

Christian Skredsvig (1854-1924)

Another Norwegian painter in Marlotte

In a recent article, we reported the visit of Norwegian painter Erik Werenskiold to Marlotte in 1881, a stay during which he painted several scenes of our village. He was then accompanied by two friends, his fellow citizen Christian Skredsvig and the German painter C. Schultze (who exhibited *Winter Landscape* at the Paris Salon that same year). Surrounded by other French painters, the three visitors then stayed at the *Hôtel Mallet*, in Marlotte.

Who is Christian Skredsvig?

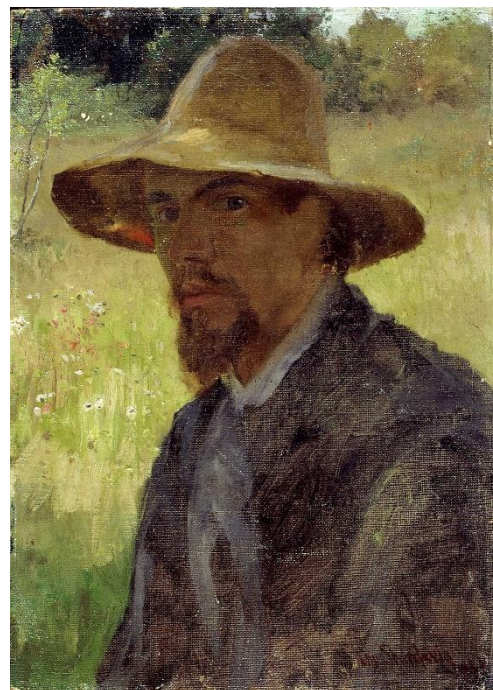
From the age of fifteen, Skredsvig attended a drawing and painting school in Oslo, training which he pursued in Copenhagen, then in Munich. He later moved to Paris, where he took lessons from Léon Bonnat (like many other Scandinavian artists) and exhibited one of his works at the Universal Exhibition in 1878. After several years in Paris and its surroundings, he returned to Norway in 1886 to settle on the *Fleskum* farm. This place then became a center of attraction for an ephemeral artistic colony, where the big names of Norwegian painting met, including Erik Werenskiold, Theodor Kittelsen, Harriet Backer..., whose works have remained markers of the new romanticism in Norwegian painting.

In his own painting, Christian Skredsvig employed an artistic style reflecting naturalism, which made him particularly known for his picturesque and lyrical depictions of landscape.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Skredsvig began writing autobiographical works, as well as novels.

Christian Skredsvig in Marlotte

Aware of the presence of Christian Skredsvig in Grez-sur-Loing, where he was in the fall of 1881 and from where he left a large oil painting entitled *October Morning in Grez* (1881-1882), we had not found any trace of his passage in Bourron-Marlotte, beyond the writings of Werenskiold. However, recent contacts with the Danish Skovgaard



Selfportrait by Christian Skredsvig, 1886 - Oslo Museum - image no. OB.00472, via digitaltmuseum.



October morning in Grez by Christian Skredsvig, 1881-1882 - Norwegian National Museum, Oslo

Museum have allowed us to access letters from the painter, thereby shedding light on his stay in Marlotte.

In May 1881, Skredsvig won the gold medal for his painting *A Farm in Venoix* presented at the Salon of the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris. It was towards the end of July that he sojourned in Marlotte in the company of his friend Erik Werenskiold. From there, he mentioned in one of his

letters that *the French state had bought the [award-winning] painting for 2000 francs. The medal was made of gold. Value 550 Francs.* Whereas Werenskiold was spending a lot of time at his easel, producing various representations of Marlotte, Skredsvig appears to have focused on ongoing commissions: *I have a few painting orders to finish, and I remain seated on my stool like a shoemaker.* From his local observations, we only found a few drawings at the end of a letter, which he wrote at the *Mallet hotel*.

of main...
 Adrs: Mallet Cafe - Restaurant.
 a Marlotte. Seine et Marne.
 Au Christian



Extract from a letter written in Marlotte, from C. Skredsvig to J. Skovgaard – July 4, 1881

Nei - Jy...
 for hvad Jy...
 Men for...
 Drag fulde Drag. Børst...
 HOTEL DE LA RENAISSANCE

In fact, the content of the messages he addressed to his friends testifies to the emotionally difficult period he was going through, following a romantic disappointment

which completely monopolized his thoughts: *I felt like a convalescent after she left me... I promised not to write to her again and I won't let myself be tempted. The wound is painful and at times more open than at others... The whole world is upside down, everything is spinning. In Marlotte, I wrote her an eight-page letter, but in the end, I tore it up...*

These feelings, however, did not completely obliterate Christian Skredsvig's naturalist sensitivity to the Marlotte environment: *The other evening I was captivated by a magnificent sky full of stars. I felt like my big feelings were insignificant compared to all the incomprehensible wonders of the sky. It's very hot here. Werenskiold and I hardly do anything, but we enjoy the table, where the steak is excellent!*

Skredsvig's stay in Marlotte was short-lived and we found him at the *Hôtel Beau Séjour* in Grez-Bourron* [sic] on August 15, 1881. Will we one day find more concrete traces of Christian Skredsvig's passage to Marlotte? Could he have represented our village in paintings still remaining to be discovered?

Acknowledgements: We are indebted to the Skovgaard Museum in Viborg (Denmark), which directed us to the letters of Skredsvig, present in their collection, as well as to Dr. T.S. Olsen who ensured their translation.

* became *Pension Laurent* in Grez-sur-Loing