

PEHR EKLUND

Lund, 1875–1943

Landscape (Rönnehed)



1906

Signed and dated lower right,
'Pehr Eklund /1906'

Charcoal and pastel on toned paper, 505 x 405 mm

The Swedish inscription on the old backing board read as follows:

“Denna tavla vann jag hösten 1906/i Lund, vid en välgörenhetsbasar å Försvarinna/(en av de högst anordnade värdinnor)./Lottpris 1 kr./Motivet är från Rönnehed./Tycker mig ha hört Pehr Eklund/var kapten vid Södra skåningarna/ och duktig, berömd konstnär./(E.E.)”. English translation: “I won this painting in the autumn of 1906/ in Lund, at a charity bazaar at Försvarinna/(one of the most highly regarded hostesses)./Lottery ticket price: 1 krona./The motif is from Rönnehed./I believe I have heard that Pehr Eklund/was a captain with the South Scanian regiment/ and a capable, well-known artist./(E.E.)”

Provenance:

Sweden, private collection from 1906;

Then by descent until 2025



Pehr Eklund | *Landscape (Rönnehed)*

Pehr Henrik Mortimer Eklund was born in Lund in 1875, the southernmost county of Sweden, and remained closely tied to the region throughout his life, even after his artistic education took him abroad. Alongside his career as an artist, he pursued a military profession and attained the rank of captain, a dual identity that situates him firmly within the bourgeois class of his time. Eklund began his artistic training in Lund under Axel Lindqvist and Fredrik Krebs, both of whom provided him with a foundation in drawing and compositional discipline. Seeking further instruction, he traveled to Munich in 1899, where he studied until 1900. Although sources are unclear, it is thought he attended the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. At the turn of the century, the Munich academy attracted a large international student body, including many Scandinavian artists, and offered a rigorous curriculum grounded in drawing, figure study, and realist observation.



Photograph of Loulou and Pehr Eklund, from the *Svenkst Konstnärslexikon*, circa 1908

From Munich, Eklund continued to Paris, where he spent the years 1900 to 1903. There he worked with, among others, Eugène Carrière and Ferdinand Humbert, and undertook further study through travel to several other European countries. Carrière's influence was particularly significant. Known for his muted palettes and soft tonal transitions, Carrière represented a Symbolist alternative to the academic realism Eklund had become accustomed to. These qualities left a lasting impression on the young artist, whose later work consistently favored atmosphere. The present landscape, dated 1906, was produced only a few years after Eklund's return to Sweden, and belongs to his early mature period, executed in charcoal with expressive pastel highlights on toned paper. The motif is identified on the reverse as Rönnehed, most likely a rural area near Lund, perhaps today subsumed by the university city. In Swedish "Rönn" can mean Rowan, a type of tree, and "-hed" a heath or moor, suggesting a more descriptive title than a particular place. Eklund focuses on a stand of twisted old trees animated by light bursting through their branches.



Light functions as the primary expressive agent in the drawing, highlighted with vibrant pastels. A fantastical luminous concentration near the center breaks through the darker masses of the trees, radiating outward in streaks and soft highlights. This unusual technique gives the scene a sense of transience, capturing a fleeting moment of perception. The toned paper serves as a middle ground between light and shadow, allowing Eklund to work by subtraction and addition, building depth through suggestion. This emphasis on mood and perception places Eklund's work within a broader Scandinavian artistic context around 1900. During this period, many Swedish artists moved away from strict academic realism toward more expressive and atmospheric interpretations of landscape. Although there is no documented personal or professional connection between Eklund and Nils Kreuger, the two artists can be understood as participants in the same cultural shift. Kreuger, a central figure of the Varberg School and a member of Konstnärnsförbundet (Artists' Association), played a crucial role in introducing French-inspired modernism into Swedish painting and works on paper. His landscapes often emphasise weather and rhythmic movement, treating nature as an expressive force. Eklund's approach parallels these concepts, functioning less as depictions of place than as meditative spaces shaped by light and sensation.

The provenance of the present drawing further situates it within the cultural life of Lund in the early twentieth century. A contemporary handwritten inscription on the reverse of the old backing board records that the work was won at a charity lottery bazaar in Lund in the autumn of 1906. Such events were common venues for artists to circulate their work and engage with local audiences, reinforcing the close relationship between artistic production and civic culture at the time. The inscription also underscores Eklund's standing within his community as a trained artist whose work was valued and sought after – with mention given to his military rank. This landscape encapsulates the distinctive qualities of Pehr Eklund's artistic practice, revealing a highly personal synthesis of influences drawn from studies both at home and abroad. However his technique does not merely echo French symbolism, but rather transforms it through his own sensibility. The radiating light and dissolving forms suggest an engagement with Carrière's atmospheric language, yet Eklund's technique remains resolutely his own. In this respect, his work stands apart from traditional strands of Swedish modernism while nonetheless participating fully in the broader transformation of Swedish art around 1900. Eklund offers a nuanced and deeply personal exploration of nature as an expressive and perceptual experience.