

Marianne Saabye: Aspects of C. W. Eckersberg's Youthful Years

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C. W. Eckersberg arrived in Copenhagen in 1803, and studied at the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts until 1809. He is known to have been a frequent visitor at the home of Jens Juel's widow from as early as 1804, two years after Juel's death. The portraits remaining there influenced Eckersberg's group painting of the Søbøtke children (1806), to which a parallel with Philip Otto Runge's and Thomas Lawrence's contemporary child portraits may be drawn. In 1806, at the Privy Councillor Johan Bülow's home, Sanderumgaard on Funen, Eckersberg saw, among other things, a large collection of Juel's landscape painting, and these influenced his series of landscapes and garden views from Møen during the period 1809-1810. In conjunction with this, the article also accounts for Eckersberg's relation to the romantic philosophy of nature and his early endeavours to provide a true-to-life portrayal of the landscape. His townscapes, paintings of fires, and moral writings from his first years in Copenhagen reveal an increasing tendency towards a dedicated, non-academic description of real life and society. Thus, in Eckersberg's youth may be found the source of that realism which became one of the hallmarks of Danish Golden Age painting.