

Painting Instruction: C. W. Eckersberg and Artistic Labor in the Danish Golden Age

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Until the appointments of Professors Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783-1853) and Johan Ludvig Lund (1777-1867) in 1818, the ossified curriculum of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts officially consisted of sketching plaster casts of antique statuary, *écorché* sculptures, and artificially-illuminated male models assuming heroic poses.¹ During their tenure at the Academy, however, the two professors introduced supplementary tuition in painting from life under natural light — a practice assimilated by Eckersberg and Lund in Jacques-Louis David's Paris studio.² In addition, private instruction under Eckersberg inaugurated *plein-air* sketching excursions and specialized tutorials in the science of linear perspective. Thus, Eckersberg's years at the Academy represent a distinct pedagogical shift that privileged the direct observation of nature over the imitation of antiquity.³

Coinciding with Eckersberg's curricular expansion, students of the mid-1820s and 1830s depicted artistic labor in sketchbooks, intimate portraits called *Freundschaftsbilder* ("friendship pictures"), and large-scale paintings intended for public exhibition. Interestingly, this subject matter was most popular among the first generation of students enrolled in the Davidian life classes, particularly Wilhem Bendz (1804-1832), Christen Christensen (1806-1845), Albert Küchler (1803-1886), Martinus Rørbye (1803-1848), and

Jørgen Sonne (1801-1890).⁴ In addition, Eckersberg's private pupils — Constantin Hansen (1804-1880), Christen Købke (1810-1848), Wilhelm Marstrand (1810-1873), Adam Müller (1811-1844), Jørgen Roed (1808-1888), and Frederik Sødring (1809-1862) — made significant contributions to this genre as both painters and subjects.⁵ Shown at work or posed in the studio, these artists are often surrounded by a carefully selected sampling of tools and instructional aids. In this examination, it is argued that such artistic accoutrements reference the respective methodologies of the sitters, who typically subscribed to Eckersberg's artistic program. More specifically, these objects often allude to and celebrate the Academy's new auxiliary instruction.

Avoidance of primary documentation and relevant historical context characterize the few existing studies devoted to this subject matter.⁶ Mogens Nykjær's *Pictures of Knowledge: Motifs in Danish Art from Eckersberg to Hammershøi* traces common motifs in Danish nineteenth-century painting to their proposed source — the contemporary intellectual milieu. He suggests that studio portraits by Bendz and Købke reflect the artists' proficiency in the Neo-Platonic writings of Dane Adolph Wilhelm Schack von Staffeldt (1769-1826), particularly his poem "In Canova's Workshop."⁷ Yet, Staffeldt's name remained obscure even after the publication

¹ Before graduating to the Academy's Plaster School, students demonstrated competency by copying prints.

² Lund studied under David from September 16, 1800, until April 1802. Eckersberg spent about one year in the studio, from September 9, 1811, until October 20, 1812.

³ Preceding the faculty's interest in nature at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, the Munich Academy adopted a new maxim to "study from nature," as opposed to 'imitating antiquity' in 1809. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present* (New York: De Capo Press, 1973), 211-212.

⁴ Philip Conisbee, "Ordinariness and Light: Danish Painting of the Golden Age," in *The Golden Age of Danish Painting*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Kasper Monrad (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1993), 38. In this essay Philip Conisbee defines *Freundschaftsbilder* as "friendship pictures, usually mutual portraits exchanged as gifts" (ibid). However, many similar works were not exchanged as gifts — they were intended for public display at the Academy's annual exhibition and, thereafter, purchased by the Royal Picture Gallery (now Statens Museum for Kunst). Thus, this term is problematic and I will approach it with caution, using it in the strictest sense. Emma Salling lists the names of the first nine students to sign up for the daytime classes in 1822/23. They are as follows: H. F. Møller, A. Küchler, C. Goos, J.

Sonne, J. Nordhoff, J. G. Wichmann, C. Christensen, M. Rørbye, and W. Bendz. Emma Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," in *Den nøgne guldalder: Modelbilleder — C. W. Eckersberg og hans elever*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Annette Johansen, Emma Salling, and Marianne Saabye (Copenhagen: Hirschsprung Collection, 1994), 32.

⁵ Bendz, Küchler, and Rørbye also received private instruction in Eckersberg's studio.

⁶ Here, I refer to broad studies of the genre. Though exhibition catalogue entries discuss these images, the works are typically examined in isolation, or more precisely, through the lens of the exhibition's overarching theme. On rare occasions, catalogue entries reference similar works and note the popularity of this subject matter during the Danish Golden Age. Yet, they do not account for the emergence of the genre in this region. Further, Klaus Lankeit's pioneering study of *Freundschaftsbilder* omits any discussion of Danish studio portraits, focusing solely on German examples. Klaus Lankeit, *Das Freundschaftsbild der Romantik* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1952).

⁷ He specifically proposes that the works of the two artists function as demonstration pieces for Staffeldt's conception of the "fundamental dualism" of nature and art. Mogens Nykjær, *Kundskabens Billeder: Motiver i dansk kunst fra Eckersberg til Hammershøi* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1991), 75-105. Inspired by the German Romantics

of his magnum opus *Digte* in 1804, and Bendz's surviving letters bear no mention of the poet nearly three decades later. Nykjær appropriately conveys the profundity of these paintings. However, a convincing theoretical analysis of Bendz's and Købke's imagery would require sufficient evidence of their personal alignment with such ideas.

Jens Peter Munk's article "Artist Portrait — Self Portrait: The Golden Age Artists' Social and Cultural Self-Understanding, When Portraying Themselves and Each Other" posits that Danish studio pictures reveal artistic self-awareness, although this thesis is not fully articulated.⁸ Instead, the meritorious feature of the article is the establishment of the genre's key typological divisions. Examining a broad sampling of works, Munk identifies the various settings and some of the basic components depicted in these images.⁹ However, he does not define the significance of recurring motifs in relation to the changing climate of the Academy.

This study aims to situate Danish scenes of artistic labor within the environment that was typically portrayed — the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts at Charlottenborg Palace. In addition to pictorial evidence, relevant source material sheds light on the chief events and academic techniques employed during this decisive period in the institution's history. Of particular utility are Eckersberg's dry, but methodically maintained *dagbøger*, or diaries, which chronicle the fulfillment of his professorial duties. In addition, a biographical sketch, penned by his daughter Julie, describes the practices and enumerates the contents of his atelier. Casually posed models bathed in natural light function as a signifier of Eckersberg's pedagogical introductions. Of course, studies of nature served only as the basis for final, idealized compositions. Thus, the history painter's maulstick becomes the

signature tool of his students, despite their frequent pursuit of the "lesser" genres. This implement facilitates the final stage in Eckersberg's artistic process — the transformation of the real into the ideal. Finally, the function of these images will be explored. At times, they commemorate shared artistic ideology; however, at other times, the imposing scale and intended audience suggest that they honor the Academy's new pedagogical inclusiveness.

In April 1822, Lund and Eckersberg lobbied on behalf of their students' education at the meeting of the Academy Assembly.¹⁰ Citing insufficient access to models and their pupils' general lack of technical proficiency, the professors proposed an elective course in painting from life.¹¹ The purpose of the course was twofold, exposing students to the nuances of natural light on the human form, and instruction in the application of color. Initially, the supplementary tuition was held regularly during the mornings of the summer holidays. Six months later, following the official approval of Prince Christian Frederik, later King Christian VIII (1786-1848), the classes took place during the "off-hours" of the regular academic schedule.¹² Nine enthusiastic students from the Life Studies and Plaster Schools registered for the debut session, which occurred regularly in the years that followed. Unfortunately, a paucity of documentation on this extracurricular program hinders a complete understanding of its content and the exercises employed.¹³ However, we know that the Academy ensured the students' access to natural light. A "painting window" was installed in the program's provisional home, the School of Life Studies and the Plaster School.¹⁴ Additionally, Eckersberg often administered instruction from his personal studio, which boasted three sizeable bay windows overlooking Kongens Nytorv ("King's New Square").

Tieck and Wackenroder, Schack von Staffeldt's poetry was rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century. During his own time, however, Schack von Staffeldt's name was eclipsed by the popularity of Adam Oehlenschläger. Svend Birke Espesgård, review of *Digte*, by Adolph Wilhelm Schack von Staffeldt, *Books Abroad* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 271. Similar theoretical interpretations of Bendz's work have also been offered by Søren Kjølrup and Henrik Wivel; however, the three scholars fail to establish a convincing link between German Romantic philosophy and the artists under consideration. Søren Kjølrup, "Guldalderforskningens paradigmer — eksemplificeret på et maleri af Wilhelm Bendz," *Meddelelser fra Thorvaldsens Museum* (1994): 115-123; Henrik Wivel, "Professor of the Undiscovered Sciences: On Wilhelm Bendz' Portraits of Artists and the Thoughts on Them at the Time," in *Wilhelm Bendz: A Young Painter of the Danish Golden Age, 1804-1832*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Marianne Saabye (Copenhagen: Hirschsprung Collection, 1996), 21-30.

⁸ Jens Peter Munk, "Kunstnerportræt — Selvportræt: Om guldalderkunsternes sociale og kulturelle selvforståelse, når de portrætterer sig selv og hinanden," *Meddelelser fra Thorvaldsens Museum* (1994): 103-113. Munk's article expands on a cursory treatment of the subject matter in Kasper Monrad's *Everyday Pictures*. Kasper Monrad, *Hverdagsbilleder: Dansk Guldalder - kunstnerne og deres vilkår* (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 1989), 141-146.

⁹ Munk divides his article into short sections, which contain little or no analysis. Under the heading of "Artists' Attributes," he tersely states, "It

is common to portray the artist through his work tools. Bendz's solution is clever. [In *Interior from Amaliegade with the Artist's Brothers* (c. 1829)], he is not present with his two brothers in their parents' living room in Amaliegade, but his tools are — paper posted on a drawing board and a stool, which reference his outdoor studies." Munk does not expound on that observation or cite the source of such accoutrements, but, instead, transitions to another category of depiction — the portrayal of the artist's bohemian lifestyle. Munk, "Kunstnerportræt — Selvportræt," 108.

¹⁰ Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 31. Though Lund drafted the official letter to the President, Salling suggests that the proposal was a joint endeavor, since Eckersberg wrote a note in support of the request. The two artists shared the responsibility of leading the elective courses and, beginning in 1824, they received annual bonuses as compensation for their additional workload.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Lund's letter underscores the lack of preparation that the Academy's students received in painting and other evaluation criteria for the gold medal competitions.

¹² *Ibid.* Prince Christian Frederik served as president of the Academy.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Early studio portraits of Jørgen Sonne, Carl Edvard Sonne (1804-1878), and Niels Peter Holbech (1804-1889) reveal the impact of this new emphasis on natural light.¹⁵ As seen in Rørbye's sketch *Academy Interior with Artists Painting and Drawing* (Figure 1), the sitters clearly recreate the conditions of the classroom, or Eckersberg's private atelier, within the confines of their personal workspaces. Bendz presents a sunlit Holbech (Figure 2) leaning on a drawing board. Direct light on an artist's face is often interpreted as reflecting the Romantic notion of divinely ordained creativity; however, an examination of this portrait's setting points to its topical significance at the Academy.¹⁶ On Holbech's left, stands an accessible anatomical model — a plaster cast of Andreas Weidenhaupt's *écorché* sculpture (original 1772). The *écorché* was an established instructional tool of the Academy's curriculum. As Jon Whiteley noted, "plaster casts were typically studied by artificial light under the classical paradigm."¹⁷ Here, Holbech rejects the traditional practice. In addition, the relationship between nature (i.e., sunlight) and the ideal (i.e., the *écorché*) references a pedagogical dialectic that may also be noted in Blunck's *The Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne* (Figure 3).¹⁸ Facing an open window, the eponymous figure executes trial prints of Gerard ter Borch's *Seated Girl in Peasant Costume* (c. 1650, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).¹⁹ Prints of paintings by the Danish Neoclassicist Nicolai Abildgaard (1743-1809) and Christian August Lorentzen (1746-1828) hang opposite the window, counterbalancing the new practice with representations faithful to the Academic tradition.²⁰ Similarly, Blunck juxtaposes the window and a tabletop *écorché* in his portrait of Jørgen Sonne (Figure 4), the older brother of the aforementioned printmaker.

Jørgen, an aspiring battle painter and one of the original enrollees of the auxiliary program, studies the drapery of a

military uniform on a lay figure. In an 1822 letter to Prince Christian Frederik, Lund emphasized the need for instruction in rendering drapery, which was likely addressed in the professors' programs.²¹ Additionally, scholars have failed to note that this figure is a homemade *Gliedermann*, a traditional studio prop used since the Renaissance, fashioned out of some cloth and a musket.²² This point bears significance in relation to Eckersberg's method. Julie Eckersberg states that her father's studio contained a "big *Gliedermann* that stood in the corner near the door."²³ Thus, these early portraits suggest that the young artists assimilated the instructor's methods soon after the supplementary instruction commenced. Substituting an *écorché* and a makeshift *Gliedermann* for hired models, Holbech and Jørgen Sonne tailor the professors' recommendations to suit their personal studio practices.

After the conclusion of the first extracurricular course, two participants from the Plaster School — Bendz and Rørbye — graduated to the traditional model school of the Academy. To the students, the transition from the supplementary Davidian life classes to those in the official curriculum was regressive. Turning a critical eye toward the tuition of the Academy's life class, Bendz and Rørbye portrayed their experiences in public and private formats, respectively. Scholars have interpreted Bendz's *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts* (Figure 5) as a commentary on the ascendancy of ordinary subject matter over the genre of history painting.²⁴ Noting the elevated servant who has captured the attention of "several of the pupils," this analysis demonstrates a keen understanding of the Danes' waning interest in history painting as a result of their grave financial situation (following the Napoleonic Wars) and the concurrent establishment of the Copenhagen Art Association in 1825.²⁵ Undoubtedly, Eckersberg's instrumental role in the development of this alternative exhibition venue facilitated

¹⁵ It is not stated whether Holbech joined the official or auxiliary life schools; however, we know that he trained under Eckersberg from 1824. Kirsten Nannestad, "N. P. Holbech," *Kunstindeks Danmark & Weilbachs Kunstnerleksikon*, accessed 5 May 2010, <http://www.kultur-arv.dk/kid/VisWeilbach.do?kunstnerId=544&wsektion=uuddannelse>.

¹⁶ Kasper Monrad interprets the light on Holm's face as a reference to the source of his artistic inspiration. Kasper Monrad, "Portrait of the Painter Christian Holm, 1826," in *Golden Age of Danish Painting* (see note 4), 55; While scholars note the prevalence of sunlit rooms in the Golden Age, no attempt has been made to tie its frequency to Eckersberg's initiatives.

¹⁷ J. J. L. Whiteley, "Light and Shade in French Neo-Classicism," *Burlington Magazine* 117, no. 873 (December 1975): 771.

¹⁸ Carl Edvard Sonne and Blunck were pupils of Johan Ludvig Lund. Thus, both artists were exposed to his views on the importance of natural light in an artist's workspace.

¹⁹ Lene Bøgh Rønberg states that C. E. Sonne created a print of the Gerard ter Borch painting. Lene Bøgh Rønberg, "The Copperplate Engraver C. E. Sonne, c. 1826," in *Two Golden Ages: Masterpieces of Dutch and Danish Painting*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Lene Bøgh Rønberg, Kasper Monrad, and Ragni Linnet (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2001), 159.

²⁰ Monrad states the prints were made by "the aging master [of the] field, Johan Frederik Clemens (1748-1832)." Kasper Monrad, "Portrait of the Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne, ca. 1826," in *Golden Age of Danish Painting* (see note 4), 68.

²¹ Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 31.

²² Conisbee identifies this object as "a grotesque dummy" and "a scarecrow." Conisbee, "Ordinariness and Light," 38.

²³ Julie Eckersberg and Emil Hannover, *Julie Eckersbergs optegnelser om hendes fader C.W. Eckersberg med en indledning af Emil Hannover* (Copenhagen: Fagskolen for boghaandvaerk, 1917), 26; Peter Michael Hornung and Monrad speculate that Eckersberg's *gliedermann* (no longer extant) was an upholstered doll, in the French style. Peter Michael Hornung and Kasper Monrad, *C. W. Eckersberg — dansk malerkunsts fader* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Palle Fogtdal, 2005), 288.

²⁴ Kasper Monrad reaffirms an interpretation offered by Mogens Nykjær in the late 1970s. Monrad, "The Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, 1826," in *Golden Age of Danish Painting* (see note 4), 58.

²⁵ Monrad, "Life Class," 58.

a leveling of the genres at the Academy. One may agree with Nykjær and Kasper Monrad on this point. It should be noted, however, that only one student cranes his neck to observe the servant's routine maintenance, and he is not sketching.²⁶

Clearly, Bendz's primary message addresses the artificiality of the practice.²⁷ The central figure draws our attention to the unnatural light source — a row of oil lamps. In addition, his stance mirrors the awkwardly contorted model who assumes the professor's prescribed pose for that week.²⁸ A preparatory sketch (Figure 6) for the painting reveals a more pointed take on this contrived arrangement. Dangling from a noose, a shadow cast by the model signifies the imagined death of classical pedagogy. Similarly, *Artists Drawing a Model* (Figure 7), from Rørbye's 1825-1826 sketchbook, depicts the model emulating the pose of Abildgaard's *Wounded Philoctetes* (1775; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen).²⁹ However, instead of paying homage to the canonical Danish painting, Rørbye questions its veracity. His model does not exhibit the bodily tension of the wounded hero, but is shown with a drawing implement in hand, sketching to alleviate boredom.

In addition to the classicized pose, Bendz and Rørbye challenge the Academy's dependence on Weidenhaupt's *écorché* sculpture. Used as a model of ideal anatomy since the eighteenth-century, the small plaster *écorché* is relegated to the background in these works. Bendz suggests the tool's uselessness on its distant perch, while a lack of functional fixedness permits Rørbye to use it as a visor stand.

The most provocative elements of these compositions are the life class's attendees. After its display at the Academy's annual exhibition, art historian Niels Laurits Høyen (1798-1870) famously attributed the discussion elicited by Bendz's painting to the recognizable figures in the composition.³⁰ As an official statement of ideological emancipation, Bendz inserts a self-portrait with his back turned to the model, in the left foreground of the composition (Figure 5). On the right, another figure, perhaps Rørbye, engages the viewer with direct eye contact. Students converse and a relative few sketch fervently, embracing the classical method. Based on

the identified figures in *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, this paper suggests that Rørbye's sketch depicts Holm, working assiduously, Bendz posed defiantly, and the artist himself, holding a sketchbook (Figure 7).³¹ These works were probably inspired by Eckersberg's own *Satire of the Model School at the Academy* (1805; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen), which caricatures Lorentzen admonishing a student.³² All three pictures challenge the institutionalized methodology and anticipate each artist's increasingly aggressive promotion of new techniques.

For Bendz and Rørbye, tuition in the Academy's Model School reaffirmed their dedication to Eckersberg's pedagogy. In an entry dated May 5, 1827, the professor's *dagbøger* tersely notes that Bendz entered his atelier.³³ Rørbye sought additional private instruction from him two years prior, and another member of the inaugural life class, Küchler, became a pupil in 1826. Coinciding with their return to Eckersberg, Bendz, Rørbye, and Küchler executed studio portraits that examine the relationship between the instructional aids of the classical method and the live model. In paintings of Eckersberg's protégés, the representation of natural light remains important, but traditional props, namely the ubiquitous *écorché* and plaster casts of antique statuary, are now marginalized in favor of the live model.

Rørbye's *Portrait of C. A. Lorentzen* (1827; Private Collection) is, however, an important exception to this depiction. Painted under the tutelage of Eckersberg, Rørbye situates his former professor in the studio, pausing mid-composition. The contents of his space — antique statuary — allude to his old-fashioned artistic emphases. Two years earlier, Lorentzen's *Model School at the Academy* (Figure 8) distilled his methodology into three equal facets, which are represented by the *Medici Venus*, the *écorché*, and two idealized nudes. He upholds tradition, gesturing to the *écorché*, while his students gaze at the live models. Perhaps as a result of his conservative outlook, the senior professor acquired the nickname "Gamle Lorentzen," or "Old Lorentzen," in contemporary correspondence between faculty members and in Eckersberg's private *dagbøger* entries.³⁴ The ageist moniker

²⁶ This student is seated to the right of the ladder, in the first row.

²⁷ Monrad, "Life Class," 58. Monrad suggests Bendz's dissatisfaction with the life class, but he does not view this work as the beginning of a trajectory of paintings that reference the Academy's pedagogy.

²⁸ Professors took turns selecting the model's pose. Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 29.

²⁹ This sketchbook contains twenty-three drawings, many of which depict studio life at the Academy. According to the Statens Museum for Kunst, this particular sketch has never been published.

³⁰ This painting was also exhibited at the 1826 exhibition. Monrad, "Life Class," 58.

³¹ The proposed identities of these figures are based on the physical likenesses previously identified in Bendz's painting. In *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, Holm is depicted in the right foreground, wearing a visor.

³² Munk suggests that Eckersberg's sketch was a model for Bendz's painting. Of course, one can also see the influence of Eckersberg's work on Rørbye's sketch, which probably predates Bendz's composition. Munk, "Kunstnerportræt - Selvportræt," 105; Eckersberg's sketch was inspired by a textbook for visual artists by Johann Daniel Preissler. Published in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries, the textbook was used at many institutions, including the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Erik Fischer, *Tegninger af C. W. Eckersberg* (Copenhagen: Den Kgl. Kobberstiksamling, Statens Museum for Kunst, 1983), 153.

³³ C. W. Eckersberg, *C. W. Eckersbergs dagbøger, 1810-1853*, ed. Villads Villadsen (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 2009), 1:250.

³⁴ The entry is dated February 12, 1826. Eckersberg, *C. W. Eckersbergs dagbøger*, 1:250. The popularity of the nickname "Gamle Lorentzen" may also be noted in a letter to Bertel Thorvaldsen sent from Christian Horneman in Copenhagen. Christian Horneman to Bertel Thorvaldsen, Copenhagen, 4 May 1829, no. 2944 of 4845, The Thorvaldsen Letter Archives, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark. Very little

may be interpreted as a barb directed at practices that Eckersberg, and others, deemed *passé*. Thus, Rørbye's portrait offers a critical view of his former professor, consistent with the sentiments of Eckersberg.

Paintings by Bendz and Kùchler question the instructional merit of antique statuary. Kùchler's *A Girl from Amager Selling Fruit in a Painter's Studio* (Figure 9) depicts a produce vendor from the titular farming island being escorted into Bendz's studio by fellow painter Holm. The subject is anecdotal and likely refers to the rising popularity of genre painting; however, the activities of this working studio should not be overlooked. Situated next to the window, Bendz paints from life, while the horrified expression of *Laocoön* reacts to the incoming sunlight. The prominence of the anti-classical semi-nude model relative to the peripheral placement of the *écorché* further underscores Bendz's breach of traditional methodology.

Similarly, in *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio* (Figure 10), the artist's comment is coded in the language of art history. Here, Christensen employs a hired model to assume a pugilist's pose. A cast of *The Borghese Fighter* rests within his line of sight, but he purposefully avoids the figure and sculpts from life, instead.³⁵ A comparison between a preparatory sketch (1827; The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen) and the final painting reveals that the sculpture was added after the picture's initial conception. In addition, casts of traditional apotropaic figures — Medusa and a lioness — safeguard their primacy in the Academy's curriculum by attempting to ward off the incoming sunlight in the final composition. Against the far wall, the *Medici Venus* averts her gaze from the modern practice.³⁶ Not surprisingly, Christensen participated in the first session of the daytime life classes and, thus, his artistic ideology is aligned with that of Eckersberg. However, in the 1830s and the early 1840s, the supplementary life-class methods were folded into the official curriculum. For instance, the Academy soon employed male and female clothed models of all ages and instituted painting classes.³⁷ Works by Ferdinand Richardt (1819-1895) and Heinrich Nickelsen (1819 - c.

1845) suggest that new, unidealized figures supplanted antique statuary and *écorché* casts as the preferred models in the official classes of the Life School, as well as the private studios of Eckersberg's pupils.³⁸

To Eckersberg, sketching from life under natural light was a fundamental artistic tool. The works yielded from this exercise permitted the artist to execute a more ideal conception of nature. Omitting perceived imperfections and rendering the final composition with exactitude, permitted the realization of what Eckersberg dubbed the "fundamental image."³⁹ Consequently, the expected finish of each composition may account for the prevalence of maulsticks in these images. Often associated with history painting, the maulstick may generally serve as an emblem of technical virtuosity, as in portraits of genre painter Bendz (Figure 9).⁴⁰

In addition to signifying the final stage of Eckersberg's process, the maulstick assumes new meaning within a broader historical context. Denmark entered a period of great fiscal uncertainty following the Napoleonic Wars. The monetary promise of a professional career in art was particularly bleak due to diminished court patronage, fewer institutional travel grants, and a relative handful of independent buyers. The genre of history painting was perhaps the most greatly affected of all the disciplines. From Eckersberg's receipt of the Great Gold Medal in 1809 until Blunck's award in 1827, the prestigious travel stipend was not conferred.⁴¹ Undoubtedly, students perceived the waning viability of a career in this genre.

Eckersberg's progressive methods and affiliation with the Copenhagen Art Association attracted many students who demonstrated their commitment to his artistic ideology through the production of intimate *Freundschaftsbilder*. At times, these students emphasized the legitimacy of their efforts by appropriating the history painter's maulstick and monumentalizing their artistic labor.

Encouraging the efforts of the young artists, The Royal Collection acquired many Danish studio portraits during this period.⁴² By the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, the Danish economy rebounded and the need to promote

has been written about Horneman (1765-1844), but it is known that he lived at Charlottenborg and worked as a miniaturist.

³⁵ Ejner Johansson, "The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio" in *Wilhelm Bendz* (see note 7), 90.

³⁶ The repositioning of the *Medici Venus* is noted in the monographic exhibition catalogue devoted to Bendz. *Ibid.*

³⁷ Salling, "Modelstudiet i Eckersbergs professortid," 41. In addition, Eckersberg hired nude female models for his private lessons on three occasions in the 1830s and 1840s.

³⁸ Please see Ferdinand Richardt's *A Painting Studio at Charlottenborg* (c. 1839; Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen) and Heinrich Nickelsen's *The Academy's Painting School* (1841; Private Collection).

³⁹ Marianne Saabye, "Mellem Ideal og Virkelighed: C. W. Eckersberg og modelstudiet," in *Den Nøgne Guldalder* (see note 4), 18.

⁴⁰ *Købke's Portrait of Wilhelm Bendz* was extremely popular among Eckersberg's students. *Købke* gave one of three versions to Eckersberg. Marstrand and Roed later copied the image. Ejner Johansson, "Christen Købke Portrait of Wilhelm Bendz" in *Wilhelm Bendz* (see note 7), 203-206.

⁴¹ Monrad, "Ditlev Conrad Blunck," in *Golden Age of Danish Painting* (see note 4), 66.

⁴² At the Academy's annual exhibition in 1826, The Royal Collection purchased Blunck's *The Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne* and *The Battle Painter Jørgen Sonne*. They also acquired Bendz's *A Young Artist* [Ditlev Blunck] *Examining a Sketch in a Mirror* (1826; Statens Museum for Kunst) and *Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*. In addition, they purchased Bendz's *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio* in 1827, and Kùchler's *A Girl from Amager Selling Fruit in a Painter's Studio* in 1828.

alternative instruction was no longer a pressing concern. Nonetheless, the paintings of these years bear witness to the transformations in pedagogy introduced by C. W. Eckersberg, which, although they were controversial at the time, were

gradually incorporated into standard practice by subsequent generations of Danish artists.

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Figure 1. Martinus Rørbye, *Academy Interior with Artists Painting and Drawing* (from a sketchbook), c. 1825-1826, pencil, pen, black ink, brush, brown wash, 7 1/8 x 4 1/2 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

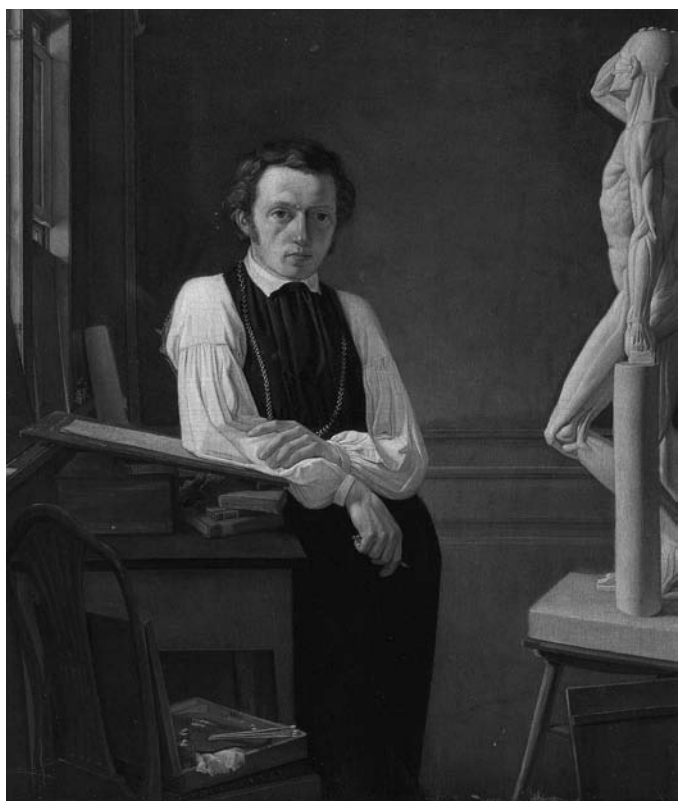


Figure 2. Wilhelm Bendz, *The Painter Niels Peter Holbech*, c. 1824, oil on canvas, 31 3/4 x 27 inches. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum, Toreby.



Figure 3. Ditlev Conrad Blunck, *The Copperplate Engraver Carl Edvard Sonne*, c. 1826, oil on canvas, 27 3/8 x 22 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



Figure 4. Ditlev Conrad Blunck, *Battle Painter Jørgen Sonne*, c. 1826, oil on canvas, 47 7/8 x 39 3/4 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

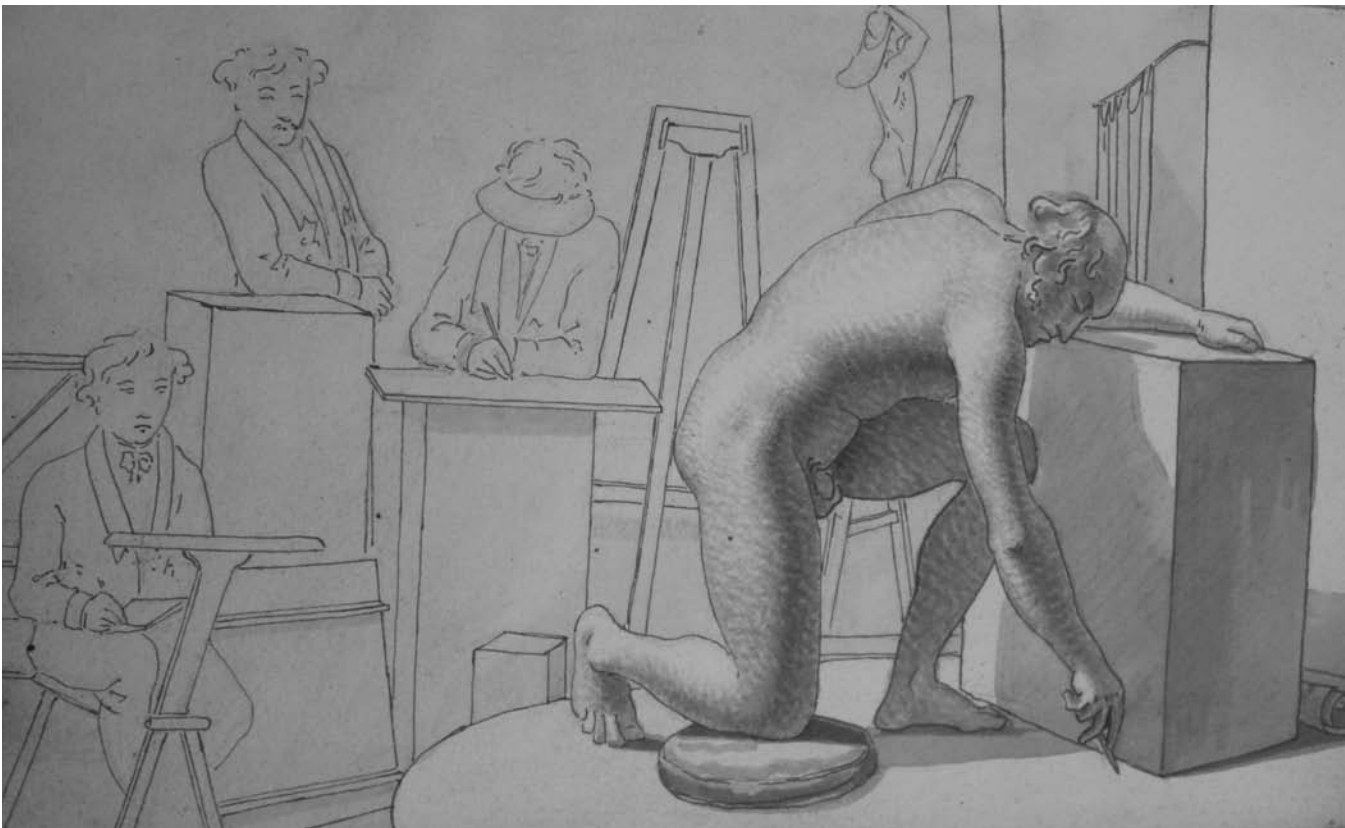


Figure 5. Wilhelm Bendz, *The Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, 1826, oil on canvas, 22 3/4 x 32 1/2 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



Figure 6. Wilhelm Bendz, *The Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, c. 1826, wash drawing, 12 x 18 3/4 inches. The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen.

Figure 7. Martinus Rørbye, *Artists Drawing a Model (from a sketchbook)*, c. 1825-1826, pencil, pen, black ink, brush, brown wash, 7 1/8 x 4 1/2 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



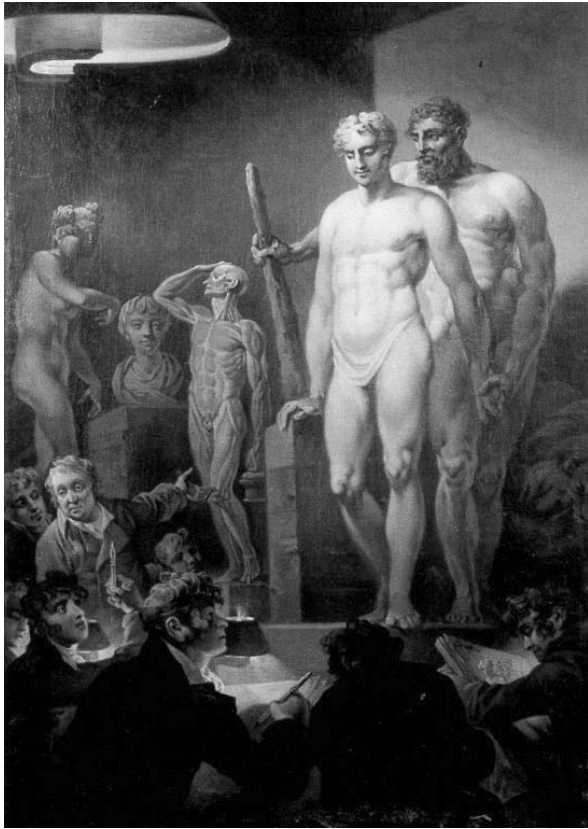


Figure 8. Christian August Lorentzen, *Model School at the Academy*, 1825, oil on canvas, 34 1/4 x 24 inches. The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle, Hillerød.

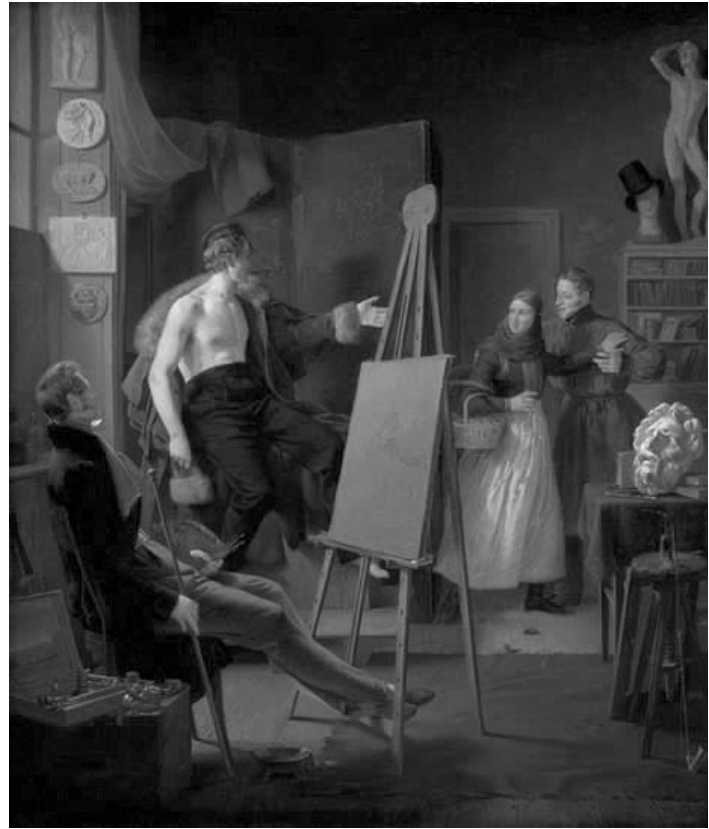


Figure 9. Albert Küchler, *A Girl from Amager Selling Fruit in a Painter's Studio*, 1828, oil on canvas, 28 x 23 7/8 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

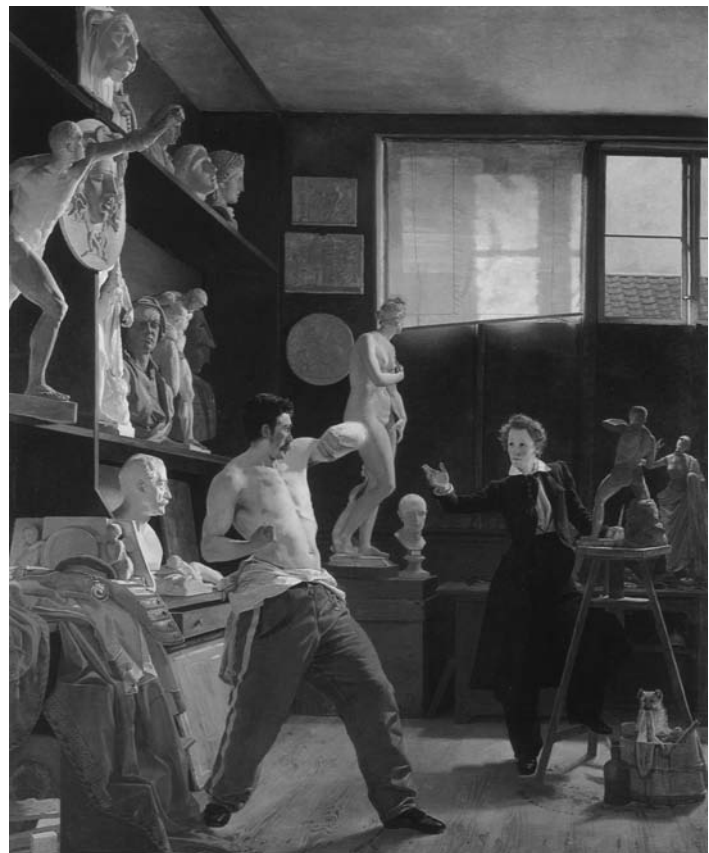


Figure 10. Wilhelm Bendz, *The Sculptor Christen Christensen Working from Life in His Studio*, 1827, oil on canvas, 74 3/4 x 62 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.