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Swedish Art History

A Selection of Introductory Texts

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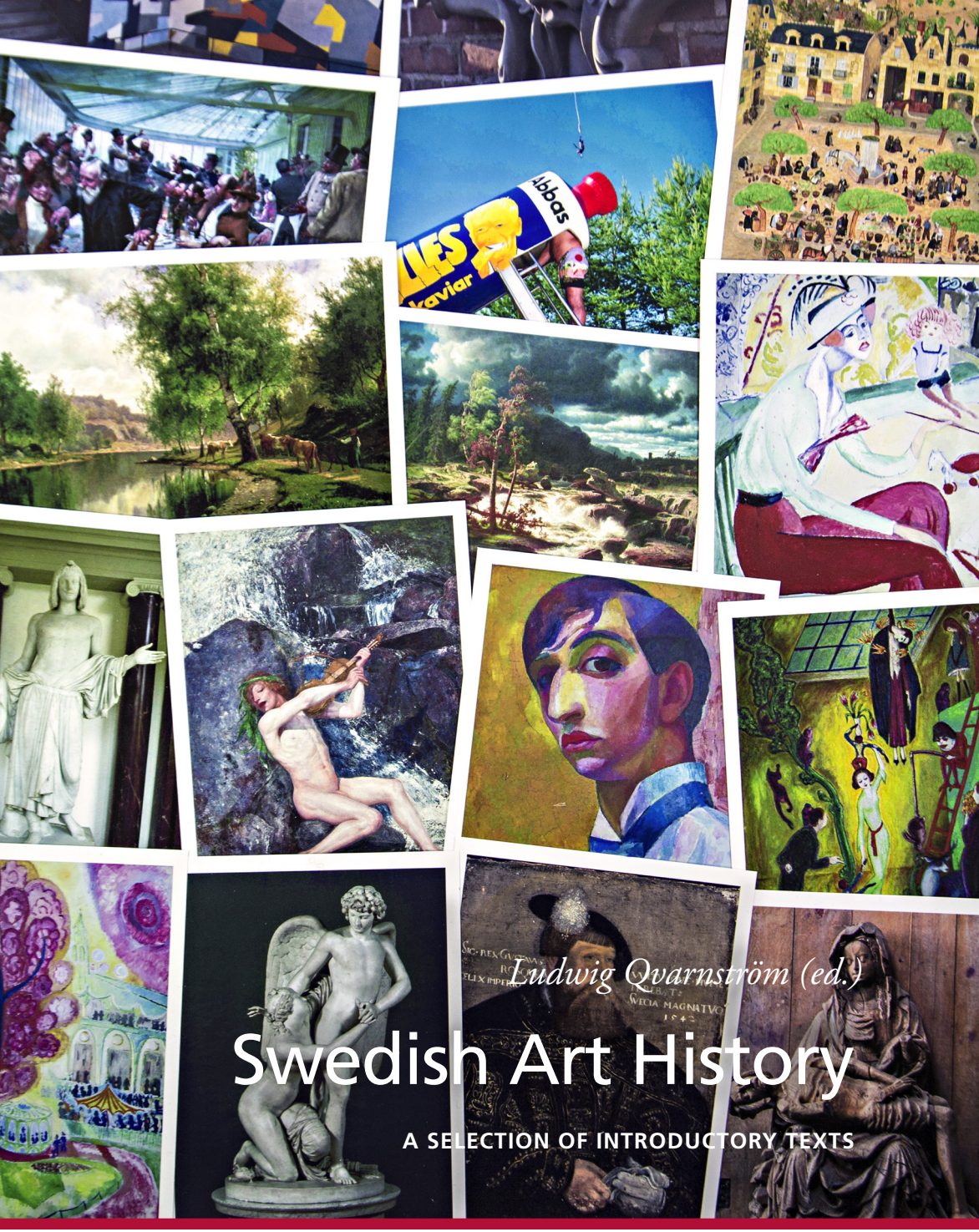

Ludwig Qvarnström (ed.)

Swedish Art History

A SELECTION OF INTRODUCTORY TEXTS

LUND STUDIES IN ARTS AND CULTURAL SCIENCES 18

This is the first extensive overview of Swedish art history written in English. The essays by Swedish scholars of art history present a broad and varied collection of texts including periodic overviews that cover prehistorical times to the 21st century, as well as thematic studies that introduce discussions on everything from political contexts, artist groups and organizations to aspects of gender, race, ethnicity and nationality. The reader is invited to a range of Swedish objects of study from rock carvings, political posters and contemporary performance art to medieval churches and railway stations. Each of the eighteen contributors gives their unique viewpoint on the subject and as a result, *Swedish Art History* invites you into a mosaic of possible readings on the visual culture of Sweden.

We are proud to be able to present this book as an open access publication and hope that it will come in handy in the teaching of Swedish art history internationally. The anthology contains twenty essays and is richly illustrated with 226 colour plates.

LUND UNIVERSITY

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SWEDISH ART HISTORY

Swedish Art History

A Selection of Introductory Texts

LUDWIG QVARNSTRÖM (ED.)



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

LUND STUDIES IN ARTS AND CULTURAL SCIENCES 18

Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences is a series of monographs and edited volumes of high scholarly quality in subjects related to the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences at Lund University. An editorial board decides on issues concerning publication. All texts have been peer reviewed prior to publication.

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Preface

A couple of years ago, I was asked to start a course in Swedish art history for exchange students at Lund University. When planning the course, I soon realised that there was very little suitable literature available in English. The latest published survey text on Swedish art history, *A History of Swedish Art* by Mereth Lindgren et al, is from 1987 and has been out of print for some years. To cope with the situation, I had to obtain permissions to make copies from older books and articles to be able to gather a suitable body of literature. When complaining about the situation in a conversation with Carlos Tuesta-Soldevilla at the International Office of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology at Lund University, he suggested that I should write an updated text myself. He then offered an initial financial contribution from the International Office to make such a project doable. I started out with the idea of a small collection of brief articles that could complement the already gathered literature. The idea was not to write a survey text, but to gather a collection of brief introductions to different aspects of Swedish art history written by different scholars. Initially, several of the contributors to the anthology were invited to a series of seminars discussing possible themes and subjects for the chapters in the book.

During the project, the collection of articles forming the chapters in the book has grown with more and more texts filling the gaps. This has resulted in an anthology looking very much like a traditional survey book, making it suitable as the main textbook for a survey course in Swedish art history. However, there are important differences between this anthology and a traditional survey text. Although the texts are chronologically organised and offer an insight into Swedish art from prehistory to the 21st century, it does not form a homogenous narrative with one text leading into

the next. All contributors to the anthology have been offered freedom in choosing their subject with the possibility to focus not only on their own field of expertise but also their own personal interests. With 18 contributors and 20 texts, there are many voices and special interests represented in this anthology. As the editor, I have, of course, discussed the contributors' choices of subject in relation to the other texts and the way the material is presented, but I have tried to not intervene too much in order to maintain the individual voices.

With an ambition to integrate the development of this anthology with the pedagogical situation in teaching exchange students, the main body of the text has on one or two occasions been used as complementary literature in an English-language survey course and then evaluated.

I want to thank all of the researchers for their contributions to the anthology and I am thankful for the support and constructive discussions I have had with my colleagues at the Division of Art History and Visual Studies at Lund University. I also want to thank professor Britt-Inger Johansson for reading and commenting on the anthology in its final stage. The project to write this book was initially made possible by the generous support of the International Office of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology at Lund University. Further, the project has received generous support from Elisabeth Rausings Minnesfond, Stiftelsen Konung Gustaf VI Adolfs fond för svensk kultur, and Gyllenstiernska Krapperupsstiftelsen. I also want to thank all of the museums, libraries, and private collectors who have helped us with the illustrations for the anthology.

Ludwig Qvarnström

Introduction

Ludwig Qvarnström

Swedish art history. Do we need another national art history in these days of globalisation? Yes and no. The idea of thinking about art in *national schools* is a child of 19th century nationalism and the creation of the large national art museums. Art history as an academic discipline is also a child of the same movement. The idea of national schools as part of a story of western art history, with its structure of a *grand narrative*, was heavily criticised in the 1980s, and in the mid-1990s the traditional art historical survey courses were put into question. However, most introductions into art history are still based on chronological survey courses with the need for survey textbooks. This book is an attempt to meet the need for such a book in the pedagogical situation of teaching non-Swedish students Swedish art history, but the aim is at the same time to maintain a critical view of grand narratives and national schools. One possibility to problematise canonical western art history is to focus on the regional and local histories as part of heterogeneous historical situations instead of as a homogenous national school. Sweden has almost always been seen as a distant northern country, on the fringe of Europe. In western art historiography, Swedish art has never gained much attention and could, for that reason, be a good starting point for a more complex understanding of western or even global art history.

As a teacher at Lund University, meeting a lot of international students, I have experienced a great demand for knowledge about Swedish history and culture, not the least its art. Many of these students have never studied art history or even history before and have consequently rather vague ideas of art and not only Swedish but many times also European history. For

that reason, we have in this anthology, tried to discuss art and visual culture within a broad, but at the same time elementary, historical context. The focus is on Swedish art and visual culture, although many references are made to historical events and artistic expressions from mainly other European countries. However, the question most students enrolled in a survey course in Swedish art history ask themselves is: What is typical for Swedish culture?

What is Swedish in Swedish art history?

Sweden as a nation or a geographical area is probably not as unproblematic as we might like to think. Although Sweden is one of the older nation-states in Europe and has been saved from the border conflicts we have

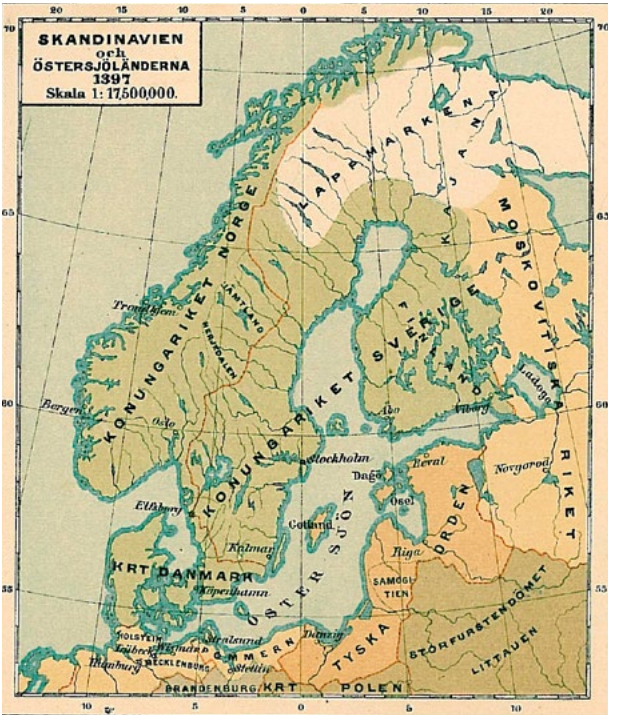

Figure 1 Historical map of Scandinavia in 1397 with the *Kalmarunionen* in light green. Illustration from Selander Hildebrand, *Historiskt Atlas*, Norstedt & söner, Stockholm 1880.

seen in Europe over the last two hundred years, it is a country with a very complex geographical area seen from a longer historical perspective. Sweden emerged as an independent and unified country during the early Middle Ages (in Scandinavia the Middle Ages are generally considered to cover the period from about 1050 to around 1530). Geographically, Sweden first emerged in the area around the three largest lakes – Mälaren, Vänern, and Vättern – and then expanded along the coasts during the 12th and 13th centuries, including parts of Finland. From 1397 until 1523, Sweden was part of a political union with Denmark and Norway. *Kalmarunionen*, as it was called, had been formed as a counterweight to the Hanseatic League, a powerful trading alliance that had been dominating the region economically, and often politically, since the 13th century (fig. 1). In the 17th century, Sweden expanded its territories to create the Swedish Empire, becoming



Figure 2 Historical map of Scandinavia in 1658, Sweden in pink. Illustration from Selander Hildebrand, *Historiskt Atlas*, Norstedt & söner, Stockholm 1880.

one of the great powers of Europe. Scania and other Danish-Norwegian landscapes were incorporated into the Swedish Empire in 1658, at the time when the Swedish Empire was at its peak (fig. 2). Sweden's era as a great power lasted until the Great Nordic War 1700–1721. Although a historical narrative could have been constructed following these changing borders (in which for example artists from western Pomerania in todays northern Germany would have been considered Swedish from 1648 to 1720 etc.), we are, for the sake of simplicity, in this anthology referring to Sweden as the geographical area it has had since 1809 (when Finland was conceded to Russia). Even though Sweden was in a personal union with Norway (separate states with a common monarch and common foreign policy) between 1814 and 1905 we are not including Norwegian art from that period (fig. 3).

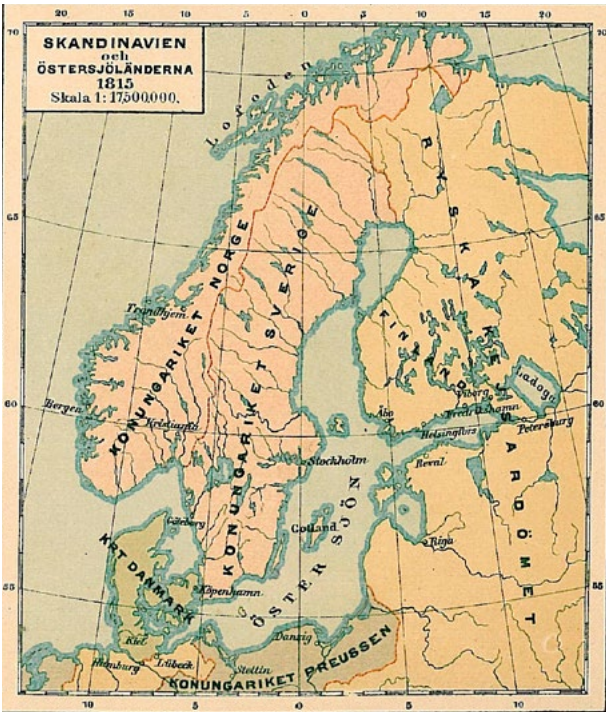

Figure 3 Historical map of Scandinavia in 1815. Norway and Sweden in pink indicating the personal union that lasted until 1905. Illustration from Selander Hildebrand, *Historiskt Atlas*, Norstedt & söner, Stockholm 1880.

This situation with changing borders is similar when considering many other European countries, making the idea of a national art history problematic. Considering the movement of ideas and artistic expressions, as well as the numerous artists working at many different places all over Europe and later the world, the idea of something specifically Swedish becomes further questionable. But still we are talking about Swedish culture and Swedish art as paramount for today's Swedish national identity, and we like to think there is something typically Swedish about it. Of course, the visual culture that developed in the region we today call Sweden is unique, but that does not make it different in an essential way. However, studying art history is a fantastic way of realising how closely cultural expressions are connected to not only the culture in neighbouring countries, but also to those much farther away, and in what today can be considered in a global sense. Studying Swedish art history, with its changing borders and numerous artists coming from other areas in Europe and elsewhere, gives insights into this exchange of a wide range of cultural expressions. The specific materialisations of artistic ideas, which have their root in many places, are what make these visual expressions unique, just as all cultural expressions are unique.

Much of the visual culture discussed in the anthology was created by foreign artists who only lived in Sweden for short periods, but whose works are still forming an important part of our art history and visual culture. This is true, not the least, when it comes to architecture, with several buildings still of great importance for the experience of many cities in Sweden. The anthology also includes several examples of Swedish artists mainly working abroad as evidence of cultural exchange and artist movement not only to Sweden, but also the other way around. This becomes all the clearer the closer to our time we come as part of an on-going globalisation of art.

Canon and micro histories

There is, of course, a canon of works of art in the established Swedish art history. In writing the chapters for this anthology, we have deliberately tried to include less known works of art in an attempt to problematise the canonised narrative. Although the chapters are organised chronologically,

they are not forming a homogenous story where one chapter seamlessly leads into the next. Instead, we have tried to embrace the heterogeneity of history. Chapters discussing a well-defined time period are representing one, among many, possible understandings of the studied material, and in comparing the chapters to each other you will find that they all tell their stories from different perspectives (although political and religious aspects are reoccurring contexts in the texts). Several of the chapters focus on a very restricted material or themes forming a kind of micro histories. It is especially in these chapters that we find less known artworks and artefacts, showing the potential in all aspects of visual culture.

I have already discussed two of the words in the anthology's title as questionable, namely *Swedish* and *history*. The third word, *art,* is of course equally problematic. I have several times mentioned *art history* in conjunction with *visual culture* to stress the importance of visual expressions traditionally not seen as art, such as utilitarian objects, posters, etc. But this expansion of discussed artefacts is relatively unproblematic in relation to the historically changing definitions of art. When considering the visual and material culture in pre-historical and medieval societies, we should remember that they did not have a definition of art in a modern sense. This is something only emerging in the late 14th and 15th centuries, and the modern system of the arts we are accustomed to today is the child of the philosophical and aesthetic discussions of the 18th century.

The ambition with this anthology is to give insights into many possible readings of visual culture and perspectives on art history at the same time as a broad material of Swedish art history is presented. The intention is not to present a thorough story of Swedish art and visual culture, if such a story is even possible to write. Letting the interest and expertise of the individual contributors to the anthology guide its content, we have ended in a story that can be compared with a mosaic rather than a linear narrative. This is probably most noticeable when comparing the kind of visual material discussed in the different chapters. Some of the contributors are mainly discussing architecture, while others are focusing on painting, etc. This is, of course, leading to an uneven history, but that is intentional. I do not believe in history as equal, homogeneous, or traceable – it is always unfair and written from one or another perspective. The chapters consti-

tute, as the title of the anthology implies, a collection of introductions to Swedish art history, pointing at the possibility to continue the studies of a complex history. For that reason, all texts are followed by a bibliography where we have tried to include as many English-language references as possible to make it easier for further reading.

Reader instructions

All chapters in this anthology could be read separately offering an introduction to a brief time period or a narrower aspect discussing a specific material or theme. The texts that broadly introduce a time period are written, in this order, by Björn Magnusson Staaf, Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin (her first text), Måns Holst-Ekström, Martin Olin, Merit Laine, Hedvig Brander Jonsson, Charlotta Nordström, and Björn Fritz. These eight chapters together form a brief introduction to Swedish art history much like a traditional survey handbook. The other 12 chapters are all focusing on much narrower fields discussing everything from specific kinds of objects such as medals (Ylva Haidenthaller) or festoons (Greger Sundin) to a few works of art by one artist in a political context (Max Liljefors and Moa Petersén). Others focus on an artist group, organisation, or artists' collective (Alexandra Herlitz, Helen Fuchs, and Jens Arvidson) or discuss questions of gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality (Åsa Bharathi Larsson, Ludwig Qvarnström, and Emma Jönsson). These 12 chapters focusing on a narrow material or theme are not only intended to give more specialised insights, but also to open up for more general discussions within a pedagogical situation such as seminars or group discussions. They can be used to raise a whole range of questions concerning everything from art as political communication or manifestation of power to art as societal critique or historical documentation.

Titles of artworks are translated to English followed by the Swedish title (if there is one). Names of organisations and institutions are treated in the same way, unless the institution or organisation usually isn't translated, as with Nationalmuseum (the National Gallery of Art) and Moderna Museet (the Museum of Modern Art) in Stockholm. The first time an artist or person of central importance for the argumentation is mentioned, the

name is in italics and followed by their years of birth and death. Although we have tried to use a simplified language, describing and analysing art and other visual artefacts requires a specific terminology. For that reason, you will find a glossary in the end of the book describing the most common art historical terms, followed by an index of artists.

Prehistoric Art in Scandinavia

Björn Magnusson Staaf

The concept of prehistoric art is not uncomplicated. The idea of *art* from a more modern understanding started to develop during the 18th and 19th centuries. It is therefore necessary to look at what often is referred to as prehistoric art with other considerations in mind. There was for example not any art audience in prehistory in the modern sense of the word. The skilful artistry put into the creation of objects, paintings, carvings and architectural constructions filled purposes that in many cases most likely were related to so called ritual practices, being connected with religious beliefs maintaining for example social bonding. The word art is thus somewhat misleading in a prehistoric context, but there were at the same time distinct aesthetic features characterising different periods. It is as matter of fact that study of such aesthetic features to a large degree has made the studies of archaeology possible. The archaeological concept of *culture* is for example closely linked to the aesthetic designs that have been prevalent in various regions in different times. The shared aesthetic ideals connected to the styles of artefacts can be regarded as a most important instrument for creating a sense of belonging within social groups. It therefore seems highly reasonable to interpret transformation of aesthetic styles in prehistoric contexts as consequences of social changes. The study of material remains and aesthetics is consequently a central aspect in all studies of prehistoric societies. The designs of everyday objects, such as pottery and tools, what often is called *handicraft* in modern terminology, will thus also be discussed in this text. A strict division between *handicraft* and *art* will not be made in this text, since these often are intertwined in prehistoric contexts, and it is then quite problematic to do such distinctions. The following text will have a focus on the history of prehistor-

ic art in Scandinavia, but it will at the same time inevitably be a history about the social and economical transformations that have taken place in this part of the world from the time of the Ice Age to the period when Christianity started to be introduced in Northern Europe.

Scandinavia became populated comparatively late in European history. The first humans arrived in what is now southern Sweden during the final stages of the last ice age circa 12,000–14,000 years ago. They were nomads following the vast herds of reindeer that roamed over the tundra covering the land area that now constitutes southern Sweden, Denmark, northern Germany, and Poland. This period in prehistory is referred to as the final Palaeolithic. The Palaeolithic is a chronological term used by archaeologists to describe the earliest phase of human history. Archaeology has shown that the implements used by the first people in Scandinavia show similarities with the material culture used by earlier groups of people living further south in Europe. However, there have so far been no findings of Palaeolithic objects in Scandinavia that can be compared to the so-called Ice Age art of central and western Europe.

The topography of northern Europe was at this time radically different from what it is today. Areas that used to be dry land were flooded by melting water form the Ice Age glaciers, and the sea levels rose. The Öresund strait that connects the Baltic Sea with the North Atlantic was formed 9,000 years ago. The flora and the fauna changed as well, and the former tundra gradually became covered by dense forests. The changing environment offered different living conditions for the people in Scandinavia. Seasonal migration was still a part of the survival strategy, but gathering, hunting, and fishing adapted new techniques. The archaeological material that has been retrieved from this so-called Mesolithic period, 9000–4000 BCE, is far richer than that from the Palaeolithic. There are several examples of both geometrically abstract patterns and figurative motifs carved on bone and wooden objects from this period. A number of figurines carved from amber and in the shape of bears among other creatures have been found in Denmark (fig. 4). These figurines show some resemblance to figurines from the European Palaeolithic, though it must be kept in mind that the objects attributed to Ice Age art are generally more than 10,000 years older.



Figure 4 Amber figurine from Denmark, probably representing a bear, 7000-5000 BCE. The National Museum of Denmark, København.

Agriculture was introduced to South Scandinavia about 6,000 years ago when other socio-cultural changes were also taking place. It has been debated whether it was the introduction of agriculture that changed society or whether it was the transformation of socio-cultural structures that allowed for changes in economy. The introduction of agriculture gradually transformed the physical appearance of the landscape. Forests gave way to cultivated fields and open grazing grounds for domesticated animals such as cattle, and later on sheep. During this Neolithic period (4000–1800 BCE), people in South Scandinavia started consciously and with architectural means to shape the landscape with the help of monumental structures. This tendency has been interpreted by a number of archaeologists as a form of architectural domestication of the landscape. Various types of megaliths such as dolmens and passage graves – tombs built from large stones and covered with earth – are the most conspicuous examples of these in Scandinavia (fig. 5). They are found in large numbers in Denmark and the Swedish provinces of Scania and Västergötland and were constructed in the



Figure 5 Dolmen from Havänge in Scania, Sweden. This megalithic grave was originally covered with earth, 3500-3200 BCE. Photo: Jorchr, GNU Free Documentation License 1.2, Wikimedia Commons.

4th millennia BCE. Megalithic architecture is a very widespread phenomenon in western Europe stretching from the south of Spain to the British Isles, France, northern Germany, and South Scandinavia with structures dating from the 5th millennia to the 3rd millennia BCE. The megalithic tombs of Scandinavia were erected on a modest scale in comparison with, for example, some of the megalithic monuments in Ireland.

Neolithic pottery has attracted a great deal of attention in research, and the design of the pottery has provided the archaeological names of several of the Neolithic societies, for example, the Funnel Beaker Culture (fig. 6) and the Corded Ware Culture (fig. 7) in Scandinavia. The pottery style has also been used to designate specific chronological periods, such as the Funnel Beaker period of 4000–2800 BCE. The pottery from the Neolithic period often shows elaborate artistic decoration, and the imagery of the Neolithic period in South Scandinavia appears to have been fully dominated by abstract geometrical patterning. Figurative images from the Neolithic are almost absent in the south, but they appear in Northern Scandinavia in the form of rock art and as figurines or implements shaped in the form of animals such as elks (fig. 8). The economy in northern Sweden and Fin-





Figure 6 (left) Funnel beaker vessel from Scania, Sweden, 3500-3200 BCE. Photo: SHM 1995-05-15, CC BY 2.5 SE. The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.

Figure 7 (right) Corded Ware vessels from Beddinge in Scania, Sweden, 2600-2200 BCE. Lund University Historical Museum. Photo: Björn Magnusson Staff.



Figure 8 Ceremonial axe head representing an Elk (probably made in Finland), Alunda Uppland, 3000 BCE. Photo: Sören Hallgren SHM 1995-05-15, CC BY 2.5 SE. The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.

land was structured in a different way than in the south, with a higher reliance on hunting for sustenance. The considerable socio-cultural and economic differences between North and South Scandinavia were to be maintained beyond prehistoric times and lasted well into early modern times.

Large parts of Europe transformed socially and culturally during the 3rd millennia BCE. The social stratification increased along with an amplified territorialisation. The appearance of a social stratum for which weapons played an important role in one's prestige indicates that the power structures related to violence changed as well. The long-distance contacts over Europe also seem to have grown stronger and tighter during this period of time, and these processes and developments paved the way for the so-called European Bronze Age. The Scandinavian Bronze Age (1800–500 BCE) is considered to belong to the general European Bronze Age, and the material culture, rituals (such a funeral traditions), and imagery show very strong links to other European regions. The period gets its name from the fact that bronze artefacts are common archaeological finds from this time period. Copper metallurgy had been developed in Europe already during the Neolithic period, but during the Bronze Age the metal alloy of copper and tin, that is called bronze, became widespread.

The Bronze Age artefacts from Europe dating to the 2nd millennium display many striking similarities in design and ornamentation, although regional and local characteristics can also be detected. The spiral motif recurs, for example, as a favoured element of ornamentation both in the Mediterranean region as well as in Scandinavia (fig. 9). Parallels in depicting certain perspectives in figurative imagery, for example, of horse chariots, are found in Andalusia, Spain; in Bohemia, Czech Republic; and in Scania, Sweden (fig. 10). The most well noted artistic expression in Scandinavia dating to the Bronze Age is the rock art. Rock carvings are rare in Denmark, but comparatively common in Sweden. The rock carvings depict a wide range of motifs, and particularly common are humans and animals in various scenes and combinations, footprints, boats and axes (fig. 11). The rock carvings in many cases most likely played an important role in rituals and might have been used in interaction with music, dances, songs, and other ceremonial activities. The rock carvings at Tanum in Bohuslän and the carvings inside the tomb of Kivik in Scania are re-



Figure 9 Neck collar of bronze, Spiral motif. Loshult, Scania, Sweden, 1500-1300 BCE. Photo: Sara Kusmin, SHMM 2006-08-10, CC BY 2.5 SE. The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.



Figure 10 Rock art, representation of a horse chariot. Gryt, Scania Sweden, 1200-1000 BCE. Photo: Sven Rosborn, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 11 Rock art, Brastad, Bohuslän, Sweden, 1200-1000 BCE. Photo: Julius Agrippa, CC BY-SA 2.5, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 12 Rock art, The Kivik tomb, Scania, Sweden, 1100-1000 BCE. Photo: Bengt A. Lundberg, Riksantikvarieämbetet, CC BY 2.5, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 13 Rock art, Nämforsen, Ångermanland, Sweden, 1200-1000 BCE. Photo: Hans Lindqvist, Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

nowned Bronze Age sites in Sweden (fig 12). The rock-carvings at Nämforsen in Ångermanland, Sweden, are also famous, among other things, for the mix of North and South Scandinavian types of motifs found at this site (fig. 13).

The most visible architectural features dating from the Bronze Age in Scandinavia are the thousands of tumuli (grave mounds) that are dispersed over South Scandinavia (fig. 14). The tumuli are often situated in locations where they are well exposed, such as the tops of hills, and they have clearly been constructed for achieving monumental effects. Their frequently dominant position in the topography of an area suggests that they might have served a role in establishing territory and dividing the landscape. Conspicuous tombs with rich burial offerings dating to the 2nd millennia BCE can also be found over large parts of Europe.

The many similarities that can be detected between European regions



Figure 14 Tumuli (grave mounds), Oxie by Malmö, Scania, Sweden, 1500-1200 BCE. Photo: Sven Rosborn, CC0 1.0, Wikimedia Commons.

when it comes to material culture, burial traditions, and artistic expression appear to come to somewhat of a halt between the 8th century and 6th century BCE. Increased urbanization started to develop at this time in the Mediterranean region, and this was to have enormous consequences for economic, social organization, and cultural contexts. Large parts of western and central Europe also changed economically, socially, and culturally during this period, a transformation process that was related to the emergence of the so-called Celtic culture. In northern Europe, comprising an area that today covers North Germany, Denmark, South Sweden, and South Norway, society also changed, and archaeologists refer to this period as the Early Iron Age. The material culture of the Scandinavian Early Iron Age (500–0 BCE) was very different from that of the Bronze Age. There were no tendencies for urbanization in northern Europe at this time, and settlements were all rural. The burial customs seem very modest in com-

parison to the graves dating from the Bronze Age. Although a number of artefacts show some influences from the La Tène (Celtic) culture, the material culture from this period also gives a humble impression. Thus the Scandinavian Early Iron Age has for a long time been interpreted as a period of recession and depopulation. However, recent large-scale archaeological investigations have shown that this period was characterised by a population increase, and the number of rural settlements increased. It appears, instead, that changes in the style of art and architecture reflected changes in the social structure of society from a more aristocratically dominated to a more egalitarian tribal society. The differences in social structure and settlement pattern might have been one of the reasons for why the Roman Empire never followed through with conquering northern Europe.

The Roman Empire, which had settled its border with the Germanic area in northern Europe along the river Rhine in the very beginning of the 1st century CE, was to have a large impact on the societies to the north. There are many examples of imported artefacts from the Roman Empire that have been found in Scandinavia, which also encompassed the Germanic area, including glass beakers, vessels for wine drinking, coins, weapons, and figurines. These artefacts probably reached Scandinavia through trade, as diplomatic gifts, or as looted goods. Scandinavians also appear to have served in the Roman auxiliary forces along the Rhine, which meant that there were individuals with direct contact to Roman society. Imported Roman goods have been found in a large number of high-status graves in Scandinavia dating to the 2nd–5th centuries CE. The social structure in Scandinavia appears to have become more stratified from the 1st century CE and onwards, which has been interpreted as a consequence of the increasing interaction with the Roman Empire. Roman design also had an impact on the material culture and design in Scandinavia. Scandinavian gold bracteates show how Roman motifs were picked up but given quite different forms and shapes (fig. 15). The earliest bracteates might have been intended as copies of Roman bracteates, but the later bracteates show a design that makes them very distinct and different in relation to their original models. Thus, these artefacts represent a truly Scandinavian design that can be regarded as a hybrid between the Roman and the Germanic.





Figure 15 (left) Bracteate, gold. Blekinge, Sweden 450–550 CE. Photo: Ulf Bruxe SHM 1993-06-18, CC BY 2.5 SE. The Swedish Historical Museum, Stockholm.

Figure 16 (right) Fibula, silver. Scania, Sweden, 8th century. Illustration from Oscar Montelius, *Om lifvet i Sverige under hednatiden* (1905).

The Western Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th century CE, which has been taken as a starting point for the definition of the following period, the Migration Period 400–550 CE. Somewhat paradoxically, the development of proto-urban settlements and political-religious centres started in northern Europe when the Western Roman Empire declined. The settlement of Uppåkra south of Lund in Scania, Sweden, is an example of such a centre. Uppåkra was a central settlement in South Western Scania that flourished between the 3rd and 10th centuries CE. The site became the object of intense archaeological studies in the 1990s, and the large numbers of artefacts that have been found at Uppåkra reflect the general development of artistic design in Scandinavia from the 5th to the 10th centuries CE. A well-known ornamental design that is associated with Scandinavia during the Late Iron Age is the so-called Animal style. This style is characterized by highly stylized animal images that are often broken up into intricately interlacing ribbon patterns (fig 16). The Animal style and objects from Scandinavia show influences from Scythian cultures in eastern Europe and Asia, but one can also detect elements from Late Roman artefacts. The

design and artistic expressions during the Migration Period in Scandinavia reflect a variety of influences and a mix of different cultures that blended together to form a unique style of expression.

The last phase of the Iron Age, the so-called Viking Age of 800–1000 CE, was politically a very expansive period from a Scandinavian perspective. Scandinavians settled in large numbers in Ireland, Britain, Normandy in France, and in what is today Russia. Members of these populations attained influential positions and contributed to state formation processes, for example, in Russia. These developments were starting to take place at the same time as states were beginning to take form in Scandinavia. The artistic expressions of the Viking Age have clear roots in the designs that developed during the Migration Period, for example, the Animal style. The Viking Age styles also absorbed influences from Celtic forms. Five different Viking Age styles of ornamentation, the Oseberg style (fig. 17), Borre style (fig. 18), Jellinge style, Mammen style, and Urnes style (fig. 19), have been named after the locations of important archaeological finds or architectural constructions. The distinctive Viking Age ornament styles were used as decoration in many different contexts, including on buildings, ships, wagons, fibulae, and on rune stones. The rune stones were in many cases originally painted in bright colours, however these colors have faded over time due to exposure of weather and wind. It has in some cases been possible to make reconstructions of the original colors (fig. 20, fig. 21). A particular form of imaginative expression is found on the so-called Picture Stones that are particularly common on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. They differ from the rune stones, since they normally do not have any text. The oldest of the Picture Stones date back to the migration period, and the motifs often depict ships. The later figurative motifs on these stones often depict various mythological scenes. These scenes are in some cases connected to stories found in the poetic Edda and prose Edda, which are medieval literary works from Iceland and the most important written sources on Norse mythology. The style of the images on the Picture Stones shows certain traits that might indicate a connection to weaving and textile techniques. The Picture Stones frequently have a form resembling to doors, or phallic shapes. It has thus been suggested that the Picture Stones were regarded as doors of perception opening into mythological dimensions (fig. 22).









Figure 17 (top left) Wooden dragonhead in Oseberg style from the Oseberg ship burial, Norway, 834 CE. The Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

Figure 18 (top right) Bronze fibula in Borre style from Hedeby, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, 9th century. Photo: Casiopeia, CC BY-SA 2.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 19 (bottom left) Architectural element in Urnes style from the portal to the Urnes wooden church in Norway 12th century. Photo: Andreas Tille, CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 20 (bottom right) Monumental rune stone in Mammen style (original) from Jellinge, Jutland, Denmark, Late 10th century. Photo: Roberto Fortuna, The National Museum of Denmark, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 21 (left) Monumental rune stone (reconstruction of how the rune stone was painted originally) from Jellinge, Jutland, Denmark, Late 10th century. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark, CC BY-SA 2.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 22 (right) Picture stone, probably depicting scenes from the myths related to Wayland, the smith. Ardre, Gotland, Sweden. Photo: Christer Åhlin and Iris Tiitto, Public Domain, The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.

The Scandinavian design of the Viking Age is clearly distinguishable from other traditions of design in Europe at this time. Scandinavia also differed from southern, central, and western Europe by not having been Christianized. This created limitations for the social interaction between Scandinavian elites and Christian because the Christian religion did not generally allow marriages between Christians and pagans. The socio-cultural differences between Scandinavia and the Christian parts of Europe thus contributed to the development of a particular form of Scandinavian artistic expression, even though there were many close contacts, for example, in trade with the rest of Europe.

However, the Scandinavian social elites had a political interest in increased interaction with the elites of Christian Europe, and Scandinavia was gradually Christianized between the 10th and 11th centuries CE. For example, the Danish King Canute, who ruled over Denmark, Norway, and England in the first third of the 11th century, was baptized after the conquering of England. The political, social, and ideological changes that took place within the frames of the state-formation processes in Scandinavia during the 11th century can also be regarded as a period of integration into Christian Europe. This process was to transform the structure and conditions for material culture and artistic design in Scandinavia and bring it into the medieval Christian European context.

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The Middle Ages
Images and Architecture

Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin

Scandinavia in the 9th and 10th centuries was a territory on the edge of Europe. On much of the continent and on the British Isles, a manner of cultural unity was developing through the Catholic Church, centred in Rome. Though not politically united, but under various secular rulers, the major part of Europe formed similar patterns of architectural and pictorial traditions, spreading through the channels of ecclesiastical and monastic structures. Despite its close contact with the Continent and the British Isles, however, Scandinavia was not yet part of those structures, but remained for a period of at least two centuries in what is known as the Missionary Era. This time period coincides with a major part of the Viking Age, the last centuries of the Scandinavian Iron Age, during which Swedes, Danes, and Norsemen waged campaigns of surprise attack from the sea, raiding targets on the coast of the British Isles and continental Europe and along the coast and rivers of present-day Russia. That activity was part of ancient patterns of expanding power and enriching the clan, not unique to the Vikings but maintained by them comparatively late in history and executed with legendary determination (and success) at the expense of some cultural values. One such raid included the burning and pillaging of the monastery of Lindisfarne on the Northumberland coast during the second half of the 8th century, an event that marks the beginning of the Viking expansion.

The spectacular and violent aspect of Viking activity in Europe represented by their raids is without doubt the best known and most often referenced, but the boats, seafaring skill, and mobility of the Vikings cre-

ated other, more stable and lasting forms of contact. They included trade and colonisation and resulted in, among other things, the Danelaw, marking the territory in present-day England that came under Danish control in the 9th and 10th centuries. Viking mobility thus also became a vessel of cultural exchange. Many artefacts such as coins from the Viking Age in Scandinavia attest to contact with continental European as well as with the British Isles.

Within vernacular visual culture, Scandinavia shared some elements with northern Europe and northern Asia, primarily a tradition of surface-oriented ornamentation based on elongated animal forms, stylised and entwined into zoomorphic patterns that were applied to portable objects of value such as weapons, caskets, jewellery, cultic objects, monumental rune stones, boats, pieces of furniture, and timber buildings. Such ornamentation was included even in the early churches, the stave churches, which were built with vertical wooden elements. The figural elements were invested with meaning, in many cases relating to narratives from the mythology of the Scandinavian peoples.

The ideal of mimetic images, imitating three-dimensional reality, was an unknown concept to the northern European pictorial tradition. It should also be noted that the idea of *art* in the contemporary sense was unknown to prehistoric and medieval Scandinavia, as it was to European society before the Renaissance.

In the early history of the Scandinavian countries, the concept of nationality did not exist. When borders between the states began to form in the Viking Age, Danish territory included the area of Scania, Halland, and Blekinge as well as present-day Denmark, and that remained so until 1658 when those areas were surrendered to Sweden. In the text below, present-day Sweden, including Scania, will be considered.

The Middle Ages in Scandinavia

The period of the Middle Ages in Western Europe is defined by the dominance of the Catholic Church and implies a time span that differs according to geographical context. The beginning of the period is set by Christianisation, and in most areas in northern Europe the end of the Medieval

era is marked by the Protestant Reformation in the early 16th century. Whereas the Middle Ages in Ireland and Great Britain can be seen as beginning as early as the 6th or 7th century, the Middle Ages in Scandinavia are generally considered to cover the period from about 1050 to the Lutheran Reformation around 1530.

Although secular buildings and objects from the medieval era have existed, these have only survived in exceptional cases, whereas ecclesiastical buildings and objects have been preserved to a much larger extent. Therefore, the history of art and visual culture of the Middle Ages as we know it today is mainly concerned with objects and monuments produced for the church. The Catholic Church was the predominant patron of the arts and, moreover, special care has been taken of church property over the centuries, even after the Lutheran Reformation.

Medieval objects were generally made for particular purposes and for a particular spatial context. They were also, nearly without exception, produced on commission according to contracts that specified the details of the work to be completed. Production took place within the framework of a workshop that was organised within the guild system. As with other crafts, a master was in charge of the workshop, employing apprentices and journeymen who were trained and could advance within the system. Some production, for example, of books and textiles, was completed in the monasteries as well as in secular workshops, and women as well as men could act as scribes and illuminators and as producers of textile works.

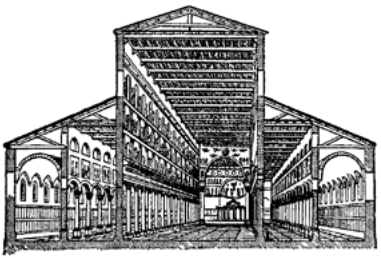
The architectural framework, purpose and style: Romanesque

As the new religion of Christianity gained ground, buildings for worship were required. The early churches in Scandinavia were built in the vernacular Scandinavian architectural tradition. During the Middle Ages, Scandinavia gradually adopted the European architectural style of the time. During the first part of the medieval period, approximately 1050–1250, masonry was introduced to Scandinavia where the vernacular building tradition had previously been based on timber and half-timber constructions. The architecture, objects, and images from the first centuries of the

medieval period in Scandinavia are characterised as *Romanesque*, a category that emphasises the influence of classical Roman architecture during the period from 100 BCE to 400 CE. It developed in Western Europe during the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, and reached Scandinavia in the second half of the 11th century. Romanesque architecture is preserved mainly in the form of churches characterised by round arches, small windows, and heavy, compact walls.

The later *Gothic* style, which is found on the European continent and the British Isles from the middle of the 12th century, was introduced comparatively late in Sweden through the monastic movement and through the cathedral projects of Uppsala and Linköping.

The typical plan of a Romanesque basilica resembles a cross, with a three-aisled nave and a transept, and with an apse at the eastern end (fig. 23 and 24). The round arch windows are small and the facade is articulated with friezes of round arcading, engaged columns, colonnettes, and recesses. The basilicas on the European continent, built in the 11th century, and the cathedral of Lund, the centre of the first archdiocese of Scandinavia, built between 1103 and 1145, show similar characteristics (fig. 25). The introduction of Romanesque building, which was initially focused on the construction of cathedrals and monasteries, required expertise that was imported from the continent, and through those building projects the technique of masonry work was introduced to Scandinavia where parish churches of a similar basic structure were built in large numbers to replace earlier timber



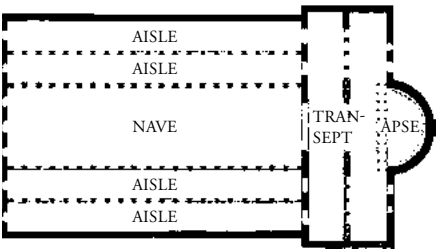


Figure 23 (left) Basilica, section. Old St. Peter's basilica in Rome, built in the 4th century, (replaced in the 16th century). Project Gutenberg – Encyclopædia Britannica, 1911. Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 24 (right) Basilica, plan.



Figure 25 Lund cathedral. Photo: David Castor. CC0 1.0, Wikimedia Commons.

constructions. The smaller parish churches follow the cathedral's basic structure: the nave, the chancel, and finally the apse, facing east (fig. 26).

Within the visual culture of churches, cathedrals, monasteries, and small parish churches – buildings of very different sizes and status and with different intended users – all merit consideration. The visual culture of churches also includes images of very different styles and objects of different materials and design. However, they all had a similar purpose and followed the same principles. Each object had its purpose and function and its intended position in the church interior. The purpose of the room and the various objects was to be a framework and to support the ritual service of mass. Religion was essential to medieval society and integrated into all parts of life.

The sacred space of the medieval church was a space apart, while simultaneously *central* in the world, because the medieval mind recognized nothing in the world as completely secular in the sense of not being part of God's realm. There are several ways of creating the sense of being in a



Figure 26 Romanesque parish church, nave towards the east with chancel arch and side altar niches. Interior of Borrie church, Scania. Photo: Lennart Hildeman.

world apart – in heaven – in the use of light, colour, dimensions, imagery, acoustics, sound, and smell. The room relates primarily not to the world outside but rather to all other churches, each pointing to the same place: heaven. They are each thought of as a microcosm with its own inner logic, and simultaneously a part of heaven on earth.

The interior of a medieval church consists of a nave, where the congregation is placed during the services, and the chancel, facing east and in most cases ending in a semi-circular apse. This is the location of the main altar, where the priest celebrates mass and the choir stands during the service. This is also the liturgical centre of the church – the crucial requirement that makes the room a sacred space. Main altars could have an altar frontal – an adorned altar front with figural representations from the life of Christ or related themes. In the Romanesque church, the border between the chancel and the nave is marked by a triumphal arch dividing the room, with side altars against the eastern wall of the nave.

The baptismal font is situated in the western part of the nave, close to the entrance, in a position that equated the entrance into the church space to that of a child being baptised with his entrance into the Christian community. The greater majority of baptismal fonts in Scandinavia were produced in the 12th and early 13th centuries, after a reform that gave responsibility for baptism to the parish priests rather than the bishop, as had previously been the case. Following that period, wealthy congregations, cathedrals, and possibly monasteries commissioned new, Gothic fonts. In most cases, however, the Romanesque ones continued to serve their purpose, and were used throughout and after the Middle Ages. Romanesque fonts were decorated with polychrome reliefs, in many cases with figural scenes from biblical narratives or symbolism. In most cases, however, the colour has worn away with time and the elements (fig. 27).

Another type of object that had its place in the church interior was wooden sculpture that, in many cases, was intended for the altars. Images of Mary and the Christ child were placed on the northern side altar, and other images of saints on the southern side of the altar where the patron saint of the church would be expected to be depicted. The choice of the northern side for the Virgin relates to the idea of Christ being present on the altar in the Eucharist or, alternatively, Christ on the cross in the triumphal arch, in which cases she would be placed to his right facing the congregation. Large crucifixes were most frequently situated in the triumphal arch, where they formed a focal point for the attention of the congregation during mass when people faced the chancel. However, crucifixes could also be placed on the altar or in other positions in the interior. A Romanesque crucifix is recognised by the standing position of Christ, triumphant over death, appearing unscathed by torture and attached to the cross with four nails, one in each hand and one in each foot. He wears a regal crown and is normally dressed in a knee-long, sometimes ornate, loincloth (fig. 28).

During the Romanesque era, mural paintings adorned many churches, remains of which are preserved mainly in the apses and chancel areas. The most common theme, consistently placed in the apse above the main altar, is the Christ in Glory, the *Majestas Domini*, showing Christ as the Lord with a cross halo, holding a book – the Gospel – and blessing the viewer while seated on a rainbow and surrounded by a mandorla and four winged



Figure 27 Romanesque baptismal font, Tryde church, Scania, 12th century. Photo: Lennart Karlsson, The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.





Figure 28 (left) Romanesque crucifix, Tryde, Scania, 12th century. The image was originally attached to a wooden cross. Photo: Katarina Nimmervoll, The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.

Figure 29 (right) Christ in Glory, Majestas Domini, Vinslöv church, Scania, 12th century. Photo: Lennart Karlsson, The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.

creatures symbolising the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This is one of the early themes adopted from the general European iconographic tradition in its form and in the position in the apse of the churches found throughout Europe in the Romanesque era (fig. 29). Another such theme is the Last Judgment.

The Late Middle Ages: Gothic

Gothic architecture was introduced into Sweden through monastic influences and through the cathedral projects. The Scandinavian archdiocese was subdivided in the 13th century with the centre of the new Swedish archdiocese in Uppsala, where a new cathedral was planned according to the prevailing French Gothic style, known at the time as *opus modernum*, *opus novum*, or *opus francigenum* (modern, new, or French work).

The Gothic style has its roots in *Ile de France*, the renovation project for the French king in the Abbey church of Saint-Denis by the Abbot Suger in 1137–1144. What we call Gothic architecture is based on some basic ideas concerning height, light, and vaults for the creation of interiors. The intention was to create spacious, high rooms filled with a different light, the

light of God. Light was regarded as the manifestation of God, and by letting the light in through stained glass the light became visible as colour. In order to make large windows possible, the weight of the vaults had to be lifted from the walls. This was accomplished through the introduction of a buttress system that interacted with the pointed rib vaults, shifting weight from the vaults away from the walls.

The advent of the Gothic church in the cathedral projects of the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries in Europe is generally explained with reference to three factors: firstly, the pointed arch that broke the previously tested round-arch structures of barrel vaulting and redistributed the weight and stress within the structure; secondly, the ribbed vault that focused the weight on the ribs and made it possible to minimize the weight of the total vault; and thirdly, the exterior support system of buttresses connected to the support points in the corners of the vaults by flying buttresses. The point of this skeleton-like structure was to create a high, spacious room filled with light streaming in through large windows of stained glass.

The fundamental idea of the Gothic church is, therefore, to create the *interior*; it is the individual in the room, in confrontation with the sacred space of the room, that is the centre of attention. The exterior buttress systems, whether containing flying buttresses or not, are in fact secondary, despite in many cases being highly decorated and decorative in their sculptural and ornamental glory. The American sociologist Robert Scott, author of *The Gothic Enterprise,* a book reflective of his longstanding fascination with Salisbury Cathedral, has likened the Gothic cathedral (in general) to 'an elaborately designed sweater' turned inside out. The pattern on the outside of the cardigan is the sought-after result, while the inside has all the constructive elements showing – intriguing and interesting as they may be – that they are not the primarily sought-after result. In a similar way the Gothic cathedral, in principle, has its paramount purpose in creating a specific kind of room, with the constructive elements on the outside serving to create the interior result.

While the cathedral in Uppsala was being built, another Gothic cathedral was built in Linköping as the centre of a secondary diocese encompassing a large portion of southern Sweden (fig. 30). Lund remained at that point the centre of the archdiocese of Denmark. The realm under the re-

sponsibility of the bishop of Linköping included, among other areas, the island of Gotland, strategically located in the Baltic Sea and an important factor in the expansion of Baltic trade. As a consequence of cultural influences, as well as of the economic development on the island, a large number of building projects were initiated to replace the many Romanesque churches on the comparatively densely populated island. Many of the projects were finished while others were abandoned due to a general lack of economic growth in the 14th century, leaving large Gothic chancels connected to small, narrow naves (fig. 31).

Parish churches were in some areas replaced by Gothic buildings, entirely rebuilt and characterised by open space, with the chancel and the nave combined into a single room that had presumably been divided only by a wooden screen that has since been removed. The Gothic parish churches can be found mainly on Gotland, in central Sweden, and were also built during the colonisation along the Norrland coast of northern Sweden.



Figure 30 Linköping cathedral. Interior of the nave towards the east. Photo: Bernt Fransson. CC A-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 31 Garde church, Gotland. Exterior. Photo: Håkan Svensson, GNU Free Documentation License 1.2, Wikimedia Commons.

Romanesque churches underwent changes, particularly in the 14th and 15th century in what was then Denmark and southern Sweden, in the direction of the Gothic style, including enlarged windows and new vaults replacing the previously existing wooden ceilings and open trusses. The new Gothic churches as well as the renovated Romanesque ones were given porches or narthexes as spaces between the exterior and the sacred space of the interior (fig. 32).



Figure 32 Gothic parish church. Härkeberga church, Uppland. Exterior. Photo: Kevin Cho, CC A-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons.

During the Gothic era, in the 14th and 15th centuries, urban culture developed and the comparatively rural countries of Scandinavia were incorporated into the trading systems of Europe, mainly by sea. In northern Europe, the dominant force was the Hanseatic League centred in Lübeck in present-day northern Germany and active in the Baltic and along the North Sea coasts. With improved communications that followed, towns grew and building techniques developed according to the patterns of the Hansa area. Masonry techniques were enriched by the use of brick, a material that was also preferred by the Franciscan and Dominican friars who belonged to the new urban movement within monastic culture and arrived in the growing towns and established themselves among the urban population.

The typical urban house of the late medieval type that reaches Scandinavia was in most cases a high, narrow building containing workshops for craftsmen, shops for selling products, and the living quarters of the craftsmen/tradesmen and their families and employees. The buildings developed ornamental, stepped gables – the narrow sides of the buildings – facing the



Figure 33 Jörgen Kock's house, Malmö, ca 1510. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

street to allow space for as many houses as possible in the desirable commercial quarters of the city (fig. 33).

Images and objects

The interiors of buildings change according to their uses. In parts of Europe where the Gothic movement was developed to its highest extent, with the prominence of walls minimised, murals lost their important positions as the predominant decorations of the sacred room as paintings were replaced by stained glass. In Scandinavia, however, this development did not entail such consequences. In most cases, even when the windows are comparatively large or, in the case of renovation projects, enlarged, enough of the walls remained for the murals to dominate the room and interact with paintings in the vaults. Today only a portion is preserved of what once was because many of the decorations were painted over after the Reformation, but enough remains to allow for a sense of what it was like. The Lutheran Reformation was comparatively tolerant where images were concerned, and consequently there is no evidence to indicate that the Reformation caused any major iconoclasm in Scandinavia. Some wall paintings were even completed within the framework of the Lutheran Church.

Mural painting from the later Middle Ages differed from that of the Romanesque period in style, themes, narrative structures, and extension in space. The most frequent motif, the Christ in Glory, was replaced by the image of the Trinity: God the Father, holding Christ the Son on the cross in front of him, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The number of different motifs increased and narrative structures were developed, and sequences showing the events around the birth of Christ and the Passion (the suffering, death, and resurrection) of Christ, as well as saints' legends, became frequent themes in late medieval iconography.

Another form of image that developed in the late Middle Ages, and retained an important position in the church interior, was wood carving. The late medieval crucifix evolved to depict the suffering Christ rather than the triumphant Christ. The characteristic late medieval crucifix shows Christ hanging, with his head falling to one side, and attached to the cross by three nails, emaciated, bleeding from being whipped, and wearing a



Figure 34 Late Gothic crucifix, Havdhem, Gotland, second half of the 15th century. Photo: Lennart Karlsson, The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.

crown of thorns. The images of the suffering of Christ were developed in order to stimulate empathy as an important component of individual worship, of taking part in Christ's suffering, with an increasing interest in the individual and his or her inner spiritual life (fig. 34).

An increased variety of saints can be seen in images intended for altars, particularly side altars dedicated to different saints. During the Gothic era, the more frequent form of altarpiece for the main altars was a retable or reredos in the form of a *triptych* or a *polyptych* consisting of a corpus with wings attached by hinges and containing woodcarving. The most frequent themes for the scenes in the corpus were Christ and Mary as king and queen of heaven (as in the early example in the cathedral of Lund from 1398) and in the 15th century the Annunciation (the archangel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to give birth to Christ), the birth of Christ, and the crucifixion. The wings of the altarpiece sometimes included images relating to the scene of the corpus or contained rows of saints, and on the backs of the wings were paintings of different motifs or themes.

The wings could be opened or closed according to the time of year. During the fasting periods before Christmas and Easter they would be closed, to be opened on Easter Sunday to reveal the polychrome and gilt inside of the triptych. A more elaborate form was the polyptych, such as can be seen in the parish church of the village of St. Olof or in Helsingborg St. Mary, with an extra pair of wings to give further options for display. In Helsingborg St. Mary, the open altarpiece depicts the birth of Christ with its surrounding sequence (fig. 35), and when closed it shows the passion of Christ. The same theme occurs in the closed altarpiece of St. Olof, whereas the open altarpiece shows the crucifixion and rows of saints (fig. 36 and 37).

There was generally an increased focus on the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ, in the late Middle Ages in connection with a certain emphasis on the humanity of Christ, as opposed to the divine side of Christ. Because it is crucial to the idea of salvation that Christ actually died as a human in his sacrifice for mankind, in order to be resurrected, the human side of Christ was seen as particularly important and during the late Middle Ages pictures were employed to emphasise Jesus as a human being who was born, had a mother and a family, and suffered and died as a human. In this context, the images of Jesus and his mother are important. In addition to





Figure 35 (left) Helsingborg, St. Maria, Retable, open, 15th century. Photo: Fred J, CC BY-SA 1.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 36 (right) St. Olof, Scania, Retable, closed, 15th century. Photo: Kulturmiljöbild, Riksantikvarieämbetet, Public Domain.

scenes of Jesus' birth and childhood, new themes intended to stimulate empathy in the beholder gained ground, including the *Pietà*, the Virgin Mary with the dead Christ in her lap, which was created in the 14th century on the European continent as a counter image to that of the Virgin with the Christ child (fig. 38).

After the Lutheran Reformation, the interiors of churches exhibited gradual changes. With the increased emphasis on the Word and the sermon within the service, the emphasis in the church interior shifted from the altar(s) to the pulpit and, consequently, the pulpit was developed as a focus of attention within the visual programme of the church. The arrangements for seating during the long sermons were organised accordingly, as permanent rows of pews. The side altars were removed, along with the wooden sculpture belonging to them. Although the Lutheran Reformation was not in principle aniconic or iconoclastic, images were restricted owing to the risk that they would become subject to worship in themselves, something that had also been addressed by the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. Images depicting saints or intended for particular cultic uses were prohibited, and images were treated solely as a pedagogic instrument by the Lutheran Church.

Many of the medieval churches were preserved, used, and renovated, particularly in rural areas, whereas some new churches were built in the



Figure 37 St. Olof, Scania, Retable, open, 15th century. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.



Figure 38 Pietà from unknown church, 15th century, Lund University Historical Museum. Photo: Lennart Karlsson, The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm.

larger towns. With the increasing populations in the 18th and 19th centuries, churches were expanded or old ones replaced with new buildings, embodying the requirements and aesthetic ideals of the 19th century.

The murals were covered, in many cases as late as in the 18th century, while during the late 19th and 20th centuries murals were again uncovered and restored, and in the early restoration projects quite often extensively repainted. Wood carvings had, in many cases, been taken out of use and removed to museums, though many medieval altarpieces and crucifixes remain *in situ*. Baptismal fonts, particularly in the rural churches, are in most cases preserved and still employed. The medieval churches of Scandinavia thus remain in use and have gradually adjusted to the changing times over the course of their long histories. They form part of the landscape and bear witness to the lives of generations of people and their conditions, their building and pictorial traditions, and their hopes and fears over the centuries.

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From Visions of Heaven to Christian Empathy

Murals in Medieval Church Interiors

Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin

Mural paintings adorned many – maybe most – medieval churches. In the Romanesque period, during the 12th and 13th centuries, the eastern parts of the church interior, which includes the chancel area, particularly the apse, and possibly the eastern parts of the nave, would have been given priority where murals were concerned. Later, the construction of secondary ribbed vaults in the interior, something that became a general tendency in the 14th and 15th centuries, resulted in repainting in many Romanesque churches, since parts of the walls were hidden behind the secondary vaults. During this period, the entire church interior would have been covered with paintings – chancel, nave, and in some cases even the porches, and the secondary vaults as well as the walls.

The iconography – the motifs – of the pictorial programmes are similar throughout Western Europe, and focused on the New Testament, whereas the Old Testament is used as support for the New Testament themes. From the Old Testament, the motifs from Genesis, especially the story of Adam and Eve, are particularly well established, and relate to the life conditions of medieval people. Images of saints relate as models for medieval people and as communicators or conveyors between human beings and God. The pictorial tradition revolves around a canon of scenes, particularly from the events around the birth of Christ and his suffering, death and resurrection. There are also images of Christ outside time, as almighty ruler or as judge

at the Last Judgment.

The different motifs vary in frequency and design at different periods, and can each be found in different parts of the church interior. The murals were part of an entire setting in each church interior – they interacted with other images, most obviously wooden sculpture, placed in different positions in the room. In this chapter, we will look closer at three medieval church interiors. From a wide field of murals in different categories of churches, from different periods and with different pictorial programmes, a few examples from various periods of the Middle Ages, all situated in Scania, have been chosen. The themes they represent are closely related to the idea of sacred space as a space apart from the secular world, created through, among other means, the murals, and the interaction with the spectator. In the following, a central question is what kind of room is constructed through the images, and what kind of response and interaction is expected or intended from the people in the room.

The vision of Heaven: the chancel in Vä

The interior of Vä church in north-eastern Scania, built in the 12th century, originally consisted of a nave and a chancel with an apse in the eastern wall. The preserved murals are focused in relation to the main altar – above the altar, in the chancel, in the triumphal arch between the nave and chancel, and on the eastern wall of the nave, where a now virtually indiscernible Last Judgment-scene has been identified. There are also, in the chancel, fragments of the images of two donors, people who would have funded the murals, and possibly made other donations to the church in question; one of the donors in Vä has been identified as the Danish king at the time of the execution of the paintings.

In the apse is the Christ in Glory, the Majestas Domini, above the altar, showing a vision of Christ in Heaven, surrounded by the winged creatures from the Book of Revelations, also known as the symbols of the four evangelists (fig. 39). He is seated on a rainbow, surrounded by an almond-shaped halo, a mandorla, and holding a book, which means the Word of God, and giving the sign of blessing. The motif, the Christ in Glory, is very frequent-



Figure 39 Vä church, Christ in Glory. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

ly used in the Romanesque era, in the easternmost parts of church interiors, in manuscripts, on baptismal fonts, and on altar frontals. It corresponds closely with a text from chapter 4 in the Book of Revelations in the New Testament, where a vision of Heaven with God on his throne is described:

> […] there before me was a throne in Heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne […] around the throne were four living creatures […] The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings […]

The image in Vä corresponds particularly well to this description, since the four creatures actually have six wings, something that is not always the case in the rendering of the motif, which is the image of Christ outside of time, at one with God.



Figure 40 Vä church, the barrel vault of the chancel. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

Christ in Glory is the image that is to be expected in a Romanesque church in this spatial context – however, in Vä, which is a royal church linked to the Danish king, and presumably built and designed with economic support from the king and hence with access to economic, artistic and theological skills, knowledge and resources far above the average parish church, the motif has been expanded to the barrel vault of the chancel, which is covered with angels and saints against the dark blue background of heaven (fig. 40). There are Seraphim (with six wings) at the top, and Cherubim and, in the rows below these, there are also saints. They are all holding texts from *Te Deum Laudamus*, thus praising God (that is Christ) in front of his throne in eternity. Through the presence of the images, the chancel becomes a visible reference to Heaven, and the angels praising God against the dark blue background vividly suggest to the medieval congregation a presence of the Heavenly hosts to connect to in their own praise during mass in the medieval church.

The interior setting that the murals formed part of, consisted of the architecture of the room and images in different materials, made for and placed in particular positions in the room. The interior objects were placed in relation to the main altar in the chancel and the triumphal arch. For instance, in a church like Vä, the main altar would have had an adorned altar frontal; it is also likely that there would have been a monumental crucifix, and among the liturgical objects used at the altar, an aquamanile for ritual hand washing, in the form of a medieval knight, has been preserved. Furthermore, in the nave, wooden sculpture on the side altars and the presumably polychrome baptismal font will have contributed to the setting. This interior setting, albeit above average in size and quality, together formed the basic Romanesque parish church and its inventory.

Gothic space: Sankt Olof

During the later Middle Ages, many of the Romanesque churches were adjusted to new ideals, while in other instances new buildings were erected to replace their predecessors. The changes can for the main part be seen as adaptations to the Gothic movement, which from the 12th century gains



Figure 41 St. Olof church, the nave towards the east. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

ground on the continent and in Britain. Its main principle is, as previously stated, to attain as much light as possible in the interior, and to eliminate as much of the stone or brick material as possible. The basic idea is that God is light, and what the architecture strives to attain is a vision of Heaven, a space that as regards its dimensions, light, acoustic qualities – in fact, to all human senses – makes a different impression from any other space in the experience of medieval people. In Scandinavia, Gothic churches according to continental standards, with complete buttress systems, can be seen in the main city churches, cathedrals, and monastic buildings, erected in the 13th to 15th centuries. In most parish churches, however, the interior is adjusted within the original or extended outer walls, in most cases with secondary ribbed vaults, enlarged windows and widened triumphal arches, as a means to create a light and open space.

In Sankt Olof, a village in south-eastern Scania, however, the adjustment to the Gothic movement took a rather different turn; the small Romanesque church originally built on the site was reused as the chancel of the Gothic church after the considerable extension of the building around 1400, which included the construction of a new nave, porch and tower. The new, two-aisled nave was built according to Gothic ideals – light and lofty, with high, slender columns and ribbed vaults covered with ornaments of organic character, like branches emanating from the pillars and from the ribs of the vaults (fig. 41). Through the interplay of the architectural structures and the ornamental decoration, the interior space can be said to imitate a forest or garden, where the pillars form the trunks, and the vaults, with their paintings of branches and leaves, are like the crowns of trees. In general terms, the church interior in the Middle Ages is, as previously stated, considered a sacred space that is different from the secular world outside, and connected to Heaven. Heaven is frequently identified with and described and depicted as the Garden of Eden which is the context of the creation, according to the narrative of the Genesis, and answers to the original paradisal state of man's innocence, to which humans will yearn back. References to Heaven or Paradise as ways of distinguishing sacred space can be observed not only in Christian churches in the Middle Ages, but also in mosques from different periods, in the Middle East as well as in medieval Spain.



Figure 42 St. Olof church, the eastern wall of the nave. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

Additionally, the walls have vestiges of mural decorations – on the eastern wall of the nave, there are two corresponding images, one of the Madonna (north of the triumphal arch) and, on the southern side, the coronation of St Olof as a martyr (fig. 42). The saint is shown sitting on a throne, with a hovering angel holding a martyr's crown over his head. Beside the throne, a man appears to be kneeling. We have no clues to the man's identity, but he will have been a donor of the mural decoration, and possibly other donations to the church. Normally such a donation would have been given by the local nobility, who were responsible for the maintenance of the church. In this case, the church was a much-visited place of pilgrimage due to its position close to the Well of St Olof, and consequently received donations – small as well as substantial – from many different people of different positions in society. This is one reason why this comparatively large building was erected in this rural parish and given such an up-to-date design. It is highly Gothic as an interior, and as such also planned and developed as a complete interior, containing murals, wooden sculpture, and no doubt also stained-glass windows. Sadly, no stained-glass windows

are preserved – in Scandinavia, very few examples have survived; the largest remaining ensemble of the few that have can be seen in Lye, on the island of Gotland.

On the other hand, an unusual amount of wooden sculpture has been preserved in St Olof, most of it from the first half of the 15th century. These are mainly made for the altars and shrines of the church. There are several different altars in the interior, in the nave as well as in the chancel. These have different status – the main altar, in the chancel, was where mass was celebrated, where the elements of the eucharist were handled, and as such the most important one, the prerequisite for the sacrality of the church. It has a reredos in the form of a polyptych. The ones in the nave are shrines, used for individual worship; those that have been preserved are a shrine to the Virgin Mary by the northern side of the triumphal arch, a St Anne's shrine by the entrance to the church from the porch, and a Trinity shrine in the middle of the room, by the easternmost pillar.

Through these images, wooden sculpture as well as murals, we are given the opportunity to learn more about how the church interior was arranged and used in the Middle Ages, and we are invited to imagine how this and other sacred spaces would have appeared and would have distributed the visitors and worshippers in the interior, and how they would have acted.

Identification and empathy: Brönnestad

In the church of Brönnestad in northern Scania, the contours of a mural decoration were discovered in the 1970s. It has been dated to the second quarter of the 15th century and covers the two ribbed vaults of the nave as well as the chancel vault. The theme of the western vault of the nave is the birth and childhood of Christ, and the eastern one is dedicated to the suffering and death of Christ. The vault of the chancel has images of saints – among female saints, popular in the late middle ages, St Catherine, St Dorothy and St Bridget of Sweden can be discerned. There is also an image of the Virgin Mary, sitting on the ground, nursing the infant Jesus. This is a motif that gained particular popularity in the late Middle Ages, and is known as the Madonna of Humility, where Mary is seated on the ground



Figure 43 Brönnestad church, The Madonna of Humility. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

and thus showing humility and closeness to humans, as opposed to the crowned and enthroned Madonna, an image of Mary that has royal connotations, and elevates her in every respect above humans.

The theme of human connection runs through the entire suite of paintings. The nativity sequence starts with the Annunciation as one of the main scenes of the western vault. Mary is approached by the Archangel Gabriel, telling her that she is going to bear the Son of God. She receives the news sitting on the ground, in humility before the heavenly visitor (fig. 43). The following main scene is Mary's visit to her cousin Elisabeth, the mother of St John the Baptist, followed by the Birth of Christ, with Mary being served her first meal after having given birth, and Joseph in an attitude that can be interpreted as aloofness, deep concern, or simply as asleep (fig. 44). The image of Mary lying in bed, and the baby in swaddling clothes in the manger is not the version of the motif that would be expected in the 15th century, but rather earlier.



Figure 44 Brönnestad church, The Birth of Christ. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

By the time the Brönnestad paintings were made, another version of the birth of Christ was taking over, inspired by a vision of the event described by St Bridget of Vadstena during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1370. The 15th century version of the motif most frequently shows Mary kneeling and the new-born baby in a halo of light in front of her on the floor, as in the paintings by Albertus Pictor in, for instance, Härkeberga and Härnevi in Uppland, or as in Undlöse church in Sealand in Denmark. Mary then seems to be worshipping the child. The present scene in Brönnestad does not follow the general pattern, but can be said in a general manner to connect to a situation well known to the public, of a mother in confinement.

The fourth and last of the main scenes in the western vault shows the Adoration of the Magi, with the child marked by a cruciform halo reserved for Christ, and resembling an actual child, naked and actively reaching for the gift of gold he is receiving from the oldest of the Magi. The three Magi worshipping Christ are of different ages, as is customary in the later Middle Ages, and thus representing all of humankind – the young, the middle aged and the old, who are all united in the Christian church in the worship of Christ. In the smaller scenes in the spandrels, we find the sequel of the narration: the presentation in the temple, the flight into Egypt and a couple of unusual scenes. One of them shows how a child is cured from disease by being bathed in the same water as the Christ-child, and in the other one Mary is sewing a shirt, while the child, still with a cruciform halo and naked, is learning to walk with the aid of a baby-walker (fig. 45). Joseph, dressed as for the flight into Egypt, is holding out his hand to support the child. Both these pictures relate to the everyday life of the medieval people most likely to be frequently confronted with the images – a baby being bathed by two women, a small child learning to walk, while his mother is sewing his clothes and his father watching. The remaining part of the paintings in the eastern vault are focused on the suffering of Christ – from the Last Supper, Christ before Pilate, the flagellation and Jesus carrying the Cross.

These motifs, with their emphasis on Christ's suffering in the flagellation, carrying the cross and crucifixion, link closely with the wooden crucifixes from the 14th and 15th centuries, which are invariably showing the



Figure 45 Brönnestad church, The Christ Child with a baby walker. Photo: Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin.

suffering Christ, hanging, bleeding, emaciated, with the crown of thorns and closed eyes. These crucifixes focus on suffering; they are no longer, as in Romanesque times, meant to show triumph – the late medieval period showed an increased interest in the individual and the spiritual life of the individual. It is believed that by taking part – through empathy – in the suffering of Christ, the individual can take part in the salvation of humankind. The intention is, then, that the individual present in the church should identify and feel empathy, and take part in the suffering of Christ for the sins of humankind. The image is also a reminder of Christ as part of the human world.

The paintings of Brönnestad can be seen as an expression of the will to identify with Christ and Mary. There is the image that shows a small child with his parents, learning to walk with the help of a baby walker of late medieval design while his father is watching and helping him, and while his mother is sewing his shirt. A similar purpose motivates new motifs, emerging in 14th century Europe, and increasing in frequency into the 15th century, the Pietà and the Man of Sorrows, meant to incite empathy: the mother with the dead son, and the tortured and crucified Christ. Another theme, developed in the late medieval period, and frequently seen as wooden sculpture, is the Christ Child and Mary with St Anne, the mother of Mary. This is another expression of the will to identify with Christ and Mary – he died a painful death, but he was also a child, had a mother, a grandmother and lived the life of humans. The images relate to the people for whom the room was intended, and who attended it.

The different rooms relate in different ways to the worshippers, the people in the room, and are created through their images to connect them to the purpose of the room, and to the intended activity in the room. The Romanesque chancel, as the image of Heaven, where the liturgy of the clergy will have echoed the eternal praise of the angels in front of God's throne. The high, lofty, Gothic church situated in the middle of the countryside, by the Well of St Olof, receiving pilgrims from near and far, to enter the garden-like interior and make their way to the shrines within. The little church of Brönnestad, where the narrative of the life of Jesus approaches as closely as possible to the lives of the people attending the church at the time when murals were painted, in order to inspire identifi-

cation and empathy. They are, even when seemingly ornamental and vegetative, never merely intended as decoration, but carry meaning and intention that will have addressed people, on different levels, and according to the station, condition and capacity of their receivers, moved the minds of people who saw them.

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Implementing a New Dynasty

The House of Vasa, Architecture, Portraiture, Power, and Uses of History

Måns Holst-Ekström

When Gustav Vasa became king of Sweden in 1523, it meant not only that a new royal dynasty was introduced but also that Sweden had left the political union with Denmark and Norway that had been formed under queen Margaret I in 1397. The union, *Kalmarunionen*, had been formed as a counterweight to the Hanseatic League, a powerful trading alliance that had been dominating the region economically, and often politically, since the 13th century. *Kalmarunionen* had been weakened by inner turmoil and Swedish dissatisfaction with Danish domination of the union, and after a series of battles and upheavals Gustav Vasa seized power and was elected king of Sweden, which since the early Middle Ages also included Finland. He was elected by a parliament, a *riksdag*, that gathered in Strängnäs on the 6th of June 1523.

Before *Kalmarunionen*, Sweden had been an elective monarchy, with candidates normally coming from a narrow scope of old and influential noble clans. Gustav Vasa was related to some of these clans but was still something of a *new man* in the royal context. His ancestors had only risen to the highest ranks of society with his great grandfather Cristiern Nilsson. It became essential for Gustav Vasa, and his sons, to secure not only military and political power but dynastic legitimacy and symbolic power as well. This was a fate that he shared with several Renaissance princes in the Italian states a century or so earlier, the most famous example being the Medici in Florence. Other well-known examples are the Sforza in Milan or Federico da Mon-

tefeltro in Urbino. It is not surprising to find out that King Gustav's political mentor Hemming Gadh had spent decades at the papal court in Rome and had first-hand experiences of the politics at play there, politics that were immortalized by Gadh's contemporary Niccolò Machiavelli in his extremely influential book *The Prince* (1513), which was dedicated to Lorenzo II de Medici and found in many royal libraries of the period.

In this chapter I will describe and discuss some of the tools used by the Vasa to achieve their political goals. I will focus on two tools of power that have a bearing on Swedish art history, tools that are still highly visible in the landscape and in art collections – castles and portraits. I will take a closer look at some examples that form visual traces of Sweden's first hereditary royal dynasty, discuss possible artistic influences, and place them within a European Renaissance context. I will also take a look at some examples of how architecture and art from the Vasa, and artistic references to them, have been used by two later Swedish dynasties – the Holstein-Gottorp (1751–1818) and Bernadotte (from 1818) – in order to strengthen claims to legitimacy.

In connection with this, I will also briefly discuss the southern provinces in Sweden, especially Scania. Scania remained a part of the Danish realm during the entire period of Vasa rule and only started to be firmly established as a part of Sweden after around 1660. This is also visible in how castles and churches in Scania from the 16th and early 17th centuries remain stylistically connected to the Renaissance style in Denmark, an elegant form of brick architecture much inspired by French and especially Dutch building. Later on, in the 19th century, when, due to a prosperous economy, many castle owners in Scania wanted to rebuild or restore their homes, stylistic inspiration often came from the Danish Renaissance along with the hiring of architects trained in Denmark.

Architecture is one of the most impressive and effective symbols of power that exists, whether it is used to demonstrate corporate power through the building of extravagant skyscrapers or cultural authority through the building of cutting edge museums today, or through the construction or expansion of castles in days of the Vasa. In the landscape of 16th century Sweden, two kinds of buildings stood out, or rather, stood up in the landscape. These were the churches and the castles. The churches, symbols of

ecclesiastical power, most of which had been built in medieval times, demonstrated the authority of the church. The castles built by Gustav Vasa and his sons became increasingly impressive and demonstrated the increase of royal and secular power in Sweden, much like in the rest of northern Europe. In the north, Christian reformist movements like Lutheranism gave way to the creation of national churches outside the authority of papal Rome, and were instead put directly under the power of the monarch. Priests became servants of the early nation states, rather than of the international Catholic Church. This also meant a redistribution of monetary power, from church to king, which was crucial in enabling large secular building projects like castles.

Already before the Vasa, there was in the late middle ages in Sweden – during *Kalmarunionen* – an ongoing struggle between the old feudal nobility and an increasingly centralized royal power. Much of this struggle focused on castles and manor houses since they often functioned both as centres of taxation and military strongholds around the country. Powerful *Vogts*, often from old families, were ruling them in the name of the king or queen. In the spring of 1512 Sten Sture the Younger, then regent in Sweden, took an important step when it came to the control of these strongholds. He succeeded in making many of the castle *Vogts* swear allegiance to him, as regent in Sweden, rather than to the *Kalmarunionen* king. Hereby a step was taken towards independence from the union, a step that Gustav Vasa could build on.

Gripsholm is the oldest of these castles. It stands on the shores of Lake Mälaren next to the small town of Mariefred. The castle is named after its original builder, Bo Jonsson Grip, one of the largest landowners of 14th century Sweden and closely connected to the royal court. Small remains of his castle can still be seen in parts of Gripsholm today. Gustav Vasa claimed Gripsholm as his by inheritance and started building on the new castle in 1537. That it was intended primarily as a fortification and stronghold against both foreign and interior threats is still highly visible in the high and thick walls, medieval style mural passages, and two substantial round artillery towers (fig. 46). The latter were at the time a new feature in Swedish architecture. Gripsholm's heavily fortified character tells us something about the instabilities of Gustav Vasa's early nation state. Apart



Figure 46 Gripsholm Castle, originally built by Bo Jonsson Grip, member of the King's Council, around 1370. Later torn down by Gustav Vasa who started building the new Gripsholm Castle on the foundations of the old one in 1537. It has been subject to several renovations and additions after that but has kept its general appearance since the days of Gustav Vasa. Photo: Håkan Svensson, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

from defense and residential functions, Gripsholm was also to be something of a dynastic and symbolic stronghold, a function that has been maintained until the present. In spite of the fact that Gripsholm quickly became architecturally unmodern, it has continually been used to tie together medieval, Renaissance, and modern Sweden.

In the late 18th century, King Gustav III, who strongly supported the Enlightenment ideas of French philosopher Voltaire, had parts of the interiors substantially refurbished in a Swedish version of the contemporary French neoclassical style. This light and elegant style is called Gustavian and has had a large influence on Swedish taste. One of the most stunning Gustavian spaces that has been preserved is the round theatre at Gripsholm housed in one of the towers, by architect *Erik Palmstedt* (1741–1803). Interested in the modern ideas of his times, Gustav III was also keenly aware of the necessity of dynastic legitimacy and the advantages of referring back to

a Vasa connection along a maternal line that connected him firmly to national history.

Later, through strategic marriages, the Bernadotte dynasty had also created important genealogical connections to Gustav Vasa. Towards the end of the 19th century, it was time for restoration works at Gripsholm. The work was led by architect *Fredrik Lilljekvist* (1863–1932), and the intention was to recreate some of the spaces in the style of Vasa Renaissance. Again, the castle was actualized as a carrier of national history and confirmed as a museum space. The old house has not been used regularly for residential purposes since the days of Gustav III, but it has remained one of the core royal domains.

Before continuing to a Vasa castle that illustrates the change from the need for fortifications to the need for representational spaces, namely Vadstena on the shores of Lake Vättern, mention has to be made of an authentic Swedish Renaissance interior at Gripsholm. This is the bedchamber of Duke Charles, one of Gustav Vasa's sons and later Charles IX. In Swedish, it is called *Hertig Karls Kammare* and it dates to the late 16th century. It is a room in one of the towers, and it has three deep window recesses (fig. 47). One of the niches



Figure 47 The bedchamber of Duke Charles (Hertig Karls Kammare) at Gripsholm, an authentic Renaissance interior from the 1570's housed in one of the towers of Gripsholm. Photo: Hans Thorwid (1996), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

has a bed cubicle framed with wooden pilasters and other references to classical architecture. The recesses also have their own ceilings with inlaid geometrical patterns that set them apart from the central part of the room with its vaulted white ceiling painted with floral motifs. The painted ceiling continues downwards to where the vaulting meets the walls, walls that are wood paneled. The paneling runs along the whole of the room, broken only by the windows in the niches facing the lake below, the large fireplace, and the door where the paneling is crowned with a classical pediment framing an image of Christ. The paneling is divided by pilasters related to the Doric-Tuscan order that frame further floral motifs. The order chosen is the correct one for a male occupant because in Renaissance and antique architectural theory, it is the most masculine one and it is a prime example of how a space can be gendered.

The whole design of the room creates a feeling of safety – with its thick walls – as well as comfort, learning, and spirituality. It is a private and intimate space in the midst of royal grandeur. This space is closely related to similar spaces on the Italian peninsula that started to develop in the 15th century and are described with the term *studiolo*. The most well-known of them being the *studiolo* of Duke Federico da Montefeltro in Urbino, dated to 1476. With the growing complexity and demands of court life in the Renaissance, the need for privacy for the ruler increased all over Europe in the following century. Learning and nature became common motifs in these exclusive spaces, spaces both for intrigue and withdrawal. The room also shows how the Vasa were quickly accommodating themselves to the international demands for royal grandeur. A number of building or restructuring projects were initiated and finished in their time – the old castle in Stockholm and the castles in Uppsala and Kalmar are important examples – but here I will take a closer look at one of the most ambitious ones.

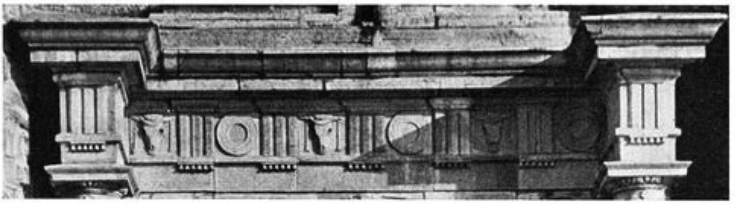
When the building of a castle was started by Gustav Vasa in 1544 in Vadstena – the burial place of St Bridget, the only medieval Swedish saint who had been approved by the papal authorities and canonized – it had several aims. Creating a fortified inland stronghold in an important and fertile part of the country was only one of them. This was important especially in the beginning of his rule when Gustav Vasa still had problems

with insurrections and Danish threats. Vadstena can be seen as one of several elitist satellites spread around the country. But Vadstena was also situated in a historically important region, within the counties of Västergötland and Östergötland, from where some of the powerful medieval clans that had ruled the country came. St Bridget, for instance, came from one of them. Gustav Vasa wanted to put an impressive mark in the middle of this politically important landscape. He, and in particular his offspring, also wanted to build something that was in tune with continental Renaissance building, an architecture where aesthetics and social prestige counted more than defence.

Building Vadstena Castle was a slow process in the beginning. It was not until two of the sons of Gustav Vasa, and one grandson, got involved with the project during the second half of the century that building on a larger scale got started. This resulted in an elegant palace characterized by symmetry, with high two-story wings, amply fenestrated, centered around a central portal with a square tower that is higher than the wings (fig. 48). Compare this to the massiveness and asymmetry of Gripsholm, and the



Figure 48 Vadstena Castle, mainly built under Gustav Vasa's son Duke Magnus 1555–1563. The architect was Arendt de Roy. Photo: Riggwelter, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.



Det estetiska intresset för detaljens förfining är i hög grad utmärkande för Vasaarkitekturen. Här meddelas ett foto av listverket i Vadstena slotts huvudportal (från 1563) jämte en ritning ur ett av Sebastiano Serlios arkitekturverk (från 1500-talets mitt), vilken tydligen utgjort mönsterblad för samma dekoration med oxkranier och runda sköldar i Vadstena. Ingenting hindrar att någon av de initierade Vasasönerna själv satt pekfingret vid denna ritning: »så ska' vi ha det».

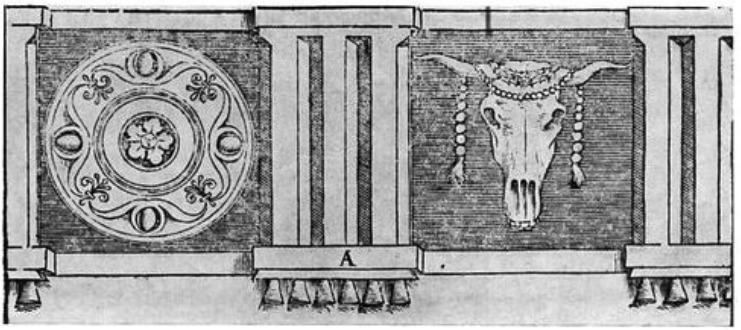


Figure 49 The picture shows how an illustration from the books of the Italian Renaissance architect Sebastiano Serlio could be an inspiration for the works on the main gate of Vadstena Castle. Illustration published in Per Westlund, "Om dekorationsmålningarna i hertig Karls kammare och i kungens sängkammare på Gripsholm", *Fornvännen – Journal of Swedish Antiquarian Research*, 1943, p. 297.

difference between medieval and Renaissance becomes obvious. At Vadstena, the façade, literally and symbolically, is of utter importance and in tune with new architectural ideals. The architect, *Arendt de Roy* (d. 1589), came from Flanders from where much building knowledge was transferred to the Nordic countries in this period. Ideals that had been formed by Italians that came to France and then to Flanders and the Low Countries. During this cultural process, the models from the Mediterranean were adapted to the demands of climate, building materials, and local building traditions.

The Mediterranean origins of Vadstena Castle are mostly visible in the ornamentation, something that the local builder or architect could find in generously illustrated architectural treatises, books that were spread all over Europe. The most important one was that of Sebastiano Serlio (1475–1554). Images spoke, and speak, louder than texts. One example of this can be seen in the main portal at Vadstena Castle. It is hewn in stone, perhaps directly after a print from Serlio, and is following the Doric order (fig. 49). Gustav Vasa and his sons had managed to create important marital alliances with several European dynasties, and Vadstena Castle played a role in housing important foreign guests. It is equipped with large halls, a chapel, and a number of bedrooms. The castle's completion date is usually mentioned as 1620, when the gables, elaborately decorated with sculptures and ornaments in late Nordic Renaissance fashion, were finished.

When we look at the gables at Vadstena and contemporary examples like the Trinity Church in Kristianstad, the similarity is obvious. *Hans Fleming* (1545–1623), at Vadstena, as well as *Lorenz van Steenwinckel* (1585–1619) and *Hans van Steenwinckel the Younger* (1587–1639) in Kristianstad, all had their origins in the same corner of Europe – Flanders and the Netherlands. Many architects and master builders from this region found work further north. The Steenwinckels had come to Denmark with Hans van Steenwinckel the Elder in 1578, and the family became successful architects in Denmark for nearly a century. The church in Kristianstad is one of the prime examples of Danish Renaissance architecture in Scandinavia (fig. 50). It was built to form the visual focus of the fortress town named after King Christian IV, at the northern borders of early 17th century Denmark. The king, a devoted builder, put his mark on both cities and architecture in Denmark through his commissions. Kristianstad was built on virgin land, on former marshes, and no costs were spared when it came to its cathedral-like church with its large windows and the high white vaults resting on slender granite pillars in the interior (fig. 51). The altar was shipped to Kristianstad from Amsterdam where it had been made to order.

In the 19th century, when big landowners in Scania, a Swedish province since 1658, made fortunes on new developments in agriculture and industry, they, and their architects, looked back to the architectural style preferred by Christian IV. Again, it was important to look for historical ref-



Figure 50 Exterior of the Trinity Church in Kristianstad, built 1618-1628. The architects were Lorenz van Steenwinckel and Hans van Steenwinckel the Yonger. Photo: David Castor, CCO 1.0, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 51 Interior of the Trinity Church in Kristianstad. Photo: Orfeus, Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

erences. In a time of budding National Romanticism, regional roots became important. On top of that, many of the landowners came from old Danish families, and many of the architects that were hired came from Copenhagen rather than from Stockholm. Good examples of this regional Romanticism are castles like Kulla Gunnarstorp, completed in 1878, and Karsholm, from 1862, both by Danish architect *Christian Zwingmann* (1827–1891).

In the Renaissance, when the individual was becoming increasingly important, we see two important artistic tools for the manifestation of this new sense of individuality, tools that overshadow other tools. They are architecture, as described above, and portraiture. With this we return to Gripsholm where we find Sweden's National Portrait Gallery (Svenska statens porträttsamling). This portrait gallery has been a museum institution at Gripsholm since 1822, but the first catalogue for the collection was printed in 1755, and collecting portraits at Gripsholm had already begun

in the days of Gustav Vasa. Having a portrait gallery became an important feature of princely palaces already in 15th century Italy, and a central function was that of reminding the visitor of the owner's glorious ancestry and contemporary, equally glorious, family and relations. Portraiture as a genre has been important in the West since antiquity, and there are many examples, both in two and three-dimensional media, one of the most famous being the bust of the Egyptian queen Nefertiti.

Portraits have often served to confirm the social status of the person portrayed as well as preserving his or her image for eternity. Gustav Vasa and his successors were acutely aware of this, and a number of portraits were created during the period 1523–1654. In 1654, the last ruling member of the dynasty, Queen Christina, abdicated and left Sweden for a life as a catholic in Rome. We will take a closer look at three painted portraits from this period, one of Gustav Vasa, one of Eric XIV and one of Christina. In the beginning, we are in Sweden's early Renaissance and at the end we will find ourselves in the Baroque and the century of absolute monarchic rule.

Gustav Vasa had a number of portraits of himself made during his lifetime, and these portraits both adorned palaces in Sweden and were sent away as gifts to foreign rulers in order to communicate prestige and status on different levels. At a time when marriages were a question of politics and economics rather than romantic love, portraits played an important role in the business of finding a suitable mate. Wedding contracts could also be signed by proxy, with a portrait and an intermediary representing the party that was not present. This was especially common within the highest levels of society and made the quality of the portrait all the more important. It was not until the late 18th century in England that the concept of romantic love as a foundation for marriage started to slowly gain ground.

The oldest known portrait of Gustav Vasa dates back to 1542 and is now to be found in the collections of Uppsala University (fig. 52). It is probably an early copy of a lost original. It is a half-length portrait showing the king from the waist upwards. He fills most of the picture with his impressive figure, like a solid block of authority dressed in black covered with expensive gold embroideries. On his head, he wears a black beret decorated with what looks like a white spherical plume. The background is a neutral can-



Figure 52 The oldest known portrait of Gustav Vasa, dated to 1542, by painter Jacob Binck (possibly a copy from the late 16th century). Uppsala University Art Collection, Uppsala.



Figure 53 Steven van der Meuler, *Eric XIV*, dated to somewhere between 1555–1561, oil on canvas, 186 x 104 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (displayed at Sweden's National Portrait Gallery, Gripsholm Castle).

vas colour over which a text is written that explains who is in the picture. Visual attention is drawn to the limited surfaces that show skin. The face is framed by a big rectilinear beard the same colour as his blond hair. The hair is also cut with straight lines, in a trademark pageboy fashion that resembles the one sported by the imaginary Prince Valiant in the famous comic strip created in the 1930s. Gustav Vasa's face shows balance and composure, and his blue eyes seem fixed somewhere in the distance, as if overlooking his domains. Portraits of him have often been compared to those of his contemporary in England, Henry VIII, second king in the Tudor line, and another protestant king with a need to establish authority beyond doubt. He shows the same solid block-like character as Gustav Vasa in many portraits of him.

While Gustav Vasa emerges like a founding father, his eldest son Eric XIV was raised like a prince and heir with all the refinements required. In a famous portrait of him that was intended to catch the interest of Henry's daughter and successor Elizabeth in a plan to unite the two kingdoms, we see a full-length portrait of the king, dressed in the latest fashion and standing on crown-patterned silk (fig. 53). He rests his right hand on his right hip in a position called *akimbo*, thereby following continental court ideals. The portrait is now in Sweden's National Portrait Gallery.

The Vasa period ends four generations after Gustav Vasa, with Queen Christina. A number of portraits were painted of her where she poses in a number of different roles. Some have a more private character, some are regular portraits of state, and others again emphasize her education and intelligence. In the equestrian portrait of her by *Sébastien Bourdon* (1616–1671), from 1653, now in the Prado Museum in Madrid, we see her riding side saddle (fig. 54). She is out on a hunt with dogs and a young falconer with his falcon. The background is an anonymous landscape lacking identifiable buildings or other such features. It is seen from a high position. The queen is the center of attention, her face showing the same kind of balance and composure as her ancestor. In one hand, she holds a raised hunting crop, a tool of discipline. Her horse is rearing but she is clearly in control.

What might look like just the picture of a hunting trip is also the portrait of a ruler, and it follows a well-established iconography of the period.



Figure 54 The last of the Vasa rulers was Queen Christina, here in a portrait by Sébastien Bourdon from 1653, Prado Museum, Madrid. Web Art Gallery, Public Domain,

The monarch controls his or her horse from above, just like he or she controls the country and its people. In art this is frequently seen in the portraits of monarchs on rearing horses and the construction of even larger palaces, culminating with the building of Versailles outside Paris and the numerous portraits of the French King Louis XIV on horseback. In Sweden, which had grown to be a great power in Northern Europe through constant wars, sumptuous palaces like Drottningholm were built. Artists from France and elsewhere were hired to decorate these new spaces, and this laid the grounds for a rapid cultural development in the following century.

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Art and Society 1650–1725

Martin Olin

France and Sweden emerged from the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) as its principal victors. Sixty years of national confidence and cultural ambition followed, with patriotic competition with other European states being the motivating force. For half of the period, from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 until 1680, the nobility, in particular a strong group of old aristocratic families who were often related to each other, dominated Swedish politics and cultural life. Victorious generals returning from the war with new fortunes joined their ranks. The nobility commissioned the construction or rebuilding of countryseats, Stockholm town houses, gardens, and burial chapels. They ordered decorative paintings and sculptures for their houses along with portraits and luxury objects of various kinds. Occasionally, they paid for the building or enlargement of churches. Significant commissions also came from the court, in particular from Queen Hedwig Eleonora, who became queen in 1654 and, although widowed in 1660, continued to be an important royal patron until her death in 1715.

In 1680, the heyday of the aristocracy came to an end when King Charles XI together with a group of loyal advisors introduced royal autocracy. With the parliamentary support of the three non-noble estates, the king enacted a far-reaching restoration to the Crown of previous land donations to the nobility. This process, known as the Resumption Act or the Reduction (*Reduktionen*), left many noblemen in strained financial circumstances, and aristocratic patronage dwindled. Instead, royal and state commissions dominated the arts of the last two decades of the 17th century. An emerging class of newly ennobled royal officials gradually replaced the old aristocracy as patrons. A war with Denmark in the 1670s prompted a reorganization

of the military, including attention to fortifications and military architecture. In 1697, the old royal castle in Stockholm burned, and the enormous undertaking of building a new palace began.

The Age of the Nobility – Riddarhuset

During the final years of Queen Christina's reign, the political alliance was matched by a court culture strongly dependent on the French intellectuals and artists who found their way to the Swedish capital. Most famous of them was the philosopher René Descartes, who died in Stockholm in February 1650. For many, employment at the court of the Swedish queen was a welcome opportunity to avoid the risks and hardships of the civil wars in France known as the Fronde (*c.* 1648–1653). Religion also played a role in many cases. The secular authorities in Sweden tolerated Calvinism, and Dutch and French Calvinists (Huguenots) could settle in the country. Some of the Frenchmen stayed only briefly, such as the painter Sébastien Bourdon, mentioned in the previous chapter, while others, such as the miniature painter *Pierre Signac* (1624–1684), who arrived in Stockholm in 1646, remained in royal service until his death in 1684. The gardener André Mollet stayed in Sweden for five years (1647–*c.*1652), while his son Jean remained in the country.

For art and luxury goods, the important trade route was through Amsterdam, and people and ideas took the same path. The French architect *Simon de la Vallée* (*c.* 1590–1642) arrived in Sweden in 1637. In 1633, de la Vallée, who came from a Parisian family of masons and master builders, had left France for Holland, where Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, employed him as an architect. Four years later, the Swedish nobleman Åke Tott invited him to Sweden, where he settled. The Chancellor of the Realm Axel Oxenstierna asked him to provide plans for Riddarhuset (the House of the Nobility). In de la Vallée's design, a central building block with four corner pavilions stands between two courtyards closed by lower wings (fig. 55). The exposed brickwork of the walls was to form the background to a rich architectural décor dominated by Ionic pilasters with banded rustication. The project shows affinity with French architecture from the early decades of

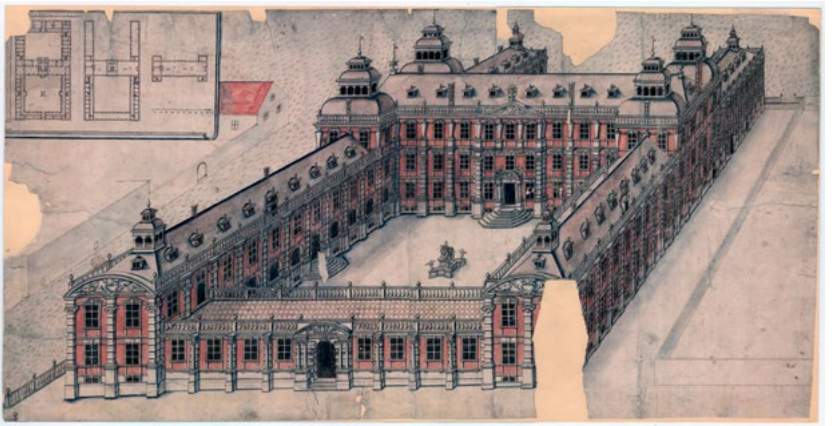

Figure 55 Simon de la Vallée, proposal for Riddarhuset (the House of Nobility), drawing. Riddarhuset, Stockholm.

the 17th century, and it also draws from the printed works of the 16th century architect Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau. The foundations were laid according to de la Vallée's plan, but he would not see his project realized. A drunken assault in central Stockholm on a November night in 1642 resulted in the architect's death a week later (the killer was a young aristocrat related to Axel Oxenstierna).

During the 1640s, work on Riddarhuset continued intermittently. Between 1646 and 1652, the German stonemason *Heinrich Wilhelm* (d. 1652) was in charge and provided the elegant auricular-style window surrounds (fig. 56). In 1653, the Dutch architect *Jost (Justus) Vingboons* (*c.* 1620–*c.* 1698) succeeded Wilhelm. Vingboons made a new design for the façades in which he introduced giant pilasters (fig. 57). The giant or colossal order – pilasters or columns spanning two or more storeys – is a motif inspired by 16th century Italian architecture, in particular the buildings and designs of the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580). The giant order was a characteristic feature of Dutch mid-century classicist architecture, and its arrival in Sweden was of great importance, and it would be adopted in a large number of buildings. The term 'Dutch Palladianism' is often used to describe this style, in which pilasters, triangular pediments, and other classical details are combined with high hip roofs and other northern ele-





Figure 56 (left) Heinrich Wilhelm, Window frame, detail, Riddarhuset (the House of Nobility). Photo: Svante Tiren, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 57 (right) Jost Vingboons, Riddarhuset (the House of Nobility), facade elevation, drawing. Riddarhuset, Stockholm.

ments. In Sweden, however, the style was modified in a couple of respects that are related to the conception of Riddarhuset. One of them is height. In urban contexts, Dutch Palladian houses are often three storeys high (Simon de la Vallée's project had been for a three-storey building). For construction reasons, the projected third storey of Riddarhuset was abandoned. Thus the proportions of the finished building are more horizontal than was originally intended (fig. 58). The second important aspect is the roof. Vingboons' design had a rather characterless hip roof. In 1656, however, the nobles dismissed the Dutch architect and in his stead put in charge *Jean de la Vallée* (1624–1696), the son of the original architect. Partly as a compensation for the murder of his father, Jean de la Vallée had studied abroad with a royal grant and had now established himself as one of the country's leading architects. His inventive roof design for Riddarhuset can be traced back to the shape of lanterns. It consists of a top section formed as a normal hip roof, interrupted by a short piece of horizontal wall and ultimately a billowing larger section with a convex upper part and a concave termination that gives the whole roof the profile of a huge cornice turned upside-down (the Swedish term *karnissvängd* used to describe the form actually means 'shaped like a cornice'). This tripartite roof design was tremendously successful – and it is sometimes considered Sweden's only original contribution to architecture. It was copied in a great number of buildings, in particular country houses. Reflecting this use, it has been termed *säteritak* [manorial roof].



Figure 58 Riddarhuset (the House of Nobility), exterior to the south. Photo: Ankara, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

The decorative programmes of both the exterior and interior of Riddarhuset reflect the self-confidence and militaristic ideology of the Swedish aristocracy. On the exterior, the frieze is decorated with gilt Roman capitals spelling out phrases like *CLARIS MAIORUM EXEMPLIS* [Following the renowned examples of our forefathers] and a quotation from Horace, *DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI* [How sweet and honourable it is to die for one's country]. The triumphant character of the building is further strengthened by the roof décor, which is partly gilt statues of personifications of noble virtues in Roman garb and chimneys disguised as obelisks crowned by flaming cannon balls.

A central function for Riddarhuset was to house parliamentary sessions of the noble estate and other meetings (it soon also became a concert venue). Numbered coats of arms painted on metal of around 2800 noble families adorn the walls. *David Klöcker* (1628–1698, ennobled with the name *Ehrenstrahl* in 1674) executed the vast ceiling painting (finished 1674) showing in its centre the enthroned figure of Svea, the personification of Sweden.

The exterior of Riddarhuset as it stands today was (more or less) completed under the direction of Jean de la Vallée in 1674. Its overall proportions and architectural details are his synthesis, but, as we have seen, were only the last step in a long and often interrupted process. Although it is the work of four different architects, and notwithstanding its twenty-five-year conception, and despite lacking the planned wings to the south, it has

always been considered one of the most harmonious and beautifully proportioned buildings of Stockholm (shamefully compromised today by the passing motorway bridge). It is treated at length here because it illustrates how French, Dutch, and Italian influences came together to shape what became one of the models for Sweden's indigenous architecture in the 17th and early 18th centuries.

Aristocratic patronage

David Klöcker had been painter to one of the leading aristocrats, Count Carl Gustaf Wrangel. Wrangel was the governor of Swedish Pomerania on the German north coast, and it was through employment at Wrangel's court that the Hamburg-born artist first came into Swedish service. At Skokloster, the large Wrangel house in Uppland, are some portraits of the family painted by Klöcker. One of them shows the count on horseback, fixing our gaze, sword in hand (1652). The horse is balancing for a moment on its hind legs, and flags and troops can be seen in the background (fig. 59). The equestrian portrait was a format normally reserved for kings and princes. That Wrangel and his painter saw fit to use it is an indication of the extraordinary social position of some of the Swedish aristocrats during the period after the end of the Thirty Years' War.

From the 1640s onwards, a prominent feature in the interiors of the nobility was white stucco décors. German and Italian sculptors and their workshops were active in the country for longer or shorter periods. Country houses such as Skokloster, Mälsåker, and Ericsberg, and town houses such as Seved Bååts' House (Bååtska palatset) in Stockholm have rich stucco ceilings that give a festive air to rooms and staircases. Churches, however, were not normally decorated with stucco, with the exception of a number of family burial chapels for the nobility. The burial chapel of Field Marshal Lars Kagg (1595–1661) at Floda Church in Södermanland is perhaps the most magnificent example of its kind (fig. 60). The décor is the first documented work in Sweden of the workshop of the Italian *stuccatore* Carlo Carove (active in Sweden *c.* 1666, d. 1697), who was the leading decorative sculptor in the country until his death. Kagg's widow Agneta Ribbing (1606–1685) commissioned the chapel, positioned to the east of



Figure 59 David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Carl Gustaf Wrangel on horseback* (Carl Gustaf Wrangel till häst), oil on canvas, 309 x 316 cm, Skokloster castle, Public Domain, Google Art Project.

the altar of the church. The plan is a Greek cross with short arms, and in the interior Corinthian pilasters support a prominent cornice from which elliptical arches spring. Personifications of virtues – Fortitude, Temperance, Honour, Justice, etc. – stand in niches between the pilasters. The comparative simplicity of the classical architecture, the work of *Erik Dahlbergh* (1625–1703), is contrasted by the exuberance and richness of the décor in the vault. There, putti and a large number of family crests, framed by rich acanthus scrolls in high relief, share the space with stucco trophies – weapons, armour, banners, war trumpets, and further personifications and symbols of faith and death. The impression of the crowded vault is



Figure 60 The burial chapel of Field Marshal Lars Kagg (Kaggska gravkoret), Floda church (Carlo Carove et.al. sign. 1667). Photo: Christer Malmberg.

lightened by the whiteness of the stucco, while the Roman militarism is balanced by Christian symbols of death and the afterlife. Originally, banners and coats of arms borne in the funeral procession were also displayed in the chapel, adding to the richness of the effect.

Elaborately carved and painted coats of arms of aristocrats – sometimes over 2 metres high – were carried in their funeral procession and afterwards placed in the family chapel or in the church, where many remain today. Occasionally, sumptuous funeral flags with gold and silver-embroidered coats of arms in high relief also survive, bearing witness to the conspicuous consumption that characterized aristocratic funerals (fig. 61).



Figure 61 Noble coat of arms for Count Robert Lichton, Kungsholm's church, Stockholm. Photo: Jssfrk, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Nicodemus Tessin the Elder

The architect *Nicodemus Tessin the Elder* (1615–1681) was born in Stralsund on the German Baltic coast (allied with Sweden from 1628 and a Swedish possession from 1648) and began working as a fortification engineer and town planner for the Swedes in 1636. His talent was spotted by Axel Oxenstierna, who employed him to work under Simon de la Vallée; after 1642, Tessin carried on some of the projects begun by the murdered French architect. He entered into royal service in 1646, and Queen Christina paid for his study tour in Italy, France, and the Netherlands from 1651 to 1653. After his return, Tessin had numerous patrons among the nobility, but his most important works were public or royal commissions.

Tessin's Italianate design for Kalmar Cathedral (begun in 1660) draws from 16th century Roman models (fig. 62). The façade scheme with five bays in the lower section and three bays flanked by large volutes and crowned by a tri-



Figure 62 Kalmar Cathedral. Photo: Bernt Fransson, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

angular pediment in the upper section was common in the Catholic world but much less so in Protestant countries. Kalmar Cathedral departs from its Italian counterparts in an important respect – the main, southern façade is in fact the side of the church (which has a longitudinal east-west orientation). The plan is a Greek cross but with slightly extended east and west ends ending in apses. In the four inner corners formed by the cross are bell towers. They are slightly set back from the main façade but appear visually to be part of it. The interior, with its Ionic giant pilasters, is light and spacious.

Central-plan churches

Throughout, Kalmar Cathedral is an innovative but occasionally uneasy compromise between a central and a longitudinal plan. Architectural theorists, in particular in Calvinist countries, promoted churches with a central plan as more suited to Protestantism. The theological emphasis in Protestant religion was on the word of God and the sermon, rather than on the altar liturgy. Because the congregation should be able to hear and see the minister, a centrally placed pulpit was to be the focal point of the design, with pews turned towards it, and a centrally placed, but less prominent, altar or communion table. The tradition of an east-west orientation, with the altar placed at the east end and the congregation turned towards it, was strong in Sweden, and radical central-planning projects, such as Jean de la Vallée's designs for the Katarina and Hedvig Eleonora churches in Stockholm (named for Swedish queens, not saints), were often met with stubborn popular resistance. The end result was almost always a compromise, with the altar at the east end. In most cases outside the larger towns, however, churches were medieval (thus Catholic) longitudinal houses of worship adapted to protestant worship (fig. 63).

An interesting and rare case of the plans of the new Stockholm churches being adopted in the countryside is that of Roslags-Kulla church built in 1705–1706 in timber in a coastal parish northeast of Stockholm (fig. 64). It is based on a central plan with the four arms of a Greek cross extending from the crossing following the length of a wooden beam. A square tower with a lantern rises above the crossing. Originally, the timber was exposed, and the red-painted panelling dates from 1728.

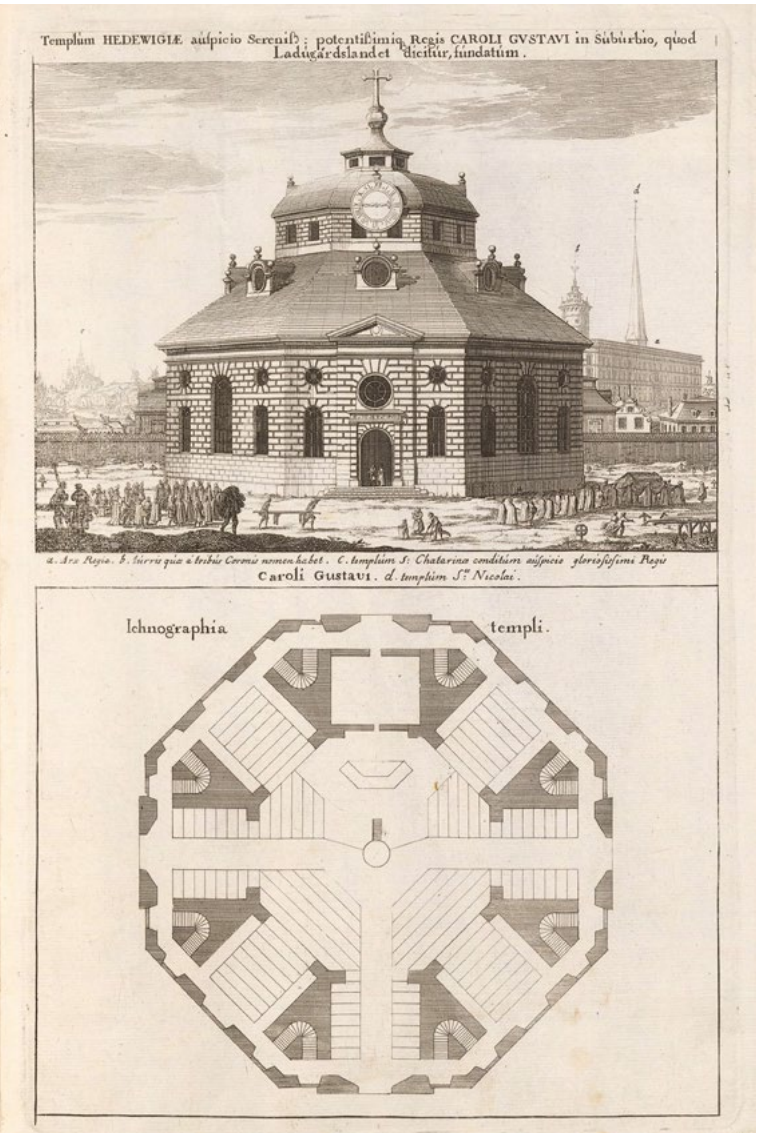

Figure 63 Church of Hedvig Eleonora, Stockholm. View and plan from *Suecia antiqua et hodierna*. First printed in 1696. Engraved by Willem Swidde. The architect of the design shown in the print was Jean de la Vallée. The foundations were laid in the 17th century, but the church was not finished until 1737, under the supervision of the architect Jöran Josuae Adelcratz. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.



Figure 64 Roslags-Kulla church, built 1705–1706. Photo: Jan Ainali, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Suecia antiqua et hodierna

Private and public building enterprises were changing the architectural landscape during this time period. There was a sense of pride, both in new accomplishments and in historical monuments. In 1661, the officer Erik Dahlbergh was granted the privilege of publishing a series of topographical engravings that would be known as *Suecia antiqua et hodierna* [Ancient and Present Sweden]. Dahlbergh was a talented draughtsman and amateur architect with a background as a fortification officer who had travelled to Italy. He came from a humble background, but through a career in the military and in the administration, he eventually became a count and sat on the King's council. The work with the 353 plates of the *Suecia* would take several decades and was not finished until twelve years after Dahlbergh's death. He himself produced many of the drawings. The Dutch artists Willem Swidde (*c.* 1660–*c.* 1697) and Johan van den Aveelen (d.

1727) engraved the majority of the plates. Many of the prints show country houses in landscape settings, sometimes embellished with extensions or pavilions not yet built.

Drottningholm

Drottningholm is the most magnificent enterprise of the period, and it is a noteworthy example of dynastic ambition expressed through art and architecture according to the rhetoric of the European Baroque. The palace is situated on an island west of Stockholm and belonged to Dowager Queen Hedwig Eleonora. An older house on the site burned in 1661. Tessin the Elder's plans (developed 1662–1667) show a rectangular main building block with four lower corner pavilions connected with further pavilions through low gallery wings enclosing two lateral courtyards. Circular, domed pavilions close the composition to the south and north ends, the latter of which is the palace chapel (fig. 65). From a distance, the rhythm of higher and lower parts is highly effective (although it became less so in the 18th century when infills were built on the lower passageways, bringing their height up to the level of the pavilions).



Figure 65 Drottningholm from the garden. Engraving (1690) by Willem Swidde for *Suecia antiqua et hodierna*. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.



Figure 66 Nicodemus Tessin the Elder, Nicolaes Millich, David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl and others, Bed chamber, State apartment, Drottningholm, 1668–1683. Photo: © Alexis Daflos, Kungl. Hovstaterna, Stockholm.

In the early phases of the interior decoration, one particular focus was Hedwig Eleonora's state bedchamber (decoration executed 1668–1682), a room of great symbolic and ceremonial importance (fig. 66). The architectural framework, with gilt stuccoes by Carlo Carove and emblematic reliefs by the Flemish sculptor *Nicolaes Millich* (*c.* 1630–1699), show many similarities with the influential prints of the French engraver Jean Lepautre. Allegorical paintings by David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl refer to the birth and upbringing of the young King Charles XI. The room, now in gold and blue but originally in gold and black, has been interpreted as a dynastic sanctuary.



Figure 67 Nicodemus Tessin the Younger, Stairwell at Drottningholm, drawing, late 1670s. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

The central staircase at Drottningholm is perhaps the most baroque space in Sweden, if that term is understood as classical architecture characterized by movement, illusionism, and rhetoric. The staircase ascends through two stories, and its symmetrical, lateral flights of stairs turning at right angles create a complex space that opens up just before the second-floor level where statues of Apollo and the nine muses by Millich are placed in niches and on the staircase balustrade (fig. 67). In the ceiling painting high above, the radiating monogram HE (for Hedwig Eleonora) reminds the visitor whose palace Drottningholm is. As in the (now destroyed) Escalier des Ambassadeurs at Versailles, the walls of the Drottningholm stairwell are decorated with figures from different parts of the world looking onto the staircase from behind a painted balustrade.

David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl

Klöcker Ehrenstrahl had shrewdly manoeuvred into the position of court painter. The price he had to pay was to serve the royal family with paintings in all genres, from the allegories celebrating the dynasty to portraits, not only of family members and grandees, but also of horses, lap dogs, albino squirrels, and oversize melons from the greenhouses. His heart was perhaps not equally into all commissions, but the sheer breadth of his subject matter makes him unusual among European court painters. Among his most interesting pictures are occasional portraits of non-noble sitters. One example is the portrait of the peasant Per Olsson (1686). Per Olsson was not a poor or insignificant man; he was the speaker of the peasant estate in Parliament, a political ally of the king who gave him rich awards and – the occasion for this portrait – made him a godfather at the baptism of one of his children. He is portrayed in palatial surroundings, but dressed in a dark coat, bending slightly and leaning on his stick with his beard, haircut, and pose following the decorum for a peasant (fig. 68). There is nevertheless a touch of elegance – a glimpse of a red garment where the coat opens, the fur hat held under his arm, and the rather stylish yellow gloves. Ehrenstrahl had a number of students, including his own daughter *Anna Maria Ehrenstrahl* (1666–1729) and the aristocratic amateur *Amalia Königsmarck* (1663–1740, fig. 69).





Figure 68 (left) David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Per Olsson from Gladhammar* (Per Olsson från Gladhammar), 1686, oil on canvas, 206 x 138 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Figure 69 (right) Amalia Königsmarck, *Self-portrait* (Självporträtt), 1687, oil on canvas, 101 x 81,5 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

In the 1690s, Ehrenstrahl painted a series of allegories commemorating important moments in the recent history of the royal family, since then displayed at Drottningholm. The Allegory of the Regency of Dowager Queen Hedwig Eleonora (1692) shows a youthful Hedwig Eleonora enthroned with a portrait of her son, the five-year old king, on her knee (fig. 70). Her child has just been presented to her by personifications of the Christian virtues. With her left hand, the queen touches the helm of state with Charles XI's monogram, indicating her role in the regency. At her feet are personifications of the visual arts – sculpture, painting and architecture, with the latter presenting the plan of Drottningholm – while putti unfold designs for the queen's other building projects. There are echoes of Catholic iconography, with the portrait of the young king taking the place of the Christ child in his mother's lap and the personifications acting in a similar way to saints paying homage to the Queen of Heaven. As in



Figure 70 David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Allegory of the Regency of Dowager Queen Hedwig Eleonora* (Allegori över änkedrottning Hedvig Eleonoras förmyndarregering), 1692, oil on canvas, 353 x 222 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (displayed at Drottningholm).

Rubens's cycle of paintings (now in the Louvre) dealing with the history of the French queen Maria de' Medici, Ehrenstrahl's allegories conflate different levels of reality and project political ideas backwards in time onto historical events. Hedwig Eleonora had not, for instance, played the important role in her son's regency that the allegory seems to suggest. In the paintings, events are shown as if the established royal autocracy of the 1690s were a timeless and divinely inspired condition, with the queen given the consequence due to her within that ideological framework.

Nicodemus Tessin the Younger and the architecture of royal absolutism

The construction of the Royal Palace in Stockholm was begun in 1692. In 1754, it was ready to receive the Royal Family who had camped out in rented accommodations for more than fifty years. Despite a construction period of more than sixty years, the palace is a remarkably uniform structure, conceived and designed during a few years around 1700 by one architect, *Nicodemus Tessin the Younger* (1654–1728). After Tessin's death in 1728, his pupil *Carl Hårleman* (1700–1753) carried through the construction and decoration with great fidelity to Tessin's plans. The palace as built thus diverges very little from the large presentation drawings completed by Tessin in 1704 and engraved a few years later.

Tessin was well prepared for the task. He had been trained by his father, Nicodemus Tessin the Elder, and had been sent as a nineteen-year-old to Rome where he stayed for a period of almost five years (1673–77). There, Queen Christina, who had settled in the city, gave him her protection. He studied and worked with Carlo Fontana, the leading architect of the younger generation, and he also received some supervision by his great hero, the famous sculptor and architect Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini. Between 1680 and 1682, Tessin was in France, studying garden design with the Louis XIV's gardener André Le Nôtre. When he returned to Sweden, Tessin assumed most of his father's responsibilities as royal architect. He designed a garden at Drottningholm in the style of Le Nôtre and worked with the completion of other projects.

A new government agency responsible for public building works and

their furnishings was established in 1697, with the construction of the new palace as its most important task. Its model was the French *Surintendance des Bâtiments du Roi*. Tessin the Younger was appointed its first superintendent (överintendent). The Board of Works (Överintendentsämbetet), would play an important role in Swedish architecture during the 18th and 19th centuries, approving and providing designs for local building projects, particularly churches, in the whole of the country.

The Royal Palace in Stockholm has an almost symmetrical plan (the medieval Storkyrkan prevented Tessin from building a low wing to the south-west). The historical background of this seemingly straightforward building project could hardly have been more dramatic. In 1692, Tessin the Younger had begun construction of the central part of the north wing as an extension of the old castle that had been the administrative centre of Sweden and the main royal residence since the 14th century. Tessin's north wing functioned as a Roman baroque screen, camouflaging the old castle's gables, oriel windows, and lack of alignment with the axes of the street system in the north part of the city. The construction work was still going on when a ferocious fire broke out in the attic of the old castle on the 7th of May, 1697. The fire spread quickly over the roofs, and the old tower with its three crowns, the symbol of the Swedish realm, sank into the flames. In a few hours, the east, south, and west parts of the castle were in ruins. The richly decorated interiors of the new north wing were consumed by fire, but the outer walls were strong and they alone survived the catastrophe.

The council asked Nicodemus Tessin the Younger to design plans for a new palace, now without having to adjust to the old castle, the remains of which it was now decided to erase. Only six weeks after the fire, Tessin could present two plans of the new palace, one for the ground floor and one for the first floor, which were approved by the regency on the 21st of June 1697 (fig. 71). The accepted project thus proceeded from these two plans, and the regency left all of 'the particulars' for Tessin to decide – including the façades (fig. 72).

In Tessin's final design, four building blocks of the same size, three and a half storeys high (one of them the surviving north wing), surround the large, central courtyard. To the west and east, lower wings have been added. To the east, they frame a garden parterre, and to the west the lower,

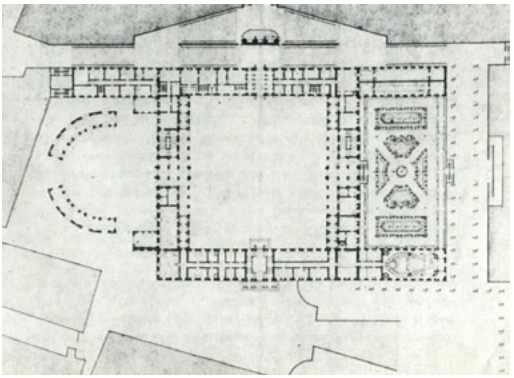

Figure 71 Nicodemus Tessin the Younger, Royal Palace, Stockholm, ground floor plan and situation. Drawing approved by the regency 21 June 1697. Public domain, Royal Palace (Slottsarkitektkontoret), Stockholm.

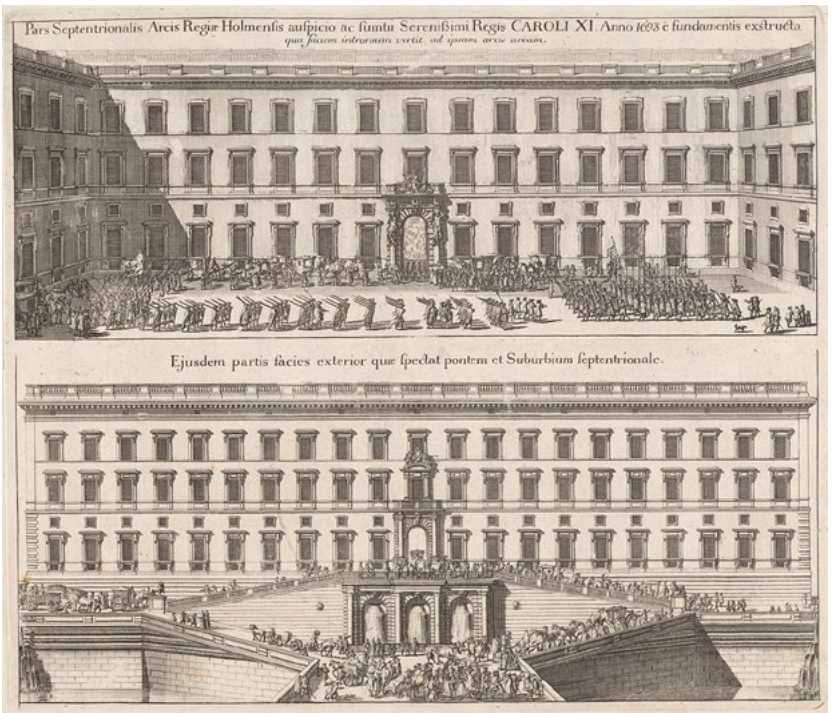

Figure 72 Royal Palace in Stockholm, North Wing, built 1692–1697, seen from the courtyard (above) and from the north (below). Engraving (1697) by Willem Swidde for *Suecia antiqua et hodierna*. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.



Figure 73 Royal Palace in Stockholm, view from the east. Photo: Holger Ellgaard, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

curved wings form an outer courtyard. The high and free position of the site, surrounded by water on two sides, gave Tessin the opportunity to design a royal residence with four – arguably equally important – façades, different in character but in a unified style, closely modelled on Roman 16th and 17th century architecture (fig. 73).

Nicodemus Tessin the Younger built a house for himself, the Tessin Palace (Tessinska palatset), close to the Royal Palace (finished *c.* 1700). Here, on a much smaller scale, he experimented with the combination of Italianate exteriors with interiors in a contemporary French style that he maintained was the ultimate synthesis of residential architecture (fig. 74). The rather sober façade does not prepare the visitor for the courtyard and garden, where Tessin, undeterred by the disadvantage of an irregular-shaped plot, created an exuberant theatre-like space with screens and perspective effects, using motifs from Roman baroque architecture such as Borromini's *tromp-l'oeil* colonnade at Palazzo Spada. The state apartment on the second floor was decorated in the fashionable style of a contemporary Parisian *hôtel particulier*, with decorative figures and scenes set within delicate *grotesque* ornaments against a gold or white background. The painters and sculptors who worked at Tessin's house belonged to a group of specialized French artists and artisans – including sculptors, painters, sculpture found-



Figure 74 Nicodemus Tessin the Younger, The inner courtyard of the Tessin Palace (the architect's own house), finished c. 1700. Photo: Frankie Fouganthin, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

ers, gilders, and others – who had been recruited to work on the interiors of the state apartments at the Royal Palace. The architect had requested that they have experience from Louis XIV's building projects. They started arriving around 1693 and worked on the interiors for around ten years. Their life in Sweden was smoothed by special privileges – including the extraordinary liberty to practice Catholicism. The leading artists were the sculptor and stucco specialist *René Chauveau* (1663–1722) and the painter *Jacques Foucquet* (c. 1660–before 1731). Much of the Frenchmen's work was undone in the great fire of 1697, but the construction was resumed soon afterwards and the décor was replaced at a remarkable speed.

The efforts of Tessin the Younger's French crew can be admired in the great gallery (today the *Gallery of Charles XI*). It is one of the most magnificent interiors from the late 17th century in Northern Europe. The famous Hall of Mirrors at Versailles and other French interiors were sources



Figure 75 Jacques Foucquet, *Charles XI after the Victory of the Battle of Lund* (Karl XI efter segern i slaget vid Lund), central part of the ceiling in the gallery of Charles XI at the Royal Palace in Stockholm, 1700–1702, oil painting on stucco. Photo: © Nino Monastra, Kungl. Hovstaterna, Stockholm.

of inspiration. Largely completed around 1703 and located in the north wing of the Royal Palace, it celebrates the reign of Charles XI through a series of emblematic paintings, by Foucquet, and sculptures, by Chauveau (fig. 75). Their complex iconography focuses in particular on the war of the 1670s, the ensuing peace manifested by Charles' marriage to the Danish princess Ulrika Eleonora, and the subsequent autocratic reforms. The gallery survives to an extraordinary degree and tells us not only about the transfer of stylistic ideals and artistic practices from the French *milieu* to the Swedish capital, but also about the compelling propagandistic force of Louis XIV's absolute rule and its trappings. In Tessin's view, the French monarchy had established a universal model for the glorification of a king through the visual arts.

After 1700

In 1700, the peace was broken, and the Swedish army under the young Charles XII embarked on a long campaign abroad. Until the battle of Poltava in 1709, work on public commissions, including the palace in Stockholm, went on at a reduced pace. During the second decade of the century, it came to a complete standstill as all resources were directed towards the war effort. In secrecy, Nicodemus Tessin the Younger made designs for monumental buildings to be built in the centre of Stockholm after an eventual victory, transforming the city into a magnificent capital of a new empire. The plans were sent to Charles XII, who had fled to Ottoman territory where he was the Sultan's more or less reluctant guest between 1709 and 1714. Tessin's projects were influential in the late 18th and the 19th centuries when the plan became known.

The portraits of Charles XII shown without a wig and in the simple uniform he wore during the military campaign have become emblematical of the war period. They have been interpreted as visual manifestations of his charismatic leadership, based to a degree on the identification of the army with its supreme commander. The best-known examples are by *David von Krafft* (1655–1724), Ehrenstrahl's nephew and successor, but they are based on portraits painted at the king's camp at Altranstädt in 1707 by *Johan David Swartz* (1678–1729).

Many artists left Sweden during the war years when it was difficult to find patronage. Family networks or contacts with other émigré artists helped them establish themselves in London, Paris, or Vienna.

A stray bullet killed Charles XII in November 1718 during a campaign on the Norwegian border. His sister Ulrica Eleonora succeeded him, but in 1720 she abdicated in favour of her husband, Frederick, Prince of Hesse-Kassel. Royal absolutism was abolished, and political power was transferred to the four estates dominated by the aristocrats. The peace of Nystad was concluded in 1721, but it was not until 1728 that work on the Royal Palace in Stockholm was resumed.

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A different rhetoric

The usage of medals as political art

Ylva Haidenthaller

A prominent characteristic of early modern times was a constant rivalry between the royal courts, challenging each other in every possible way. Art, buildings, military campaigns – everything was an indication of who was the richest, most famous, and most successful. Royal desires and ambitions were not least expressed visually. This was also true for Sweden when it established itself as a 'Great Power' during the 17th century. The country could not afford to be left behind in its representation when it was compared to allies and enemies such as the Holy Roman Empire and France. Hence, Sweden hired the services of some of the most renowned craftsmen and the most skilful artisans of its time in order to be able to compete. Today also, like in former times, visual culture appears to be closely connected to a society's beliefs and helps us to understand the civilisation that shaped it. Still, seen from today's perspective, the images produced during early modern times can be rather difficult to unravel. In particular, the visual rhetoric might seem peculiar, but even if the ways of visual communication were different then, we will see that in general it pursued the same concepts as we use today. The following text will examine one of these means of visual communication and representation, one that has almost fallen into oblivion in our days, which is the use of medals.

A medal, similar to a coin, is a round relief cast or struck in precious metal like gold, silver, or bronze. The material's permanency goes hand in hand with the timeless message a medal should convey. Due to the material, which required a certain economic liquidity, medal art was strongly



Figure 76 A page from numismatist and miniaturist Elias Brenner's *Thesaurus nummorum Sveo-Gothicorum* […], Stockholm 1691, depicting the obverse and reverse of three of Queen Christina's medals. This illustrates very well how differently the same person could be depicted on a medal. Uppsala University Library, Uppsala.

connected to the upper classes and produced by and for the elite. The first thing one would behold was the *obverse* (the front of the medal), which would usually show the image of the person the medal should represent, not only who the portrayed person was (mostly with all the given titles) but also who this person wanted to be. The truth, similar to many other forms of art produced during this era, was often secondary. A king, even if his features were properly portrayed on a medal, could be depicted as the ancient hero Hercules, or represented with divine symbols and attributes. The *reverse* (the other side of the medal) could illustrate almost anything, such as an allegorical reference to the latest victory, an emblematic puzzle, or the sovereign's coat of arms. Especially because of the lack of encyclopaedias, a coin or a medal could show the beholder how the different regents looked and what his or her agenda was (fig. 76).

Therefore, the image's function relates closely to the person ordering the

medal. It was deliberately calculated how the medal should be perceived by the viewer as images were central to sovereigns' strategies for maintaining power. Through them, the regent proclaimed a strong public appearance, and medals were an especially potent method of representation.

Apparently, during early modern times a medal had a slightly different purpose than today. Nowadays, we mostly think of medals in connection with sports events, but as we will see, the custom of donating medals in honour of good deeds or achievements has a long tradition, even if the settings have changed. Already since the Renaissance, coins and medals were popular things to exchange and collect. Sovereigns, but also other people of noble birth, commissioned medals in order to commemorate certain events, such as victories, weddings, funerals, or other noteworthy occasions. At these festivities, the medals were given to noblemen, diplomats, and other dignitaries as tokens of affection, alliance, and sometimes rather the opposite. Further, similar to today's price medals, the gift had an economic purpose; due to medals' precious material, they could serve as a store of value. In time of need the objects could be melted and traded for their value in money. Though this was a common fate, it did not diminish the prestige of medals. People regarded these objects both as a visual pleasure and, due to their enigmatic flair, as a mental exercise. Medals had the advantage that they were portable, a monument in a convenient size. Further, they were easy to produce but they still had this aura of extravagance. In contrast to engravings, medals were cast for posterity. They should endure over time.

The most important purpose of a medal was indeed to be seen, but how should an object of this size represent a sovereign? Wars are not only fought on battlefields, and the political propaganda that surrounds these enterprises was as important then as it is today. The crucial difference is that today it would likely be a cause for concern if a European president or prime minister were to compare himself or herself with the sun, to propagate divine descent, or to slander another country in such a way that every political alliance would be damaged. During the 17th century, though, this was viewed as a common rhetorical programme. When Gustavus Adolphus officially entered the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in 1630, a medal was struck to commemorate this event. The obverse depicts the





Figure 77 and 78 Gustavus Adolphus, coined, silver ø 47mm, unknown artist. The Historical Museum at Lund University, Lund.

king's profile according to this time's custom, with a laurel crown and wearing a sash on his harness (fig. 77). Around his image one can read his given title GVSTAVus ADOLPHus Dei Gratia SVECOrum GOTHOrum WANDALOrum REX MAG [Gustavus Adolphus, by God's grace, the great king of the Swedes, Goths and Vandals]. These Latin words may seem trivial as they just tell us the names of the king and of the peoples that were governed by him, but nonetheless this is of importance. Not only do they remark on divine intervention, Gustavus Adolphus is king by God's grace, but also on the lands that he holds. The reverse shows a vessel sailing from a tower with three pinnacles (Castle Tre Kronor, Stockholm, which was at this time the seat of the Swedish court) and the sun rising over the sea (fig. 78). The inscription, NON EXORATVS EXORIOR [I rise without being persuaded], appears on a convoluted band. It is unclear if the king himself, or *riksrådet* (the council), or one of his allies in Germany ordered the medal. Still, it is obvious that Gustavus Adolphus equals with the sun, coming to fight (and win) this religious war.

The Thirty Years' War was one of the bloodiest in Europe's history. It started as an aftermath of the reformation; a religious war fought between the Protestant forces and the Catholic Holy Roman Empire, and soon it evolved into more than just a war in the name of God, but also as a conflict



Figure 79 and 80 Gustavus Adolphus, coined, silver ø 65 mm, Sebastian Dadler. Uppsala University Coin Cabinet, Uppsala.

over territories. The propaganda during this war impregnated almost everything from pamphlets to children's lullabies; names were given and truths were strained or exaggerated. For example, the Swedes were labelled as vicious savages by the Catholic union, but were considered as heroes by their Protestant allies, with King Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North, as their leader. Still, as bloody as this war was, it was the Baroque medal art's golden age. All contestants of the war produced medals challenging and defaming each other with propagandistic visual messages, sometimes blunt, sometimes with finesse. A medal was this time's 'sophisticated' slander and a well-established method of communication.

Another medal, engraved by *Sebastian Dadler* (1586–1657) – who was one of the most popular medal artists of this time and mostly active in Germany – yet again depicts King Gustavus Adolphus with his titles (fig. 79). However, it is the reverse that calls for attention (fig. 80); a warrior (with the king's face) in ancient armour, drawn sword, and a cross-marked shield is surrounded by streaks of lightning. The sun, depicted like a half-circle around his head, gives the impression of a halo, and the sun's rays appear as if the king has wings. He almost looks like an angel of death. As God's warrior, he stands on top of beaten enemies, beasts, and figures of monstrous humans. Solemnly he gazes to the skies as if he were looking for God

himself and his approval. The inscription reads MILES EGO CHRISTI, CHRistO DUCE STERNO TYRANNOS, HAERETICOS SIMUL ET CALCO MEIS PEDIBUS. PARCERE CHRISTICOLIS, ME DEBELLARE FEROCES PAPICOLAS CHRISTus, DVX Meus, EN ANIMAT [I am Christ's soldier, under Christ's command I slay tyrants, at the same time I trample upon the heretics under my feet. Look, Christ, my leader, gives me courage to spare the admirers of Christ, but to conquer the cruel followers of the pope]. Gustavus Adolphus is God's servant and heaven supports him by sending vanquishing thunderbolts to fight against the infidels. The king is a likeness of Emperor Constantine and Archangel Michael, two of God's well-known soldiers, who traditionally were depicted in ancient armour, drawn sword, and cross-marked shield. Therefore, even if the beholder would be unable to read the Latin inscription, the meaning is clear; by divine help Gustavus Adolphus will slay his enemies, come what may. This is an unmistakable and ferocious message, but nothing unusual in these fights for 'the right cause' and no room for doubt is left to the beholder. Moreover, this illustrates very well the strong position that religion had during the early modern times. Since the world believed in God, the presence of God often appears as a 'wild card' on monarchs' medals – he was the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Nonetheless, the visual rhetoric on medals could also look very subtly, as shown in the next example, a coronation medal of Gustavus Adolphus' daughter and heir, Queen Christina. She was crowned on the 20th of October in 1650. The queen was already declared mature years earlier (before that, a regency government had ruled since the time of Gustavus Adolphus' death on the battlefield in Lützen, Germany, in 1632), but her coronation had been postponed until the Thirty Years' War's peace negotiations were completed, and later until it could be carried out to the queen's satisfaction. A royal ceremony, such as a coronation, was an essential aspect of the visual culture of the European courts during early modern times. Consequently, it was important for the political art. Ceremonies were rather ephemeral events, but by giving the attending public something to remember it by, the visual rhetoric could have a long-lasting impression. In contrast to oil paintings, which were ordered afterwards to commemorate a royal ceremony, medals were actually distributed at these events and



Figure 81 and 82 Queen Christina, coined, silver ø 28 mm, Erich Parise. Uppsala University Coin Cabinet, Uppsala.

therefore had a direct connection to the solemn act. What otherwise would have been a temporary manifestation of power was complemented by a compact visual expression, a portable political souvenir.

For her coronation, of which the remarkable splendour has been described in contemporary sources, the queen had ordered several medals with various motifs and sizes. One of these is a small silver medal and, in comparison with others struck for the same event, is rather plain. Due to its size (not even 30 mm), we can assume that this particular medal would have been bestowed as a gift to the lower estates, or tossed out to the crowd waiting outside the church. It depicts the queen in profile, wearing a laurel wreath and her hair modestly arranged into a knotted bun at the back of her neck, a hairdressing rather uncommon for this time (fig. 81). The inscription is simple, CHRISTINA REGINA [Queen Christina]. The reverse depicts an arm stretching out from clouds holding a crown; above it reads AVITAM ET AVCTAM [inherited from the ancestors and extended] (fig. 82). A short, but witty, game with words – something that the contemporary beholder of a Baroque medal would appreciate. The translation of this message seems apparent. The arm that stretches out of the heavens is God's almighty hand crowning Christina. Because everyone believed in God and the true order of things (God institutes the ruler), and God

himself is crowning the queen, nobody should challenge her status. Further, Christina upholds her connection to her father, *inherited from the ancestors*. It was of essence to promote the queen as the heir of the throne. Today, one would assume that if a monarch were to be crowned, he or she would be inviolable in this position, but it was always important to stress who actually was the head of the state. Even if Christina's status as ruler was (mostly) unquestioned, she was still female and unmarried. Therefore, it was vital to maintain a strong political rhetoric.

Normally, one would expect a Baroque medal to be much more elaborate because this time's art was characterised by *horror vacui* [fear of empty space]. All the same, the queen uses few but clear signs, without any extravagancies (which would be unusual for her). By this kind of 'plain' visual programme, she breaks new ground, which she will pursue on other medals as well. The laurel wreath, a typical symbol of regency, reminds of ancient gods and heroes, with whom she identifies herself. It was popular for female regents to compare themselves with Minerva, the ancient goddess of wisdom; for male monarchs, Mars, the god of warfare, or Hercules would be the obvious choice. A ruler had to be successful at warfare, but Christina, being female, could not follow in her father's footsteps and become a war hero, but at least she could spread the word of her being wise and a clever strategist. As sources lead us to believe, Christina was very engaged in the production of her medals and truly used this art's full potential in various ways. At first sight, the coronation medal might seem simple, but its visual concept is as well thought out as that of an ostentatious oil painting.

Only four years later, in 1654, the queen abdicated and left the throne to her cousin Charles X Gustav. In secrecy, Christina had long prepared to leave Sweden and convert to Catholicism, which is why she over the years had introduced the idea of her cousin as her successor. Maybe for that reason she had given him command over the Swedish troops in Germany, where he made a name for himself. At first *riksrådet* was not pleased, neither with her decision to resign nor with her choice of successor. Nonetheless, he was male, of noble birth, and apparently a competent military man, and consequently not an impossible replacement for the last member of the Vasa dynasty. Charles X Gustav was crowned on the same day as the





Figure 83 and 84 Charles X Gustav, coined, silver ø 56mm, Johan Georg Breuer. Uppsala University Coin Cabinet, Uppsala.

queen abdicated, June the 6th (which also is the very same day that Gustav Vasa had been elected king in 1523).

The new king's military experiences proved to be very beneficial in Sweden's quest for greatness. In 1657, Sweden was engaged in wars against Russia and Poland and was at the same time declared war on by the Danes. The Danes calculated that the king and his army would arrive by sea from Poland, where Charles X Gustav and his armed forces were situated. The king, though, chose a different way. Early in 1658, he attacked the Danes from the south and marched with his troops over the frozen strait between the Danish islands Fyn and Sjaelland. This risky gamble was unexpected by the Danes and led to their defeat (this time) and to the Treaty of Roskilde in which Sweden acquired Scania, Blekinge, and Halland (today the southern provinces of Sweden). This victory was celebrated as something extraordinary and was illustrated in many oil paintings, engravings, and medals. The medal struck to remember his triumph depicts the king, similar to his predecessors, with his titles, laurel crown, harness, and sash (fig. 83). He appears as a timeless hero, as lasting as the medal's material. The reverse shows the Swedish troops marching over the ice (fig. 84). The inscription reads NATURA HOC DEBUIT UNI [(this help) was nature obliged to give this one man]. Today, this would seem as an extremely vain message

and understood as delusional or even comical, but again in early modern times this was considered serious rhetoric. Further, such medals were not only regarded as political art, but were also charged with underlying messages. The medal's rhetoric would be comprehended, not only as a boastful symbol of power, but also as a threat. An image of the king as a capable commander on one side, and the other side showing the latest victory combined with an inscription reinforcing the statement. On the one hand, this would be an ideal piece of metal given to his allies, and on the other hand to his enemies.

To conclude, as we all know, art is often an expression of its time. Almost all art produced during the Baroque period in Sweden had a strong connection to royal power and had, in one way or another, a propagandist purpose. Because most artistic enterprises reflected the ruling parties' cravings and intentions, one must always consider this time's art with an awareness of this cultural and historical background. It reveals contemporary trends, styles, beliefs, and even technical possibilities. In that regard, medal art is truly a product of its time. It is a fusion of the Baroque age's preference for luxury objects and collectable items at the same times as it combines visual communication with emblematic riddles, allegories, and Latin proverbs. They connect not only humans, but due to their persistent and widely appreciated material even time and space.

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The Skokloster festoons

Greger Sundin

In a storage room in the eastern tower of the Skokloster castle lie six wooden boxes, framed as pictures and covered by glass. Within are moulded and arranged festoons set against a glimmering black background. The six works are not completely similar. One pair is composed of wax fruits, paper flowers, silk ribbons, and bunches of grapes of rock crystal partly covered in green wax (fig. 85). The remaining four are somewhat smaller, and the festoons here are made out of conchs, shells, paper leaves, and faux coral (twigs of birch covered in red lacquer, fig. 86). The once vibrantly colourful arrangements are now faded and broken, and many of the hollow wax casts are cracked or flaked.

In Skokloster's inventory of 1716, they are described as '6 sth: festoner af Swenska Musslor allehanda slag, och förgullta Ramar' [Six festoons of diverse Swedish mussels, and gilt frames]. They were, at the time, located in a small praying cabinet that was not part of the original floor plan, but a subdivision that only existed from ca. 1684 to approximately the 1740s. The commissioning owners of that cabinet were Carl Gustaf Wrangel's daughter Margareta Juliana Wrangel (1642-1701) and her husband, Count Nils Brahe the Younger (1633-1699). Despite the referral to 'diverse Swedish mussels' in 1716, they have generally been considered as being of central European origin. With this essay, I want to contextualise the pictures and provide some insight into why they were so easily deemed 'non-Swedish'.

The praying cabinet was an austere room, almost completely draped in black velvet with polychrome floral embroideries. According to the inventory, it was plainly furnished with a small desk, a lectern, two chairs, and two small three-light candelabra, and on the walls were two wall sconces,



Figure 85 Festoon picture with illusory fruits made out of wax, paper, silk, and rock crystal. 45.5 x 54 cm. Skokloster castle, inv. no. 1719:1. Photo: Greger Sundin.



Figure 86 Festoon picture with shells, conchs, silk, and illusory coral. 37 x 29 cm. Skokloster castle, inv. no. 1720:2. Photo: Greger Sundin.

four oil paintings of various sizes, one framed print, and the six festoon pictures. Consequently, the festoons formed a major part of the cabinet's decorative scheme, and the black glimmering background of the festoons would harmonise well with the black velvet of the wall drapings. In the second and last inventory of the cabinet, from 1728, we can note a substantial difference. From a subdued room for prayer, it had metamorphosed into a veritable *Kunstkammer* with added shelves and display cases filled with naturalia, ivories, exotica, various trinkets, and religious paraphernalia. A *Kunstkammer* (or cabinet of curiosities) was originally a private collection of things, often objects of nature, that formed a material reference to the surrounding universe for the inquiring scholar during the Italian Renaissance. The collection was kept in his or her study (*studiolo* in Italian) and over time came to encompass more and more objects from a wider range of fields. When this practice moved north across the Alps during the 16th century, the collections had begun to extend to every aspect of natural history and human endeavour – the *Kunstkammer* became a treasury holding both extreme wealth and knowledge. With this enlarged ambition of what a *Kunstkammer* should be came a revised set of uses for it – from a collection for private contemplation and scholarly guidance to a princely display of wealth and prominence. Following the fashions of the royal *Kunstkammern* came scaled-down versions in noble and wealthy burgher homes. The practice became quite widespread in higher social strata throughout Europe. Then with the Age of Enlightenment and new scientific ideals in the mid-18th century, the interest and need for *Kunstkammern* declined as more public and systematic means of display grew stronger, i.e. the museum.

At Skokloster, the 1716 inventory was triggered by the death of Count Abraham Brahe's (1669–1728) first wife Eva Bielke (1677–1715). Abraham Brahe remarried Margareta Bonde (1680–1727) the same year. Did she influence this new direction of the cabinet? It would follow a tradition of Swedish female collecting and patronage of the arts, such as that of the Queen Dowager Hedvig Eleonora (1636–1715) and Countess Ebba Brahe (1596–1674), who both amassed considerable collections. Unfortunately, documentation is scarce and little indication remains of which incentives motivated the development.

Albeit being unique in Sweden both today and at the time, Skokloster's festoon pictures sprang from an erudite European milieu, and with them as examples we can access a range of 17th century European scholarly imagery and artistic practices. The festoon has its origin in the moulded altar and frieze decorations of Antiquity, which in turn represented the garlands of real flowers, leaves, and fruits that adorned portals and altars during festivities. The motif re-emerged during the Renaissance and has since played a role in several contexts, but most commonly in architecture and applied arts. The same form can take the guise of stucco embellishments in architecture, printed frontispieces in illustrated books, and moulded furniture adornments, together forming a sense of stylistic coherence. Swedish baroque architecture presents copious examples of festoons, with examples to be seen in the central staircase of the Drottningholm palace (by Nicodemus Tessin the Elder) and on the façades of Riddarhuset (by Simon de la Vallée), both from the 1670s–1680s and contemporary to the Skokloster festoons.

Renaissance Italy's interpretation of Antiquity, perhaps more than Antiquity itself, ignited a surge of classicism. Newly decorated palaces and churches in Rome and Florence made ripples through Europe and defined taste far beyond Italy. The frescoes in the audience chamber of Cosimo I in Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, for instance, include a frieze of majestic festoons as a part of its painted architectural programme, and Michelangelo's two funeral monuments of Giuliano and Lorenzo de Medici in the Basilica di San Lorenzo in Florence had festoons incorporated in the architectural backdrop. These types of applications made an impact on visiting artists and architects and inspired adaptations in their own work.

The transfer of the festoon motif from an architectural context into pictures to be hung on a wall began in Northern Europe, and especially in present-day Holland and Belgium, during the 17th century. Naturalistic flower still lifes had started to become a motif in their own right in paintings in the first decades of the century and became increasingly popular. They were also closely associated with *trompe l'œil* techniques that meant to deceive the viewer into believing that what he or she saw was real and not a painting, often against a monochrome, or neutral, background. Floral still lifes connote the brevity of life and passing beauty, but the ephemeral nature



Figure 87 Jan van Kessel the Elder (Antwerpen 1626–1679). Still-life with shells and flowers, dated 1654. Oil on copper panel, 31 x 43 cm. Private collection.

of blossoming flowers is oddly counteracted as they are captured in the more lasting media of painting, sculpture, and architecture. Conchs and shells were also often the subject matter of still lifes, and the Skokloster festoons should be seen in relation to this sphere of motifs. There is, for example, a notably similar painting of a festoon made out of conchs and shells by the Flemish painter Jan van Kessel from 1654 that holds all of the pictorial elements that later came to materialise in Sweden (fig. 87).

In 1707, the Dutch artist and art theoretician Gerard de Lairesse (1640–1711) published his treatise *Het Groot Schilderboek*, in which he describes a method of composing flowers for still lifes by making them out of 'paper or silk, each with its own colour, and the stalks made of wire, such as one finds for sale with the decorators'. They can in turn be rearranged in a manner that suits the motif best, as a 'bouquet, festoon or basket with flowers'. Further, they would be very helpful during the winter months because they never fade. de Lairesse's description is instructive as it addresses the existence of artificial flowers in the service of artists, and that they

were independently manufactured. It also describes how they were used for compositional purposes when real flowers were not at hand.

A South German *Kunstkammer*, in the form of Philipp Hainhofer's art cabinet, had been in the Royal Swedish Collections since 1633 and in Uppsala since the 1650s, and among a wide range of artefacts, it housed a considerable number of shells organised according to the pre-linnaean scientific principles of the time. Often, important objects of nature were set in man-made mountings, frequently of precious metals, such as the Venus cup crowning Hainhofer's cabinet, formed around a sea coconut, or the Nautilus cup in the same cabinet.

When we look at this type of applied naturalia, we can draw certain conclusions from the natural properties, as well as from how they are prepared and arranged. At Skokloster, many of the shells are from the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean, but despite their distant origins they were comparatively easy to find in Europe during the period, mostly due to Dutch trade and shipping. They were not from the realm of exclusive and inaccessible shells that were attractive to the distinguished scholars of naturalia, but were rather ordinary imported goods. In addition to these shells, the set was 'diluted' with shells from the *Viviparus* and *Lymnaea* families, both common in the Baltic Sea and especially along the Swedish eastern coast. As they were so prevalent, they were not traded to any extent. Had the pictures been made in another European region, the type of 'diluting' shells would likely reflect that. In addition, several of the shells have been altered with tints and paints, which further advances the notion that it was not the pure natural qualities of the shells that were in focus to the producer, or to the client. Consequently, it is not a scientific collection of shells we see at Skokloster, but objects subordinated to their decorative function as part of festoons.

The practice of organising shells into images was not unique for Skokloster. According to the estate inventory of Countess Ebba Brahe, her Stockholm palace housed 'eight large mussel pictures with silvered frames' and nine additional 'mussel pictures' framed in black ebony frames of various sizes. We do not know the motifs of these pictures, but their presence tells us that the type was known in Sweden during the second half of the 17th century.



Figure 88 Giovanni Francesco Venturini (1650–1710). One of the frontispieces in Filippo Buonanni's book *Ricreatione dell'occhio e della mente nell' osseruation' delle Chiocciole* (1681).

In the Jesuit Filippo Buonanni's book *Ricreatione dell'occhio e della mente nell' osseruation' delle Chiocciole* from 1681, we find an example of the aesthetic arrangements of shells in printed book frontispieces (fig. 88). Considered the first book on collecting conchs and shells, it was also notably present in the Skokloster library. We can in all these examples see a will to intertwine motif and material and to play with notions of an animate nature that follows the Mannerist tendency to relate humans to the surrounding world. The Buonanni frontispiece is one such example.

Although the Skokloster festoons were made in Sweden, they followed from an intellectual strand of early scientific exploration and classification combined with ideas of collecting and displays of knowledge that existed

throughout Europe. In practice, the artistic transfer was accomplished through the movement of artists and journeymen who travelled abroad as part of their education. In addition, stylistic influences were distributed through comparatively cheap prints and illustrated pattern books that found their way into artisan's workshops and were interpreted according to local conditions and fashions. With the many acquisitions and spoils from the Thirty Years' War that came to influence a good deal of Sweden's intellectual environment during parts of the 17th century, there was no shortage of continental designs available in Sweden. 'Continental' does in this case equally imply a catholic iconography, which had already embraced the festoon motif. But the peculiar interpretation of the motif in Skokloster results from collection principles emanating from the world of the *Kunstkammer*. With its origins in the North Italian scholarly *studioli*, the phenomenon was a palpable expression of the early modern search for knowledge in the surrounding universe. The ardent interest in taxonomies and classification originated in the constant dichotomy between objects of God (*naturalia*) and objects of Man (*artificialia*). Here, the interesting point is the combination thereof. Despite external similarities, there is a vast difference between constructing a motif of nature out of a number of shells and conchs (that *are* nature), and to create the *illusion* of nature via the means of paper, wax, and wire. Why let these diametrically different attitudes share the suite of pictures? Or was it, rather, the intended effect? By letting naturalia and artificialia jointly depict nature chastened by man in the form of a festoon, material and motif interplay and illustrate the complexity of the universe. We may see them as pure decoration, if such a thing exists, but for the people at Skokloster at the height of Sweden's Baltic Empire, it can be assumed to have been something that, albeit on a modest scale, connected their world in the north to history and to the grand continental collections.

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Art and Society 1720–1800

Merit Laine

The Great Nordic War (1700–1721) led to the end of Sweden's era as a great power. The peace terms resulted in heavy losses of land, which meant that the already impoverished state lost half of its income. The economy recovered surprisingly quickly, but adjusting to the position of a minor European power proved more difficult. For many, and for a long time, the recovery of lost prestige and territories remained the focus of foreign policies.

A new constitution put a firm end to absolute royal rule. Political power was transferred to *the Estates* (the nobility, clergy, burghers, and peasants), which for most of the period were dominated by the nobility. This era of Swedish political history is known as the *Age of Liberty* (Frihetstiden, 1719–1772). Charles XII was succeeded by his sister Ulrika Eleonora the Younger (1688–1741), who abdicated in favour of her husband Fredrik I of Hesse-Cassel (1676–1751). The childless couple was succeeded by Adolf Fredrik of Holstein-Gottorp (1710–1771) and his consort Lovisa Ulrika (1720–1782), born princess of Prussia, who were important patrons of letters, the sciences, the arts, and architecture. They also became a significant political actors, working to change the new constitution in order to increase royal power.

Gustav III (1746–1792) succeeded his father Adolf Fredrik in 1771, and the following year he reinstated royal supremacy through a coup d'état. Gustav shared many of his parents' interests, and with more power and financial resources he was able to pursue them with more far-reaching results. Initially popular, he became increasingly criticized and was finally murdered by a small group of conspirators. His son Gustav IV Adolf (1778–1837) was deposed in 1809, mainly because of Sweden's unsuccessful involvement in the Napoleonic wars, which led to the loss of Finland to Russia.

A central concept in Swedish discourse during the Age of Liberty was utility (*nytta*), meaning the usefulness of an activity, object, or knowledge for the common good. The production and consumption of luxury, including architecture and the arts, was encouraged because luxury generated work and public income. It was also politically useful; like prosperous towns, well-tended fields, meadows and forests, and productive works and manufactories, luxuries signalled order and financial stability. Luxury and good taste also gave cultural prestige, which was a real asset in international diplomacy. Military strength was another important part of the image of Sweden, as the monumental fortifications projects of the era testify. Especially during the latter part of the century, the visual arts also became part of a growing and increasingly bourgeois public sphere.

In spite of a strong patriotic strain in the debate and political decisions concerning the arts, with a few exceptions there were no attempts to develop a specifically Swedish style or mode of expression. Studies abroad, especially in France and Italy, were obligatory for artists and architects who wished to attract an elite clientele or to succeed in public careers. The baroque classicism of Tessin the Younger was appreciated throughout the century, not least for its associations with Sweden's period as a great power. The Rococo style was introduced in the 1730s, and it soon became extremely popular. The neo-classical movement began to have an impact in the 1760s, and strong Pompeian influences can be seen from the 1780s. In Sweden, these last styles are known as Gustavian and late Gustavian. During the reign of Gustav III, historicizing Nordic motifs were also introduced, but mainly in the context of theatre and court festivities.

The art and architecture created during the Swedish 18th century can be studied from many viewpoints. For this brief presentation, the points of departure will be a set of concepts that in many ways defined the period, politically, socially, and economically. These are Power, Faith, War, Commerce, Learning, and Collecting. The last section of this chapter will provide a synthesis in the form of an analysis of Drottningholm Palace and its relationship to the cultural legacy of the century.

Power

Throughout the 18th century, Sweden remained a hierarchical society, and this was visually reinforced in many ways, including styles of dress, body movement, interior decoration, building styles, and town planning. Perhaps mainly for financial reasons, the rise to power of the nobility did not lead to the conspicuous building projects typical of the previous century. Good taste and comfort became important tools for demonstrating superiority, and these reign supreme in manor houses such as *Carl Gustaf Tessin* (1695–1770) and Ulrika Lovisa Sparre's (1711–1768) Åkerö (fig. 89). Nevertheless, the elites were expected to spend according to rank, regardless of their real assets, because this upheld the prestige of family and class as well as of the nation. Tessin was a leading politician who spent a large proportion of his assets to cut an impressive figure during his diplomatic missions. He was also an extremely influential patron and collector, and among his commissions to French artists is his own portrait in the role of a learned connoisseur, with recognizable objects from his collections (fig. 90). Many years later, Ulrika Lovisa Sparre was represented in her parlour at Åkerö – in a more unassuming style but like her husband in a setting that speaks



Figure 89 Carl Hårleman, Åkerö Manor. Photo: TS Eriksson, CC BY 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 90 Jacques-André-Joseph Aved (1702–1766), *Count Carl Gustaf Tessin* (Greve Carl Gustaf Tessin), 1740, oil on canvas, 149 x 116 cm. Photo: Cecilia Heisser, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

of taste, learning, and collecting interests (fig. 91).

The apex of the hierarchy as represented through architecture remained the Royal Palace. The main residence of the Royal family, it was also the seat of government, administration, and jurisdiction, a monolith of political and cultural power completely dominating the capital's townscape. The effort to complete the palace became a major factor in the development of the arts. Tessin the Younger's plans for the exterior were followed with only minor alterations, and the few finished baroque interiors were



Figure 91 Olof Fridsberg, *Lovisa Ulrika Sparre, Countess Tessin in her Parlour at Åkerö* (Ulrika Lovisa Sparre, grevinnan Tessin, i sitt kabinett på Åkerö), 1762–1763, watercolour on paper, 16,5 x 12,3 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

left intact. In the 1730s and 1740s, mainly French painters, sculptors, woodcarvers, and gilders were called in to work on the palace and to take on and teach Swedish assistants. The painter *Guillaume Taraval* (1701–1750) was assisted by *Johan Pasch* (1706–1769) who soon mastered the style of Rococo decorative painting and was appointed court painter. Through Pasch's many private commissions, the new French taste was communicated from the capital to other parts of the country. Among the interiors reflecting the French–Swedish collaborations is the King's audience cham-



Figure 92 Carl Hårleman, The Queen's Audience Chamber, Royal Palace, Stockholm; furnishings originally in the King's Audience Chamber, completed 1754: Beauvais tapestries after cartoons by François Boucher; throne canopy woven in Stockholm by Pierre-Louis Duru and Pehr Hilleström after cartoons by Jean Eric Rehn. Throne chair carved by Adrien Masreliez after drawings by Rehn. Photo: © Alexis Daflos, Kungl. Hovstaterna, Stockholm.

ber, designed and coordinated by the superintendent *Carl Hårleman* (1700–1753). Though created by several craftsmen and in different countries, the elements of the room formed a harmonious unity, with recurring decorative motifs such as rose garlands, which occur on the tapestries, the canopy, and the chair (fig. 92).

The Board of Works (Överintendentsämbetet) gradually increased control of public and ecclesiastical buildings throughout the country. During the Age of Liberty, financial limits for civil public buildings, including the Royal Palaces, were set by the Estates, and professional decisions were taken by the superintendents (överintendenterna) who headed the Board. Except for prestige projects, durability, safety, and economy were more important factors than style, but the Board was nevertheless a factor in what might be termed the centralization of taste during this period. Another was the Manufactory Office (Manufakturkontoret), which was established in

1739 to encourage and control the production of the manufactories.

The Royal Drawing Academy (Kungl. ritarakademin) was also a normative institution. Begun as a drawing class by Taraval, it was formalized in 1735 by Tessin. The training followed established academic patterns, with copying after drawings and classical sculpture, and finally drawing live models. In 1773, it received its formal statutes, formulated by the superintendent and president of the Academy *Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz* (1716–1796), and became the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna). A professor's chair in architecture, student pensions for studying abroad and yearly competitions were introduced, as well as public exhibitions, such as were held by the Academies in Paris and London.

After the coup in 1771, Gustav III took personal control of royal and public building, a control that he exercised directly in his own projects and through the Board of Works. By this time, there was no need for the large-scale artist's immigration seen in the earlier part of the century. The internationally renowned sculptor *Johan Tobias Sergel* (1740–1814) returned from Rome in 1778. His works in marble introduced neo-classical sculpture to the King, and Sergel received many commissions from him, including monumental sculpture as well as portraits (fig. 93). The painter-designer *Louis Masreliez* (1753–1801), and the carver-designer *Jean-Baptiste Masreliez* (1748–1810), both sons of the prominent woodcarver *Adrien Masreliez* (1717–1806), were of great importance for the development of the late Gustavian style. This was developed in direct response to Gustav III's tastes and ideas, formed during his journey to France and Italy in 1783–84. During this visit he invited the architect, painter and stage designer *Louis Jean Desprez* (1743–1804) to Sweden. While few of their projects were finished, the grandiose visions of palaces and pavilions, especially for the landscape park at Haga, remain a vivid testimony to the imagination of both patron and artist (fig. 94).

Gustav III had a clear understanding of the persuasive nature of visual culture, as was evident not least in his own appearance. A contemporary writer admiringly described the King's graceful movement and handling of his royal cloak as part of a performance that also included the delivery of a masterly speech. Such performances resonate in images like *Alexander Roslin's* (1718–1793) portrait of Gustav in his coronation dress (fig. 95). The



Figure 93 Johan Tobias Sergel, *Amor and Psyche* (Amor och Psyke), 1787, marble, h. 159 cm. Louis XVs original commission of the sculpture was taken over by Gustav III in 1776. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

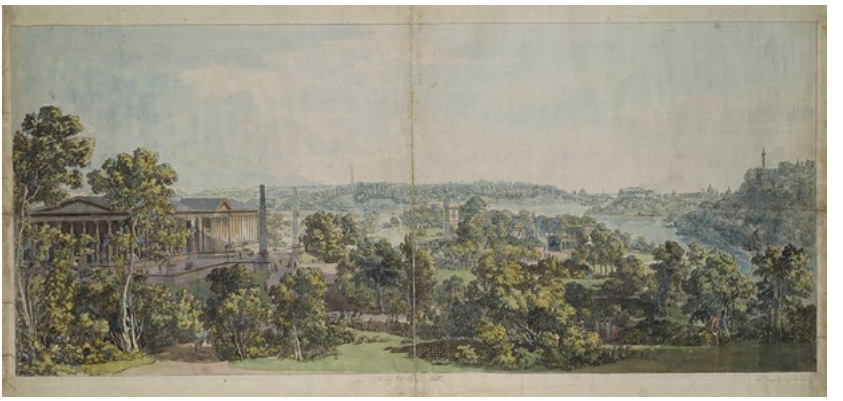

Figure 94 Louis Jean Desprez, *Proposal for Haga Palace* (Förslag till Haga slott), ca 1790, pen, ink and watercolour on paper, 64,5 x 101 cm. An intended neo-classical palace is to the left, while the Pavilion of Gustav III, still in existence, can be seen near the lake. In the far distance is Stockholm, with the Royal Palace clearly visible. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.



Figure 95 Alexander Roslin, *Gustav III, King of Sweden* (Gustav III, konung av Sverige), 1777, oil on canvas, 260 x 152 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (displayed at Sweden's National Portrait Gallery, Gripsholm Castle).

coat was modelled on the coronation costume of Charles XI – a typical example of the importance of historical references in Gustav's court culture and political rhetoric. Paintings such as this demonstrate the importance of good artists for rulers and the elite; the elegant perfection of the artist's technique suggests the same qualities in the sitter, without losing the sense of his or her individuality. The Swedish-born Roslin had his permanent address in Paris, where he was greatly appreciated by the French elite.

War

With a foreign policy aimed at reconquering lost territories in the Baltic and regaining a position as a great power, war was long seen as an unavoidable, or even desirable, prospect. Decisions taken by the Diet in 1746–47 led to several new fortification projects. The fortress of Sveaborg outside Helsinki was a vital part of the defence of Finland and a base for ships designed to operate in the Finnish archipelago. It was the costliest of the public building projects during the Age of Liberty, and it also became important for the development of civil architecture, technology, and art in the eastern part of the Swedish realm. Draughtsmen, sculptors, master masons, and carpenters worked there and brought back new techniques and styles to their native parts of Finland. Among the architectural features of the fortress, the courtyard on Vargön is especially important. It eventually became the burial site of the fortress' creator, the officer and eventually field marshal *Augustin Ehrensvärd* (1710–1772), who was also a talented architect and artist (fig. 96). The funeral monument was designed by Sergel after a sketch by Gustav III. Classical elements such as rostra and weaponry predominate in the decorations, which were cast in bronze from cannons taken in the naval battle at Svensksund during the war with Russia in 1788–90.

The Admiralty remained based in Karlskrona, which at that time was the third largest city in Sweden and centered almost entirely on the navy. As a result of Gustav III's plans for war, shipbuilding was intensified and several new buildings serving the needs of the navy were erected. The admiral *Carl August Ehrensvärd* (1745–1800) and the shipbuilder *Fredrik Henrik af Chapman* (1721–1808), both active as architects, developed neoclas-



Figure 96 Augustin Ehrensvärd, *View of Sveaborg* (Utsikt över Sveaborg), oil on canvas, 54 x 69,5 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

sical idioms with influences from early Greek temples and English neo-Palladianism. A lasting monument to their originality is af Chapman's country house Skärva, where traditional Swedish rural architecture is combined with Greek temple architecture(fig. 97).

Martial themes were extremely popular for male portraiture, testifying to the prestige of officer's careers and the importance of the role of military leader for rulers. The work of David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl and especially David von Krafft remained influential, sometimes as closely followed models, sometimes as faint but nevertheless important echoes. One instance of the latter is a portrait type created by the pastel painter *Gustav Lundberg* (1695–1786), who was active in Paris for many years and in 1745 became court painter to Adolf Fredrik and Lovisa Ulrika. Among his Swedish clients in Paris were officers who came to France to complete their training. These patriotic young men were often great admirers of Charles XII, yet



Figure 97 Fredric Henric af Chapman and Carl August Ehrensvärd, Skärva, 1787. The panelling covering the timbered construction is of later date. Photo: Henrik Sendelbach, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 98 Gustaf Lundberg, *Axel von Fersen the Elder* (Axel von Fersen d.ä.), pastel on paper, 65 x 54 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

wholly embraced French culture and fashions. In the 1730s, Lundberg developed a portrait formula for these officers and gentlemen that remained popular for several decades (fig. 98). The blue coats and breastplates in these images are reminiscent of portraits by Krafft, and 'the blue coat' associated with especially the army of Charles XII. On the other hand, a graceful bearing, powdered wigs, and facial make-up demonstrated the sitter's social standing, savoir-faire, and taste. This type of image highlights 18th century debates on masculinity and national identity. For those who shared the ideals of the men portrayed in this manner, the elegance of Lundberg's pastels and their models added qualities to what might be called a core of masculine, military, and Swedish virtues. For others, such portraits raised anxieties; the French influences were seen as effeminate and enfeebling, and their visibility as an indication of qualities taken away rather than added.

Faith

The Lutheran-Orthodox faith was fundamental in the Swedish 18th century worldview, and Sunday services, christenings, weddings, and funerals were basic features of the pattern of life. For most communities, the parish church was the focus of collective commissions, and ecclesiastical art and architecture was an extremely important part of the visual culture of the period. This is easily missed by museumgoers today, since most of the paintings, sculptures, woodcarvings, silver, and textiles commissioned by parishes or individual donors still remain in the churches they were made for.

The *långhuskyrka* [church with longitudinal floorplan] with a single bell tower remained the most typical form of church throughout the 18th century, preferably with a white, brightly lit interior. Decorative features were often restricted to altarpieces, pulpits, and organ fronts. For more important functions or locations, baroque building types such as cruciform, domed churches remained popular. Such churches were also important focal points in town planning, standing at the ends of streets or impressing viewers from high atop the townscape.

The most splendid of the new church interiors was the Royal Chapel in the palace in Stockholm. Tessin's plans were only slightly adapted by Hår-



Figure 99 Elias Martin, *The Christening of the Duke of Småland* (Hertigen av Smålands dop) 1782, oil on canvas, 223,5 x 195 cm. The ceiling paintings by Taraval are visible, as is the altarpiece, conceived by Tessin the Younger and given its final form by Sergel. The silver baptismal font and the silver throne date from the 17th century and are used for royal functions to this day. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

leman, while Taraval's ceiling paintings incorporated an international, monumental Rococo style. In the painting *The Christening of the Duke of Småland* (Hertigen av Smålands dop), *Elias Martin* (1739–1818) gives a beautiful idea of the church in function, dramatically lit and with a sense

of a divine presence radiating from the altarpiece's sculpted image of the Agony in the Garden (fig. 99).

In spite of increased control by the Board of Works, local church building techniques and styles continued to flourish, especially far from the capital. Interpretations of Rococo and Neo-Classicism were integrated with existing traditions, as in Vemdalen church, designed by the local builder *Olof Månberg* (1714–1767) and like many country churches built entirely of wood (fig. 100). After 1772, Gustav III's interest in and control of architecture extended to projects far from the capital, including administrative buildings, schools, and churches. One example of a master builder far from the capital who adapted to the new taste was *Jacob Rijf* (1753–1808), who came from a family of several generations of master builders active in northern Sweden and Finland. Like his predecessors, he was taught by his father,



Figure 100 Olof Månberg, Vemdalen Church, 1763. Photo: Arild Vågen, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

but in order to master the approved neo-classical style he also studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

Learning and collecting

The quest for useful knowledge contributed to the flowering of the natural sciences during the Age of Liberty. Knowledge and objects moved in a wide network of scholars, patrons, and amateurs, not least the many clergymen who took an interest in natural sciences. There was no conflict between modern science and faith; the study of nature was the study of God's creation and His greatness. Many collections were amassed of natural history (including living plants and animals), scientific instruments, and mechanical models. In 1745, The Royal Academy of Sciences (Kungl. Vetenskapsakademien, founded in 1739) began the construction of the Stockholm Observatory, which was given a prominent location on one of the hills of the capital. The building had practical functions and contained the Academy's library, scientific instruments, and a cabinet of natural history, but it also represented and glorified the network of research and patronage that had been formalized in the Academy.

Collections of coins, inscriptions, vessels, and works of art, especially from Roman times, testify to a continued interest in the Classical heritage, which was also a given point of reference in contemporary debate. For much of the 18th century, historical, literary, and moral associations were perhaps the most significant properties of antiquities. With the rise of Neo-Classicism, aesthetic aspects became more important, and sculptures from antiquity in particular became even more sought after by collectors. In Rome, Gustav III managed to buy large-size representations of Apollo and the Muses, and most importantly a newly discovered statue of Endymion, an acquisition that gave him considerable European prestige.

Collections could represent considerable monetary and cultural value, and much thought and money went into presenting them to their best advantage. Principles varied, from strictly systematic displays to more decorative schemes where objects such as shells, corals, classical bronzes, and beautifully bound books were combined with carved and gilded interiors. Gustav III intended to make his classical sculptures the centre of an enor-



Figure 101 Pehr Hilleström (1732–1816), *The Gallery of the Muses in the Royal Museum* (Musernas galleri i Kongl. Museum) 1790s, oil on canvas, 86 x 120 cm. The Endymion can be seen in the foreground of the gallery, which was located in the Royal Palace and designed by Carl Fredrik Sundvall (1754–1831). Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

mous neo-classical palace at Haga. After his death, they were displayed in the first public Swedish museum, known as the Royal Museum (Kongl. Museum), where especially the *Endymion* was fervently admired. The Museum's director Carl Fredrik Fredenheim (1748–1803) described vividly how in the night-time moonlight bathed the image of the beautiful youth, who according to Greek mythology was beloved by the Moon Goddess Selene: 'The chaste moon, who every time she lights up the windows […], seems to fall in love once again with her former darling' (fig. 101).

Collections of paintings usually did not have the didactic functions of the 'learned' objects discussed above. An art historical approach existed, but was not typical; the usual response was aesthetic pleasure, and sometimes reflections on the subject or the moral content of the painting. Contemporary art

was often appreciated for its decorative qualities as well as the painter's skill and was incorporated into decorative schemes as overdoors and wall panels. Old Master paintings and drawings were admired as demonstrations of the genius of their creators and could carry considerable prestige. Gustav III gathered his Old Master paintings in a gallery in the Royal Palace, and after his death this display was incorporated into the Royal Museum. 18th century French and Swedish art, on the other hand, was not part of the nascent canon and was thus excluded from this context.

Commerce

Especially in Stockholm, but also in other large towns, there was a lively market for art, furniture, and other luxury goods, and most artists were also part of this commercial life, though not always wishing to appear so. Shopping could be an education in taste, as is visualized in the advertising card of the Precht brothers, showing a fashionable interior over a text in French, which states that in the Precht shop one can find many kinds of goods in various materials and that jewellery and silverware was made on the premises.

Until the 1760s, there was strong political support for the early and often quite small factories known as manufactories. The production of textiles was of great importance, as the import of fabrics, especially luxury fabrics, was seen as injurious to state finances. Following the prevailing pattern of importing skills rather than goods, the Manufactory Office invited large numbers of French silk weavers to establish themselves in Sweden. Later, several families of textile printers were the first Jewish immigrants. Another important industry was ceramics. Rörstrand and Marieberg were among the many European manufactories striving to produce true porcelain after the Meissen manufactory had successfully mastered the technique in the 1720s. The Swedish enterprises mainly produced fine faïence, including the tile ovens that became inevitable decorative features in well-to-do homes (fig. 102).

High-quality goods were also produced within the traditional guilds. Changes in fashion emanating from the elite were quickly picked up by workshop masters, but they also had their own networks, which could stretch over several countries and generations. Ambitious journeymen



Figure 102 Marieberg manufactory, Tile Oven at Sturehov, ca 1780. Photo: Holger Ellgaard, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 103 Table by Georg Haupt made in 1796 after drawings by William Chambers (1723–1796), veneer of rosewood, lemonwood, ebony etc, over oak and deal; drawer of mahogany, polished mineral samples inset into the top, h. 75 cm. Victoria & Albert Museum, London. The table was made during Haupt's London years and bears the inscription (in French): 'This table was commissioned and designed by Mr Chambers, First Architect to His British Majesty & made by his very obedient servant George Haupt, Swedish. London 4th February 1769.' The Swedish-English architect William Chambers was an important contact for Swedes in London.

travelled abroad and brought back first-hand knowledge of new trends and techniques. The most well-known of the cabinet-makers of the Gustavian period, *Georg Haupt* (1741–1784), studied with important makers in Paris and London (fig. 103). Many others might be mentioned, in the guilds as well as the manufactories, including cabinetmakers, and makers of chairs, clocks, picture frames, and mirrors as well as silversmiths, glass-blowers, silk-weavers, and modellers and painters of ceramics. The state's ambitions for high-quality production was amply fulfilled, though admittedly not all enterprises proved financially successful.

While public careers and official appointments in the fields of arts and



Figure 104 Ulrica Fredrica Pasch, *Self-portrait* (Självporträtt), oil on canvas, 69 x 55 cm, ca 1770. Photo: Leif Mattsson, The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm.

architecture were closed to women, they could be active within the guilds and manufactories, though a systematic study of their contribution is missing. While the norm was that the male members of the family plied the trade, there were certainly exceptions, such as *Ulrica Fredrica Pasch* (1735–1796), who belonged to a well-established family of painters originating in the painter's guild. She and her brother *Lorentz Pasch the Younger* (1733–1805) received their first training from their father. While the brother completed his training abroad, the sister was obliged to stay at home, but still had a very successful career as a portrait painter and became the century's only professional female member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (fig 104).

A highly prestigious commercial project was the Swedish East India Company, founded in 1731. Most of the goods brought back from China were re-exported, but the Company still had a notable impact on Swedish material culture. Porcelain changed from being expensive collector's items



Figure 105 Manufactory in Canton, China, Pieces from a service commissioned by Carl Linnaeus, porcelain. Gustavianum, Uppsala University Museum, Uppsala.

to consumer goods for the elite. Services and individual pieces were commissioned, with monograms, coats of arms, or other details sent out through the company to serve as models for the Chinese craftsmen. An unusual decorative motif can be seen on the service ordered by Carl Linnaeus; each piece bears a botanical depiction of the Linnea, a woodland plant named after the famous scholar (fig. 105). Goods produced in a 'Chinese style' for export to Europe were still adapted to this market, but in Europe they were perceived as genuinely Chinese and used as inspiration for *chinoiserie* interior decoration, furniture, ceramics and garden pavilions. This fashion left its mark in many Swedish manor houses and gardens.

Commerce not only resulted in production, but also in wealth that was spent on patronage and building projects. Wealthy ironmasters developed model estates, typically including a church, manor house, worker's housing, and other necessary buildings, arranged according to a strict hierarchy and orientated on a straight village street. The owners belonged to the financial and cultural elite, and they commissioned buildings and interiors from leading architects and artists, and the furnishings could include important libraries and collections. Ironmasters also commissioned depic-

tions of their works and estates – from images of themselves in park settings to realistic portrayals of the work in the mines and forges. Elias Martin and *Pehr Hilleström* (1732–1816) were the most well-known painters working in these genres.

Drottningholm – an era and its legacy

While many places and objects might seem to embody different aspects of the Swedish 18th century, Drottningholm Palace and the surrounding estate is perhaps the most representative of the elite culture of the era. Drottningholm also demonstrates the creative aspects of patronage and the role of amateurs in 18th century visual culture.

Ulrika Eleonora the Younger inherited Drottningholm in 1715 and continued to develop the palace as a memorial to the Pfalz dynasty. The galleries of Charles X Gustav and Charles XI were finished, and a portrait gallery of the generals of Charles XII was added. The portrait gallery also had a political edge. The queen could not accept the new constitution, and she saw the officers of her father and brother as models of virtuous loyalty, in contrast to the nobles of the Age of Liberty who had usurped the position that rightfully belonged to the king.

The next queen at Drottningholm was Lovisa Ulrika. From 1745 until she ceded the estate to Gustav III 32 years later, the palace and its environs were the site for her and her husband Adolf Fredrik's most ambitious building projects. The baroque palace visualized a conception of royal dignity and power that was in perfect accord with Lovisa Ulrika's political views, and she changed very little of the existing interiors; instead, she appropriated their symbolism and splendour. Her most important additions to the existing palace were her library and study and cabinets for her collections of natural curiosities, coins and medals, and antiquities. The rooms were redecorated several times; in their final state, they bear witness to the continued importance of classical antiquity for learning, literature, and the arts (fig. 106). During her lifetime, they were a framework for and representation of the learned Queen; after her death, they were to be monuments to her memory. The most important works from Lovisa Ulrika's



Figure 106 Jean Eric Rehn, The Library at Drottningholm, designed ca 1760. The symbolism and inscriptions reflect the ideals of the Queen, which also informed the Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities that she founded in 1753. Photo: Holger Ellgaard, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

collection of paintings hung in the cabinets next to the library and were displayed according to schools, which was then a recent innovation in art display. While not formally open to the public, her collections were available to scholars and students and could also be visited by tourists of a certain social standing.

Outside the palace, the planting of the baroque garden was finished, and a separate theatre, designed by Adelcrantz, was erected for the plays, operas, and ballets that were an inevitable part of court culture throughout Europe. Farther away from the palace and hidden from sight is the Chinese Pavilion (figs. 107, 108). It was inspired by contemporary French, German, and English *chinoiserie*, but the main building also contained a large number of many kinds of Chinese artefacts (fig. 109). Some had been import-

ed by the Swedish East India Company, but there was also precious porcelain with a provenance in collections of the previous century. Certain objects, such as a large number of dolls dressed in costumes of classes and professions, provided information on Chinese society. Despite its eclectic and (to more knowledgeable eyes) far from authentic character, the Chinese Pavilion can be interpreted not only as an exoticism, but as a display of knowledge about Chinese art and technology. As such, it testifies to the serious interest in China that existed alongside the fascination with its colourful visual culture. Near the Pavilion, a miniature manufactory town was established, with the production of, for example, fine gunsmith's work and silk weaving. Cultivation of silkworms and production of raw silk was also attempted. Canton, as the factory town was suitably known, thus reflected the general interest of the period in establishing new types of production as well as luxury goods.

The architects Hårleman, Adelcrantz, and *Jean Eric Rehn* (1717–1793) as well as the foremost craftsmen of the day were active at Drottningholm,



Figure 107 Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz, The Chinese Pavilion at Drottningholm, designed by Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz, completed ca 1769. Photo: Holger Ellgaard, Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

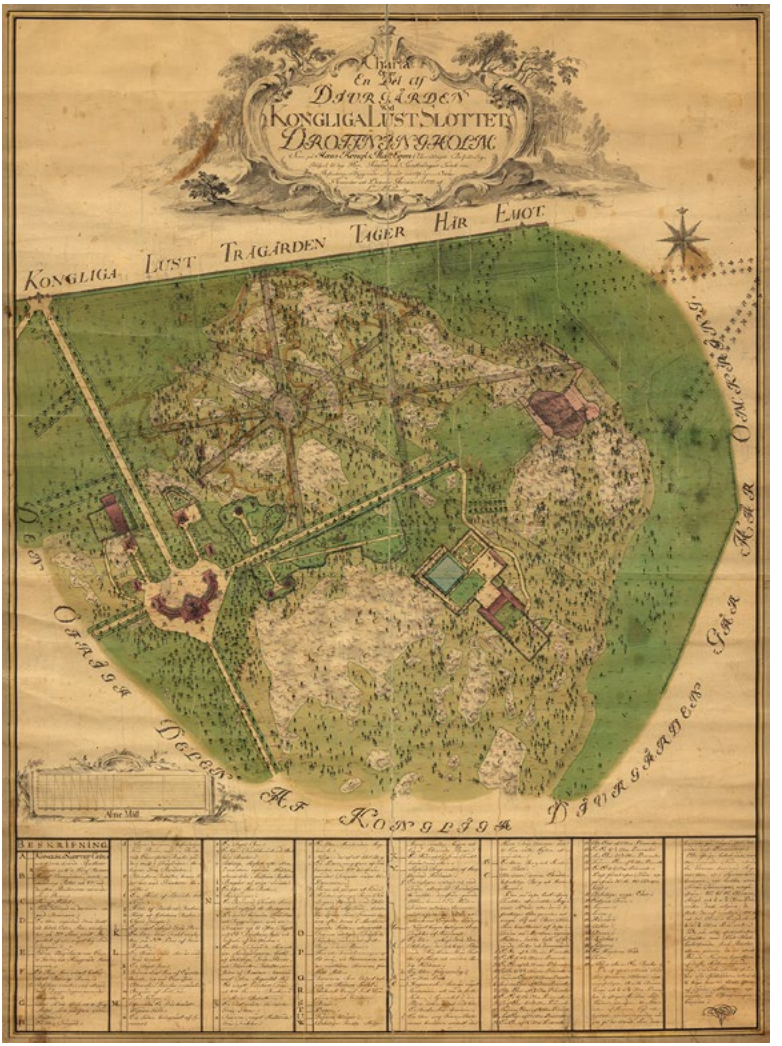

Figure 108 Lars R. Kökeritz (1741-1824), *Map of the Chinese Pavilion and Environs* (Karta över Kina slott med omgivningar), 1779, pen, ink and watercolour on paper, 97 x 72,7 cm. Courtesy of the Royal Palace Archives, Swedish National Archives, Stockholm. The very detailed map shows the main building with wings to the left, and to the right the fish pond and menagerie. Smaller pavilions, aviaries and garden plots can be discerned around these buildings. The straight walks were originally, and very unusually, planted with rowans, but had been replaced with chestnut trees. Mulberry trees planted here and elsewhere at Drottningholm provided food for the Queen's silkworms.



Figure 109 Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz, Jean Eric Rehn, after an engraving in William Chambers' *Designs of Chinese Buildings…* (1757), The Red Cabinet at The Chinese Pavilion, 1760s. The walls are covered with Chinese 18th century panels made for export, and like the Japanese cabinet are parts of the authentic pieces of lacquer recorded in an inventory of the Pavilion in 1777, and still in place today. A few of Lovisa Ulrika's Chinese costume dolls are visible on the shelves of the cabinet. The over-door is a European lacquer imitation. Photo: © Alexis Daflos, Kungl. Hovstaterna, Stockholm.

but the estate as a whole was the creation of Lovisa Ulrika and Adolf Fredrik. Their active participation is well documented, and the various projects reflect their tastes and interests. Drottningholm also became a political tool, visually representing the Royal Couple as rulers of a model kingdom encompassing the glory of the past, the learning and taste of the present, and enterprise in manufacture and innovation in agriculture.

Here, Adolf Fredrik and Lovisa Ulrika could appear as the enlightened despots they aspired to be throughout the entire realm of Sweden. The palace and its environments also provided opportunities for their leisure activities, such as gardening, turning, and embroidery. Lovisa Ulrika, her ladies in waiting, and her daughter Sofia Albertina embroidered wall panels and chair covers for several interiors. Needlework was an appreciated art form, and the Queen bequeathed embroidery to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, which also received several amateur needlewomen as honorary members.

When Gustav III took over Drottningholm, it was the most splendid and up-to-date of the Royal country residences. For him as for Adolf Fredrik and Lovisa Ulrika, the layers of history provided a suitably royal background, and the theatre and Chinese Pavilion continued to be important settings for court life. The creative personal participation of the patron was equally evident during Gustav's time as it was during the time of his parents. After the Russian war in 1788–90, the King commissioned eleven monumental paintings from Desprez, intended for a gallery commemorating himself as a warrior. Though never realized, this project was clearly in dialogue with the galleries devoted to the exploits of Gustav's Caroline predecessors. Gustav III's most important contribution to Drottningholm was to be the landscape park, comprising meandering canals, informally planted trees, flowery meadows, and a labyrinth, as well as ornamental buildings. The project was referred to as an English park, but the King was more inspired by the eclectic French version of landscape gardening. Plans developed as Gustav III received new impressions during his travels, but many projects remained on paper. Among the many types of buildings built or planned, the Gothic Tower, begun in 1792, testifies to the King's interest in chivalry and a mysticism with medieval trappings. In the same spirit, the King arranged elaborate tournaments with temporary stage sets at Drottningholm.

The rediscovery of the 18th century began in earnest in the early decades of the 20th century, and the art, architecture, literature, learned culture, and social arts of the period have since come to be regarded as a high-water mark in Swedish cultural history. This view has gradually become widely accepted and was confirmed when Drottningholm became Swe-

den's first World Heritage Site in 1991. The choice was appropriate, since Drottningholm as an historic environment and one-time setting for an elegant and literary court culture has been important in the development of present-day perceptions of the era. The court theatre is especially significant in this context. It had long been out of use when it was rediscovered in the 1920s, and was then perceived as completely unchanged. Descriptions of the theatre from this time alternate between art historical analysis and suggestive evocations of visual effects and experiences of authenticity. This participatory and sometimes emotional reception has remained a feature of the cultural appreciation of the era, and probably contributes to its appeal. Its continued fascination can be seen in many 20th century and contemporary contexts, from books, films, and theatre to interior decoration, fashion photography, and the re-enactment groups who delight tourists visiting Drottningholm, Haga, and other heritage sites. Of Sweden's historical epochs, only the Middle Ages have a comparable attraction.

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Art and Society in the 19th century

Hedvig Brander Jonsson

In May 1807, the Linnaeanum in the Botanical Garden of Uppsala was inaugurated. May was the month of birth of Carolus Linnaeus, who was born in 1707. This occasion, and the inauguration one year later of the sculpture representing King Gustav III on Skeppsbron in Stockholm, can be seen as the two final manifestations of the Gustavian era. The celebrations seem like retrospective idyllic feasts in Sweden, a country, that will soon afterwards experience radical changes. The armies of Napoleon move victorious over Europe, and the recently crowned emperor is now to be regarded as the master of Europe. In two years Sweden will lose Finland in a war against Russia. It was a national tragedy as Finland had belonged to Sweden since the early Middle Ages.

Originally a palace garden from the 17th century, the Botanical Garden was donated to the university at Uppsala by Gustav III in 1787. An orangery was erected to serve as a winter repository for delicate plants and trees, for botanical lectures, and most of all as a memorial building for Carolus Linnaeaus (fig. 110). In 1807 the building was completed, based on drawings by two architects, the first being plans drawn up by *Olof Tempelman* (1745–1816) and then later plans from *Louis Jean Despréz* (1743–1804). It is clear that the Linnaeanum was inspired by ancient Greek and Roman temple architecture, and this is most visible in the Doric portico directed towards the castle. The long façade on the south side is dissolved by high rectangular windows to catch the sunlight and as a source of heating. In other parts the building is characterised by smooth, mostly windowless



Figure 110 The Linnaeanum, main building in the Botanical garden in Uppsala, inaugurated in 1807. East façade with Doric portico. Photo: Riggwelter, Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

walls and distinct geometrical forms according to the refined ideal of the international style of the neoclassical period.

The Linnaeanum was planned for practical and pedagogic functions, but also to honour the most important Swedish scientist, Carolus Linnaeus. The task of executing a portrait sculpture of this giant of learning went to *Johan Niclas Byström* (1783–1848), a Swedish sculptor who lived in Rome and satisfied his Swedish customers from there. During most of his professional life, he worked in Italy, owned houses and a marble quarry, and was successful and well paid. The representation of Linnaeus can be compared to ancient Roman portraiture, but in this case, it is not a bust but a whole-length image of a man sitting on a postament decorated with plants (fig. 111).

Linnaeus is depicted with short-cut hair, although in portraits of him from the 18th century he wears a wig, according to male fashion of the time. However, the short-cut hair-style corresponds better to Roman practice and to the male ideal of the early 19th century, as does the imaginatively draped dress, which is comfortably unbuttoned. He is turning over the pages of a large book, which is intended to remind of his great scholarly

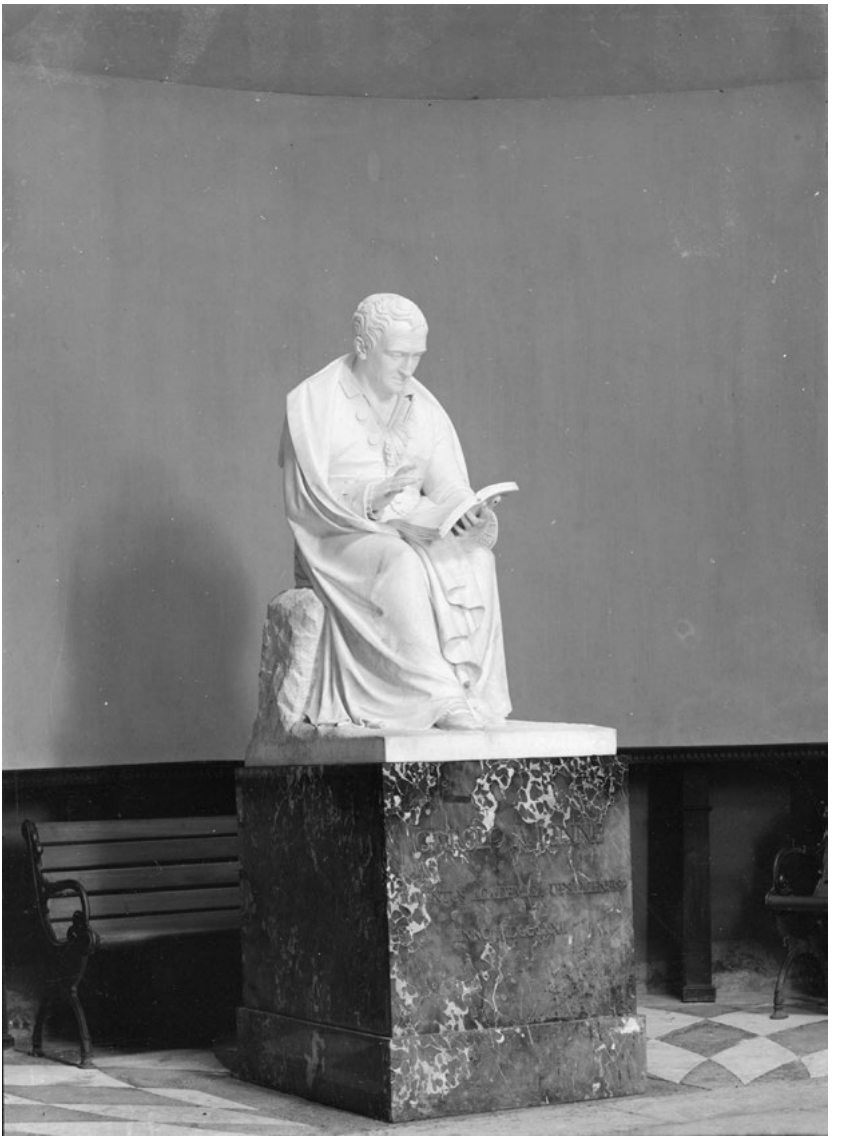

Figure 111 *Carolus Linnaeaus*, marble sculpture by Johan Niclas Byström, inaugurated in 1829. In the posthumous representation the scientist is depicted in Roman portraiture style. Photo: Henri Osti, Upplandsmuseet, Public Domain.

work, *Systema naturae* (1735). Inaugurated in 1829, the sculpture was placed in a vaulted niche, like an apse, in the vast hall inside the portico. Later on, and for many years, the Linnaean sculpture was exhibited in the entrance hall of Carolina Rediviva, the university library, before it was brought back to its original apse and exclusively displayed in the newly restored hall during the Linnaeus anniversary celebration in 2007.

A new dynasty

Despite its location at the periphery of Europe, Sweden was sorely wounded through the Napoleonic wars, which in several ways resulted in a restructuring of the map of Europe. The loss of Finland in 1809 after many centuries of kinship was difficult to endure. Although Norway was to be joined to Sweden some years later, the Swedish people faced a new situation that required new ideas and new ventures. One saying was to 'within the borders of Sweden re-conquer Finland', i.e. to see the possibilities within one´s own country as a compensation for the loss. Sweden suffered from a poor economy at the time, but the heir to the throne, the French marshal Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, invested parts of his own fortune and thus contributed to strengthening the national finances. He inherited the throne in 1818 under the name of Charles XIV John and remained king until his death in 1844. His reign was characterised as a period of recovery and stability. Within a few decades, the population grew in number by about 50%, due to 'peace, vaccination and potatoes', no war, better health conditions, and better nutrition, based on agricultural reforms and improved farming, which in turn contributed to the evolution of the countryside.

Public schooling was introduced in 1842. The 19th century saw the rise of the importance of education, new skills and occupations, and a noticeable professionalisation of society. Secondary schools and other institutions for higher education were built and used. But there was also, already under the reign of Charles XIV John, and especially among artists and intellectuals, a severe criticism of the king and the authorities as autocratic, conservative and a hindrance to social evolution. These kinds of opinions were clearly expressed through the growing press and in associated printed imagery and caricatures (fig. 112).



Figure 112 Ferdinand Tollin, *Rabid radicals attacking the Stockholm city hall in the 19th of July 1838* (Rabulisternas anfall på Stockholms stadshus 19 juli 1838), lithography. Ferdinand Tollin was a Stockholm depicter with a critical eye when he rendered political conflicts during the reign of Charles XIV John. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

The establishment of the new dynasty is the subject of a painting by *Fredric Westin* (1782–1862) titled simply *The Bernadotte family portrait* (Bernadottska Familjetavlan) from 1837 (fig. 113). The genre is a well-known type of royal portraiture, famous examples of which are Goya´s portrait of the Spanish royal family (1800) and David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl´s portrait of Charles XI and his family (1683). The dynastic meaning is obvious, but at the same time Westin´s representation can be compared to family portraits of the bourgeoisie and the cult of kinship and friendship of the Romantic period.

The royal family is depicted in a grand hall of the Haga palace, formed by



Figure 113 Fredric Westin, *The Bernadotte Family* (Bernadottska Familjetavlan), 1837, oil painting, 338 x 400 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. The portrait shows three generations of the new royal dynasty, as a visualization of grandeur and legitimacy.

classical architecture, grouped along the pictorial surface under an image of the national symbolic figure of Svea. She is depicted with her lion and surrounded by ancient deities such as Minerva (wisdom) and Hercules (strength). As if on his way out of the room the king´s adoptive father, Charles XIII, is represented in a white marble bust. He is a legitimising prerequisite for the new royal family at the same time as he is a reminder of the past. Three generations of the living family are shown. The royal ladies wear dresses of heavy silk and airy laces and tulle, while the men are burdened by richly decorated uniforms. Through the painting you can follow a band of hands, linking together the adults with the children, who are the future.

Even if criticism of the authorities could be severe with traits of impatience, the confidence in the nation, its historical heritage, and future possibilities was common and far-reaching, manifested to a great deal in an outlook on nature, landscape and rural life. This was also expressed by artistic means, and Swedish artists had a long tradition of going abroad.

In the middle of the 19th century, Düsseldorf in Germany was regarded as an inspiring meeting-place where several Swedish artists stayed for years, painting Swedish and Norwegian landscapes from sketches made during summer visits and wanderings. However, the Düsseldorf paintings were far from the artistic ideals that the so-called 'Opponents' (Opponenterna) stood for at the end of the 19th century and the paintings were then and later the objects of many deprecatory judgements. However, recent historiographical writing has expressed a greater understanding for this kind of painting because of its contemporaneity, narrative qualities, and careful documentation of folk life and the built environment and for being appreciated by a large audience in its time.

In the painting *The celebration of Midsummer at Säfstaholm* (Midsommardans på Säfstaholm) from 1825 *Johan Gustaf Sandberg* (1782–1854) depicts a sunny and happy life in the countryside, as it could be seen on festive occasions (fig. 114). The large manor house is visible in the background and so is a glimpse of the gentle folk. But a number of the servants of the estate have the leading part together with local people from the area.



Figure 114 Johan Gustaf Sandberg, *The Celebration of Midsommer at Säfstaholm* (Midsommardans på Säfstaholm), 1825, oil on canvas. A sunny scene depicting the bright side of country life and emphasizing rural festival costume. Photo: Voith Paper Fabrics Högsjö AB.

Together they amuse themselves around the maypole decorated with flowers. This is a genre painting depicting the farmers´ life with small scenes to catch sight of in the big composition and it is a good example of contemporary interest in anecdotic narration as well as careful documentation of rural costume.

To transform the country through building projects

Sweden was significantly provincial throughout most of the 19th century, and 9 persons out of 10 lived in the countryside. Towns were few, small, and slowly growing. However, starting in the 1860s there was a distinct change towards industrialisation, urbanisation and transformations of many of the larger towns into fully built cities. The need for functional transportation became obvious, foremost for developing trade and industry, but it also brought opportunities to make excursions and to see one´s country, nature and built environment. Some provinces were regarded as especially Swedish, e.g. Värmland as characterised by forests, ironworks, and manor houses and Dalecarlia with colourful folk costumes, naïve and expressive interior paintings and memories of the time of national liberation during the Vasa period of the 16th century. The appreciation of domestic nature and culture was an important factor throughout the whole of the 19th century.

The need for communications and more effective transport systems for goods and products from the growing Swedish industry became obvious and was the subject of much public debate in Sweden during the first half of the 19th century, in the press as well as in Parliament. A first result was the Göta Canal, a waterway to connect the Baltic coast with the West coast, to connect the capital Stockholm with the merchant and port city of Gothenburg and a band of small but growing towns and villages in between.

The Göta Canal became important for the growing steamship traffic, but as early as around the middle of the century interest and efforts were directed towards a new kind of transport system, the railway, which was to thoroughly transform Sweden in many respects. One could now travel

across most parts of the country in a comparatively short time, and a uniform national time schedule was introduced in 1878. In contrast to the Göta Canal which was financed by private means, the railway system was funded by the Government, which had to borrow huge amounts of money from abroad.

The railway was the future. Products from the industries could be transported and sold much more quickly, and this new-found mobility led to drastic changes in the demographic structure of the country. In addition. a new kind of tourism became available for larger portions of the population, and there was increased interest in the nature and landscapes that were characteristic of different places and regional cultures. 'Know your country' was the motto of STF, the Swedish tourist organisation, founded in 1885. It is still a strong organisation with more than 300,000 members and youth hostels all over the country. Journeys, outdoor life, and wanderings were encouraged and were offered to those among the growing population who could afford to travel and who could appreciate staying primitively in faraway places. Access to domestic nature and cultural events was thus available in new ways for Swedes.

Administration of the traffic system, which was controlled by the state, was carried out by a new government authority that was responsible for the construction and repair of roads, railways, canals, harbours, bridges, and ferries, and for their constant maintenance.

Church building was, of course, an important task for architects during the entire 19th century. A large number of elderly churches consisted of medieval or early modern buildings that were too small in relation to the growing population, were often in bad shape and were sometimes misplaced considering that the new villages and towns were growing along the newly built railways. The obvious increase in population made everyone believe in continuous growth. The aim for church building was 'to prepare room for all citizens in spacious and dignified churches'. The prime example of the new scale of this enterprise is the new church in Kristinehamn, inaugurated in 1858 (fig. 115).

The town of Kristinehamn was financially advancing as a shipping harbour for the important iron works in the western parts of the mining district (Bergslagen). It is worth noting that the very first railway in Swe-



Figure 115 Kristinehamn church, planed by Carl Georg Brunius and inaugurated in 1858, is a monumental building demonstrating 'medieval styles' as recommended by the architect. Photo: Janee, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

den was constructed along this road. From an architectural history point of view, the building process and its result marks the transition from the older type of church building in classic style, often with a centralised ground plan and ancient types of ornament, to the long-naved plans and building elements imitating those of the Middle Ages. Indeed, the first proposal for the church of Kristinehamn was a neoclassical model, but it was considered too difficult and expensive to realise. The next step of the building committee was to ask the architect and professor in Greek language in Lund, *Carl Georg Brunius* (1792–1869), a programmatic advocate of 'medieval styles', to propose an alternative project. His drawings were not accepted by The Board of Works (Överintendentsämbetet), but they were approved by King Oscar I, who had the last word concerning church building projects.

The building process was long and expensive, and it was made more difficult by the dimensions of the building and technical problems, but when the church was finally finished it drew public attention and wonder. A long darkish nave directs to a luminous choir, a concept that had been introduced in Germany under the notion 'die herrliche Perspective', the glorious perspective. The mysterious dusk is brought about because there are no windows in the nave, which would have been normal in a basilica like this one. The extraordinarily bright choir was created through lofty windows with clear glass. Outside, tall narrow mouldings enclose the portal and contribute to the impression of magnificent height. The western façade seems like an orchestra of different neo-Gothic forms. Still, the building as a whole has a strong horizontal line because of the elongated edifice and the comparatively low towers. It has been said that the proportions coincide with that of the cathedral in Lund, before the restoration by *Helgo Zettervall* (1831–1907), a building Brunius had seen daily.

Brunius also made the drawings for the interior, where he throughout used ornaments and decorations with Christian symbols. He did not want any pictorial representations, 'Images become idols', he uttered in 1855. By avoiding images, he joined with the neo-classical aesthetics concerning church interiors.

After more than ten years of construction, the church was inaugurated in 1858. It appeared to be the most magnificent ecclesiastical building in

Sweden. So it was described in *Tidskrift för Byggnadskonst och Ingenjörvetenskap* [Journal for Building and Engineering] in 1860. Soon afterwards, however, much of the church interior was changed. The clear windows brought about an unpleasantly sharp light for the congregation, and they were changed into glass paintings in 1900. In the 1930s, Brunius' altar arrangement was replaced by the old altarpiece from 1717, and the plain pulpit by a Baroque one, both once belonging to the older church. Today the church of Kristinehamn is an architectural creation in the medieval style, but the furnishing represents both older and newer historical strata.

The 19th century in Sweden and Europe was characterised by a continuous professionalization, which required education. Many schools and institutions on different levels were erected, and their forms followed after their functions and importance. The highest level of education, the university, was emphasized through lavishly outfitted new buildings in Lund and Uppsala, and they both express the historical importance of learning and its place in the European scholarly tradition.

The university building in Lund was designed by Helgo Zettervall, who was the most influential architect in Sweden during the latter part of the 19th century. He had completed a thorough restoration of the cathedral in Lund starting in the 1860s and would later be in charge of several enterprises of this kind. The cathedral in Uppsala is the most well-known example of an ideology for restorations aiming at creating ideal normative types within the period style to which the building was attributed. For churches, the so-called medieval styles were considered appropriate, but for buildings intended for education and culture classical styles or Renaissance style were preferred. For Zettervall, it was not important to reconstruct the original appearance of a building, but to show what a building could have looked like if it had expressed a particular architectural ideal in a correct way. This view corresponded to opinions and practice in a large part of Europe, e.g. in France where it was clearly on display in the works of Viollet-le-Duc (fig. 116).

The university building in Lund, completed in 1882, stands out like a palace of erudition in its white plaster habit. Zettervall has directed classical elements into a monumental main façade. Tall columns wear the entablement of the central part, from where sphinxes have a sweeping view of



Figure 116 Lund University, main building by Helgo Zettervall, completed in 1882. The white façade has a richness of strictly organized classical elements as a manifestation of erudition and learning in the ancient tradition. Photo: Mikael Risedal.

the town. Inside the grand hall, there are still more expressions of this praise of the antique. Grey plastered pillars carry tall Ionic columns and the ceiling is a barrel vault, a symphony in white, blue and gold. In the apse the rather plain lecturer's desk is placed, from where words of wisdom and eloquence will pour out to the audience and lift them up towards that world of beauty and ideas, which the upper part of the hall expresses.

Railway stations and hospitals

Travelling by train became a common habit, and the network of railways led to radical changes in town plans, the structure of small places, and the built environment. Railway stations became important tasks for architects. The first one of extensive dimensions in Sweden was erected in Gothenburg in 1856-1858, after drawings by *Adolf Wilhelm Edelsvärd* (1824–1919). Railway stations had become his main work, and he drew 41 models or design prototypes for 210 railway stations all over the country and a further

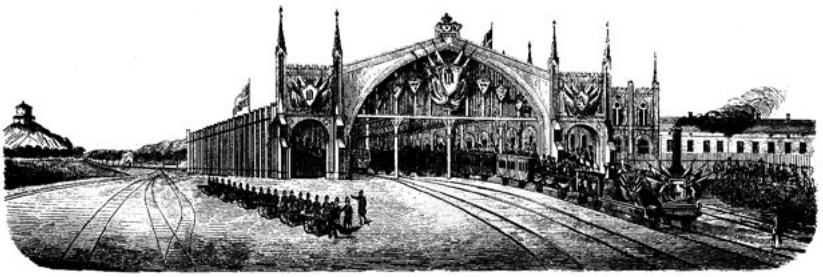

Figure 117 Gothenburg Central Station was the first grand railway station, built in the 1850s after drawings by Adolf Wilhelm Edelsvärd, who designed hundreds of buildings for the expanding railway net. The entrance of the station hall opens to the west part of the city. Xylography of the inauguration of the station in October 4 1858, published in *Illustrerad Tidning*.

87 unique station buildings. According to Edelsvärd´s program, the railway should be drawn along the outer edge of the town. The main building of the station should be magnificent and impressive facing the city or town and in front of the building there should be an open spacious place with adjoining broad streets. The grounds could take forms such as a park with planted trees (fig. 117).

The railway station of Gothenburg was placed in a marshy and unattractive part of the city, with low reputation. The large poorhouse with a thousand inhabitants was situated there, as was the regional jail, and earlier the town pillory. The construction of the station building brought a radical change to the status of the area and made this into one of the earliest examples of gentrification in Sweden. The station was two-storied in yellow brick stone with neo-Gothic details and a protruding central part and side parts. The symmetrical plan was repeated in the interior with its broad entrance hall, and beyond it a ticket office and waiting rooms for prominent persons and for people with lower social status on their respective sides. The upper floor held offices and housing for the stationmaster. Immediately behind the station building was the grander and broader station hall. This layout became the model for many other stations in Sweden.

As the railway traffic and the demands for better stations has grown, the Gothenburg railway station has been rebuilt, the first time in the 1870s by

Edelsvärd himself, later on in the 1920s, and most recently in the early 2000s, with a large addition built behind the station hall and the main building.

Another consequence of the transformation of travelling culture was hotel building, and in many cases, these were monumental houses placed at the biggest square of the town or close to the railway station. In the older small-scale society, when people travelled by horse and coach there was an organised system with inns and minor houses offering simple beds and meals. Every village had to keep an inn, but from the middle of the 19th century this system was increasingly called into question and in 1878 finally abolished.

The new accommodations that were erected in the growing cities and towns were distinguished buildings that offered not only comfortable bedrooms and savoury meals for travelling guests, but they also had large rooms for official entertainments and parties. These kinds of halls were welcomed by the developing middle class. It is evident that this was a time when many architects were being commissioned to redesign townscapes to accommodate the burgeoning bourgeois culture.

Even social commitments helped to transform the general aspects of towns when different institutions for care were erected, hospitals being the most important and most frequent. Their often-monumental appearance was to correspond to contemporary demands for hygiene and good care. In Gothenburg, the Sahlgren Hospital was erected in 1849–1855 (fig. 118). It was the third hospital named after Sahlgren; the preceding two had come into being after donations in 1782 and 1823. In the middle of the 19th century the grand commission went to *Victor von Gegerfelt* (1817–1915), who became the architect as well as the master builder. Inspired by hospitals he had seen during his study tours in France and Germany, especially the public hospital in Munich, Gegerfelt devised his project plan – an oval elliptical ground plan, where semicircle parts connected to a higher central rectangular building. The second semicircle was never built as Gegerfelt was forced to leave the project in 1854 blamed for the escalating costs of the building.

Compared to its predecessors, the Sahlgren Hospital gave proof of several kinds of new ideas for better results in health care, such as good ventilation and functional rooms for surgery and medical examinations. Re-



Figure 118 The Sahlgren Hospital in Gothenburg, erected in 1849-1855, incomplete. The monumental building was designed by Victor von Gegerfelt to correspond to new ideas about hygiene and health. Lithography by unknown artist, 1855. Published by Meyer & Köster Lith. Atel., Göteborg. Photo: Project Runeberg, Public Domain.

garding architectural style, the building represented a general European tradition with horizontal lines of round arched windows in the semi-circular part and demonstrating increasing value in the central parts, where the doctors´ medical and surgical work was performed, by using windows of different sizes arranged in groups for monumental effect.

The health care activities went on until 1900, when another new public Sahlgren Hospital was completed. After a period of use for certain minor types of health and social care, the von Gegerfelt building is at present used by Gothenburg University.

Landscape painting

As more people travelled in the 19th century and met with landscape and nature, perhaps far away from their homes, many of them sought to record what they saw in art and pictorial production. Landscape painting became one of the dominating genres from the middle of the 19th century, which is evident e.g. from the lists of exhibited works in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna).

Artists were often supported by grants from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts to continue their studies abroad, e.g. in France, and when they returned to Sweden they set about recording manifold interpretations of Swedish nature, and many of these images quickly got and still have iconic status among the population.

Several factors cooperated in the growing interest in landscape views and the geographical features of one´s own country. Romantic currents saw the beauty in the wild and sublime sceneries that had not yet been mastered or structured by human cultivation. The upheavals in Europe and the national humiliations following the Napoleonic wars led to patriotic awakenings, demanding people to strengthen themselves both morally as well as physically. This was especially evident in Germany, but it had an impact also in Sweden. People and landscape belonged together, and a rising tide of nationalism praised the natural features unique to one´s homeland.

During most of the 19th century, Sweden and Norway were united, and in Sweden interest in Nordic nature was to a great extent directed towards Norwegian fjords and mountains, and this fascination became most noticeable in the 1860s and 1870s. The social-aesthetic writer *Ellen Key* (1849–1926) took walking tour in Norway with friends in 1876 when she was 27 years old. During weeks full of hardship, they met with wilderness, ancient rural architecture, fairy tales and songs from a thousand-year tradition. The walking was a kind of liberation for the small group of female friends as they tested life in the wilderness under conditions usually only experienced by men.

Marcus Larson (1825–1864) worked within the artistic community in Düsseldorf in Germany. In 1855, he had a break-through at the world exhibition in Paris, showing the painting *Waterfall in Småland* (Vattenfall i



Figure 119 Marcus Larson, *Waterfall in Småland* (Vattenfall i Småland), 1856, oil on canvas, 190 x 233 cm. The dramatic painting with its sharp light on frightening natural phenomena became a popular favourite abroad and at home. Nationalmusem, Stockholm.

Småland). It was later sold to a collector in England, but soon after the artist made a replica for Sweden, which now hangs in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. Water is rushing through the stone landscape (fig. 119). Trees are bending, branches are broken in the hard wind, and dark clouds race across the sky creating dramatic contrasts between light and shadow. A rural settlement is only dimly visible in the background, but the point is that it is impossible to reach the tiny village – a kind of scenery first introduced by the Swedish painter Elias Martin in the late 18th century. But maybe it is not impossible to pass the stream? A small twisty gravelled road and a primitive bridge indicate human presence. The strong effect of the painting is due to the realism of details in the rendering of the peculiarities



Figure 120 Edvard Bergh, *Summer landscape* (Sommarlandskap), 1873, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 cm. A tender meditation on a Nordic landscape in its most peaceful condition. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

of nature, combined with dramatic lightening, colour contrasts and the vivid depiction of life-threatening natural phenomena.

Of quite another quality is the painting *Summer landscape* (Sommarlandskap, 1873) by *Edvard Bergh* (1828–1880). The beholder´s ideas about the rural grace and innocence of the Swedish summer are confirmed by this tender meditation on grazing cows, a calm watercourse, juicy meadow grass, and crowns of trees above slender white trunks of birches (fig. 120). The representation of broad-leaf trees, cloud formations, and glittering water are proof of more thorough studies of Nordic nature and Nordic light. *En plein air painting* was developing and older artistic traditions were little by little being replaced by new attitudes and new methods. For Nordic landscape painting, there was no use for the contrasting lights and colours and knife-edged contours that the young artists had studied and practiced in Southern Europe. Foliage of birches and soft daylight was something else and asked for new treatment of colour and another kind of brushwork. Bergh´s cows look as though they belong to the landscape, but



Figure 121 Bruno Liljefors, *Owl deep in the forest* (Uven djupt inne i skogen), 1895, oil on canvas, 166 x 191 cm. In this painting Liljefors has interpreted the fascination for the mystical mood of enigmatical animals and dark forests at the turn of the century. Photo: Hossein Sehatlou, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg.

they are also part of an agricultural system as they are owned by someone for whom they are an important source of income and nutrition.

Wildlife painting was another motif sphere developing in the last decades of the 19th century. *Bruno Liljefors* (1869–1939) devoted himself to sceneries with wild animals in their natural environments. In his paintings of close observation of animal in landscape, their camouflage and ability to blend into the environment are inspired by Charles Darwin´s radical new ideas about the survival of the fittest and translated into lyrical interpretations of wildlife, Swedish nature and Nordic qualities of light.

The environment of animals and their physical adaptions are Liljefors main themes, but from time to time these themes will get a deeper and

darker tone as in *Owl deep in the forest* (Uven djupt inne i skogen) from 1895 (fig. 121). Under the dark forest skyline and out from a secret darkish background materialises the threatening shape of a bird, an owl, who grips the beholder with its burning gaze. Its soft feathers and plumage meet with the rough cliff. The human being advances towards the motif on conditions set by the owl and by the wilderness. In his painting Liljefors expresses the experiences of the lonely walker in the forest, feelings of being witness to something close to the supernatural.

Interest in popular and rural culture did not only concern buildings and ornaments and customs and costumes, but also folklore, Nordic sagas, and mythology. This theme is visualised in a fountain project by *Johan Peter Molin* (1814–1873) – shown in a temporary building for the crafts exhibition arranged by the new Nationalmuseum in 1866 and later cast in bronze and installed in Kungsträdgården in 1873 (fig. 122). Näcken (the Neck), a male water spirit, playing an instrument, sometimes evil and tragically



Figure 122 The fountain in Kungsträdgården, Stockholm, a monumental sculpture by Johan Peter Molin, cast in 1873, shows a mythological scene with deities representing water in a vivid neo-Baroque composition. Photo: Holger Ellgaard, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

lonely, meets with the sea god Ägir and his daughters, the waves. The motif could be a tribute to Stockholm, where the lake water of Mälaren meets the Baltic Sea. Forms of waves and flows of hair enclose the figures. The moderate classicism, typical for Swedish sculpture during the earlier parts of the 19th century, is here replaced by luxuriant neo-Baroque, which is also evident in the spiral forms carrying the upper parts of the fountain.

Mobility and travelling also took place beyond the steamboats and railways that transported one across familiar countrysides and at the end of the century several scientific expeditions with global claims were undertaken that attracted much attention. One of them was the *Vega* expedition. In the 18th century the disciples of Linnaeaus had carried out similar far away, but smaller, expeditions. The *Vega* expedition had scientific purpose too. In the crew were physicians, meteorologists, hydrographs, a botanist and a zoologist. The zoologist, who specialised in fauna and animals, also undertook ethnographic studies during this journey. For example, he undertook research into the *tjuktjer* people who lived in the northeast part of Siberia.

During the winter of 1878–1879 the ship had come to a standstill, frozen in the masses of ice, before the melting season when the journey could continue. But the project was successful in the end, and the *Vega* passed through the North-East Passage and made a circumnavigation of the whole Eurasian continent. Back in Stockholm in 1880 the head of the expedition Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld and his crew had a triumphant reception and were greeted as heroes by many, including the royal family, and the area around the castle was magnificently illuminated for the occasion. As a sign of appreciation, an honorary portrait of Nordenskiöld was commissioned. The order went to *Georg von Rosen* (1843-1923) and resulted in a representation of monumental dimensions (fig. 123).

The explorer in fur coat holding a long ice-stick and a pair of binoculars is depicted standing in heroic solitude in the overwhelming landscape of the Arctic Ocean under heavy dark grey winter clouds. Behind him, far away in the background, the frozen ship with the crew is visible, underscoring the heroic importance of the leader. When the painting was first shown in 1886, it was interpreted as 'an image of the human spirit, bound by nature, but still triumphant' and as 'a glorification of the victorious



Figure 123 Georg von Rosen, *Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld*, 1886, oil on canvas, 344 x 242 cm. Having completed the North-East passage with ship and men, Nordeskiöld is here depicted as the lonely hero in the frozen lifeless seascape. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

power of human research'. The quotation is from a review by Karl Warburg, literature and art history professor in Gothenburg 1890–1900.

The General Art and Industrial Exposition of 1897

The later part of the 19th century was characterised by industrialisation and urbanisation, economic growth and the establishment of large enterprises, all of which led to optimism under King Oscar II, who reigned from 1872 to 1897. The celebration of his twenty-five years on the throne in 1897 was accompanied by the grandest art and industry exhibition hitherto carried out in Sweden. It marked a process that had transformed the small agrarian Nordic country into an at least partly urbanised nation with blossoming industries, communications, and structures for education, associations, and cultural life. However, it is important to remember that many of the people who had moved from farming life in the countryside into urban life to work in the factories were very poor, lived in misery and suffered from disease. Thus, the exhibition should be regarded as an expression of the potentialities of development in Sweden, summarised by showing what had been effected regarding 'products of art, science, industry and crafts, materials for education, and war.'

The section of the exhibition reserved for industry was to show the status and possibilities of development. It was structured into nine themes, with education and science in the first place, followed by engineering, industry, and crafts. The rest of the exhibited displayed means of transport on land and sea, electricity, war materials, and items for sport and tourism. All together it formed an extensive survey of national capability based on inventions, technical skills, and prosperity (fig. 124).

The section for art had a huge impact in the art world by displaying only contemporary art, created since 1880. Art life at this time was affected by conflicts between the artists who followed the older academic tradition and the Opponents who searched for new artistic solutions and greater individual expression. In the exhibition, both movements were represented.

Maybe the most audacious example of the new artistic ideas was presented by the controversial painting *The Neck* (Näcken) by *Ernst Josephson*



Figure 124 A description in text and illustrations of the Art and industry exhibition of 1897 was carried out by A. Hasselgren and published within covers decorated according to the aesthetic ideals of the event. Photo: Ludwig Qvarnström.

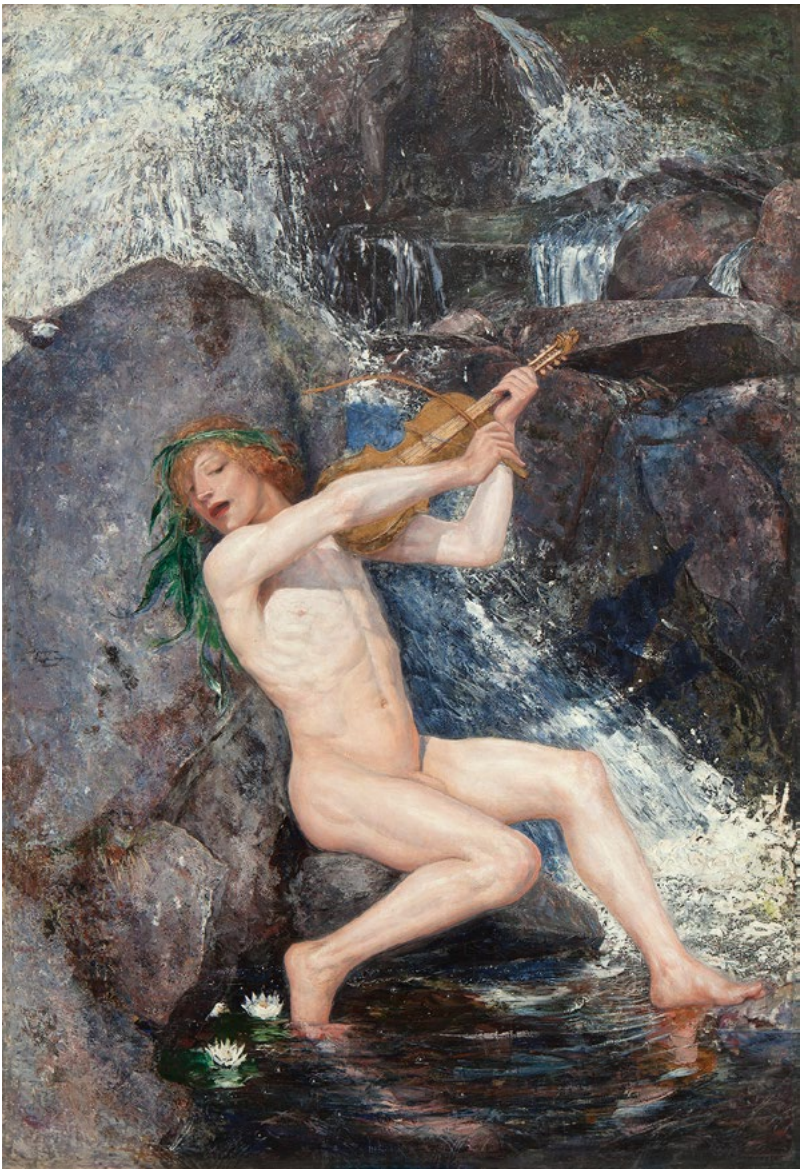

Figure 125 Ernst Josephson, *The Neck* (Näcken), 1886, oil on canvas, 216 x 150 cm. Näcken, in the Swedish folklore a male water spirit with dangerous drifts, is the protagonist in a painting by Josephson, who is underlining the disharmonious and yet challenging character of the model. Photo: Lars Engelhardt, Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde.

(1851–1906). Nationalmuseum had refused to accept the painting as a gift from Prince Eugen in 1893, but four years later it was displayed as an important work of art (fig. 125). The folklore theme here gets a pictorial interpretation with high emotional strain, where the almost artificially lightened male body is sharply outlined against a foaming waterfall and dark cliffs. Discordant tones seem to come out of the instrument, which is painfully uplifted in the center of the painting.

As mentioned, the exhibition took place the year that Oscar II celebrated a quarter of a century on the throne. The Bernadotte family which, had obtained its royal status through adoption in the 1810s, had kept it throughout the century. The royal family was very much active in organizing the exhibition. The crown prince was the head of the exhibition committee, and his younger brother Eugen, himself an artist, was responsible for the art section. The manifold and spectacular arrangements, which spread across 200,000 square meters of the most beautiful part of Stockholm, Djurgården, was to some degree an expression of traditional popular amusements and enjoyment culture, but now manifested with new and accelerating modernity.

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History Painting and National Identity in the 19th century

Emma Jönsson

The very first thing visitors encountered when entering the newly opened Nationalmuseum in Stockholm in 1866 were three monumental images of the Norse gods Odin, Thor and Balder (fig. 126) by the Swedish sculptor *Bengt Erland Fogelberg* (1786–1854). The large-scale marble statues were positioned in the grand vestibule with its impressive staircase, elaborate portals, chequered marble floor, and rich ceiling decoration. Odin and Thor were both depicted as warriors. They stood at either side of the entrance to the historical museum on the ground floor, where ancient monuments, medieval altarpieces and other historically remarkable objects were displayed, appearing to guard the nation's cultural heritage. The third sculpture of Balder, god of justice, light, and purity, was placed on the stairs, welcoming visitors with open arms to the art galleries on the upper floors. The magnificent interior and the sight of the gods instilled in the viewers a sense of awe and wonder, preparing them to enter the museum and view the nation's cultural and historical heritage with seriousness and respect.

The establishment of national museums in Western culture was inextricably linked to the formation of nation-states in Europe during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The starting point of the nation-state era is often considered to be the French Revolution in 1789, during which ideas about people's right to sovereignty and self-government quickly spread and resulted in societies moving away from the old aristocratic order. Old systems were replaced with new social and political structures based on a



Figure 126 *Entrance hall of Nationalmuseum* (Trapphuset i Nationalmuseum) xylography, *Ny Illustrerad Tidning*, 1866. Photo: Lund University Library, Lund.

democratic concept of equality. Alongside this was the German Romanticist idea that the nation and the people were one united entity. These ideas subsequently gained a foothold in Sweden, and the Swedish language and culture was thus tied to the Swedish nation. The increased national and historical consciousness can be perceived as an effort to maintain traditions and to create a sense of belonging in a rapidly changing society characterised by the industrialisation, urbanisation, and increased communications of the 19th century.

Elements of a nation's cultural heritage were exhibited in museums in an attempt to showcase and consolidate the nation-state. The public museum not only reflected the nation-state and its ideological values, but also served as an educational institution that communicated the idea of nationhood to the general public. At Nationalmuseum, the history of art could be traced from ancient Greece to contemporary Sweden. Paintings were arranged chronologically and by national schools, linking the artworks to different epochs and ethnic groups. By viewing the art in the museum, notions about the Swedish nation, in contrast to the wider world, could be established.

History painting was regarded as the highest form of academic painting at the time, and it occupied a prominent place in the museum. As the critic Lorentz Diedrichson explains, history painting was considered to require 'the deepest, most brilliant imagination, the most detailed studies, the richest life experiences, and the heartfelt inspiration of all artistic genres'. It was believed that the paintings should not only educate the viewer about the historical events depicted but also serve as moral examples, teaching people about good and bad and about right and wrong. This was something that distinguished history painting from lower genres such as portraiture and still life. Alongside the growing nationalist movement, history painting based on national subjects became increasingly popular. In Sweden, the subjects were often based on Anders Fryxell's volumes *Contributions to the Literary History of Sweden* (Berättelser ur Svenska historien) published in 1823–1879 and his vivid descriptions of significant moments in the nations history. Despite Fryxell's lack of scientific knowledge, the volumes are often considered to be the first literary work offering a comprehensive history of Sweden, and they served as a valuable source of inspiration to history painters at that time.



Figure 127 Carl Wahlbom, *Death of King Gustavus Adolphus in the battle of Lützen* (Gustav II Adolfs död i slaget vid Lützen), 1855, oil on canvas, 101 x 151 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Carl Wahlbom (1810–1858), one of Sweden's most renowned history painters, was well acquainted with Fryxell's work. While living and studying battle painting in Paris, Wahlbom had worked on illustrations for the English translation of Fryxell's chapters concerning the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus' life and death. Keen to make the illustrations authentic and historically accurate, Wahlbom went on several field trips around Europe following in Gustavus Adolphus footsteps to study the architecture, the clothing, and the visual appearances of what would have made up surroundings. The English version of the book series was never published due to the publisher's sudden bankruptcy; however, the knowledge that Wahlbom acquired from studying Fryxell's texts and Gustavus Adolphus' history would prove to be useful later in his professional career when he started portraying the events of Gustavus Adolphus life in his paintings.

Wahlbom's most famous painting – *Death of King Gustavus Adolphus in the battle of Lützen* (Gustav II Adolfs död i slaget vid Lützen) – was bought by the state in 1855 and was later displayed at Nationalmuseum (fig. 127).

The subject relates to the historical events that unfolded during the Thirty Years' War and the death of Gustavus Adolphus in the battle of Lützen in 1632. Wahlbom's dramatic portrayal of the battle depicts the moment when the Swedish king falls from his horse after being struck by a fatal blow. His fellow countryman is trying to protect him by holding on to him while still defending them both from the enemy's attack.

The horror of the war can be witnessed in the dramatic composition, the carefully rendered details and the realistic appearances of the image. The king appears at the centre of the image, amidst the tumult of the battle. In contrast to the chaotic situation and the panic that seems to have struck both men and horses, the king looks at peace with himself as he is softly falling. He is, unlike the dark enemy and the foggy background, illuminated by a glorious light. The painting evokes an almost sacred feeling, enhanced by the king's pose, which is reminiscent of Christian portrayals of Christ's descent from the cross.

Despite the realistic appearances of 19th century history painting, the images are far from being historically correct. *Death of King Gustavus Adolphus in the battle of Lützen* tells us more about the nationalistic ideas of the 19th century than the actual historical moment it depicts. The Swedish king, depicted as light-skinned and dressed in a bright costume, is portrayed as a hero as opposed to the enemy, which can be understood in contrast to the Swedish king as dark, evil, and distinctively non-Swedish. By referring to Christian iconography in the portrayal of the king, the viewers are instantly able to draw parallels between Gustavus Adolphus's death and Christ's fate and sacrifice for humanity. This image thus contributes to an understanding of the Swedish king, and by extension the Swedish nation, as something good and honourable.

In contrast to Wahlbom's glorifying portrayal of Gustavus Adolphus, *Georg von Rosen's* (1843–1923) painting *Erik XIV* (1871) presents a far less romanticised image of the Swedish king (fig. 128). Von Rosen had gained a new perspective on history painting during his travels in Europe, and he was particularly inspired by a form of history painting that was characterised by psychological undertones and by the realistic history painting practised in Munich. The subject of *Erik XIV* relates to the reign of King Erik XIV, the eldest son of Gustav Vasa, and the rivalry between two influential



Figure 128 Georg von Rosen, *Erik XIV*, 1871, oil on canvas, 274 x 355 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Swedish dynasties of the 15th and 16th centuries, the House of Vasa and the House of Sture. In 1567, Erik XIV unjustly accused members of the House of Sture of conspiring against the Crown and ordered them to be imprisoned and sentenced to death. This decision affected the king's life considerably. The king was later accused of being mentally ill, and he was dethroned in 1569 and spent the remaining years of his life in prison. According to the legend, the king's First Councillor, Jöran Persson, influenced Erik XIV in making this fateful decision. Von Rosen has portrayed a fictional event in which Jöran Persson is trying to convince the ambivalent king to defeat the enemy by signing the death sentence. Unlike Wahlbom's glorifying portrayal of Gustavus Adolphus, von Rosen has pictured Erik XIV in an informal setting and in a moment of great agony and distress. Erik is seated on the floor in his private chamber, torn between Jöran Persson's request to carry out the unrighteous act of signing the death sentence and his wife Karin Månsdotter's plea to abstain. Dressed in black

and with a sinister look on his face, Persson is handing the pen to the king while simultaneously pointing at the document in Erik's hand. The innocent Karin Månsdotter, dressed in a white gown, is seated on the bench next to her husband. She appears to be worried about her husband's condition and frightened by Persson's intrusion into their private chamber. She is holding Erik's hand in order to protect him, but also as a way of keeping him from performing the unjust action.

The painting is characterised by its psychological drama, and it evinces a highly charged atmosphere. Karin Månsdotter symbolises compassion and light as opposed to the evil and darkness represented by the conniving chancellor Jöran Persson. In the midst of all this is Erik, dressed in red, staring into the nothingness with a blank expression, completely preoccupied with his own internal drama. Whereas Wahlbom's painting alludes to a great past and the Swedish nation's supremacy, von Rosen's image serves as a moral example about right and wrong. Viewers would have been aware of Erik XIV's tragic end and the painting thereby encouraged them to follow the good and light represented by Karin Månsdotter, ideas that were consistent with the Christian ideals of the time. *Erik XIV* became a great success and was bought by Nationalmuseum in 1872.

A significant part of the nationalist movement was to bring forth an art that was 'home-grown' and inspired by the motherland. These aspirations took many forms throughout the 19th century and were not limited to the sphere of history painting. Fogelberg's aforementioned images of the Norse gods are examples of how ideas regarding the Swedish nation also permeated other genres and artistic mediums. Fogelberg was involved in the Geatish Society (Götiska förbundet), which was established as a social club in 1811. Erik Gustaf Geijer, one of the leading members, described the aim of the Geatish Society as seeking to 'regenerate the old Geaths spirit of freedom, courage, and an honest mind'. They encouraged artists to produce art that glorified ancient Nordic history and Norse mythology, and it was in this spirit that Fogelberg created the images of Odin, Thor, and Balder.

The lack of earlier models raised the question of how Norse gods and other mythological creatures should be respectfully visualised in art. Fogelberg based his representation of Balder (fig. 129) on a written descrip-



Figure 129 Bengt Erland Fogelberg, *Balder*, 1844, marble, h. 257 cm. Photo: Erik Cornelius, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

tion that emphasised two important characteristics of the god: his beauty and his goodness. According to the legend, Balder was beloved by everyone, and all living things had sworn never to hurt him – all but the mistletoe. When Loki, the troublemaker of Asgard, heard of this, he made a spear from this particular plant. Later, when all the gods were gathered and amusing themselves by throwing objects at the seemingly invulnerable Balder, Loki gave the spear to Balder's blind brother, who then unintentionally killed him. Fogelberg chose to picture the moment when Balder exposes himself to the assemblage of gods, just before being hit by the fatal spear.

In order to visualise the divine beauty and goodness of Balder, Fogelberg turned to both classical and Christian models. As art historian Ragnar Josephson argues, Fogelberg was particularly inspired by the classical sculpture of Aphrodite, known as Venus de Milo, which was discovered in 1820, and the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen's depiction of Christ. In his portrayal of Balder, Fogelberg merged the beauty of the ancient classical goddess with the goodness of Christ. Balder is depicted as a feminine young man. Like Venus de Milo, he is portrayed with a bare chest and dressed in a robe that is draped around his hips, covering his lower body. He is standing in front of the viewer with his arms stretched out in a vulnerable yet embracing pose, which bears a resemblance to that of Thorvaldsen's sculpture of Christ. Once again, the artwork is legitimised by its references to Christian and classical models, which consolidates the understanding of the Norse god and the Swedish nation as something highly important and genuinely good.

The ideologically charged images, ascribed with moralising and educational qualities, served as important tools during the nation-building process and in the formation of a Swedish national identity. The images were exhibited in the museum environment as a way of consolidating the nation-state and teaching the general public about their own history and culture. Thanks to the technological progress of the 19th century, the images were also widely spread as reproductions. History paintings were often reproduced in history books and as posters used for educational purposes in Swedish elementary schools from the late 1800s and well into the 20th century. Here, the images allowed one to visualise Swedish history and

thus they influenced later generations' conceptions of what people ought to have looked like and how the historical events had been played out. Although such nationally characterised art began to lose its status with the emergence of Modernism in the early 1900s, and despite the fact that the images have been marginalised within the general context of exhibitions and art historical research over the past century, the visual rhetoric of the images has lived on through other media such as film, photography and videogames. The images have thus, knowingly or unknowingly, influenced notions of 'Swedishness' – the nation's history and people – and by extension also gender roles and ideals both historically and today.

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To Entertain, to Enlighten, and to Instruct

Colonial Visual Cultures in late 19th century Sweden

Åsa Bharathi Larsson

In 2014, one of the celebratory events of the bicentennial of Norway's constitution was the restaging of the ethnological exhibition of the Congo village (Kongo Landsbyen) in Oslo (formerly Kristiania). Ethnological exhibitions developed and gained popularity in the second half of the 19th century when European colonization was at its peak, and continued to be widespread in the first decade of the 20th century. The Norwegian government sponsored, as part of the celebration, the two artists Lars Cuzner (b. 1974) and Mohamed Ali Fadlabi (b. 1975) to rebuild an ethnological exhibition, which opened on 15 May 2014. The artists claimed that the new project, which they named 'European Attraction Limited' (taken from an original British entertainment company in the late 19th century), was meant to provoke a discussion on colonialism and racism in a postmodern world, and moreover to confront Norway's racist and colonial past (fig. 130).

The original Congo village was set up in 1914, a hundred years before the restaging, with participants brought from Africa performing the popular display of the ethnological exhibitions (fig. 131). Norway's 1914 ethnological exhibition is perhaps not what one thinks of when one thinks about early 20th century Norwegian cultural history. Instead Norwegian early 20th century cultural history often discusses the work by Henrik Ibsen and Edward Munch. However, for five months, 80 people of African origin





Figure 130 (left) The Congo Village in Frognerparken, Oslo Norway, during the opening on 15 May by Lars Cuzner and Mohamed Ali Fadlabi. Photo: Margit Selsjord.

Figure 131 (right) Africans exhibited at the 1914 Jubilee Exhibition in Kristiania (Oslo), Norway. Courtesy of Oslo Museum.

lived in 'the Congo village' surrounded by 'ethnic African artefacts'. More than half of the Norwegian population at the time paid to visit the exhibition and watch 'traditionally dressed Africans' living in palm-roof huts and going about their supposed everyday routines of making handicrafts, cooking, and eating. King Haakon VII of Norway (1872–1957) officiated the opening of the exhibition.

The exhibition of the *Other* has a long history. Empirical sources show that in ancient Egypt, 'black dwarves' from the Sudanese territories were on display. In the Roman Empire, 'barbarians and savages' were forced to walk the streets in Rome with the purpose of reinforcing Roman dominance over the world. Beginning in the 15th century, explorers brought living and dead human specimens to the courts of European rulers. As Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch, Éric Deroo, and Sandrine Lemaire have asserted, the ethnological exhibition united the functions of exhibition, performance, education, and domination. It is crucial to understand how strong the lure of exoticism and the urge to explore foreign lands has been for Europeans. Hence chambers of marvels and wax cabinets are only one of many links to these ethnological exhibitions.

As several scholars have claimed, the awareness of a colonial past in Scandinavia has often been minimised. The most frequent argument is that the Scandinavian countries did not have enough 'important colonies' in the last decades of the 19th century and therefore no colonial history to

consider. Consequently, events such as the ethnological exhibition in Oslo are seen as 'harmless'. Nonetheless, as historian Rikke Andreassen has asserted, this is far from the truth. Why, then, was it such popular entertainment in a region that was in the periphery of colonial politics? It is true that Scandinavian colonial activities could not compete with the greater empires such as Great Britain, France, or Germany, but if we study other empirical sources and, more specifically, visual sources, a colonial visual culture was flourishing in the Scandinavian countries in the last decades of the 19th century.

Colonialism must therefore be comprehended as a cultural phenomenon that involves ideas and values of 'races' and new cultural and entertainment practices. Cultural historian Hannu Salmi has claimed in *Nineteenth-Century Europe: A Cultural History* (2008) that the blooming of an economic society was first linked to colonialism but further pushed into an expanding consumer culture in the late 19th century.

This chapter will describe the development of the ethnological exhibitions with particular attention paid to what happened in Sweden. The empirical material focuses on various ephemera; however, posters are a main feature. Furthermore, the chapter discusses how colonial visual cultures were part of a broader media landscape in late 19th century Sweden than has previously been perceived.

In the Swedish regional paper *Dalpilen* from 1886, an advertisement from the Falu Hotel depicted an event in the town of Falun, Dalecarlia – the press described it as a special occasion (fig. 132). The attraction was the viewing of an 'authentic man from Africa', who had been brought to Europe. According to the article, 'Uomogogowa' was dressed in his 'national costume' and was good at both singing and dancing. This event was seen as special because it was the first time the 'peculiar race' was exhibited in Sweden. Moreover, Uomogogowa's religion was not Christianity, but described as a pagan one. On the posters, it was said that he prayed to the animals, the sun, and the moon. Before the Swedish spectators went to see Uomogogowa's show, the crowd had received clear information on how to watch and what to think and experience. This sort of entertainment was established by the German merchant Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913), a pioneer of the zoo industry who displayed Samoan and Sámi people in so-


Zulukaffern
UOMOGOGOWA
är anländ hit och förevisas å Falu Hotell, 1 tr. upp (ingång från gården), den 10 April kl. 7—10 e. m. samt Söndagen den 11 April från kl. 5 till 10 e. m. sista gången.
Denna märkvärdiga menniskorace härstammar från Afrikas urskogar, der de äro helt och hållet vilda och föda sig af jagt och fiske samt frukt m. m.
De bo uti ihåliga träd eller i marken, och till bedja afgudar, såsom sol, måne, stjernor eller jorden, ormar eller andra djur m. m. Uomogogowa uppträder här i sin nationaldräkt och utför krigsdans och sång enligt sitt hemlands bruk. Denne man har blifvit tillfångatagen af en fransk sjökapten och sedan öfverförd till Europa.
Vistelsen här blifver endast 2 dagar.
Entré: 50 öre, barn och tjenare 35 öre.
(1113)

Figure 132 Advertisement: 'The Zulu Kaffer Uomogogawa' (Zulukaffern Uomogogawa), *Dalpilen* 9 April 1886:14. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

called natural settings in the Hamburg Tierpark in 1874. His exhibitions travelled all around Europe, and eventually other entrepreneurs adopted the concept, as was the case with the display of Uomogogowa.

The boundaries between science and popular culture were blurry and constantly negotiated. Regarding shows in Sweden, ethnological exhibitions often combined a lecture with the actual show. It is significant to note that for the Swedish viewer this was not just a chance to see racial diversity, but also to understand one's own place within the racial hierarchy. Ethnological exhibitions included 'performances' of dancing, singing, fighting, and eating; often these were said to be the special 'talents' of the men and women on display. The exhibitions usually claimed that the Indigenous people were runaways or former slaves.

One of the most talked about performances was 'The tour of "Bush-Negro Women"'. The tour visited Sweden between the 1870s and 1890s. There is great difficulty in determining where the women on display came from. The two women, Miss Kitte Janson (Cetty Stjordt) and her niece, Miss



Figure 133 Poster: *Bush-Negro women* (Busk-Negerqvinnor), 1879, Gefle. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

Alice Ruffen (Alice Refen), half her age, were perhaps slaves from Alabama, South Africa, or even South America. The advertisements showed different spellings of their names. The circus manager often advertised without his own name, and many posters presented the two women as a solo performance without a connection to a circus company. In several posters, it looked as if they were representing themselves without a manager.

The poster did not show a photograph of Miss Janson and Miss Ruffen. Instead, an illustration displayed two women with identical clothing, pierced ears, and haircuts (fig. 133). They were standing next to each other

holding their hands, barefoot. The physical features such as eyes, nose, and mouth were exaggerated, and the same black colour of their skin was seen in the large letters promoting the show. Images of black people were stereotyped, and men, women, and children were displayed in the same manner. Additionally, the depiction of native women was often sexualized. As the historians Rikke Andreassen and Anne Folke Henningsen claim, sexuality has always been an essential component to understand the staging of the Other. A leading view connected to racial discourse was that non-Europeans had a different, more explicit sexuality than Europeans. This was sometimes highlighted in the discussed ethnological exhibitions. However, the two African-American women described below were said to be 'decent' in the posters, which implied that other exhibitions were not. The figure of the 'Hottentot Venus' resurfaced and became an essential component within ethnological exhibitions showing female bodies.

The shows, exhibitions, and attractions displaying semi-naked women could also be compared to the photographs taken by Oscar Birger Ekholm (1861–1890) and ethnographer Hjalmar Stolpe (1841–1905) during the scientific and commercial *Vanadis* expedition in 1884 (fig. 134). The circumnavigation around the world that took place between 1883 and 1885 brought thousands of ethnographical artefacts back to Sweden and became the core of the Museum of Ethnography, which was established by Stolpe in 1902. Besides collecting, Stolpe took photographs and conducted measurements of the Indigenous populations that he encountered on his voyage. The practice of documenting Indigenous peoples was also seen in Sweden. For example, Gustaf von Düben (1822–1892) and Lotten von Düben (1828–1915) photographed the Sámi people of northern Sweden for the purpose of establishing an archive of racial photographs (fig. 135). These photographs circulated in illustrated journals and were made into stereopticon slides for use in public lectures.

These racial photographs together with the posters and advertisements of ethnological exhibitions were important in constructing tantalizing knowledge about the Other, as well as creating a colonial experience from a distance. Sociologist Robert Bogdan reminds us that the ethnological exhibition was very much a staged performance. It was researched, choreographed, and displayed in a distinctive arrangement. The Swedish post-

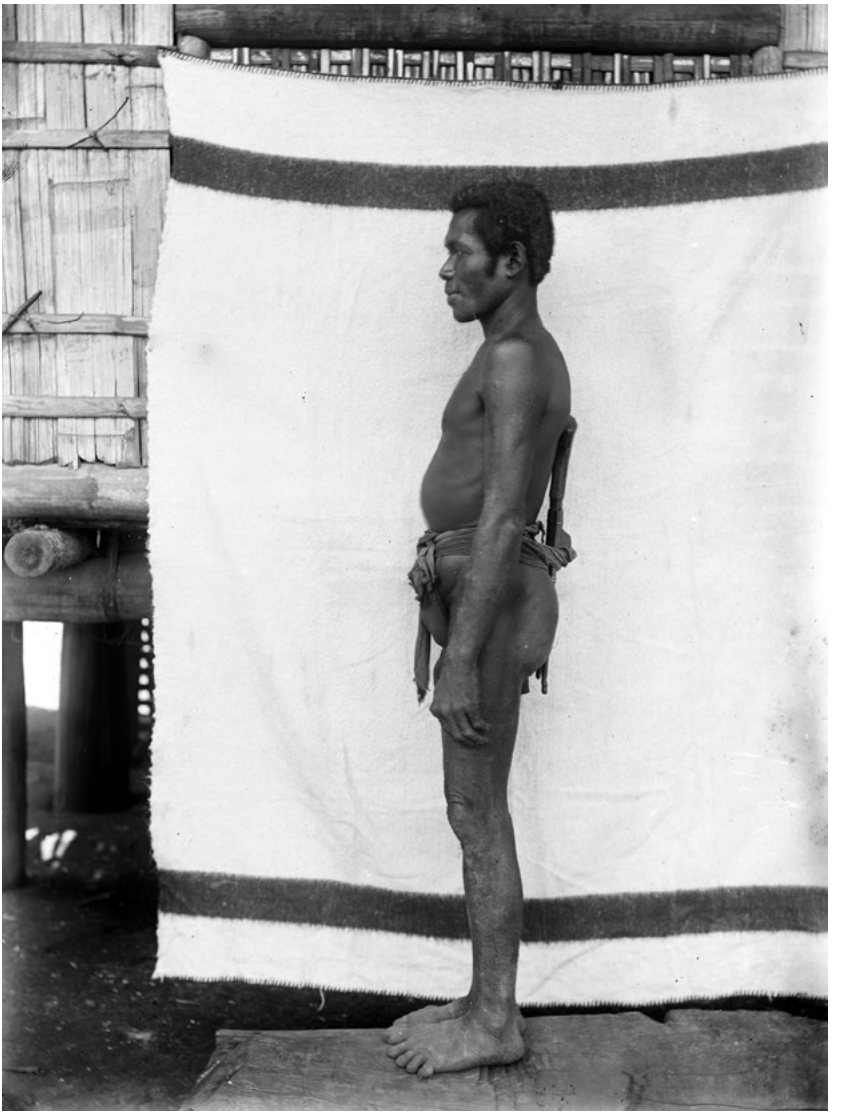

Figure 134 Racial photographs, Vanadis expedition 1883–1885. Photo: Oscar Birger Ekholm. Courtesy of the Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm.



Figure 135 Lotten von Düben, photograph of Maria Persdotter 1873. Courtesy of the Nordic Museum, Stockholm.

ers and press presented the shows as extraordinary events, yet the circus managers wanted to avoid claims of voyeurism and prided themselves on staging shows that were concerned with education.

The circus managers of the show usually lied about the identity of the entertainers. The most common way to promote a performance was to use an exotic mode of presentation. Exoticism was the basis of marketing literature, the staged appearance, the banners, and other aspects of the 'freak' promotion and display. 'The exotic mode introduced the act to appeal to a large audience, and with ideas of the primitive and bestial', Bogdan claims. Circus directors told the spectators that the people on display came from specific parts of the world, and the Indigenous people would then stage stereotypical and presumed manners of the countries to be represented. The narrative staged by the performers was intended to maximize interest, and exaggeration was common. Thus, the staging of 'racial diversity' was constructed around three distinct functions: to entertain, to enlighten, and to instruct. That meant that the same group could move from an ethnological exhibition to the science laboratory to a circus act.

An imperial gaze defined these events in which the Other was staged in a strict racial hierarchy where the black man was inferior to the white man. Importantly, both textual and visual staging reinforced the notion of where the audience would place themselves in the performance, as the above example shows. Art historian Anna-Maria Hälllgren's analysis of visual representations of social problems can be compared alongside visual representations of the colonial world. Hällgren claims that representations of social ills such as poverty, prostitution, and criminality should not just be seen as having a negative impact on society. Instead, these representations were important in making the vision a valuable resource. Hällgren argues that representations of social problems can be largely instructional.

Similar ideas were reflected in contemporary press and guidebooks that claimed that a lesson could be learnt while watching ethnological exhibitions. The 'Zulukaffir' as a trope had been established long before Uomogogowa or the African-American women were displayed. The word 'kaffir' was a derogatory term used in South Africa to refer to a black person. The word itself stemmed from Arabic, meaning 'disbeliever'. As art historians have pointed out, power relations were visualized by posi-

tions and postures, and placing Indigenous people on their knees or far from the central focus suggested a colonial setting and racist attitudes.

Different ethnological exhibitions were either associated with circus performances or could be staged in various establishments such as hotels, missionary buildings, community halls, clubhouses, public schools, and factories. These displays went beyond the capital of Stockholm and were popular in villages and towns all over Scandinavia. The above-mentioned performances with Miss Janson and Miss Ruffen toured in towns such as Ängelholm, Falun, and Kalmar. The low prices made it possible for a broader public of farmers and workers – who could rarely afford to go to the museums, wax cabinets, or panoramas in the cities – to see these displays.

Historian Ingrid Millbourn has suggested that the depictions of the Indigenous performers were actually implicitly portrayed as given them a voice of their own and identity. Contrary to this, I claim that such images should be viewed carefully with regards to their visual rhetoric and the strong racial stereotypes on display. The poster of Miss Janson and Miss Ruffen was not a realistic portrayal of the women, but instead a racial stereotype made by an unknown artist. Moreover, posters often represented the Indigenous people as speaking with their own voice, when actually the text and image worked together to reinforce ideas of the Other. It is important to historicize how visuality was constructed. Hence, these images did not contain inner meanings, but were given meaning due to a specific colonial context.

A clear example of the framing of the ethnological exhibition can be seen in the Canadian agent Robert A. Cunningham's (1837–1905) touring exhibition of Australian Aborigines, which was one of the most talked about colonial shows in the 1880s. In 1886, Cunningham's tour came to Sweden and went on display for several months in Djurgården, Stockholm. The audience received information about the show from the multitude of advertisement posters covering the walls around the capital, and the news reported how the Swedish spectators reacted with enthusiasm and curiosity to the show.

As historian Rosalyn Poignant claims, Cunningham did not know anything of Aboriginal culture. His 'performers', which he renamed with Western names, worked together as a group to create a show of dances,

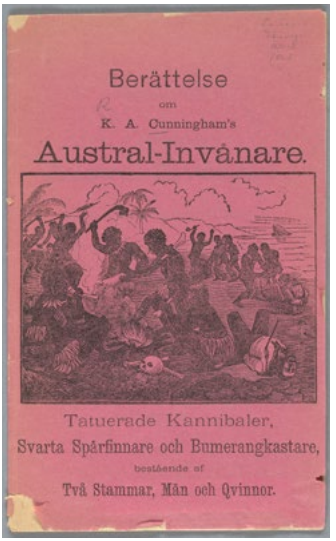

Figure 136 *History of R. A. Cunningham Australian Aborigines tattooed cannibal, black trackers, boomerang and throwers, consisting of two tribes, male and female* (Berättelsen om K. A. [sic] Cunningham's Austral-Invånare tatuerade kannibaler, svarta spårfinnare och bumerangkastare, bestående av två stammar, män och qvinnor), 1886. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

mock fights, boomerang throwing, and songs in so-called stage costumes. Cunningham came to realize the value of professional photography, and sales of postcards with the performers became a feature of all the touring venues. The same advertising strategies were used at Buffalo Bill's Wild West performances, which travelled all around Europe in the late 19th century. When Cunningham's group came to Paris in 1885, only four of the nine performers had survived the journey. The other five had died of illness. When the show came to Sweden, a brochure was republished in Swedish, describing the show in detail, and this was followed by reprinted documents from the Australian government and the international press. But by the time the group entered Stockholm, only three participants were alive to perform.

The cover illustration above of the Swedish brochure was the same as the English and French editions from 1884 (fig. 136). It did not come from a photograph displaying the nine Australian Aborigines; instead, an image

of 'savages in the nineteenth-century Western imagination' was published. Poignant observes that 'whatever their supposed 'racial' origins; they were said to be characterized by 'ferocity' and 'treachery'; they practiced self-mutilation, lacked language and ate people.' The book cover showed 'the savages' feasting on the seashore. The Australian Aborigines dominated the picture frame, and a sunken ship could be seen along with white settlers either dead or about to be feasted upon. This kind of imagery was also remediated into posters, as previously seen. The image of 'the savage' was a common theme in the visual arts and followed the traditions of representing the Other as naked, animalistic, and wild.

The Cunningham booklet noted that the displayed people belonged to an uncivilized human race and that their traditions and customs had not reached the standard of modern civilization. The front cover emphasized such notions, and was reproduced on posters to attract audiences. The Swedish edition followed the English and French versions, and articles from the international press such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Toronto World,* and *Le cri du peuple* also emphasized the stereotypes. The back cover of the booklet promoted the exhibition:

> The only troupe of these wild, devious, uncivilized people with red tattoos on their body and big rings in the nose and ears. Real bloodthirsty beasts in daunting human disguise, without intelligence and with little ability to speak. They perform peace, war, kangaroo, emu and tokato dances and their Midnight-Corrobores. Throwing with lance and boomerang.

The above quote strengthened the notion of the Other as lacking in intelligence and language. Moreover, it suggested that they were 'beasts in human disguise'. The illustrated press highlighted the event on many occasions. For example, the magazine *Ny Illustrerad Tidning's* lengthy account 'Cannibals in Stockholm' from 1886 described the show and was illustrated by the Swedish artist Ernst Ljungh (fig. 137).

It was obvious that the booklet by Cunningham had provided *Ny Illustrerad Tidning* with background information. It repeated the narrative of Cunningham's stories, and those who were unable to see the show got a detailed description of the performance. As the report said, 'They have

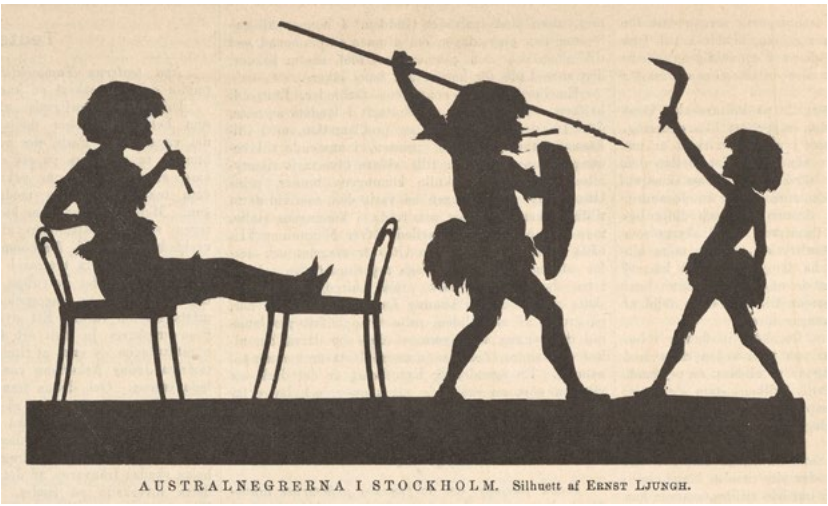

Figure 137 'Australian Negros in Stockholm. Silhouette by Ernst Ljungh' (Australnegrerna i Stockholm. Silhouette af Ernst Ljungh), *Ny Illustrerad Tidning*, 26 June 1886:26. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

been let out into an open space in Djurgården and there they have been able to show peculiar tricks'. In *Ny Illustrerad Tidning*, race theories in which the white European male was superior to other groups of people were explained as *comme il faut* for the Swedish audience.

According to articles like the one in *Ny Illustrerad Tidning*, the Australian Aborigine was on the lowest level of the human evolutionary scale. They were said to be 'inferior' to the African as well as to Europeans, with a vast distance between the 'Australian Negro' and the African. The article claimed they were of two different types. Swedish readers also learned that they spoke a few words of English and that they were satisfied with European food but missed the kangaroos. Cunningham himself remarked that they were outstanding in eating but they could also starve themselves, as animals do. The article compared the throwing of a boomerang to the hammer of Thor. *Ny Illustrerad Tidning* finished the article with the information that this was soon to be an extinct race.

Images of Indigenous populations as an 'inferior race' of 'cannibals' could also be seen in the immensely popular comic strips published in the Swedish illustrated press. Racial stereotypes were continuously shown on



Figure 138 Comic Strip: 'An adventure in New Zealand' (Ett äventyr på Nya Zeeland), *Illustrerad Familj-Journal* 15 May 1887:20. Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

the very last page of the magazine *Illustrerad Familj-Journal*, a section reserved for games and comic strips. The two main themes of the stereotypes consisted of either 'the Indigenous population meeting Europeans' – the former was often referred to in the comic strip as 'cannibals' – or 'a supposed everyday life event'. Within the first theme, the most common feature was the encounter with the white European (often male) that began with a threat by the 'cannibal', who lusted for human flesh. However, every comic strip ended happily, with the Westerner tricking the 'cannibal' (fig. 138). The second theme elaborated on different narratives regarding Indigenous everyday life. These too depicted Indigenous populations as lazy, childlike, and aggressive.

Ethnological exhibitions were only one 'entertainment event' that explicitly dealt with colonial narratives. In late 19th century Sweden, a vast visual culture landscape included exotic and oriental motifs and colonial narratives in various media formats. In the art salon, Swedish artists as for example, but not exclusively, *Anders Zorn* (1860–1920), *Jenny Nyström* (1854–1946), and *Julius Kronberg* (1850–1921) depicted 'the Orient'. However, they were more known in their own time in other painting genres but nonetheless produced some orientalist motifs. Moreover, the Swedish artists *Egron Lundgren* (1815–1855), *Henrik Ankarcrona* (1830–1917), *Frans Wilhelm Odelmark* (1849–1937), and *Ivan Aguelí* (1869–1917) were know in their own time as orientalist painters.

Zorn's depictions of Istanbul and North Africa portrayed the veiled Muslim woman or the black African woman in juxtaposing ways (fig. 139). For example, contrasting the white and black bodies in the harem or in the Turkish bath, displaying colonial fantasies of the Other. Ankarcrona and Odelmark were said to stand out in the orientalist tradition and were popular at the art market, producing many various orientalist motifs. Kronberg's work depicted biblical motifs within an orientalist painting tradition (fig. 140), and Nyström's studio work displayed the immense 'exotic artefacts' that were brought back home to the artists. Many of the Swedish artists did not go abroad to get 'inspiration' for their work; instead, they copied and took inspiration from works such as Zorn or European painters like the French artist Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904). These artists have come to be labelled as *armchair orientalists*, never setting foot in the Mid-



Figure 139 Anders Zorn, *From Algiers Harbour* (Från Algers hamn), 1887, watercolour, 67 x 41 cm. Photo: Per Myrhede, Prince Eugen's Waldermarsudde, Stockholm.



Figure 140 Julius Kronberg, *Queen of Sheba* (Drottningen av Saba), 1888, oil on canvas. Tjolöholm Castle, Gothenburg.

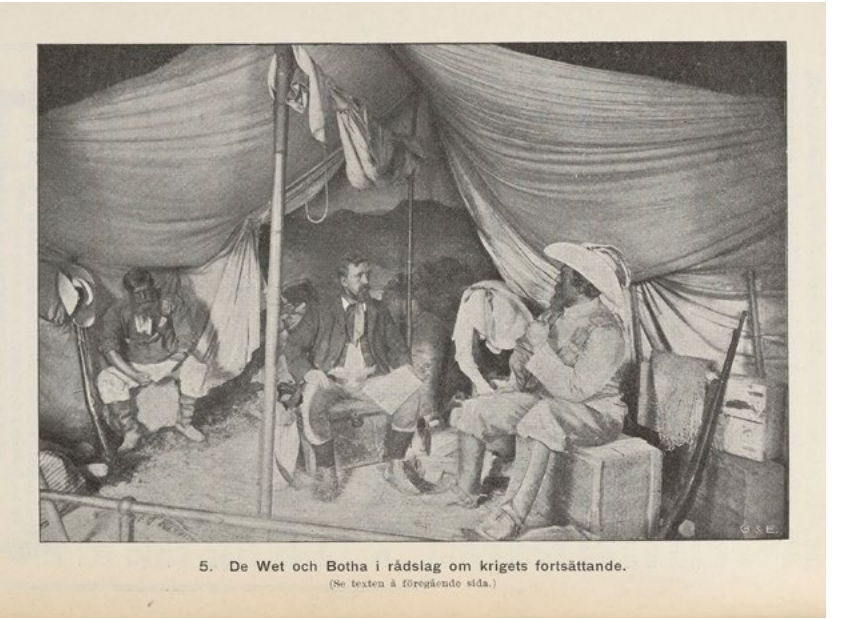

Figure 141 Wax display: 'Stanley and Löjtnant P. Möller' (Stanley och Lieutenant P. Möller), *Vägvisare genom Svenska Panoptikon* (Stockholm: Nya Tryckeri-Aktiebolaget, 1889). Courtesy of the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

dle East. This was often the case with the Swedish female artists who were restricted to travel by social and cultural norms. For example, artists like *Eva Bonnier* (1857–1909) and *Ingeborg Westfeld-Eggertz* (1855–1936).

Besides the art salon, these paintings were reproduced in the illustrated press, where most people had the chance to see them. Nearly every month during the late 19th century, an orientalist reproduction was published in *Ny Illustrerad Tidning* or *Illustrerad Familj-Journal*. Furthermore, commercial products such as soaps, cigarettes, and coffee were racialized and extensively advertised.

In the bigger cities such as Stockholm and Gothenburg, wax cabinets and oriental maze salons were established. These included colonial and exotic happenings. One of the most popular tableaux in the Swedish Panopticon in Stockholm was of Henry Morton Stanley's (1841–1904) expedition in Congo. The wax display was praised for its accuracy of the



Figure 142 The Oriental maze salon mirror labyrinth at Hamngatan 18B, Stockholm, 1890. Courtesy of Stockholm City Museum, Stockholm.

explorers and Indigenous peoples, though again the African slaves were depicted in demeaning ways (fig. 141 and 142). The oriental maze salons were not about realism; instead, the press helped to portray them as a dream or fantasy. As art historian Tomas Björk claims, the semi-naked concubines and dressed sultans reinforced the Europeans' sexualisation of the Middle East, and the wax display was intended to show how decadent and corrupt the 'Orient' was. The European political debate considered such regions as destined to be ruled by the European colonial empires, hence justifying colonization throughout the 19th century.

To conclude, the mass production and circulation of visual representations of the colonial world such as the ethnological exhibition, wax cabinet, oriental maze, and oriental imagery created visual strategies that separated the Other in a strict racial hierarchy and visualized the European colonial project as a civilizing mission. Sweden did not have a large colonial enterprise outside its borders, but it was nevertheless keen to partici-

pate in the race for new territory. However, it is also important to consider the colonial behaviour within Sweden with regards to for example the Sámi people. The Sámi population were also staged in Sweden and abroad in ethnological exhibitions. One way to be part of the European colonial project was to engage in colonial practices, and among these were the ethnological exhibitions and performances that were seen all around Scandinavia.

Returning to the 2014 restaging of the Congo village in Oslo, numerous anti-racism organizations in Scandinavia characterized the art project as offensive. Critics debated whether there was any creative value in the re-enactment of such a dehumanising exhibition, especially in a postmodern world that has not yet been 'cured' of racism. Hence, the fact that issues of colonial heritage and Scandinavian colonialism have recently appeared in not just academic fields, specifically historical disciplines, but also in public debate, speaks volumes.

This chapter is based on Åsa Bharathi Larsson's dissertation *Colonizing Fever: Race and Media Cultures in Late Nineteenth-Century Sweden* (2016).

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From 'The Paris Boys' to the Artists' Union

A Swedish secession in the late 19th century and its art history

Alexandra Herlitz

The last couple of decades of 19th century European art history are well known for smaller amalgamations of artists who withdrew from and went into opposition against the government-funded art schools. Such counter-movements sprung up in many different places in Europe, all due to similar frictions with the established art world. Generally speaking, a common denominator for these secessions that disengaged from the official academic systems can be found in discontent and disagreement concerning the institutional framework and bureaucratism, education statutes, and exhibition regulations. Usually these secessions founded new art schools and conducted group exhibitions, often based upon artistic and personal sympathies. By their revolting against the established art systems, these secessions were to go down in art history as e.g., the Parisian *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* (1890), the *Munich, Vienna*, and *Berlin secessions* (1892, 1897, 1898), and the *New English Art Club* in London (1885). These revolutionary mergers of mostly younger artists have been described in numerous publications, of which many have a tendency to emphasise the rebellious and creative qualities of the artists' unions that stood up against the royal and governmental art academies across Europe. Swedish art history got its own example of such a contumacious association of artists at the end of the 19th century and also this group holds a special position in

the national art history of Sweden, which will be the subject of this text.

The 84 Swedish artists who joined forces under the name the Opponents (Opponenterna) as they presented their claims to their adversary, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna) in Stockholm, on March 27, 1885, were young and quite unestablished at that time. Several of them would later become some of the most famous Swedish painters of all time, including *Carl Larsson* (1853–1919), *Richard Bergh* (1858–1919), *Georg Pauli* (1855–1935), and *Ernst Josephson* (1851–1906). What is special about this Swedish secession is that they were not gathering in one geographic location like so many similar movements in the rest of Europe. It is suggested that this grouping was to be found in Stockholm, where their adversary, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, was located, but actually most of them were not even in Sweden when they lined up in opposition. Although there has been a certain focus on the young artists who lived in Paris, the Swedish Opponents were scattered all over Europe, which meant quite considerable logistic difficulties for the group's activities. These were overcome by the enthusiastic leader of the early opposition, the painter Ernst Josephson, who at that time was settled in Paris, as he reached out to the scattered Swedes both through travel and by mail. On the European map, Sweden is undoubtedly a country in the northern periphery, but Swedish and other Scandinavian artists have always been eager to travel to the continent for education and inspiration and to keep themselves updated with current trends in art. At the end of the 19th century, clusters of Swedish artists were to be found in different places in Europe, for example in Munich, Düsseldorf, London, and Rome, while the most well-known Swedish colony, according to Swedish art history writing, was to be found in Paris. The prominence of the Swedish community in Paris arises from the fact that researchers focused more on that group of artists than for instance the earlier generation that sought to Germany.

As for many other international artists, a stay in Paris was crucial for Swedish artists in their efforts to establish a career at home. The *Salons* – the official exhibitions held by the Parisian *Académie des Beaux-Arts* (from 1748 to 1880) and then by the *Société des Artistes Français* (from 1881 to 1890) – were the greatest annual art events in the Western world and thus



Figure 143 Hugo Birger, *The Scandinavian Artists' Lunch at Café Ledoyen, Paris: Varnishing Day 1886* (Skandinaviska konstnärernas frukost i Café Ledoyen, Paris. Fernissningsdagen 1886), 1886, oil on canvas, 183,5 × 261,5 cm. Photo: Hussein Sehatlou, Gothenburg Art Museum, Gothenburg.

very important for aspiring artists. Having a work of art accepted by the jury of the Paris Salon equated with being recognised as an artist, also outside of France; and to be awarded with a medal or even honourably mentioned for a work of art could lead to fame and fortune. Most of the Swedish artists had no intention of staying in France, and their sojourn has to be seen as a springboard for professional advancement in Sweden based on that international recognition.

The painting *The Scandinavian Artists' Lunch at Café Ledoyen, Paris: Varnishing Day 1886* (Skandinaviska konstnärernas frukost i Café Ledoyen, Paris. Fernissningsdagen 1886, fig. 143) by the Swedish artist *Hugo Birger* (1854–1887) depicts a nowadays famous scene of the Swedish colony in Paris, showing the artists gathering to celebrate successful participation in the Salon of 1886. While the foreground of Birger's painting shows secondary figures, the topic given in the title of the painting and thus its focus, is to be found in the rear middle. In the winter garden of the Café Ledoyen

near the Champs-Elysées, just behind a model who is sitting sideways on a chair and through her gaze directing the view of the spectator towards the main attraction of the painting, the cheerful group of Nordic artists is gathered for a celebratory lunch. It is remarkable that Birger placed two unknown French models in the foreground, while the Nordic women artists who were affiliated to the community are as good as absent in this group portrait. Apparently, the engraver and sculptor Antoinette Vallgren (1858-1911) was the only woman artist depicted in this scene. Probably she is rather included as the wife of the Finnish sculptor Ville Vallgren (1855-1940), just as it is the case with the other portrayed artists' wives Gerda Hagborg and Matilda Birger. This painting has been understood as quite documentary, as it, for instance, depicts a situation that can also be found in the memoirs of the artists, namely their annual celebration at the Café Ledoyen in Paris on Varnishing day, which was the day prior to the formal opening of the Salon. Even if the picture was painted over many sessions in the studio and not accomplished in real-time and thus documenting a historical moment, it is actually of revealing character, both concerning the stylistic manner and the self-perception of the Opponents.

Stylistically, the composition by Birger exemplifies how the young artists from Sweden were rather painting in the conservative style advocated by the Academy, even though they were trying to approach more recent stylistic features. In 1886, when Birger created this work of art, fourteen years had passed since Claude Monet had produced his first impressionist painting. Still, this generation of Swedish artists was not embracing the impressionist style, which of course also has to do with their interest in participating in the Salon, where the jury was accepting and awarding paintings created in an academic manner. On the other hand, this painting by Birger shows a restraining interest in the loose brushstrokes of the non-academic, avant-garde impressionists, which is evident in the small section in the background between the model looking at the spectator and the waiter balancing a tureen on a tray. Many of the Swedish works of art executed in an academic manner include sometimes slight hints, but sometimes more obvious traces, of the avant-garde expressions they picked up in Paris, though not always impressionist features. Combining the strict academic style with restrained avant-garde features, as the Swedish artists

did, has been called *juste milieu-painting* (French for 'middle way painting') and was a common compromise for many of the young international artists in Paris at that time. Painting in a juste milieu-manner could satisfy these artists' desire of innovation at the same time as it enabled them to have their paintings accepted by the jury of the Salon.

Although the group portrait is affected by academic characteristics of composition, the artists' self-perception remains recognisable in its composition and content. The painting pretends to give us a documentary inside view of the joyful and harmonious Scandinavian colony in Paris, but it is at the same time expressive concerning the way in which the Opponents wanted themselves to be seen.

The joyful crowd's bustle draws the spectator's attention to the topic of the work of art, even though it is located in the rear of the painting. The boisterous spirit is mainly established through the artists' expansive arm movements, both swaying their top hats in cheers and raising their champagne glasses. Still, the painting is thoroughly structured through coordinated patterns that follow an academic approach of composition; the glass-clinking arms of the artists are structured by parallel orientation while the raising of top hats and glasses is coordinated by repetitive patterns of movement. The artists seated to the right side of the table are neatly arranged and aligned, which is further emphasised by the line of bottles on the table in front of them. By using strict structuring principles, Birger manages to establish orderliness despite the muddle in the background. The composition connects well to the motif itself; Hugo Birger seeks to show himself and his comrades as liberated and carefree spirits, but at the same time not as bohemian libertines. They are moderately lively and decent.

The spectator is kept at a distance through the secondary figures in front that shield the artists – we are excluded from the group of artists, but we are still to be witnesses of their feast. Our representatives in the painting, the ones the spectator is supposed to identify with, are the two men on the right-hand side who appear to be kept aside by a poodle, whose hindquarters are meaningfully directed to the spectator – they may witness the merry group, but they have to stand apart. Because one of the two men can be identified as the Swedish painter *Hugo Salmson* (1843–1894), him

being kept at bay in the painting becomes more expressive concerning the Parisian microcosm in which the Opponents were living and working.

In earlier art historical literature on the Swedish Paris colony, the informal gathering of Scandinavians appeared to be a homogenous and harmonious group working and associating in the Montmartre district; an incorrect factoid that paintings like Birger's were supposed to illustrate. In fact, the Swedish artists were scattered across Paris, and their community was not at all homogenous, as conflicts concerning age, social class, and gender were bubbling under the surface. At least two clusters of Swedish artists can be identified in the 1880s, and besides the Montmartre colony there was another group of artists settling in Montparnasse on the opposite bank of the river Seine. Joining the Montmartre colony made it possible to connect to a Scandinavian network providing the advantage of Paris-experienced colleagues, but presupposed the acceptance of similar structures as the ones that were purposefully left behind in Stockholm. This is one of the reasons why many younger and especially female artists from Sweden were settling on the other bank of the Seine and joining other international artists living there, only associating with the Montmartre colony occasionally. Both the Montmartre colony and the Montparnasse colony comprised thus Opponent artists and the choice of colony appears linked to the individual artists' personal degree of acceptance of the reportedly discriminating structures concerning age, social class and gender that were prevailing in the Montmartre colony. Artists like Georg Pauli have depicted in their autobiographical works how the Opponents in the early 1880s were being called 'the Paris Boys' (Pariserpojkarne) by the older generation that was observing the younger ones with a suspicious and jealous gaze and expressing something shallow and very immature with that belittling moniker. Pauli also describes how the older Swedish artists in Montmartre felt the urge to subdue the younger ones, and he mentions how particularly insufferable the depicted Hugo Salmson was, who was deemed the doyen of the Montmartre colony. Regarding these circumstances within the Swedish microcosm in Paris, this painting from 1886 – the year after the Opponents stepped up against the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm – is revealing in the way the joyful crowd is depicted victorious, and in that triumphant moment being observed and recognised by experienced

artists like Hugo Salmson and *Alfred Wahlberg* (1834–1906), who usually kept the youngsters at bay.

The actions against the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm were initiated in Paris. Ernst Josephson apparently had the first ideas about an opposition while painting all alone in Eggedal in Norway, where he might have become aware of contemporary Norwegian colleagues who had been in a fierce dispute with the authorities at home somewhat earlier, starting in 1880. Returning to France, Josephson, validated by his friends, pursued his plans regarding subsequent extensive protests towards the Academy in Stockholm. In private, Josephson had made a list of names of artists who he thought would be interested in participating in the opposition, and he started to call them to meetings in Paris. Furthermore, he sent enquiries to the other Swedish colonies in London, Rome, and Düsseldorf asking them for support in a common petition towards the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. Persuasive powers were needed, and in order to get the formerly mentioned Hugo Salmson's weighty signature on the paper, Josephson and Pauli offered to make him the chairman of the board in a future artists' union. Josephson's enthusiastic efforts during the fall of 1884 and the spring of 1885 received different types of reactions, but in the end, he managed to gather 84 signatures for his petition to the Academy.

In Swedish art history, the year 1885 has been described as the Opponents' year of important occurrences, starting with the submission of their petition at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm on March 27. The petition of the Opponents included many demands concerning the reformation and modernisation of the academic education in Stockholm, the awarding of scholarships, and revisions to exhibition and purchase policies. Besides the Art Academy, the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm also appeared as a main adversary. The purchase committee of the Nationalmuseum consisted of artists, but because these were appointed by the Academy the Opponents considered that they were countering modern art from the continent and thus not buying the works of the 'Paris Boys'. Because the Academy had stopped exhibiting works that were sent home by the artists abroad, it had become more difficult for the Opponents to sell their art in Sweden, which is why they demanded changes.

The reaction to the Opponents' emergence and bold demands was a

combination of pique and ridicule. In addition, the Academy found a clever way to treat this bothersome matter. The committee declined any discussion and referred everything to His Royal Highness, who actually held the ultimate responsibility for the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. King Oscar II, however, sent the errand back to the board of the Academy, who in turn deigned not to reply the Opponents until the following autumn. The reply was negative in all regards; all demands were rejected, and the Academy had the full support by King Oscar II. This fiasco led the Opponents to take the next step, and they concluded that a strong organisation had to be established in order to become an equal antagonist to the Academy in the Swedish art arena. During an artist meeting in Gothenburg in 1886, the Swedish Artists' Union (Konstnärsförbundet) was founded.

From the very start, the Opponents had a focus on exhibition activities. While Ernst Josephson gathered the signatures of his comrades on the petition, the Swedish painter Richard Bergh organised the exhibition *From the banks of the Seine* (Från Seinens strand) at Blanch's Art Gallery (Blanchs Konstsalong) in Stockholm in April 1885, just days after the petition was handed in. The purpose of this exhibition was to show modern art from Paris in Stockholm, and 100 works of art created by 18 different artists were on display. Although several female Swedish artists who were settled on 'the banks of the Seine' had signed the petition, among others *Julia Beck* (1853–1935), *Emma Löwstädt-Chadwick* (1855–1932), *Anna Nordgren* (1847–1916), and *Jenny Nyström* (1854–1946), the exhibition in Stockholm included only the 'Paris Boys'.

The ongoing schism between the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and the Opponents (and now the Artists' Union) manifested itself in several exhibition projects in which the two antagonists, though mainly initiated by the Opponents, appeared to compete with each other. Because the Opponents had cut all relations with the Academy, they could no longer participate in the anniversary exhibition of the Academy and decided to have their own concurrent exhibition, *The Exhibition of the Opponents* (Opponenternas utställning) in the autumn of 1886.

However, the Artists' Union was not a homogenous and harmonic group either, and strong wills had to be united in the common cause. The first severe crisis occurred already in the so-called 'year of disgrace' when,

in 1887, the former enthusiast and founder Ernst Josephson withdrew from the group. At the same pace at which the leadership of the Artists' Union became even more authoritarian than the Academy ever was, more and more of the less dedicated Opponents began to tire of the conflict and backtracked. In 1890, The Society of Swedish Artists (Svenska konstnärers förening) was founded and became a happy medium where both members of the Academy and of the Artists' Union could meet. This new affiliation opportunity led to a strong decrease in members in the Artists' Union, but this did not weaken the group. It rather led to an increased belligerence that eventually provided the Artists' Union with a dominating position on the Swedish art scene in the following decades. Their position and their artistic ideals were consolidated through the art school they founded and their extensive interest in exhibition activities, both in Sweden and beyond.

The organisation of art shows became also an essential activity for the Artists' Union. It was in fact the Artists' Union that took the initiative to represent Sweden in the World Exposition in Paris in 1889 without any involvement of the Swedish authorities. In the following years, the Artists' Union was in the same way allowed to arrange the Swedish participation in several of the big art expositions, amongst them Chicago 1893, Berlin 1896, Stockholm 1897, and Paris 1900. In that way the artistic ideals of the Artists' Union became dominating in Sweden as well as being recognised abroad as being typically Swedish.

In that context it is important to remember that Europe after the Congress of Vienna in 1814 was characterised by nation-building processes. In order to create a feeling of common bonds within a nation, artists were expected to contribute to the establishment of a distinct national art. Although Swedish artists throughout the 19th century had picked up themes from Norse mythology or depicted detailed motifs from Swedish peasantry, the artists of the Artists' Union saw themselves as the first ones to paint *authentic* Swedish motifs and to create a *genuine* national style, the so-called National Romanticism. Richard Bergh was the Swedish painter who in his writings most clearly ruled out the preceding artist generations' works as 'non-Swedish' because of their German training at the academy in Düsseldorf. At the same time, he claimed that he and his comrades who were

trained in France had – after their return to Sweden – taken off their 'French gloves' and started to paint in a genuinely Swedish manner. The National Romanticism that the painters from the Artists' Union created and that became known as a Swedish national style was mainly depicting the Swedish landscape with its pines and firs, preferably with a moody lighting that later came to be known as the 'Northern light'. Bergh, amongst other artists, said that it was the years spent abroad that opened his eyes to the distinct characteristics of Swedish nature, and in that way the rise of National Romanticism has been described in Swedish art history.

The painting *Midsummer Dance* (Midsommardans) by Anders Zorn (fig. 144) is a prime example of how Swedish painters expressed their idea of Sweden, its traditions and its characteristic light conditions in the summer – the painting shows a dancing scene in the Swedish countryside in Dalecarlia in which couples clad in folk costumes twirl around the meadow in the wistful twilight of the early dawning sun in the midsummer night. In the background the traditional Swedish maypole in front of a house painted in the Falu red colour that is characteristic for the log cabins in the Swedish countryside, stands distinctly against the clear night sky, while the golden tone of the early morning sun immerses the scenery in the lucid twilight of a typical Swedish summer night. The brightness of the Swedish sun in this scenery between late night and early morning can be understood from the gleaming reflections in the windows. Zorn emphasises in this painting Swedish traditions in the form of the maypole and the dances around it, as well as characteristic Swedish folk costumes (many of these regional dresses were mainly created in the end of the 19th century by giving earlier costumes a unified form) and housing, and last but not least the extraordinary light conditions in his native country. The traditional maypole, with christian origins, came probably from Germany to Sweden already in the middle ages and became part of the midsummer festivity linked to the burgeoning vegetation of spring that was celebrated by the Swedish peasant society. During the first half of the 19th century the Swedish maypole received the more unitary shape that is depicted in the painting by Zorn: a pole with a crossbar, adorned with two rings. In the end of the 19th century the popular midsummer festivity became linked closer to the national cultural identity of Sweden, which came to manifest



Figure 144 Anders Zorn, *Midsummer Dance* (Midsommardans), 1897, oil on canvas, 140 × 98 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

in the use of the Swedish flag or ribbons in the colours of the flag as a decoration for the maypole. Consolidated as a national phenomenon the midsummer festivity has since then become increasingly associated with notions of Swedishness.

Motifs from inside Swedish homes and Swedish family life became typical, and these are most eminently on display in the work of Carl Larsson who gained fame through his paintings of his family in Dalecarlia expressing the good and happy family life. However, it would be incorrect to state that the Swedish painters just shrugged off all their French training when they came home, and many features of their compositions from Sweden still reveal a continental influence. In that way, the painting by Anders Zorn shows the clear influence of the loose and light brushstrokes of Impressionism, which had its origin in France. National romanticism in Sweden was thus not about a homogenous stylistic expression, but about a desirable and characteristic Swedishness' in its motifs.

Through their newfound authority concerning the expositions of Swedish art, the Artists' Union was empowered to sort out artists who were not aligned to the artistic ideals and the desired 'Swedish' style of the Artists' Union. That power led to successful Swedish artists like Julia Beck, who stayed in France and received the highest civilian decoration in France, the *Légion d'honneur*, for her artistic work, not being exhibited in the shows of Swedish art organised by the Artists' Union. Beck refused to paint wistful sceneries in Swedish summer twilight and continued to render her French landscapes dimly lit by a homogenous light and in a greyish tone as was popular in France and which was abandoned by her French-trained colleagues who returned to Sweden. Her various sea landscapes, often including water lilies, were also developing towards a more impressionist direction with loose brushstrokes and more abstract forms (fig. 145).

The parochial exclusion of expatriate Swedes from shows organised by the Artists' Union meant that these successful artists had to find other solutions to show their art. This led, for instance, to the Swedish sculptor *Christian Eriksson* (1858–1935) showing his bronze sculptures in the French section of the World Exposition in Paris in 1900. It is almost ironic how the Artists' Union opposed the inclusion of art by expatriates to a greater extent than the Art Academy ever did, as this was one of the points of



Figure 145 Julia Beck, *Nénuphars/Water Lilies* (Nénuphars/Näckrosor), ca 1887/8, oil on canvas, 65,5 × 50 cm, private collection. Photo: Bukowskis.

criticism raised by the Opponents when they were based in Paris and elsewhere. In the long-run, artists excluded from the shows were also excluded from Swedish art history, and some of them were only rediscovered much later, like Julia Beck who did not have her real re-entry into Swedish art history until the 21st century.

The numbers of members were dwindling due to the ongoing quarrels, and in 1910, the year of their last exhibition abroad in Berlin, the Artists' Union consisted of only 21 members. Interestingly, it was the controversies with the next generation of young artists, those who had been trained at the *Académie Matisse* in Paris, that united the former adversaries, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and the Artists' Union, and reconciled them in a common exhibition at the Art Academy in 1913. In 1920 the Artists' Union ceased to exist. However, with the experienced and driven artists connected to it, the once powerful Union would, even though disappearing from the scene, save itself into the future. This was possible by their actively partaking in writing themselves into art history.

The artists affiliated with the Opponents and/or the Artists' Union are nowadays some of the most famous artists in Swedish art history, which of course can be related to the fact that they have been written into art history as representatives of 'the Swedish style', basing their fame on the national celebration from the late 19th and early 20th centuries when a national artistic expression was of great importance. However, their ongoing fame in Sweden is probably very much linked to the way in which their position has been written into the national Swedish art history.

Already in the 1880s, even before the Opponents were established, the Swedish artist, art critic, and art historian-to-be Georg Nordensvan (1855–1932) wrote in favourable terms about the artists of his generation in Swedish magazine articles and art criticism, and he would continue to do so in the numerous art history books he wrote during the last 40 years of his life. Nowadays, Nordensvan's threefold role as artist, critic, and art historian would be seen critically, but at a time when the discipline of art history was quite new and under development his experience as an artist and critic supported his credibility as an art historian. He was educated with some of the Opponents and on friendly terms with them, and his art historical narration about his comrades is written in a favourable and some-

what venerating way; his depiction of the revolutionary achievements and the schism with a reactionary Academy in Stockholm, as well as their establishment of a 'genuine Swedish style' after their united return to Sweden, are suggestive of a disposition to exaggeration and romanticism regarding the historical facts. However, the picture portrayed by Nordensvan was congruent with the memoirs published by the aged Opponents themselves during the 1920s and 1930s, and these were thus reinforcing each other as sources of factual presentations of historic events. This practice of art historiography is unthinkable nowadays, but was not unusual in earlier art history. The Italian artist and writer Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) who has been deemed the first art historian ever, had a similar way of writing art history about artists earlier or contemporary with him. In his book *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550), Vasari delineates how Italian art became better and more superior throughout the Renaissance and how the art of his own time, headed by his good friend Michelangelo (1475–1564), was the summit of creation.

This Swedish secession, the Opponents who later turned into the Artists' Union, became a strong protagonist in Swedish art history, and it has been quite difficult for other contemporary artists, no matter how successful they were in their own time – for instance Julia Beck or *Olof Sager-Nelson* (1868–1896) – to overcome the superiority of the Opponents and be mentioned to an adequate degree in Swedish art history. The coincidence that a national Swedish art history was written for the first time during the glory days of these artists, and the fact that this first art historical work was authored by a person who was on friendly terms with them, were lucky circumstances for these artists that contributed to their names remaining strong and famous in the history of Swedish art. In consonance with the famous words of Winston Churchill – 'History is written by the victors' – the former 'Paris Boys' with their secession became the lucky victors in Swedish art history at the end of the 19th century.

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Painting from the Turn of the Century 1900 to the Second World War

Charlotta Nordström

Sweden underwent significant social, political, and economic changes in the first three decenniums of the 20th century. By the outbreak of the Second World War, Sweden had slowly transformed its values and culture connected with the long 19th century (1789–1914) to become an emerging welfare state. With this transformation came changes to the art scene, and this chapter brings attention to painting related to a selection of movements in Swedish art and avant-garde art between 1900 and the late 1930s.

Swedish Symbolism and art of Fin de Siècle

Symbolism brought Swedish art into the 20th century with artists like *Ernst Josephson* (1851–1906), *Carl Fredrik Hill* (1849–1911), *August Strindberg* (1849–1912), and *Eugène Jansson* (1862–1915). With nature as a recurrent subject matter, the symbolist artists merged matters of the human psyche with realistic and fantastic landscapes. Strindberg – the writer, playwright, and art critic – was autodidact as an artist, and his paintings first received praise and attention after his death in 1912, mainly for their expressive colours and subjective content of emotional force. Strindberg's imaginary landscape, *The Avenue* (Alléen, 1903), in the art collection of Ernest Thiel, and now in The Thiel Gallery (Thielska Galleriet) in Stockholm, shows an avenue with ash-grey soil, lined by trees with stems in the same colour, leading towards a horizon that ends with nothing but a lighter tone of grey (fig. 146).



Figure 146 August Strindberg, *The Avenue* (Alléen), 1903, oil on canvas, 94 x 53 cm. Photo: Tord Lund, Thiel Gallery, Stockholm.

Thick orange and yellow foliage contrasts with the darkness, and the sky gives an unsettling, atmospheric feeling. The alley seems to lead nowhere, and Strindberg described the image as '[…] the yellow alley with the big unknown in the background' in a letter to his artist colleague Carl Larsson from December 13, 1905 (Eklund [ed.] 1976: 215). A road with an infinite end is a recognizable symbol in art with religious connotations, pointing to the lingering human path of life.

The art collector Ernest Thiel was a supporter of many artists who were to become associated with the Swedish fin-de-siècle Symbolism, and he purchased significant symbolist works by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863-1944). Early Swedish Symbolism is represented in the art of *Richard Bergh* (1858-1919), who in the 1880s was a prominent figure together with Ernst Josephson among a group of artists that openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the educational principles and exhibition practices of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna). These artists became known as the Opponents (Opponenterna) after organizing two artist-run exhibitions at Blanch's Art Salon (Blanchs Konstsalong) in Stockholm in 1885, *From the Banks of the Seine* (Från Seinens strand) and *The Exhibtion of the Opponents* (Opponenternas utställning) (Nordensvan 1928: 256 ff.).

Bergh's symbolism includes myth and landscapes to reveal the eternity of the symbols being used, no matter how ambiguous they might seem. The ambiguity arises from Bergh's references in his paintings to symbols in art with culturally established meanings, while leaving certain symbolic elements open to new interpretations. In the 1890s, Bergh expressed that he had become a romantic, leaving naturalism aside and calling Impressionism partially 'idiotic' (Nordensvan 1928:367). In this spirit, Bergh painted *The Knight and the Maiden* (Riddaren och jungfrun, 1897), depicting a knight in armour, holding his hands protectively around a young maiden in white with a dandelion globe in her hands. The scene is set in in a field of dandelion globes, connoting human mortality, rebirth, or a prediction of a future catastrophe (the spherical shape of the dandelion globe can be decoded as symbolizing the world). Three years later, Bergh finished his monumental work *Nordic Summer Evening* (Nordisk sommarkväll, 1889–1900), which was purchased by art collectors Pontus and



Figure 147 Richard Bergh, *Nordic Summer Evening* (Nordisk sommarkväll), 1899–1900, oil on canvas, 170 x 223,5 cm. Photo: Hossein Sehatlou, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg.

Göthilda Fürstenberg and put on display in the collectors´ art gallery in Gothenburg (fig. 147).

The painting has been subject to a variety of interpretations, for example, as a quiet contemplation of nature, as a symbolic image of the relationship and juxtaposition of nature and culture, or as a symbol for the ties of marriage. It embodies a fin-de-siècle spirit with a man and a woman (Bergh used singer Karin Pyk and Prince Eugen as models) standing on a veranda with the evening sun reflecting in a still lake, and their faces with bodies half turned toward the water, as if moving forward into the new century with a stillness that evokes loss. The daylight is slowly escaping the couple on the floorboards by their feet, while they both seem lost in thought. It brings to mind the questions asked in the French artist Paul Gauguin's (1848-1903) symbolic painting from 1897–1898, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, executed in Gauguin's



Figure 148 Ivan Augéli, *Landscape with Red Fields* (Landskap med röda fält), 1916–1917, oil on canvas, 19 x 24 cm. Västerås konstmuseum, Västerås.

highly individualistic post-impressionistic style with a theme from Haiti. The Synthetism (i.e. flat colour fields and bold outlines combined with a symbolic visual language) of Gauguin inspired Swedish artists like Bergh's student Ivan Augéli (Brummer et al. [ed.] 2006: 23 ff.), and this approach was highly refined in Aguéli's landscape paintings (fig. 148).

By the end of the 19th century, economic and political changes in Sweden were marked by the rise of the Social Democrat Party (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetarparti) with the voting question as a main issue. In 1907, a reform was consolidated that allowed all men over 23 years of age to vote, but it would take another 14 years until women gained the same right. The onset of industrialization in Sweden caused a sudden migration of people leaving the Swedish countryside for the cities, and with this mobilization came poverty and crowded living conditions due to the rapid urbanization. The monarchy was criticized for negligence in political

matters regarding the national situation. After the Oscarian era (with reference to the King Oscar II, r. 1872–1907) came the reign of Gustav V (r. 1907–1950), and a major political occurrence of the time was the disintegration in 1905 of the union that had been formed in 1814 between Norway and Sweden, the only real effect of which was a weakening of Swedish military strength. Re-enforcement of Swedish defences was requested by Gustav V, despite the king's lack of real political power, which caused a crisis in Parliament ending with the current government resigning and the royalist Hjalmar Hammarskjöld being appointed as prime minister. When the First World War erupted in July 1914, Sweden declared itself neutral. Despite its neutrality (a stand that caused serious discussions within Parliament), Sweden was not entirely untouched by the consequences of the war. In 1917, workers around the country staged large-scale demonstrations concerning the lack of food – a consequence of the government's regulation of food in order to temporarily deal with Sweden's diminished ability to import goods during the war.

The emergence of Modernism(s) in Swedish Art

Late 19th century Symbolism and National Romanticism still characterized Swedish art in the wake of the new century, but a younger generation of artists both challenged and incorporated romantic and symbolist ideas – and a Swedish avant-garde was emerging in the 1910s. This development in Swedish art from the 1910s to the 1950s can be tied to five directions of the modernist project: Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism (Edwards 2000:43) – 'isms' with different degrees of influence on Swedish painting. As a simplification, two directions within Swedish avant-garde art can be recognized – 1) the belief in primitivity, colour, form, and dynamics (Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism) and 2) anarchistic freedom (Dadaism) and irrationalities (Surrealism) in revolt against the materialism, rationalism, and moralism of the Western world (Edwards 2000: 43).

Internationally, the early Cubism of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque from France concerned the deconstruction of objects in pictorial space and the addition of the elements of time and movement in

the assemblage of images. Cubism inspired several Swedish artists, for example, *Siri Derkert* (1888–1973) and *Gösta Adrian-Nilsson*, called GAN (1887–1965), but the Expressionism and Fauvism (from the French word 'fauve,' meaning 'wild,' with reference to the expressive use of colour) of Henri Matisse (1869-1954) was more influential in Swedish avant-garde painting of the 1910s. Next to the influence of Matisse, the dominant expressions of the Swedish avant-garde in painting included a manner of Naïve Art, which has been identified as 'the belief in primitivity' and described as having a childish, direct view of reality combined with a liberated, playful way of visual representation (Blomberg 1962: 50). Overlapping the emergence of Swedish Naïve Art, a new approach to realism appeared in the 1920s, described as New Objectivity.

At the opening of a major Swedish art event, *The Baltic Exhibition* (Baltiska utställningen) in Malmö 1914, many of the participating countries found themselves at war with each other after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. *Ferdi-*



Figure 149 Architecture by Ferdinand Boberg, *The White City*, The Art and Industry Fair in Stockholm, 1909. Photo: A. Blomberg, courtesy of Stockholm City Museum, Stockholm.



Figure 150 Isaac Grünewald, *The Singing Tree* (Det sjungande trädet), 1915, oil on canvas, 116 x 89,5 cm. Norrköpings konstmuseum, Norrköping. Photo: Ludwig Qvarnström.

nand Boberg (1860–1946) was the main architect for the exhibition, and he had previously created the pavilions for *The General Art and Industrial Exposition* (Den allmänna konst- och industriutställningen) in Stockholm 1897 and 1909 (fig. 149). The pavilions at The Baltic Exhibition were built in Boberg's adaptation of Art Nouveau – a style that was at its high point at the fairs of 1897 and 1909, but considered out-dated by 1914.

In the Swedish art pavilion at The Baltic Exhibition, a group of young Swedish artists who had studied under Matisse in Paris drew attention to their works – among them were *Isaac Grünewald* (1889–1946), *Sigrid Hjertén* (1885–1948), *Leander Engström* (1886–1927), and *Nils Dardel* (1888–1943). Individual approaches to Expressionism and Fauvism, far from the National Romanticism that had dominated Swedish art in the 1890s, made impressions on the visitors at the exhibition. Grünewald was a leading artist of early Swedish Expressionism and had been a central figure in The Young (De unga) – a group of artists of the Paris Matisse school (Académie Matisse) who became known through three exhibitions at Hallin's Art Merchant Store (Hallins Konsthandel), in Stockholm in 1909, 1910, and 1911 (fig. 150).

After the exhibitions of The Young, a new formation of artists, The Eight (De åtta), took shape under Grünewald's lead, representing an expressionist style, deriving from Fauvism. *Gösta Sandels* (1887–1919), as part of The Eight, chose a darker colour palette and rougher brushstrokes compared to artists following Matisse's high-tuned colour scale that was most obvious in the works of Grünewald and Hjertén. His painting *Woman Washing Windows* (Kvinna som tvättar fönster) from 1911 reveals his artistic choices, especially concerning colour, and differentiates his works from other Swedish expressionists in the 1910s (fig. 151). Its sky in dark blues and white finds its lighter colour counterpart in the dress of a woman who is standing between the interior and the exterior in the act of window washing. The balcony window frame in brick red is lined against an earthy yellow exterior wall – a yellow that on the balcony becomes mixed with the dark greens of the plants that decorate the railing. The wall in the background, separates the urban landscape from the countryside, following a tendency in Swedish art from the 1910s until the 1930s of mixing images of modernization and urbanization. In other words, an artistic choice of not completely leaving the traditional farming community behind, while depicting



Figure 151 Gösta Sandels, *Woman Washing Windows* (Kvinna som tvättar fönster), 1911, oil on canvas, 73 x 57 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm.



Figure 152 Hilma af Klint, *The Ten Largest*, No. 7, Group IV (De tio största nr. 7, grupp IV), 1907, oil and tempera on paper, 328 x 240 cm. By courtesy from the Hilma af Klint Foundation, HaK 108. Photo: Albin Dahlström, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

urban environments in painting.

Few Swedish artists are considered to have attempted full abstraction in painting as abstract artists were recognized through their explorations of techniques, form, colour, line, space, and material. While Russian-born Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) is generally considered to have been the first artist to explore complete abstraction, the Swedish artist *Hilma af Klint* (1862–1944) explored the artistic freedom of the style in a highly individual way, already combining Cubism with Expressionism and spiritual Symbolism around 1906, although her works were not exhibited until the 1980s (fig. 152). In Sweden, Klint stood relatively alone in following this path until *Otto G Carlsund* (1897–1948), who in the 1920s and 1930s investigated the possibilities of Abstract Art and Cubism through a theoretical perspective and whose works are closely related to those of the French painter Fernand Léger (1881-1955) and the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian (1872-1944).

Swedish painting between the wars

After the First World War, Swedish avant-garde art developed an independence in relation to international currents and art movements. As a result of the war, the mobility of Swedish artists decreased – the road to Paris and other larger European cities was no longer obvious, which might serve as an explanation for the development of regional uniqueness within Swedish art that reached its height in the 1930s. The strongest currents in Swedish art in 1900–1940 are rather Expressionism, Symbolism, and Primitivism (Naïve Art), all originating from points of transitions between older traditions and the effects of urbanization (Blomberg 1962: 50).

In *The New Swedish Art* (Den Nya Svenska Konsten) from 1923, a publication that attempts to describe contemporary currents in Swedish art labelled as 'modern', the modern artist is imagined as standing freer than during the 19th century: 'He no longer wishes merely to replicate, but to create. He does no longer strive for optical illusion, but for artistic synthesis' (Blomberg 1923: 2). This seems true if comparing the techniques of a so-called modern artist with the academic painting principles of the 19th century. Seeking challenges through the limitations of the canvas in terms

of flatness and size, as well as experimenting with form, colour, and line, was a process that was initiated before modern art and modernism became subjects of discourse. An escape from Naturalism and Academism can be seen, for example, in the works of Édouard Manet (1832-1883) in the wake of French Impressionism and of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), whose artistic inquiries laid the groundwork for Cubism. Manet's and Cézanne's approaches to painting became influential for avant-garde movements in art that followed after Post-Impressionism.

The Side Wing and 1920s Swedish avant-garde painting

The acclaimed exhibition The Side Wing (Falangen) at Liljevalchs Art Gallery (Liljevalchs konsthall) in Stockholm in 1922 revealed directions in Swedish art that deviated from simplified style classification. The Side Wing was a group of seventeen artists with core members such as *Gideon Börje* (1891–1965), *Vera Nilsson* (1888–1979), Leander Engström, *Einar Jolin* (1890–1976), *Hilding Linnqvist* (1891–1984), *Birger Simonsson* (1883–1938), *Otte Sköld* (1894–1958), *Ragnar Hallberg* (1892–1966), *Arvid Fougstedt* (1888–1949), and Nils Dardel. A colourful expressionist style dominated the group's works, in combination with impressions of New Objectivity, Naïve art, and Surrealism. At the pavilion showing Nordic art at *The Gothenburg Jubilee Exhibition* (Göteborgs jubileumsutställning) in October 1923, several artists who were connected to The Side Wing showed their works. In the foreword to the exhibition catalogue, the art historian Axel L. Romdahl makes a point of dividing the participating artists into two groups, while simultaneously writing, 'The new Swedish painting that is represented at our exhibition shows no uniformity or one-sided character' (Romdahl 1923: 7). There was a group of artists from Stockholm where the influences of Henri Matisse surfaced in their works (Grünewald, Hjérten, Engström, and Jolin, Dardel) and a Gothenburg-based group with Swedish west coast landscapes as their main choice of subject (Simonsson, Sandels, *Carl Ryd* (1883–1958), and *Arthur Carlsson Percy* (1886–1946)) (Romdahl 1923: 7). Romdahl's division of artists into these groups makes a regional claim for each, while leaving the question open regarding what the



Figure 153 Carl Ryd, *Tilled Fields* (Åkerfält), 1917, oil on canvas, 60,5 x 74,5 cm. Photo: Hossein Sehatlou, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg. Although this painting is made earlier than the 1920s, it gives an example of Ryd's direction in landscape painting associated with the Gothenburg group.

diversity in Swedish avant-garde art of the 1920s was really about. Differences between these two groups can be found in the treatment of subjects and colours, and as a rough generalization the Gothenburg division was more associated with landscape painting. Both groups also turned to subjects in their closest environment, such as interiors featuring people in their closest circles or families, window views from their homes, etc., but the Gothenburg group's depictions contain a more distant eye. In terms of colour, the Gothenburg group's colour choices can be described as subdued and closer to the style of Cézanne than that of Matisse, which is more closely related to the Stockholm artists (fig. 153).

As a common feature for the different 'isms', a common denominator is identified for the artists of new Swedish painting in 'their relationship

to the main subject, to nature' (Blomberg 1923:1). This simplification roughly encircles Swedish art of the 1920s as being either expressionist (including Naïve art) or cubist in style, with the exception of an artist like Nils Dardel, whose exotic landscapes are described as 'complicated' and 'peculiar' (Blomberg 1923: 55).

The peculiarity of Dardel

An art critic for the weekly magazine *Idun* at The Side Wing's exhibition in 1922 was immediately drawn to the space that housed Nils Dardel's works that had attracted a crowd on the day of the exhibition's opening (*Idun* 1922, no. 42). One of Dardel's series of paintings was called *Dreams and Fantasies* and the critic summarized his impressions of these works: 'The young, Swedish artist juxtaposes symbols of joy and beauty found in the dream with symbols of terror, insecurity, and apocalypse' (*Idun* 1922, no. 42). One of the paintings in *Dreams and Fantasies* was later named *Visit to an Eccentric Lady* (Visit hos exentrisk dam, 1921), and a closer look at the painting gives a notion about Dardel's ascribed peculiarity as well as the multifaceted directions in Swedish art of the 1920s (fig. 154).

The large-format painting shows a room with a skylight window, with no sunlight entering from the outside. A seemingly dead man in a magician's cloak hangs from a rope from the ceiling with yellow birds circling around his head, as a glowing halo. On top of a blue-green backdrop wall stand two figures – a Pierrot character and a young girl, both with bowed heads. Below them runs a fire-red ladder where a white-faced disfigured man is holding a fishing rod with a rabbit hooked on it to tease a snake. Dressed and undressed monkeys are spread out in the room, busy with different actions. A large plant balances the composition and makes its way from the floor to the ceiling, and then escapes the framing of the picture. In the foreground, a rooster is greeting a couple of birds that are placed one step away from a slender, deer-like animal. The animal is turning its body towards a red-haired man in a purple suit who has entered the room with a bouquet of flowers and a ferocious looking dog at his ankles. A butler with a monkey on his shoulder is making a gesture as if he is introducing the purple-dressed visitor to a woman who is standing in the centre of the

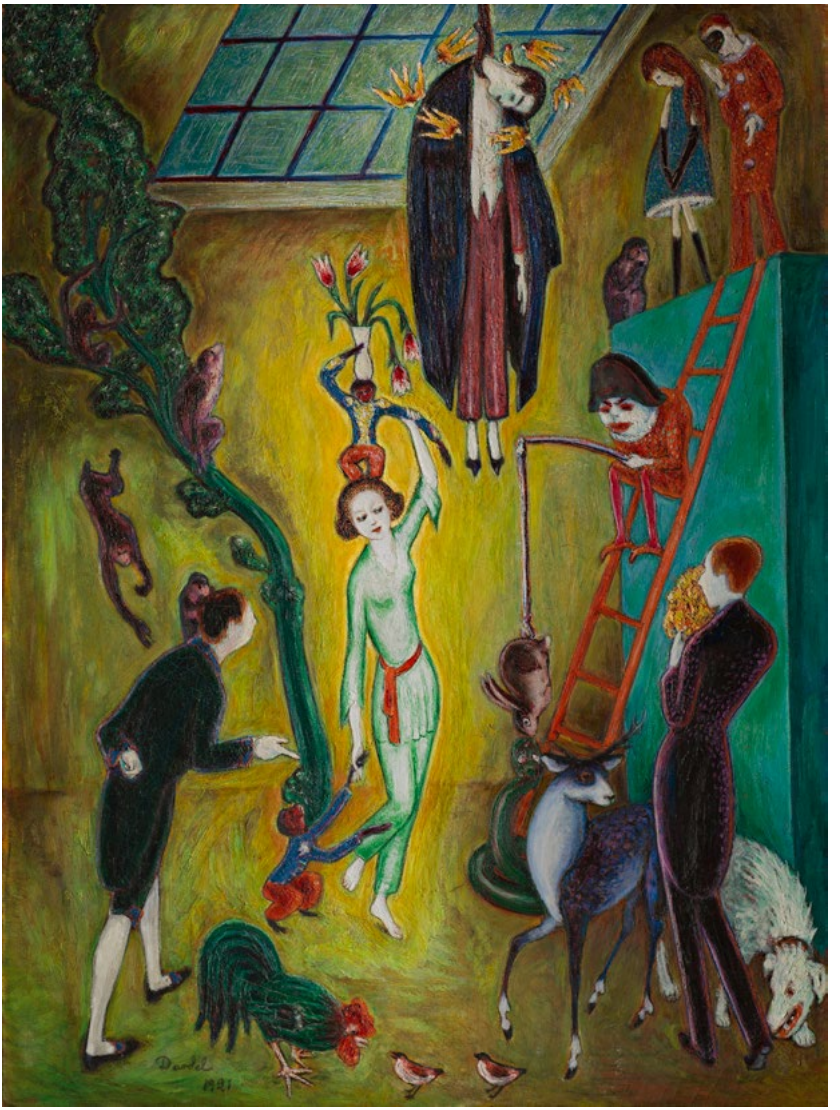

Figure 154 Nils Dardel, *Visit to an Eccentric Lady* (Visit hos exentrisk dam), 1921, oil on canvas, 130,5 x 97,5 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

room. The (eccentric) lady holds one monkey in her hand and another one sits on her head, holding a vase with withering flowers. Dardel's dream settings point to Surrealism with their represented absurdities, and the critic from *Idun* exclaimed: 'I believe that, that modern psychologist we spoke about, would be delighted if he saw how studious Dardel makes use of the Symbolism of monkeys' (*Idun* 1922, no. 42). The 'modern psychologist' surely refers to the practice of psychoanalysis, as Sigmund Freud's work *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* [Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis], published in 1916–1917, had become widely known in the 1920s. Freud's theories regarding the functions of the human unconscious had a great impact on the French surrealist movement in art and literature, with André Breton (1896-1966) as its front man. In the 1930s, a more distinct surrealist style compared to Dardel's works was represented by the Halmstad Group (Halmstadgruppen), an artist collective based in the Swedish west coast city of Halmstad. The group exhibited their works internationally in surrealist exhibitions next to well-known artists like Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) from Spain and Max Ernst (1891-1976) from Germany.

Dardel's eccentric lady and his dream and fantasy works from the 1920s bear strong references to the world of theatre and appear as staged performances taking place within a human mind. His surreal and absurd creations of stage décors for the Paris-based avant-garde company *Les Ballets Suédois*' productions from 1920 – *Nuit de Sain Jean*, *Maison de Fous*, and *El Greco* – concretizes Dardel's relationship to the performance arts. Dardel's paintings from the 1910s are more naïve than surrealistic or absurd, and the traits of Naïve Art remain in his later works. In *Visit to an Eccentric Lady*, the subject matter is linked to Surrealism, while Naïve Art asserts itself in the representation of figures as puppet-like or faceless.

Naïve Art and New Objectivity

Naïve traits were a tendency in works by many Swedish artists already in the 1910s. A prominent painter who continued to explore the style was Hilding Linnqvist, with his playful, narrative paintings filled with curious figures that sometimes echoes Pieter Bruegel the Elder's busy 16th century imagery (fig. 155). The French naïve artist Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) with his autodidact



Figure 155 Hilding Linnqvist, *View of the Square, French Small Town (Chinon)* (Torgbild, fransk småstad (Chinon)), 1921–1925, oil on canvas, 407 x 298 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Hilding Linnqvist/BUS.

techniques and unusual use of perspective can be seen as a source of inspiration, and similarly to Dardel the inclusion of animals played a part in encoding the image with symbols. In Rousseau's art, objects and their surroundings are all relative to each other in scale, refusing the academic tradition of perspective in painting – a completely subjective rule over the pictorial space to guide the viewer's eye. Rousseau's style shows similarities with Swedish naïve artists' works that, in turn, when moving into the 1930s, are related to social and political changes with a regional uniqueness.

The works of the Swedish artist Otte Sköld display a mix of Naïve Art traits and the realism of New Objectivity, with its focus on figurative art. Sköld's series of bar scenes, *Le Bistro*, from the early 1920s depicts the artist's immediate surroundings in Parisian bar milieus, and one of the paintings was presented at The Side Wing's exhibition in 1922. One version of Sköld's bistro scenes can be found today in the collection of the National Museum (Nasjonalmuseet) in Oslo, Norway (fig. 156).



Figure 156 Otte Sköld, *Le Bistro*, 1920, oil on wood, 52 x 70 cm. The National Museum, Oslo. © Otte Sköld/BUS.

It shows women and men in different actions, spread out in a bistro interior – couples, card players, a man with his half-eaten dinner in front of him, a woman descending the stairs after a toilet visit, and a sturdy barman observing his workplace. The figures are roundly shaped with faces that are rather repetitions of patterns than portraits. The pipe of a heater in the foreground divides the room and corresponds in shape to the stair's handrail on the opposite side and to the curved bar counter. A social realism is evident regarding the choice of subject matter, combined with a naïve style of painting perspective and figures, similar to works by Rousseau. Sköld's realism evokes an inclination towards New Objectivity, and together with Arvid Fougstedt, the two artists became main representatives of this direction in Sweden. New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit), originated from Germany with artists like Max Beckmann (1884-1915), Otto Dix (1891-1969), and George Grosz (1893-1959) as leading figures. The term was coined in 1925 to describe the common features of artworks that were exhibited the same year at Kunsthalle in Mannheim under the Weimar Republic (1919–1933). The style was a reaction against Expressionism and Abstract Art, and it marked a return to the absolute figural in painting that evoked the classical realism found in early Renaissance painting. Some artists took this realism to an extreme, on the verge of the absurd. It was at times harshly satirical, playing on the immediate contemporary world and sceptical of industrial modernization and progress in the aftermath of the First World War.

Fougstedt's style can be described as being closer to the German New Objectivity compared to Sköld's work, which retains more of a naïve character. Fougstedt continued to explore this manner of painting from his public breakthrough with an exhibition in Stockholm 1919 up until the 1940s. In a self-portrait from 1924, the artist pictures himself sitting on a chair in the interior of an apartment, holding a small canvas and a pencil to symbolize his role as an artist (fig. 157). Gazing directly to the side, the represented figure escapes to engage in a dialogue with the viewer. A sharp light brightens the foreground and reflects strongly on the figure's forehead – a realistic lighting that hides no symbols for the viewer to detect or interpret. The subdued colour palette and the calm simplicity of the background with its lack of depth, as well as the clarity of the figure, is remi-



Figure 157 Arvid Fougstedt, *Self-portrait* (Självporträtt), 1924, oil on canvas, 46 x 33 cm. Courtesy of Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Arvid Fougstedt/BUS.



Figure 158 Bror Hjorth, *Ole on the Balcony/View over Skånegatan* (Olle på balkongen/Vy över Skånegatan), 1932, oil on canvas, 116 x 89 cm. Private collection. Photo: Stockholms auktionsverk. © Bror Hjorth/BUS.



Figure 159 Vera Nilsson, *Lamp Light* (Lampsken), ca 1930, oil on canvas, 78 x 88 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Vera Nilsson/BUS.

niscent of French artist Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' (1780-1867) Neoclassicism that inspired many of the artists associated with New Objectivity. Fougstedt's work finds itself far from the Expressionism and Fauvism that dominated in early Swedish modern art of the 1910s.

The naïve style represented in Sköld's work, on the other hand, would be explored further by the artists *Bror Hjorth* (1894–1968), *Anna Berg* (1875–1950), Vera Nilsson, and *Sven Erixson* (1899–1970) in the 1930s. In Hjorth's painting *Ole on the Balcony/View over Skånegatan* (Olle på balkongen/Vy över Skånegatan) from ca. 1932, the artist's son is depicted in winter clothing with a view over the street Skånegatan with south-central Stockholm and its snow-paved streets in the background (fig. 158). The area around Skånegatan was at the time a working-class area that had a rapidly growing population as industrialization in Sweden became a reality in the late 19th century. With this environment behind him, the boy's bright red mittens echo the same tones as some of the buildings found in the balcony scene's backdrop. Below the balcony, everyday life is depicted with cars and people on the streets. In the centre of the composition stands a naked, dark tree that towers towards the sky in the middle of the urban area, mimicking the antlers of a deer while simultaneously taking on the shape and colour of the Art Deco balcony rail. The rounded shapes of objects and the relative perspective found in Sköld's *Le Bistro* are placed by Hjorth in the urban environment of Stockholm. During the 1930s, Hjorth concentrated mostly on sculpture and reliefs as artistic expressions, but he returned more seriously to painting in the 1940s, and continued to explore a naïve style with a Swedish particularity.

Another Swedish naïve artist, Vera Nilsson, also used her own child as a model. In her painting *Lamp Light* (Lampsken) from 1930, the artist's daughter is portrayed as sleeping with her head on a table, turned against her mother, the artist at work fig. 159). As a contrast to Hjorth's *Ole on the Balcony*, where the artist's son becomes part of the construction of a colourful winter cityscape, Nilsson enhances the intimacy that can be found in the French artist Berthe Morisot's (1841-1895) impressionist works, depicting her family in interiors and revealing the close relationship between the artist and the painted subject. The fluidity and subjective perspective of the room brings the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh's (1853-1890)

brushwork and colour use to mind, but Nilsson makes use of a more fiery, earthy palette, dominated by yellows, browns, and reds. The search for objectivity through distance found in works aligned with New Objectivity is here exchanged for intimacy.

Getting political

The 1930s were troubled years, and Swedish art became oriented towards a content of social criticism, whether considered as Expressionism, Naïve Art, realism, or New Objectivity. The great depression after Black Tuesday with the New York stock market crash in 1929 struck hard at the Western world economy in the 1930s, including the art market. Sweden was initially spared, but with the death of the most influential Swedish financier, Ivar Kreuger, on 12 March 1932, the consequence was an immediate financial crisis. The effects on the art market included reduced mobility for Swedish artists, and this is a partial explanation for the development of a more regional specificity within Swedish painting and sculpture. The financial situation for Sweden was resolved when the Wallenberg business and banking group stepped in to join forces with the other Swedish banks.

The Social Democratic Party's leader Per-Albin Hansson had become prime minister in 1932, and the concept of *Folkhemmet* [the People's home'] – which was to be the model for the Swedish welfare state – was also launched in the early 1930s under Hansson's lead. Later, he set the directions for Swedish neutrality in the war to come, and a coalition was formed with the other political parties in Sweden. Hansson's Social Democrat government had been elected in 1932 after the catastrophic events in Ådalen in 1931, when a strikers' conflict resulted in the shooting of five protesters on police orders. Swedish workers became a primary subject in painting and sculpture during the 1930s, and Swedish art became more political than before.

Albin Amelin (1902–1975) entered the Swedish art scene through an exhibition at the Stockholm gallery Swedish-French Gallery (Svensk-Franska galleriet) in 1929 with social-realistic paintings, portraits of workers, and urban landscapes, which were hung next to his still-lives of flowers. Amelin's painting *The Gasworks, Winter* (Gasverket, vinter) from 1936



Figure 160 Albin Amelin, *The Gasworks, Winter* (Gasverket, vinter), 1936, oil on canvas, 97,5 x 130 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Albin Amelin/BUS.

shows the gasworks in Stockholm with a burning fire giving rise to a heavy smoke (fig. 160). Snow becomes mixed with the black coal, and the machinery together with the two cisterns creates a rhythm in the image. With an ochre coloured fire burning in the background, the painting evokes an apocalyptic feeling. Boats appear stuck in the frozen water by the fenced off gasworks area, and in the foreground a trail of people are seen walking and biking – most probably workers.

Amelin was also among the artists who exhibited at the Stockholm Exhibtion in 1930 (Stockholmsutställningen 1930) next to Nilsson, Erixson, and others who had ties to the artist-run gallery Färg och form in Stockholm. The Stockholm Exhibition is mostly remembered for its architecture by *Gunnar Asplund* (1885–1940) and for the breakthrough of the style of Functionalism, which is still strongly associated with Scandinavian architecture and design.

Next to depictions of working-class Sweden, Swedish Expressionism



Figure 161 Ivan Ivarson, *Fruit Harvest, St Georges de Didonne* (Fruktskörd, St Georges-de-Didonne), 1939, oil on canvas, 51 x 60,5 cm. Photo: Hossein Sehatlou, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg.

continued into the 1930s through the artist group called The Gothenburg Colourists (Göteborgskoloristerna) and the works by, for example, *Åke Göransson* (1902–1942), *Ragnar Sandberg* (1902–1972), *Inge Schiöler* (1908–1971), and *Ivan Ivarson* (1900–1939) (fig. 161). Their works brought attention to the treatment of colour through the use of a warm and intense palette, and they express infatuation with the nature of the region of Gothenburg. Although foremost related to the painting of landscapes and seascapes, the motifs of the group stretch further to include cityscapes and interiors, projecting a belonging to nature's eternal existence, as well as to the modern world.



Figure 162 Endre Nemes, *The Baroque Chair* (Barockstolen), 1941, tempera and oil on canvas, 109 x 90 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Endre Nemes/BUS.

Turning the eye briefly away from the developments in Swedish painting, the world fair *Exposition internationale des 'Arts et des Techniques appliqués à la Vie moderne'* in Paris 1937, pointed to current conflicts of the Western world and presented political manifestations in art. The Spanish pavilion showcased Picasso's monumental painting *Guernica*, representing the horrors of the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. On the same exhibition grounds stood the fascist architecture of the Soviet and German pavilions. In parallel to the shaky conditions in Europe, the developments in Swedish painting in the 1930s were associated with regional characteristics, whether political turns or a closeness

to nature, and the 1940s set the stage for new influences as artists fleeing the war found a home in Sweden and mixed with local artistic circles.

One of these artists was Hungarian-born *Endre Nemes* (1909–1985), who quickly earned a name for himself with a solo exhibition in Stockholm in 1941, presenting an international surrealist style and the technique of mixed media in painting (acrylics, tempera, and oil) to a Swedish audience (fig. 162). Nemes became an important teacher at the Valand Academy in Gothenburg and was its director from 1947 to 1955. The impact of Surrealism as direction in post-war Swedish art can be seen in the works of the Imaginists (Imaginisterna), a group of artists based in Malmö in southern Sweden. Their style, however, was more abstract and less detailed than Nemes' take on Surrealism. More visible on the Swedish art scene in the late 1940s was the style of Concretism (Konkretism) with its breakthrough at the exhibition *Young Art* (Ung konst) in 1947 at the gallery Färg och form in Stockholm. The concretists' art was closely associated with the heydays of the Swedish welfare state.

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Gender and identity in the early 20th century

The artist couple Grünewald-Hjertén

Ludwig Qvarnström

Dressed in a long red skirt, ice-green blouse, and a fashionable hat, *Sigrid Hjertén* (1885–1948) is seated on a green chair with the brush in her hand (fig. 163). Her elongated body almost fills the foreground, while the painting she is working on is outside the picture. In the background, a child in a sailor's suit is seated on a green bench with his toys – a sailing boat and a horse on wheels – on the floor. On the wall behind the child there is a large decorative painting in green, red, and yellow in a half round shape acting almost as an aureole surrounding the two subjects in the painting. This is one of very few self-portraits by Sigrid Hjertén where she has depicted herself as an artist, although her fashionable outfit is more suitable for a dinner party than working with paint. The child in the painting, with his well-known big curly hair, is her son Iván. The decorative painting in the background is her husband's, the artist *Isaac Grünewald's* (1889–1946) proposal for the decoration of the Marriage Chamber in the Law Court of Stockholm, which was made in 1914, the same year as Hjertén's self-portrait. In a self-portrait, artists usually put their own most important paintings in the background, but Hjertén has put her husband's most important work at the time in the background instead. This was probably due to them sharing the same atelier in Stockholm, which was also their home, and Grünewald was at the time working on this full-scale sketch. Iván does not seem to be posing, but instead for a moment has stopped playing with



Figure 163 Sigrid Hjertén, *Self-portrait* (Självporträtt), 1914, oil on canvas, 118 x 89 cm. Malmö Art Museum, Malmö. © Sigrid Hjertén.

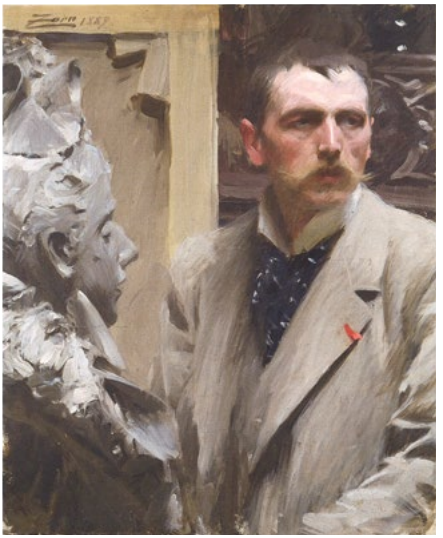

Figure 164 Anders Zorn, *Self-portrait* (Självporträtt), 1889, oil on canvas, 74,5 x 62,5 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

his toys and has sat down looking expectantly at his mother.

Like many other young Scandinavian artists at the time, Sigrid Hjertén and Isaac Grünewald had both studied at *Académie Matisse* in Paris. In the spring of 1913, Isaac Grünewald and Sigrid Hjertén exhibited for the first time together at Hallin's Art Merchant Store (Hallins Konsthandel), in Stockholm. In 1914, they were at the beginning of their splendid careers, introducing French Expressionism in Sweden. During the rest of the decade they established themselves as one of the most famous artist couples in Sweden, and they were very often compared with each other by art critics.

Grünewald's presence in Hjertén's self-portrait, through his decorative painting in the background, can be understood as part of their aim to promote themselves as an artist couple. It is a completely different relation than what we can see in, for example, the older artist *Anders Zorn's* (1860–1920) self-portrait from 1889 made for the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. In Zorn's self-portrait, we can see a self-confident artist in an asymmetric composition looking past the observer. Everything in the painting reminds us of his profession; the back of a canvas in the background and the clay

bust of his wife Emma Zorn that he was working on at the time (fig. 164). Iván's presence with his toys in Hjertén's self-portrait not only presents the space as her and Grünewald's combined atelier and home, but also Hjertén's role as both mother and artist, even though she emphasises her role as artist in her self-portrait. She seldom represented herself in a maternal role, and in Grünewald's portraits of her she is rarely together with Iván. It is a completely different view of the family compared with, for example, *Carl Larsson's* (1853–1919) watercolours from the 1890s of family life with eight children at his and *Karin Larsson's* (1859–1928) picturesque cottage Lilla Hyttnäs at Sundborn. Even though their home was a joint project, Karin Larsson is usually depicted by her husband in her maternal role together with their children, posing for their father the artist. At the turn of the century, women were usually depicted within the private sphere, and one of the most conspicuous motifs was the convalescence emphasising the woman as fair and vulnerable, such as Carl Larsson's por-



Figure 165 Carl Larsson, *Convalescence* (Konvalescens), 1899, aquarelle on paper, 52 x 66 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

trait of his wife Karin in bed from 1899 (fig. 165).

In the 19th century, the private sphere and the public were clearly separated and gendered. The private home became the world for women while men could move freely in the public sphere. This hierarchical separation was still noteworthy in 20th century Sweden (and still today), a dualistic status relation based on pairs of opposition such as masculine/feminine, production/consumption, machine/body, active/passive, functional/decorative, etc. At the same time, from the mid-19th century we can see a strong women's liberation movement in Sweden that opened the possibility for women to establish themselves as artists. In 1864, the 130-year-old Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna) in Stockholm, the only institution in Sweden offering an education in the fine arts, opened a class for women in painting and sculpture. There are examples of successful women artists before the mid-19th century going back to at least the 17th century. The most famous and probably the first Swedish professional female painter was *Ulrica Fredrica Pasch* (1735–1796), daughter of *Lorens Pasch* (1702–1766) who was responsible for her training. Until the 1860s almost all women artists came from artist families. Although women could get academic training from 1864, they still had difficulties exhibiting their work and making a living as artists, and in the 1890s there was a backlash with a strong counter-reaction against the women's movement. The Artists' Club (Konstnärsklubben) founded in 1856 was and still is a strictly male association. Although women were associated with the Artists' Union (Konstnärsförbundet) that was founded in 1886 and active until 1920, none achieved the status of their male colleagues. This conservative attitude was also apparent in the policies of vanguard associations. The Young (De unga), for instance, founded by, among others, Isaac Grünewald in 1907, only allowed male membership. In England, Germany, and France, female artists had long had their own interest organizations; for example, the Society of Women Artists in London was founded in 1855. However, it was not until 1910 that female Swedish artists founded their own exhibition and support group called The Association of Swedish Women Artists (Föreningen svenska konstnärinnor).

Sigrid Hjertén, who met Isaac Grünewald in 1909, was not a member of the Association of Swedish Women Artists. Instead, she became the only

female member of The Eight (De åtta), an association founded by Grünewald in 1912. As a member of the male-dominated avant-garde and combining a lengthier marriage with an artistic career, she was unconventional. Her relationship with Grünewald gave her the opportunity to exhibit together with other male expressionists, and during the 1910s their relationship was probably conducive for both of their careers. During the 1920s, the family moved to Paris, and soon her family commitments came into conflict with her artistic career. In an interview in the women's magazine *Idun* in 1924, she said:

> I do not paint very much nowadays […] I concern myself with my husband's work: His successes, setbacks, dreams and struggles are mine and, besides, I have our son and the household. That is enough, and I am happy with it. Now when I paint it is mostly for pleasure.

Although it sounds like she had given up her career as an artist in 1924, she continued to paint and exhibit until mental illness finally ended her career. In 1936, she finally gained wider public recognition with a well-received solo exhibition at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm, but at that time she was hospitalised, diagnosed with schizophrenia.

The reason for Isaac Grünewald and Sigrid Hjertén to move to Paris was probably due to the hard climate of art criticism they met in Sweden. As avant-garde artists, they were both paid attention to, but at the same time the conservative critics marginalised them. They were both marginalised in a double sense, not only as avant-garde artists but also for Hjertén as a woman and for Grünewald as a Jew. In 1918, the artist couple had a large exhibition together with *Leander Engström* (1886–1927) at Liljevalch's Art Gallery (Liljevachs Konsthall) in Stockholm. The exhibition was important for the public recognition of Expressionism in Sweden, but it also led to several negative outbursts by critics and artists. The older artist *Albert Engström* (1869–1940), who during the 1910s often attacked Modernist artists, wrote an indignant article full of invectives.

> Mrs Hjertström-Grünewald I do not even consider. For her work is complete idiocy. She has her models in the Eugenia Home for the Disabled

> and seems to possess a perverted longing for malformations. I swear to God there is nothing artistic in her idiotic doodles. Let me confirm that her attempts are humbug. Her colours are ugly and thin and foolishly coquettish. Her husband's colours are also thin, but coquettish in an intelligent manner.

Engström not only misspells her name, which was a common way to disparage an artist at the time, but also describes her art as 'idiotic doodles' and 'foolishly coquettish'. This is one of numerous articles attacking Hjertén's art during her lifetime. Her status as a female artist was prejudicially undermined, and she was often compared to her husband Grünewald as a pale copy of his more colourful art. As a Jew he also got his share of negative criticism, even though his colours, according to Engström, were 'coquettish in an intelligent manner'. Grünewald was often aligned by critics with the negative features of modernity – materialism and the mass market – which were typical anti-Semitic prejudices about Jews. In early 20th century Swedish art, criticisms of Modernism and Jewishness were often conflated. When, for instance, the artist *Ossian Elgström* (1883–1950) reviewed Grünewald's participation in the group exhibition of The Eight at the gallery Salon Joël in Stockholm, he seized on Grünewald's Jewishness and reformulated Expressionism into 'Express-Zionists' and referred to Grünewald as the 'Zionist Isaac'. Using only his first name makes the statement disparagingly familiar. In the nationalistic climate of the earlier national romantics, cosmopolitan Modernism and Jewishness were considered a threat to the social and national body. As Grünewald became more and more successful in the public sphere, the openly anti-Semitic outbursts continued unabated at least until the 1930s when the rhetoric became much more subtler and later almost disappears, even though traces of this rhetoric are still noticeable in 21st century art historiography. These prejudices were not only part of the art criticism in the early 20th century, and they also left their mark in Hjertén's and Grünewald's art.

On April 12, 1913, the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* published a brief article about the above-mentioned exhibition at Hallin's Art Merchant Store, where Grünewald and Hjertén exhibited together. The article is illustrated with a portrait of the two artists; the drawing, the caption informs us, was



Figure 166 Isaac Grünewald, drawing published in *Dagens Nyheter* April 12 1913.

made by Isaac Grünewald (fig. 166). With a few simple marks, he has depicted his own and Hjertén's profiles in a manner that makes them easily identifiable. Grünewald's dark hair, heavy eyelids, distinct eyebrows, large curved nose, and full lips are dramatically contrasted against Hjertén's fair hair, small turned-up nose, and tight-lipped mouth. Especially during the 1910s, both artists played with gender roles and identity in their art. Isaac Grünewald made several self-portraits during his career. In these paintings, as in his self-portrait from 1912 (fig. 167), we once again find an emphasis on his striking facial features. He often depicted himself in half profile and slightly from below, a position that definitely brings out his nose and one of his eyes. Looking at photographs of him, we can see that he definitely had a large nose, full lips, and distinct eyebrows, characteristics he often emphasized in his self-portraits. What makes this visual self-characterization interesting is its visual correspondence with ideolog-



Figure 167 Isaac Grünewald, *Self-portrait* (Självporträtt), 1912, oil on canvas, 44,5 x 36,5 cm. Private collection. Photo: Ludwig Qvarnström.

ically loaded visual codes within the anti-Semitic discourse of the time. In early 20th century Sweden, the visual codes of the anti-Semitic discourse were very well established and visible in, for example, the daily press and magazines. Grünewald became one of the most publicly known Jews in Sweden, frequently occurring as a subject in the daily and comic press. In an anonymous drawing in the comic magazine *Kasper* (1918:22), he is depicted with all the 'Jewish' facial characteristics and as mass-producing art that Hjertén is shown hanging to dry as if it were laundry (fig. 168).

Going back to the small drawing in *Dagens Nyheter* from 1913, Grünewald has, in essence, presented himself and Hjertén as an upper middle-class lady and the Jew, which was at the time a highly odd couple. Coming from the upper middle class, Hjertén was representative for female artists at the same time as her relationship with Grünewald and participation in the male-dominated avant-garde movement made her unconventional. In-



Figure 168 Unknown artist, drawing published in *Kasper* 1918:22.

stead of moderating his own appearance, Grünewald emphasized his Jewishness, which can be understood as both a provocation and a way to deal with these images of him. By making his antagonists' visual language his own, he could on a personal level disarm the public image of him as a Jew.

Coming from a poor family, Isaac Grünewald in his youth used to wear second-hand clothes, and in early photographs and paintings he looks like a bohemian. This was originally probably determined by material necessity, but soon developed into a role. The archetypal contemporary Swedish bohemian was the artist *Ivar Arosenius* (1878–1909), but Grünewald early on, as soon as he could afford it, acquired the fashionable dress and elegance of a dandy. This is clearly visible in several of Sigrid Hjertén's portraits of her husband. In a portrait from 1918, Grünewald is sitting down reclining on his elbow (fig. 169). He is elegantly dressed in a light grey suit, pink shirt, and red and white striped tie. His blue hair, blue tinted eye shadow, and light pink lipstick match the colour harmonies of the clothing. His eyes are half closed, his lips are full, and his nose is standing out clearly with distinct contour lines. Hjertén has feminized Grünewald's body, which with the elegant outfit makes him a typical dandy.



Figure 169 Sigrid Hjertén, *Isaac Grünewald*, 1918, oil on canvas, 130 x 85 cm. Private collection. © Sigrid Hjertén. Photo: Per Myrehed.

The dandy had its roots in the circle around the Irish poet and playwriter Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and the decadents of the 1880s. This type of body culture was accordingly associated with decadence and foreign elements in Swedish society by conservative critics. The dandy was a man playing the role of a woman, while the Jewish body was often feminized from an anti-Semitic point of view, and these were easily conflated body types. Hjertén is here pointing out Grünewald's otherness in a double sense; at the same time as she has depicted him as a Jew she has depicted him as a dandy, which was one of the artist's available roles that was popular among Modernist artists. Hjertén and Grünewald represented themselves as a cosmopolitan and elegant couple, which was an important part of their role-playing on the Swedish art scene. The male artist could consciously play the role of the dandy; this feminine role was a chosen role by the male artists and was a role a woman could not play. When Grünewald painted the portrait of Hjertén leaning on a black chair in 1916, she is posing with a fashionable white dress with red dots and a red hat (fig 170). She is consciously posing showing her slender feminine body, but she could not be playing the role of the dandy because at that time this kind of exaggerated femininity was considered the natural behaviour for a woman. Although artists in early 20th century experimented with gender roles the ideas of or awareness of masculinity and femininity as socially constructed belongs to the post-war era.

Even though there were several examples such as *Vera Nilsson* (1888–1979), *Mollie Faustman* (1883–1966), and *Siri Derkert* (1883–1966), who, like Sigrid Hjertén, were women who had managed to establish themselves as artists, there were few possibilities for women to adopt the male artist's role that dominated at that time. Going back to where we started with Hjertén's self-portrait. Although Hjertén was known for her elegance in way of dressing – something we can understand as part of her and Grünewald's role-playing as a glamorous artist couple – her fashionable dress and plumed hat seem unconventional when depicting herself as an artist. However, this can be understood as a reference to a specific tradition among female artists leading to an objectification of herself. For a moment, she has depicted herself in the traditional role of women in painting – as a model – clearly showing the difficulties or her as a woman to find a suitable artist role.



Figure 170 Isaac Grünewald, *Sigrid and the Black Chair* (Sigrid och den svarta stolen), 1916, oil on canvas, 200 x 125 cm. Private collection. Photo: Per Myrehed.

Although they lived in Paris during the 1920s, they kept an atelier in Stockholm, and Isaac Grünewald had several successful commissions for stage designs for the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm and other theatres. In 1932, they moved back to Sweden where Grünewald became professor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. He left Sweden as an avant-garde artist and came back a decade later as an established artist and professor at the most prestigious art institution in Sweden. But this was not without controversy, and he was subjected to anti-Semitic attacks until his death in an airplane crash in 1946. Sigrid Hjertén died two years later after an unsuccessful lobotomy.

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The Halmstad Group

Surrealism in the 1930s

Helen Fuchs

In the 20th century of Swedish art the Halmstad Group (Halmstadgruppen) is associated with Post-Cubism during the 1920s and the introduction of Surrealism during the 1930s, and the group garnered much attention being from a small provincial town having an obvious relationship to international avant-garde movements. Even so, some critics seemed unable to consider them as a part of both a local and a international context. Irrespecitve of what art movement the Halmstad Group was related to by art critics, it was often described in relation to 'Swedish' art, international movements, and to preconceived ideas about provincial places such as the city of Halmstad. The group exhibited extensively in Sweden during the 1930s, and a large number of articles and newspaper items were written about them.

The reception of the group's Surrealism was profoundly divergent, and this article intends to present how the Surrealism of the Halmstad Group was met during the 1930s in terms of both Swedish cultural contexts and international modernist contexts.

Support and influence

With one exception, the six men who formed the Halmstad Group in 1929, came from modest family conditions of workmen, seamen, and farmers, living in and around the city of Halmstad, located on the west coast of Sweden, 140 km south of Gothenburg.

Axel Olson (1899–1986), his brother *Erik Olson* (1901–1986) and their cousin *Waldemar Lorentzon* (1899–1984) started to paint during the late 1910s, during their spare time as apprentices. In 1919, they participated in an amateur exhibition and they met the art collector and engineer Egon Östlund (1889–1952). From the 1920s until his death, Östlund's support and encouragement was probably decisive for the group's success. Through Östlund they got to know the artist *Gösta Adrian-Nilsson* (1884–1965), who exercised a huge influence on them during the 1920s. His distinctive style of energetic Futurism and Post-Cubism attracted them as being truly modern and masculine. Through Östlund they also acquired contacts with wealthy Halmstad citizens who agreed to support their stays abroad. In 1923 Axel Olson spent a few months in Berlin studying under Ukranian-born artist Alexander Archipenko (1887–1964). His brother Erik and cousin Waldemar went to Paris in 1924 and studied under Fernand Léger (1881–1955).

Informal and formal education

By that time, two other young men, *Sven Jonson* (1902–1981) and *Esaias Thorén* (1901–1981), also decided to try make it as artists after having seen one of Gösta Adrian-Nilsson's paintings in Halmstad. In 1926, they went to Paris, however, because of lack of money it was a short stay.

Stellan Mörner (1896–1979) had a different background and never lived on a regular basis in Halmstad. He was of noble birth and was raised at the family estate Esplunda, some 140 km west of Stockholm. During the 1920s and 1930s, Mörner's father resided in Halmstad as County governor. When visiting during the late 1920s Mörner acquired some decorative commissions where he met and engaged some of the others. Mörner who had a degree in art history, went to Paris in 1923, where he decided to abandon an academic career in order to become an artist. He attended several private art schools and he studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna) in Stockholm in 1925–28.

Mörner was the only one in the group who acquired a long and formal art education. In contrast, Erik Olson had no formal artists' education in Sweden. He did, however study at the private school of Fernand Léger in

Paris and later became Léger's assistant with his friend, the Swedish artist *Otto G Carlsund* (1897–1948). They were entrusted with the task of enlarging Léger's small sketches and executing them as full–size original oil paintings in his name. Thus, this long tradition of learning and working in a master–apprentice relation continued in a modernistic Parisian context.

Paris, Copenhagen and Stockholm

Considering the Halmstad Group, Erik Olson and Stellan Mörner were schooled as artists in different formative contexts in Paris and in Stockholm. However, both of them came into contact with Surrealism in Paris simultaneously when its first manifesto was published by the French poet André Breton in 1924. The Halmstad Group benefited from their different circles of contacts and abilities – Erik Olson who lived in Paris in 1924–25 and 1927–35, moved to Denmark in 1935 and lived outside Copenhagen until 1944. He had first-hand contact with Post-Cubism and Surrealism in Paris and later in Copenhagen. Mörner had contacts in Stockholm and Sweden, and his communicative skills to deliver talks and texts often made him the natural spokesman for the group apart from Egon Östlund.

The Halmstad Group

By the end of the 1920s, the six artists all knew each other and knew Egon Östlund, who seems to have been the driving force in forming the Halmstad Group in 1929. The main reason for forming the group seems to have been to facilitate exhibitions and publicity, however it seems like Östlund also wanted to use the opportunity to market the somewhat off-centre town of Halmstad, as a source of international avant-garde modernism in Sweden. With the aid of the Halmstad Group, the town and its coastal surroundings were claimed to be a good environment for progressive culture and artistic creativity. Thus, he wanted to put Halmstad on the map for reasons beyond the prevalent perceptions of it as nothing more than a provincial town of salmon fishing and industry. Considering this, 'The Halmstad Group' was a well-chosen name, because it was impossible not mention the group without mentioning their hometown. Thus, the name

communicated their geographical origin without telling anything about what kind of art they made. As it turned out, the group survived both Post-Cubism and Surrealism, however general knowledge of the Surrealism of the Halmstad Group has overshadowed the artists as individuals.

Egon Östlund more or less functioned as their manager during the 1930s and 1940s. He systematically engaged in defending and marketing the group, by mediating exhibitions, updating the newspapers, cultivating influential contacts, keeping its members on good terms, and supporting them economically. Without his support, the group would probably not have been formed nor been maintained.

Post-Cubism and Surrealism

In the 1920s, the artists practiced quite austere forms of Post-Cubism and Abstract art, and some of them also adhered to figurative movements. However, around 1930 Erik Olson and Stellan Mörner gradually moved towards Surrealism. What attracted them were the poetic, narrative, and dreamlike possibilities that sharply contrasted with the geometric and somewhat incorporeal forms of Post-Cubism that they were practicing at the time. This change was not as visually drastic as it might seem. There are several aspects of Cubism and Post-Cubism that provided an important basis to Surrealism, such as the exploration of perception and of spatial ambiguity. However, in contrast to Cubism, Post-Cubism, and figurative art as New Objectivity, Surrealism challenged all kinds of notions of art as manifestations of conventional ethics and aesthetic values. Through the use of several different kinds of techniques surrealists used unexpected combinations of elements to obtain ambiguous poetic meaning and dreamlike effects. Visual as well as linguistic conventions were challenged, by examining notions about language, consciousness, unconsciousness and reality. According to the core Parisian surrealists, Freud, psychoanalysis, and communism were the means of a truly surrealist avant-garde art aiming at liberating the individual and engaging in societal change.

Stockholm 1930

During the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 (Stockholmsutställningen 1930), modernist architecture was introduced in Sweden, and influential Swedish architects in cooperation with leading social democrats started to realise this new type of architecture as a means for societal change. At the Stockholm Exhibition, the artist Otto G Carlsund arranged an exhibition with abstract and post-cubist art. From the Halmstad Group Erik Olson, Esaias Thorén and Stellan Mörner participated. Even though this type of art seemed to correspond to modernist architecture, critics considered it to be incomprehensible, empty, and purely decorative. Thus, it seems like art was expected to communicate tangible content, not some kind of higher truth, or someting mathematically precise and calculated. Even though the artists of the Halmstad Group gradually abandoned Post-Cubism, its compositional austerity continued to function as a hallmark for most of them. Considering the move towards Surrealism, non-figurative and Post-Cubism could not provide the Halmstad Group artists with the means they needed in order to depict their experiences of modern life. In contrast, figurative Surrealism offered the possibility to communicate cultural references, the mysteries of life, and memories connected to real or imagined things and places.

'Paris 1932'

By 1932, when the Halmstad Group held their first widely acclaimed exhibition in Stockholm, some well-known art critics described Erik Olson and Stellan Mörner as surrealists. The exhibition at the Galerie Moderne coincided with the 'Paris 1932' -exhibition at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, showing post-cubist and surrealist prints and drawings by artists living in Paris, in which Erik Olson partook. Critics frequently related it to the Halmstad Group exhibition, thus stressing its art as part of an international avant-garde movement. Both exhibitions ignited a fierce debate about Surrealism because such art was not readily accepted either within or outside the Swedish modernist art context. For example, artist and professor Isaac Grünewald claimed that Surrealism was childish and deprived of authenticity.

Divergent reception

Considering how Surrealism was met abroad during the 1930s, it comes as no surprise that the Halmstad Group was sometimes harshly attacked and ridiculed in the Swedish national press. Sometimes their paintings were characterized in terms that closely corresponded to the reception of Surrealism elsewhere: as 'monstrous and disgusting', 'disgusting perversities', 'pure nonsense', 'flummery', 'sickening', and as an 'illusionistic trick'. Some judgements seem to have been intended to characterise the Halmstad Group's Surrealism in relation to other types of contemporary Swedish art as 'sectarian', 'salon art', 'dandyism', 'fashionable', 'on the modern art autostrada', even 'too comprehensible', 'morbid', 'genuine quasi-art', 'speaking in tongues', 'over-intellectual', and as 'Freudian perfumed studio constructions'. Despite ridiculing and degrading comments like these, the Halmstad Group was also met with open-minded curiosity. Even critics who were sceptical of Surrealism often appreciated individual paintings, and efforts were continuously made to contextualise, defend, understand, and explain the group's work. With a modernistic approach, some critics and commentators encouraged people not to try to understand the work but just to be carried away by the images. This kind of quiet individualised attitude, often expressed by not so well-known critics or anonymous commentators, corresponded to what the Halmstad Group artists wanted to obtain.

A particular kind of Surrealism?

In contrast to general notions on Surrealism as being politically committed to revolution and desire, the artists of the Halmstad Group did not intend for their work to be provocative. They were not comfortable with the term Surrealism if it was perceived as sensationalism, scandal, psychoanalysis or communism. For this reason, the artists and Egon Östlund repeatedly seemed anxious to point out the differences in relation to Danish and Parisian Surrealism, which often were perceived as openly erotic and politically committed. The artists of the Halmstad Group often felt misunderstood through such recurrent comparisons because they claimed to be



Figure 171 Erik Olson, *The Daily Press* (Dagspressen), 1941, oil on canvas, 66 x 66 cm. The Nanne Collection, Mjellby Art Museum, Mjellby. © Erik Olsson/BUS.

proponents of a type of Surrealism that was grounded more in the study of nature, in conscious daydreams, and in visual puns rather than in the unconscious. However, in some of his paintings, Erik Olson demonstrated political engagement. For example, while living in Denmark in the 1940s he made explicitly anti-Nazi paintings (fig. 171), which forced him to leave the country.

Uneasiness

Another possible explanation for why the Halmstad Group often felt misunderstood might be the discrepancies between the remarkable amount of attention they received compared to the poor sales of their work. During the 1930s, the artists were mentioned in at least 460 newspaper items and articles. However, personal correspondences bore witness to just how economically exposed and dependent the artists were on Egon Östlund. As an example of the poor sales, the Halmstad Group sold only 10 of the approximately 70 paintings exhibited at the Nordic Surrealist exhibition in Lund in 1937.

It is likely that ridiculing newspaper articles also contributed to why they felt misunderstood, including articles in which Surrealism was char-



Figure 172 Waldemar Lorentzon, *Fatefull Night* (Ödesnatt), 1938, oil on canvas, 106,5 x 136 cm. The Halmstadgruppen foundation collection, Mjellby Art Museum, Mjellby. © Waldemar Lorentzon/BUS.

acterised not as art, but as an expression of a mental disorder. However, generally speaking, the artists of the Halmstad Group were not considered mentally insufficient, and according to several critics, the Halmstad Group appeared to be quite healthy and acceptable in relation to Danish Surrealism. Still, such articles, sometimes with banner headlines, were given quite a great deal of space and are interesting as a part of a wider societal context. For example, the growing interest and acceptance of Surrealism in Europe and Sweden came about during a decade when political decisions were being made to produce a sound society and, a healthier population, for example by forced sterilizations. The enormous Beckomberga mental hospital outside Stockholm – which was built in 1929–1936 to house about 1600 patients – can be seen as another example of such social engineering.

From an art history point of view, reactions against Surrealism as expressions of mental disorder, not as art, can be seen as reactionary and as coming in parallel to the societal ambition to avoid mental and physical degeneration in the population. Accordingly, art and artists were expected to be edifying in order to serve the common good. More moderate commentators also questioned Surrealism on the grounds of its effects on its viewers. Thus, it was argued that art was supposed to bring about a feeling of relief. In contrast, Surrealism, including the paintings of the Halmstad Group, often seemed worrying. One out of many examples is the painting *Fatefull Night* (Ödesnatt, 1938) by Waldemar Lorentzon with its dramatically contrasting light and darkness, sharp colours and shadows, and a heavy dark sky and a vast desert landscape (fig. 172). In the middle of this, hats and fluttering coats on a hanger are strangely incorporated, which makes it almost stage-like. Another similarly worrying example is *The Play Has Begun* (Spelet har börjat) from 1938 by Esaias Thorén (fig. 173).

In the context of rational modernist architecture and modernist urban planning, Surrealism could be experienced as an anomaly. Even so, the general audience was attracted to the Halmstad Group's 'surrealism–light', which seemed to have been perceived as relatively more acceptable than Surrealism in general. Moreover, in contrast to Parisian and Danish Surrealism, the traditional technical skill and tidiness of the Halmstad Group was proudly pointed out by critics as positive qualities. Maybe this can be considered a characteristic Swedish attitude, to be moderate, and thus one could consider the Halmstad Group artists as 'moderate surrealists'.



Figure 173 Esaias Thorén, *The Play Has Begun* (Spelet har börjat), 1938, oil on canvas,140 x 107 cm. The Nanne Collection, Mjellby Art Museum, Mjellby. © Esaias Thorén/BUS.

The artist and the onlooker

Some Halmstad Group-exhibitions generated caricatures, chatty and, satirical articles and ironic poems that gave the impression that Surrealism in general was bizarre and thus rewarding to make fun of. It is tempting to dismiss this type of attention for consciously ridiculing a type of art one did not like or did not understand. However, in order to understand the reception more fully, they are worth considering, because they often communicate something substantial about how the paintings were understood, or not understood, in a specific Swedish societal context. For example, they tell us something about what was expected of art and about an expected relation between the artist and the audience. Surrealist paintings are often dreamlike in character and contain poetic visual and linguistic associations that can be experienced both as general and as personal to the artist. Simultaneously the artist wants to engage the onlooker as an individual and as a member in a wider cultural context, and thus able to have experiences on different levels simultaneously.

Some critics were of the opinion that the visual and linguistic puns of the Halmstad Group were often too literary, too banal, or just incomprehensible. It seems ironic that commentators did not know how or did not want to respond to the artists' invitation to partake as active agents in a surrealist painting. For example, Stellan Mörner often depicted memories of his childhood environments at the family estate Esplunda, and he included pieces of period furniture, interiors, and gardens in a somewhat worrying, enigmatic, and melancholic way. These works can easily be understood as deeply personal, and they can also be experienced from a wider societal perspective as depictions of a type of disappearing society in Sweden. However, because of their surreal, vague, and dreamlike character, the onlooker is invited to experience them in a personal way. Thus, the artist seems to transfer some of his agency to the onlooker.

The artists used distinct individual methods for depicting personal as well as more general experiences and cultural references. Axel Olson often used locally well-known environments such as the coastline and fishing and farming equipment, but he altered the effects of light and shadows, proportions, and distances from what are generally considered as natural, thus making



Figure 174 Axel Olson, *Port* (Hamn), 1939, oil on canvas, 88 x 120cm. The Nanne Collection, Mjellby Art Museum, Mjellby. © Axel Olson/BUS.



Figure 175 Sven Jonson, *Morning* (Morgon), 1941, oil on canvas, 75 x 80cm. The Nanne Collection, Mjellby Art Museum, Mjellby. © Sven Jonson/BUS.

visible different and slightly worrying aspects of reality, a prime example of this is the work titled *Port* (Hamn) from 1939 (fig. 174).

Distinctive of Sven Jonson are pale, cool colour tones, as well as classic reminiscences such as columns, architectural remains, and statues, even if these were not always classic in form. This made some critics consider him traditional in character rather than modern. What makes his paintings understandable in a surrealist context is the use of vast empty landscapes, contrasts in light scales, long dramatic shadows that give an impression of vast fateful expanses, and silent and full moonlit landscapes (fig. 175).

Swedish or not?

One reason for some to dismiss the Halmstad Group and its Surrealism, was its international origin. Thus, some critics considered the Halmstad Group as simply mimicking something foreign that was en vogue at the time or even outmoded. Thus, in contrast to the critique of their Surrealism, some critics claimed the importance of cultivating nationally distinct art. Recurrent comparisons with Parisian and Danish Surrealism sometimes created preconceived negative expectations that made critics unable to recognize their claims of a somewhat different, distinct type of Surrealism of their own. Perhaps this can be seen as grounded in the encounter between the group's small town Swedish origin and their international experiences in Berlin, Paris, and Copenhagen.

The term 'surrealism' sometimes provided the Halmstad Group with a valuable international context greater than Halmstad, Stockholm, and Sweden – in which their art could be understood. On other occasions, they consciously downplayed pre-conceived ideas of Surrealism as a kind of threatening foreign avant-garde, for example, by referring to traditional folktales as genuinely surreal: 'In the world of tales, anything can happen. They are an expression of the irrationality of man, for the great unknown, which both worries and fascinates. In fairy tales, everything obscure and repressed is given shape' (G:W 15 April 1939). However, in contrast to some critics' disdain for Surrealism as an international movement, the actual paintings and the subjects, were often negatively or positively connected specifically to Halmstad and its coastal surroundings. The Halmstad

Group's paintings were sometimes also characterized as typically Swedish or Nordic. Thus, critics often seemed unable to see the Halmstad Group's Surrealism as simultaneously having international, regional and national origins.

Local support and a public commission

Despite a certain opposition during the 1930s, regional newspapers eagerly reported on the group's forthcoming and on-going exhibitions, their sales, and what the Stockholm critics wrote in a spirit similar to that of the triumphs of a local soccer team playing on away grounds conquering the nation and maybe the whole world. For example, the following headlines appeared in the regional newspapers in 1931–1936: 'The Halmstad Group make good publicity for Halmstad. The young artists receive lively acclaim as well as Halmstad as a city of art', 'The Halmstad Group invited to the Nationalmuseum. Exhibition this month or the next', 'The Halmstad Group exhibits in Stockholm', 'The Halmstad Group. A factor to count on in Swedish art', 'The Halmstad Group meet with success in Finland', 'The Nationalmuseum acquires art of The Halmstad Group', and 'Australian praise for the Halmstad Group', and already in 1934 the group was labelled 'nationally famous'. Not only their successes were reported, but also sometimes detailed poor reviews. There also seems to have been a lively debate regionally about whether Surrealism was to be considered as art at all.

Although the Halmstad Group had supporters in their hometown, their position was not undisputed. Thus, it was a sign of acknowledgement when Egon Östlund in 1937 managed to persuade the municipality in Halmstad to give the group the commission to design the intarsia doors and wrought-iron works for the new City Hall being built by the architects Yngve Ahlbom and Nils Sterner. By entrusting them with such an important public commission, the Halmstad Group was granted a permanent presence in a highly prestigious environment in their hometown. The traditional and quite costly intarsia technique is usually not associated with avant-garde art or surrealist techniques. However, it was suitable in order to fully integrate the pictures with the architectural setting by accentuating

their decorative character and thus could prove that the Halmstad Group's Surrealism was socially acceptable. In the context of public art, Surrealism was quite rare in the 1930s, and it was probably the Halmstad Group's type of unobtrusive Surrealism that was required for the style to be accepted in such a context. Considering the artistic aspects, the images included in the commissioned works demonstrate a combination of typical surrealist elements and strategies, such as single disengaged staring eyes, visual ambiguities in details, and unexpected combinations of motifs. In the intarsia designed by Stellan Mörner, modern power pole frameworks are combined with an 18th century girl in a long skirt selling fish, thus uniting local history and contemporaneity (fig. 176). In the intarsia doors to the Court of



Figure 176 Stellan Mörner, *On old Ground* (På gammal grund), 1938, intarsia doors, Halmstad City Hall. Photo: Helen Fuchs. © Stellan Mörner/BUS.

Justice by Sven Jonson, the texture of the wood is used to create a refined surreal trompe l'oeil effect of three dimensionality. Traditional elements of justice, such as the scales and the blindfolded Justitia are included in a dreamlike and surreal totality. In a formal clear cut, yet diffuse alluding manner as regarding subject, typical to Sven Jonson, the work also gives the impression of civilisations long gone. Symptomatically enough, the Halmstad Group's intarsias and wrought–iron works in the City Hall often were mentioned in the press during the late 1930s and provided a notable form of recognition for the group.

Publicity and crowds

Irrespective of how the critics and general audiences perceived the Surrealism of the Halmstad Group, their exhibitions generated enormous amounts of publicity, public engagement, and crowds. One example was the Nordic Surrealist exhibition held at Lund University in 1937, in which the Halmstad Group partook. As the opening was approaching, several newspapers indicated that the exhibition was expected to be sensational. This, as well as the word 'shocking', was recurrent concerning the Halmstad Group's exhibitions throughout the 1930s, which was in accordance with how surrealist exhibitions in general were met, for example in London and Paris. If the reports are to be believed, the exhibition in Lund had to open two hours in advance due to the rush of visitors. During the first three days, 2,000 persons were said to have seen it and when it closed two weeks later, the number was 5,000.

The Halmstad Group's exhibition at the Liljevalchs Art Gallery (Liljevalchs konsthall) in Stockholm in 1939 also attracted a huge audience with 10,000 visitors coming over the course of three weeks. The art gallery representative seemed somewhat surprised by the audience's positive reactions, which were in contrast to the Nordic Surrealist exhibition in Lund, where Surrealism was made fun of. Egon Östlund, who probably made the exhibition economically possible, wanted to stage a huge and magnificent 10-year Halmstad Group jubilee, thus making it impossible for the Stockholm critics and audience to overlook. According to the newspapers, the Liljevalchs exhibition made an overwhelming impression with more than

600 works by the Halmstad Group artists being exhibited. Some influential critics still considered most of the Halmstad Group's art as banal, strange, and from a modernist point of view even outmoded in its narrative character. However, sales were considered good: 55 works were sold for a total of 17.856 Swedish crowns (which corresponds to 546.891 Swedish crowns in 2017). Among the buyers were well–known architects such as Sigurd Lewerentz and Erik Lallerstedt as well as other representatives of the well-established upper middle class such as dentists, military officers, pastors, managers, and physicians. Nine of the buyers were women.

Concluding remarks

During the 1930s, critics as well as art historians identified the Halmstad Group as part of Surrealism – which was an important, international modernist movement – and thus interesting to exhibit and write about. Others, however regarded the movement as unsound and foreign in a highly negative way. The artists themselves had the ambition to claim a type of Surrealism of their own that was neither politically engaged nor explicitly erotic and that had no intention to shock its audience. They were of the opinion that this type of low–key Surrealism had an important task in modern society as liberating in an individual rather than societal way. Gradually, this attitude seems to have attracted the audience, although leading critics often seems to have been more reluctant.

Without a doubt, the Halmstad Group's Surrealism caused a lot of attention in Sweden during the 1930s. Among professional critics, anonymous writers, and the general public, it seemed to serve as a foundation for discussing the function of art in modern society; art in national, regional, and international contexts; concepts of art; and the power of the beholder.

Considering the popularity, the surrealist lithographies of the Halmstad Group gained during the 1940s and 1950s, their unobtrusive type of Surrealism seems to have served as an engaging form of art in the peoples' home of Sweden.

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To Build a Welfare State

Ludwig Qvarnström

In 1923, the housing situation in Stockholm and Gothenburg was so pressing that the municipalities had to arrange for emergency accommodations. Small rooms without a ceiling were built in sport's halls accommodating one family each (fig. 177). This was the result of a long period of increasing populations in the big cities due to industrialisation and an inadequate

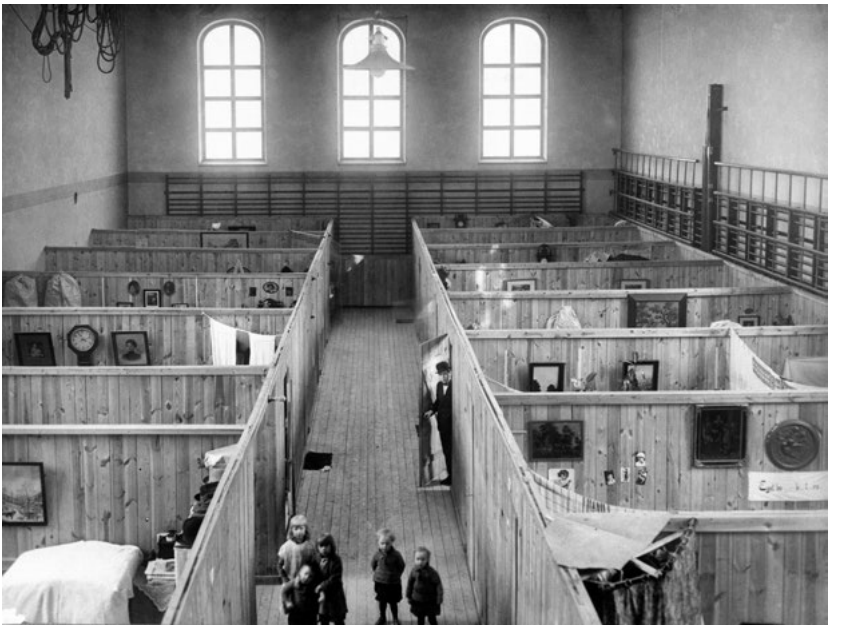

Figure 177 Emergency accommodation at the police sport's hall at Tjärhovsgatan 24, Stockholm, 1925. Photo courtesy of Stockholm City Museum, Stockholm.

housing development. The housing issues had been of great importance in Swedish politics since the mid 19th century without resulting in any solutions. In the late 19th century, several philanthropic societies tried to solve the problems, but only after the First World War a serious governmental and municipal housing policy was adopted in Sweden. From that point onwards until the mid-20th century, the living standard in Sweden developed from one of the worst in Europe to one of the best in the world.

The first municipality-owned housing corporations were established in the late 1910s and 1920s followed by a more considered governmental housing policy in the 1930s. The rapid construction of housing was not only due to a governmental policy but also very much due to cooperative associations. Savings and Construction Association of the Tenants (Hyresgästernas Sparkasse- och Bostadsförening, HSB), founded in Stockholm in 1923, was probably the most important of them. The organisation was built around the idea that members of the organisation could rent apartments in cooperatively owned buildings. This provided the opportunity to obtain mass housing, but not for everyone because one still had to invest in the cooperation. HSB was inspired by the preceding organisation Stockholm cooperative housing association (Stockholms Kooperativa Bostadsförening, SKB) founded in 1916. However, during the 1920s and 1930s most buildings in Sweden were built by private developers, and most of the apartments were very small, often only one room and a kitchen, especially in the larger cities.

'Folkhemmet'

The dominating socio-political project in Sweden during the interwar period was *Folkhemmet* [the People's Home]. This was a political project closely associated with the Social Democratic Party (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetarparti, SAP) and the creation of the Swedish welfare state. The SAP was in power from 1932 to 1976, and the construction phase of Folkhemmet is often seen as taking place during that period. The concept of 'folkhemmet' was introduced in 1928 by the SAP politician Per Albin Hansson (1885–1946) in a speech. Hansson described a future society marked by fair distribution of wealth, equality, and mutual under-

standing. Folkhemmet is also described as 'the Swedish Middle Way' clearly indicating it as a political project in-between capitalism and socialism, although it had its roots in the right-wing political theorist Rudolf Kjellén's vision of class collaboration in service of national interest. Kjellén's vision was based on the ideas of the German statesman Otto von Bismarck.

In the 1910s and 1920s the SAP discarded their earlier orthodox model of class struggle and began to follow a model of planned economy combined with social engineering and expansion of the public sector. This meant that the SAP turned their back on socialist revolution and thereby created a more pragmatic idea of how to create a happy and well-being future state. Folkhemmet was an optimistic vision of the future based on democratic values and the benefits of industrialisation and modernisation, but it also connected to patriotic ideas of a unified people and good hygienic conditions for all Swedes. Instead of treating patriotism as a right-wing idea, the SAP incorporated it into their socialist program. At the same time, political and cultural nationalism was more or less consciously repressed in favour of the SAP's socialist patriotism and cosmopolitanism.

The Stockholm Exhibition in 1930

The most visible aspect of Folkhemmet is its consequences for urban planning and architecture, and it is closely associated with modernist architecture in Sweden. Modernism in architecture is a broad concept that embraces a long period from the 1910s to at least the 1970s and several different expressions. In the United States, the modernist movement was called 'The International Style' when it was introduced in the early 1930s. In Sweden, it was christened 'Functionalism', reflecting the particular focus on functionality. As an expression of style, the concept is associated with the period from the late 1920s to the Second World War. The introduction of modernist architecture in Sweden occurred in tandem with the building of the welfare state. Functionalism had its grand breakthrough with the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 (Stockholmsutställningen 1930), arranged by the Swedish Society of Arts and Industrial Design (Föreningen Svensk Form formerly called Svenska Slöjdföreningen). The Society was founded in 1844 to promote design and the integration of arts and industry in Sweden. It

had arranged several industrial design exhibitions since the 1850s, and the Society's most important exhibitions during the 20th century were the Home exhibitions in 1917, the Stockholm exhibition in 1930, and the 1955 Helsingborg exhibition. The art historian Gregor Paulsson was the intellectual leader of the Stockholm exhibition. Inspired by a visit to the 1927 Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart, he wanted to arrange a similar event in Sweden. The exhibition architect became *Gunnar Asplund* (1888–1940), who in the years before had created the City Library in Stockholm. The library is an excellent example of a building reflecting the 1920's Swedish Classicism as well as the emerging Functionalism. Asplund reduced the classical ornamentation to a minimum emphasising the geometric elements of a central rotunda inscribed by a cube (fig. 178), but the building still has low relief ornamentation and traditional windows with small rectangular glass, seldom seen in later functionalist architecture where all ornamentation is removed and where we also often can see large panoramic windows.



Figure 178 Gunnar Asplund, Stockholm City Library seen from the Observatory Hill. Photo: Holger Ellgard, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

The Stockholm exhibition signalled not only a new architecture, but also a new society and a new type of ideal human. Functionalism was not a SAP project, and many social democrats strongly disapproved of the new movement. Nevertheless historically, functionalism has been closely associated with the SAP, especially because Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson lived in a functionalistic terraced house built in the 1930s (fig. 179). At the Stockholm exhibition, architecture was not primarily represented as design or technology, but as a political idea – as a conscious housing policy that was needed in order to manage the pressing housing issues and class inequalities. As an architectural project, functionalism was extremely successful in Sweden and has become a key element associated with 'Swedishness'. This was not initially the case, and the criticism raised against the Stockholm exhibition and functionalism was actually concerned with a lack of such 'Swedishness'. The response from the functionalist architects in the manifesto *accept* (acceptera) was to stress the national historical root of



Figure 179 Per Albin Hansson in front of his terraced house at Ålstensgatan, Stockholm. Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 180 Terraced house no. 43 by architect Uno Åhrén at the Stockholm exhibition 1930. Photo: Karl Alfred Schultz, ArkDes, Stockholm, (ARKM.1985-109-302).

functionalism in Sweden and how the typification, standardisation, practical objectivity, and practical simplicity together constituted a Swedish heritage adopted by functionalism and its advocates. The use of daylight was particularly emphasised as being typically Swedish going back to at least the Stockholm building ordinance of the 18th century. The cold and lack of daylight during the winter season had created a need to admit the greatest possible amount of daylight into buildings. This suited the aspiration of functionalist architecture and its emphasis on large window surfaces well (fig. 180).

Also, the hygienist's promotions for health, fresh air, and cleanliness suited functionalism's light filled space and its un-adorned, smooth, and easily washed surfaces in kitchens and bathrooms. Dirt was clearly visible in daylight and easy to remove; virtue and aesthetics went hand in hand. The standardisation of building components and the rationalization of construction methods, which started in Sweden with the Committee of Standardisation in 1919, also suited the functionalists strive for a more rational and cheap building. As a clearly centralized nation, Sweden was early on able to adopt building standards as an instrument of state control in order to produce better housing. These traits would later become key characteristics of the Swedish national mentality, and functionalism thus laid the foundation for a new national mythology.

What was to be accepted then, according to the manifesto *accept*? The new modern age, a new collectivism that should not be based on a political revolution but on more modest revolution that has to do with developing moral character, and to accept that everyday life has to be transformed with a new relation between individuals and commodities. The first page in the manifesto is illustrated with a man standing in front of a crowd (fig. 181) and the following text:



Figure 181 First page in *acceptera*, Gunnar Asplund (ed.), Tiden, Stockholm 1931.

Individual and mass…
Personal or universal?
Quality or quantity?
– An impossible question, for we can just as little escape the fact of collectivity as we can escape the individual's demands for an autonomous life.
The problem of today is:
quantity *and* quality, mass *and* individual.
It is necessary to attempt to solve this problem, even in the art of building and in the crafts.

accept was not a manifesto for a modernist avant-garde approach to form but was more a discussion on how to transform Swedes into good and reasonable consumers. But functionalism was, of course, also a provocative aesthetic language with its cube-like buildings and lack of ornament.

One reason for the success of functionalism was that it was employed in everyday architecture in a time when massive investments were made in building. The goal of the project was to build *the utopia of the everyday in Sweden*.

Utopia of the everyday

In a competition for affordable housing in Stockholm in 1932, the architect's office of the Co-operative Society (Kooperativa Förbundet, KF) presented an entry bearing the socialist motto 'One day the earth shall be ours…'. The KF was founded in 1899 by 41 local consumer co-operatives in order to support them with information and with education for store managers and board members. Soon KF also became responsible for the common procurement of goods. In the 1930s, KF expanded rapidly, setting up various industries in order to support the co-operative grocery stores. KF consequently needed their own architects to create industries, small stores, and department stores, and the KF's architect's office was started in 1925. As with above-mentioned entry to the competition in 1932, they also made drawings for housing.

As part of the entry for the affordable housing competition, the painter *Arvid Fougstedt* (1888–1949) made three gouache paintings that are excellent illustrations of the goal to build the utopia of the everyday in Sweden. The title of the entry, 'One day the earth shall be ours…', alludes to the well-known socialist song *L'Internationale* by the French poet Eugène Pottier. These paintings point at the negotiation between tradition and modernity in the construction of the utopia of the every day. Fougstedt has depicted a couple of functionalist terraced houses with large windows and flat roofs (fig. 182). In the back yard, there is a small garden where a man is digging in the ground, growing crops. A woman is serving coffee, and a man is standing in the background reading the paper. In the lower left corner, we find the artist himself sitting down making the painting. With a garden of one's own, the former farmer now an industrial worker, who during the industrialisation has moved from the countryside to the city, gains back a piece of land. Combined with the allusion to the socialist song *L'Internationale*, we have here the idea of international solidarity combined with the Swedish dream of a garden of one's own. In Fougstedt's painting of the interior of the terraced house, we can see a combination of modernist architecture and much older traditional furniture (fig. 183). The sofa and the pedestal table represent the Empire style developed in the first half of the 19th century rather than functionalism. It is very much this kind of combination of both traditional



Figure 182 Part of KF architects entry *One day the earth shall be ours* (En dag skall jorden bliva vår), painting by Arvid Fougstedt, gouache, 1932. Photo: ArkDes, Stockholm, (ARKM.1999-37-01). © Arvid Fougstedt/BUS.

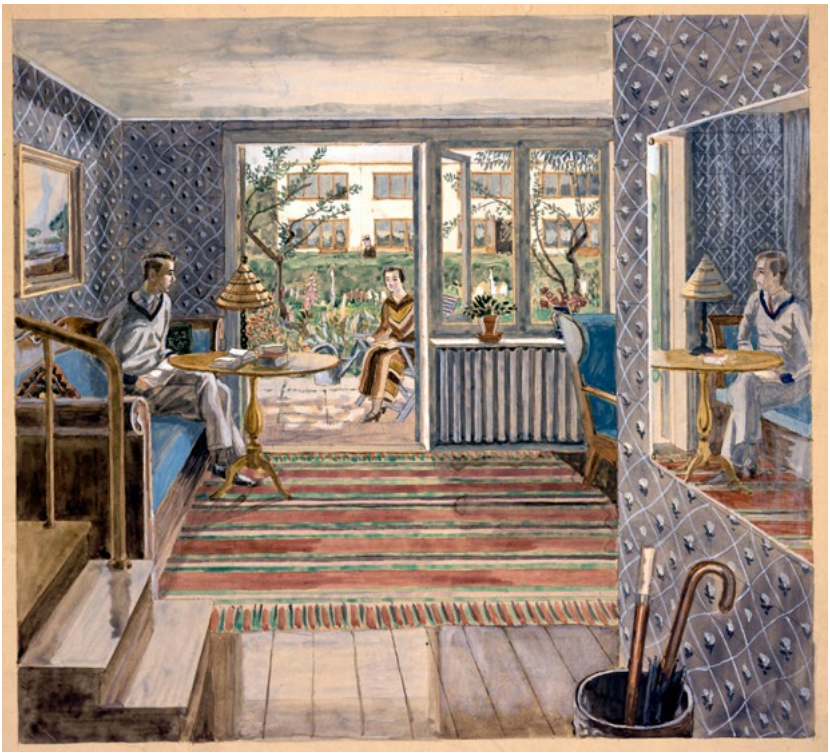

Figure 183 Part of KF architects entry *One day the earth shall be ours* (En dag skall jorden bliva vår), painting by Arvid Fougstedt, gouache, 1932. Photo: ArkDes, Stockholm, (ARKM.1999-37-02). © Arvid Fougstedt/BUS.

national forms and dreams and cosmopolitanism that constitute the Swedish modernism – the Utopia of the Everyday!

The new human

'The utopia of the everyday' was not only a political project to create an ultra-modern nation state, but also to create a new ideal human/citizen. Sweden was, at the time, supposed to be inhabited by a healthy 'blond' population. The gymnastics of Pehr Henrik Ling (1776–1839) were becoming increasingly popular during the first half of the 20th century and influ-

enced the body ideal of the new human and the SAP's care of the population. Similar ideas of new ideal humans were widespread in Europe at the time, which not the least was manifested by the huge interest and participation from several European countries in the first Lingiad (Ling gymnastic games) arranged in Stockholm in 1939.

Of great importance in the debate about the housing problems, social services, and the 'new human' was a book by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal with the title *Crisis in the Population Question* (Kris i befolkningsfrågan) published in 1934. The book discussed the overcrowded homes and the low birth rate in Sweden, as well as the need for the sterilization of unwanted and unproductive individuals in society. Contemporary historians have shown how extensive the sterilization project was in Sweden and that it was officially sanctioned (the sterilization laws were established in 1934 and 1941). Sweden was also one of the pioneering countries when it came to racial biology with a State Institute of Racial Biology founded already in 1922 in Uppsala. These few examples testify to a complex biopolitical scenography that goes against the myth of Sweden as a progressive, cosmopolitan, and 'neutral' country. From this perspective, Sweden was in line with many other European countries, maybe even in the forefront, at least when it came to scientific justifications regarding the 'cleansing' of the population.

Swedish Modern and the Home Research of the 1940s

In the 1940s the rather strict and somewhat chilly functionalism of the 1930s was softened and developed into a more sensitive style. The interiors became warmer in colours and more comfortable. Furniture was foremost made in light-coloured Swedish wood such as birch and beech. This development can be described as a return to the old rural and traditional style, but incorporated into the functionalist rational aesthetics. This style of interior design that developed during the 1940s and 1950s has been understood as a specifically Swedish form of modernism, later called 'Swedish Modern', and clearly associated with the broader concept of 'Scandinavian Design'.

The 1940s was also a period of large investigations into living standards and interiors. Several of these investigations were initiated in the 1930s, but

it was not until the 1940s and early 1950s that the results could be seen. In 1944 the Swedish Society of Arts and Industrial Design started a committee focusing on living standards and interior design together with KF, HSB, educational organisations, and a women's society. There was also economic support from one of the larger federations of labour unions in Sweden. The goal was not only to study the layout of apartments and interiors, but also to educate people in how to furnish their apartments in a functional way with high-quality furniture.

In 1944 the Homes Research Institute was founded with the aim to study the working situation for women in Sweden. Since most Swedish women were housewives, reflecting the gendered society at the time, that meant the Swedish kitchens. The Homes Research Institute consequently studied the movements in differently organized kitchens, the optimal height of the kitchen sink, etc. These investigations led to a standardisation of Swedish buildings and interiors, especially in the kitchens and bathrooms. Also, the Swedish Society of Arts and Industrial Design made their own investigations into, for example, beds, the space needed for four people around a kitchen table, etc. The result is visible in the layout and interiors of the apartments in the 1940s and 1950s.

The investigations of the Swedish living standard not only led to standardisation but also showed how crowded Swedish homes still were. The investigations also showed that overcrowded apartments were often self-inflicted because very often families had an idea of a parlour as only being used on Sundays and on special occasions. If they could afford an apartment with one extra room, they often crowded together in the kitchen and one small room in order to reserve one room for these special occasions.

The peak and the end of the welfare state

Sweden was salvaged from the direct horrors of the Second World War, and after the war the people's home developed into a welfare state with a powerful influence on society. A state-controlled housing policy was the foundation for the victory over overcrowding in Sweden. Through public utility companies, the new building regulations were given a decisive role in the provision of housing, and through the new building regulations and building bylaws these companies were given far-reaching powers to make



Figure 184 *Parapeten* at The Helsingborg exhibition 1955, overview over the exhibition area. Photo: Pål-Nils Nilsson, Arkiv Svensk Form, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

decisions about planning and building. The national old-age pension, child benefits, and opportunities for education further reinforced the social responsibilities of the welfare state. The increased purchasing power, which was one of the results, was further strengthened by the strong boom in the economy during the post-war period. At the same time, social management was called into question by right wing politicians and critics in the economic planning debate of the period.

From Town Plan to Cutlery (Från stadsplan till matbestick) was the evocative title of a Swedish exhibition held in Zürich in 1949. It can be viewed as a symbol of the 1950's dream of being able to design everything in society and in everyday life – down to the smallest detail. The 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s are the decades when many of the social projects initiated in the 1930s were truly realised during the economic boom in Sweden, and this lasted until the early 1970s.

During the 1950s, there was a community of shared values that gave a picture of society as capable of being surveyed and planned, and this formed the basis for the welfare society. The H55 exhibition held in Hels-

ingborg in 1955 can be seen as a symbol of this outlook (fig. 184). Here many of the ideals from the functionalism of the 1930s were realised and combined with breakthroughs in concrete art and modern graphic design. The exhibition was a direct follower of the Stockholm exhibition of 1930 that showed future housing, design, and building techniques. H55 was more of a success when it came to design than architecture compared to the Stockholm exhibition.

The 1960s and 1970s was the time of the so-called Million Programme, starting in 1965 and continuing until 1975 with the goal to build one million new dwellings in Sweden in 10 years. The programme, which has its counterparts in many other European countries at the time, was a huge success in the rational production of buildings, but it soon became the symbol of an inhumane and low-quality way of living with large areas of similar large buildings in uninspiring surroundings.

The depressing picture of the two lonely boys in the winter of 1971 in Tensta has become a symbol of the Million Programme (fig. 185). But we have to remember that as a part of the Million Programme other kinds of



Figure 185 Tensta, winter 1971. Photo: Holger Ellgard, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

buildings such as terraced houses and small detached or semi-detached houses were also constructed in areas that are still well functioning and popular. The 1970s are often considered as the last decade of Folkhemmet, and the 'Swedish model' has since then been renegotiated into something completely different. In the early 21st century, the Million Programme areas have become one of the most challenging architectural problems for Swedish town planning. Most of these areas have not, due to the building techniques used, aged in dignity and are in need of extensive restorations.

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The Concretists

A New Realism in Public Art in the 1940s and 1950s

Jens Arvidson

On entering the office complex on the ground floor at the now former head office of Astra Pharmaceutical Company in Södertälje, a colourful wall painting and a stairway are revealed immediately. At first glance, they seem pushed into a corner – yet the space is airy and playful. The distinctive wooden handrail, sparse, black iron poles with a wavy cross-pattern, and the wide white marble steps of the stairway are in complete dialogue with the painting's softly rising loops. In this interchanging flow of horizontals and verticals there is a rhythm that goes through all three floors.

A full grasp of the mural is only possible from climbing all of the stairs. The spatiotemporal experience of the whole, the painting and architecture together, is one of a sudden discovery of how it meanders itself steeply upward (or downward). In short, the scheme of the shapes in the painting is adapted to, is playing with, and is part of the existing architecture; the building relates to the painting as the floors pick up the dominant colours of the blue on the ground floor, the moss green on the first floor, and the muted violet and pink on the second floor. Increased intensity is achieved in this dialogue between the composition and colours of the painting and the stairway. Hence, the function of the wall painting is twofold: as a framing background for the stairway and as a total integration into the architecture. Completely abstract, or rather *concrete*, it is all about colour changes, spatiality, and movement – a rising motion.

Throughout its existence, art critics have written positively about the

painting and its integration with the surrounding architecture. In 1955, Ulf Linde (1929–2013) wrote that *Karl Axel Pehrson's* (1921–2005) wall painting, *Tempered Ascension* (Tempererad stigning) from 1954, is 'one of the finest abstract works of art made in Sweden' (fig. 186). Both architect and artist expressed an understanding of each other without letting go of spontaneity and harmony; the spiral lines of the stairway repeated in the painting dissolve and go 'beyond'.

It took Pehrson a year to complete the painting. At the time he got the commission, he had been working on the theme of 'the broken vertical' in several paintings, and he figured this theme could be adapted for the wall behind the stairway. Because the building and the stairway were already in place, he integrated the stairway into his own purely constructive painting. The floors were used as natural interfering and extending elements with the vertical colour fields on the wall painting. This simple pattern of a 'broken vertical' in the painting is still playful in its structure, and supplemented by a fleeting associative element to vegetation.



Figure 186 Karl Axel Pehrson, *Tempered Ascension* (Tempererad stigning), 1954, tempera on canvas, 950 × 500 cm. The stairwell, Head Office of Astra Pharmaceutical Company, Södertälje. Photo: Per Torgén, Örebro Läns Museum, CC BY 2.0. © Karl Axel Pehrson/BUS.



Figure 187 Lennart Rodhe, Lage Lindell, Karl Axel Pehrson, Olle Bonniér, Pierre Olofsson, stucco lustro-frieze, 1956, each painting approx. 100 x 300 cm. The canteen of Astra Pharmaceutical Company, Södertälje. Photo: unknown. © Lennart Rodhe, Lage Lindell, Karl Axel Pehrson, Olle Bonnier, Pierre Olofsson/BUS.

With the achievement of *Tempered Ascension*, the company again invited Pehrson, this time together with *Lennart Rodhe* (1916–2005), *Olle Bonniér* (1925–2016), *Pierre Olofsson* (1921–1996), and *Lage Lindell* (1920–1980) for what would be the epitome of a whole generation and a final manifestation made by these concretists together. They composed five stucco lustro-paintings on the seventeen-metre-long north wall in the canteen at Astra (fig. 187). All five based their designs on a simple geometric pattern made by Rodhe, still keeping their individuality and relying on a subdued colour scheme of black, grey, and white, with Lindell's oxblood running through on the wall to bind it all together.

The idea of a frieze-like mural was met with both admiration and criticism. Individually, the paintings were considered exquisite. Art critic Lars Erik Åström (1917–1994) suggested that a certain rhythm united them 'into an uninterrupted process of pause and change' with no loss of decorative quality. But he criticises the totality; the frieze would have mastered the 'entire environment' had the architectural setting been neutral. And Ulf

Linde did not relent in his attack:

> From an 'environmental aesthetic' point of view, this must be a reactionary mistake. Here, five non-figurative painters have had an opportunity to make a wall, advise on the room's furniture and textiles and other colour schemes, in short, create a unit of the whole canteen and arrange everything – including the paintings – under this device. But they have emphatically lost their chance. (1956)

Uncompromising and unforgiving, Linde could not reconcile himself with the concretists' inability to execute a monumental artwork in co-operation with its architecture. Thus, Astra represents both success and failure – sometimes referred to as the peak and endpoint – of an idea that the concretists seem to have promised with their monumental art. Åström and Linde imply this as they bring up the 'environmental' aspects, which must be seen as an even larger and more critical idea than merely art applied to architecture.

The *total work of art*, from the German *Gesamtkunstwerk*, is foremost an idea of restoring the public function of art in order to redevelop society and culture. It can appear in several forms, but is most often recognized when two or more different arts are united into a combined work. One such form is the *monumental form*, as when visual art and architecture is shaped into a unity. One possible way to understand the concretists' intention with their art in public space is to see it from the particular viewpoint of a total work of art: the belief to enable a social ideal by uniting art and architecture. In this text, I will give an overview of Swedish Concretism (Konkretism), public art and how it is related to the total work of art.

The Concretists and the Conception of a New Reality

In April 1947, the collective exhibition *Young Art* (Ung konst) at the gallery Färg och Form in Stockholm displayed the work of eleven artists. Besides those who were to become some of the leading representatives, especially as contributors to the new Swedish monumental art, i.e., the Astra-artists, the others were the painters *Randi Fisher* (1920–1997), *Olle Gill* (1908–

1996), *Armand Rossander* (1914–1976), and *Uno Vallman* (1913–2004) and the sculptors *Knut-Erik Lindberg* (1921–1988) and *Liss Eriksson* (1919–2000). *Young Art* is usually considered as the most important event for the breakthrough of this new generation of Swedish artists and a step towards non-figurative art: Concretism. It meant a reorientation towards the continent and the tradition of Post-Cubism from the 1920s and 1930s that had been revitalised especially in post-war France and Switzerland. The artists had not fully reached beyond the figurative-abstract tradition at the exhibition, and some would only mature into full concretists later that year. There would be a host of exhibitions the following years under the labels 'New reality' and 'Concrete', which were related to the international association *Réalités Nouvelles* [New Reality] and its annual spring salons in Paris for non-figurative art, where several Swedes were represented. The Concretism became one of, if not *the*, most intensely directed movement in Swedish post-war modernism.

In the review 'Young Gothics', art critic Sven Alfons (1918–1996) rationalised the novelty of the artists' aesthetic. It is mainly this article that made the event significant and identified the pursuit of 'the purest creation of space' (145). In various and individual ways, the dynamics of spatial issues made them modern Gothics – 'not a gothic in height but a gothic on the width'. The most apparent characteristic trait in Swedish Concretism is spatial changes, the evasive and 'intangible space' (142).

In different ways, the artists brought their ideas of Concretism to the public, through talks, in texts, and in the art itself. Bonniér was the one who theorised about its aesthetics in several essays. His article 'Depiction of Nature Abstraction Concretion. A Conceptual Inquiry' ('Naturavbildning Abstraktion Konkretion. En begreppsutredning') from 1948 is often seen as the Swedish concretist manifesto. He explains that a picture is concrete 'when it can be perceived as a thing in itself, and not as a conception of more or less 'naturalistic' or 'abstract' forms to a background – but a surface that itself works dynamically on every point' (89). Independent of nature, form and colour become a 'new nature, a new concrete reality' (95). Much can be recognised from elsewhere, such as in Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg's (1883–1931) *Art Concret* manifesto, *The Basis of Concrete Painting*, written in 1930 together with *Otto G Carlsund* (1897–1948),

among others. This was a theoretical substantiation of the concrete orientation within Bauhaus, De Stijl, and 1920s constructivism. An earlier Doesburg essay on the basic concepts of the new art, 'Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst' (1925) – which was actually the first time the term 'concrete' was used – also lends thoughts for Bonniér's theories about what one was looking for: a universal, objective art.

What sets Bonniér apart from the earlier, international concretists is his concept of *progressive concretion* (identifiable in varying degrees in most of the Swedish concretists as they were looking for a strong dramatic motion). When the picture is independent from external reality, just colours and shapes that create a tension on the flat surface, it is experienced as spaces in a constantly shifting motion. 'The image is now surface, now space – manifold space – but all these spaces are completely relative and force the eye to move on: there is no fixed point' (89).

The theoretical focus on the removal from natural reality makes concrete art appear as autonomous, that it exists without societal relevance and in opposition to a unification of art forms. Yet, the idea was to create imagery parallel to our own world, a reality that would exist *in* it, as a 'positive dynamics of the present, and which wants to give pause in this now [and] should have the opportunity to become one of the highest values of collective humanity in the future' (Bonniér 1949:41). With a possibility to influence its surrounding milieu in the aftermath of the war, the most fitting scenes for this other reality were public buildings. The whole thinking behind the new or higher reality was crucial to the total work of art in European modernism. To reach that reality the artwork required such constructive, formal means in the visual arts.

Public Art

Swedish modern public art began some time before and around 1900, appearing in an idealised realistic tradition with allegorical, historical, and educational motifs in a variety of public places. While the interwar period in Sweden was a busy time in view of the lively modernism, the renewal of public art was difficult due to a lack of consensus between architects and visual artists. The social democratic society was in the process of building

Folkhemmet [the People's Home], the welfare state, through a series of reforms. Functionalism was on the rise after the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 (Stockholmsutställningen 1930) to help solve some welfare problems through architecture, by designing rational habitats and harmonious built environments. Some support for involving art in this project, to bring the 'human' into the architecture, was expressed. Ideally, this was a shared vision with the abstract art movements of the 1920s. However, the architects resisted pictorial additions to their dogmatic, ascetic style of functionalism; artists were rarely involved in the construction processes and were subsequently assigned designated spaces for their contributions. In other words, at the time artists was on the whole not motivated by a vision to collaborate with architects, and to let visual art form a unity with buildings.

The artists did not, or could not, follow the functionalist, modernist forward-looking spirit. For one thing, Swedish functionalism did not import all of the ideas from its international predecessors, mainly the Bauhaus school's ideas on architecture as an artistic form that also forms society. The Bauhaus school's artistic ideology of collaborative forms of art was meant as a design for life. It was an *ideology of public art*, aiming to intervene with the everyday lives of people and to change their lives by changing their habitats. Collectivist dreams like these were not directly disseminated in the Swedish cultural debate, i.e., there was less concern for pursuing an artistic totality. Art in the public environment was mostly of the traditional kind, since the ideal among those who commissioned public art were quite figurative and illustrative, despite the fact that Carlsund curated the first major exhibition of non-figurative art in Sweden, the *International Exhibition of Post-Cubic Art,* at the Stockholm Exhibition. The times were not ready for such art, certainly not for public spaces. There were also economic reasons that prevented a more avant-garde art from making its way into the public space.

Another reform in the changing Swedish society was the establishment of new government agencies. The significance of public art had increased during the early 20th century, and a decades-long discussion about the socialisation of art, its undisputable value for society, and the need to spread it in a democratic way, paved way for the parliamentary debates. Just before the Second World War, discussions turned into action in the

creation of a programme in Sweden for art in the public environment. 'Art is about to become everyone's property', said Arthur Engberg, Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, in 1936, and it was decided that the cost of artistic decoration in government buildings should not fall below 1% of construction costs. In 1937, the Public Art Agency Sweden (Statens konstråd) was formed in order to fund and administer commissions of public art. However, the outbreak of the war put public art production on hold. This was the situation just before the concretists held their *Young Art* exhibition.

Swedish Concretism and the Total Work of Art

The ideology of the Bauhaus school and its related artists was 'the widest-known test of the total work of art thought in the modernist avant-garde' (Munch 343). Its coherent aesthetics for a universal programme of design, architecture, and city planing was an inspirational source for Swedish functionalism. But it was the Swedish concretists who, after the war, could reconnect the ideology of public art through their new pictorial aesthetics. They interpreted the modern avant-garde in terms of its potential to influence and renew the surroundings, and they saw *architecture as the framework for our daily lives*.

Rather than being able to influence the architecture in question, the artistic element had to be a development of the architect's idea. Thus, the concrete art was in a collaborative *service* to the architecture, while at the same time the architecture was the *motif* for the art to construct a totality. In the emergence of a new reality, concrete art in public spaces could be a life-bringing process, a 'potential symboliser' (Sandström 1980:126).

By keeping away from representative imagery, concrete art is unsentimental but sensitive to an immediate sensual reality. It creates contexts and cohesive structures in public spaces to act 'as a generator for a public dialogue, where the artwork is one of the parties of the dialogue and us the other' (Wedebrunn 13). In what new reality did the concretists put or offer their audience? Sven Alfons asks what inner meaning there is to the spatial escape, to the instability in the manifold spaces and the intangible spaces. It is a reminder of the unsolid world outside that calls for an existential

attitude, but the manifold space also contains possibilities and new positions to choose from. This afforded a universal vision for communication and communion, and this can be exemplified in some concrete artworks.

Lennart Rodhe's first big public commission, for the drawing room at Ängby Secondary School in Stockholm, was a process that extended before and after the *Young Art* exhibition and included a pictorial language that transitioned from figurative-geometrical to the concrete. The end result, *Stairs Theme* (Trappans tema, 1953; fig. 188), is a distillation from an original figurative painting, *The Sawmill* (Sågverket) from 1946.

Rodhe focused on dramatic movement. From spotlights directed on the staircase, he traced its shadows on the wall to create a sense of never-ending movement. To him, this was a new and multifaceted realism that naturalistic means could never achieve. The effect is similar to *Tempered Ascension's*



Figure 188 Lennart Rodhe, *Stairs Theme* (Trappans tema), 1953, casein tempera on canvas. The drawing room, Ängby Secondary School, Stockholm. Photo: Birgitta Samuelsson. © Lennart Rodhe/BUS.

extension of the wall that reaches into the room and its incorporation with the wall that heightens the concrete reality and a totality.

Arne Jones (1914–1976) did not exhibit at *Young Art*. Yet, Alfons mentions him as if he was a 'young Gothic' – a concretist: 'There is young Swedish sculpture that would respond well to the artistic issues encountered by the painters; Arne Jones represents it, for example' (150).

Jones's *Spiral Space* (Spiralrum, 1955) is a remarkably large sculpture, but small in comparison to the space in the entrance hall of Blackeberg Secondary School (fig. 189 and 190). Located at the top (fourth floor) of a large spiral staircase that joins the floors of the building, its thin copper-clad and joined flexible triangles make it want to act like 'wind-driven dragons dancing toward the height' (Söderberg 1991:85). Yet, its movement is both upwards and downwards, mimicking and finishing the spiral staircase. A required element in the work is the time that it takes to experience





Figure 189 and 190 Arne Jones, *Spiral Space* (Spiralrum), 1955, approx. 500 x 200 cm, copper, Blackeberg Secondary School, Stockholm. © Arne Jones/BUS. Left photo from Rolf Söderberg, *Arne Jones*, Sveriges allmänna konstförening, Stockholm, 1991. Right photo: Tore Johnson.

the whole building and everything around it. 'A Jones sculpture invites you to a walking tour. It is then perceived as "cinematic", it "moves" and offers the eye alternating visual adventures' (Söderberg 1991:48). It opens up in communion with the space of the large building.

Randi Fisher was not always considered a concretist because her style varied between figurative and abstract. The more radical concrete ideals opposed this and considered such art difficult for the monumental qualities required and desired. As for her public works, this was another matter.

The different pictorial language used in her glass paintings for churches has great affinities with Bauhaus artists of the 1920s. She early on replaced the traditional symbols found in churches for a certain mood effect through colours, lines, shapes, and light alone. In the Ängby Church (1957–1959), simplicity of geometric forms and the use of light create an intimate interaction with the pure architecture. Light was always emphasised as important for the 'Gothic' space, and in these glass paintings light *is* the true reality. The choir's painting is dominated by blue shades with elements of burgundy and moss green that are open for symbolic interpretation (fig. 191). The nine side windows, all on the southern side, consist of a monochromatic translucent white, and a slightly irregular, broken pattern from the leaden cames

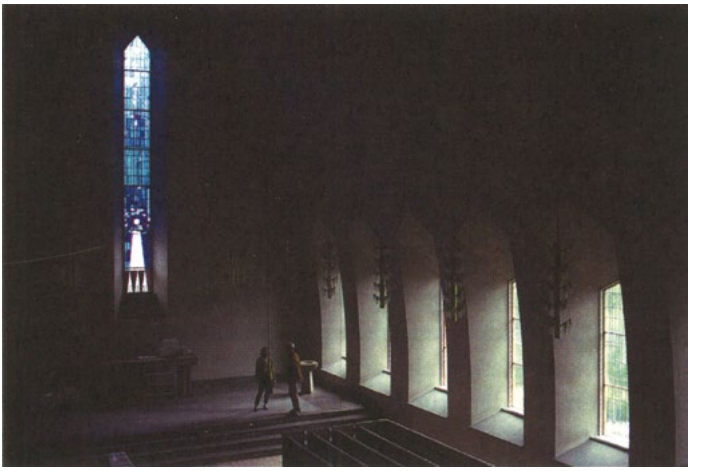

Figure 191 Interior of Ängby Church, Bromma, Photo: Eskil Fagerström.



Figure 192 Randi Fisher, stained glass painting, 1957–1959, Ängby Church, Bromma. Photo: Linda Fagerström. © Randi Fisher.

forms a non-figurative motif (fig. 192). Light and shadows physically enter through/out of the windows into the church to actively be in the room. Alfons' expression 'spaces constantly escaping into each other' gains an uncanny meaning (143). The space is as progressively concrete as it gets. Furthermore, the total effect is increased by the music and the sermon when the liturgy is performed.

The concretists made no references to the actual concept 'total work of art'. Instead, it was the tradition they put themselves in – how and what the artworks demonstrated – that associates them with the concept. That is the possible *promise* they made for their monumental art. The same association is evident in the criticism by Åström and Linde, when they use concepts such as 'environmental aesthetics' and 'total environment' that shows a common understanding of the artistic ambitions of a total work of art.



Figure 193 Olle Bonniér, wall painting at the entrance to the office of the Swedish Housing Association in Vällingby, 1955. Photo: Göran H. Fredriksson, Stockholm City Museum, Stockholm, CC BY-NC-SA 2.5 SE.

As an expression of the built contexts in Sweden, concrete art can be seen as an artistic fulfilment of the statement, 'Art is about to become everyone's property', which in some sense also relates to the total work of art. But before the Public Art Agency Sweden made a serious comeback to support the concretists, they had moved on. In 1957, Bonniér ended it all on a personal note: 'We cannot continue to talk about concrete art' (28). This anti-manifesto is a complete dismissal of the whole ideology of a universal art and an art–architecture synthesis in the tradition of the 1920s concretist ideology. Perhaps the essential problem was the relation to the architecture, which he experienced himself. Even if a monumental painting could be hailed as an utmost delicate concrete work, the totality could still be a monumental failure. In Ulf Hård af Segerstad's review of Bonniér's wall painting for the entrance to the office of the Swedish Housing Association in Vällingby, he expressed doubt as to whether the painting was right in that context, since it was too large and too colourful (fig. 193).

But he saw other things that really belonged there, such as a sad notice board and 'a piece of weak luminaire, a visually indifferent staircase with mute colouring', which included 'the view of an architecturally meaningless formation of the place and the hidden pressure of a profound, dull building.' Collaboration between painting and architecture never stood a chance for all those 'insignificant essential details'.

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Art and Politics since 1950

Björn Fritz

Sweden in the 1950s and Sweden today are very different places in many ways. In the following, I will discuss the intersections between art and politics in Sweden during that time span, but it is important to emphasize that this is only one of many aspects of the history of the period. One might just as well trace shifts emanating from changes in art education, in intensified contacts with the rest of the world, and in aesthetic choices. By making my choice of perspective, many deserving artists will be left out of my essay, but on the upside, such a choice allows me to explore the development of Swedish society in close connection to the art it produces.

Sweden kept a mostly neutral stance through the Second World War, so when rationing and travel restrictions were lifted in the beginning of the 1950s all was set for a prosperous return to a peacetime society. The Social Democratic Party (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetarparti) that had been the ruling party almost continuously since 1920, and would remain in power until 1976, was continuing its project of modernization and the development of a social security system for all citizens. The years from 1950 until 1973 are often thought of as a modern 'golden age' due to the fact that almost all Swedes saw an increase in wealth and available social services (such as free schools, free universities, free medical support, and old age pensions). This was made possible by a general upturn in the economy after the Second World War and by the availability of very cheap energy in the form of oil. This would last until the beginning of the 1970s, at which time several economic factors, especially the oil crisis of 1973 and the American stock market crash that same year, would put an end to this unrivalled economic growth and dispersion of wealth among all of Swe-

den's citizens. The most visible problem during this golden age was the need to build new homes for a growing and more urbanised population as well as rebuilding existing cities to accommodate increased car traffic.

1950s: public art and one photographer

The Swedish art scene during the 1950s was mostly dominated by what had taken place before the war, and artists working within the framework of Concretism (Konkretisterna) or Surrealism (Imaginisterna) were the major players. Although they were working mainly with art for art's sake-related formal problems, it should be noted that this type of modern art became a very important symbol for modernity as well as progress of the time, especially through public art created by artists such as Lennart Rodhe, Olle Bonniér, Karl Axel Pehrson, Pierre Olofsson, Randi Fisher, and Arne Jones. Public art in Sweden became a building block in the construction of a modern mass society, and it was aimed at pleasing the general viewer and improving everyday life for all.

One photographer during this era stands out as the most progressive and forward looking – *Christer Strömholm* (1918–2002). After a time as a student of well known Swedish art teachers such as Otte Sköld and Isaac Grünewald, he became a photographer who travelled the world and photographed its less seen sides. The best known of these images are those he took of transsexual women at Place Blanche in Paris during the 1950s and 1960s. In these, as well as many of his other photographs, there is an unlikely combination of snapshot, portrait photography, and documentary style that sets him apart as one of the greatest Swedish photographers of all times (fig. 194). His documentary style, where he photographed these marginalized women from within their own community and together with them, was very far removed from the general Swedish views on transsexuality, homosexuality, and prostitution in the 1950s. Sweden had its own version of the American McCarthy witch-hunts in the form of the Hajby and Keyne political scandals (Mr. Kurt Hajby's alleged love affair with Gustav V, the king of Sweden, was at the centre of the scandals). Strömholm's photographs were not shown to the general public until the publication of the book *Les Amies de Place Blanche* in 1983 and in his retrospec-



Figure 194 Christer Strömholm, *'Gina & Nana' from 'Place Blance'* in Les Amies de Place Blanche, 1963. © Bildverksamheten Strömholm.

tive exhibition at Moderna Museet (the Museum of Modern art in Stockholm) in 1986. The images then became an important inspiration for many Swedish artists interested in questions of gender, sexuality, and identity, and Strömholm became an influential teacher at his School of Photography in Stockholm between 1962 and 1972.

1960s: Playful protests and Moderna Museet

The sixties were a time of great change in Sweden, as elsewhere in the world. The designer *Lena Larsson* (1919–2000) can be seen as an example of how old traditions were cast aside and modernity was embraced; she suggested that families should spend more time together and less time taking care of household chores. Buying new and throwing it away when it was worn out would be more sensible than countless women wasting

their lives with mending and washing up the dishes (yes, she did suggest paper plates and cups at the kitchen table).

Moderna Museet opened in 1958. Pontus Hultén (1924–2006) was its director from 1960 until 1973, and he produced many highly influential exhibitions that in turn changed the Swedish art scene. Noteworthy shows had themes such as American Art, Pop Art, Movement in Art, and the remarkable installation of French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle's large female sculpture *She*, which the audience entered through the vagina in order to take part in the exhibition inside her body. American artists Edward Kienholz, Andy Warhol, and Robert Rauschenberg all had separate shows, and these kept the Swedish audiences in touch with contemporary, mostly American, art.

The exhibition *Movement in Art* (Rörelse i konsten) in 1961, included mobiles, motorized sculptures, happenings, and performances. One art critic who disapproved of the playfulness of the kinetic art wondered sarcastically if the nearby amusement park Gröna Lund had reopened at the museum. While the exhibition was a joint venture with the Stedelijk museum in Amsterdam and the Louisiana museum of Modern Art in Denmark and mostly showed international art, one Swede was represented – *P O Ultvedt* (1927–2006). His playful machines, often with humorous or sarcastic titles, showed very little respect for the institution of High Art and instead appealed to the viewer's more childlike and playful sides (fig. 195). In hindsight, this show at Moderna Museet seems like a starting point for a livelier and far less self-conscious art scene in Sweden, opening it up to new forms of expression such as installation and performance. Art could be playful and political at the same time, and many artists took the chance to provoke and challenge society, the audience, and any perceived expectations of what art ought to be.

Öyvind Fahlström (1928–1976) created maps of the world explaining the political structures of the times and made installations where the audience was invited to rearrange the pieces in them (compare Max Liljefors' essay on Fahlström in this book). The anarcho-feminist artist *Monica Sjöö* (1938–2005) caused a scandal with her painting *God Giving Birth* in which God was depicted as a black woman giving birth (fig. 196). *Carl Johan de Geer* (b. 1938) produced several provocative posters such as his anti-nation-

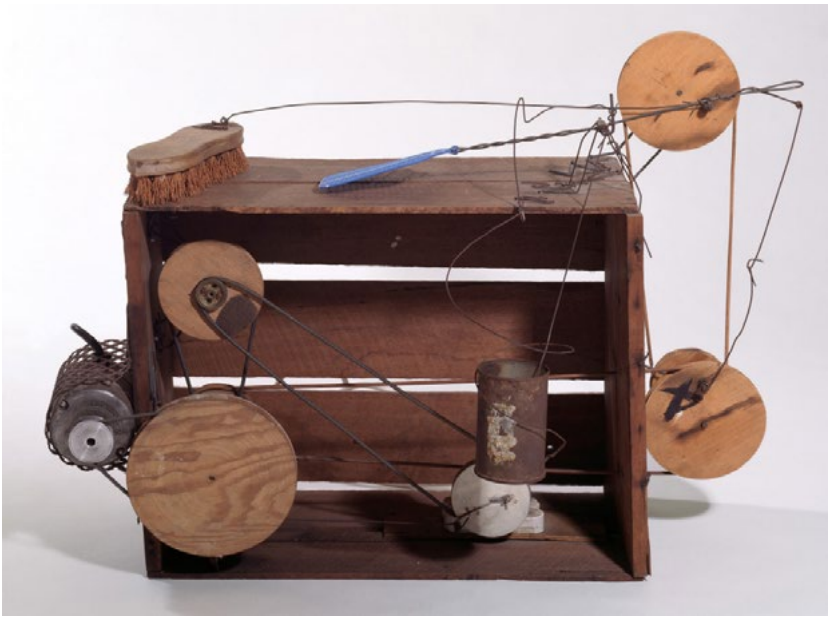

Figure 195 P O Ultvedt, *The Fly Swatter* (Flugsmällan), 1962, mixed materials, 51 x 71 x 39 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © P O Ultvedt/BUS.

alistic statement with the Swedish flag together with the text 'Desecrate the flag, refuse to bear arms, betray your country, be anti-nationalistic' as well as the word 'COCK' written on the flag itself (fig. 197). De Geer was also an editor of *Lars Hillersberg's* (1934–2004) satirical magazine *PUSS*, and he produced several, often quite odd, television programmes for children. It seemed like art and artist were involved everywhere, shaping the look and content of Swedish sixties culture. *Sture Johannesson* (1935–2018) made another scandalous poster in 1968 for the show 'Underground' at Lund's Art Gallery (Lunds Konshall); the poster prominently featured a naked woman smoking an odd pipe with a cannabis leaf, a painting by Eugene Delacroix, a multitude of small pictures of Che Guevara, and the motto 'Revolution Means Revolutionary Consciousness' (fig. 198). This poster upset local politicians who cancelled the exhibition, and the director of Lund's Art Gallery, Folke Edwards, was fired. Politics and drugs were controversial subjects, and so was sex. *Peter Dahl* (b. 1934) exhibited his

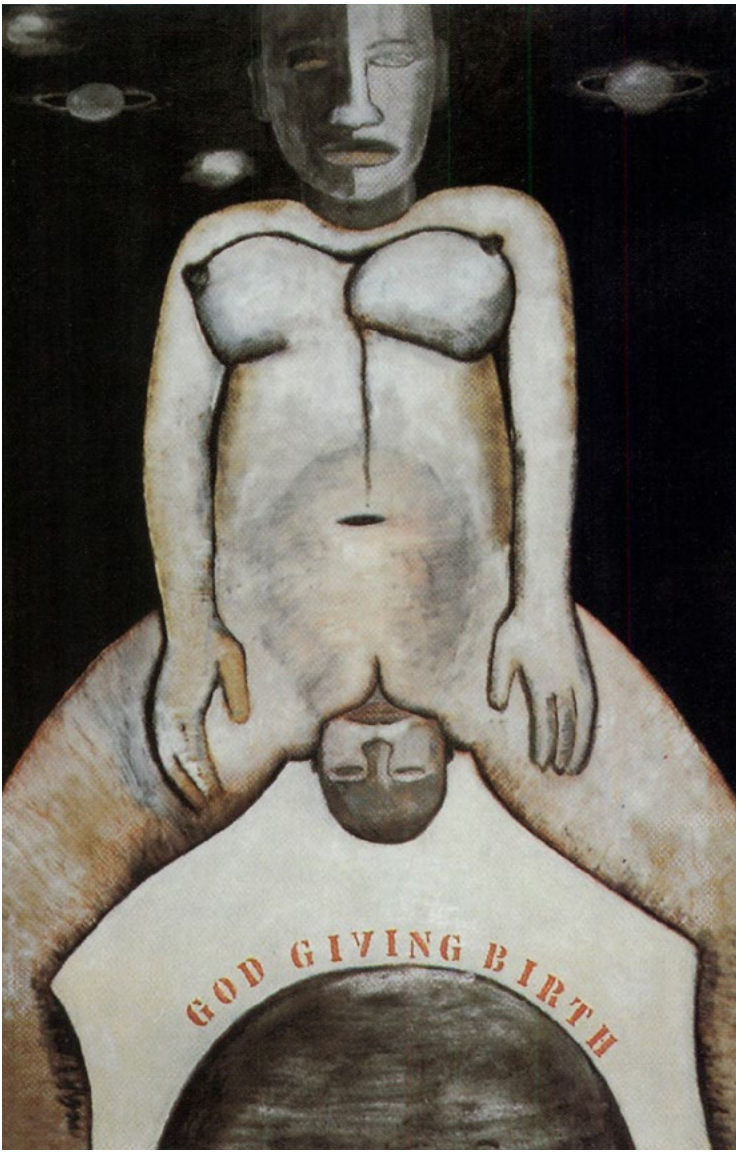

Figure 196 Monica Sjöö, *God giving Birth*, 1968, oil on canvas. MAN:s konstsamling. © Monica Sjöö.



Figure 197 Carl Johan de Geer, *Desecrete the Flag* (Skända Flaggan), 1967, silkscreen, 69,5 x 49,5 cm. © Carl Johan de Geer.



Figure 198 Sture Johannesson, *Revolution means revolutionary consciousness*, 1968, offset lithography, 62,2 x 85,1 cm, 1968. © Sture Johannesson/BUS.

The Liberal Breakthrough in Society (Liberalismens genombrott i societeten) in 1970, in which a man prominently shows his erect penis to a woman who in turn lifts up her skirts and looks a lot like Princess Sibylla (who was a member of the royal family), (fig. 199). This painting, as well as the de Geer poster mentioned above, was confiscated by the police when showed for the first time. This of course generated publicity and curiosity and made the artist well known all over Sweden.

Although the 1960s were economically prosperous years for most Swedes, political unrest was growing, and this was expressed through art that challenged conventions and popular beliefs. At the same time, we should note that these changes in the art movement of the time mostly



Figure 199 Peter Dahl, *The Liberal Breakthrough in Society* (Liberalismens genombrott i societeten), 1970, oil on canvas, 92 x 100 cm. Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg. © Peter Dahl/BUS.

concerned the subject matter of the art, not the formal or technical aspects. With the exceptions of Öyjvind Fahlström and P O Ultvedt, most Swedish art was well within the realm of classic painting or graphic design. There was initially outrage against art that was seen as indecent or romanticizing drugs, but this subsided. The sixties were all in all a time of happy protest and playful jabs at old conventions, and the participants in the art scene were to be highly influential long after the decade was over. Fahlström soon became one of the internationally best-known Swedish artists, and he developed close ties with the Situationist movement in France. Sjöö moved to the UK and worked for most of her career there. Carl Johan de Geer, who is still an influential writer and artist, was a big part of the design collective 10-gruppen and worked for Swedish television. Dahl became a member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna) and was widely popular with his illustrations of the Swedish 16th century poet Bellman's songs. Sture Johannesson pioneered computer art in Sweden in the 1980s and got a second chance to show at Lund's Art Gallery with *Counterclockwise Circumambulation* in 2004. It prominently showed hemp plants (though not of the cannabis-producing variety) and was once more closed, temporarily, and destroyed (according to Johannesson) by the police.

1970s: Vietnam and other revolutions

As the sixties turned into the seventies, there was a change in spirit. Demonstrations against the Vietnam War were common and brought with them a wider interest in global political issues. The oil crisis of 1973 and its precursor the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East started an economic recession in many parts of the world, including Sweden. Large industrial companies started to move production from Sweden to countries with cheaper wages and lower taxes, and there was an emerging understanding of ecological problems that initially came to focus on the fight against the use of nuclear energy. The future suddenly seemed a bit gloomier, and this was perhaps most visible in a changed understanding of the Swedish housing programme, where the goal of building a million new homes from 1965 to 1975 that at the beginning was met with enthusiasm now was seen as just pro-



Figure 200 Gerhard Nordström, *Summer 1970* (Sommaren 1970), 1972, oil on panel, 190 x 435 cm. Dep. Jönköpings länsmuseum. © Gerhard Nordström/BUS.

ducing horrible grey concrete high-rises full of problems. In the elections in 1976, Sweden got its first non-socialist government in many years. It should be said that the perceived gloominess of 1976 was to a large extent perception and not reality; Sweden was (and still is) one of the wealthiest countries in the world with a large system of social securities for its citizens, but gloom and protest was at times an important theme in Swedish art.

Gerhard Nordström (b. 1925), for instance, made many comments on the Vietnam War and military practices in general. These are perhaps most chillingly visualized in the series of paintings called *Summer 1970* (Sommaren 1970) done in 1972. Here large landscapes depict Swedish summer days – green lush nature and picnicking Swedes – but around the edges of these landscapes are large heaps of bloody, mutilated bodies placed as depicted in the widely photographed and publicized My Lai massacre (fig. 200). These are both calm and brutal pictures, juxtaposing Swedish summer and war atrocities within a shared landscape and thus bringing the meaning of war back home.

Many artists commented on phenomena closer to home. *Peter Tillberg's* (1946–2016) large painting of school children in a dull grey spacious classroom, each one of them alone at their benches looking straight forward with muted, greyish, and dull facial expressions does not paint a happy image of Swedish childhood (fig. 201), and neither does the title *Are you cost effective, little one?* (Blir du lönsam lille vän?).



Figure 201 Peter Tillberg, *Are you cost effective, little one?* (Blir du lönsam lille vän?), 1971, oil on canvas, 197 x 316 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Peter Tillberg/BUS.

More nuanced and varied takes on the relations between parents and children can be seen in *Lena Cronqvist's* (b. 1938) work, where she from the early seventies and onward has dealt with issues concerning herself and her various family relations – from a post-partum psychosis to the death of her parents. Her subject matter might originate in her private experiences, but her images transcend the private to address the general human subjects of relations, family, and mortality, all painted in a direct and somewhat naive manner that makes the often-harsh subject matter more accessible for the viewer (fig. 202). *Marie Louise Ekman* (b. 1944) paints in a similar naive style, although clearly more influenced by comic books. Her paintings focus on similar subject matter too – such as family and social relations – but with a significantly more pronounced feminist viewpoint and a great love for the absurd and grotesque (fig. 203). Her 1976 movie *Hallo Baby* paints a bleak picture of the life of a female artist in the male-dominated art world of Stockholm. The same kind of happy exaggerations and comic effects that are an important part of her paintings can be seen here, and the movie (one of many she has made since then) functions as a comment on her own work.



Figure 202 Lena Cronqvist, *The Mother* (Modern), 1975, Norrköpings Konstmuseum, Norrköping. © Lena Cronqvist/BUS.



Figure 203 Marie-Louise Ekman, *No title (Inez Svensson)* (Utan titel (Inez Svensson)), 1973, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 61 cm. Private Collection. Photo: Bukowskis. © Marie-Louise Ekman/BUS.



Figure 204 Kjartan Slettemark, Entering himself as a work of art at Liljevalchs spring salon of 1975. © Kjartan Slettemark/BUS.

Comic absurdity was also the choice of *Kjartan Slettemark* (1932–2008), a Norwegian artist often active in Sweden. He travelled around the world with a passport with his own picture replaced by one of Richard Nixon (closely associated with the Vietnam War at the time). He handed himself in as an art object to the spring salon at Liljevalchs Art Gallery in 1975, dressed in a poodle costume (fig. 204). He was inspected and rejected. He showed up at the opening of Malmö Art Gallery (Malmö Konsthall) in the following year in the same poodle costume and attempted to bite the feet of the art critic Olle Granath. The intended message was to show that the art world makes poodles of all artists, taking the individuality, freedom, and edge away from any artistic expression. However, not even Slettemark's performances could avoid this, and the poodle costume is today part of Moderna Museet's collection.

Some artists took to the alternative leftist movements in Sweden and helped shape their visual environments. Demonstrations, posters, record covers, and satirical or political drawing became an important part of how the century was perceived. *Gittan Jönsson's* (b. 1948) painting of a happy woman destroying pots and pans and Lars Hillersberg's reworking of Carl XVI Gustaf's motto into a suggestion that he should commit suicide *For Sweden Out of Time* (För Sverige ur tiden), a play with the king's newly chosen motto, are both very typical of such work (fig. 205).

The seventies were indeed a very politicized decade in which art was often judged by its moral content, and ABBA winning the Eurovision song contest in 1974 was more likely to cause a storm of indignation than the public suggestion that the king ought to shoot himself. In the 1979 election, Sweden was back in the hands of the Social Democratic Party and its leader Olof Palme, but the times were changing fast. Neoliberalism, free market economies, and post-modernism would rapidly make the idealism of the seventies seem as dated as the colourful batik-dyed fabrics of the time.

1980s: Yuppies and postmodernism

The 1980s are often seen as the decade of post-modernism, a return to making visibly striking art often by re-using images from art history, contemporary culture, and advertising – subjects that were seen as low and



Figure 205 Lars Hillersberg, *For Sweden Out of Time* (För Sverige ur tiden), 1968, lithography, 42 x 30 cm. © Lars Hillersberg/BUS.

commercial in the 1970s. This was very much in line with a political shift in Sweden (and the rest of the world) at the time; the social democratic hegemony had been broken, and an era of neo-liberalism was beginning to make its mark on the cultural landscape.

Initially, this can be understood as a move away from socially engaged art towards a fascinated look upon the market side of the art world. This fascination should not be understood just as a revolt against socially concerned art of the 1970s and an embrace of the market, liberalism, and the sudden upswing in the art market at large, but also as an exploration of the art system itself. Behind this turn towards a post-modern aesthetic theory were two major forces. The first was a general change in the art world where the shift towards post-modernism had been under way since the 1960s and made its very visible debut in Sweden in the early 1980s. Post-modernism was first understood as (German) neo-expressionism and a return to painting on canvas and a closer look at the art history of the 19th and 20th centuries. This meant that a painter such as *Max Book* (b. 1953), who was experimenting with expressionistic painting and various collage techniques that just a few years earlier would have been introverted and out of touch with the times, became one of the most visible and influential artists of the 1980s (fig. 206). The second force behind the post-modern breakthrough was the economic upturn of the 1980s, often referred to as the yuppie era in which many young entrepreneurs (mostly in the financial sector) made it big and wanted to spend their new income on, among other things, art. Due to tax reasons, art was a very good investment at the time, and the majority of the art market dealt in second-hand sales of old Swedish masters, including Anders Zorn, Bruno Liljefors, and Carl Larsson, which were all seen as safe investments. Reports in the media on the increasing prices of art brought with it a general interest in both historical and contemporary art, and when post-modernism in Sweden came to incorporate not only neo-expressionistic painting but also the more theory-heavy art dealing with contemporary visual culture and aesthetic theories, it created a very visible market for contemporary art as a luxury good. This occurred rather quickly and abruptly in Sweden – from a socially active art scene discussing social and political issues to a market-driven art scene heralding the artist as a star who pro-



Figure 206 Max Book, *Lott/Lot* , 1985–1986, oil on canvas, 210 x 300 cm. Private Collection. Photo: Bukowskis. © Max Book/BUS.

duced luxury objects that were talked about and explained through a theory-heavy and at times very obscure discourse.

In this climate, some of the artists of previous generations again found themselves at the centre of attention. *Jan Håfström* (b. 1937), who made his debut in 1966, used images of Mr. Walker (from the comic book *The Phantom*) as well as other pop-cultural references in his paintings, a practice that suddenly was very close to post-modern ideas of apropriation and reuse of images (fig. 207). *Ola Billgren* (1940–2001) got his big breakthrough with successful shows in Stockholm at the beginning of the 1980s, although he had been working in a photo-realist style since the mid-1960s. In the eighties, he introduced expressionistic themes into his paintings and thus produced not only visibly pleasing and highly sellable art but also images that were very much in touch with the academic interest in art history and the visual vocabularies of older art (fig. 208).

It should come as no surprise that in this new environment of market and theory-driven art, quite a few young artists would emerge from the art



Figure 207 Jan Håfström, *Mr Walker*, 2009, oil on panel, 100 x 100 cm. Private Collection. Photo: Bukowskis. © Jan Håfström/BUS.

schools and into the galleries. *Truls Melin* (b. 1958) worked with sculptures as if they were constructions in architecture or design; common objects such as boats, planes, and the human figure are treated as objects and placed within frameworks, often quite literally, and the sculpture's presence as an object is made more striking by its machinelike monochrome lacquer (fig. 209). Often these objects give the impression of children's toys that are made into sculpture through a dreamlike incorporation with other objects and construction materials. *Cecilia Edefalk* (b. 1954) undertook the same re-contextualization within painting. Her group of paintings *Another Movement* (En annan rörelse, 1990) is in many ways the archetyp-



Figure 208 Ola Billgren, *Painting* (Målning), 1967, oil on panel, 62 x 95 cm. Private Collection. Photo: Bukowskis. © Ola Billgren/BUS.



Figure 209 Truls Melin, *The Dream Ship* (Drömskeppet), 2006, painted cardboard, 48 x 100 x 30 cm. Skissernas Museum, Lund. © Truls Melin/BUS.

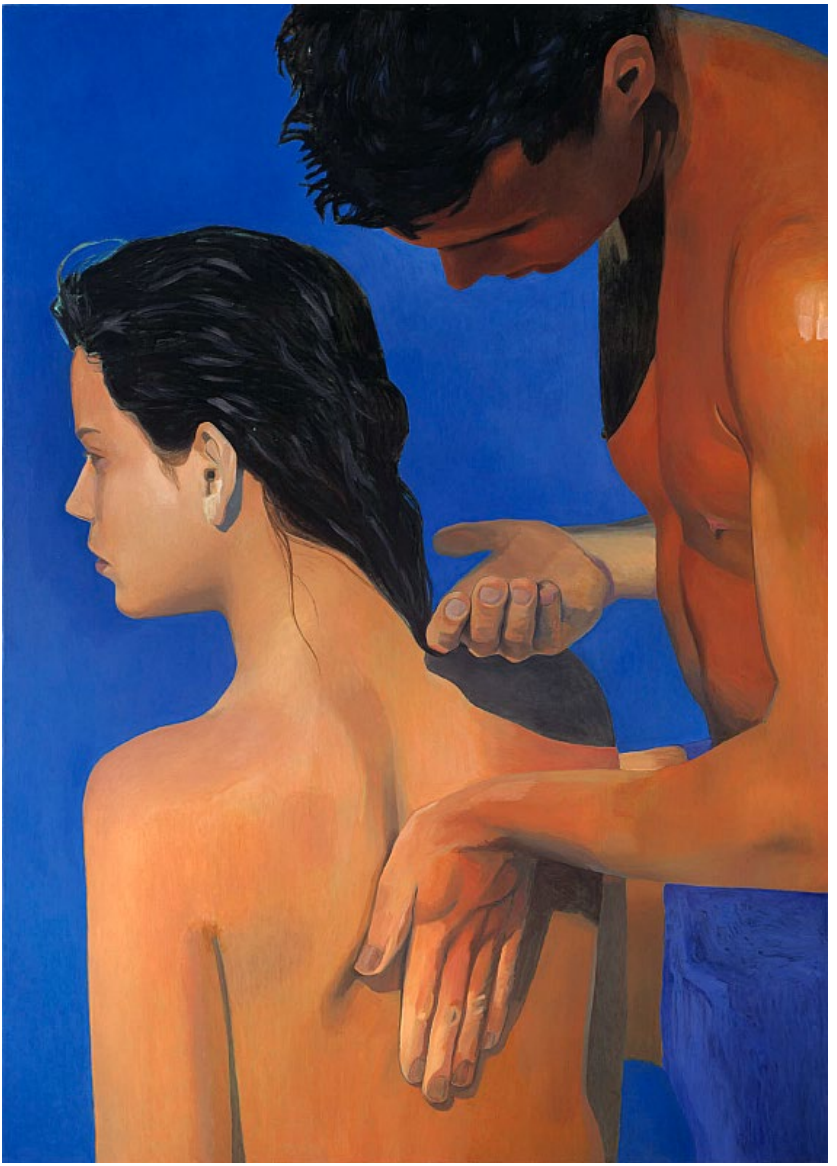

Figure 210 Cecilia Edefalk, *Another Movement* (En annan rörelse), 1990, oil on canvas, 238,5 x 171 cm. Photo: Parallan Allsten, Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Cecilia Edefalk.



Figure 211 Lars Vilks, *Nimis*, 1980–. © Lars Vilks.

ical 1980s image; it is based on a picture from an advertisement, and the background has been replaced by a solid blue colour field that makes the orange bodies pop out of the image (fig. 210). The visual subject is a man applying suntan lotion to a seated woman's back. Both persons are turned away from the viewer, and the bottle with the lotion is 'missing' in the centre of the image. The painting was shown as several copies of various sizes at the same time, a way of working Edefalk has used many times. *Another Movement* sums up many things about art in the 1980s in Sweden; it is visually stunning, it connects to art history (Photorealism of the 1960s as well as Surrealism of the 1930s), and it is playful while at the same time highlighting a kind of under-articulated social angst.

Although post-modern culture in general was in sync with a neoliberalist society, there were a few artists in opposition, and in hindsight they did point towards what was to come. One such artist is *Lars Vilks* (b. 1946), who's installation *Nimis* at Kullaberg nature reserve became a long and vivid story about artistic freedom, nature preservation, and ownership (he sold *Nimis* first to the German artist Joseph Beuys and, after Beuys' death, resold it to Bulgarina-American artist Christo Javacheff to prevent its dem-

olition). The sculpture/installation/building is a large irregular structure built out of driftwood and was begun in 1980 (fig. 211). It became a popular tourist attraction thanks to all the publicity it got when local politicians wanted to remove it from the nature preserve, where all construction was banned even if it was labelled art. *Nimis* has been partially destroyed by nature and fire, but it is constantly being rebuilt and improved on, and it still stands in place today as a sign that art can sometimes transcend the law.

Ingrid Orfali's (b. 1952) large-scale cibachrome photographs can be seen as typical of another development at the time (fig. 212). She used literary content, allegory and everyday objects (such as an iron, lipstick, or a tampon) in beautiful glossy close-ups to construct a complex feminist critique of culture at large. Feminist issues played an important role on the international postmodern art scene, but it would take until the 1990s before they became a common theme in Sweden too.

1990s: Feminism and GLBT visibility

As mentioned above, the 1980s were an economically prosperous time, mainly due to growth in sectors dealing with finance and construction. The 1990s saw that bubble burst, and the decade began with a recession that slowly turned into a new financial bubble, this time driven by tech industries and what became known as the Internet bubble. That bubble



Figure 212 Ingrid Orfali, *La chute d'Ariadne*, 1986, cibachrome, 101 x 101 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Ingrid Orfali/BUS.

burst at the end of the decade and recession was back again. Thus the nineties were a decade of fast changes, troubled economies, and the emergence of Internet technologies that would change society in many ways. It was also the time for identity politics, where women, homosexuals, and people of colour demanded to be seen on equal terms. Such developments were as visible within the arts as in politics, sometimes so much so that art itself seemed to produce change.

Most visibly and politically effectual were the twelve large-scale photographs by *Elisabeth Ohlson Wallin* (b. 1961) forming the exhibition *Ecce Homo* (1998). The photographs depict classical situations in the life of Christ, but they are staged in contemporary settings with obviously gay and lesbian models – naked, in leather gear, transvestites, HIV-positive, etc. The exhibition was first shown in Uppsala Cathedral and later went on tour around the country. It was even shown in the Swedish Parliament. As expected, there was a fair deal of outcry from conservative Christians, there were demonstrations (for and against the exhibition), and there were even physical attacks on the photographs. In the end, the photographs, with their easily understood re-imagining of well-known themes paired with tantalizing otherness caused a great deal of debate. However, out of that came a greater visibility and understanding of GLBT issues.

Reimagining and reinterpreting canonical works of art history is a typical postmodern trope, and it was used by several artists at the time. *Annica Karlsson Rixon* (b. 1962) is a photographer often concerned with questions of gender and identity. When she reimagines Scandinavian turn of the century paintings into a modern context, *Peder Kröyer's* (1851–1909) *Artists' Luncheon at Brøndum's Hotel* (Ved frokosten) with its all-male cast becomes a contemporary lunch with Karlson Rixon's female friends striking similar poses (fig. 213 and 214). The transformations in play here – from oil painting to photography, from 1883 to 1997, from male to female – are contrasted with the similarities of pose, dinner setting, social interactions, joy, and light. The juxtaposition is not an easy comment on gender, but rather an elaborate comparison that sheds some light on change and differences concerning the gendered role of the artist as well as on art history.

Annika von Hausswolff (b. 1967) also works with photography and with questions of gender and identity. In her 1993 series of images titled *Back to*





Figure 213 (left) Annica Karlsson Rixon, *The Artists' Luncheon*, 1997, c-print, 82 x 61 cm. Photo: Bukowskis. © Annica Karlsson Rixon.

Figure 214 (right) Peder Kröyer, *Artists' Luncheon at Brøndum's Hotel* (Ved frokosten), 1883, oil on canvas, 67,5 x 76,5 cm. Art Museum of Skagen.

Nature, she staged images based on crime-scene photography (fig. 215). The cold and precise images of female bodies in Swedish nature evoke images from another Swedish artist from the late 19th century, Anders Zorn. Zorn is famous for his many paintings of nude young women bathing out in streams and lakes, combining landscape and the nude into an archetypical image of young, natural, beautiful Swedish sensuality (fig. 216). Interestingly he quite often used photography in his preliminary sketching of his paintings. The nude women in von Hausswolff's nature occupy the same space and display the same bodies as in Zorn's paintings, but they are obviously violated. There are no longer any traces of either happiness or sensuality left; instead, she displays a far more sinister take on femininity and nature in Sweden in the 1990s.

Yet another artist of the same decade working within the same realm of nature and historical painting was *Matts Leiderstam* (b. 1956). In his series *Returned* (1997–2001), he returned paintings (actually copies of French 17th



Figure 215 Annika von Hausswolff, from *Back to Nature*, 1993, c-print, 43 x 60,5 cm.
© Annika von Hausswolff.

century artist Nicholas Poussin's S*pring or Earthly Paradise*) to their mythological place of origin in different parks and photographed them in this setting (fig. 217). He then left the paintings so that other visitors to the park could take them. The parks and the spaces within them that he chose were not random places, but cruising spots, places where men would meet for casual sex. The setting of the images was in their own way an earthly paradise like the one Poussin once painted. This too means that Leiderstam's paintings most likely ended up on the walls of gay men, just as his photographs of the paintings ended up in the gallery. This very public acknowledgement of casual and anonymous outdoor gay sex as a part of our culture was yet another way of weaving together images, art history, and identities into a comment on contemporary society.

There were other men examining the male gender role in Sweden in the 1990s. *Magnus Wallin* (b. 1965) made videogame-based computer animations dealing with bodies, anatomy, and disabilities (fig. 218). *Peter Johansson* (b. 1964) disarmed the heroic male artist by weaving an intricate artistic world around his own body, *dalahästar* (small wooden horses painted

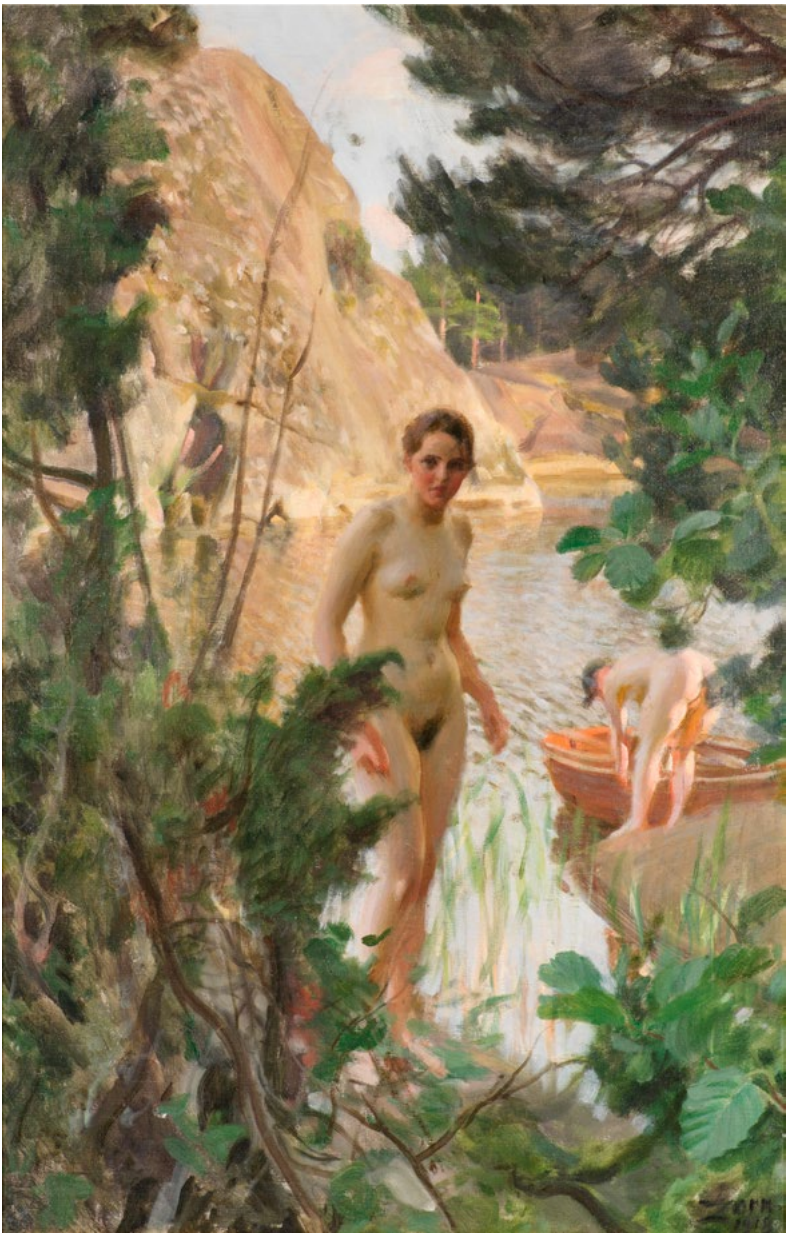

Figure 216 Anders Zorn, *The Skiff* (Jollen), oil on canvas, 100 × 64 cm. Private Collection. Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 217 Matts Leiderstam, *Returned*, Hampstead Heath, London, 1997, c-print, 19 x 18,5 cm. © Matts Leiderstam/BUS.



Figure 218 Magnus Wallin, still from video *Elements*, 2011. © Magnus Wallin/BUS.



Figure 219 Peter Johansson, *El Hombre Elastico, my friend the sausage* (El Hombre Elastico, min vän korven), invitation card, 2016. © Peter Johansson/BUS.

with ornamental flowers, usually sold as tourist souvenirs), and *falukorv* (a type of cheap Swedish sausage), (fig. 219). *Lars Tunbjörk* (1956–2015) made photographic collages dealing with Swedishness (for more on Tunbjörk, see Moa Petersén's essay in this book). These artists were describing new, less heroic, and more human male positions and placing them in unconventional contexts.

The two most visible artists of the decade were *Dan Wolgers* (b. 1955) and *Ernst Billgren* (b. 1957), and their work was typically representative of the 1990s. However, because they were both un-interested in political themes, their work falls outside the scope of this essay.

2000 and beyond: Identity politics

The connection between the personal and the political was not only possible but also a very successful idea for some of the artists emerging during the new millennium. They would make this their chosen arena, causing both scandals and discussions. Economic and political change maintained their rapid pace in the years following the collapse of the Internet bubble. Banking and real estate once more got the economic wheels turning, this

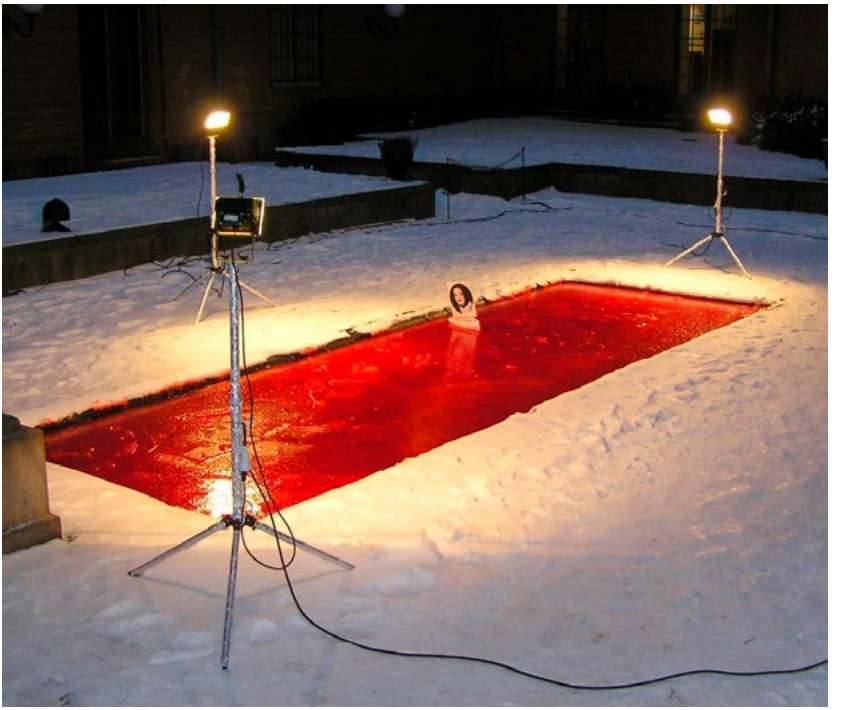

Figure 220 Dror Feiler and Gunilla Sköld-Feiler, *Snow White and The Madness of Truth*, temporary installation at the Museum of History, Stockholm, 2004. © Dror Feiler and Gunilla Sköld-Feiler.

time in a system that thanks to computerized trading affected the whole world simultaneously and very rapidly, but this system too crashed at the same time as the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment firm in 2008. Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and the growth of EU both became prominent political issues.

At times, these developments led to political skirmishes. The Israeli ambassador, Zwi Mazel, attacked and agitated against *Snow White and The Madness of Truth* (fig. 220) by *Dror Feiler* (b. 1951) and his wife *Gunilla Sköld-Feiler* (b. 1953). The installation, on display at the Swedish History Museum in 2004, dealt with the Israel-Palestine conflict, and central to it was a small ship with a sail made out of a photograph of a Palestinian suicide bomber, Hanadi Jarada, in a basin full of red water. Feiler, himself Jewish and born in Isra-



Figure 221 Anna Odell, *Unknown, woman 2009-349701*, still from video of performance/re-enactment, 2009. © Anna Odell/BUS.

el and a prominent pro-Palestine activist, has said that the idea was to draw attention to the conflict and the cruelty of it all. Mr. Mazel did not agree and saw it as an attack on Israel. The artwork ignited some heated debates between various voices in Sweden and Israel, and it became the focus of conspiracy theories about why the artwork was attacked at the time.

In 2009 another performance act came to ignite a heated debate about the limits and purposes of art when *Anna Odell* (b. 1973), as part of her studies at Konstfack (University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm), reconstructed her own psychological breakdown back in 1995 at a central bridge in Stockholm (Liljeholmsbron), complete with the intervention of unknowing police and healthcare personnel, filmed it, and showed the resulting film as a work of art – *Unknown, Woman 2009-349701* (fig. 221). Odell's purpose was to show how our society handles mental health issues, but the debate was mostly focused on her wasting hospital resources. Odell was fined 2500 SEK, but this got her career off to a great start, and she was

later praised for her movie *The Reunion* (2013) in which she re-enacts her own class reunion using herself along with professional actors.

The intersection of identity and ethnicity has not been a usual theme in Swedish art, but there are a few artists who have made it a central part of their work in recent years. The best known of these artists is surely *Makode Linde* (b. 1981) whose ongoing *Afromantics* series puts grotesque and graphic blackface on many different kinds of objects and images. His most controversial work to date was *Painful Cake* (2012), (fig. 222). Several artists were invited to each submit a cake for an event organized by the Swedish Artists' Association (Konstnärernas Riksorganisation, KRO) to celebrate their 75th birthday. Linde's cake had a body looking like a black version of the Willendorf Venus and Linde's own head made up in blackface make-up. Each time someone cut the cake, he screamed (a lot). A video clip showing Lena Adelsohn-Liljeroth (at the time minister of culture) cutting a piece of cake and feeding it to Linde went viral, instantly shaping a very aggressive debate about gender, blackness, and art. The sides in this debate were many, and were mostly unwavering. Linde is a young, black, Swedish, gay man, Adelsohn-Liljeroth is an older and well established white female politician,



Figure 222 Makode Linde, *Painful Cake*, still from performance, 2012. © Makode Linde/BUS.

and his cake depicted a bleeding and screaming caricature of a black woman. Many voices where very critical of the event – the National League of AfroSwedes (Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund) was insulted by the blackface, several feminist critics focused on the gender of the cake and the act of cutting and eating it, and a lot of the critique seemed focused on the conservative political views of Lena Adelsohn-Liljeroth.

Other recent takes on ethnicity include *Lisa Vipola's* (b. 1982) fake remakes of Sami crafts in 2014. Vipola is not part of the Sami community (the Sami are the indigenous population of the Scandinavian north), but grew up close to it. She is not trained in Sami handicraft, but made imitations in modern materials and showed them as *Sami Duodij* [True Sami Craft], drawing the wrath of some commentators within the Sami community as well as accusations of plagiarism (fig. 223). Both Linde and Vipola work within a complicated web of ethnic identities among minorities in Sweden, and their work is vital in exploring this area. Highly visible and loud multiculturalism is fairly new to Sweden, so it is no wonder that art should be part of the discussions surrounding it.

Questions regarding Swedishness, otherness, and ethnicity have certainly become more important than ever, and Sweden is in no way shielded from the ongoing nationalistic and protective ideologies that have blos-



Figure 223 Lisa Vipola, *Sami Duodij*, detail of object, 2014. © Lisa Vipola/BUS.

somed in numerous countries in recent years. Sweden itself has rarely been a topic of the art discussed in this essay, and when it has been the purpose has often been parodic, as with the work of de Geer and Hillersberg. The most poignant work that concerns itself with Sweden, but without political or nationalistic connotations, is the multipart project *My Country* (2010) by *Ann-Sofie Sidén* (b. 1962). The work consists of video from a multi-week trip that she and some of her students at The Royal Institute of Art (Kungl. Konsthögskolan) made from Stockholm to the sculpture park at Wanås in Scania. They travelled at a slow pace, mostly riding horses or walking, and they captured the rural parts of Sweden that are only rarely visible in the media. The video recordings were later edited into to a large video installation that gives the viewer an uncommented portrait of a non-urban, slower Sweden that lives closer to nature than most of us do today. It is not a romantic image, but one full of everyday life.

Political art in Sweden in recent years has often come to mean art dealing in identity politics. This is a complex field, but one that often takes place within the realm of culture and representation, thus its dominance of the art scene should come as no surprise.

Conclusion

Few things have been constant in Sweden during the post-war period except change itself. Our society, its ideals, and its politics are constantly changing, and culture evolves together with the rest of society. In the sixties we saw a much greater influx of international art into Sweden, the seventies became a time of political protest, the eighties were a time of theoretical and economic excess, the nineties introduced identity politics into art and society, and the time since the beginning of the new millennium has seen a renewed interest in political art but with new objectives.

Politics and art do mix, and many times the mix provides an energetic and very interesting result, as I hope to have shown here. This does not mean, however, that politics is the main subject of art. The history of the post-war period in Swedish art can be told from many different perspectives, and this is just one of them.

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Aesthetics and politics in the 1970s

Öyvind Fahlström's Column series and Sketch for World Map Part I (Americas, Pacific)

Max Liljefors

The four prints by Öyvind Fahlström (1928–1976) presented in this article depict quasi-hybrids of comics and maps. They represent complex global networks and connections in the post-war period, all of which revolve around the worldwide military and economic dominance of the United States, including the Vietnam War, racial segregation, global economic injustice, and the cynical, triumphal march of capitalism. The works date from the 1970s – a creative period in Fahlström's career in which he grappled with concrete political and social issues from an explicitly left-wing standpoint. According to Pontus Hultén (1924–2006), the first director of Stockholm's Moderna Museet (the Museum of Modern art), this development took root after Fahlström's move from Europe to New York in 1961. Nevertheless, in the New York art scene Fahlström's engagement with Realpolitik was sometimes perceived as European.

The offset black and white litograph *Sketch for World Map Part I (Americas, Pacific)* (1972) is a study for Fahlström's painting *World Map* (acrylic and Indian ink on vinyl) of the same year and for the *Column* series. In

This chapter does not contain illustrations because the copyright holder of Fahlström's works did not agree to the economical terms offered. Instead, online reproductions of the artworks discussed in this chapter can be found on the website http://Fahlstrom.com Graphics & Multiples: http://www.fahlstrom.com/graphics-multiples?page=1

this print, the oceans between the continents are reduced to mere straits, and national borders barely follow their actual paths. The forms Fahlström has given to various territories more or less serve the purpose of telling these lands' contemporary political and economic histories in a flurry of words, images, and diagrams. Thus, a pervasive theme is the US's support for dictators and paramilitary forces in Latin America, as well the considerable profits accrued by American corporations which this policy facilitates. Roughly in the middle of the image there is some documentation about US support for armed death squads in Costa Rica, which had abolished its army in 1949, and immediately beneath, and to the right, there are details of American involvement in Brazil's economic growth and turbulent changes of government. In his maps, Fahlström abandons the objectivity of cartographical projection in favour of visualising the phenomena of political oppression and economic exploitation. Geographic borders are transformed into images and text fields, and visual and narrative elements compose so-called image-swarms about poverty and wealth, suffering and gun violence, and the profits raked in by the rich from the defenceless poor. In other words, these are images about the real story, or stories, that ultimately unfolded, and still unfold, behind national demarcations, and show that these demarcations are sometimes maintained purely for the sake of providing a functional context for them.

Throughout his artistic oeuvre, Fahlström has sourced his visual inspiration and graphic vocabulary from popular culture and the mass media, as well as from comics, puzzles, games, maps, and the news media. The three additional works analysed here share the collective title *Column* as a nod to the columns of text in a newspaper.

In the middle of the lithograph *Column no. 1 (Wonder Bread)* (1972), there appears a light blue image field in the shape of a piece of toast featuring a muscular man in a white T-shirt. This is a paraphrase of a classic American advert for Wonder Bread, which, according to the advertisers, makes a person strong: 'Wonder Bread helps build strong bodies in 12 ways.' The darker blue field immediately beneath it then metaphorically depicts the negative health effects of this so-called wonder bread: a loaf of bread decked out as a tank, with the muzzles of rifles protruding from the front and firing at the now naked man. To the right of the slice of Wonder

Bread is a man torn to shreds by a bomb, and the text informs the viewer that the company behind Wonder Bread also develops electronic systems for guided missiles, and thus: 'Wonder Bread helps destroy strong bodies.' The metaphor of firearms in the loaf of bread is a concrete illustration of the normally concealed, murderous connection between America's comfortable way of life and its warring effect on other parts of the world. Surrounding these scenes, Fahlström has spread before us a tapestry of similar themes. Besides elaborate statistics on the profits of the weapons and oil industries and the unjust tax system are pictures illustrating the history of the slave trade, while modern-day newspaper headlines report trivial events: '4 police cars crash chasing nude driver'.

Fahlström sets the White House at the centre of *Column no. 2 (Picasso 90)* (1973), and like a spider it creates a web of corrupt liaisons between politics, finance, and the military that spreads out across the US and the rest of the world. Octopus-like tentacles embrace the CIA, FBI, and the corrupt trade unions allied to President Richard Nixon and other Republican politicians. A crazed pattern of injustice unfolds, depicted in a mix of comparative statistics and pedagogical illustrations. With this collage, Fahlström expresses his belief in the responsibility of art in a world of injustice and oppression. This notion is made verbally explicit in the bottom right-hand corner of the picture where he addresses a letter to the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), whose *Guernica* (1937) he holds to be a model of politically engaged art. Here, however, Fahlström takes the famous Spanish painter to task for failing to act on demands that he removes his painting from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, to make a political statement: 'Why don't you honour the pleas from American and other artists to remove *Guernica* from the Museum of Modern Art, until the USA completely withdraws from all of S.E. Asia?' Fahlström's proposal is particularly poignant considering that *Guernica* was created in protest of the German and Italian bombing of civilians during the Spanish Civil War. On the one hand, the Germans' military strategy recalled the bombing of Vietnam, a persistent theme in Fahlström's work. On the other hand, *Guernica* was on loan to the MoMA at the time because Picasso had forbidden the painting to be transported to Spain as long as the country was not a democracy. (*Guernica* was finally returned to Spain in 1981.) For the same reason, Fahlström thought, *Guernica* should not

be shown at the MoMA. An image field beside the letter shows *Guernica* being carried out of the MoMA.

Fahlström's *Column no. 4 (IB-affair)* (1974) deals with a political scandal in Sweden. In 1973, Peter Bratt and Jan Guillou, journalists for the newspaper *Folket i Bild/Kulturfront*, exposed the existence of an undisclosed secret service that had been set up by the post-war Social Democratic government to spy on Swedish communists and which operated without legal basis. (Usually 'IB' is understood as an abbreviation for *Informationsbyrån* [the Information Bureau], but some argue it stands for *Inhämtning Birger* [Acquisition Birger] in reference to Birger Elmér, the head of IB.) Among other things, Bratt and Guillou managed to prove IB's extensive cooperation with the CIA and the Israeli secret service, Shin Bet, in violation of Sweden's doctrine of neutrality. Bratt and Guillou were sentenced to prison for espionage. In Fahlström's silkscreen, the IB affair is depicted as a facet of America's global imperialism. In the middle of the picture is a tape recorder wearing a police hat and sunglasses, framed with the following inscriptions: 'US Public Safety Program' and 'Murder Export, Inc.'. Beside it, there is text explaining that between 1962 and 1967 the US spent 308 million dollars on training and drilling 7,480 foreign policemen to join death squads, torture people, and terrorise independent trade unions. Diagonally below, and to the right, is a floppy Swedish cap, also with sunglasses, labelled 'IB affair'. And below that is an illustration of the contradiction between the myth of Swedish neutrality and its reality: in an orange image field stand the journalists, Bratt and Guillou, behind bars. After seeing Fahlström's picture, Bratt summed up the left-wing view on Sweden's international role as follows: 'In the eyes of Swedish intelligence, Sweden lost its political innocence and became a small link in the chain of America's global network' (Bratt, p. 74).

The works presented here are examples of the way in which Fahlström, in the 1970s, made aesthetic decisions on the basis of objective economic and historical information. Fahlström saw this as a renewal of the convention of history painting:

> With the introduction of a completely coloured background (in the Column series, World Map, etc.), I have gotten into a sort of historical painting where all kinds of data and ideas – historical, economic, poetic, topical – are presented in a unified style. For the sake of clarity, data and interpretations are both written down and depicted visually. Blue colours denote USA, violet Europe, red to yellow socialist countries, and green to brown the Third World. (Fahlström in Flash Art)

Fahlström's detailed documentation and sharp political criticism arose from his sympathy for the poor and disadvantaged people in the world, as well as from his ethical standards and high intellectual integrity. He describes his impression of the US in the 1960s as follows:

> Living in LBJ's [Lyndon B. Johnson's] and Nixon's America during the Vietnam war – culminating in the Christmas '72 terror bombings of Hanoi and Haiphong and Watergate – it became impossible not to deal in my work – once I had the stylistic tools – with what was going on around me: Guernica, multiplied a million times. (Fahlström in Flash Art)

Nevertheless, the explicit political statements in Fahlström's work are not at the expense of aesthetic and formal considerations. If anything, indeed, Fahlström went a step further in the 1970s in working out some of the artistic problems that had concerned him at an earlier stage in his career. The term *bisociation* sums up the central principle and challenges of his work. The expression stems from the book *The Act of Creation* (1964) by the Austrian-Hungarian and English author Arthur Koestler. For Koestler, *bisociation* signified a fundamental force of all creativity: the ability to combine two otherwise unrelated perspectives in order to reach a new and surprising level of meaning. If two distinct, or even contradictory, thought paradigms – with fundamentally different origins, criteria, and values – meld or collide, a new thought horizon can open up that can suggest startling new meanings. For Fahlström, this linkage does not primarily take place through combining irreconcilable areas of subject matter, such as the idylls of advertising with the facts of slaughter or the blend of high art and popular culture. He is more concerned with defying the contrast

between form and content and between formalism and political engagement.

This approach can be traced back to Fahlström's early output. At the end of the 1950s, he began sampling visual gestures and *topoi* from the world of comics, from *MAD* magazine, and later from the illustrators George Herriman and Robert Crumb. For some time this influence was noticeable in the non-figurative, yet visually distinct, pictorial elements that occupied the entire surface of his images, such as the painting *Sitting…* (1962). The results are pictures intended to be read as narrative, but without legible content. The impulse to read is awakened and simultaneously inhibited. In Fahlström's painting *Ade-Ledic Nander II* (1955–57), non-figurative shapes inspired by architecture and biology create delimited structures in separate sections of the image surface. This not only results in an original composition, but seems, in other respects as well, to be of prime importance to Fahlström. According to Pontus Hultén, Fahlström showed *Ade-Ledic Nander II* to interested friends at various stages of completion. Fahlström would drape a sheet over the image so that only the part he was working on at the time could be viewed through a hole in the sheet. The purpose was to prevent the spectators, as well as Fahlström himself, from being distracted by other parts of the image or by the composition as a whole. Evidently, Fahlström would work on the picture in a similar fashion (Hultén, p. 102). In this compositional technique, the American artist Mike Kelly (1954–2012) saw a parallel to Fahlström's democratic perspective on geopolitical questions – each part should first be appreciated in its autonomy, and only then integrated into a larger system (Kelly, p. 20).

Throughout his entire artistic production, Fahlström was fascinated with rules and games, from his concrete poetry right through to his world maps. This was most forcefully expressed in his interactive, or variable, paintings and installations where certain elements of the work can be moved by the spectators. In his 1966 text 'Hotdogs and Tweezers', Fahlström described the idea of the game as a simple, fundamental world view and explained his work as a combination of gaming rules, invariable forms, and the variables of the playing subject (Fahlström, 1979, p. 46). He held that the resulting constellations reflected the fundamental tension between 'the astronomical freedom of choice' and the 'fragile rigidity' of rules. For

Fahlström, the tension characterising the idea of the game stands in contrast to the 'free form' of formalism in which everything can be connected with everything else so that, in principle, nothing is really connected and everything appears to be of equal value (Fahlström, 'Ta vara på världen', p. 50). Yet, in terms of content, there is also a contrast between Fahlström's attitude and the attitude of indifference displayed in Pop Art and Neo-Dadaism. It is here that Fahlström's 'bisociative' leaps take on greater significance, and the rules of reality – with such disparate examples as the border between Congo and Angola, the numbers in a telephone book, and the positioning of buttons on a jacket – are characterised by a fragile stability; they look absolute, yet they are easily changed. Ultimately, it is about a new definition of Realpolitik. Realpolitik is generally understood as the pragmatic, often dirty, political practice that stands in opposition to principles and ideals. Yet Fahlström would like to show that this structuring of reality by Realpolitik does not exist objectively. The rules are immaterial, and thus brittle; they can always be reinvented, altered, or discarded. Fahlström's geopolitical engagement emerges from this optimism.

Fahlström's refusal to accept the opposition of form and content as a limiting factor in his artistic work makes him difficult to classify in art historical terms. He was part of the international art scene in New York, close friends with Neo-Dadaist and Pop Art figures such as Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008), Jasper Johns (b. 1930), Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929), Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997), Andy Warhol (1928–1987), *Erró* (b. 1932), and many others. Because of his appreciation of popular culture, he himself has often been designated as a Pop Artist, but his interests in rules and game theory make him more of a Conceptualist and thus closer, in a sense, to Neo-Dadaism and Fluxus. However, the concrete political content of his art differentiates him from these movements, and in contrast to the 'coolness' of Warhol and Lichtenstein, he was 'hot'. In hindsight, Fahlström appears to have been an avant-gardist who was an inspiration to a later generation of post-modern artists. This became clear at *documenta X* in Kassel, in 1997, where two of his greatest installations were exhibited: *Meatball Curtain (for R. Crumb)* (1969) and *The Little General (Pinball Machine)* (1967–1968). His 1953 manifesto for concrete poetry 'Hätila ragulpr på fåtskliaben' (the title, a play on onomatopoeically alienated

orthography, is from the Swedish translation of A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*), which marked the beginning of concrete poetry in Sweden, is also republished in the catalogue for *documenta X*.

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Country Beside Itself

Photography and Politics in Late 20th Century Sweden

Moa Petersén

Throughout the history of photography, photographers have been concerned with social issues. This is true not only of photojournalists and documentary photographers, but of art photographers as well. One, perhaps obvious, explanation for this is the specific connection to a material reality that is inherent in the photography medium, rendering it favorable, or even natural, for many art photographers to work with social reality. In the text below, I will touch upon the relation between Swedish photography and politics throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. However, my emphasis will be on *Lars Tunbjörk*'s (1956–2015) photography book *Country Beside Itself*, published in 1993, and more specifically on how the book reflects Swedish society at a socio-political breaking point that would set the tone for Sweden's subsequent social development. *Country Beside Itself* is considered by many to be the most important portrayal of Swedish society ever made through photography. In the current essay, I explore the explanation of its success.

Country Beside Itself contains eighty-one photographs by the internationally renowned Swedish photographer Lars Tunbjörk. The photographs portray a variety of locations in Sweden during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In addition to those images, the book also contains two textual entries: 'Matter,' written by the Swedish author and poet Thomas Tidholm (b. 1943), and 'Good Is He Who Tastes Good,' by the Swedish public debater Göran Greider (b. 1959). Tidholm's poetic text is constructed around



Figure 224 Lars Tunbjörk, *Skara Sommarland*, 1991, © Lars Tunbjörk, courtesy of Maud Nycander. Printed in Tunbjörk, Tidholm & Greider, *Landet utom sig: bilder från Sverige = Country beside itself: pictures from Sweden*, Journal, Stockholm, 1993.

the concept of 'materiality' and is a commentary on the increasing social and cultural focus on the material that Tunbjörk's images may be said to depict. Greider's text is intended to show how Tunbjörk's photographs illustrate and document the political changes occurring in Sweden at the time of the book's publication in 1993. Both texts can be seen as problematizing the concept of emptiness in an increasingly material culture.

The images in *Country Beside Itself* show people who seemingly have been placed into their surroundings. Those surroundings are often full of artificiality and consumerism, or of withered plastic objects once set there to amuse: a large plastic dinosaur or a giant Kalles Kaviar tube (fig. 224). Against this backdrop of excess and decadence, the people who inhabit the images seem a bit lost or confused. The effect is often absurd or exotic, or as Greider notes in his text, 'carnevalesque.' Materials in the images are

often shiny, as Tidholm also points out in his poetic text. One explanation of that shininess lies in Tunbjörk's use of the flashbulb. Unlike other photographers who work with light and darkness in order to bring out texture or mystic shadows from the objects depicted, Tunbjörk's use of the flash makes the colors loud, the scenes flat, and everything in the images equally highlighted.

Tunbjörk has in interviews described the source of his inspiration in the American photo-documentary tradition, with examples such as Lee Friedlander (b. 1934), William Eggleston (b. 1939), and Garry Winogrand (1928–1984). He is frequently compared to the English documentary photographer Martin Parr (b. 1952), who like Tunbjörk often depicts through glaring colors modern consumer society and the middle class. But where, in Eggleston's or Parr's images, we find a certain distance to the scenes or people depicted, in Tunbjörk's work we instead find an identification with seemingly confused, and somewhat trapped, humans. Greider poignantly describes in 'Good Is He Who Tastes Good' this feeling of the depicted forlorn middle-class:

> The middle-class stands there, confused. As if nothing, really, has made a difference. Halfway through the evening jog, a man or woman stops on a hill. When the heavy breathing slowly subsides, the tepid May evening filters through consciousness and tells of all that is missing. Humans, clad in brand-new tracksuits, but on the verge of tears, can look incredibly forlorn when one does not see them on televised sport shows.

Commentators have differed on whether Tunbjörk's images entail a distancing of the people and scenes portrayed, or if such distancing is lacking. Tunbjörk himself noted this in an interview published in the magazine *Publikt* in 2007: 'I'm often misunderstood. Some people have described me as ironic and distanced. I don't recognize myself in that! It's my contemplative approach that is misunderstood as distanced. And my point of departure is not to be ironic.'

This purported lack of distance that Tunbjörk stresses above is, I believe, one of the reasons why *Country Beside Itself* achieved such success as a photographic depiction of Swedish society in the early 1990s. In his imag-

es, Tunbjörk seems to share the confusion of the humans he portrays. In a film made by *Nyhetsbyrån TT* in 2008, Tunbjörk describes his goal in photography as weaving together his 'subjective vision with [his] mental state and an objective documentary depiction.' When identifying with the people he is portraying, Tunbjörk photographically approaches what the French sociologist Emile Durkheim called a 'collective conscious,' which denotes the collective feelings and convictions of the members of a society or subgroup. The insight gained from such a psychological blending into the surroundings he portrays is an important factor in achieving the instantaneous quality of the images.

Social documentary photography, a subcategory of documentary photography, has a long history. It is, in essence, the recording of humans in their natural condition. It has traditionally arisen from a socially critical perspective from which the lives of underprivileged people and the social problems they face are depicted. As early as the second half of the nineteenth century, photographers such as Jacob Riis (1849–1914) and Lewis Hine (1874–1940) published images of city life in America in efforts to bring about social reform. Socially engaged photography continued to depict society's lower classes into the 1960s and 1970s. During those decades, American social documentary photographers began turning their cameras on members of the middle class. Among the most influential examples of this development are the three photographers Tunbjörk credited with having influenced his own work: Friedlander, Winogrand, and Eggleston. Since the late 1970s, social documentary photography has increasingly been accorded a place in art galleries alongside fine art photography.

Swedish art photography has traditionally been closely connected to Swedish socio-political development. Peter Gullers points out how many Swedish photographers during the 1970s focused on the working class to elucidate their motives, producing documentary studies of Swedish industrial workers. *The Blacks* and *The Mine* were prototypical titles of photographic reports from the factory floor. Such ideals for art photography were clearly reflected in the political climate in Sweden during the 1970s, when the collective spirit was strong and identification with the working class was an important component of the dominant social ideology. When Niclas Östlind describes the Swedish photography scene of the 1970s

through the 1990s, he argues that the political undertones of 1970s art photography disappeared during the 1980s, as photography was instead used to investigate the artist himself. Photography became increasingly staged in studios instead of being shot in the real world. Östlind goes on to describe how photographic reportage was not totally eradicated, but had shifted with respect to content. Work from the 1980s focused on how the artist-photographer, and the writer whose text accompanied the images, experienced what he or she depicted. Such reportage often chose as its subjects' people on the margins of Swedish society such as those from orphanages or prisons. Accompanying the shift of narrator was the shift from black-and-white serenity to emotional and romantic color photography. The new narrative style and color photography came together in the magazine *ETC*, which, from its establishment in 1978, presented an experimentally aesthetic, leftish take on popular culture and marginalized groups in Swedish society. In the 1980s, *ETC* published photography books by artists such as *Anders Petersén* (b. 1944) and *Christer Strömholm* (1918–2002). Photographing members of marginalized groups has long been one of the most common motives of art photography around the world. Tunbjörk's images in *Country Beside Itself* are, instead, depicting the mass rather than pointing out exceptions from it. Tunbjörk's images thus take a step away from *ETC* and the Swedish reportage photography books of the 1980s and move toward the American photo-documentary tradition, as discussed above, where members of the middle classes rather than the working classes are depicted. But what kind of society do Tunbjörk's images portray?

In the film made by *Nyhetsbyrån TT* from 2008, Tunbjörk remembers his work with *Country Beside Itself* in the following way: 'It was very thrilling to travel around Sweden at this time. It was almost as if I was traveling through the US at times. The colors were all new, and all the plastic and glitter that had shown up during the few years of economic boom in the 1980s.'

Tunbjörk alludes, in the quotation above, to developments in the stock market that led Sweden to its financial heights during the mid-1980s. During that time, Swedes saw their incomes rise and consumption reached record levels. The economic repercussions of the subsequent economic collapse left the Swedish people in the early 1990s with enormous debt and

high interest rates. The financial crisis continued throughout the 1990s. In 1992, the Riksbanken [the central bank of Sweden] raised the interest rate to 500 percent, and most foreign investors withdrew their funds. The economic crisis of the early 1990s was a watershed in Swedish history that had both short- and long-term consequences. Östberg & Andersson assert that those consequences include permanent changes in Swedish society such as increased poverty, health problems, and unemployment. A right-wing government was elected in 1991 for the first time in twenty years, and the elected parties were dependent for their governing power on the right-wing populist party, Ny Demokrati [New Democracy]. A wave of xenophobia engulfed Sweden, which underwent a shift from sovereign autonomy to membership in the European Union (1995), stronger influence from the USA, and a freer market in a globalized economy. This transition from a traditional Sweden where the welfare state dominated toward a modern export country was criticized thoroughly, as described in Greider's text in Tunbjörk's book. As part of the move toward free-market capitalism, television and radio commercials were allowed starting in 1991 and 1993, respectively. In Greider's text, the market of early 1990s Sweden was characterized as 'a jungle of offers' and as 'an aggressive paradise.' Tunbjörk's images effectively show how the new consumerism and material abundance reflected the social and financial shifts described above (fig. 225).

Tunbjörk's images thus capture a Swedish society on the verge between economic boom and decline. In Tunbjörk's obituary, published in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, Malena Rydell describes the period when the images of *Country Beside Itself* were taken as 'the morning light after the party, when the confetti remain scattered over the asphalt.' In the film by *Nyhetsbyrån TT*, Tunbjörk reflects upon the prospect of authoring another book like *Country Beside Itself* at the time of the interview (2008) in the following way: 'If I would do a project like *Country Beside Itself* today, it would be a much darker portrayal. Society has hardened. Marginalization has increased. And I couldn't have ignored that if I was to go on a similar trip today.'

We can, therefore, conclude that Tunbjörk fulfilled one of the most important recipes for successful photography: finding the right places at the right times. But even if the images might appear spontaneous, there is



Figure 225 Lars Tunbjörk, *Rotebro*, 1990, © Lars Tunbjörk, courtesy of Maud Nycander. Printed in Tunbjörk, Tidholm & Greider, *Landet utom sig: bilder från Sverige = Country beside itself: pictures from Sweden*, Journal, Stockholm, 1993.

a lot of work behind capturing that spontaneity. In some instances, Tunbjörk returned to certain places over the course of as many as three years in order to get a good picture. Such patience, together with an ethnographic method of 'sinking-into-the-wall as a high school usher,' as Pelle Kronestedt described Tunbjörk in an obituary written by Josefin Olevik published in the magazine *Fokus*, is revealed in the timing of the images. Figure 226, for example, shows a motorway diner waitress standing squarely beneath a television set that displays an image of Pretty Boy and the phrase 'Skäms!' [Shame!]. The strong, artificial light on her awakens associations to the bright lights of interrogation rooms that, together with the displayed phrase, makes her appear to have been caught in an unseemly act – perhaps simply the act of being in the material and consumerist culture.



Figure 226 Lars Tunbjörk, *Hallandsåsen*, 1991, © Lars Tunbjörk, courtesy of Maud Nycander. Printed in Tunbjörk, Tidholm & Greider, *Landet utom sig: bilder från Sverige = Country beside itself: pictures from Sweden*, Journal, Stockholm, 1993.

So, finally, why can *Country Beside Itself* be considered a successful photographic portrayal of early 1990s Swedish society? To the more obvious reasons of Tunbjörk being at the right places at the right times, we can add a certain skill in finding situations that depicted contemporary Swedish life especially well. That, in turn, may be explained by a certain ethnographic method used by Tunbjörk whereby the photographer steps into a collective consciousness, but avoids full participation in what happens. Instead, he captures the situations and the people within them by merging

his subjective vision or experience, his mental state, and an objective documentary depiction of contemporary life and culture through his image composition. There is also a complementary factor that relates to the photography medium itself. The crisis point in Swedish society that Tunbjörk depicts is ideological, but one that expresses itself through the material, for example, new colors, ubiquitous plastic, and the explosion of visual advertisement. Art is well suited to represent this crossroad between ideology and the material turn it took in this case. Photography – because of its connection to the real, the material, and the visual – is among the forms best suited to this purpose. The flashbulb that renders the materials it illuminates shiny, and the richness of detail it reveals, is vital to the images. A few years after the new materials' and colors' first meeting with Swedish society and culture, Tunbjörk's gaudy images of smoldering plastic and glitter depict with precision Sweden's transformation from a distinctive welfare state to just another interchangeable component of the globalized free market.

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Lars Tunbjörk – vinnare av TT:s Stora Fotopris 2008 (Scanpix Stora Fotopris). Porträtt av Lars Tunbjörk med anledning av Scanpix Stora Fotopris 10-årsjubileum (numera TT Stora Fotopris), video, produced by A. Birgersson & P. Norrman on the behalf of TT Nyhetsbyrå, 2008.

Glossary

abstract, abstraction Any art that does not represent observable aspects of nature or transforms visible forms into a pattern resembling the original model. Also the formal qualities of this process.

acanthus A leaf plant whose foliage has inspired architectural ornamentation since antiquity.

aesthetics The philosophy of beauty.

aisle Passage or open corridor of a church, hall, or other building that parallels the main space, usually on both sides, and is delineated by a row, or **arcade**, of **columns** or **piers**. Called **side aisle** when they flank the nave of a church.

akimbo A position in which the hands are on the hips and the elbows are bowed outward.

allegory In a work of art, an image (or images) that illustrates an abstract concept, idea, or story, often suggesting a deeper meaning.

altar A tablelike structure where religious rites are performed. In Christian churches, the altar is the site of the rite of the **eucharist**.

altarpiece A painted or carved panel or winged structure placed at the back of or behind and above the **altar**. Contains religious imagery, often specific to the place of worship for which it was made.

animal style A type of imagery used in Europe and western Asia especially during the ancient and medieval periods, characterized by animal or animal-like forms arranged in intricate patterns or combats.

apprentice A student artist or craftsperson in training. In a system of art and crafts training established under the **guilds** and still in use today, master artists took on apprentices (students) for a specific number of years. The apprentice was taught the artist's craft and worked in the master's workshop or atelier.

apse A large semi-circular room, opening to the **chancel** in the east of a church.

arcade A series of **arches**, carried by **columns** or **piers** and supporting a common wall.

arch In architecture, a curved structural element that spans an open space.

archdiocese, diocese The parishes that are subject to one bishop form a diocese, with a **cathedral** as its centre. A number of dioceses form an archdiocese, led by an archbishop who, in the Catholic church, as in Medieval Scandinavia, is placed directly under the pope.

architrave An architectural element in **Classical** architecture. The bottom element of an **entablature**, beneath the **frieze** and the **cornice**.

attic The top story of a building, often decorated or carrying an inscription.

avant-garde A term derived from French military word meaning 'before the group,' or 'vanguard.' Avant-garde denotes those artists or concepts of a strikingly new, experimental, or radical nature for the time.

balustrade A low barrier consisting of a series of short circular posts (called balusters), with a rail top.

Baroque Classicism The 17th century interpretations of the **Classical** tradition, in Sweden especially represented by the architecture and design of Nicodemus Tessin the Younger.

base Any support of a statue or the shaft of a **column**.

basilica A large rectangular building. Often built with **clerestory**, **side aisles** separated from the centre **nave** by **colonnades**, and an **apse** at one or both ends.

buttress An architectural support, usually consisting of massive masonry built against an exterior wall to brace the wall and counter the thrust of the **vaults**. Transfers the weight of the vault to the ground. **Flying buttresses**: An **arch** built on the exterior of a building that transfers the thrust of the roof vaults at important stress points through the wall to a detached buttress **pier** leading to the wall buttress.

canon Established rules or standards.

capital The sculptured block that tops a **column**. Include different decoration according to the conventions of the **order**.

cathedral The principal Christian church in a **diocese** (se **archdiocese**), built in the bishop's administrative centre and housing his throne (cathedra).

central plan building Any structure designed with a primary central space surrounded by symmetrical areas on each side. For example **Greek cross plan** (equal armed cross).

chancel The part of a Christian church near the **altar**, reserved for the clergy and choir, and typically separated from the **nave** by steps or a screen.

chinoiserie European architecture and design influenced by Chinese or East Asian models, usually objects produced for export to Europe. Chinoiserie was popular from the later part of the 17th century to the early 19th, and can thus be found in **Baroque**, **Rococo** and **Neo-Classical** versions.

cherub (cherubim) The second-highest order of angels. Popularly, an idealized small child, usually depicted naked and with wings.

choir The section of a Christian church reserved for the clergy and the choir (singers), either between the **crossing** and the **apse** or in the **nave** just before the crossing, screened or walled and fitted with stalls (seats).

Classical A term referring to the art and architecture of ancient Greece between c. 480–323 BCE. **Classical, classicism**: Also: any aspect of later art or architecture reminiscent of the rules and the examples of the ancient Greece and Rome.

clerestory The topmost zone of a wall with windows in a **basilica** extending above the aisle roofs. Provides direct light into the central interior space, the **nave**.

collage A technique in which paper forms are cut out (often painted or printed) and/or found materials, are pasted onto another surface. Also an image created using this technique.

colonialism The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. Modern colonialism began about 1500, following the European discoveries of a sea route around Africa's southern coast and of America. With these events sea power shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and to the emerging nation-states of Portugal, Spain, the Dutch republic, France, and England. By discovery, conquest, and settlement, these nations expanded and colonized throughout the world, spreading European institutions and culture.

colonnade A row of columns, supporting a straight **entablature** or a series of **arches** (as an **arcade**).

colonette A miniature **column.**

column An architectural element used for support and/or decoration. Consists of a rounded vertical shaft, and equipped with a **capital** and a **base**. **Engaged column**: column, partly incorporated into the wall.

Concretism A term used in Sweden for a non-figurative and pure geometric art. It had its breakthrough in the late 1940s and gained a special impact during the 1950s in Sweden with the Concretists (Konkretisterna) and their public art. It follows ideas from the international constructive art movement Art Concret in the 1930s.

Corinthian order See **order**.

cornice The uppermost section of a **Classical entablature.** More generally, a horizontally projecting element found at the top of a building wall.

crossing The juncture of the **nave** and the **transept** in a church, often marked on the exterior by a tower.

Cubism Art movement in early 20th century based on a new approach to representing reality foremost developed by the artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. They brought different views of subjects together in the same picture, resulting in paintings that appear fragmented and abstract.

Dadaism Art movement in early 20th century. Dada artists rejected the logic, reason, and aestheticism of modern capitalist society, instead expressing nonsense, irrationality, and anti-bourgeois protest in their works. The art of the movement spanned visual, literary and sound media, including many forms of expressions.

diet During the Age of Liberty, the Swedish parliament, consisting of the four estates, assembled at irregular intervals, usually with a few years in between. These assemblies, which could last for several months or even as long as a year, were called Diets (*Riksdag*).

diptych Two panels of equal size, usually decorated with paintings or **relief**, and hinged together.

Doric order See **order**.

en plein air A French term meaning 'in the open air' describing the practice painting outdoor so artists could have direct access to the fleeting effect of light and atmosphere while working.

entablature The upper part of a classical building supported by **columns** or a **colonnade**, comprising the **architrave**, **frieze**, and **cornice**.

eurcharist The holy communion, a focal point in the service of mass, in which, according to the Catholic Church, the bread and wine are transubstantiated into the body of Christ. The eucharist is a sacrament.

Expressionism Art movement in early 20th century, initially in poetry and painting. Expressionist artists typically present the world from a subjective perspective, distorting it radically for emotional effects in order to express the meaning of emotional experiences rather than physical reality.

flying buttress See **buttress**.

fresco A painting technique in which water-based pigments are applied to a surface of wet plaster. **Al secco** is created by painting on dried plaster.

frieze The middle element of an **entablature**, between the **architrave** and the **cornice**. Usually decorated with sculpture, painting or mouldings. Also: any continuous flat band with **relief** sculpture or painted decoration.

Futurism A cultural movement within visual art, literature, music and architecture founded by the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1909. It emphasized speed, technology, youth and violence, and modern technological innovations as the car and the aeroplane.

gable The triangular upper part of a wall at the end of a ridged roof.

Geaths Previous tribe that inhabited parts of present Sweden. In late 18th century and 19th century, the term could refer to pre-Chistian as well as medieval period.

genre painting A term used to loosely categorize paintings depicting scenes of everyday life, including (among others) domestic interiors, parties, inn scenes, and street scenes.

Gothic A style of medieval art that developed in Northern France out of **Romanesque** art in the 12th century. It spread to all of Western Europe, and much of Southern and Central Europe. It was introduced comparatively late in Sweden (13th century) through the monastic movement and through the cathedral projects of Uppsala and Linköping. Gothic architecture is most familiar as the architecture of many of the great cathedrals, abbeys and churches of Europe. Its characteristics include the pointed **arch**, the **ribbed vault** (see vault) and the **flying buttress**.

Greek cross plan See **central plan building**.

guilds An association of craftspeople. The medieval guild had great economic power, as it controlled the selling and marketing of its member's products, and it provided economic protection, political solidarity, and training in the craft to its members.

grotesque Fanciful decoration similar to but distinct from arabesque (intricate surface decoration of plant forms, spirals, knots etc.) in that it includes human figures, animals and architectural elements.

halo A circle that surrounds and frames the heads of emperors and Christian saints to signify power and/or sanctity.

history painting The term history painting was introduced in the seventeenth century to describe paintings with subject matter drawn from classical history, mythology and the Bible – in the eighteenth century it was also used to refer to more recent historical subjects. History paintings often convey a high moral or intellectual idea. Although the genre has a long tradition it is most commonly associated with the emotionally and nationally characterised painting practiced at the academies of art during the 19th century.

hôtel particulier A townhouse of a grand sort. Whereas an ordinary *maison* (house) was built as part of a row, sharing walls with the houses on either side and directly fronting on a street, an *hôtel particulier* was often freestanding.

Hottentot Used to refer to Khoekhoe people (also spelled Khoikhoi and meaning 'men of men'). Hottentot is the pejorative term, fashioned by the Dutch (later Afrikaner) settlers, for any member of a people of southern Africa whom the first European explorers found in areas of the hinterland and who now generally live either in European settlements or on official reserves in South Africa or Namibia.

iconoclasm Destruction of images, often for religious reasons.

iconography The study of the significance and interpretation of the subject matter of art.

in situ An object still in the original place or studies in front of the original.

Impressionism A 19th century art movement originated with a group of Paris-based artists in opposition to the academic art tradition in the 1860s on wards. Impressionist art is characterised by an emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities, ordinary subjects, inclusion of movement as a crucial element of human perception, and unusual visual angels.

Installation Art A term coined in the 1960s and 1970s to refer to works created for a specific site and arranged (usually temporarily) to create a total environment.

intarsia Technique of inlay decoration using variously coloured woods.

Ionic order See **order**.

juste milieu-painting — A French term meaning 'middle way' or 'happy medium' that has been used to describe artistic forms that try to find a middle ground between the traditional and the modern.

kunstkammer — A German term literally meaning 'Art chamber'. An early form of museum in which strange or rare objects were exhibited.

landscape park/garden — A style of garden or landscape design developed in opposition to the formal Baroque gardens, usually intended to represent an idealized form of natural landscape, with informal planting, meadows, meandering water, and small buildings, bridges etc. in a variety of styles.

majestas domini — 'Christ in Majesty' or 'Christ in Glory'. The Christian image of Christ seated on a throne as ruler of the world, always seen frontally in the centre of the composition, and often flanked by other sacred figures, whose membership changes over time and according to the context.

mandorla — A upright almond-shaped **halo** encompassing the whole body.

Mannerist — A sophisticated, elegant style characterized by elongated forms, irrational spatial relationships, unusual colours and lightning effects, and exquisite crafts. These traits are associated with the style called Mannerism of the sixteenth century.

Naïve Art — Art created by a person who lacks the formal education and training of a professional artist. Naïve Art is characterised by childlike simplicity of execution and vision. Often extremely detailed, and there is a tendency toward the use of brilliant, saturated colours rather than subtle mixtures and tones, and also often absence of perspective. When the aesthetic is emulated by a trained artist, the result is sometimes called **Primitivism**.

narthex — The vestibule or entrance porch of a church.

National Romanticism — A intellectual and aesthetic movement during late 19th and early 20th century. In Scandinavia and the Slavic parts of Europe especially, national romanticism provided a series of answers to the 19th century search for nationalist styles that would be culturally meaningful and evocative, yet not merely historicist.

nave The central **aisle** of a **basilica**, two or three stories high and flanked by aisles, and defined by the nave **arcade** or nave **colonnade**.

Neo-Classicism A renewed inspiration from **Classical** models, occurring in many forms throughout Europe from the middle of the 18th century and into the early 19th, inspired by new archaeological finds, art theoretical writings, and an art criticism often directed against the **Rococo**.

Neo-Dadaism Art movement flourishing in the late 1950s and 1960s that had similarities in method or intent with earlier **Dada** artwork. Neo-Dada artists often used the industrial societies mass produced modern materials and popular imagery.

New Objectivity A art movement (in German: *Neue Sachlichkeit*; in Swedish: *Nysaklighet*) emerging in Germany in the 1920s as a reaction against **Expressionism**. Characterised by detailed and highly realistic, as well as satirical and sometimes grotesque depictions, giving the impression of unreality.

order In **Classical** architecture an order consists of a **column** with **base** (usually), shaft, **capital** and **entablature** decorated and proportioned according to one of the six accepter models (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan, Roman Doric and Composite).

Orientalism In its most general sense, orientalism can be defined as the academic discipline that studies the language and culture of the 'Orient', usually understood as meaning the Islamic countries of the Near and Middle East. This scholarly discipline goes back to the 18th century and has inspired broader intellectual and artistic circles in Europe and North America, and so Orientalism may also denote the general enthusiasm for things Asian or 'Oriental'. More recently, mainly through the work of the Palestinian American scholar Edward W. Said, the term has been used disparagingly to refer to the allegedly simplistic, stereotyped and demeaning conceptions of Arab and Asian cultures generally held by Western scholars.

orientalist painting A term referring to the depiction of people or places in present-day Greece, Turkey, North Africa or the Middle East, by painters from the West. Although this form of **Orientalism** has its roots in **Renaissance** art, it gained widespread popularity both with art collectors and art critics in the early 19th century due to the mood of **Romanticism** then prevalent. The catalyst for this Orientalism was Napoleon's unsuccessful invasion of Egypt in 1798–1801, which stimulated great public interest in the area and its culture. As a result a number of painters (mostly French) took to visiting North Africa, the Levant and the Middle East, where they produced a variety of genre painting and studies of everyday life.

parish A congregation; the people and the area belonging to a particular church.

pediment A triangular **gable** found over major architectural elements such as **Classical** Greek porticos, windows, or doors. Formed by an **entablature** and the ends of a sloping roof or a raking **cornice**.

Performance Art An artwork based on a live, sometimes theatrical performance by the artist.

pier A solid masonry support, as distinct from a column often square or rectangular in plane.

pietà An image of the Virgin with the dead Christ in her lap.

pilaster A shallow **pier** with a **capital** and usually a **base** projecting only slightly from a wall; in **Classical** architecture conforming to one of the **orders**.

pillar A free-standing upright architectural structure, distinct from a **column** in that it need neither be cylindrical nor conform with any of the **orders**.

polyptych A painting or **relief**, usually an **altarpiece** on more than three panels, see **diptych** and **triptych**.

Pompeian Here, a later phase of **Neo-Classical** decorative style, inspired by the wall paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum, but also by, for example, Greek vase painting and Renaissance decorative art.

Pop Art An art movement that emerged in Britain and the United Sattes during the mid- to late- 1950s. Pop Art is characterised by its use of popular and mass culture, such as advertising, comic books and mundane cultural objects. The movement challenged the idea of a separation between fine art and popular culture.

Post-Cubism A collective term of different art movements that developed from Cubism with orientations toward geometric abstraction and non-figuration. Post-Cubic art focused on the construction of form and colour as artistic problems rather than representational matters. It played a major role in the social dimension of avant-garde visual arts, architecture and design in the 1920s and the following decades.

Primitivism Art movement that borrows visual form from non-Western, prehistoric peoples or working in the style of **Naïve Art**.

public art (Swe. offentlig konst): artworks designed for places where the public have regular access. It can refer to monumental art, art in offices and in churches, murals, sculpture, graffiti and street art, perhaps even billboards. Public art can be temporary and permanent and made in any medium. Though the term is a 20th century invention used by administrators to describe municipal and state government cultural policy programs, it also refers back to historical times.

pulpit An elevated stand surrounded by a parapet for a preacher or reader in a Christian place of worship, designed as an independent element often richly carved.

putto (putti) Italian for a male child, especially one shown naked in Renaissance and later art.

recess A blind window or blind door.

reformation The detachment from the Catholic church, mainly in northern Europe in the early 16th century, starting off as a radical reform movement within the organisation, and then severed from it. As a result, the Protestant churches then formed are completely separate and subject to the secular rulers of the respective territories and countries, as opposed to the Catholic church which is led by the pope, who is not subject to secular rulers. The different reformers of the early 16th century, primarily Martin Luther and Jean Calvin, though agreeing on the Bible as the sole authority in Christendom and believing in the individual's right to read and interpret the Bible and turn directly to God, take different stands in many issues, and the consequences to the visual culture of the areas where the respective reformers have their main influence, vary a great deal. The Calvinist reformation in Holland takes a strongly iconoclastic direction, whereas the Lutheran reformation in Scandinavia does less so – however, the images are treated solely as a pedagogic instrument by the Lutheran church.

relief A sculpted image or design whose flat background surface is carved away to a certain depth, setting off the figures. Called high or low relief depending upon the extent of projection of the image from the background.

Renaissance A period in European history, from the 14th to the 17th century, regarded as the cultural bridge between the Middle Ages and modern history. It started as an intellectual and cultural movement in Italy in the late medieval period and later spread to the rest of Europe, marking the beginning of the Modern Age. In Sweden, the Renaissance is closely associated with when the House of Vasa was ruling Sweden. As a style renaissance place emphasis on symmetry, proportion and geometry and in architecture the regularity of parts is important as they are demonstrated in the architecture of **Classical** antiquity and in particular ancient Roman architecture.

Rococo — As a decorative style, rococo makes use of sinuous, asymmetrically arranged elements, often stylized natural forms such as waves, rocks or plant stems, to which more naturalistic details – flowers, shells, animals – are frequently added. In painting, informal, emotional or sensual subjects were favoured. For the monumental art influenced by this style, the German term *Spätbarock* (late baroque) is more apt, since it underlines the strong links with the previous period in terms of style, scale and function.

Romanesque — An early medieval style that emphasises the influence of **Classical** Roman architecture. It developed in Western Europe during the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, and reached Scandinavia in the second half of the 11th century. Romanesque architecture is preserved mainly in the form of churches characterised by round **arches**, small windows, and heavy, compact walls. It was followed by the **Gothic** style.

Romanticism — A movement in the arts and literature that originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual. Romanticism can be seen as a rejection of the perception of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality that typified **Classicism** in general and late 18th century **Neo-Classicism** in particular.

rostrum (rostra) — A warship's ram in ancient Rome, developed into a classical decorative motif, and usually referring to naval victories.

sanctuary — A sacred or holy enclosure used for worship. In ancient Greece or Rome, consists of one or more temples and an **altar**. In Christian architecture, the space around the altar in a church called the **chancel** or the presbytery.

stave church — A medieval Scandinavian wooden church constructed by wooden posts and beams, in a type of timber framing construction with huge timbers (staves) at its core.

still life — A type of painting that has as its subject inanimate objects (such as food, dishes, fruit, or flowers).

stucco — Various types of plaster used as protective and decorative covering for walls. A mixture of lime, sand, and other ingredients into a material that can be easily molded or modelled.

stucco lustro A plaster and painting technique where the paint is immediately ironed when still wet to make a shiny, glossy surface. The technique dates from Roman times, mainly used to create paintings directly on a wall surface.

studiolo A small room set aside as a place for study and contemplation that emerged in 15th century Italy. Often lavishly decorated and painted.

Surrealism A art movement within visual art and literature that began in the early 1920s in France. Surrealist paintings are characterised by its unnerving, illogical scenes painted with photographic precision, but it also developed painting techniques that allowed the unconscious to express itself. Surrealism developed out of the **Dada** activities during the World War I and from the 1920s onward, the movement spread around the globe, effecting all kinds of cultural expressions.

Symbolism Late 19th century art movement. Symbolism can be seen as a revival of some mystical tendencies within **Romanticism**. Symbolist painters used mythological and dream imagery with often very personal, private, obscure and ambiguous references.

Synthetism Term used by post-Impressionist artists as Paul Gaugain and Émile Bernard in the 1880s and 1890s to distinguish their work from **Impressionism**. Their art is characterised by the use of flat monochrome colour fields and black contour lines.

The Agony in the Garden The Agony in the Garden refers to the event in the life of Jesus after the Last Supper. Jesus prayed to God, at first asking to be spared the suffering to come, but then accepting His destiny: 'Not my will, but yours be done'. In the Bible, it is described in Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22: 39-46, and Mark 14: 32-42.

total work of art A work of art that creates a total experience and with the intention to revive cultural values. It makes use of two or more different forms of media. The term derives from the German word *Gesamtkunstwerk* that has come to be accepted in English as a term in aesthetics.

transept The arms of a cross-shaped church perpendicular to the **nave**. The point where the nave and transept cross is called the **crossing**.

triptych A painting made on three panels. The panels may be hinged together so the segments (wings) fold over the central panel.

trompe-l'oeil An illusionistic painting intended to 'deceive the eye'.

vault An **arched** masonry structure that spans an interior space. The simplest form is the *barrel* or *tunnel vault* of continuous semi-circular or pointed sections. The intersection of two tunnel vaults creates a *groin* or *cross vault*. A *ribbed vault* has a framework of arched diagonal ribs between which the cells are filled with lighter stone. Ribs may function to reinforce the groins or may be purely decorative.

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