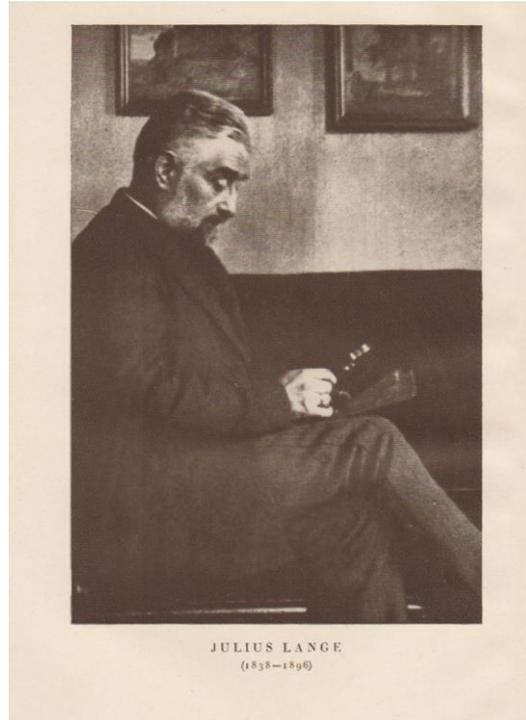


Julius Lange (19 June 1838-20 August 1896)

Karl Johns



Photograph of Julius Lange taken from *Julius Lange – Vom Kunstwert: Zwei Vorträge*, translated by Ferdinand Nagler with a forward by Julius von Schlosser, Wien: Amalthea Verlag 1925

Lange, not to be confused with Julius Lange, the Düsseldorf landscape painter, was raised in an intellectual family in Copenhagen where he attended the Metropolitanskolen, formerly called Latin Cathedral School, Struenseegade Nørrebro, now a part of the university. After an eye disease, he attended the art academy studying architecture, painting privately and classical philology at the university. For a man who lived less than 60 years, his achievement is impressive.

In 1862 he was able to spend five months in Italy concentrating on the early and High Renaissance. 1867-1868 he travelled through all of northern Europe and Italy, teaching at the Copenhagen art academy beginning in 1868, succeeding Niels Laurits Høyen there after his death in 1870. He taught at the university beginning in 1871 and in an official position from 1875. He became a member of the academy of sciences in 1877, given an honorary doctorate in 1886 and made *extraordinarius* in 1888. He was on the board of what is now the Statens Museum since 1878 and placed in charge of its sculpture department in 1895. Aside from Høyen, he

associated with a group including Jakob Ludvig Heiberg, Frederik von Nutzhorn, Jens Paludan Müller, Troels Troels-Lund and Georg Brandes.

His experience of Romanticism, Positivism and the obvious opposition to the materialism in the philosophy of the time should be clear from the subjects of his lectures and publications. He must be counted among the earliest academic art historians and certainly not lacking in concentration or originality.

He expressed himself thoroughly in letters,¹ and wrote about subjects ranging from the arts of ancient Egypt to his own contemporaries. Some of his more voluminous publications are a revision of the five-volume survey of the history of art by Wilhem Lübke and a history of the human form in the arts. His range is best apparent in a three-volume selection of essays produced posthumously by Georg Brandes and Peter Købke.²

Obviously, much that was written 130 years ago will be obsolete. Comparatively little had been photographed, attributions have changed, a few of his examples could no longer be identified, and the quality of some others lead us to prefer overlooking them, but it seems important to remember what is still valid and only partially followed in some essays by Johan Jakob Tikkanen, figures such as Aby Warburg, Georg Weise, students of Julius Schlosser and others. Lange traced the rise of individual expressiveness through the millennia, the very long historical arch recently popularized again by historians, the different nature and orientation between one art form and another, the phenomenon later discussed by Mario Praz as *Mnemosyne*, uneven levels within the work of a single artist, and even the relative appeal or boredom in art made on commission. He certainly benefitted from collections of material, museum work and stylistic criticism such as his compatriot Emil Jacobsen was publishing in the *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* or Georg Dehio was then preparing. While an element of Romanticism is still apparent in his appraisals, Lange is closer to us today than the relevant works of Franz Kugler or even some from Jacob Burckhardt. His idealist criticism of the positivism and materialism of his time anticipates Benedetto Croce. The term '*udtryk*' is among his favorite words, and in some ways has a parallel in Croce's '*espressione*'.

¹ *Breve fra Julius Lange*, ed. Peter Købke, Copenhagen, 1902, also in a selected German translation, *Briefe von Julius Lange*, Strasbourg: Heitz, 1903.

² Lübke revised by Lange, *Kunsthistorien: Fremstillet i dens Hovedtraek*, Copenhagen: Philipsen, 1881, Julius Lange, *Billedkunstens Fremstilling af Menneskeskikkelsen i dens ældste Periode indtil Højdepunktet af den graeske Kunst*, Copenhagen: Dreyer, 1892, *Billedkunstens fremstilling af Menneskeskikkelsen i den graeske Kunst første Storhedstid*, Copenhagen: Lund, 1898, *Manneskefiguren i kunstens historie fra den graeske kunsts anden blomstringstid indtill vort aarhundrede*, Copenhagen: Det nordiske forlag, 1899, translated as *Darstellung des Menschen in der älteren griechischen Kunst*, Strasbourg: Heitz, 1899, Lange, *Die menschliche Gestalt in der Geschichte der Kunst von der zweiten Blütezeit der griechischen Kunst bis zum XIX. Jahrhundert*, Strasbourg: Heitz, 1903, Lange, *Udvalgte skrifter af Julius Lange*, udgivne af Georg Brandes og P. Købke, Copenhagen: Det nordiske forlag, 1900-1903.

Aside from his lecture about Michelangelo's idiosyncratic relation to his marble blocks, written after the Michelangelo celebrations of 1875, we present the English-speaking audience with a review of the publications of Greek grave stelae and three lectures tracing the history of human gestures as they appear and then disappear within the history of art. These are the hand laid on the chest, the heavenward gaze, and the unusual straddling stance. The latter was then further expanded by Johan Jakob Tikkanen in his immortal, unforgotten 'Studien über den Ausdruck in der Kunst'.³

I have relied on relatively literal German translations, alas with many errors, published shortly after Lange's death, checked against the *Udvalgte skrifter af Julius Lange*, the collected essays in three volumes 1900-1903. My own knowledge of Danish is limited to slightly less than two semesters of Swedish many years ago, but family members who spent a few years of their youth in Copenhagen, one in a rather nice apartment on Nyhavn, have been helpful with particular questions. Methodologically as well as bibliographically, the Scandinavian contribution to the history of art has generally been overlooked from the nineteenth-century surveys on to the most recent history of the discipline. Tancred Borenius became one of the first academic art historians in England, and although Jacob Burckhardt dismissed them as 'Attribuzler', his revisions of Crowe and Cavacaselle are still of use. Tikkanen's work on Psalter illustration was certainly an early impulse to Meyer Schapiro in his search for the secular elements in Romanesque art, and Julius Lange deserves a place for his range, his originality, and if nothing else then his influence on and inspiration to Tikkanen. We might also mention Harry Fett (1875-1962), director of historical preservation in Norway and author of a list of books and articles filling the better part of 90 pages, including a medieval sketchbook of Icelandic provenance.⁴

The German author and literary historian Arno Schmidt has not allowed us to forget that in framing the canon or singling out classics there is a tendency to submerge much work of high quality and great originality. Julius Lange appears as one of the early art historians to have suffered from that process and ought not to be forgotten.

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³ Johan Jakob Tikkanen, "Studien über den Ausdruck in der Kunst", *Die Beinstellungen in der Kunstgeschichte*, Helsingfors: Finnische Literaturgesellschaft, 1912, and *Zwei Gebärden mit dem Zeigefinger*, 1913, Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae, respectively vol. 42, no. 1, vol. 43, no. 2.

⁴ Hugo Fett, *Dr. Harry Fett: Bibliografi 1875-1962-1975*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1975, sketchbook, p. 28.