

Oscar Törnå (1842-1894) – Swedish painter in Bourron-Marlotte

In our series documenting foreign painters who visited Marlotte during the second half of the 19th century, this article focuses on the Swede Oscar Törnå.



Oscar Törnå, 1901

Oscar Törnå was born on October 18, 1842, into a modest family of southeastern Sweden. At the age of 21, he entered the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts, where he was quickly recognized as one of the most promising students. In 1870, he received a first medal for his landscape paintings. After a brief period at the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts, where he was disappointed by the teaching methods, he went to Paris in 1874, where he discovered and became enthralled by the French landscape painters of the time. For the next four years, he explored the natural environment he admired, staying south of the Fontainebleau forest, in Grez-sur-Loing, Marlotte, and Montigny-sur-Loing. Törnå thus became the first Swede to draw inspiration from that region, producing paintings depicting French village streets, clearings in the Fontainebleau forest, and the reflections of rivers beneath the foliage of trees.

We have no precise information regarding Törnå's residence in Marlotte, but it is reasonable to assume that he settled, like other artists of the time, at the famous Antony inn.

At the 1877 Paris Salon, he exhibited two landscapes, *Banks of the Loing* and *Surroundings of Grez-sur-Loing*. One was sold to the art dealer Goupil, while the other received praise from the art critic Duranty. Buoyed by this success, Oscar Törnå continued his study of the Fontainebleau landscape and exhibited a painting entitled



Chemin de Marlotte by Oscar Törnå, June 1876 (oil on canvas)

La Gorge-aux-Loups at the 1878 Salon, an emblematic location that he could easily have explored from Marlotte. La Gorge-aux-Loups was not, in fact, the only source of inspiration

that our village provided him. Indeed, he also painted the *Forest of Fontainebleau, La-Mare-aux-Fées*, and *Chemin de Marlotte*, reproduced on the prior page.

It was also in 1876, during a stay of several months in our region with painter friends, that he depicted them at their easels, practicing plein air painting. Could further research allow us to identify the two figures portrayed?



En plein-air, Marlotte by Oscar Törnå, 1876 (oil on panel)

Another scene depicting plein air painters in the Fontainebleau forest can be seen on a beautiful canvas at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, *Summer Landscape near Fontainebleau*. The location depicted was precisely identified by Gérard Bayle-



Summer landscape near Fontainebleau by Oscar Törnå, August 1876 (oil on canvas)

Labouré¹: it is the road to the Grande Mare, formerly known as the Descent of the Fairy

Rock. It is located north of the Mare-aux-Fées, on the edge of the Gorge-aux-Loups biological reserve, about a half-hour walk from what was then the hamlet of Marlotte.

His stay in Marlotte and, more generally, the years spent in France undoubtedly mark the pinnacle of Törnå's career. The study of the Fontainebleau painters and the works of Camille Corot sparked a great creative joy in him, allowing him to sensitively reproduce the play of light in the foliage, the abundance of colors in the greenery, and the shimmering reflections on the water.²

1 - *En forêt de Fontainebleau hier et aujourd'hui* Internet site by Gérard Bayle-Labouré <https://foret-fontainebleau.teria.fr/>

² Wikipedia