

Joakim Skovgaard – Another Scandinavian painter in Marlotte

While the presence of Scandinavian painters is well known in Grez-sur-Loing, this is not the case in Bourron-Marlotte. Although the works created by the Swede Oscar Törna in Bourron have been clearly identified, and we recently documented the visit of the Norwegians [Erik Werenskiöld](#) and [Christian Skredsvieg](#), we still have much to learn in this area. For example, a letter from Joakim Skovgaard, discovered in the archives of the [Skovgaard Museum](#) in Viborg, Denmark, caught our attention.

Joakim Skovgaard – A Notable Danish Painter

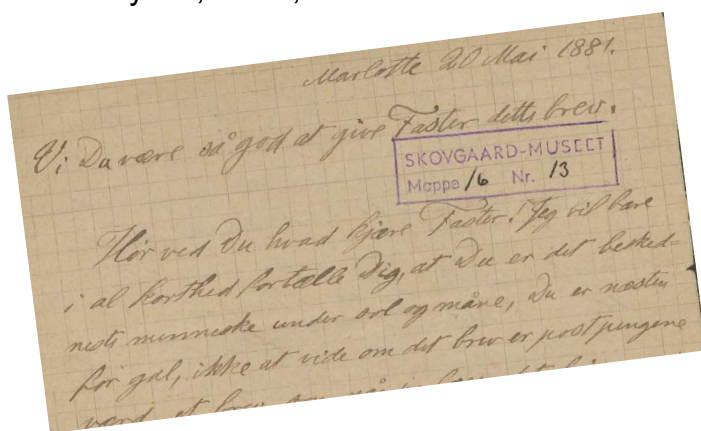


Joakim Skovgaard, before 1900
(Royal library, Copenhagen)

Joakim Skovgaard (1856-1933) received his first drawing lessons from his father, P.C. Skovgaard, a Danish landscape artist considered one of the leading painters of the late Danish Golden Age. It was during a trip to Paris in 1880-81 and a stay of several months at the school of Léon Bonnat that the young Skovgaard acquired the basics of naturalism in painting. He then traveled to Italy and Greece, where he developed an interest in ceramic painting and costume studies for church decorations. He also adopted a lighter style, influenced by Impressionism. In the 1900s, Skovgaard was commissioned to decorate Viborg Cathedral, one of the largest commissions ever received by a Danish artist, and which remains today an absolute masterpiece of Danish art. Joakim Skovgaard is considered a key figure among the artists who, at the turn of the century, created a decorative style based on specifically Danish principles.

Joakim Skovgaard in Marlotte

On May 20, 1881, he wrote a letter from Marlotte¹, in which he emphasized the presence of *nature, the arrival of spring and the most incomparable birdsongs*. He further emphasized *the real trees observed in the forest of Fontainebleau!* On May 20, he also expected a visit from four friends, whose identities we learn in another letter written on May 27: they were Viggo Pedersen², his



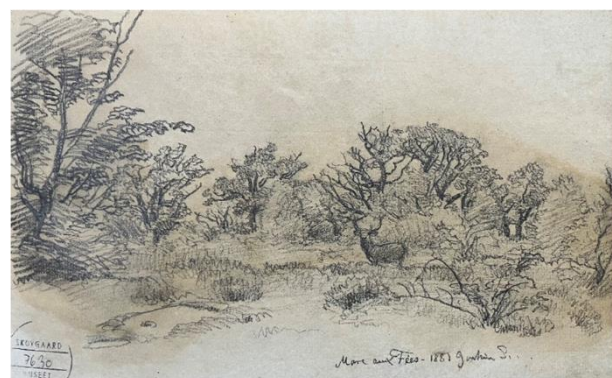
¹ We thank Dr. Terkel Svava Olsen for translating the letters cited in this article.

² Viggo Pedersen (1854-1926), Danish landscape painter, whose stay in Paris in 1881 exposed him to landscape art, significantly influencing his style.

brother-in-law Borup³ and Erik Henningsen⁴. Skovgaard mentioned that *it was summer, I tell you. The crops are growing well and at night it was so warm that yesterday we stayed without coats watching the locals dancing at the inn.*

Further on, he provides a beautiful description of the natural setting where he is located: *The attached little drawing is from a spot in the pine forest. I drew it on a beautiful evening; the sky was very clear, with only a few scattered clouds. Standing on a large rock (not while drawing, but afterward), I gazed down at the valley, illuminated by the low sun. The rock I was standing on cast its shadow far into the valley, and the wind howled in the pine treetops. But deciduous forests are more beautiful. At Gorge-aux-Loups and Mare-aux-Fées, nature is so wild; the oaks bear bristling branches, some almost leafless. The afternoon a few days ago was magical; large white clouds drifted across the blue sky. It had just rained, so everything radiated freshness, and the yellow broom sparkled between the walls and bushes. These are places so wonderful and wild that one would expect to encounter something extraordinary. The strangest creature I have ever seen is a red deer. I would like to see a wild boar, but I dare not hope to meet one.*

The *small drawing* mentioned naturally intrigued us... especially since it was not included in the digitization of the letter! Fortunately, the staff of the Viborg Museum agreed to carry out additional research⁵, which allowed us to identify not just one small drawing, but a series of sketches made by Skovgaard during his stay in our village, some of which we reproduce below.



Drawings by Joakim Skovgaard, 1881 - Collection Skovgaard Museum

³ Future brother-in-law of Viggo Pedersen.

⁴ Erik Henningsen (1855-1930), Danish painter and illustrator, known for his social realist depictions of disadvantaged groups.

⁵ We are particularly indebted to Ms. Gitte Clemens, Collections Manager at the Skovgaard Museum in Viborg.