

The Jerichau-Wilkens Antiquities

*Jens Adolf Jerichau (1816–1883)
in The Eternal City*

In 1838, the young 22-year-old Jens Adolf Jerichau arrived in Rome and was warmly received by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, who the following days guided Jerichau around the city. The walks through the city's winding streets and alleyways and the overwhelming relics from antiquity found everywhere simply blew Jerichau away. Thorvaldsen even advised him: "... begin your work by diving into antiquity." Jerichau did just that, but that he would become the owner of the largest Danish private collection of objects from antiquity – second only to the collections of Thorvaldsen and the brewer Carl Jacobsen – was not in the cards.



Wilkens sitting at the desk with his wife, approx. 1890. Along the wall of the bookcase is his collection of antiquities. Hercules (lot 140) and the female head (lot 144) are seen.



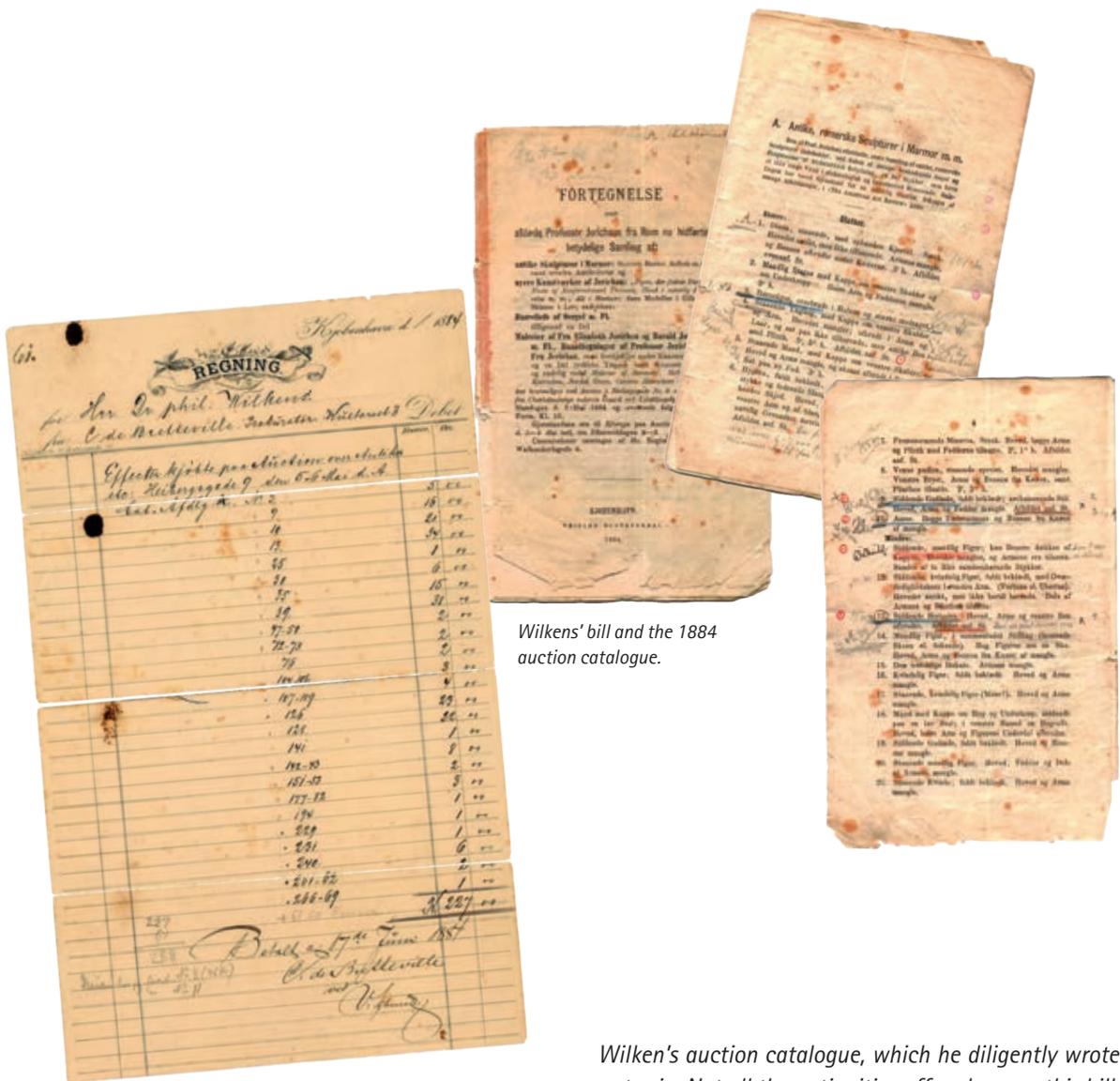
Jerichau painted by his wife with his breakthrough work "Hercules and Hebe" from 1845 in the background. Both this and his antique Hercules were compared to the legendary figure Belvedere Torso in the Vatican Museum.

Jerichau as an Antiquities Collector – an Investment

Although Jerichau bought antiquities as a pleasant pastime while he lived in Rome, it appears not to have been a lifelong collector's passion that led him to amass a collection of more than 350 antiquities. According to his biography from 1884, he acquired his large collection of antiquities en bloc in 1854, and in 1855 he wrote to his wife and painter Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann: "I want to buy antique marble fragments, which in time will increase significantly in value." The investment was never realized since the collection remained in Jerichau's studio in Palazzo Lovati at the Piazza del Popoli. Jerichau's art and antiquities collection in Rome must have weighed heavily on him in his old age, because three years before his death he wrote to the Danish government and asked if they would accept his works if they agreed to pay for the transport home – an offer that was accepted.

Professor Claudius Wilkens (1844–1929) Picks up the Torch

In 1884, Jerichau's estate was put up for auction in Copenhagen, and in addition to art and furniture, the auction also contained 350 lots with antiquities. At that time, Claudius Wilkens was 40 years old and an associate professor of philosophy and sociology at the University of Copenhagen. Like Jerichau, Wilkens seized the opportunity to acquire



Wilken's bill and the 1884 auction catalogue.

antiquities en bloc. From the preserved bill of purchase, you can see that he acquired more than 40 lots. And like Jerichau, he kept the antiquities as they looked when purchased (judging by the photograph) without any fittings or restoration. Wilkens reportedly did not acquire any more antiquities after this auction. They were later passed on in the family.

The Antiquities Are Coming on the Market Again

More than 130 years after the first purchase, 11 of Jerichau-Wilken's antiquities are up for auction. Most have never been on the market before, whereas lots 137, 140 and 147 were acquired at Bruun Rasmussen Auctioneers in 2003. Two of the antiquities, lots 140 and 144, were exhibited at the Glyptoteket in 1974 and mentioned in the catalogue. As something completely unique, there is the original bill of purchase as well as

Wilken's auction catalogue, which he diligently wrote notes in. Not all the antiquities offered are on this bill, possibly because Wilkens exchanged some. Wilkens has written "exchanged" in at least two places in the catalogue. In the catalogue, it appears that Wilkens made a red circle next to each lot with his antiquities. Whether the item is on the bill or is checked off in the catalogue (or none of the two) will be stated under each individual lot up for auction. If interested, the buyer can get a copy of the bill of purchase from 1884.

The antiquities up for auction are first and foremost characterized by their authentic and unspoiled appearance – without restorations and preferably not fitted. It is primarily fragments, a real lapidarium of feet, faces and a pillar. In some cases, there is also a story, for instance, the Hercules figure. In addition to stone, burnt clay is one of the most preserved materials from antiquity, and a lekanis, a fragment of a relief and terracotta figures from other collections are also offered.