

*Anders Kold: Not for Pleasure Alone and in Leisure Moments. Two Landscapes by Jens Juel at the Thorvaldsen Museum*

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Two pendant landscapes hang at the Thorvaldsen Museum, painted by the most famous Danish portraitist of the late 18th century, Jens Juel (1745-1802): *Prospect of the Little Belt from Hindsgavl on Funen*, fig. 1, and *Prospect of the Little Belt from a Ridge at Middelfart*, fig. 2. The works can be dated to around 1800. A comment in N. H. Weinwich's encyclopedia of artists from 1811 that Juel made landscapes "for pleasure alone and in leisure moments" has formed the following generations' idea of him and has been largely instrumental in defining Juel as the unreflective contrast to the serious Neo-Classicist Nicolai Abildgaard.

Prospect painting was a widespread genre around 1800, but Juel's two topographically identifiable motifs are aberrations, since they do not show Hindsgavl Manor, let alone its gardens – the characteristics of this genre. The message in the pictures must therefore be sought in a combination of the topographic and genre-like.

If the pictures were commissioned, then it must have been by the manor's owner, Christian Holger Adeler. He was no figurehead, but rather the local prime mover in carrying out the agricultural reforms that were given the King's approval and legislated in 1788. The inventory of Adeler's library provides a glimpse of the world of this liberally-inclined landowner, and in 1787, Adeler even committed himself in writing as a champion of reform. His aversion to the patronizing and humiliating attitude towards the peasantry can be seen as the background for fig. 1, and his enterprise, which could be seen among other things in his spinning and weaving mills in Mid-

delfart, are reflected in fig. 2, where the lord of the manor is seen returning from an inspection tour. The commission, which can thus be seen as taking stock of his work for a good cause, was probably given in July 1799, when Juel was in the district. Adeler died before the pictures were completed; the artist died in 1802. This is why the paintings were found in the sale of Juel's effects. Thorvaldsen bought them for his collection in 1843.

The theme in the two “moral landscapes” – allegories of the abolition of adscription – had been treated before by Juel, and then as well in landscapes. Two pendant motifs from 1792-93, and a further treatment of the subject in 1794 show the use of the present/past motif. If the three paintings from the 1790s hold dramatic expectations for the future, then the two paintings at the Thorvaldsen Museum together radiate serenity. Juel can be considered one of the last artists who, at the dawn of the 19th century, were still effortlessly able to give a harmonious depiction of aristocratic culture and the drudgery of work.