

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

- with a beauty all its own

"I called this collection the Glyptotek to demonstrate that it was not intended as a museum with its usual need for scientific order and completeness, where art works often stand in isolation, alien to each other in an unbalanced mixture. No, it was to be a place where the statues are displayed in splendour and harmony, to grace the life of the living".

Carl Jacobsen, founder of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, June 1906

Introduction

The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek is an art museum of international standing situated in central Copenhagen. It houses rich and diverse collections in two main departments, one of which is devoted to ancient art of the Mediterranean area, the other to French and Danish art of the 19th and early 20th century.

The museum was named after Ny Carlsberg, the brewery owned by the founder, brewer Carl Jacobsen (1842-1914). He added the word Glyptotek, 'a collection of sculpture', to indicate the pride of place taken by that art form and in recognition of his debt to the older namesake, the Glyptothek in Munich.

Originally one of the largest private art collections of its time, the Glyptotek was donated to the public by Carl Jacobsen by deeds of gift in 1888 and 1899. He subsequently established the New Carlsberg Foundation, in 1902, to ensure the financial well-being of the museum. In this way, today as well as at the turn of the century, the profits from the famous Carlsberg Breweries contribute decisively to maintaining and enriching the Glyptotek. Since 1954, the museum has been an independent institution supported not only by the Foundation, but by the City of Copenhagen and the Danish State as well.

The Jacobsen family did however continue its generous support of the museum by way of massive donations of paintings and sculpture made by a representative of the next generation of the family, the son of Carl, Helge Jacobsen (1882-1946). As opposed to his father, who hated the Impressionists, Helge was very keen on Modernist French art; between 1914 and 1930, where he served as member of and, from 1920 until 1927, Director of the Glyptotek's Board of Trustees, he acquired a number of significant works of art for the museum, among them Manet's *Absinthe Drinker* and several paintings by Paul Gauguin. Privately, he was able to establish a substantial collection of French paintings and sculpture in the same period. In 1927 and 1938, he donated a large number of these works of art to the Glyptotek.

The first building for the Modern Collection, 1897

The sculpture galleries

The ground floor of the first building was designed by architect Vilhelm Dahlerup (1836-1907), to hold the collection of French and Danish sculpture. The bulk of this collection followed two separate artistic trends: one a collection of Classicistic sculpture in white marble by the pupils of Bertel Thorvaldsen, the first Danish artist to become

internationally recognized; the other a fair number of the stars of the late 19th century Parisian Salon - together with Auguste Rodin, the ground-breaking contemporary of the French Impressionists.

Nowhere outside France is a comparable collection to be seen. Thus, there are 35 works by Rodin, in bronze, marble and plaster. The museum keeps masterpieces such as *The Burghers of Calais*, *St. John the Baptist Preaching* and *The Thinker*. Of the many marble sculptures, *The Kiss* is no doubt the most well known. As for the Salon, Carpeaux is particularly well represented, having a whole loggia on the 'Danish' side of the building to himself. His studies for the group *La Danse*, for the facade of the Paris Opera, and the agonizing *Ugolino and his Sons*, taken from Dante's Divine Comedy, are outstanding. The setting for this embarrassment of riches is a cavalcade of interior architecture, at once innovative and derivative. Each gallery differs from the next, from Pompeian frescoes to Rococo ceilings, classical mosaic floors and neoclassical friezes with Nordic mythological content. These are spaces created for the works of art they surround. In effect, they are a museum within the museum, vibrant testimonies to the history of the collection.

The Golden Age Paintings

Paintings of the period 1800 – 1850, known as the Danish Golden Age, has recently met with international acclaim and the Glyptotek holds a fine selection including major works by its leading representatives: C.W. Eckersberg, Købke, Constantin Hansen and J.T. Lundbye. Sculptures by Thorvaldsen, Canova's Three Graces and a number of other works by sculptors of the period accompany the paintings, which can be seen on the first floor of the Dahlerup Wing.

The Collection of Ancient Art - and a Winter Garden, 1906

Having donated his collection of contemporary French and Danish art in 1888, Jacobsen immediately set about creating one of ancient art. Due to a uniquely favourable set of circumstances, it grew at a remarkable rate and could not, as originally intended, be housed along with the first donation. The donation to the public of Jacobsen's collection of ancient art in 1899 led to the erection of a whole new building, designed by architect Hack Kampmann (1856-1920), and standing back to back with Dahlerup's. This in turn led to the decision to round off the courtyard of the older building, a task allotted to Dahlerup.

The simplicity of the brick surfaces on the walls here are in harmony with the industrial flavour of the glass and cast iron superstructure, offering a taste of both Jacobsen's and the period's industrialist level, surge and ambitions. Twelve slender iron columns carry the dome which soars to a height of 30 meters over the floor. The glass of the dome is honey coloured - perhaps to suggest the light of the Mediterranean sun -, that of the surrounding roof neutral.

In the garden itself, sculptures both ancient and modern may be enjoyed in a setting of subtropical evergreens. The focal point is the little pond where gold fish laze around the 'Water Mother', a work from 1921 by the Danish sculptor Kai Nielsen. For many people, she is the embodiment of the Glyptotek, just as the Winter Garden is its heart and symbol.

Kampmann aligned his building symmetrically around the main axis provided by Dahlerup, but faced it about so that it might have a front of its own: Architecturally, the Glyptotek thus has no back, but two very different fronts, united by a common axis. One may look from one end of the museum to the other, when entering and at regular intervals during the visit, as the symmetrically disposed galleries lead one back to the axis. Apart from visual enjoyment, rejoining the axis also gives you the psychological lift of having an idea of where you are, of how far you have progressed.

Art and flowers

Standing high up on the balcony of his new Winter Garden, Carl Jacobsen held a memorable speech at the ceremonial inauguration of the Winter Garden and Kampmann's building for the collection of ancient art. The year was 1906, the Danish royal family, members of its aristocracy and foreign dignitaries as well as the new industrial nobility were all there, seated far below. Of the Winter Garden he said "Being Danes, we know more about flowers than about art, and I imagine that during the winter, this greenery will make people pay a visit; and then, looking at the palms, they might find a moment also for the statues". He knew about museum fatigue, and added that the stricken might use the garden to recuperate.

The Winter Garden is properly speaking a Conservatory, indebted both in its idea and its technique of construction to 19th Century English buildings thus named. This is no botanical garden with scientifically labelled plants, but a room for people to meet and relax.

Extending the Modern Department: Henning Larsen's French Wing, 1996

French Paintings and Sculpture

In-depth conservational examination of the collection of French paintings in the Glyptotek during the 1980's led to an alarming conclusion. The Impressionist works were slowly deteriorating and unless something was done to protect them against air pollution and unstable climatic conditions, they would suffer irreparable damage. It was soon determined that it would be impossible to introduce the required high technology into the existing Impressionist galleries in Dahlerup's building without infringing on the building's status as a protected monument.

At that point, the New Carlsberg Foundation acted with characteristic generosity. Thanks to Jacobsen's foresight, an interior courtyard of 30 by 30 meters was available in the existing building, and the Foundation offered to finance a new wing for the French paintings on this site. This decision has enhanced focus on the Glyptotek collection of French art nation - and world wide, and rests on the unique foundation of the collector Helge Jacobsen's endeavours, acquisitional foresight and luck at a time when Modernism was still only nascent.

The French Galleries: The Degas Sculptures

As a complement to the rich assembly of sculptures by Rodin and Carpeaux, the Modern Department holds the **Degas Sculptures**, the complete oeuvre of seventy-two bronze works, otherwise only to be seen in three other museums in the world. The full set was cast in 22 editions, lettered alphabetically from A-T. Along with the sculpture studies of

horses, dancers and portraits, which are all from the series lettered "R", the museum holds Degas' most well-known piece, the *Danseuse, 14 ans*. The sculptures were donated to the Glyptotek in 1949 by the New Carlsberg Foundation. They have been of great significance, not only as full documentation of the artist's prowess in this "private" and exclusive area of his oeuvre, but also as a source of perpetual inspiration and study for generations of Danish artists. In this respect, one can say that the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek nowhere else gives more credit to its original standing and declared ambitions of being a museum for sculpture than in the display of its Degas collection.

It is with great pleasure that we at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek can present the Degas sculptures to a Canadian audience. They act, we feel, as special ambassadors of our museum, and it is not often that such a large part of our museum heritage travels. The four paintings by the French master that we hold in our collection will be alone in representing him here for some time, but it is good to know that his sculptures in our possession do the same elsewhere!

Paul Gauguin

Other French artists of renown accompany Degas in the Glyptotek, among them Cézanne, Monet, Pissarro and Morisot, but most notably maybe Paul Gauguin, whose marriage to Danish Mette Gad and his brief, but artistically important stay in Copenhagen 1884-85 connects him with this country. He is represented in the Glyptotek with more than 40 paintings and sculptures, making it one of the world's largest Gauguin collections. This is a truly unique room, allowing you to take in his entire career before concentrating on the individual works of art, both paintings, ceramics and sculpture.

Besides high technology protection and coherent presentation of the collection, Henning Larsen's French Wing has a final, vital thing to offer: Architecture of the highest quality. This is of the essence in the Glyptotek, where the physical setting for the works of art is a major contributing factor in making the museum a unique visual experience. Invisible from the outside as well as from inside the older buildings, the extension introduces late 20th century Danish architecture, enriching and rounding off the century that has passed since the opening of the first galleries of the Glyptotek in 1897.

Flemming Friberg

Director, July 2003

Degas Sculptures in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek

The Ny Carlsbergfondet (The New Carlsberg Foundation) entered into negotiations with Mme Nelly Hébrard, Paris, concerning the acquisition of the "R" series of the Degas bronzes (73 pieces – 51/H; 73/S) in September 1948 in connection with a concurrent exhibition of the bronzes in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. The negotiations carried on for some time, during which the exhibition (including the R-series) went to Stockholm (Galerie Blanche, October 9 – November 7, 1948) and Oslo (Nasjonalgallerie, November–December 1948). It is likely for this reason why the Stockholm catalogue gives no statement as to the ownership of the bronzes.

The travelling exhibition was financed by the Ny Carlsbergfondet and arranged by Haavard Rostrup, curator at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in collaboration with Galerie Blanche, Stockholm.

The acquisition of the bronzes was finally arranged in the spring of 1949. Ny Carlsbergfondet placed the 72 bronzes at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek on May 10, 1949 and formerly donated the works to the museum in 1952.

The "R" Series Exhibition History:

Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo from 1948:

1948

Edgar Degas 1834–1917. Skulpturer og Monotypier. Tegninger og malerier, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, September 4 - 26, 1948. Introduction by Haavard Rostrup. The exhibition consisted of 73 bronzes [the "R" series and *Little Dancer, Fourteen Years*, catalogue states that the bronzes belonged to a private collection]; 33 monotypes; 17 drawings; 5 paintings and 1 pastel.

Edgar Degas, 1834–1917. Skulpturer och Monotypier, Målningar, Pasteller och Teckningar, Galerie Blanche, Stockholm, Oktober 9 - November 7, 1948. Katalog nr. 10. Introduction by Gustaf Engwall. The exhibition consisted of 73 bronzes [the "R" series and *Little Dancer, Fourteen Years*, catalogue states that the bronzes belonged to a private collection]; 34 monotypes and 19 paintings, pastels and drawings.

Edgar Degas 1834–1917: Skulpturer, Nasjonalgallerie, Oslo, November–December 1948. Introduction by Haavard Rostrup. The exhibition consisted of 73 bronzes [the "R" series and *Little Dancer, Fourteen Years*, catalogue states that the bronzes belonged to a private collection].

Exhibition history of the "R" Series after the donation to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek:

1985

April 27– June 20, 6 bronzes from the "R" series (M.I.N. 2642, 2646, 2647, 2666, 2667, 2670) on loan to Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark, in connection with the exhibition Tiden, Den 4. Dimension (Time, The Fourth Dimension). The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue with the same title.

1999-2000

December 10–March 26, 5 bronzes from the R-Series (M.I.N. 2670, 2671, 2674, 2675, 2692) on loan to Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark in connection with the exhibition De Glade Givere. (The Cheerful Givers/Patrons of Art) The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue with the same title.