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KUNST SEIT 1982



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DETLEV CONRAD BLUNCK
1798 Münsterdorf/Holstein - Hamburg 1854

Self-Portrait at the Age of Forty-Six

Oil on canvas, laid down on cardboard; 1844.
Signed and dated lower right: *Blunck 1844*, and inscribed: *Wien*.
20.8 x 19.4 cm

PROVENANCE: Claudius Reinhard van Hauen (1864-1937), 1931 (with his collector's stamp *RvH* on the reverse) – Private collection, Denmark

Detlev Blunck graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, where he trained as a history painter under the guidance of Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783-1853); after his studies he went to Rome on a scholarship in 1828. He spent nearly a decade in the Italian capital where he joined the circle of Danish artists surrounding Thorvaldsen. During his stay in Rome and after leaving Denmark in 1840, Blunck corresponded with Johann Ludwig Lund (1777-1867), who had been his professor at the Academy before 1822, throughout his life.

Blunck was closely associated with the German art scene, and particularly the Nazarene's religious fervour was prevalent in his work. He even fought on the German side in the First Schleswig War – his *Self-Portrait as Legionnaire* is held in the Nivagaard Collection [Fig.1].

It was during his long stay in Rome that he painted *Danish Artists in the Osteria La Gensola in Rome* [Fig. 1], which is one of the most famous works of Danish art from this period. He was a brilliant portrait painter and portrayed several Danish artists who were also living in Rome at the time.

Blunck was also portrayed [Fig.2] by fellow artists, such as by his very good friend and travelling companion Wilhelm Bendz (1804-1832), who died in his arms in Vicenza.

Blunck left Rome in 1838. Ulrich Schülter-Wülwer writes: "After Blunck's scholarship had been repeatedly extended for ten years, Thorvaldsen's departure was taken as an opportunity in Copenhagen to end Blunck's stay in Rome. The latter made one last desperate move to delay his departure. As Thorvaldsen was not prepared to give up his Roman flat, Blunck offered to take over the duties of a majordomo: *Would it not therefore be worth considering whether it would not be right to hand all this over to a compatriot for supervision, who, with Thorvaldsen's authorisation, would look after his interests here and move into his abandoned flat in his absence? (...) I also consider it everyone's duty to make this sacrifice to the fatherland.*

But nothing came of it. On 5 August 1838, the frigate "Rota" weighed anchor, with Blunck on board."¹

After brief stays in Copenhagen and Munich, the artist settled in Vienna in 1841, where he remained until 1848.

In the 1840s Blunck painted several important self-portraits, including the present picture.

¹ Ulrich Schulte-Wülwer, *Detlev Conrad Blunck*, in: *Sehnsucht nach Arkadien. Schleswig-Holsteinische Künstler in Italien*, p. 140

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We would like to thank Karin Bechmann Søndergaard for her valuable advice on cataloguing this portrait. The painting will be included in the supplementary volume to the Catalogue raisonné of Detlev Conrad Blunck's oeuvre.

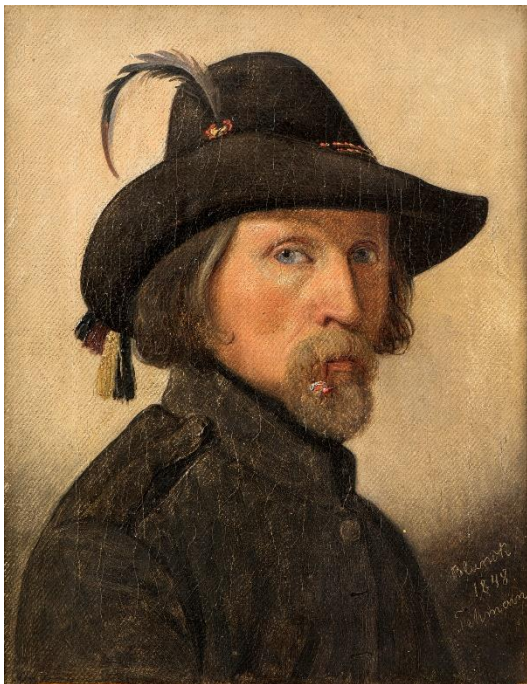


Fig. 1: *Self-Portrait as Legionnaire*, 1848
Oil on canvas
26 x 20 cm
Nivagaards Malerisamling, Nivå
Inv. no.: 0214NMK

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Wilhelm Bendz, *A Young Artist (Ditlef Blunck) Examining a Sketch in a Mirror*, 1826
Oil on canvas
98 x 85 cm
Statens Museum, Copenhagen
Inv. no. KMS280



Fig.3: *Danish Artists at the Osteria la Gensola in Rome*, 1837
Oil on canvas
74 x 99.4 cm
Nationalhistoriskmuseum, Frederiksborg