

ELLIOTT FINE ART

Nineteenth Century to Early Modern

Hans Andersen Brendekilde
(Odense 1857 – 1942 Jyllinge)

Portrait of an Egyptian boy

Located, dated and monogrammed upper right: *Cairo 28.1.90 / H.A.B.*

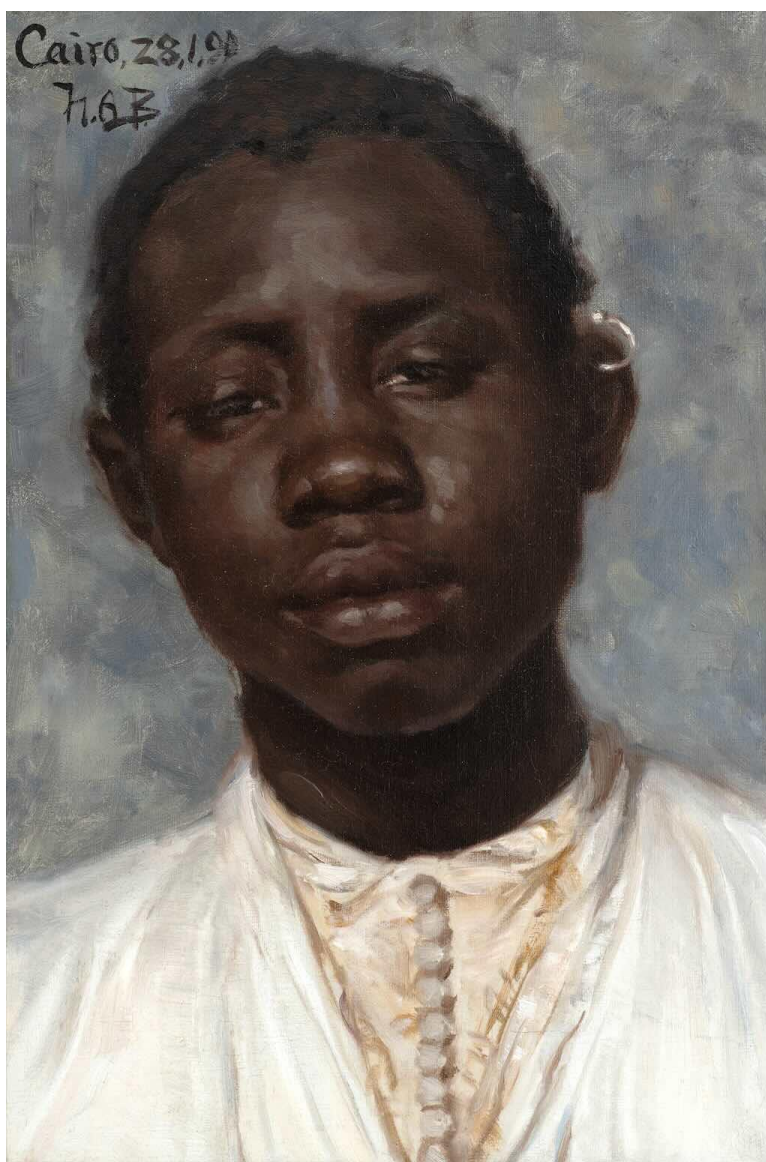
Oil on canvas

41 x 27 cm. (16 ¼ x 10 ½ in.)

Provenance:

Bruun Rasmussen, Copenhagen, 30 November 1999, lot 663;

Private Collection, France, until 2022.



Hans Andersen Brendekilde is celebrated for his evocative depictions of Danish rural life. His most famous painting, *Udslidt (Worn Out)* (fig. 1), is regarded as the quintessential example of Danish social realism and garnered significant acclaim when exhibited in Paris in 1889. Following this triumph, Brendekilde won an academic scholarship, enabling him to journey across Europe and into the Near East, travelling through Syria, Palestine and Egypt.



Fig. 1, Hans Andersen Brendekilde, *Udslidt (Worn Out)*, 1889, oil on canvas, 207 x 270 cm, Fyns Kunstmuseum

In Egypt and the Near East, Brendekilde painted a small but important body of work. Though less well-known than his rural scenes, these paintings are important examples of a naturalistic vein of Orientalism, contrasting with the more exoticising depictions of some of his contemporaries.

Whilst in Egypt and the Near East, as in Denmark, Brendekilde focussed on social themes, capturing everyday life amongst the lower classes and marginalised. His keen eye for detail vividly conveys the light, colour and textures of the places he observed, whether illustrating a view of Jerusalem with a shepherd boy in the foreground (fig. 2) or depicting two pilgrims visiting the tombs of the apostles Jacob and Zacharias near Cairo (fig. 3).



Fig. 2, Hans Andersen Brendekilde, *Jerusalem from the South East*, 1890, oil on canvas, 43 x 74 cm, Private Collection

Brendekilde also painted a small number of bust-length portraits and head studies in Egypt, of which this is a particularly fine example. As with his portraiture more generally (fig. 4), Brendekilde closely crops the composition, creating a powerful immediacy and presence. The identity of the young boy depicted here, painted in late January 1890, remains unknown, though he may have modelled for some of Brendekilde's multi-figure works.



Fig. 3, Hans Andersen Brendekilde, *The Tombs of the Apostles Jacob and Zacharias near Cairo*, 1890, oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm, Private Collection



Fig. 4, Hans Andersen Brendekilde, *Portrait of L.A. Ring*, circa 1885, oil on canvas, 47 x 34 cm, Fyns Kunstmuseum

Brendekilde was born in Brændekilde, a small village near Odense on the island of Funen. He was distantly related to Hans Christian Andersen, the renowned fairy tale writer, and, like Andersen, endured a childhood marked by poverty. Both men's fathers were clog makers. At age four, Brendekilde left his parents and lived with his grandparents until he was ten, after which he worked as a shepherd in exchange for room and board.

His artistic talent was recognized and nurtured during his school years, leading to his acceptance into the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 1877, at the age of 20. In Copenhagen, he formed a close bond with Laurits Andersen Ring, another artist of humble origins who shared his vision. The two initially shared a studio in the city, and, due to their similar surnames and artistic themes, were often mistaken for one another. In 1884, to distinguish themselves, they adopted new surnames based on their birthplaces: Brendekilde and Ring.

Brendekilde's career quickly flourished, with his internationally exhibited social realist paintings earning praise and accolades in Denmark and abroad. His works, which capture the hardships and realities of his era, have secured his place as a significant figure in both Danish art history and the wider tradition of European realism.