



How an Artisan became an Artist – an Overview of the Early Stages of Finnish Art Education

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*'It is childish to long for native art; Finland can never be a land for artists.'
– It was not long ago when this sentiment was commonly heard; in this way many speak
even today, but their number is becoming smaller and smaller.¹*

This article focuses on early art education in Finland from the 1840s to the end of the 1860s. During this time the backbone of art education was created in The Grand Duchy of Finland. Before the 1840s there was no institution in the country focusing primarily on educating artists. The distinction between the artist profession and craftsmanship emerged during this time and was connected to the development of the schooling system for artists. The artist's new identity was accompanied by the founding of art academies.

An important step in Finland creating its own generation of artists was the foundation of the Finnish Art Society in 1846. Another important contributor was the Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki in the mid-19th century. The most essential source material for this article has been the Finnish Art Society's minutes with appendices from the years 1846–69. These minutes include, for example, information about acquisitions of works of art, exhibitions and letters sent to the board by artists.² Circumstances in Finland were challenging during the mid-19th century. During this 20-year period Finland endured the Crimean War, from 1853 to 1856, a cholera epidemic and the Famine of 1866–68. Despite all of these difficulties there were hopes of improving the education system for artists.

From the 1840s to the end of the 1860s there were three important art teachers in Finland – Magnus von Wright (1805–69), Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm (1799–1881) and Robert Wilhelm Ekman (1808–73). In these teachers' lifetimes the professional identity of the artist changed radically. They also represent three institutions, which gave guidance in drawing: Magnus von Wright was the drawing teacher in the Imperial Alexander University, Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm was teaching in the Finnish Art Society's Helsinki Drawing School

1 *Papperslyktan* 15 October 1860. My translation.

2 The oldest part of this material (years 1846–1901) is available in digitised form. It can be read from the website: <http://www.lahteilla.fi/styp/>.

and Robert Wilhelm Ekman was the teacher at Turku Drawing School. From 1849 the school in Turku was run by the Finnish Art Society.

In this article I analyse how art education evolved under these three teachers. I study the differences and similarities between the schools. In previous studies the significance of the University Drawing School has not been in the spotlight. I argue that the University Drawing School had strong connections to the Finnish Art Society and its working field. Moreover, I expand my point of view to include the university's role in artistic life in Finland in the mid-19th century. In the following chapter I show how the artist profession was dissociated from the craft-oriented approach to painting in the mid-19th century.

A new, strange profession

The selection process for this vocation changed in the 19th century due the abolition of the guild system in 1868 and also the gradual equalisation of social groups.³ Up until then, drawing was considered suitable only for the nobility as a hobby and it was rare to see someone from that class as a professional artist, making their living through the profession.⁴ In the 19th century this changed – even children of the nobility began to gravitate towards the profession. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century another significant progression took place. Prior to that it was usual for artists to earn extra income from 'artisan painting'. This was natural, because in Finland there were not many work opportunities. The techniques were also similar.⁵ In the 19th century artists started to earn extra income by teaching. Moreover, both professions, professional artists and artisans, also started to dissociate from each other.⁶

This social development can be traced in the institutions of art education. The drawing teachers Godenhjelm, von Wright and Ekman are also good examples of this development. They all belonged to the nobility, but they were not wealthy enough to be without any profession. During their lifetime it became possible to be an art teacher. But it can also be seen from their careers that it was still work in process. Not until the end of the 19th century did the status of an artist become more specific. Before this, it was more advantageous if one's status was not solely that of an artist, but that one also had a title or belonged to the nobility.⁷ Godenhjelm first educated himself as a lawyer. Only after that did he fully commit himself to becoming an artist. Neither Ekman nor von Wright went to university due to economic or family reasons. Von Wright worked as a cartographer for the land survey office, and then from 1845 to 1849, he was a taxidermist at the university's Zoological Museum. Ekman was an orphan and did not have the resources to go to university. For these three artists it was natural to earn a living by teaching. This was a situation that was hard to imagine only few decades earlier.

The Finnish Art Society's drawing schools in Helsinki and in Turku, along with the University Drawing School in Helsinki, reflect this development as well. The University school's teacher already had an exceptional status from the end of the 17th century. Under the University's protection he could work without the guild's authority and did not have to be a guild member. The Drawing School in Turku symbolises the changing circumstances in Finland in the 19th century as well. The school was created within the guild system. Then it took on a new teacher, Robert Wilhelm Ekman, who was a member of Stockholm's Royal Art Academy. After this, the

3 *Ammattikuntia koskevat asiakirjat (Documents concerning Guilds).*

http://wiki.narc.fi/portti/index.php/Ammattikuntia_koskevat_asiakirjat (Accessed 29.11.2017).

4 This was not always the case e.g. in Finland. Margareta Capsia is a good example of nobility, who also made career as an artist.

5 Jukka Ervamaa. 'Käsityöläismaalareista von Wright -veljeksiin. Taitelijan urasta ja asemasta Suomessa 1700-luvulta 1800-luvun alkupuolelle.' In *Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia* 3. Ed. Aimo Reitala. Helsinki: Taidehistorian seura, 1977, 19.

6 Jukka Ervamaa. 'Käsityöläismaalareista von Wright -veljeksiin', 19, 25.

7 Jukka Ervamaa. 'Käsityöläismaalareista von Wright -veljeksiin', 7–53.



Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm,
At the Drawing Board,
undated,
pencil on paper,
35cm x 21.5cm
Finnish National Gallery /
Ateneum Art Museum
Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
Ainur Nasretdin

school was brought under the Finnish Art Society's control. Art societies were also a novelty in Europe in the 19th century.

It is important to note that when artisans' and artists' paths were separated their schooling system was also separated. In 1848 the Finnish Art Society founded a school with the aim of educating artists in Finland. Two years earlier, in 1846, the artist Johan Erik Lindh, together with Lars Källström, founded a school in Helsinki that focused on training artisans. So it can be noted that the history of art education not only reflects the development in economic life, but also much deeper changes in society and culture.⁸ A fundamental change was the foundation of the Finnish Art Society in 1846. Its conscious goal was to improve the education system so that the country could create its first generation of artists. The next chapter focuses on the Finnish Art Society's impact in this field. After this I present the two schools of the Society and the University Drawing School's backgrounds and working methods. When focusing on the Finnish Art Society's history, it is important to notice that, when it was founded, there was already one powerful institution in the country.

'Education's possibilities, education's honour and education's future'

When the Finnish Art Society was founded it was not alone in the 'Desert of Art'.⁹ Even before it there had been an institution

whose goal was to develop Finland's art life – the Imperial Alexander University. In 1828 its first statute prescribed that the University was founded 'to advance Science and Fine Arts development in Finland, along with educating its youth for service to the Emperor and the Fatherland'. The new statutes from the year 1852 repeated this directive.¹⁰ However, throughout the 19th century it was questionable as to what this statute actually meant: how big a role should the university take to further the development of art in Finland?

The university's first statute is also mentioned in the Finnish Art Society's Tenth Anniversary Annual Report. It shows that in the autumn of 1845 the circumstances were favourable for the Society's foundation. There had been a long period of peace in the country and material well-being had increased. There had also been positive cultural happenings: Finland's first public art exhibition was held at the University Drawing School in 1845. The nationalistic feelings there were strong:

In these favourable circumstances, which include education's possibilities, education's honour and education's future, expedite even the Art Society's first heart blood out of the Motherland. Thus an alliance between science and art appeared here, such as everywhere in the Fatherland. Man knows that the latter is known for being the legitimate daughter of the Fatherland already in the first Finnish university's statute, which contained and contains confirmation that the land's highest educational institution is founded to advance 'sciences and fine arts progress in Finland'.¹¹

8 Jukka Ervamaa. 'Käsityöläismaalareista von Wright -veljeksiin', 19.

9 The expression 'Desert of Art' (Konst Ödemarken) was often used to describe the art scene in Finland in the 19th century.

10 *Yliopiston statuutit* (The statutes of the University of Helsinki) from the webpage: <http://www.helsinki.fi/yliopistonhistoria/nostot/statuutit.htm> (Accessed 15.10.2017).

11 The Tenth Anniversary Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1856. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, Finnish National Gallery (FNG).

In this patriotic atmosphere men gathered at the university for the first meeting of the Finnish Art Society on 10 March 1846. The Imperial Alexander University was a very significant framework for the Society. Besides the university, the committee members of the Society had connections to Finland's cultural, political and economic life.¹²

The newly founded Society had a lot to do. It differed from similar societies in Europe. In other countries there already existed other art institutions, art collections and art academies. The art societies' field of operation was thus much smaller than in Finland. Elsewhere they merely organised raffles and exhibitions, because the collections and institutions required for art education were already in place.¹³ In Finland the mission of the Society was to develop a popular knowledge of art and to use the funds from membership fees to create a framework for the study of the basics of art. Besides this the Society organised art lotteries, exhibitions and later the Society's mission was also to create an art collection of its own.¹⁴

As the Finnish Art Society engaged in a wide field of activities, power devolved into its hands. Its committee was crammed with top experts from the state administration and economy, with the university's presence especially evident: indeed most of the committee members had some link to the university. It was also very typical for one person to have several positions, making them very influential.¹⁵ Finnish art life was not bound to structures but was shaped by influential characters. Because of this, it is easy to explore the art education field in Finland through its teachers. For example, from the 1840s to the end of the 1860s Godenhjelm and Ekman spent almost their entire careers as the only teachers in their schools and Magnus von Wright was the University Drawing School's only teacher for 20 years. After the Art Society's foundation everything changed in the Finnish art scene. The members of the Society became the important actors in the field. They had the chance to rule Finnish art life, and their first concrete actions were to establish a drawing school in Helsinki and bring the drawing school in Turku under the Society's control.¹⁶

The University Drawing School

Professors and officers at the university not only supported the Finnish Art Society, but there was also a possibility to learn drawing at the university. The Drawing School of the university was not like any other drawing school. The institution of the drawing master dated back to the 17th century, when, in addition to the traditional educational ideals of the sciences, the nobility and civil servants in the Estates-General needed to acquire new skills in such areas as modern languages, drawing, dancing, music, theatre, fencing and horsemanship. Training in these skills was offered by specialist tutors. The universities granted them teaching privileges, but they usually earned their keep from fees paid by their students.¹⁷ In the mid-17th century these new subjects were also introduced in the Swedish universities in Uppsala, Lund and

12 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin. Fredrik Cygnaeus, Carl Gustaf Estlander ja taidekokoelman roolit*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, Valtion taidemuseo, 2008, 74.

13 Susanna Pettersson, *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 80.

14 *Suomen Taideyhdistys – otteita historiasta*. <http://suomentaideyhdistys.fi/en/info/lisaa-historiasta/> (Accessed 20.12.2018).

15 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 96–98; Johanna Rassi, 'Ei kansa elä vain leivästä.' *Suomen Taideyhdistys ja kuvataiteen kannattajakunnan muotoutuminen Helsingissä 1846–1865*. Pro gradu -tutkielma. Suomen ja Pohjoismaiden historian oppiaine, Helsingin yliopisto, 2010, 100–102.

16 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 61, 80.

17 Jussi Nuorteva. 'Practice masters' as representatives of internationalism at the Turku Academy.' <http://375humanistia.helsinki.fi/en/jussi-nuorteva/practice-masters-as-representatives-of-internationalism-at-the-turku-academy> (Accessed 12.10.2017).

Turku.¹⁸ The history of teaching drawing at Turku's university, which was called The Royal Academy of Turku, began in 1708, under the drawing master Johan Oppenort.¹⁹ Over the years the ideas behind the institution of the drawing master changed. For example, in the early 19th century the officers of the university were worried about the behaviour of the students and their morality. They were afraid that the students would start a rebellion against Russia and thought that activities like drawing would distract them from getting into trouble. Besides learning languages, other sophisticated hobbies were considered to encourage a sense of morality.²⁰

In 1828 The Royal Academy of Turku moved to Helsinki, now the new capital of The Grand Duchy of Finland, and was renamed the Imperial Alexander University. In 1830 art teaching also started in the University Drawing School, when Pehr Adolf Kruskopf came from St Petersburg to take up the teaching post.²¹ Adolf von Becker, who wrote the history of the University Drawing School, gives a very positive impression of Kruskopf's teaching methods. According to him Kruskopf did everything to make drawing lessons as modern as possible. Though resources were scarce, he arranged drawing courses, model sheets and lithographs according to the methods of the Art Academy of Paris. In addition, he acquired nine plaster casts for students to draw from.²²

Finland's first art exhibition was the most significant event in Kruskopf's teaching career. The exhibition was held at the University Drawing School and can be seen as a sign of the success of the efforts to civilise – and control – the students. The idea of forming a sculpture collection came from Nils A. Gylden, who was an assistant of classical philology at the university. However, it was decided that there were not enough funds for the project. Gylden presented his idea to the students, who raised the necessary funds for the purchase of sculpture reproductions of the *Apollo of the Belvedere*, *Diana of Versailles* and *Laocoön*. When the sculptures arrived in Finland, the first art exhibition of the country was organised. In addition to the sculptures, there were paintings which were brought by a Belgian merchant. Besides these works there were 20 sculpture reproductions from the Drawing School.²³

Kruskopf retired in the spring of 1849 and the post of the drawing teacher was declared open.²⁴ Magnus von Wright and Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm, the teacher at the Society's Helsinki Drawing School, applied for the post.²⁵ The application process offers an interesting perspective about the differences and similarities between these two art teachers. The chemistry professor Adolf Edvard Arppe and professor of anatomy and physiology Evert Julius Bonsdorff from the university's consistory gave the most thorough statements. From Bonsdorff's extensive analysis one can see the growing interest in art in Finland in the 1840s. For him a good artist was able to express higher and original ideas. This was possible only

18 Kaarina Pöykkö. *Ars universitaria 1640–1990*. In *Teoksia Helsingin yliopiston piirustussalista*. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 1990, 7; *Exercitiemästare*. Nationalencyklopedin. <http://www.ne.se/exercitiemästare>. (Accessed 12.12.2017.)

19 A special engraver Daniel Medelplan was recruited in 1678 to illustrate publications of the Academy. He did not give lessons in drawing. Before him there were also few students who made illustrations for the Academy.

20 Matti Klinge. *Ylioppilaskunnan historia*. Helsinki: WSOY, 1978, 56–57.

21 Kruskopf got the position though he became second in the application process after Fredrik Joakim Ekman. Like Godenhjelm, the reason was probably Kruskopf's good relationship with Russia. He had studied and lived there for several years. In addition, he was from Old Finland, which had been part of Russia already from 18th century. For further information Hannele Savolainen, 'Pehr Adolf Kruskopf.' <http://www.kansallisbiografia.fi/kb/artikkeli/3418/> (Accessed 10.10.2017).

22 Adolf von Becker. 'Ett Bidrag till universitetes ritsals historia.' *Hufvudstadsbladet* 4 May 1893; Pöykkö. *Ars universitaria 1640–1990*, 69. The minutes of the university's consistory also reveal an image of an enthusiastic and motivated teacher: new acquisitions were made regularly every two or three years.

23 *Helsingfors Tidningar* no 84 25 October 1845. For further information Matti Klinge. 'Teoreettisen kuvataideharrastuksen alkuvaiheista Suomessa.' *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 2/1962.

24 The Minutes of the Consistory 14 March 1849 § 8, 11 November 1847 § 14. The Central Archives of the University of Helsinki.

25 The Minutes of the Consistory 28 April 1849 § 6. The Central Archives of the University of Helsinki.



Erik Johan Löfgren,
*Portrait of the Painter
Magnus von Wright, 1867*,
oil on canvas,
65cm x 53.5cm
Finnish National Gallery /
Ateneum Art Museum
Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
Henri Tuomi



if the artist possessed technical skills. Technical abilities were demonstrated by harmonic compositions, successful use of colours, and ability in figure drawing.²⁶

Arppe and Bonsdorff felt that there were several reasons to appoint von Wright. His work was more diverse; he mastered anatomical drawing and scientific illustrations; he knew how to make portraits, animal paintings, landscapes as well as various nature objects. Godenhjelm had experience of making altar paintings and portraits and he was a good figure drawer, but so was von Wright. In addition, he was adept in several different art techniques, including lithography which was considered essential. Arppe saw that recruiting von Wright would be a good thing for the university. In addition, he had already been deputy to the drawing master for some years.²⁷

It is not surprising that Arppe and Bonsdorff saw von Wright as suitable for the task. Von Wright had good relations with the university. He had been the conservator and supervisor of its zoological collections since 1845. In addition, in the 1840s, Bonsdorff published a series of comparative anatomy studies in the *Acta* series of the Finnish Academy of Science and von Wright was the author of many of its drawings and lithographs.²⁸

Elina Sopo has pointed out in her research that von Wright also had good connections with St Petersburg.²⁹ He was a close friend of count Alexander Armfelt, who was the Minister-Secretary of State for Finland and also was a close friend of Otto Wilhelm Klinckowström, a civilian officer, member of the senate and the administrator of the Imperial Palace. Von Wright, Armfelt and Klinckowström all influenced the Finnish Art Society.³⁰ Von Wright even had connections to the Imperial family.

Godenhjelm did not receive a post as a drawing master, but he served as a substitute teacher on several occasions when von Wright was away in 1854 and 1855–56.³¹ Moreover, von Wright and Godenhjelm often worked together within the Art Society. They designed and executed its exhibition displays and handled issues related to the transportation of the Society's artworks.

The Finnish Art Society's Helsinki Drawing School

The Finnish Art Society quickly achieved its goal to create a framework for the study of the basics of art – although the beginning was humble. The Society's Helsinki Drawing School was founded in 1848 and its first teacher was Godenhjelm. Right from the beginning he was the only option for the teaching position, probably due to his good relations with Russia

26 The Minutes of the Consistory 28 April 1849 § 6. The Central Archives of the University of Helsinki.

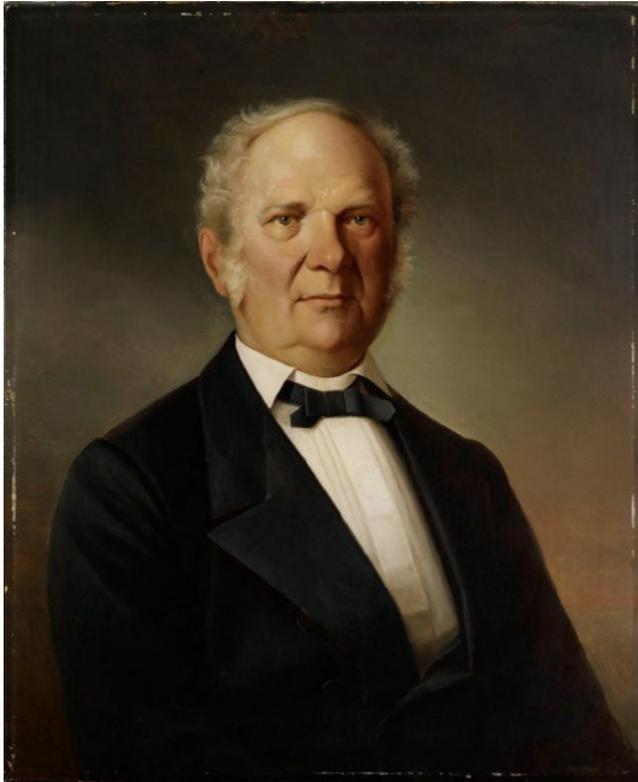
27 The Minutes of the Consistory 28 April 1849 § 6. The Central Archives of the University of Helsinki.

28 Juhani Lokki, Torsten Stjernberg & Anto Leikola. *Von Wright- veljesten linnut*. Helsinki: Otava 2003, 40.

29 Elina Sopo. 'Magnus von Wrightin sosiaalisista verkostoista 1840–1860-luvuilla: vuorovaikutuksen sisällön tarkastelua.' *Ennen ja nyt: Historian tietosanomat* 3/2015. http://www.ennenjanyt.net/2015/09/magnus-von-wrightin-sosiaalisista-verkostoista-1840-1860-luvuilla-vuorovaikutuksen-sisallon-tarkastelua/#footnote_58_2398 (Accessed 28.12.2017).

30 Elina Sopo. 'Magnus von Wrightin sosiaalisista verkostoista 1840–1860-luvuilla: vuorovaikutuksen sisällön tarkastelua'.

31 The Minutes of the Consistory 23 September 1854 § 5, 10 October 1855 § 4, 13 February 1856 § 5. The Central Archives of the University of Helsinki.



Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm, Self-Portrait, 1869, oil on canvas, 70.5cm x 57cm
Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Hannu Pakarinen

as the selection committee was keen not to threaten St Petersburg. There had been some warning experiences: in the 1840s the Finnish Literature Society had acquired a bad reputation because of the revolution in France in February 1848 and was seen as anti-Russian. Limitations were thus placed on the Society's working area.³²

The Finnish Art Society's chairman, Baron Carl Johan Walleen, had good connections even with the royal family in Russia.³³ Moreover, the Society's patron was Aleksandr Aleksandrovich, later Alexander III.³⁴ Godenhjelm had graduated from St Petersburg's Art Academy and his teacher had been the graphic artist Nikolai Utkin. His studies were funded from the petty cash of Emperor Nikolai I, and then he taught drawing for example in the school of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of St Katarina in St Petersburg.³⁵

The Helsinki Drawing School of the Finnish Art Society opened its doors on 13 November 1848 in the house of the upholsterer Jonas Litonius in Aleksanterinkatu.³⁶ In February 1849, 38 students had signed up, 24 men and 14 women.³⁷ Among these students were the teacher Victoria Åberg, Werner Holmberg and Adolf von Becker. Their studies enabled them to become professional artists.³⁸ In the list of the students there were three noblewomen. The other women students were able to attend because of the status of their fathers. From the enrolment list it can also be noticed that the school's first

target group had previous connections to the Art Society. For example, many of the students were the Society members' children.³⁹ Johanna Rassi has come to the conclusion that it was desirable that the school should start its lessons with sufficient student groups, but it was not self-evident that enough students could be found. Because it was hard to find suitable children, the classroom was filled with children who were already known and the Art Society's members saw art lessons as an enlightened hobby for their offspring. At the same time, this showed their commitment to the Society.⁴⁰

32 For further information: Susanna Pettersson, *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 77; Maritta Mellais. 'Carl Johan Walleen.' (2012)

<http://www.lahteilla.fi/fi/person/carl-johan-walleen> (Accessed 11.12.2017).

33 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 77; Maritta Mellais 'Carl Johan Walleen.' <http://www.lahteilla.fi/fi/person/carl-johan-walleen> (Accessed 11.12.2017).

34 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 75.

35 Helena Hätönen. 'Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm.' (2012)

<http://www.lahteilla.fi/fi/person/berndt-abraham-godenhjelm> (Accessed 4.12.2017).

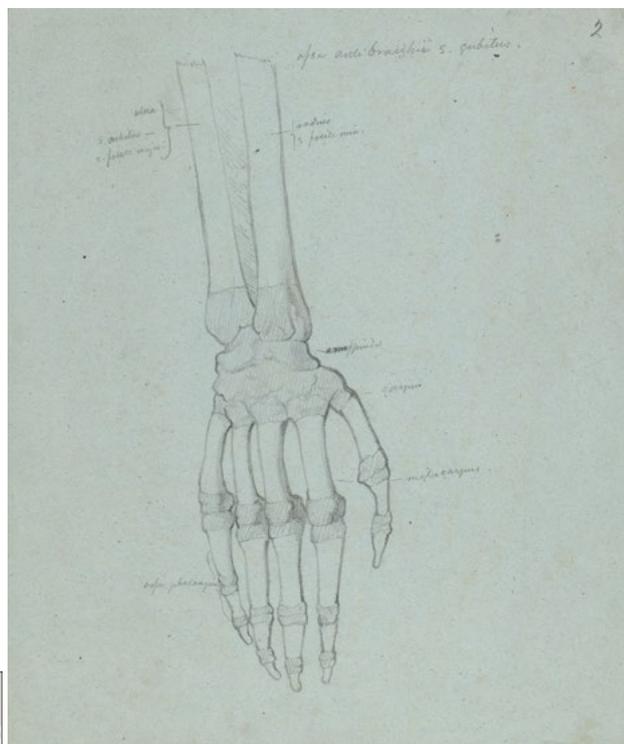
36 In the same year the school moved to Esplanadinkatu to the house of the dispatcher Wekström.

37 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1849. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

38 The enrolment list of students at the Finnish Art Society Drawing School in Helsinki, 17 February 1849. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG, <http://www.lahteilla.fi/fi/page/suomen-taideyhdistys-suomen-taideyhdistyksen-piirustuskoulu-helsingissa> (Accessed 11.11.2017).

39 Johanna Rassi. 'Ei kansa elä vain leivästä', 146; The enrolment list of students at the Finnish Art Society Drawing School in Helsinki, 17 February 1849. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

40 Johanna Rassi. 'Ei kansa elä vain leivästä', 146.



Robert Wilhelm Ekman,
*Study of the Right Hand of
a Skeleton, undated,*
33.5cm x 28cm

Finnish National Gallery /
Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
Lauri Asanti

Turku Drawing School and Robert Wilhelm Ekman

The Turku Drawing School was a pioneer. Founded in the same year as the University Drawing School – 1830 – Turku Drawing School was set up by master painter Carl Gustaf Söderstrand, who had studied at the Royal Art Academy in Stockholm. At the beginning the target group for the school was apprentice painters. Soon Söderstrand expanded the school's syllabus and started to consider also those who could pursue a career as a professional artist. In 1843 he founded an antique class and the school became divided into two classes. This was made possible as Söderstrand had purchased plaster cast reproductions from antique sculptures from St Petersburg and Stockholm. Before this the students had focused on copying lithographs and prints.⁴¹

In 1846 Robert Wilhelm Ekman became the headteacher and the school was renamed the Drawing School of the Antique. When the Finnish Art Society was founded the same year in Helsinki, the citizens of Turku abandoned their ideas of having their own Art Society. They suggested the Society could set up its own branch in Turku.⁴² In 1849 the Art Society had already decided also to bring Turku Drawing School under its control. It took three years for the Art Society's drawing school to be opened in the city because the change of ownership required many legal reforms. In

addition, the school had new rules in 1849. These reforms did not happen only because of the new owner. Ekman planned to change the school's syllabus, too.⁴³ In the meantime Ekman and Söderstrand continued teaching in the old Drawing school of the Antique for apprentice painters. Eventually in 1852 it was possible to start teaching the new syllabus.⁴⁴

Teaching realities in Helsinki and Turku

What were the teaching realities in The Grand Duchy of Finland when the three schools were in operation? They all operated on virtually the same level. They could only give elementary education. In the 1850s Turku Drawing School was still the most advanced, having two teachers – Ekman and Söderstrand – and two classes. For advanced students there was the antique class and for beginners the principal class. In the former students practised drawing from plaster cast reproductions of antique sculptures. In the latter students drew ornaments and copied model pictures. In all three schools the basis of the teaching was drawing. Only after a good knowledge was gained could a student start practising painting. In the Art Society's Annual Report from 1849 it is pointed out that the students could take the Society's artworks home to continue their studies there.⁴⁵

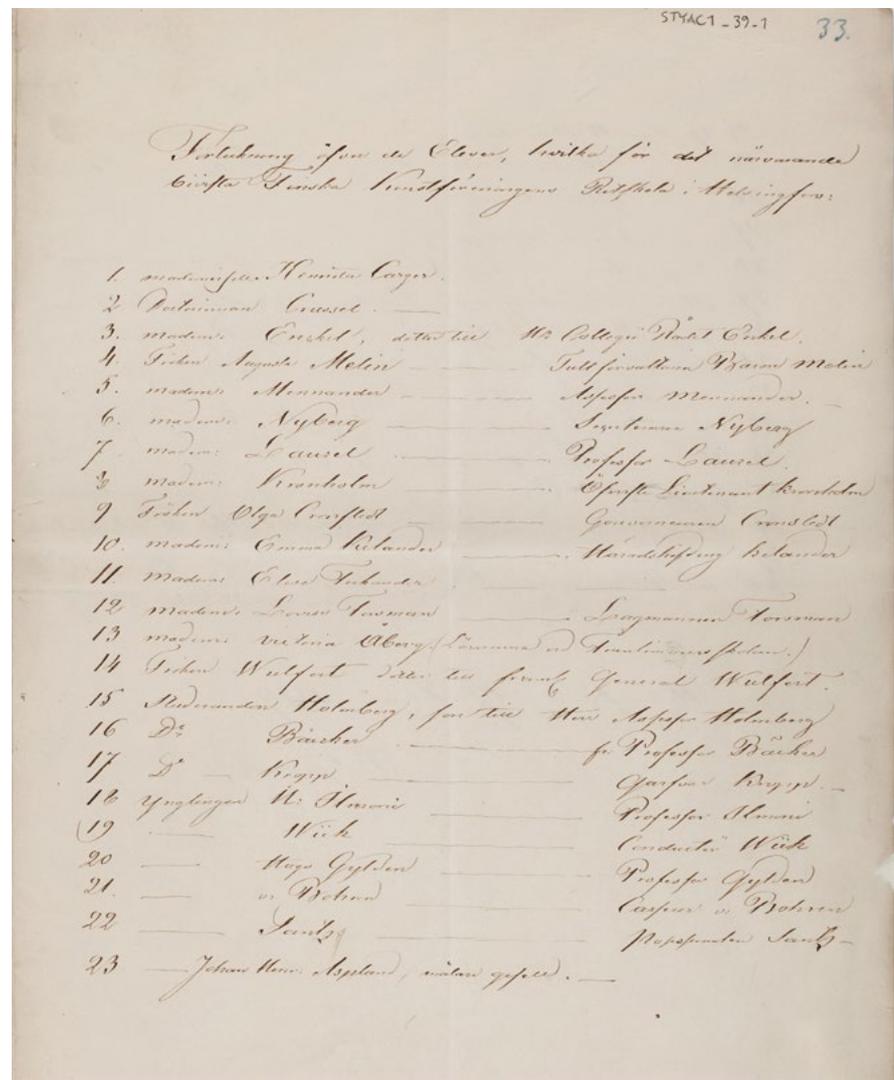
41 Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekouluun arkea ja unelmia. Turun Piirustuskoulu 1830–1981.* Turku: Turun maakuntamuseo – Turun Taidemuseo, 1996, 13, 25.

42 Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekouluun arkea ja unelmia*, 19.

43 The Plan for foundation and operations of the Drawing School in Turku, 1848 (Turun piirustuskoulun perustamis- ja toimintasuunnitelma vuodelta 1848.) <http://www.lahteilla.fi/fi/document/suomen-taideyhdistys-turun-piirustuskoulun-perustamis-ja-toimintasuunnitelma-vuodelta-1848>. (Accessed 27.11.2017.)

44 Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekouluun arkea ja unelmia*, 13, 20.

45 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1849. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.



The enrolment list of students at the Finnish Art Society Drawing School in Helsinki, 17 February 1849, page 1/2. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, Finnish National Gallery

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Ainur Nasretdin

Both the Helsinki Drawing School and the University Drawing School had to cope with only one teacher in the 1850s. Students painted or drew either model pictures or plaster casts. In Turku the school was open for four days a week: the principal class was held on Tuesday and Friday 10–12 and on Wednesday and Saturday 17–19. The Antique class was held also on Wednesday and Saturday 18–20.⁴⁶ The Helsinki Art Society's school gave teaching on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday 11–13. There was no teaching outside of term time. In 1848 Godenhjelm was employed for four hours a week for 8 months a year.⁴⁷ From 1849 the teaching duty was increased to 6 hours a week.⁴⁸ At the university there were only two hours of teaching in a week. It took place on Wednesday and Saturday 12–13. In this regard it has to be noted that an important addition to the school's working environment were the private lessons which were open for students outside the university. Unlike the public lessons for university students, these private lessons were not free of charge.

46 Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekoulun arkea ja unelmia*, 25.

47 The Minutes of the Finnish Art Society meeting 26 April 1848 §1. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

48 In the minutes of the Art Society in 1849 it is written that there will be teaching for 4 hours. In the newspapers in 1850 it is however informed that there will be 6 hours in a week. See for example *Morgonbladet* 15 January 1852; *Helsingfors Tidningar* 17 September 1853.

For Ekman the annual wage was 200 roubles while Godenhjelm's salary was 300 roubles. Another teacher in Turku, Söderstrand, did not receive any payment. The university's statutes from 1828 set their drawing master's wage at 316 roubles.⁴⁹ In the 1850s the fee for a Society member's child attending Helsinki Drawing School was 5 roubles in spring and 3 roubles in autumn. For non-members, the fee was 6 roubles in spring and 4 roubles in autumn.⁵⁰ In the new statutes of 1849 there is a vague reference to some of the classes in the Turku school being free and some being fee-paying.⁵¹

The number of students in the schools is also a good indicator of the working environment. In the 1850s Turku Drawing School had more students than the Helsinki schools. Usually there were 60–70 students in a semester. Both Helsinki and Turku Drawing Schools opened their classes for women and children. For example, in the spring semester of 1854 there were 64 students in the principal class of which 14 were female and in the antique class there were 10 students, of which 4 were female.⁵² In Helsinki Drawing School there were around 20–40 students each semester in 1850s. The Annual Reports of the Society do not specify the gender of the participants. However, we know that there were female students because in the 1850s many of them received stipends and awards. The Society also purchased their works. In the University Drawing School there were far fewer students, around 5–10 each semester, probably because they were open only to adult men. In Finland it was not possible for women to enrol at university in the 1850s or 1860s. The private teaching there was, however, open for women as well.

In the Art Society's schools female participation was desirable because it boosted class sizes and the Society wanted to have as many potential artists in its working environment as possible. Talent was the most important feature and secondary things were a student's sex or social background. It was also easy to take women in the Society's schools because the teaching was at an elementary level. Unlike the Academies in other European countries, there was no drawing from nude models and therefore no moral disagreements. These two factors helped women to take classes. The attitude in the Society was surprisingly open-minded towards female students and female teachers. For example the Annual Report of 1860 stated that the Society's former student Selma Schaeffer was going to take up a post in Viipuri secondary school as a teacher: 'The Society is happy, that this woman's talent has been taken into account despite old prejudices.'⁵³

A good indicator of the schools' working environment is whether they had permanent premises or not. Turku Drawing School had its own permanent location in Söderstrand's house in Piispankatu 8 since the end of the 1830s. Helsinki Drawing School had at least five different locations from the end of the 1840s to the end of the 1860s. For example, the school was operating for longer periods in Mikaelinkatu in Professor Bengt Olof Lille's house⁵⁴, in Palmqvist house in Pohjoisespländi⁵⁵ and in Margelinska house in Mariankatu.⁵⁶ Constant relocations were a burden for the schools. Furthermore, these premises were not designed for teaching art. The Art Society's exhibitions were often organised in the school's premises and that was also a distraction for the students.⁵⁷

49 Although all were not paid with cash but with other products like grain.
Författningar och beslut rörande Kejsarliga Alexanders universitet i Finland 1828, 205.

50 The Minutes of the Finnish Art Society meeting 18 January 1849 § 6.
The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.
If a family had several children in the school it was possible to have a discount.

51 Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekoulu arkea ja unelmia*, 25.

52 Finnish Art Society 'Till Direktion' (To the Board), 1854.
The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

53 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1863.
The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

54 *Morgonbladet* 15 January 1852; *Helsingfors Tidningar* 17 September 1853.

55 *Morgonbladet* 15 January 1852; *Helsingfors Tidningar* 17 September 1853.

56 *Helsingfors Tidningar* 2 September 1864, 5 September 1865.

57 See e.g. The minutes of the Finnish Art Society meeting 10 March 1851.
The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

The University Drawing School was situated in temporary locations in the early 1830s.⁵⁸ It found a permanent home in 1834 in one of the university's satellite buildings on Fabianinkatu. The building also housed gymnastic, fencing and dancing classes.⁵⁹ The Drawing School was in the other wing of this renewed building.⁶⁰ When the Helsinki Drawing School of the Art Society was founded in 1848, it literally started from nothing. It was forced to find a target group of students, its own premises and equipment for the teaching.

The idea of the unification of the two schools in Helsinki

It has already been mentioned that von Wright had good connections to the Imperial family in Russia. He met Alexander II for the first time when the tsar was travelling in Finland as an heir apparent in 1842. Alexander II made a short visit to the land surveying office, where von Wright was working at the time, where he declared he was satisfied with the drawing work for the maps.⁶¹ When Alexander II visited Helsinki again in 1851, von Wright was the teacher at the University Drawing School. On 14 March in 1851 von Wright wrote in his journal that the heir apparent also visited the school.⁶²

A couple of weeks later, *Morgonbladet* newspaper published an article entitled *The Finnish Art Society*. Three more followed in April, discussing the state of Finnish art and how art in Finland could be developed.

In the first article the author suggested a concrete solution to the problem of how to develop Finnish art: the unification of the Society's Helsinki Drawing School with the University Drawing School. The article pointed out that there were fine artworks in Finland; they were presented in the country's first art exhibition. These works were now in the University Drawing School. There were also many other plaster sculptures.⁶³ After this, the author goes to the heart of the matter:

*The university, or more accurately, its drawing school and the Finnish Art Society do the same thing for the advancement of art and its study within the country. It seems to us that it is not impossible that it could be so organised that neither of the party's interests and benefits would therefore suffer: on the contrary we believe that the benefits to both parties would be significantly increased.*⁶⁴

58 For example in the University's Natural History Museum's premises.

The Annual Reports of the University 1828–1852. The National Library of Finland.

59 The Annual Reports of the University 1828–1852. The National Library of Finland.

60 Rainer Knapas. 'Yliopiston rakennukset.' In *Helsingin yliopisto 1640–1990. 2. osa. Keisarillinen Aleksanterin yliopisto 1808–1917*. Matti Klinge (ed.). Helsinki: Otava, 1989, 270.

61 Wright, Magnus, von. *Dagbok 1841–1849*. In Anto Leikola, Juhani Lokki, Torsten Stjernberg och Johan Ulfvens (Utgiven av). *Konstnårsbröderna von Wrights dagböcker 3*. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1999, 74; Elina Sopo. 'Magnus von Wrightin sosiaalisista verkostoista 1840–1860-luvuilla: vuorovaikutuksen sisällön tarkastelua'.

62 Wright, Magnus, von. *Dagbok 1850–1862*. In Anto Leikola, Juhani Lokki, Torsten Stjernberg och Johan Ulfvens (Utgiven av). *Konstnårsbröderna von Wrights dagböcker 4*. (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2001), 73; Elina Sopo 'Magnus von Wrightin sosiaalisista verkostoista 1840–1860-luvuilla: vuorovaikutuksen sisällön tarkastelua'.

63 *Morgonbladet* 3 April 1851.

64 *Morgonbladet* 3 April 1851. My translation.

According to the author, the combination of schools would bring forth many fruitful things. It would create one big collection and thus better resources, in turn creating better teaching quality and interest in art studies. The author mentions that only a few students are participating in the teaching of the University Drawing School. Drawing and painting would most likely be more common among young people studying at the university 'and soon many promising talents will also be founded from the university's youth, their works could be used to decorate the Art Society's exhibitions'.⁶⁵ Moreover, public opinion about art would become more favourable.

The article states that the University Drawing School had spacious and appropriate facilities for teaching. It would be of great benefit for the Art Society's school if it could have access to these facilities too. If the numbers of students were too large for the premises, it would be possible to limit them. In addition, students could be divided into two groups, with their own separate teaching hours. This could be easily accomplished because the school would have two teachers. It is self-evident to the author who the teachers would be: Magnus von Wright and Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm, who had already proved their talent for teaching.⁶⁶ He then pointed out that the university had been influential and that influence had extended to the Finnish Art Society and its work. Now, the Society could grow and succeed with the University Drawing School and its collections. In the light of all this it should be clear that combining the schools would be desirable. Now the university and the Society should find out how to organise this merger.⁶⁷

There is no mention of this idea of combining the two schools in the other articles in the series. Instead they focus on the current practicalities of the Society, such as the financial situation, the status of members, the organisation of exhibitions and lotteries, and the recent activities of the school. In the final part of the series, the author notes that through art it was possible to speak in a special way about people's history, ways, wisdom and religion. This is why art was of great importance to education.⁶⁸ Interestingly, the author or authors behind these articles remain unknown, although it is clear from the nature of the story, that the writer had such a good knowledge of schools' conditions that they must have had a close connection to the Art Society as well as contacts with the university. What is probable is that Alexander's visit inspired the author to present his ideas, because it was published immediately afterwards. Perhaps the author hoped that the heir apparent could show his support for this undertaking. It is likely that von Wright and Godenhjelm welcomed the idea. Both had co-operated extensively and in addition, the Art Society had organised its annual exhibitions at the Mineral Museum of the University in 1850 and 1851. It may be that the organisation of exhibitions at the university was the moment when someone started to imagine co-operation on a larger scale.

However, the set of issues did not lead to action and it remains a mystery as to why not. The Art Society's documents and minutes reveal no references to the contents of the article. The minutes of the Board Meeting from April 1851, however, reveal that there was an acute problem finding suitable and inexpensive premises for the Helsinki Drawing School.⁶⁹ Minutes from 1851 also show that Helsinki Drawing School made two very large acquisitions that helped its lack of educational material. In May Godenhjelm had suggested that the school purchase a plaster cast collection from abroad. The 1852 Annual Report states that Godenhjelm's proposal had been agreed and 41 plaster casts representing significant works from the Antique were purchased from Copenhagen.⁷⁰

65 *Morgonbladet* 3 April 1851.

66 *Morgonbladet* 3 April 1851.

67 *Morgonbladet* 3 April 1851.

68 *Morgonbladet* 3 April 1851, 10 April 1851.

69 The minutes of the Finnish Art Society board meeting 11 April 1851 §1.
The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

70 The acquisition cost 1,020 roubles 66 kopeks. In addition there was an acquisition of paintings and planch works. The cost was 385 roubles and 46 kopeks. This included two paintings from Stockholm. The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1852; The 10th Anniversary Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1856. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

The school received significant support from Grand Duke Alexander's donation in his son's name in the summer of 1851. The donation consisted of 28 oil paintings and they were originally from Otto Wilhelm Klinckowström's heirs.⁷¹ Susanna Pettersson has noted that in the previous studies the donation has been interpreted as the beginning of the Art Society's collection. According to Pettersson this interpretation is misleading, because the collection was intended for art education.⁷² For example, in *Helsingfors Tidningar* newspaper it was stated that the donation helped the Drawing School, as students now had appropriate models for copying. However, it is mentioned that the wish of the donor has also been that best works of the collection remain in the property of the Art Society.⁷³ This was not the central point in the matter – the education was the priority. The donation relieved the most acute lack of educational material.

In 1856 the University Drawing School suffered a setback when the premises were given to support female gymnastics and the Drawing School was forced to move. The school's finest sculptures were transferred to the University Library, while the school itself moved to the university's cloakroom. It is difficult to find a clear reason for this move. Adolf von Becker has suggested it could have been due to pure ignorance, or that the university just did not understand the needs of drawing instruction. Another reason could have been that the university officers believed that the Drawing School could soon have new premises at the university's new building. However, that building, Arppeanum, was not completed until 1869. Probably the reason behind the move was the appointment in 1854 of the new head of gymnastics Florentin Wilhelm Bergholm, who wanted to improve his department and managed to do that to the detriment of the University Drawing School.

Whatever the reason for the move, its new premises in the cloakroom and the loss of plaster casts caused by transferring them to the University Library, which was in a separate building, meant the working environment had in any case significantly deteriorated. In the next chapter I will return more closely to the Art Society's Helsinki Drawing School. This chapter focuses on the protégé system, which had been created at the end of 1840s.

The protégé system of the Finnish Art Society

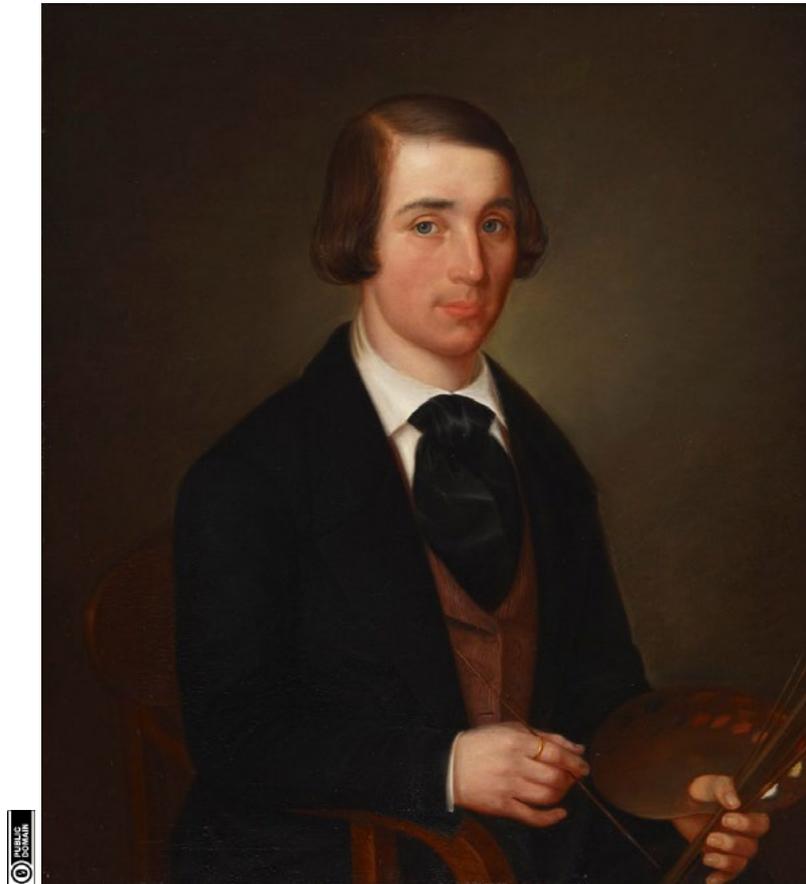
The Finnish Art Society's commitment to make art education available for the widest possible number of talented young people, included those whose families could not afford to fund their children's studies. The Finnish Art Society gave its first grant in 1847, when Ekman proposed that the Society could support Erik Johan Löfgren's studies in Stockholm. Ekman's recommendation was accepted and Löfgren received a grant of 100 roubles.

The Art Society looked for new young talent. The next protégé student was Fredrik Wilhelm Nikander. He was given free accommodation in the Society's premises by the commercial counsellor Heidenstrauch's house. Then he was sent to study in Turku Drawing School with Ekman. In addition, he received a monthly scholarship of 10 roubles. At the same time the Society also created a fund for young students who 'demonstrate an excellent tendency to art and are hardworking and have a moral lifestyle'. The financial aid package was for up to three years, unless the circumstances changed the Society's point of view. In 1849, Herman Adrian Barkman was invited to Helsinki. The Society gave him a scholarship place in a newly founded drawing school in Helsinki and he also received a monthly allowance. The third

71 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1852. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG. Susanna Pettersson writes in her doctoral thesis that Klinckowström's collection was purchased for the state at the same time that the state took Klinckowström's palace under its control in Kruunuhaka. When Klinckowström died he was in debt and the heirs were forced to sell the property. Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 109. For further information see also Susanna Pettersson. *Lumoutuneet. Tarinoita taiteen keräilystä 1800-luvun Suomessa*. Helsinki: WSOY, 2004.

72 Susanna Pettersson. *Lumoutuneet*, 61–63.

73 *Helsingfors Tidningar* 16 August 1851.



Erik Johan Löfgren, *Self-Portrait*, 1847,
oil on canvas, 81.5cm x 71cm
Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum
Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis

protégé student was Johan Erik Asplund, who was a journeyman painter from a poor family. Like Barkman, he started his studies in Helsinki Drawing School in 1849.⁷⁴

In the tenth Annual Report of the Art Society it is noted that the outcome of the protégé system was bad. Only Löfgren was considered to be a successful protégé student. He had experienced many difficulties in his career as well, but the Society found that he had succeeded because of his long and thorough studies. Nikander, Barkman and Asplund were distracted from the path which leads to the artist profession. Asplund had shown diligence but his efforts were not sufficient. Barkman had fallen into poverty and despair. Nikander had moved to Kuopio to teach art, but this was not enough for the Art Society. Asplund's fate was perhaps the most tragic. According to the Society's minutes, his misfortune was a wrong career path and therefore a failed career. His only option had been the return to craftsmanship, which the Society considered to be almost a worse fate than death.⁷⁵

The committee members in the Art Society saw that the reason these students failed was lack of education at a young age. The protégé system did not produce the desired

74 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1856. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

75 The Tenth Anniversary Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1856. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG; Hanna-Leena Paloposki. 'Johan Henrik Asplund.' (2012) <http://www.lahteilla.fi/fi/person/johan-henrik-asplund> (Accessed 12.10.2017).

results, but it shows how strongly the Society wanted to educate Finland's first 'own' artists' generation. The failure of the protégé system did not mean that the financial support for the students was stopped. On the contrary, efforts were made to improve the methods of support and encouragement. One of these was the Ducat Prize.

The Ducat Prize and other forms of support

In 1857, the Finnish Art Society launched an award, the Ducat Prize. The Art Society decided to give one award of 20 roubles and two awards of 10 roubles 'for copies, that demonstrate well-completed studies, these prizes are intended to encourage young domestic painters and painters'.⁷⁶ The Society supported students by giving travel grants for postgraduate studies and for example by purchasing students' artworks. Even after the protégé system had failed, the Society continued to give scholarships and monthly support for hard-working students. Actually, all of these acts of support had the same goal as the idealistic protégé system. The Art Society also saw the chance to encourage students who produced the kind of art which was considered to be appropriate, thus indirectly influencing what kind of works were made in Finland.⁷⁷ However, Turku Drawing School was a real pioneer in rewarding students, who since 1833 had been encouraged through donations of silver nib holders.⁷⁸ When the school was brought under the Society's control, it became part of the Society's support system.

The relocation of the University Drawing School was a setback in terms of the working environment, yet in the 1850s there were also positive changes. In 1855 for the first time students were able to apply for grants from the university's public fund. There was one upper- and one lower-class scholarship. Students were required to demonstrate understanding and abilities in drawing and a desire to educate themselves in the field of art. In addition, in the statutes of 1852 it was declared that the annual grant was awarded to the Drawing School to acquire the necessary equipment for the school.⁷⁹ The next chapter focuses on people who could influence art teaching in Finland at a practical level. These were not just the teachers at the time, but also members of the Imperial Alexander University and the Finnish Art Society.

Prominent figures in art education

Ekman, von Wright, and Godenhjelm had a considerable influence over what kind of art was created in the 1850s and 1860s by art students. However, the three teachers were not equally appreciated. In the middle of the 19th century, the development of art education also showed that teachers learned more about their profession during their teaching career. For example, in 1857 von Wright went to Düsseldorf for a few months to study – following the footsteps of his pupil, Werner Holmberg.

The Finnish Art Society had its own visions of what kind of art and whose art was interesting, and those artists who had connections to the Art Society were prominent. The von Wright brothers, especially Magnus von Wright, were particularly favoured. The Art Society had an interesting relationship with Godenhjelm's works and did not acquire them for its collections, despite the fact that his works followed the classical ideals. Compared to the appreciation of Magnus von Wright and Ekman, Godenhjelm was considered far behind. Ekman was an admired artist until the beginning of the 1860s. Then his star faded, and the Society no longer sought his

76 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1859. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG. Tikkanen 1896, s. 82.

77 Susanna Pettersson, 'Suomen Taideyhdistys. Tausta, perustaminen ja toiminnan kulmakivet.' In *Dukaatti – Suomen Taideyhdistys 1846–2006*. Rakel Kallio (ed.). Helsinki: WSOY, 2006.

78 Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekoulun arkea ja unelmia*, 25.

79 Författningar och beslut rörande Kejsarliga Alexanders universitet i Finland 1852–1887 § 254. The National Library of Finland.



Berndt Abraham Godenhjelm, *Ajax, a Study of a Plaster Cast*, undated, charcoal on paper, 44cm x 41.5cm
Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Ainur Nasretdin

historical paintings for its collections.⁸⁰ Magnus von Wright's reputation held well throughout the 1860s, with the works acquired for the collection having a great influence on students' impressions of good art because the teaching was largely based on copying.

The teachers were not the only figures whose views were reflected in the content of the students' art. One very prominent figure was Fredrik Cygnaeus, Chairman of the Art Society. Cygnaeus played a central role in the Finnish art scene in the 1850s. He was involved in making decisions on art purchases, travel grants, prizes and exhibitions. He saw that the Society had its own significant and unique role to play in securing the future of the country's first generation of artists. He instructed and encouraged art students, but also deliberately directed them to topics that he himself found important, such as national-historical painting and Finnish landscapes. Cygnaeus also supported prominent students with loans. He also held 'the salon of prospects' at his home, which helped art students gain entry to the Finnish art scene.⁸¹

The destiny of art students in a resource-scarce country was very much dependent on Cygnaeus's sympathies, but this also created dependency relationships. It secured him a strong position in the field of Finnish art teaching.⁸² He was a major figure at the university, especially among young people and in 1854, he became the first professor of aesthetics and modern literature. The University Drawing School also came under his watchful eye. Cygnaeus's position was further underlined by the fact that there were few people who could

⁸⁰ Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 107.

⁸¹ Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 146–154.

⁸² Susanna Pettersson *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 146–154.

challenge him in the art field. He also had influential supporters, such as Zacharias Topelius and Magnus von Wright.⁸³

However, not everyone was satisfied with Cygnaeus's dominant position. Ekman, who was one of his acquaintances, thought there were times when Cygnaeus's ideas went too far – and he accused Cygnaeus of trying to drive him away from the 'temple of art'.⁸⁴ Ekman's feelings can be understood against the backdrop of events in the late 1850s and 1860s. At that time his and Cygnaeus's own plans for the Academy of Art were in conflict. This conflict is analysed in the next section of the article.

Utopias and dreams of an Art Academy

In the middle of the 1850s the working environment was difficult for the schools. The Crimean War in 1853–56 and the cholera epidemic made it difficult to continue studies and teaching. However, hard times did not stop dreams about the future of art education. The goal was to improve the education system and move from elementary education towards a true art academy.

At the end of 1857 *Helsingfors Tidningar* newspaper published the first of three articles highlighting the problems in Finnish art education and the significance of the university both as a supporter of the arts and as the supreme institution of education. The author's ideas are presented in a form of dialogue between a Finnish man and an American tourist to whom he is speaking about Finnish culture and its education system.⁸⁵ The Finnish man tells the American that the Finnish Art Society has two drawing schools, but with few exceptions the schools have managed to educate only dilettantes. The Finnish man emphasises that Finland does not have a court or wealthy patrons of the arts. In Finland, however, there is something that is stronger than a single rich patron – the Imperial Alexander University. There people can study drawing, singing and acting, and its art department acquires plaster casts and other equipment, as well as staging frequent exhibitions and concerts on its premises. The university also grants scholarships for the students who study these subjects. In Finland the university is the closest institute to an art academy. However, the problem is that young people spend only four to six years at the university. For this reason, the studies will be insufficient to develop the skills of a real artist. In the article the Finnish man argues that art studies should start at lower levels of education, and concludes with his dreams about an art academy that would raise the level of education in the country.⁸⁶

While no concrete proposal is made in the article, in the previous year, there had been two plans for the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts in Finland. In 1854, the Director of Turku Drawing School, Ekman, together with architect Georg Theodor von Chiewitz, devised a plan to set up 'the Finnish Drawing Institute'. Two separate departments would be created, one for the artists and one for architects, artisans and industrialists. The institute would need a head teacher, first Ekman himself, plus five teachers. The annual expenses were calculated to be about 4,500 roubles. The plan was published in January 1857.⁸⁷

At the same time a similar plan for an Academy of Art appeared, initiated by Cygnaeus in 1856 and first mentioned in his letter to Senator Casimir von Kothén. In this letter Cygnaeus did not view the activities of the university in such a positive light as did the author of the articles in *Helsingfors Tidningar*. In his opinion, the university's drawing master and music teacher were the only things that the university had given in the field of art. Yet, they were poorly paid and living on the edge of poverty. Cygnaeus appealed to the goodwill of Emperor Alexander II. Now would be the time for the state to start supporting art, he wrote.⁸⁸ In

83 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 146–154.

84 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 147.

85 *Helsingfors Tidningar* 25 November 1857, 28 November 1857, 2 December 1857.

86 *Helsingfors Tidningar* 2 December 1857.

87 Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekoulun arkea ja unelmia*, 35.

88 Fredrik Cygnaeus. *Samlade arbeten. 10,4, Poetiska arbeten*.

Helsingfors: G. W. Edlund, 1889 [1856], 438.

Cygnaeus's plan, the Academy's teaching was divided into two departments; one for artists and another for architects. Some of the lessons were intended to be shared, such as drawing and art-history lectures. The Academy's Board would include artists, collaborators in the art field and government representatives. Academicians would receive support from the state for the establishment of ateliers, where they could train young artists.⁸⁹

Later the plan was refined so that the Academy would be divided into three departments: 'the Ornament school', 'the Building School' and 'the Figure school'. The Ornament School would teach drawing and design, the Building school architecture and practical construction, and the Figure School would concentrate on painting and sculpture. Cygnaeus argued that the Academy could not only improve the Finnish Art scene, but also the country's industry could benefit. The annual budget was calculated to be about 10,000 roubles.⁹⁰ It is likely that Cygnaeus was aware of Ekman and Chiewitz's ideas for a Drawing Institute when he was making his own plan. For example, in February 1857, Ekman described his own plans for an Institute in a letter to Cygnaeus.⁹¹ The Art Society's board did not support Ekman and Chiewitz's plan, probably partly because of Cygnaeus's influence.

Cygnaeus promoted his plans for an Academy assiduously in the Art Society's meetings throughout the 1860s. The board supported his project and the university consistory also reviewed the plan.⁹² However, the state authorities were not convinced. The economic situation in the country was not favourable and there was widespread famine in 1866–68, but from Cygnaeus's point of view, Finland now needed the Art Academy even more, because it would bring comfort to suffering people. He accused the government of supporting the Art Society's Drawing School, but not the Academy project. Cygnaeus saw that the Drawing School had become a substitute for the Academy.⁹³ The Senate did not swallow the bait. Just because he made provocative speeches it did not mean the project was any more realistic. Gyldén became the most vocal critic, pointing out that it was unrealistic, and referring critically to the current salary situation of the university's drawing master and music master: if the university had poorly paid teachers, how it would be possible to fund a whole Academy?⁹⁴

The criticism that Cygnaeus received can also be understood from another perspective. In the Society's minutes of the 1860s Cygnaeus mentions his plans for the Academy for the first time. The minutes show that he suggested the Art Society set up a third Drawing School, in Viipuri (Vyborg).⁹⁵ So Cygnaeus's idea of creating one big Academy of Art competed with the idea of extending the primary education of drawing in other districts in Finland. By 1861, however, it was clear that the Society did not have enough funds for the school in Viipuri.⁹⁶ Cygnaeus's efforts ultimately resulted only in increasing the Society's aid in 1863 to 1,000 roubles a year, granted specifically for the development of art education.⁹⁷

89 For an extensive study of the Cygnaeus' influence and his ideas for the Art Academy, see Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*.

90 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 169.

91 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 165.

92 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1861. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

93 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 174–175.

94 Nils Abraham Gyldén. *Finska Konstföreningens Stiftelse historiskt framställd*. Helsingfors: Theodor Sederholms boktryckeri, 1868, 38–39.

95 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1860. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

96 The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1861. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

In 1891 a drawing school in Viipuri was founded. It was operating up until 1939.

97 Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 170.



Magnus von Wright, title page from *Grunder i Teckna och Rita* (Basics of Drawing and Sketching), 1838, lithograph 24.5 x 15.5cm

Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Tero Suvilampi

Changing power relations

In 1862 Turku Drawing School's founder and second teacher Söderstrand died. Despite this difficult situation Ekman put forward a plan to the Finnish Art Society in 1863, which he had already made with Söderstrand, to develop the school and make its working environment larger. The plan was that, in addition to the principal class and the antique class, a large antique class and a life drawing school would also be created with the students drawing from a nude model.⁹⁸ However, the plan was not accepted in Helsinki. Art historian Margareta Willner-Rönholm has stated that this was the time when the priority was clearly given to Helsinki Drawing School. Moreover, Cygnaeus did not want other competitors around the art academy project. After the extension plan was rejected, relations between Cygnaeus and Ekman cooled. At the same time, Ekman's art was re-evaluated: the Art Society's old master had begun to look old-fashioned.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekoulun arkea ja unelmia*, 36.

⁹⁹ Margareta Willner-Rönholm. *Taidekoulun arkea ja unelmia*, 36; Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 170.

After the Turku plan was rejected, it was clear that the 1,000 roubles support would be allocated to Helsinki Drawing School. The Society wanted to divide its lessons into a principal class and an antique class and another teacher would be needed. Cygnaeus favoured Adolf von Becker, who was studying in Paris, so he wrote to offer him the post of the teacher at Helsinki Drawing School. Cygnaeus pointed out that Godenhjelm was performing all his duties conscientiously and flawlessly, but unfortunately he already belonged to ‘the past generation’ and ‘people of the future’ should take the lead. Although Godenhjelm would continue in his position, the school would need two teachers because there would be 50–60 students.¹⁰⁰ Von Becker was not exactly excited about the offer. In his opinion, the salary was barely sufficient in a costly city like Helsinki, but on the positive side it was a permanent post with a secure annual income. Still, the circumstances in Finland seemed too difficult and in any case, he decided to continue his studies abroad.¹⁰¹

The Art Society found a satisfying alternative candidate and in 1863 Carl Eneas Sjöstrand took up the new post as teacher of the antique class. The yearly salary was 300 roubles, the same as Godenhjelm’s.¹⁰² With Sjöstrand the school could also start sculpture classes. New teaching material was also purchased in 1864, when Sjöstrand commissioned 14 plaster sculptures from Berlin.¹⁰³ The Turku Drawing School was less favoured than the Helsinki Drawing School. Just before the new decade, there were also other significant changes in the field of art teaching which defined the future of art education in Finland. In the next section these changes are presented.

The end of the decade and the new players in the field

The statutes of Helsinki Drawing School were renewed in 1868. Four lessons per week were allocated for the principal class and four for the antique class, making eight teaching hours in total. Perhaps the most remarkable reform was that entrance fees were abolished. The Art Society’s Annual Report of 1868 describes the changed situation of schools well, stating that, in these enriched conditions, the number of pupils had increased as well as the teaching hours. A total of 64 students participated in the lessons in the spring.¹⁰⁴

The working environment at Turku Drawing School was not as favourable and things deteriorated towards the end of the decade. At the beginning of the 1860s the treasurer of the Art Society’s Turku branch, August Pomell, was found to have lost a considerable amount of the Drawing School’s funds. Söderstrand died in 1862, and no other teacher was reimbursed to replace him. Then the rent on the premises went up in 1867. The statutes of Helsinki Drawing School were renewed in 1868 with the idea that Turku Drawing School could also follow suit. However, due to the poor economic situation, it was not possible to make the school’s tuition free. All of these uncertainties caused dwindling numbers of students. Despite the difficult circumstances, Ekman developed his teaching methods. For example, he began to teach with a live model.¹⁰⁵

At the University Drawing School teaching had continued throughout the decade in bad conditions. Adolf von Becker has described how unsystematic copying of model sheets took up most of the students’ time. In addition, he had become increasingly dissatisfied with von

100 Fredrik Cygnaeus’ letter to Adolf von Becker, 1863. Collection of artists’ letters. Archive Collections, FNG.

101 Adolf von Becker’s letter to Fredrik Cygnaeus, 14 July 1863. Collection of artists’ letters. Archive Collections, FNG.

102 The minutes of the Finnish Art Society board meeting 14 October 1863. §2. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

103 Asiakirja koskien kipsien hankintaa Berliinistä vuodelta 1864. (Document concerning the acquisition of plaster casts from Berlin, 1864). The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

104 There were 49 male students and 16 female students. The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1868. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

105 The minutes of the Finnish Art Society board meeting 28 January 1869. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

Wright's way of teaching. This was probably influenced by the lack of students and their poor level. Nevertheless von Becker considered that von Wright's artistic example and a pleasant personality had had a good impact on his pupils.¹⁰⁶

The Imperial Alexander University had suffered for long time from the lack of suitable premises. The new building called Arpeanum, completed in 1869, was designed to house the university's museum collections and a chemistry laboratory, to solve a long-standing space problem. From the Art Society's minutes it can be seen that the Society also followed the process of building.¹⁰⁷ It had hoped that the university would again support art in Finland and would arrange premises for the Society's art collections.¹⁰⁸ Almost the whole of the top floor of the building was designed for the University Drawing School and the University Museum. The new premises in Arpeanum were historical in many ways – also from the perspective of art education. Finland had its first purpose-built atelier. The Arpeanum changed the position of the University Drawing School in the field of art education. However, Magnus von Wright would never see this new stage of the School's history. He died in July 1868.

After his death, Godenhjelm and Ekman both applied for his teaching post. Ekman's plans for an Academy of Art had been disregarded since the end of the 1850s, but now he saw that he had a new opportunity to become a key figure in Finland's art scene. Again he sent a letter to Cygnaeus, outlining his plans, and asked him to support his application. Ekman's long career was appreciated in the university's consistory, but they considered that both Ekman and Godenhjelm were too old. It was even noted that Ekman's artistic level had dropped significantly in the 1860s, and that would also affect the quality of education. The much younger Adolf von Becker was appointed instead. The second teacher they appointed was the Art Society's antique class teacher, C. E. Sjöstrand.¹⁰⁹

Ekman complained about the consistory's decision, to no avail, and so von Becker took the University Drawing School into the new decade.¹¹⁰ Godenhjelm retired in 1869. Ekman was no longer a central figure in the Finnish art scene, so instead he focused on developing Turku Drawing School and especially his own private academy. He was also awarded a salary rise in 1869 due to the increase in teaching hours and in honour of his long service. Ekman was not the only one who withdrew from the spotlight. After the failure of the Academy project, Cygnaeus refused to participate in the renewal of the statutes of the Art Society's Drawing School in 1868. After Godenhjelm retired, Arvid Liljelund was hired to teach at Helsinki Drawing School along with Sjöstrand. A significant change in the field of art education in Finland was the Sculpture School, which was established in Helsinki in 1871. The key figure behind this development was Carl Gustaf Estlander, who became an influential figure in the 1870s.

Epilogue

I have given an overview of the early stages of Finnish art education from the mid-1840s to the end of the 1860s. I originally became interested in the questions of Finnish art education's history through my masters thesis on the University Drawing School's history from the 1830s to the 1930s. For my masters thesis I have studied the minutes of the consistory of the university. In this article I have focused in particular on the minutes of the Finnish Art Society. With these source materials I have been able to acquire a comprehensive insight into the

106 Adolf von Becker. 'Ett Bidrag till universitetets ritsals historia.' *Hufvudstadsbladet* 4 May 1893.

107 Arpeanum's designer, Carl Albert Edelfelt, was also as an alternate member of the board of the Society. See for example the minutes of the Finnish Art Society annual general meeting 10 March 1869. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

108 The minutes of the Finnish Art Society 1869. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

109 Armi Hölttö. *Keisarillisen Aleksanterin yliopiston piirustussalin toiminnasta Adolf von Beckerin opettajakaudella 1869–1892*. Helsingin yliopisto, taidehistorian laitos, pro gradu -työ, 1997, 19–23.

110 Armi Hölttö. *Keisarillisen Aleksanterin yliopiston piirustussalin toiminnasta Adolf von Beckerin opettajakaudella*, 23.

Finnish art field in the 19th century. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society belongs to the Archive Collections of the Finnish National Gallery. I studied this material as a research intern in the Finnish National Gallery's internship programme in the autumn of 2017.

What is the nature of the material from this period? A very good answer to this question is given by the long-term secretary of the Art Society Zacharias Topelius:

If someone claims that the secretary has neglected the care taking of the minutes, I admit that the accusation is not entirely unjustified; but I also need to add that during these times the formalities were a side note and a driving force in every direction was the central point. The history of the Finnish Art Society is not written on paper, but in colours in fabric and the blows of a chisel, through schools and artists.¹¹¹

The Art Society's material can be described as somewhat bohemian in nature. Sometimes the reader can follow how 'after the meeting of the Society, some members of the board gathered again for a happy midday celebration in Kaisaniemi restaurant'.¹¹² However, Topelius reminds us of the fact that the precise minutes were not the first thing that came to mind in those times. When the Finnish Art Society was established in 1846, it was only developing its working methods and in 20 years they were advanced. Unfortunately lists of Helsinki Drawing School students from the autumn of 1849 to spring 1869 had already disappeared in the 19th century. Luckily there is one surviving list of students enrolled from February 1849. With the changes from the 1860s to 1870s, a new era began in keeping the minutes of the Society, after Topelius withdrew from his duties as secretary in 1869. The new secretary, Carl Gustaf Estlander,¹¹³ updated the Society's minutes to create a more professional system. Moreover, from 1872 the minutes of the annual general meetings of the Art Society were also published. Despite its incompleteness, the Society's archive is the most important source material for studying the history of Finnish art education.

I would like to thank the Finnish National Gallery for launching its research internship programme. In 1858 Ekman wrote a letter to Cygnaeus with some important advice: 'Therefore, brother, I encourage you in the name of the art that you encourage the beginners (...).'¹¹⁴ The Finnish Art Society's offspring, the Finnish National Gallery, has also followed this advice. With the internship programme the National Gallery is helping young researchers to develop their skills and is supporting research into its art history.

¹¹¹ Quoted from Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 30. My translation.

¹¹² The Annual Report of the Finnish Art Society 10 March 1860. The Archive of the Finnish Art Society. Archive Collections, FNG.

¹¹³ Susanna Pettersson. *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin*, 302.

¹¹⁴ Robert Wilhem Ekman's letter to Fredrik Cygnaeus, 8 March 1858. Collection of artists' letters. Archive Collections, FNG.