

PRESS



RELEASE



Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, *View through Three Arches of the Colosseum in Rome*, 1815  
Oil on canvas, 32 x 49.5 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

The first monographic exhibition in France  
of the Master of the Danish Golden Age

*C. W. Eckersberg (1783-1853)*  
*Danish artist in Paris,*  
*Rome and Copenhagen*

from 1 June to 14 August 2016



*C. W. Eckersberg (1783-1853). Danish artist in Paris, Rome and Copenhagen*  
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For the first time, France is hosting a monographic exhibition of Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, a major Danish artist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 125 works will be revealed, including paintings that have not been shown in public for over 100 years.

On view during Autumn 2015 at the Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst and subsequently at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the exhibition will be held at the Fondation Custodia (Paris) from 1 June to 14 August 2016. The Fondation Custodia is the ideal venue for this show as it owns a rich collection of Danish art, comprising *plein air* oil sketches and no less than 400 drawings as well as two reliefs by the famous sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen.

The exhibition is arranged in several stages. On the first floor of the Hôtel Lévis-Mirepoix, the paintings will be presented in chronological and thematic order: the early years in Denmark, in France and Italy, before the development of his art in Copenhagen. In the basement, the visitor will find drawings and sketches by the artist, including twelve sheets from the collections of the Fondation Custodia.

### **The years in Paris and Rome**

A leader of the Copenhagen School, the young Eckersberg won a prize that allowed him to study in France between 1810 and 1813. The year he spent in the studio of Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) was crucial for his time in Paris. This artist's teaching relied exclusively on study of the live model and was an innovation for Eckersberg. The historical scenes of the artist's early works changed character immediately under the influence of the French master.



The Fondation Custodia exhibition includes several drawings and paintings from this period. While Eckersberg's ambition was to devote himself to history painting, a much more prestigious genre at the time, he also began to create works in another style. These included landscapes made during the promenades that brought him around the Île-de-France and urban views of Paris such as the *Pont Royal seen from the Quai Voltaire* (1812, fig. 6). In this painting, the artist, in the role of a simple observer, has set out to render the slightest details with great precision.



work from this period, *The Marble Steps Leading to the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli in Rome* (1814-1816, fig. 14) in the room devoted to Italy. The scene is set at the foot of the Capitoline Hill. Eckersberg has focused his attention on the humble façade of the church and the modest medieval houses that stand alongside the monumental staircase, instead of showing the most famous buildings at the site. The artist chose unusual points of view in his works, exploring his interest in the construction of the image that would years later lead him to write his

Eckersberg left France for Italy in June 1813 and settled in Rome, moving into the house where Thorvaldsen also lived, and they became close friends. In this burgeoning, international artistic environment, Eckersberg concentrated on *plein air* painting that allowed him to capture the vagaries of shadows and light and to render them in the instant, using innovative points of view and compositions. Eckersberg became fascinated by this *plein air* painting, creating several views of the Eternal City. Visitors can admire a major



treatise on *Linear Perspective applied to the Art of Painting* (1841). Thus, in the *View through Three Arches of the Colosseum in Rome* (1814-1816, fig. 16), probably Eckersberg's most famous work, the background has been created from three different points of view. The painter, standing in front of the central arch, could only see the view framed by this opening; to see the two others fully, he had to take two steps to the left or five to the right.

## The Return to Copenhagen

After his time in France and Italy, Eckersberg returned to Copenhagen in 1816 where he remained until his death. He became professor and then director of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and spent the rest of his life painting and teaching. He introduced *plein air* painting to his students, considering landscape to be a subject worthy of study and illustration.

The drawings and paintings made from 1830 onwards, evoking daily life in Denmark and Eckersberg's many portraits of the Danish bourgeoisie show his interest in habits and manners, as well as secular scenes. When he returned to Copenhagen he made portraits of several of the generous patrons who had allowed him to study abroad. In these works, the French influence can be seen – especially that of David – in the arrangement of the models, which is impressive but simple, the rigorous composition, clear details and the rendering of the texture and quality of fabric.



With its many figures, the portrait of the *Nathanson Family* (1818, fig. 18) is certainly one of the most complex portraits produced by Eckersberg. The artist had to comply with various requirements of his patron, the merchant Nathanson. The latter wanted a painting that reflected his high rank in Danish society, as a merchant and assimilated Jew and like the artist, he sought a varied

and vibrant composition. Eckersberg initially suggested showing the family participating in a dance, but Nathanson preferred a scene portraying the parents coming home after an audience with the queen, according to family legend.

Après les portraits, l'exposition propose au visiteur d'entrer dans l'intimité des études de nus, novatrices par leur caractère réaliste.

Au cours de l'été 1837, Eckersberg exécuta cinq tableaux représentant des modèles nus presque de grandeur nature. Pour ces toiles qui devaient servir de références pour ses élèves, il choisit avec soin ses modèles (deux masculins, deux féminins et une fillette), complémentaires par leur âge, leur type et leur expression concentrée ou distante.

As in the *Seated Male Model*. Peter Krstrup (1837, fig. 25), the lateral lighting emphasizes the chiaroscuro and highlights the volumes of the body which has not been idealized in any way.



This journey through Eckersberg's work ends with paintings and drawings illustrating marine scenes. On the basis of his early paintings, one would assume that Eckersberg kept being attracted to urban scenes and landscapes after his return to Copenhagen. In fact, marine scenes were to dominate his production. For some of these, Eckersberg adopted artistic processes that were at the time experimental, such as the unusual round format he chose for *Sailing*



*from Copenhagen to Charlottenlund* (1824, fig. 20). The small sailing vessel is shown as if he had observed it through a telescope from another ship. Although the ship itself has been painted with Eckersberg's characteristic precision, the clouds in the sky have been treated rather schematically. He had not yet refined the capacity of acute observation that he reached in 1826 when he made a systematic study of atmospheric effects, painting a series of cloud studies.

In the second section of the exhibition, Eckersberg's drawings echo his varied interest in everyday scenes, landscapes and seascapes. As a meticulous draughtsman, he often made an initial study in situ, adopting composition. In the *Gothic Gate in Paris*, (1811, fig. 3), the foreground suggests the artist shadow of a tree when he of a ruin in the midst of fertile However, he undoubtedly in the calm of the studio, conscientious rendering of the grey wash that gives the sheet a



a rigorous  
*of the Parc Monceau*  
chiaroscuro of the  
was sitting in the  
recorded this motif  
vegetation.  
finished his drawing  
concentrating on the  
atmosphere with a  
finished appearance.

A catalogue in French accompanies the exhibition. It includes texts by Kasper Monrad, Anna Schram Vejlbj, Neela Struck, Jesper Svenningsen and Jan Gorm Madsen.

## **Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783-1853)**

### **Biography**



Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (fig. 2) was born in 1783 and grew up in the south of Denmark. He wanted to become a history painter and so in 1803, entered the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen.

From 1810 to 1816, he continued his studies in Paris and Rome, developing a new approach to history and landscape painting that he introduced into Danish art.

On his return to Denmark in 1816, Eckersberg was appointed Professor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, a position he held until his death in 1853.

Art historians refer to this period as the School of Eckersberg, the School of Copenhagen, or the Danish Golden Age.

Careful observation of detail and the effects of light is characteristic of Eckersberg's work.

Eckersberg had three wives and eleven children.

Throughout his life, Eckersberg was meticulous about keeping a diary.

In two undated letters, written by Eckersberg to an unknown recipient, he described his routine in Paris. Letter published by Bramsen, 1947, p. 144-147:

“[...] My friend Müller lives here with me and we work hard from five in the morning until the evening. At the moment, we're both busy at the Musée Napoleon. Müller is copying a Gaspard Poussin and I'm copying a Holy Family by Raphael. We hold an academy with a few German painters to draw nudes from life, and very soon I'll have the opportunity to study for a few months in the studio of the great David. These are our occupations as well as our distractions because there's nothing in Paris that could soothe our leisure time. Here, it's not customary for friends to visit you at home and you have to travel 4 to 5 kilometres to go to the countryside to benefit from the good air in the corn fields and the meadows, without even being sure of finding any. In Paris, there are the Tuileries gardens that are so marvellously proportioned, drawn with ruler and compass, and the Champs-Elysees gardens where you can stroll under the chestnut and lime trees. These places are our only comfort because otherwise, from

Montmartre, the eye captures only a block of grey-black stone as far as it can see. [...] In the roads here, we are often witnesses to amusing scenes. Nowhere else can you find so many minor trades. You meet artists, acrobats, hawkers, shouting their wares loudly everywhere. It amuses us a lot, with Müller. The



Parisian girls are thin and slender but a beautiful face is quite rare. They go to the buvette and drink their coffee and eau-de-vie like the men. In the public academies, they draw from the male nude without being offended: I would really not like to have a Parisienne as a wife. If you were here, your brush and your pencil would find many interesting things. The farmers' carriages and horses are unique; the horses wear on their back a blue sheepskin with fringes with their harness and draw a two-wheeled cart with a white roof in which the entire family lives. They are very picturesque. [...]"

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"[...] My affairs here are progressing very slowly and although I have tried to use my time to make the most of opportunities, other than a few little things, over the entire summer, I have worked on nothing other than finalizing my copy after Raphael. My great admiration for David's talent means that I dreamed for a long time of studying under him [...]. In the hope the Academy would receive my intention [to remain in Paris to study with David for another year] favourably, I have been working in his studio since September. Mr. Neergaard the King's Valet introduced me to him and showed him a few of [my] quite passable compositions by which, quite surprisingly, David seemed to be satisfied, an attitude he continues to have towards me. When I finished my first figure, he said: "*Monsieur, I do not know how one can paint like this in your country.*" He is one of the most rigorous and precise men and does everything possible to encourage his students and make them progress. He enthuses as soon as one of them stands out and he is especially interested in colouring, which has given me courage again. I am going to strive to benefit from this advantage although I will need to devote another 24 francs to it from my monthly income without counting all the little associated expenses. We paint from life and the studio models are the most exquisite. There is a perfect Hercules, another is similar to a gladiator, and a third is like a young Bacchus or Antinous and so many others, it changes every week. Other than that, he advises us to make compositions and until now I have been perfectly content. [...]"



## Interview with Ger Luijten, director of the Fondation Custodia

### Why show the work of Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg in Paris?

Eckersberg is at last back in Paris! He lived at 3 rue de Beaune (fig. 4), in the 7<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, for three years, from 1810 to 1813 and here, at the Fondation Custodia at 121 rue de Lille, we're in "his" neighbourhood.



### How did you encounter Eckersberg and the Danish artists?

In 1985, I went to Copenhagen and on entering the Statens Museum for Kunst, I had a revelation discovering the light and clarity of vision of the Danish painters. Their painting is both detailed and subjective. It shows an almost democratic interest in the subjects they tackle: they pay as much attention to the recesses of a house as to a Biblical or mythological scene. In a way it's a continuation of 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painting. The subjects are similar, with a large number of scenes from daily life and portraits. Portraits of the bourgeoisie are more common in Danish painting than those of the aristocracy; we truly enter into a way of life.

### What is this way of life, how do you perceive it in the paintings?

Even today, if you go to Denmark you'll observe that the scale of the houses is identical to those that occur in 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings. The colours, textures, bricks and also the northern light of Copenhagen,



so close to the sea. Experimenting the radiance and the clarity "for real", and then finding it in Eckersberg's paintings is staggering!

### Does Eckersberg fit in with the Fondation Custodia?

For the past six years since my arrival at the Fondation Custodia as director, we have begun a policy to acquire *plein air* sketches, mainly by

French, German, Dutch and Danish artists. This collection now hangs in the majestic staircase of the Hôtel Turgot that houses our collection. We have about fifty sketches by Danish artists. To show Eckersberg here, to offer the public an opportunity to discover the extent of the talent of this master of the Danish Golden Age through a great monographic exhibition seemed obvious to us. It's a continuation of what we are implementing in our collections. We want to stimulate the public's interest in Danish artists who are still relatively unknown outside Denmark.





At the Fondation Custodia we have a very representative group of 16 drawings by Eckersberg, bought by my predecessors and myself. We will show these drawings on the occasion of this exhibition. We also keep over 400 sheets by Danish artists that the public can come to look at, by appointment, in our study room in the Hôtel Turgot.

### **How was the exhibition conceived?**

Kasper Monrad, the world expert on Eckersberg, selected the works for our exhibition *C. W. Eckersberg (1783-1853). A Danish Artist in Paris, Rome and Copenhagen*. Kasper Monrad wrote a book on Eckersberg about ten years ago. He has also made a major contribution to the catalogue that we are publishing in French on the occasion of this Parisian exhibition.

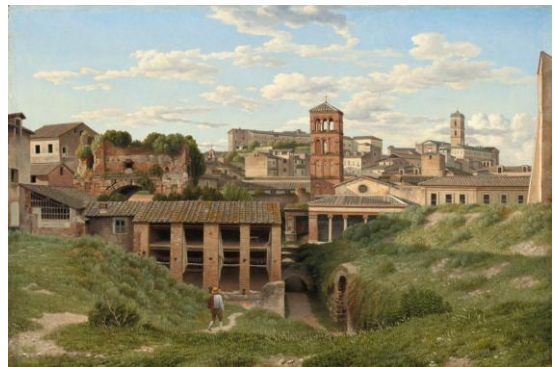
The monographic exhibition we are offering shows the early works, the major series of portraits painted by Eckersberg throughout his life, but also seascapes, Biblical scenes and landscapes made by the master of the Danish Golden Age. The show reveals that Eckersberg did not favour one genre over another.

### **What is the specificity of Eckersberg that touches you especially?**

Eckersberg was Professor at the Copenhagen Academy for a large part of his life, from 1816 until his death in 1853. He taught many students and gave them a lot of freedom. He was not a dominating and overbearing teacher, on the contrary, he never positioned himself “above” his pupils but “with” them.

His teaching was based on the observation of nature, the effects of light on it, as well as linear perspective. He wrote a treatise on the subject, which is hard to find now, but the Fondation Custodia has a copy of it in its library.

As an artist, Eckersberg was very original in his way of treating landscape. He used proto-photographic framings with unexpected results: views of corners of Rome, but also compositions where you have the impression of lying on the ground, which intensifies the perspective effects of a painting.



### **He also painted a large number of portraits?**

Eckersberg lived during the Age of Enlightenment and it's not surprising that he painted professors and scholars. The majority of his portraits were commissions. A room in our exhibition devoted to Eckersberg the portraitist will host a series of masterpieces from Danish museums. The large portrait of the Nathanson family will be at the centre. But the most extraordinary portrait, in my view, is the one he made of his friend the sculptor Thorvaldsen (fig. 11): it is a marvellous testimony of one important artist paying respect to the other. Visitors will of course be able to see it in our rooms. Thorvaldsen by the way also made a magnificent sculpted portrait of Eckersberg.



### **How do you define the influence of Eckersberg's time in Paris in his work?**

French painting of the time was very different to what was being taught in Denmark. The teaching of Jacques-Louis David, with whom he studied, relied essentially on working after the live model, which was new for Eckersberg.

Eckersberg's encounter with David proved to be decisive for the artist, it allowed him to move in new directions and to approach his subjects in a different way. David helped him to refine his drawing style and to cultivate a form of neoclassicism that we immediately notice in his work.





*C. W. Eckersberg (1783-1853). Danish artist in Paris, Rome and Copenhagen*  
from 1 June to 14 August 2016, Fondation Custodia, Paris

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## Practical Information:

### EXHIBITION

*C. W. Eckersberg (1783-1853). Danish artist in Paris, Rome and Copenhagen*

### DATES

**from 1 June to 14 August 2016**

### PRESS OPENING

Tuesday 31 May from 10 to 11.30 am

### VERNISSAGE

Tuesday 31 May from 6 to 8.30 pm

### LOCATION

Fondation Custodia  
121, rue de Lille · 75007 Paris · France  
[www.fondationcustodia.fr](http://www.fondationcustodia.fr)

### ACCESS BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Metro: Assemblée Nationale (line 12) or Invalides (lines 8 and 13, RER C)  
Bus 63, 73, 83, 84, 94: Assemblée Nationale

### OPENING HOURS

Every day except Monday from 12 to 6 pm

### ADMISSION CHARGES

Full 10 € / Reduced 8 €

### CATALOGUE

*C. W. Eckersberg (1783-1853). Artiste danois à Paris, Rome et Copenhague*  
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## Images Available for the Press

### *C. W. Eckersberg (1783-1853)* *Danish artist in Paris,* *Rome and Copenhagen*



1. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*View of the Sanderumgaard Garden*, 1806  
Pencil, pen and black ink, grey wash, 231 x 277 mm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



2. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Self-portrait*, 1807-1810  
Oil on canvas, 33 x 36 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



3. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Gothic Doorway in the Parc Monceau in Paris*, 1811  
Pencil, pen and black ink, grey wash,  
228 x 236 mm  
© Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



4. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*View from Eckersberg's Lodging in the Hôtel d'Irlande,*  
*Rue de Beaune no. 3, Overlooking the Seine*, 1811-1812  
Pencil, pen and black ink, grey wash, 213 x 218 mm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



5. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Food is Prepared. Eckersberg's Hostess in Paris (?)*, 1812  
Pencil, pen and brownish-grey ink, brownish-grey wash, 224 x 258 mm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



6. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Pont Royal seen from the Quai Voltaire*, 1812  
Oil on canvas, 55.5 x 71 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



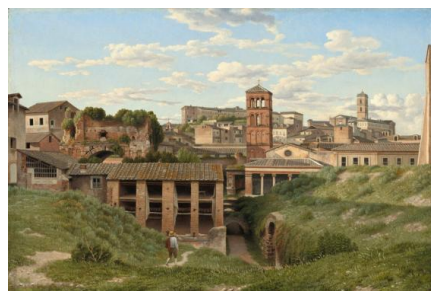
7. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*The Longchamp Gate in the Bois de Boulogne*, 1812  
Oil on canvas, 33 x 40.5 cm  
© The David Collection, Copenhagen, inv. 16/1969  
Photo Pernille Klemp



8. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness*, 1813  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 80 cm  
© Nivaagaards Malerisamling, Nivå



9. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Alcyone's Farewell to her Departing Husband*, 1813  
Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 48.5 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



10. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*View of the Cloaca Maxima*, 1814  
Oil on canvas, 31.5 x 47.5 cm  
© National Gallery of Art, Washington



11. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Portrait of Bertel Thorvaldsen Wearing the Habit and Insignia of the San Luca Academy, 1814*  
Oil on canvas, 90.7 x 74.3 cm  
© The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The Academy Council, Copenhagen / Photo Frida Gregersen



12. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*The Capuchin Monastery at Genzano, 1814*  
Pencil, pen and black ink, grey wash, 222 x 302 mm  
© Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



13. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*The So-called Villa of Raphael in the gardens of Villa Borghese in Rome, 1814-1816*  
Oil on canvas, 27.5 x 24.5 cm  
© Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg



14. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*The Marble Steps Leading to the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli in Rome, 1814-1816*  
Oil on canvas, 32.5 x 36.5 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



15. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*A Courtyard in Rome, 1814-1816*  
Oil on canvas, 33.5 x 27.5 cm  
© Kunstmuseum, Ribe



16. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*View through Three Arches of the Colosseum in Rome, 1815*  
Oil on canvas, 32 x 49.5 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



17. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*The Model Maddalena*, 1815  
Oil on canvas, 31 x 21.3 cm  
© The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen



18. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*The Nathanson Family*, 1818  
Oil on canvas, 126 x 172.5 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



19. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Bella and Hanna, the Eldest Daughters of Mendel Levin Nathanson*, 1820  
Oil on canvas, 125 x 85.5 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



20. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Sailing from Copenhagen to Charlottenlund*, 1824  
Oil on canvas, 44.5 x 45 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



21. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*A Russian Fleet at Anchor near Elsinore*, 1826  
Oil on canvas, 31.5 x 59 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



22. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Study of Clouds*, 1826 or later  
Oil on canvas, 24.5 x 32.5 cm  
© Kunstmuseet Brundlund Slot, Museum,  
Sønderjylland, Aabenraa



23. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*The Copenhagen Stock Exchange, Christiansborg Palace  
and Holmens Church, viewed from The Asiatic Company  
Square*, 1832  
Oil on canvas, 46 x 65.5 cm  
© Kunstmuseet Brundlund Slot, Museum  
Sønderjylland, Aabenraa



24. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Langebrogade, Copenhagen, in the Moonlight with Running  
Figures*, 1836  
Oil on canvas, 45.5 x 33.5 cm  
© Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



25. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Seated Male Model. Peter Krstrup*, 1837  
Oil on canvas, 94.5 x 62.5 cm  
© The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The Academy  
Council, Copenhagen / Photo Frida Gregersen



26. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Male Model holding a Staff. Carl Frørup, 18 years*, 1837  
Oil on canvas, 94.5 x 62.5 cm  
© The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The Academy  
Council, Copenhagen / Photo Frida Gregersen



27. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*Female Nude. Florentine*, 1840  
Oil on copper, diam. 23 cm  
© Brandts – Museum for Kunst og Visuel Kultur,  
Odense



28. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg  
*A Sailor Taking Leave of His Girl*, 1840  
Oil on canvas, 34.5 x 26 cm  
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