

Royal Academy of Music

Reconstruction in the Entrance Hall of the original wall paintings (1911)

On 22nd June 1912 the Academy officially opened its doors to the new Marylebone Road premises, having moved from the cramped conditions of Tenterden Street, near Hanover Square, which it had occupied since its foundation in 1822. Teaching had already begun in the new building, designed by architects Sir Ernest George and Alfred Yeates, the year before.

The Danish-born artist, Baron Arild Rosenkrantz (1870-1964), was commissioned to provide a painted programme for the entrance hallway. These same paintings, one a reconstruction, have nearly a century later, been re-hung in the Royal Academy of Music on a long-term loan, with the kind permission of Baron Erik Rosenkrantz and the Rosenholm Foundation, Rosenholm Castle, Denmark, where the artist spent most of his latter years.

The true commission details are unknown, and it is also unclear as to why the paintings were removed, but a transcribed letter in the Royal Academy of Music Minutes of 30 October 1911 from the architects... 'begs to acknowledge your letter telling us that the Directors desire the removal of the painted decoration in the vestibule. We are ordering this to be done. Messrs. Roberson of Long Acre were employed to fix these canvases and it was their opinion that they could not be taken off, but you have found otherwise. The provisional amount in the contract for painted decoration was £200, and Baron Rosenkrantz's agreed estimate for his work was for this amount. We thought at the last meeting we understood that it was the wish of the Committee that the artist should receive payment of the work to be carried out'.

A further note in the Minutes from F. W. Renaut Esq, Royal Academy of Music states that 'General members of the Committee agreeing in the recollection that no opinion as to the payment for the artist for the work done had been expressed at the meeting of the Buildings Committee, the Secretary was requested to write to Messrs George and Yeates to the effect that the pictures were of no use or value to the Committee but they hoped they might be of some use or value to the artist or architects, and that in such case a portion of their cost might be saved to the Royal Academy of Music'. No further documentation has been found, including within the artist's own papers, but the artist must have valued the paintings to have kept the panels for the rest of his life, in spite of what must have been a disappointment.

Arild Rosenkrantz was born in Denmark on 9 April, 1870. He lived and worked abroad most of his life, mainly in England. From his early years he was influenced by the French salon painters, the Pre-Raphaelites, in particular Edward Burne-Jones, William Blake and J.M.W. Turner – and later by Claude Monet. His father, the Danish diplomat Baron Iver Holger Rosenkrantz, died before he was three, so he became closely attached to his Scottish-born mother, Julia Louise Mackenzie, and often accompanied her on her travels to relatives in England, Scotland and Italy. At sixteen he went to Rome to study with Modesto Faustini, the fresco-painter, and after two years he continued his studies at L'Academie Julian in Paris. Here, he exhibited during 1892-5 at Perladan's Symbolist *Salon de la Rose + Croix* in Paris. Joséphine Péladan had set about bringing together all the young *Symbolistes* painters in Europe. At the first exhibition, held in March 1892, Erik Satie, briefly the official Rosicrucian composer, provided occasional music for performances of Péladan's play *Le Fils des étoiles*, a 'pastorale kaldéenne en trois actes'. The exhibition was presented as 'a sumptuous sanctuary of art, graced by the music of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Wagner' (*Grove Encyclopedia of Art*)

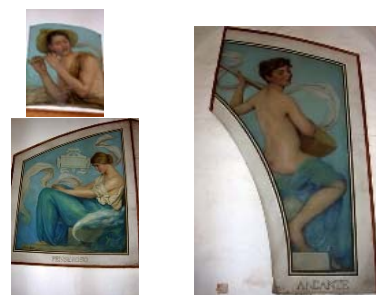
In 1894 and again in 1895 he travelled to New York where he started working with stained glass. After a year in the USA, where he had worked on the Gallatin window at The Decorative Stained Glass Company in New York and designed a window for Tiffany on the subject of *King Alfred the Great*, he moved to London and there established himself as a spiritual artist. Here he showed work in the final exhibitions of the New Gallery, the favoured gallery of Burne-Jones and his followers in the 1890s, which closed in 1909. He had many commissions, including twelve large panels for the ceiling in the dining room at Claridge's Hotel, London and for the dining room in Simpson's on the Strand, and made stained glass windows and bronze sculptures for a number of English churches, houses and castles, including heraldic windows for the Gothic Halls in Berkeley Castle and Welbeck Abbey. He sculpted a bronze Christ figure for St George's, Camberwell, and also established himself as a portrait painter. His sitters included Dame Nellie Melba and his relative, the Duchess of Grafton. In 1912, his epic ballet, *The Gate of Life*, which he designed choreographed and lit, and which was enacted with a pianist playing selections from Beethoven's *Waldstein* and *Moonlight* Sonatas and *Eroica* Symphony, took place in London. He also illustrated the Danish edition of Edgar Allen Poe's *Tales of Mystery Adventure* and many other literary works, including for the publisher George Harrap, and illustrations for *The Tatler*.



Rosenholm Castle, Denmark, in which Arild Rosenkrantz spent his latter years and to which he bequeathed some of his paintings, including those done for the RAM's new premises



The only photographic evidence of the scheme. Note the 'phantom' music stand to the left!



Paintings tacked to the wall in an upper corridor in Rosenholm Castle, prior to their loan to the Academy and subsequent restoration. Although nearly a century old, they were, by and large, in good condition.

An interview with the artist in the *International Studio* of 1907 records that he found his greatest pleasure ‘... in contemplating paintings which have been designed successfully for some special position in an architectural scheme such as those early Italian altarpieces, the secret of whose perfection lies in their absolute harmony with their surrounding architecture’.

Rosenkrantz married his Scottish cousin, Tessa Mackenzie, and joined the Anthroposophic Society in London. Having met Rudolf Steiner there in 1912, he and his wife were in 1914 asked to join the group of artists in Dornach, Switzerland, who were working with Steiner on decorating the two cupolas in the first Goetheanum. Steiner introduced him to Goethe’s theory of colour, and this completely changed his whole outlook and way of using colours. On returning to London he worked as a teacher, decorated two anthroposophic theatres, designed costumes and stage decorations and exhibited annually. In 1939 he and his wife returned to Denmark in order to prepare for an exhibition for his 70th birthday in April 1940; on this day, Denmark was invaded. They were offered sanctuary in one of the family’s homes, Rosenholm Castle, near Aarhus, where his wife died in 1944, and where he spent his latter years, painting and exhibiting.

Reconstruction and restoration

In 1989 the Danish journalist Bente Rosenkrantz Arendrup, great-niece of the artist, visited London to further document Rosenkrantz’s work in the United Kingdom, in particular his stained glass and paintings. This was the first that Academy knew of the presence, or even absence, of the wall paintings, and on further investigation a paragraph in the *RAM Club Magazine* (November 1911) was found which referred to them in passing. In 1995, prior to the repainting of the entrance hall, arrangements were made by Janet Snowman, through the Courtauld Institute, for a conservator to try and locate traces of the paintings below one of the lunettes. Nothing was found, and it was concluded that they must have been done on canvas, rather than having been painted directly onto the surface of the wall.

Some years passed and, prior to a summer holiday visit to Copenhagen in summer 2005 by Janet Snowman, and with the intriguing idea of these paintings always present, contact was re-established with Bente Arendrup to inquire whether she had discovered anything further about them, and it was a delight to find that panels belonging to the scheme were in fact in an upper corridor at Rosenholm Castle. Hastily and with great excitement, arrangements were made with Baron Erik Rosenkrantz for a visit to the castle and permission to visit this area, not open to the general public. Here, four of the six lunette paintings, the two spandrel paintings and two beautiful images painted for the area over the old wooden front door were identified and photographed. A few weeks later, the idea of borrowing the paintings and restoring them to the Academy — into the spaces for which they were painted and shaped — was put to Baron Rosenkrantz, who kindly consented, with permission of the Rosenholm Foundation, to an initial 30-year loan.

A further visit was undertaken, this time to include the art restorers Alan Bush and Jonathan Berry, to assess the feasibility and cost of undertaking such a project. The Anthony Travis Charitable Trust kindly agreed to support the conservation and restoration of the paintings, which were collected and brought to the UK by Bush & Berry Conservation in January 2006.

As mentioned, two lunette panels were missing, and one such space has now been used for descriptive information and to record the Academy’s acknowledgements. The second missing panel (*Liebeslied*) is the only painted reconstruction; the restorers had initially used a later idea which Arild Rosenkrantz developed in the 1920s for an illustration for *The Tatler*. The discovery of the actual original panel in a family farmhouse in Denmark in mid-2006 was a thrill; it had been given by the artist to a member of the family. It was not possible for the much-loved actual painting to be incorporated into the scheme, but a photograph of it did, however, provided a further model, and the reconstructed panel was adapted to take better account of this image.

The small decorative panels representing musical instruments have been reconstructed by Bush & Berry from sources which include the one original photograph (page 1) of the paintings *in situ*, two small watercolour drawings of an earlier idea for the area by the artist, which also came to light during the past year (*right*) and further examples of Arild Rosenkrantz’s work at Rosenholm, which Alan Bush and Jonathan Berry found when they collected the paintings just a year ago. These images, in particular the tambourine and ribbon decoration, also complement the instruments on the beautiful decorative ironwork of the staircase by J.Starkie Gardiner (a couple of panels of which, on the second floor, contain the first few bars of *God Save the King*).



Sculpture by Albert Hodge, main facade



Early ideas for the scheme, by Arild Rosenkrantz. Small watercolour drawings found among the artist's personal papers by Bente Arendrup, 2006



The original front doors (interior),



Published drawing, proposed Duke's Hall, left wall, 1911

Finally, an illustration of the proposed decorations by the architects for the new Duke's Hall (left), published in May 1911 in both the *Architects' and Builders' Journal* and *The Builder*, show that a similar decorative scheme was suggested in this part of the new Academy, too. Around the lunettes of the hall is a further painted programme, and the names of popular composers also provide a decorative element. The cartouches in the finished Duke's Hall, around the ceiling, were left blank and remain so. Maybe money was a problem here, or a decision was taken to keep things 'plain and simple'. The article in the former journal is very critical of the design for the proposed organ.

The Paintings

Overall then, the paintings comprise ten panels, two of which were missing, of which one was, as mentioned previously, reconstructed. They represent musical moods and the nurturing of the young - an important poetic statement for the aims of an institution such as the Royal Academy of Music. Looking from the front door into the building, the lunettes are as follows:

Right wall

Pan, the shepherd boy, represents the *Aubade*, piping in the break of day. The central panel, *Liebeslied*, represents a love-song while, in the third panel, the mother and her young child, with a bunch of grapes, represent the *Scherzo*, here depicted as a game. The small child has tugged his mother's clothing in an effort to obtain some grapes, dislodging her dress from her shoulder.

Left wall

A young mother cradles her infant in a panel representing the *Berceuse*, a cradle song. Finally, the panel representing *Romance* is perhaps more literary, conveying a lyrical tenderness between a mother and child, of feeling and imagination, as she reads to him. Maybe here the idea of the ancient Greeks is presented, notably the complete integration of music and poetry. Neither the subject nor the title of the missing panel is known.

Spandrels

The two spandrel (archway) paintings are titled *Allegro* and *Andante*. Here, the young girl (right), playing a stringed instrument (a theorbo), represents the 'soft music' (strings) and Melody, while the young boy (left), with his tambourine, represents the 'loud music' (percussion) and Rhythm. Together they convey the idea of Harmony, and also reflect the sculptural figures by Albert Hodge at the apex of the façade of the building (page 2), where the same idea is used, though with a more heavy, masculine approach to the stone figures. Their lively movement and the sounds conveyed in the paintings also portray a dance.

Theatre archway

These quiet and peaceful panels dated 1911, called *Smorzando* (dying or fading away) and *Penseroso* (contemplation), were originally painted to be placed opposite the youthful, and perhaps noisy, spandrel panels and over the wooden front door (page 2), itself replaced by the bronze and glass structure in the 1960s. They have now been found a home in the archway near the Sir Jack Lyons Theatre, beautifying the area, and they await their new lighting.

The paintings contrast with the sculpture on the facade of the building — with its images of Pan, Mercury, Apollo, Marsyas with his aulos (over the Duke's Hall), Comedy and Tragedy and further iconographic details.

Acknowledgements

The Academy is grateful to Baron Erik Rosenkrantz and the Rosenholm Foundation (Rosenholm Castle, Denmark), the Anthony Travis Charitable Trust, Bente Rosenkrantz Arendrup and Bush & Berry Conservation Studio.

Bush & Berry Conservation Studio

Alan Bush and Jonathan Berry are both Accredited Conservation Restorers (ACR) by the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) and Fellows of the British Association of Painting Conservators and Restorers (FBAPCR). The studio occupies a spacious Victorian Church near Bristol, and the practice undertakes work throughout the United Kingdom, conserving a wide range of paintings – from small easel paintings to large-scale wall and ceiling canvases, many of which belong to the National Trust, Royal Academy of Arts, private galleries and collectors. Their recent work includes *The Separation of Night from Day*, a fresco by Guido Reni (1599) for Kingsdon Lacy; the full-scale painted copies by Sir James Thornhill, commenced in 1729, of Raphael's tapestry cartoons, including that of *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, for the Royal Academy of Arts, a large French landscape painting by August Bonheur (Barbizon School) for a gallery in Beverley Hills, two large landscape canvases of birds by the 17th-century English painter Francis Barlow, for Clarendon Park (National Trust), and an early painting by David Hockney (1958) for a private client. Their general approach to conservation is that by its very nature it is a traditional craft, which first and foremost should respect and serve the aesthetic and historic context of the painting. However, they also keep abreast of our times, when research and development in material science offers an increasing range of conservation materials, upon which they must take reasoned judgement as to the suitability when applied to valuable works of art.

Rosenholm Castle

Founded in 1559, the beautiful moated Rosenholm Castle is Denmark's oldest family-owned castle and one of that country's most interesting and harmonious buildings, inspired by Italian Renaissance architecture, complete with a loggia. In the period between 1740-5 the castle was renovated and the 13.5-acre park with lime tree avenues, lime tree pavilions and beech hedges was established. Today the magnificent park represents a typical Baroque establishment to which a new chapter was added in 1994: the rose garden with many roses as well as fountains. It is furnished with hundreds of pieces of furniture, paintings and tapestries, all of which contribute to give the visitor an impression of the life and history of a noble family down through the centuries.

The Castle's new website (www.rosenholmslot.dk) is currently only available in Danish. A translated paragraph from its website records the following information under the heading 'Rosenkrantz and Gyldenstjerne':

Some Danes may have wondered why Shakespeare mainly used Greek names such as Laertes, Polonius, Ophelia etc in 'Hamlet' when the play takes place in Denmark. However, Two Danish noble families sneaked their way onto the cast: Rosenkrantz and Gyldenstjerne, which has made these family names internationally famous. According to family chronicle this was due to the fact that the two young gentlemen were on a study trip to England when Shakespeare wrote his famous tragedy. Here they met the great writer at an inn and after many filled glasses had been emptied Shakespeare had the idea to move the history from Greece to Denmark. Gyldenstjerne's room, which was Rosenholm's most prestigious room in the old days, has its name because the Gyldenstjernes, from the neighbor manor Moellerup, stayed here when they stayed for the night at Rosenholm. (It's also the room most frequently haunted by ghosts. In the old days unwanted guests were granted this room and if they were not a Gyldenstjerne they always left the next day).'

