar Orlando Furioso, for instance. But he was not. Eckersberg's *Roman Beggar*, violated the rules for portraiture because the figure is anonymous. By painting this Roman beggar with the dignity and attention usually reserved for portraiture Eckersberg seemed to question the existing aesthetic hierarchy according to which individuals on the lowest rung of the social ladder were unworthy of such privileged attention and distinguished presentation. This attitude characterized Realism, an artistic movement that emerged several decades later. Realist artists adopted

a more egalitarian attitude toward subject matter and considered the lower classes as fitting subjects. Eckersberg's attitude also characterized Impressionism's recording of neglected aspects of modern life, especially ones that were part of the artist's everyday experience. This attitude was considered radical in 1859 when Manet painted *Absinthe Drinker* (Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen), which depicts a low life figure similar to Eckersberg's in a similarly shabby yet dignified manner.

Conclusion

The Copenhagen Academy fostered a visual practice that emphasized carefully observing and recording the natural world, combined with Winckelmann's ideas regarding simplification, concentration, and dignity to produce art works that transgressed contemporary norms, anticipated artistic trends by decades, and encouraged an independent creativity that would later become the hallmark of modern artistic practice.

ausgewählte
Veröffentlichungen

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Website: www.19thcenturyart-facos.com