

The Golden Age of Danish Painting (1801-1864)

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Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 6pm.
Fridays until 9pm

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For the first time in France for nearly 35 years, the Petit Palais is proud to present an exhibition dedicated to the finest hours of Danish painting, from 1801 to 1864.

Precise and refined, more than 200 works by the leading artists of the time, like Christoffer Eckersberg, Christen Købke, Martinus Rørbye and Constantin Hansen, offer an immersive view of Denmark in the 19th century. The fruit of recent research by an international team, the exhibition is designed to shed new light on a remarkable period of artistic output.



Christen Købke (1810-1848), *View of Døsserengen*, 1838.
Oil on canvas, 53 x 715 cm, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst

The exhibition was organised in collaboration with the Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK) in Copenhagen and the Nationalmuseum of Stockholm.

A new approach to the Danish Golden Age

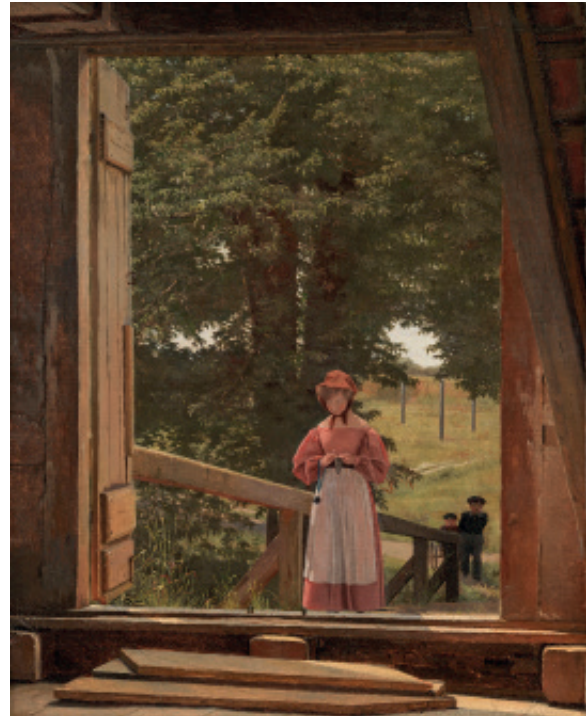
The Danish Golden Age is traditionally thought of as a period of unparalleled artistic and cultural flourishing in Denmark from 1801 to 1848. Artists worked to forge an image of a powerful and united nation by focussing on the Copenhagen bourgeoisie and bucolic landscapes of their homeland. This exhibition takes a broader and more original approach, prolonging the Golden Age to 1864, when Denmark suffered defeat at the hands of Prussia in the Second Schleswig War. This event marks a turning point, both in terms of art history and in the mindset of the time. The exhibition shines a light on a wider range of artists, beyond Eckersberg and his students, to include many so-called “cosmopolitan” painters, who rightfully re-gain the place that is theirs in the Danish Golden Age.

Delving into 19th-century Denmark

The exhibition proposes a thematic approach that touches on subjects such as life in Copenhagen, artists at work, travel, landscapes, open-air painting, and family portraits. It opens with a leading figure of the Danish Golden Age, Christoffer Eckersberg, who was at the root of the remarkable artistic revival in Denmark. A professor at the Royal Academy, he trained an entire new generation of painters. The key role Eckersberg played is a reminder of the growing importance of artists in early 19th-century Danish society. The cultural scene was vibrant, more and more exhibition venues were opening, and a rising wealthy bourgeois class guaranteed artists a regular clientele who eventually turned to collecting. Artists were becoming professionals in their own right thanks to the Royal Academy, and enjoyed painting self-portraits, sometimes on large canvases that reflect their new social status. Commissions from the new bourgeoisie contributed to the growing trend for portraits, as did a taste for portraying intimate family circles. Artists often turned to children for models, showcasing the good upbringing received from their parents, a cornerstone of Danish culture. Painters travelled to perfect their technique, but also to develop their careers abroad. They brought back very fine landscapes and scenes of everyday life from Italy, the shores of the Mediterranean, France, and other Scandinavian countries.



Constantin Hansen, *A Little Girl, Elise Købke, with a Cup*, 1850.
Oil on canvas, 39x355 cm, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst



Christen Købke, *View from the Loft of the Grain Store at the Bakery in the Citadel of Copenhagen*, 1831, Oil on canvas, 39 x 305 cm, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst

The exhibition also evokes artists' fascination with the world, from its breath-taking vastness down to its minutest detail. They created a new vision of the infinitely large, with pictures of wide-open skies, and the infinitely small, with extremely accurate botanical studies. Moreover, the development of open-air painting allowed them to paint landscapes with unusual perspectives, such as the work above by Christen Købke featuring a view of the countryside from a wooden granary. The city also provided artists with new subject matter. Attentive to the slightest detail, they captured humorous and intimate scenes from everyday life.

An activity-based exhibition

Different activities are available to visitors aged 7 and up throughout the exhibition. Designed to highlight certain distinguishing features of Danish Golden Age painting, they focus on multiple details in the paintings by putting visitors' visual acuity to the test. The exhibition also includes a period room inspired by paintings that show artists in their studios. Visitors are invited to try their hand at drawing using the same perspective octants from the time. Three hands-on games help gain appreciation for the sharp observation skills and excellent techniques of Danish artists in painting models, both children and adults. Lastly, in the room dedicated to studies of nature, visitors can manipulate gyro-screens to better understand the innovative points of view chosen by Danish artists to frame their landscapes.

Curators at the Petit Palais:

Servane Dargnies-de Vitry, curator of 19th-century paintings at the Petit Palais
Christophe Leribault, Director of the Petit Palais

Expert curators:

Peter Nørgaard Larsen and Annette Rosenvold Hvidt (Statens Museum for Kunst de Copenhagen)
Magnus Olausson and Carl-Johan Olsson (Nationalmuseum de Stockholm)

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