



### **Christen Købke: research brings Danish master to world's attention**

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**Interviewer:** For most people, the name Christen Købke may not rank among the likes of Pablo Picasso and Vincent van Gogh. But a current exhibition at the National Gallery aims to raise the profile of the Danish painter whom many believe should be placed among the front rank of nineteenth century European artists.

The exhibition, entitled 'Christen Købke: Danish Master of Light', opened at the National Gallery in London on March 17<sup>th</sup> and will be followed by another starting in July at the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh. It represents the culmination of a two year research project into Købke's work by Professor David Jackson of the University of Leeds, funded by a grant from the AHRC.

Looking back at this two-year project, what does Professor Jackson feel AHRC funding brings to a major exhibition such as this one.

**Professor Jackson:** It buys you two things essentially it buys you time and it buys you the way to pursue that research. First of all it allows me to leave my daily duties at Leeds, teaching, administration these sort of thing so that I can go off to Copenhagen, go to Denmark, I can go to the libraries, archives I can do the work so that I don't have to be stationed in one particular place. It also frees you up in terms of travel arrangements, accommodation that sort of thing so the practicalities are all taken care of and that allows you to pursue the work without anything else distracting you over a good long period of time.

Secondly and very important it also buys you the expertise, in this instance as it was part of what was written into the grant, a research assistant, and I have the abilities of a very talented young Danish research assistant who is in Copenhagen all the time, so that even when I am not there this person can assist in finding things in archives, in translating work etcetera. So the work was all done by the grant buying me out, buying my time out and giving me the expertise to assist me.

Interviewer: The collaboration between Professor Jackson, the National Gallery and the National Gallery of Scotland was a natural one but an important one too for this project's coming to fruition.

Professor Jackson: I had worked with the National Gallery before so they knew who I was, I did a big exhibition in 2004 on Russian landscape paintings so they knew who I was and we had very good contacts there. But more importantly the National Gallery and the National Gallery of Scotland, which is the second venue for this exhibition, they both own works by Købke which is quite unusual. They bought these in the 80's and beyond and so we had a good marriage of interest there, they knew me I knew them, they owned works by Købke so there seemed a very good rationale as to why they would want to show a much bigger exhibition by the artist.

Interviewer: Given the lack of general appreciation and knowledge of Købke's work, what does Professor Jackson feel will be the impact of the exhibition?

Professor Jackson: Huge impact, I mean in just over the last few days we've been here conducting press interviews, nationally, internationally, we had the press day today which brings in people from as far afield as China and we have been talking to television channels in Spain and across Europe. This has been published in journals in France, in the United States. The National Gallery because of its prestige brings a huge amount of contacts. We estimate for instance, and this is only an estimate, that this show will be seen by around about 100 thousand people it may even be more with the media attention that is going onto this now so the impact is absolutely huge, you would never reach those sort of audiences any other way.

Interviewer: AHRC-funded research allowed Professor Jackson to look more closely at Christen Købke, the times in which he painted and the wider context of Danish, Scandinavian and European art within which Købke developed as an artist. How would Professor Jackson himself explain the importance of the research to the exhibition?

Professor Jackson: Well the research has helped me in furthering the understanding of him in the sense that prior to the research he was an artist that I knew on a more casual basis. When you are freed up to spend two whole years of your life devoting yourself to this then of course you get much closer to the subject and your understanding of the subject is much deeper. But the research has been conducted with a long-term familiarity with Scandinavian and with Danish art and this allowed me to fine tune that and go into much more depth.

Interviewer: For Professor Jackson the legacy of this research is more than just the exhibition. It's the starting point for re-appraisal but also for a series of potential impacts stretching well into the future...

Professor Jackson: I think there are a number of those, obviously you hope that part of the legacy is that the catalogue, the book that is published here and distributed by Yale, we hope that will live on. We hope that will have a life that goes on long beyond the exhibition as the exhibition will conclude in Edinburgh later this year and once the exhibition goes then the research in its printed form lives on for much longer so we hope that as a book that research will be there for many decades to come. But I would hope also that this kick starts more interest in the period, that more people will want to be getting engaged with this, there is a big public programme here of engaging the public audience but also in terms of research I would hope that this would switch young art historians and students onto the fact that there is very good quality art in periods that are not altogether as well known as others and that research can take place in others places. I hope that research will branch out from here from Købke to the golden age, to northern Germany and Denmark and get an understanding that these areas of history though under-represented are exceedingly important.

Interviewer: What would Professor Jackson say are the main characteristics of Købke's work and finally, does he have a favourite painting among the more than 50 currently on show?

Professor Jackson: It's a difficult one in a sense because of Købke's works, some are more designed to hang in public spaces, there are one or two which are relatively large, some are much more domestic and the overall theme is domestic these are small works to be hung in interiors at home and in that sense I think there is a very small landscape painting which is called 'A View of the Lime Kilns' which shows a very small cottage by the shore, a few cows, nothing much, it's a most mundane ordinary subject you could imagine but the aesthetic treatment, the use of light, the clarity, the precision of this work is so breathtakingly aesthetically perfect in every way that if I could pick one of these off the wall take it home hang it this would be the one.

Interviewer: You can see the AHRC-funded "Christen Købke: Danish Master of Light" exhibition, which is guest curated by Professor Jackson, at the National Gallery until the 13<sup>th</sup> of June and then at the National Gallery of Scotland in July.