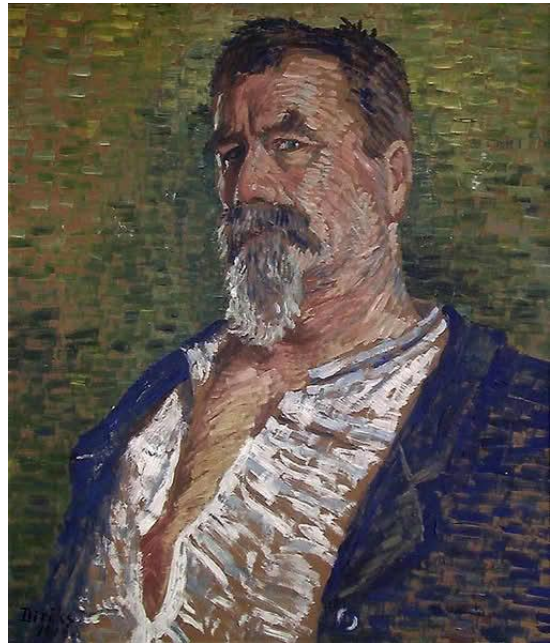


Edvard Diriks (1855-1930) – Another Norwegian Painter in Bourron-Marlotte

We already documented the presence of Norwegian painters in Bourron-Marlotte, namely Erik Werenskiold and Christian Skredsvig¹. This article provides some information about the presence in our village of another Norwegian, Edvard Diriks.

Biography of Diriks

Karl Edvard Diriks was born in Christiania (former name of Oslo) in 1855. He shared a bench at the *Aars & Voss* Gymnasium with Erik Werenskiold.² The close relationship between these two classmates certainly contributed to Diriks's growing interest in drawing and painting. In 1874, while studying architecture in Karlsruhe, he met fellow Norwegian painters Krohg³, Gude⁴, and Thaulow⁵. Shortly after, he briefly studied at the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts, and it was in 1877 that he truly became a painter, exhibiting his first works in 1879 in Christiania and Munich. Settling in Christiania, he spent many years as a devoted portraitist of his hometown and its surroundings. His paintings from this period demonstrate the architect's sensitivity to the town's historic buildings, which he depicted with precision.



Self-portrait by Edvard Diriks, 1906 – Collection Oslo national museum

In 1882, he made his first trip to Paris, where he discovered Impressionism and was deeply affected by Monet's great exhibition in March 1883. It was thanks to his painting *La Rue de Rome*, a vivid representation of Parisian traffic in the spirit of Monet, that he was admitted to the Salon of 1883. Back in Norway, he developed the broad, free brushstrokes and characteristic chromatic palette that would mark his later French period.

In 1892, he married Anna Westerberg, a Swedish-born sculptor and stained-glass artist. Three years later, the couple embarked on a long journey that took them, in addition to Paris, to Spain, Italy, Germany, and Austria. In 1899, they decided to settle permanently in Paris, where Diriks immediately organized his first exhibition and quickly established himself in the French art world. His friend, the poet Paul Fort, declared: "It was Moréas, Edvard Diriks, and I who created Montparnasse, then considered the preferred haunt of young radical artists."⁷ During the following years, he exhibited regularly in the Parisian Salons: the Salon des Indépendants, the Salon des Beaux-Arts, and the Salon d'Automne, and his home became a meeting place for many foreign artists, including Picasso and Modigliani. In 1907, a banquet organized

by his artist friends for his *Légion d'honneur* medal was a fitting demonstration of the fame he had achieved in France.⁸



He spent an extended period in Norway in 1909 and 1910, during which he focused on depicting Nordic winters: snowdrifts, howling winds, steam from steamships rising in the gusts, and boats capsizing at sea. Upon returning to Paris, and during the war years, Diriks primarily resided in the capital, but also painted in Normandy (1917) and near the Spanish Mediterranean coast (1918).

In 1921, Edvard and Anna Diriks returned to Norway and settled permanently in Drøbak, a small town on the shores of the Oslo Fjord.⁹

Diriks in Marlotte

Given the 22 years he spent in France and his affinity for naturalist and impressionist styles, it is no surprise that Diriks made a pilgrimage to the artistic hotspots of the Fontainebleau region, including Marlotte! He even left behind several canvases painted in our town, including the examples shown below. His reputation as *a landscape dramatist and a painter of beautiful turquoise and silver skies, driven by the wind*, is fully realized in two of the paintings below. These landscapes are *studied by this man from the North with a heartfelt warmth, and always with that power, that robust nobility that he couldn't help but impose on everything he did.*¹⁰



From Marlotte, France by Edvard Diriks, 1908 – Oslo national gallery



La plaine de Bourron près de Marlotte by Edvard Diriks, 1900 - RMN-Grand Palais (Orsay museum) / Philipp Bernard



Gathering clouds over Bourron near Marlotte by Edvard Diriks, 1908 – Auction at Stockholm Auktionsverk Hamburg in 2022

Edvard Diriks died in Norway in 1930, at the age of 75.

1 - *Werenskiold et Skredsvig, deux peintres norvégiens à Marlotte* by D. Ricoult, Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte n°65, 2023.

2 – Personal communication from Marit Werenskiold.

3 - Christian Krohg (1852-1925) – Norwegian painter and writer. He lived in Paris in 1881 and 1882, then from 1901 to 1909.

4 - Hans Gude (1825-1903) – Painter, major figure of Norwegian romanticism.

5 - Frits Thaulow (1847-1906) – Painter linked to realism. One of the most famous Norwegian artists of the 19th century.

6 - *Chronique des arts et de la curiosité*, 1899.

7 - *Edvard Diriks : Un Viking sur Montparnasse* by Øystein Sjøstad, 2018.

8 - Gil Blas – 23 juin 1907.

9 – Excerpts from an article about Edvard Diriks in *Encyclopédie des artistes norvégiens*, volumes I to IV, published between 1982 and 1986.