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Early 19th Century Danish Artists and Their Choice of Paper for Drawings and Sketches

The large collection of prints and drawings at the Danish National Gallery (Statens Museum for Kunst) in Copenhagen is a valuable source for the study of paper used by Danish artists for drawings and sketches. Some years ago, a research project examined the watermarks in the works of the Danish artist Nicolai Abildgaard (1743-1809). He used both Danish paper (approx. 35 %) and paper of foreign, mainly Dutch, origin. Abildgaard was professor and director of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and there was a striking resemblance between the Danish paper in his works and the paper used in academy documents from the same period, suggesting that he may have bought his paper from the same supplier as the academy or his paper was supplied by the academy.

The present project will focus on the works of some of Abildgaard's students at the academy, such as Kratzenstein Stub (1783-1816), Johan Ludvig Lund (1777-1867) and Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783-1853).

After their academy time the students usually spent some years abroad, typically in Rome or Paris, as part of their training, and these travels may have had an impact on their choice of paper.

In the beginning of the 19th century the Danish paper industry was expanding with new papermills and the installation of the first Danish paper-machine in 1829 at Strandmøllen north of Copenhagen.

The aim of the present project is to investigate if the artists' travels abroad and the developments in the Danish paper industry are reflected in the artists' choice of paper for their drawings and sketches.

Keywords: 19th century drawings; artist's paper; papermaking in Denmark;