COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Statens Museum for Kunst: Masterpieces

Twenty paintings from Denmark's national gallery: Danish artists at home and in Rome, and European works from El Greco to Matisse



Statens Museum for Kunst, usually shortened to SMK, is Denmark's national gallery in Copenhagen. Its collection runs from older European painting through Danish art to modern work. Most of this selection is Danish.

Rome comes up again and again: Bloch's osteria, Marstrand's charlatan in Piazza Barberini, Eckersberg's view into the damaged Colosseum and Constantin Hansen's group portrait of Danish artists gathered in the city. Copenhagen supplies a corvette on the stocks and Købke's prospect towards Nørrebro. Eckersberg's name comes up more than anyone else's, and his pictures here move from an ancient ruin to open sky to a ship not yet afloat.

Several painters looked close to home. Hammershøi and Matisse each painted their wives, Haslund his children at the piano, and Bendz a fellow painter checking a sketch in a mirror. Hammershøi also painted his easel in a room without its painter. The remaining pictures come from elsewhere in Europe, from El Greco and Cornelis van Haarlem in the sixteenth century to Matisse, Derain and Modigliani in the early twentieth.

Artline chose these works from SMK's documented holdings, independently of the museum.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/statens-museum-kunst

The selection · 20

1. In a Roman Osteria
   Carl Bloch · 1866
2. The Fall of the Titans
   Cornelis van Haarlem · 1588-1590
3. Portrait of Madame Matisse: The Green Line
   Henri Matisse · 1905
4. Pierrot
   Amedeo Modigliani · 1915
5. Portrait of a Man
   El Greco · 1575
6. The Wounded Philoctetes
   Nicolai Abildgaard · 1775
7. A Group of Danish Artists in Rome
   Constantin Hansen · 1837
8. View of the Interior of the Colosseum
   Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg · 1816
9. View from Dosseringen towards Nørrebro
   Christen Købke · 1838
10. A Room in Strandgade with the Artist's Wife
    Vilhelm Hammershøi · 1901
11. Interior with the Artist's Easel
    Vilhelm Hammershøi · 1910
12. Woman in a Chemise
    André Derain · 1906
13. The Ryberg Family
    Jens Juel · c. 1793-1797
14. Ditlev Blunck Examining a Sketch in a Mirror
    Wilhelm Bendz · 1826
15. Interior with a Violin
    Henri Matisse · 1918
16. Concert: The Artist's Children and Their Playmates
    Otto Haslund · 1887
17. A Charlatan Selling Blacking in Piazza Barberini
    Wilhelm Marstrand · 1840-1849
18. Cloudscape, Study
    Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg · 1826
19. A Corvette on the Stocks, Copenhagen
    Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg · 1828
20. A Blind Man outside His House
    Michael Ancher · c. 1881-1884

01 / 20

In a Roman Osteria

Carl Bloch

1866 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Carl Bloch. In a Roman Osteria. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

An osteria is a tavern, and Bloch's group sits round a table among cups, food and furniture in what seems an ordinary social scene. Then you notice that one figure has turned to look straight out of the picture. That direct look gives the gathering its awkward immediacy, as though the viewer had been caught watching.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS4087

02 / 20

The Fall of the Titans

Cornelis van Haarlem

1588-1590 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Cornelis van Haarlem. The Fall of the Titans. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. Public domain; compressed study reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Cornelis van Haarlem tells the Titans' defeat almost entirely through anatomy. The falling bodies twist in opposite directions, and the rocks give them points of contact but no stable position. The myth becomes an occasion for showing how far the human body can turn and stretch before it loses all purchase.

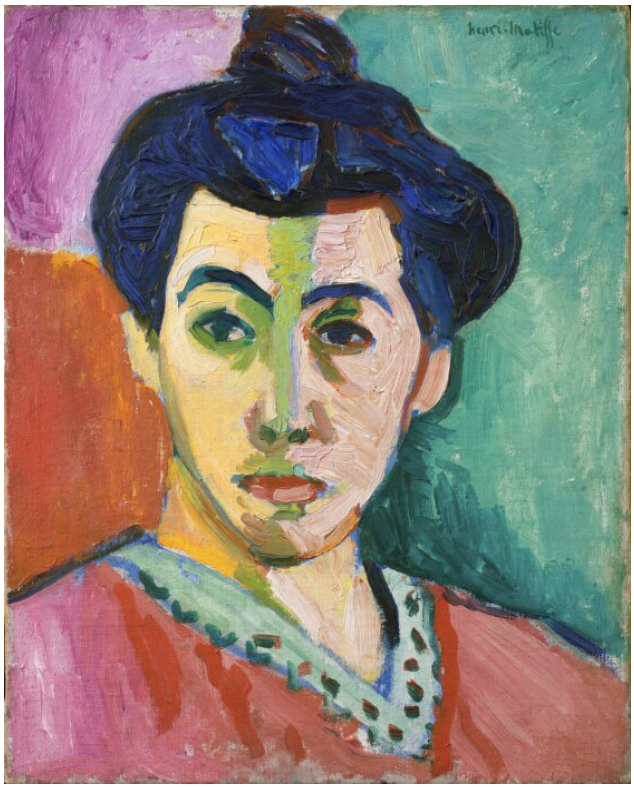
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS1

03 / 20

Portrait of Madame Matisse: The Green Line

Henri Matisse

1905 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Henri Matisse. Portrait of Madame Matisse. The Green Line. SMK, Copenhagen. Public Domain Mark 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

A green band divides Amélie Matisse's face into two halves of different colour, yet she remains recognisable. The painting makes no attempt at naturalistic flesh tones. Its force comes from colour contrast.

It is also small, about 40.5 by 32.5 centimetres, which is easy to forget given the strength of its colour.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMSr171

04 / 20

Pierrot

Amedeo Modigliani

1915 · Oil on cardboard · Statens Museum for Kunst



Pierrot (Self Portrait as Pierrot). WikiArt; Amedeo Modigliani. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Public domain

The ruff and angular headwear mark the figure as Pierrot, a theatrical role. Modigliani builds the long face from narrow features and greenish patches. Mask-like as it is, it still reads as a person's face, so a picture of a stage character comes close to being a portrait. It is painted on cardboard.

Object source · Open artwork

05 / 20

Portrait of a Man

El Greco

1575 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



El Greco. Portrait of a man (Andrea Palladio). WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/el-greco/portrait-of-a-man-andrea-palladio-1575 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

The sitter has sometimes been identified as Palladio, but that identification is disputed. Whoever he was, his dark clothing is compact and the setting subdued, so a few details carry the portrait. The cuffs and beard stand out clearly, and a pale hand reaches beyond the dark mass of the body, giving the picture some action outside the face.

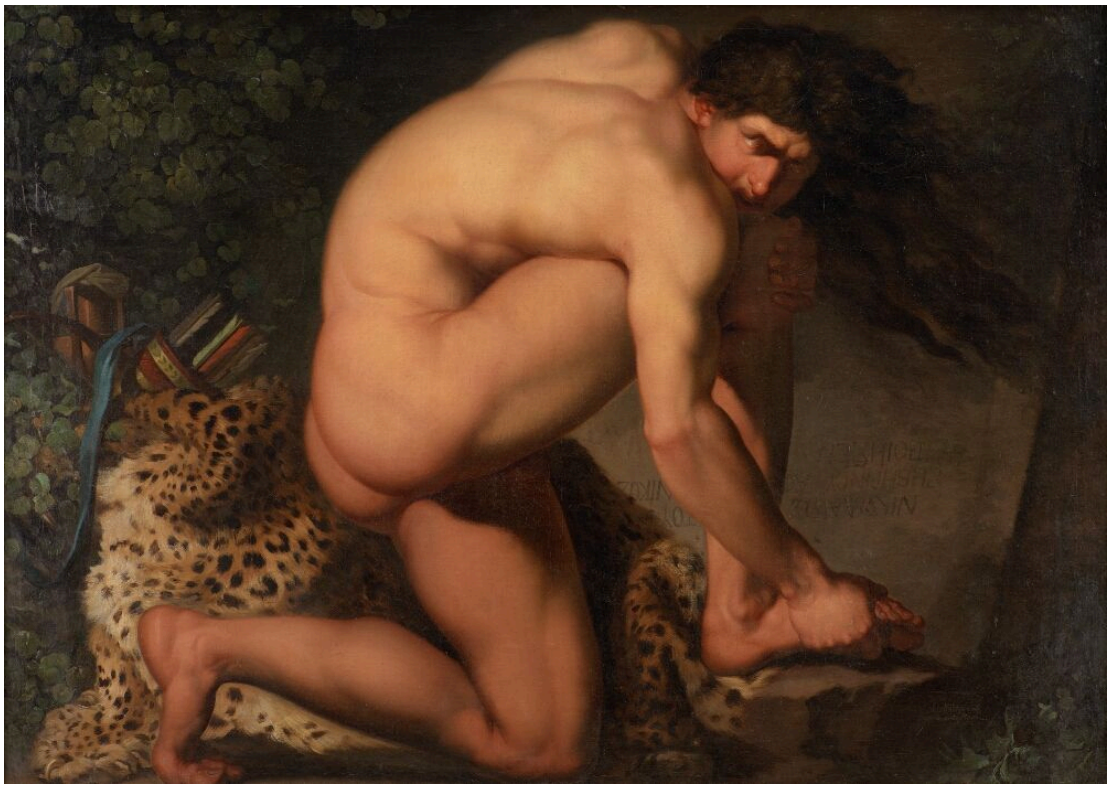
Object source · Open artwork

06 / 20

The Wounded Philoctetes

Nicolai Abildgaard

1775 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Nicolai Abildgaard. The Wounded Philoctetes. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Abildgaard puts the pain into the whole body. Both of Philoctetes' hands lead to his injured foot, and his back and limbs fold around it. He is shown alone, with no other figure to share the weight of the scene.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS586

07 / 20

A Group of Danish Artists in Rome

Constantin Hansen

1837 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Constantin Hansen. A Group of Danish Artists in Rome. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Hansen's fellow artists share a room but not an activity. Some sit, others stand, and they turn in different directions. Each is an individual likeness, and each seems busy with his own work. It is a group portrait without ceremony. An open view beyond keeps the room from closing in.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS3236

08 / 20

View of the Interior of the Colosseum

Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg

1816 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg. View of the Interior of the Colosseum. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

The damage does not make the Colosseum hard to read. Eckersberg builds the view from intervals and shifting planes, so the arches and broken walls still read as parts of one structure and the distances between them can be followed. Small figures give the human scale. Nothing much happens to them.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS1776

09 / 20

View from Dosseringen towards Nørrebro

Christen Købke

1838 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Christen Købke. A View from Dosseringen near the Sortedam Lake Looking Towards Nørrebro. SMK, Copenhagen. Public Domain Mark 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Købke sets a flagpole, the one firm vertical, against the long horizontals of water and sky. Two figures nearby and a boat in the distance take up only a small part of the view.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS359

10 / 20

A Room in Strandgade with the Artist’s Wife

Vilhelm Hammershøi

1901 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Vilhelm Hammershøi. A Room in the Artist's Home in Strandgade, Copenhagen, with the Artist's Wife. SMK, Copenhagen. Public Domain Mark 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

The title names the artist's wife, but her face is hidden. Hammershøi tells us far more about the room. Its limits are unusually clear, and in all that stillness a small grid of sunlight on the floor counts as an event.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS3696

11 / 20

Interior with the Artist’s Easel

Vilhelm Hammershøi

1910 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Vilhelm Hammershøi. Interior with the Artist’s Easel. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

An easel and a framed picture mark this as a place of work, but the artist is absent. An open doorway leads into a further room where nothing is happening either. The Strandgade interior at least has a figure in it, even if her face is hidden. Here painting is present only through its equipment and an empty setting.

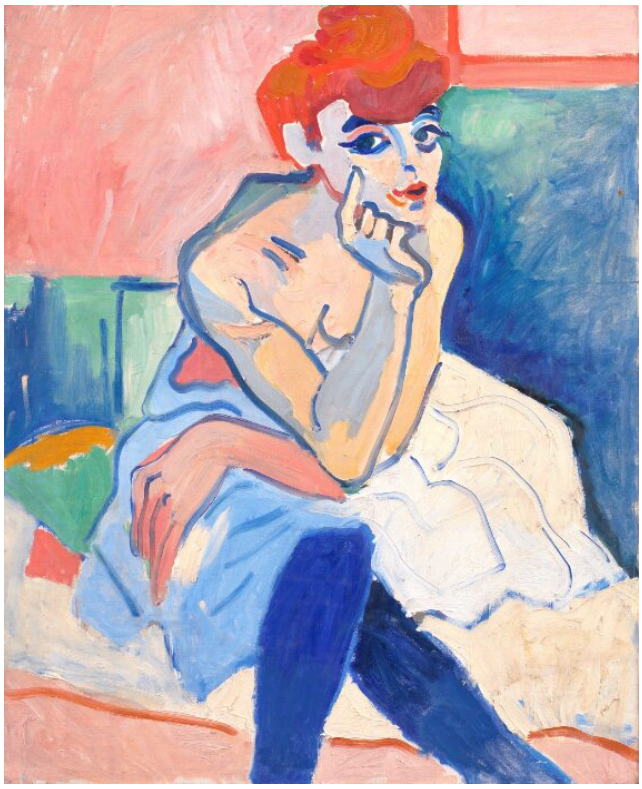
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS7444

12 / 20

Woman in a Chemise

André Derain

1906 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



André Derain. Woman in a Chemise. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. Public domain; compressed study reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

The woman rests her chin on her hand, a familiar pose that keeps the body easy to read. That may be what leaves Derain free with colour. Pink, blue and green blur the usual distinctions between skin, fabric and shadow, and colour builds the figure as much as any outline does. Matisse's portrait of his wife, which also gives up naturalistic flesh tones, makes a natural companion.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMSr14

13 / 20

The Ryberg Family

Jens Juel

c. 1793-1797 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Jens Juel. The Ryberg Family. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Gestures link the seated older man with the two standing figures. The landscape, with its distant view, gives the family a wider social setting. Their position comes across through land and surroundings as well as through their likenesses.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS2098

14 / 20

Ditlev Blunck Examining a Sketch in a Mirror

Wilhelm Bendz

1826 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Wilhelm Bendz. En ung kunstner (Ditlev Blunck) betragter en skitse i et spejl. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Ditlev Blunck, himself a painter, looks at a sketch in a mirror, which shows it to him the other way round. Tools and canvases crowd the working room. Bendz paints the pause in which Blunck judges what the reversed view reveals.

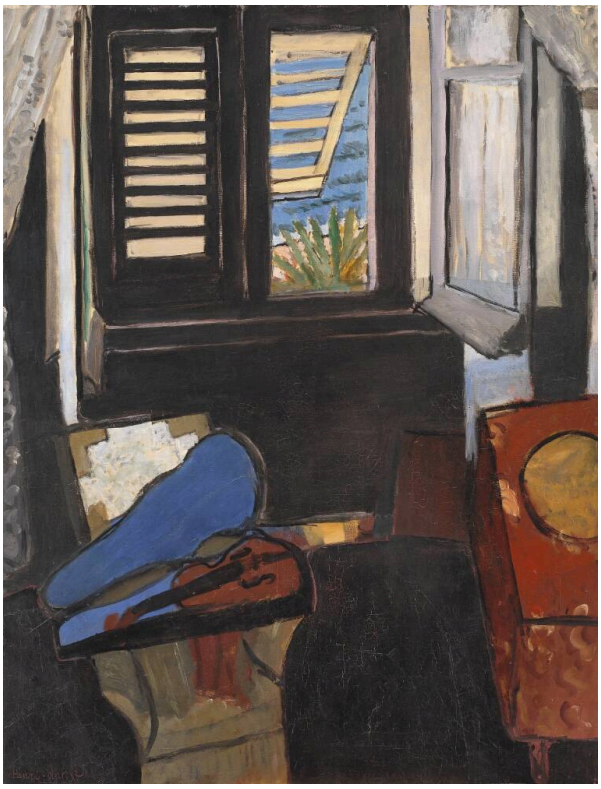
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS280

15 / 20

Interior with a Violin

Henri Matisse

1918 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Henri Matisse. Interior with a Violin. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Like the easel in Hammershøi's interior, the violin implies someone who is not there. It lies at rest, and there is no musician in sight. In Matisse's picture the absence counts for less. Open shutters connect the room to a brighter outside, dark frames separate the adjoining areas, and the instrument and furniture become parts of the colour arrangement without becoming the centre of a story.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMSr83

16 / 20

Concert: The Artist’s Children and Their Playmates

Otto Haslund

1887 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Otto Haslund. "Koncert". Kunstnerens børn og deres legekammerater. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

The title says Concert, and some of Haslund's children and their playmates do concentrate on the piano. Others, including the youngest, spoil any idea of a perfectly coordinated performance. The scene is more particular because of them.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS1306

17 / 20

A Charlatan Selling Blacking in Piazza Barberini

Wilhelm Marstrand

1840-1849 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Wilhelm Marstrand. A Charlatan Selling Blacking in the Piazza Barberini in Rome. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

The charlatan's demonstration has drawn an audience in Piazza Barberini. Persuasion is what joins the figures, and their varied responses matter as much as his gesture. The buildings and a fountain set the scene, but the sales pitch gives the picture its tighter structure: he has to win attention before he can sell anything.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS3770

18 / 20

Cloudscape, Study

Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg

1826 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg. A Cloudscape. Study. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

A narrow band of ground lies under layers of cloud. Eckersberg divides the sky into heavier masses and paler openings, ordering something with no fixed structure much as he ordered the broken arches of the Colosseum. This is a study, and the clouds are its whole subject.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS6433

19 / 20

A Corvette on the Stocks, Copenhagen

Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg

1828 · Oil on canvas · Statens Museum for Kunst



Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg. A Corvette on the Stocks. Copenhagen. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

Eckersberg shows the corvette raised on wooden supports, before it is afloat. Out of the water, the hull shows surfaces that would normally be hidden. The timber framework shows how so large a structure rests on the ground.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS6439

20 / 20

A Blind Man outside His House

Michael Ancher

c. 1881-1884 · Oil on panel · Statens Museum for Kunst



Michael Ancher. A Blind Man Outside his House. Statens Museum for Kunst. Public Domain Mark 1.0. Compressed full-frame reproduction. · Public Domain Mark 1.0

The man stands beside his house, head lowered and stance supported, while bright light spreads across the ground around him. The title tells us he is blind. Light falling around a man who cannot see it could easily have been made into a pointed contrast. Ancher studies his posture as closely as he might in a portrait and keeps him part of the landscape.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: KMS3459

Size and support

On a screen every picture appears at much the same size, which hides real differences in this selection. Matisse's portrait of his wife is small, while Cornelis van Haarlem's scene of tumbling bodies is large. The supports vary too. Most of these paintings are on canvas, but Modigliani's Pierrot is on cardboard and Ancher's blind man is on panel. SMK's catalogue has useful object records.

Further reading

Concerning the Spiritual in Art

Wassily Kandinsky; translated by Michael Sadleir · Read free · English

This is Kandinsky's argument about colour, in Michael Sadleir's English translation. It gives historical context for the Matisse and Derain paintings, where colour does much of the work.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12