

THE ALLURE OF COLOUR

Pastels from Anna Ancher to P.S. Krøyer



P.S. Krøyer: *Hunters of Skagen*, 1898. Oil on canvas. ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum

The pastel on the wall is a sketch for the painting made the same year. Pastels on paper

Seven hunters and their hounds are taking a well-earned rest amidst the tall lyme grass after having gone hunting in Skagen. P.S. Krøyer was a keen huntsman himself, and here he appears in the company of (l. to r.) hotelier Degn Brøndum, architect Ulrik Plesner, artist Einar Hein, municipal treasurer Johan Brodersen, senior dune inspector Carl Frederik Dahlerup and artist Michael Ancher, wearing a dark blue coat. The setting is the area around Skagens Nordstrand where the small hummock offers them a view of the flat landscape. In later life Krøyer primarily used pastels for cartoons and preliminary sketches for his large-scale paintings. The overall composition of this pastel closely resembles that of the final painting, even though details such as the cluster of dead rabbits in the painting are absent from the large sketch. Krøyer did numerous preliminary works for this painting and also took several photographs during hunting trips, using them as reference material. The painting is now owned by ARoS Aarhus Art Museum.

Frants Henningsen: *Evening Scene. Bringing in the Harvest*, 1886. Pastels on canvas



The cornfield shines like gold in the evening light. Above it, pink clouds float by in the blue sky. Piles of straw can be seen in the foreground, waiting to be brought in by the farmer and his carthorses glimpsed in the background. Frants Henningsen is best known for his harrowing, realistic depictions of the harsh lives and conditions faced by the lower classes. In this large, bright pastel the artist presents a more romantic outlook on peasant life.

Edma Frølich Stage: *Portrait of Asa Withusen*, 1888. Pastels on canvas

The young woman sits with her hands folded across the green table, wearing a dreamy expression. The woman in the portrait is the artist's stepsister, Asa Withusen, who owned the work up until her death. The artist has used subtle, muted colours and soft strokes to depict her silk-clad sister, who almost seems to merge with the brown colours of the background. The pastels reproduce the effect of light falling onto the woman's neck and the many folds of the silk dress with great sensuousness. Edma Frølich Stage was daughter of the artist Lorenz Frølich, and she mainly worked with portraits in pastels. However, she also painted still lifes and flower paintings in oils. In 1891 she took part in founding the alternative exhibition venue Den frie Udstilling, where she went on to exhibit her work for the rest of her life; she contributed to her final exhibition at the age of 87.





P.S. Krøyer's painting *Midsummer Eve Bonfire on Skagen's Beach*, 1906. Oil on canvas. Skagens Museum

P.S. Krøyer: *Midsummer Eve Bonfire on Skagen's Beach*, 1903. Pastels on paper

P.S. Krøyer painted this large pastel in preparation for the painting *Midsummer Eve Bonfire on Skagen's Beach* in 1903, three years before the painting was completed. The work is a monumental portrait of the artist colony that lived and worked in Skagen from the 1870s onwards. The Skagen painters reintroduced the pagan tradition of midsummer eve bonfires, and here we see



the most prominent figures of the colony gathered around the large fire. This painting is among the very to feature local Skagen residents and artists in the same picture. The artists, such as Holger Drachmann in the dark cloak and Marie Krøyer leaning on the boat, stand gathered to the left in this scene; only the artist Lauritz Tuxen, holding his sketchbook, mixes with the locals to the right. In a move typical of Krøyer, the pastel features three types of light: the glint of the distant lighthouse, the glow of the fire and the moonlight reflected in the sea. Getting handmade artist's paper in such large formats was not possible, so Krøyer used coarse machine-made paper for the large pastel. Such paper becomes very porous with the passage of time. To counteract this, the pastel underwent conservation work in the spring and summer of 2018; it is now on display for the first time after this conservation was completed.

P.S. Krøyer: *Artists' Lunch in Skagen*, 1909. Pastels and charcoal on paper



In March 1909, the last year of his life, Krøyer made this copy in pastel and charcoal of his then 25-year-old painting *Artists' Lunch at Brøndum's Hotel*. It was one year after the foundation of Skagens Museum. At this time, the pictures in the dining room still belonged to the hotelier Degn Brøndum, who was considering whether they should be bequeathed to the Museum and incorporated into the collection. The pastel might have been a compensation for the painting intended for Brøndum's family. In the picture a number of artists are congregating around the luncheon table at Brøndum's Hotel in Skagen. The host, the hotelier Degn Brøndum, is placed at the centre, and at the table with him are some of the Norwegian and Swedish artists that were a part of the colony. In the background Michael Ancher is standing with his rifle over his shoulder. In the bottom of the picture, the names of those portrayed are noted under each individual: The Danes Michael Ancher and Degn Brøndum, the Norwegians Wilhelm Peters, Eilif Peterssen, Charles Lundh and Christian Krohg, and the Swedes Oscar Björck and Johan Krouthén. Krøyer painted many pictures like this one, portraying the artists' apparently carefree bohemian life style.

Anna Ancher: *Old Woman by her Spinning Wheel*, 1886-87. Pastels on canvas

Anna Ancher painted many pictures of women engaged in quiet pursuits – as in this case, where local Skagen resident Helene Andreasdatter Lønstrup, known as Old Lene, is absorbed by her spinning. Her face with the downcast eyes is depicted in profile, and she wears a black bonnet on her head. Her brightly coloured red blouse with the white collar is a marked contrast to the dark clothes she is usually shown wearing. The window panes in the background have been loosely sketched in shades of light green and blue. Through them, a warm light falls onto the yellow spindle and Lene's hand. Light also falls in from the space occupied by the spectator, lighting up Lene's face and making it the undisputed focus of the picture.

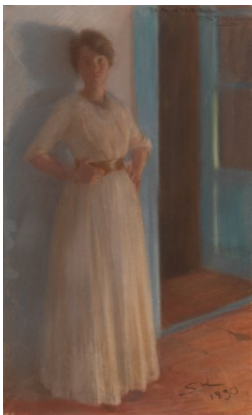


Anna Ancher: *Old Woman Reading*, (1882). Pastels on paper

The woman in the picture is a local Skagen resident whom Anna Ancher portrayed on numerous occasions. Known as Lene, her full name was Helene Andreasdatter Lønstrup. This work is the earliest pastel by Ancher in this collection, done just two years after she first took up pastels. In this pastel Ancher has moved in close on the reading woman, who is entirely engrossed in her own world. Portrayed in profile, she wears a dark grey headscarf that contrasts sharply up against the soft, white background. Light falls in from the right, illuminating parts of the shadowed face and the hands holding the open book. Ancher returned repeatedly to the subject of this old woman reading, for example in a drawing and a painting done in the same year. In 1896 she returned to the theme again in her first and only etching. Creating several versions of the same motif in different techniques was a typical trait of Ancher's method.



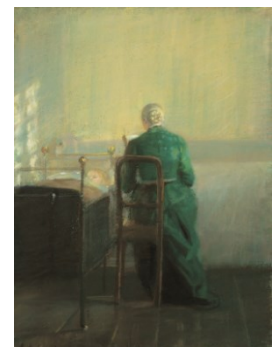
P.S. Krøyer: *The Artist's Wife. Evening Scene by Lamplight*, 1890. Pastels on paper



Marie Krøyer looks towards us, her hands at her side as her shadow rises up against the wall behind her, thrown up by the light of a lamp outside the picture itself. This pastel was painted during the artist couple's combined honeymoon and study trip, where Italy was among the destinations visited. On 15 August 1890, P.S. Krøyer received an invitation, asking him to contribute works to an exhibition of pastels at the Grosvenor Gallery in London that autumn. Just over a month later he sent three pastels off to England, including *At Lunch in Cività d'Antino* and this portrait of Marie. Krøyer presumably created this pastel portrait as a direct result of the London invitation, and it may be a repeat of an oil portrait he had already painted of Marie in July that year prior to leaving Amalfi.

Anna Ancher: *Reading to the Young Patient*, 1893. Pastels on canvas

With virtuoso skill, Anna Ancher combined colours and light effects to form atmospheric images. The picture of a woman reading to a sick child has been put together out of a few large fields of colour: the brown floor and the furniture in the foreground, the green dress and white sheet in the middle and the woman's blonde hair, which almost seems to merge with the wall in the background. From the right, sunbeams flood in through a window, forming light-coloured squares on the girl's bed. The effect created by light falling through a window onto a wall was one of the artist's signature visuals.



Anna Ancher: *Helga in her Playroom. The Artist's Daughter*, 1891. Pastels on canvas



The artist's daughter, Helga, is in her playroom, decorating a window with imaginative and colourful paper cut-outs. She is very close to the windowpane, light flooding onto the young face and the hands working the paper. Anna Ancher was one of the first Danish artists to adopt the pastel technique when it found new popularity in the late nineteenth century. Ancher used the pastels to produce images pervaded by a great intensity of colour and light. In this picture of her daughter she has allowed the blues, reds and greens to glow on the paper. The colours are echoed in the cut-outs on the windowpane, in the reflection on the windowsill, in Helga's dress and in the many objects on the table in the foreground.

P.S. Krøyer: *At Lunch in Cività d'Antino*, 1890. Pastels on paper

In July 1890 P.S. Krøyer and Marie Krøyer arrived in the small mountain village of Cività d'Antino south of Rome, where the artist Kristian Zahrtmann spent almost every summer from 1890 to 1913 with pupils and fellow artists. In this scene, Krøyer depicts the artists taking lunch at Casa Cerroni, where they stayed. At the table we see Zahrtmann leaning back, a slice of melon before him; Krøyer looks towards Marie, and at the back we find two pupils of Zahrtmann, the painters Henry Lørup and Tom Petersen. In this pastel, Krøyer balanced cool whites, greys and blues up against the warm, glowing colours of the figures' faces, the flowers and the doorway with the maidservant in the background.



P.S. Krøyer: *Maren Sofie*, 1883. Pastels on paper

P.S. Krøyer: *Maren Sofie*, 1883. Pastels on paper

P.S. Krøyer returned to Skagen in 1883 to spend his second summer there. He first arrived in town the year before, visiting the artist colony that had already been established in town. Like his fellow artists, he used locals as models. Here he has painted two pastel studies of a young local girl, Maren Sofie Olsen, seen in different poses and lighting. One shows the girl in profile, while the other depicts her turning her head slightly away from us. The founder of the museum, Heinrich Hirschsprung, bought these two portraits in 1884, and they are the earliest known pastels by Krøyer. Fellow artist Michael Ancher also painted Maren Sofie's picture several times, in portraits and in larger interiors.



Anna Ancher: *Girl Sowing*, (before 1902). Pastels on paper



We do not see the source of light in this image of a girl sowing, but the lit areas of the room tell us that there is a window nearby. The sun glistens like blue beads in the white sowing and makes areas of the yellow end wall radiate with head. The glowing effect of these colours is enhanced by branches and leaves casting shadows amidst the rays of sunlight. Inspired by Impressionism, Anna Ancher was keenly interested in colours and light. Indeed, the most significant aspects of this scene appear to be the effects of light and shade created by the sun – and the unusual choice of colour. Sophisticated details abound: note the edge of the table, painted as an orange line, and the reflections of the white table top in the flower pot. Works like these made Anna Ancher famous as a master of light and sunshine.

Anna Ancher: *Old Man from Skagen*, (circa 1885). Pastels on paper



This picture of an older, grey-bearded local man from Skagen is darker than the light-filled paintings usually associated with Anna Ancher. Nevertheless, light still plays a crucial part in this small profile portrait where the man's distinctive facial features emerge out of the darkness while his eyes remain hidden in deep, dark eye sockets. Anna Ancher was the only one of all the Skagen painters to have been born and raised in Skagen. Her close ties to the town are reflected in her many intimate and atmospheric images of its residents. She often allows the observer to come very close to those she portrays, partly by placing her sitters in the foreground – as in this case, where the man's profile runs parallel to the picture plane.

Carl Thomsen: *Self-portrait*, 1887. Pastels on paper

The artist looks back over his shoulder, directly out at us. One side of his face is shaded by his hat, but the bright blue eyes and the red beard is highlighted. In this self-portrait Carl Thomsen used pastels to conjure up contrasts between light and darkness and to capture the many different shades and tones of skin. Like P.S. Krøyer and Frants Henningsen, Thomsen studied under Frederik Vermehren at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. He is particularly well known for his portraits and gentle genre pieces.



P.S. Krøyer: Portrait of the painter Michael Ancher, 1884. Painted plaster

P.S. Krøyer: Portrait of the painter Anna Ancher, (1884). Painted plaster