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CALL FOR RESEARCH INTERNS
2024



Hiroshige, *Gio Temple in Snow, Geishas Greeting each other in Snowfall before the Temple Gate*, undated, woodblock print, 23.8cm x 36.9cm (paper)
Finnish National Gallery / Sinebrychoff Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Jenni Nurminen

Editorial: Underpinning Exhibitions with International Research

Kirsi Eskelinen, PhD, Museum Director, Finnish National Gallery /
Sinebrychoff Art Museum

30 November 2023

This issue of *FNG Research* concentrates on the research behind the two recently opened exhibitions, 'Peder Balke – The Spell of the Arctic', at the Sinebrychoff Art Museum and 'Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism', at the Ateneum Art Museum. The first is a monographic exhibition of the Norwegian painter Peder Balke (1804–87), which is presented to a Finnish audience for the first time. An important exhibition had taken place at the National Gallery in London in 2014, but the Norwegian painter of the Romantic era still remains less well-known internationally. Balke was fascinated by Arctic landscapes. Following his trip to the North Cape in the 1830s, he repeatedly depicted his visions of the north for

the rest of his life. Balke was open-minded and experimental in his painting technique. His late output becomes almost abstract. Gill Crabbe interviews the co-curator of the exhibition Dr philos. Knut Ljøgodt, who is Director of the Nordic Institute of Art, about the concept and the aim of the show. The exhibition at the Sinebrychoff Art Museum is a collaboration with the Institute.

In October the Ateneum Art Museum opened the exhibition 'Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism'. In her article 'Echoes of Impressionism in Finland', Dr Marja Sakari, the museum's Director, writes about one of the starting points for the 'Colour & Light' exhibition: why the effects of Impressionism were not seen in Finnish art until the first two decades of the 20th century. Her article concentrates on the French and Belgian art exhibition that was organised at the Ateneum in 1904. The senior advisor to the exhibition is Professor Anthea Callen, who is interviewed in this issue by Gill Crabbe. Prof Callen discusses her role in contributing to the project, including her research into the Impressionist and Neoimpressionist works that Finnish artists were exposed to, and brings her particular expertise in the material culture of western European artists of the period.

The Ateneum Art Museum is actively promoting research work on its collections in conjunction with its upcoming exhibitions. At the moment there are several joint research projects being undertaken with international partners at the Finnish National Gallery. In the spring of this year the Ateneum organised a seminar as a part of an international research project called Gothic Modern, which aims to share and exchange ideas for a scientific publication in connection with the exhibition taking place on this theme in the autumn of 2024. Gill Crabbe met Dr Ralph Gleis, one of the participants of the seminar in Helsinki. Dr Gleis has been Director of the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin for several years, and was recently appointed Director of the Albertina in Vienna, a post he is taking up in 2025. The interview with Dr Gleis gives a good grounding in the four-year research project and its goals.

Another international research project, which is underway at the Finnish National Gallery concerns 'Pioneering Women Artists'. Its first conference 'Crossing Borders: Transnational Networks of Pioneering Women Artists' was held in September at the Ateneum Art Museum. The project will culminate in a scholarly publication and an exhibition in Helsinki at the Ateneum, which will also travel to the Düsseldorf Kunstpalast, in 2025.

Meanwhile, the Sinebrychoff Art Museum is preparing a major exhibition in Helsinki on the great Venetian Renaissance Master Jacopo Bassano. Scheduled for September 2024, this monographic show presents Bassano's work for the first time in Europe outside Italy. The exhibition includes several less well-known paintings and rare drawings executed in coloured chalks. The curators of the exhibition are Dr Kirsi Eskelinen and Dr Claudia Caramanna, both of whom are Bassano scholars.

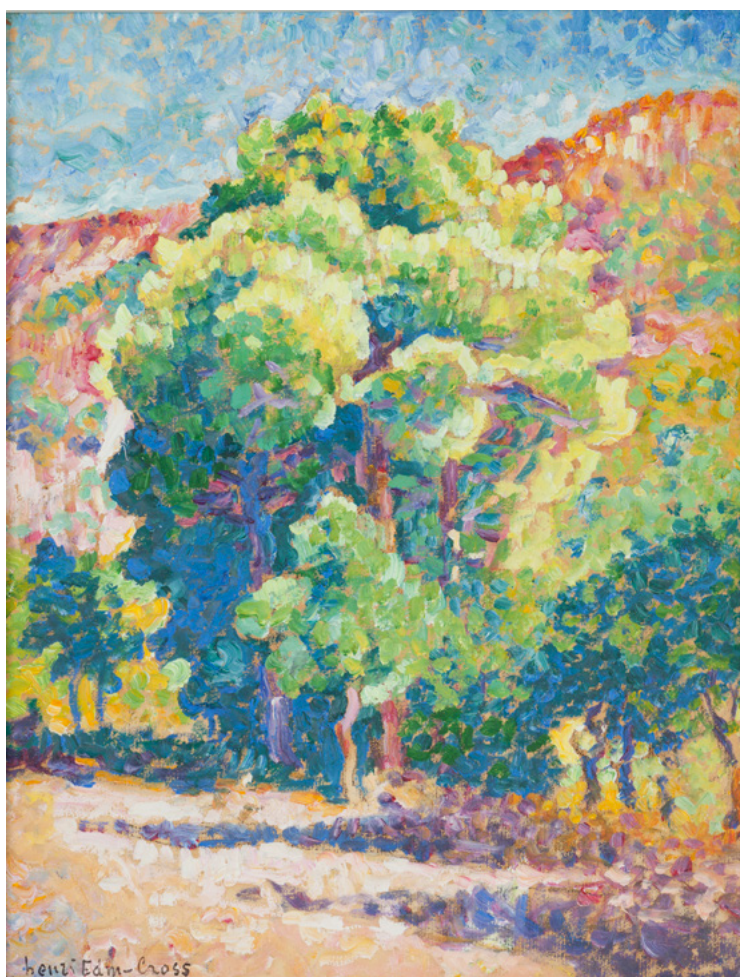
Finally, I would like to draw your attention to our annual call for research interns for 2024. Applications will be taken until 31 December 2023, and the two interns selected will be announced on 15 January 2024. Details of how to apply are in this issue.

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Lighting up Colour

Gill Crabbe, *FNG Research*

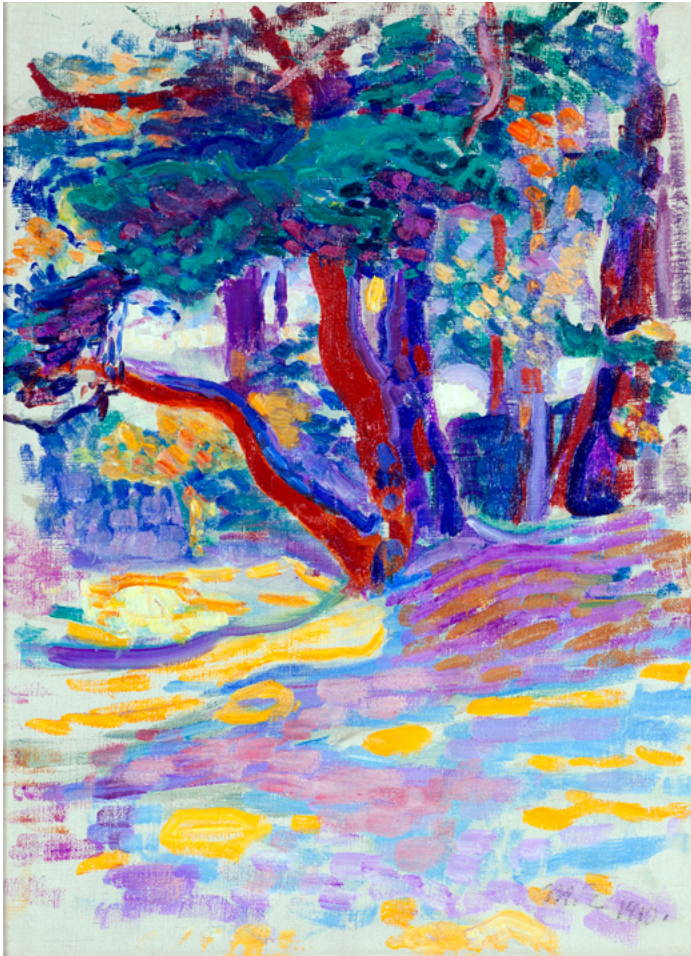
For the exhibition 'Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism', now showing at the Ateneum Art Museum, the curators invited renowned authority on Impressionism Professor Anthea Callen to be senior advisor on the project. Gill Crabbe asks her about what she brought to the role



Henri-Edmond Cross, *Pine*, 1907, oil on paper, 35cm x 27cm
Sigurd Frosterus Collection, Amos Rex, Helsinki
Photo: Stella Ojala, Amos Rex

It is a bold museum that chooses to stage an exhibition that places celebrated works from history's most popular art movement alongside those by artists who, albeit stars in their home country, might be considered obscure or even unknown internationally. But in mounting the exhibition 'Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism' the Finnish National Gallery's Ateneum Art Museum has created an opportunity for an important conversation between the Western European proponents of Impressionism and Neoimpressionism and the Finnish artists of the early 20th century. Significantly, it is a conversation that revolves around the effects of transnationalism, as well as the hybrid fusions of style and technique that can result from international influences.

Indeed 'Colour & Light' mixes a dazzling palette of artworks across every room in its show. Replacing a tired chronological approach with rooms themed according to subject matter – the garden, wintertime, rural life, the sea, the nude, urban life – one is exposed more directly to the impact of new techniques and shifts in material culture across time and space. Thus one finds Monet's wintery scene *Floating Ice on the Seine* (1880) alongside Finnish painter Pekka Halonen's brilliant sunlit snowscapes (*Rock Covered in Ice and Snow*, 1911); the *plein-air* rural scenes of Henri-Edmond Cross's *Pine* (1907), effulgent in high summer, together with Magnus Enckell's pine trees painted on his summer sojourn on an island in the Gulf of Finland in *From Suursaari* (1910) and Ellen Thesleff's *Landscape from Tuscany* (1908), palette-knifed in rich hues of violet and viridian green. And further on, we see Paul Signac's eye-popping Neoimpressionist coastal idyll *Antibes* (undated),



Magnus Enkell, *From Suursaari*, sketch, 1910, oil, 45cm x 32.5cm

Sigurd Frosterus Collection, Amos Rex, Helsinki

Photo: Stella Ojala, Amos Rex

alongside Verner Thomé's blinding *contrejour* painting *Bathing Boys* (1910).

The exhibition and accompanying scholarly publication are the result of an ambitious research project initiated by the Ateneum and aided by Professor Emeritus Anthea Callen, a world expert on Impressionism and the material culture of the period, who was invited to join the project as senior advisor. Prof Callen had been approached by Ateneum Chief Curator Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff through their mutual connection to the Association for Art History, where her presentations on vitalism and *plein-air* painting had attracted the Finnish curator's attention. Callen is author of nine books, several of which reflect her expertise in Impressionism and also in material culture – she has a PhD in 19th-century artists' materials and techniques in 19th-century France, from London's Courtauld Institute. This, in turn has afforded her a key role in several episodes of the popular British TV series *Fake or Fortune*. Significantly, she is also a trained artist, which brings additional interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding. 'Training as an artist does bring a different vision,' she says. 'You're trying to tune into the mind of the artist. As a practitioner you recognise the ideas and how they are executed are inseparable.'

The 'Colour & Light' exhibition pivots on how and to what extent Impressionist and Neoimpressionist artists influenced Finnish artists to incorporate into their practice the new methods, equipment and materials employed by these Western European artists from the 1870s on. Does this interest in material culture reflect a current trend in exhibition projects generally? 'I think the rise of critical theory in particular from the 1980s and '90s onwards was an unconscious compensation for the fact that scholars didn't understand or value material culture,' says Callen. 'My life's work is to demonstrate that the physical *matter* of art itself carries meanings both historical and socio-cultural. Material objects have intrinsic and historically specific meanings, whereas in "pure" art theory, which has now faded somewhat, the only thing that mattered was the idea, the concept; the art object itself was virtually ignored. So I think with technical art history (as it's now often called) there has been a turn.'

One of the key changes in the past 20–30 years is that art historians now take conservation science much more seriously, Callen points out. 'To some extent this material shift is also market driven, by the demand for



Ellen Thesleff, *Landscape from Tuscany*, 1908, oil on canvas, 40.5cm x 40.5cm

Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Hannu Pakarinen

authentication in the global art market. Before the 1990s there wasn't the present extensive range of scientific technologies and equipment available to aid conservators' knowledge of an artefact before they began conserving it. Notably since c. 2000 masters programmes and PhDs in technical art history have flourished. It is a major shift and some outstanding work has come out of it, bringing new insights into the physical nature of objects.'

Callen's interest in this area is aptly demonstrated in her essay in the *Colour & Light* catalogue, in which she sets the scene for the exhibition by outlining the conditions that led to the flowering of Impressionism and Neoimpressionism among Western European artists. This introduction leaves space for Finnish art historians to focus on the impact this had on the Finnish artists. Thus Callen highlights in particular the French, Belgian and British artists' development of *plein-air* painting, 'working "on the motif" to record their visual sensations of ephemeral light effects (*effet*) in nature using a limited palette of bright colours and close tonal values, bold broken brushwork and a direct immediacy of paint handling'. Her essay includes details of the development of individual brushstrokes of colour (*taches*) that treat the landscape and its light effects as a coloristic whole; the evolution of pointillist techniques and the shift from tonal colour to prismatic; the use of square-format canvases and the selection of radical new viewpoints that flattened perspectival recession in order to emphasise the picture plane and surface paint handling.

How did Professor Callen's contribution as senior advisor unfold in the development of the exhibition project? 'My main creative role was in providing a backdrop to the concept of *plein-air* painting and how *plein air* as a practice took off in the Nordic countries, becoming throughout Europe part of a broader cultural phenomenon alongside vitalism and new modernist trends like Fauvism after 1900,' says Callen. 'The rise of Nordic "colour and light" painting coincided with the rise of vitalism in Finland, whereas in Western Europe – Belgium and France particularly – the spread of *plein-air* landscape painting and the idea of celebrating the outdoors had begun at least 30 years earlier. So it's interesting to consider why colour and light painting came so much later to the Nordic countries.'

The project was not without its challenges and blind alleys, however, especially during the initial research phase. There were practical limitations, not least those imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. 'Many of the key Impressionist works are now in the US and there were considerable logistical and financial constraints in what we could borrow, as well as the potential problem of Covid for transportation,' Callen explains. Then came the outbreak of the Ukraine war. 'Sadly, all the Russian works that had been earmarked for the show had to be foregone and I had to look for alternatives.' But the team were able skilfully to navigate these various obstacles through creative and strategic thinking; the resulting show includes important loans from the Clark Institute, Williamstown, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris and the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. Callen had been contracted to write the letters to non-Finnish museums and galleries, setting out the importance of their loans to the exhibition: 'I used my networks and professional standing where appropriate,' she adds.

Prof Callen had monthly discussions via Zoom with the 'Colour & Light' curators, von Bonsdorff and Ateneum Museum Director Marja Sakari, and together over a period of four years they shared image spreadsheets on the content, balance and themes of the exhibition. Early brainstorming sessions centred around the key exhibition of French and Belgian art held in 1904 at the Ateneum. It showcased Impressionist artists who were connected to the Parisian dealer and collector Paul Durand-Ruel. He had taken on artists including Monet, Pissarro and Renoir in their early days, thus playing a pivotal role in the emergence of the Impressionist movement. 'I spent a lot of my early time researching what had been shown in Helsinki in 1904 to get a real idea of what the artists and the audiences in Finland had been exposed to,' she explains. 'I had become very familiar with the Durand-Ruel Archive when I was researching my masters. Its records date to before 1870, when the company stopped trading in artists' materials and began specialising exclusively in picture dealing. In the 19th century it was common for colour merchants to take paintings from struggling artists in exchange for art materials, which often created a longstanding intimacy between them.'

The team decided to focus on those Impressionists and Neoimpressionists who were included in the 1904 exhibition. 'There were many we excluded because they didn't appear in

the 1904 show, even though they were key players in France and Belgium,' says Callen, 'which meant for example no Cézanne, no Berthe Morisot, no Mary Cassatt.'

This concept provided a template for structuring an exhibition that would look back and then forward from 1904, and in the process explore the networks that developed into a specific art market. 'It became our focal point, from which to look out to the impact of that show,' Callen explains. 'The 1904 show was a wonderful example of how artworks circulated and how a national movement became an international phenomenon; Durand-Ruel had already begun showing his artists' work in affluent New York in 1886, almost 20 years before the Impressionists made a big impact in Finland. This approach helps you reconstruct how the market worked and how ideas and styles spread.'

Thanks to the detailed stock records in the Durand-Ruel Archive, Prof Callen was able to trace the paintings shipped from his Paris gallery via his outpost in Berlin, through to Helsinki for the 1904 exhibition. 'We were able to identify about 12 of the Impressionist works. Along with the extant 1904 exhibition catalogue held at the FNG Library and contemporary reviews of the exhibition unearthed by Marja Sakari, this information was hugely important in reconstructing how that exhibition might have looked,' she explains. The logical next step of course was to locate some of these works and if possible secure loans. However, this proved difficult because 'after the Durand-Ruel loans left Helsinki in 1904, they were toured to exhibitions in other European cities, and were never returned to Durand-Ruel in Paris,' Callen says. 'During the First World War many of these paintings were looted, disappearing into the murky wartime underworld and thence into obscure private collections.'

Callen knew that, from c. 1890 on, all works passing through Durand-Ruel's hands were documented photographically. 'Durand-Ruel made glass-plate photographs of all his paintings, many of which now appear in the modern *catalogue raisonnés* of the artists involved, but either their whereabouts are unknown, or their locations are outdated,' says Callen. Instead, the photographic plates enabled the team to identify comparable works that could be sought. For example, the large Monet in the Winter-themed room in 'Colour & Light', *Floating Ice on the Seine* (1880), is from the same series as the one that was shown in 1904. Such works then set the scene for researching their influence on Finnish artists.

While Prof Callen was not involved in the detailed curation of the Finnish art works in the show, regular discussions were held with the Finnish team to select which works would be shown. In the spring of 2022 she made a five-day trip to Finland to see the key public collections of Finnish modernist art. 'We viewed and chose Finnish paintings (and others held in Finnish collections) in Helsinki and Turku to be included (or excluded); I toured the empty Ateneum galleries with the Finnish curatorial team to discuss how we would organise the hang and best use the various spaces, including the timeline in the first room; I also suggested an introductory video.' On her visit Callen also met museum conservators to discuss the treatment of Finnish modernist paintings, among others, and gave a lecture on French Impressionist *plein-air* methods and materials to Ateneum staff.

The resulting 'Colour & Light' exhibition juxtaposes paintings by artists shown in the 1904 exhibition with works by Finnish modernists that reveal the rich legacy of the Impressionists and Neoimpressionists, not only in terms of artistic influence but also in stimulating new directions for Finnish artists. Thus in the Winter room, in addition to *Floating Ice on the Seine*, we find Monet's *plein-air* Norwegian *Winter Landscape, Sandvika* (1895), now at the Latvian National Museum of Art, and Sisley's stunning *Snow at Louveciennes* (1878) 'in conversation' with Pekka Halonen's iconic Finnish snowscapes.

'I think the Monet from Riga is a key painting in this room, even though it's perhaps the least obvious,' says Callen. 'It shows Monet so curious to experience Nordic snow that he travelled to Norway in March 1895 to paint it; yet compared to *Floating Ice on the Seine* or Halonen's large canvases, it's such a small, unassuming work – perhaps because *plein-air* painted in harsh Nordic conditions. Indeed the smaller scale of the French works allows Halonen's massive snow paintings ample space to breathe. Monet painted *Floating Ice* in January 1880 when he, like many of his *plein-airist* colleagues, was at a turning point. Expanding his ambitions, he withdrew that year from exhibiting with the Impressionists and attempted instead to show at the Paris Salon, the first time in 10 years. In fact *Floating Ice* served as a study for Monet's larger canvas *The Ice Floes* (March 1880, now in Shelburne



Claude Monet: *Winter Landscape (Sandvika)*, 1895, oil on cardboard, 37cm x 52.5cm
Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga

Photo: Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga



Pekka Halonen, *Rock Covered in Ice and Snow*, 1911, oil on canvas, 96.5cm x 155.5cm
Antell Collections, Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Aleks Talve





Alfred William Finch, *The Cliffs of Dover*, 1892, oil on canvas, 66.5cm x 80.5cm
 Ahlström Collection, Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

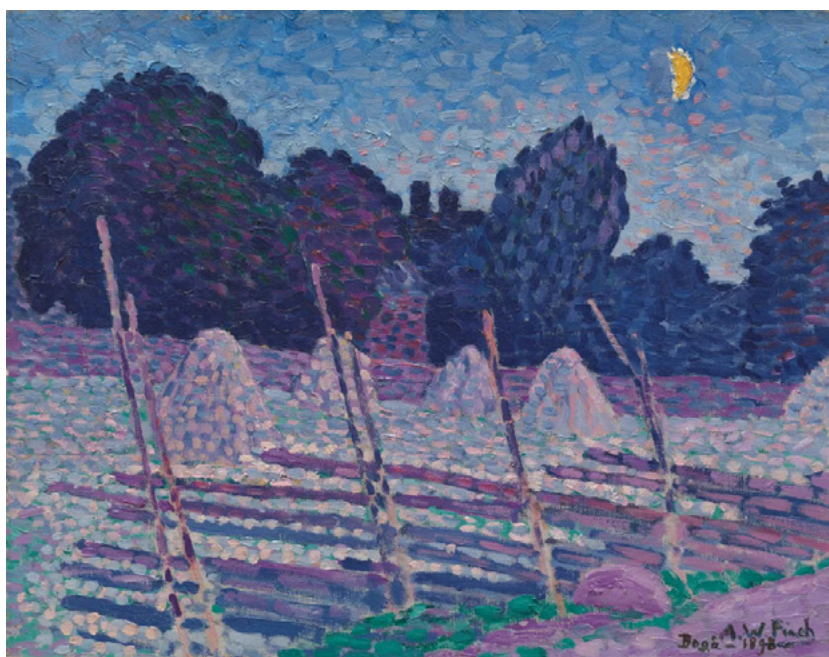
Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Aleks Talve



Museum, Vermont), painted in his studio and submitted to the Salon Jury. It marks a major shift in method and scale – and him thinking in series – giving you a sense of what is to come with his water lilies.’

Alongside the Monets, Pekka Halonen’s masterful snow scenes reveal the intensity of the Nordic light flooding his canvases. ‘You can see that he is painting “en plein air” in the single-canvas works and then moving on to this extraordinary diptych, *Rock Covered in Ice and Snow* (1911), which is almost Symbolist in feel – an animistic landscape with icicles like gaping shark jaws – giving a sense of the spirits of the North.’

‘Also what Halonen does which Monet does not, here at least in this Winter room, is to exclude the sky; in pushing the sky beyond the top of the painting he pushes his composition closer towards abstraction.’ In contrast, Monet’s *Floating Ice* is divided almost equally in two, with the horizon acting as a hinge: the lower half echoes the upper half as if mirroring it. Whether using a central horizon or a view that eliminates the sky, the resulting flatness emphasises the physical two-dimensionality of the painted surface.



Alfred William Finch, *An August Night*, 1898, oil on canvas, 35cm x 45.5cm
 Gift from Arvid Sourander, Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Hannu Aaltonen



As the exhibition progresses, further juxtapositions reveal the impact of Neoimpressionism on Finnish artists. ‘The most powerful influence was Alfred William Finch, not just technically but in terms of providing an umbilical cord to other European tendencies,’ says Callen. Finch had moved to Finland in 1897 to take up a position at the Iris ceramic factory in Porvoo, bringing with him his painting practice as a pointillist (*An August Night*, 1898). In the room dedicated to seaside paintings, an exquisite line-up along one wall shows Théo van Rysselberghe’s *Dunes at Cadzand (View of the Scheldt)*, from 1893, Paul Signac’s *Cassis, Cap Lombard, Opus 196* (1889), and Finch’s *The Cliffs of Dover* (1892), while on the wall opposite is a conversation between Magnus Enckell’s *Boys on the Shore*, Signac’s *Antibes* and Verner Thomé’s *Bathing Boys*. ‘Finch’s work, not only through his contacts with French, British and Belgian artists, was important in increasing a sense of belonging to a wider European tradition but also in offering the Finnish artists a whole range of possibilities for where they might take their own work,’ Callen points out.



Verner Thomé, *Bathing Boys*, 1910, oil on canvas, 108.5cm x 130cm
 Hoving Collection,
 Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum
 Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Aleks Talve



Yrjö Ollila, *Pines on the Shore*, 1912, oil on canvas, 94cm x 76.5cm
 Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum
 Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Kirsi Halkola



Indeed, in her essay for the catalogue Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff writes that ‘the Finnish artists were not faithful to theories, instead they were modifying their paintings using a variety of techniques, the unifying factors being bright colours and the depiction of light rather than a programmatic Neoimpressionism.’ Prof Callen agrees. ‘Some of these artists, such as Verner Thomé, in work like *Bathing Boys*, follow Finch in terms of Neoimpressionist paint application, but Thomé takes it in his own direction, both in terms of subject matter and also in the way he is using light,’ Callen points out. ‘Very few paintings deploy *contrejour* with the full sun behind the figures because it’s blinding, making it almost impossible to paint “*en plein air*”. I’m sure *Bathing Boys* would have been painted in the studio as it is such a large work; the figures were probably based on sketches or life studies. You can imagine the difficulties in persuading a group of boys to pose! It would be fascinating to examine further the relationship between “preparatory” drawings and “spontaneous” *plein-air* paintings among the colourists in Finland.’ Here and in the following rooms, with the vitalist themes that were the subjects of the Nordic exploration of nature, nakedness, and the sun as life-force, it is the Finnish artists who predominate, heading off in their own direction in explosions of vibrant, almost Fauve colour (Yrjö Ollila, *Pines on the Shore*, 1912) and intense Nordic summer light (Santeri Salokivi, *Girls on the Shore*, 1916).

‘Colour & Light’ offers a rare chance to trace the international connections and influences of Impressionism and Neoimpressionism in Finnish art in thought-provoking and innovative ways. Where might it sit in the pantheon of worldwide exhibitions on these groundbreaking movements? ‘I think this exhibition’s originality lies in its contextualisation of Western European modernist developments in *plein-air* painting within Finnish colouristic



Santeri Salokivi, *Girls on the Shore*, 1916, oil, 93cm x 149cm
 Nordea Art Foundation Finland

Photo: Museokuva: Matti Huuhka & Co

modernism around 1900–20,' says Callen. 'Asking, for example, why these developments arrived so much later in Finland than in France and Belgium, the exhibition traces the networks of artistic influence, exhibition and dealing that resulted in this Finnish modernist flowering. Most revealing for me in the exhibition is just how easily the work of Finnish colourists sits alongside their French and Belgian modernist counterparts.' For Callen herself, it has been a big learning curve, as she had not previously encountered many of the Finnish artists. 'It has been such a great pleasure working on this show,' she says, 'and the museum staff have been fabulous.'

Clearly, this exhibition demonstrates that bold ambition and curatorial vision have been repaid in manifold ways, not only showing how the Finnish artists of the early 20th century were open to the influence of the Western European avant-garde, but also how they could apply its principles to the cultural specifics of Nordic conditions, its nature, its light, and through their independent spirit, develop new ways of expressing the Finnish sensibility.

'Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism', until 25 February 2024, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki

Sointu Fritze & Lene Wahlsten, *Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism*. Ateneum Publications Vol 169. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2023

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Echoes of Impressionism in Finland

Marja Sakari, PhD, Director, Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Also published in Sointu Fritze and Lene Wahlsten (eds.), *Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 169. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2023, 51–65. Transl. Wif Stenger

Worst of all was a corner that contained landscape paintings, each smudgier than the last, because they all looked as if the artist had squeezed a lot of colour into the palette and then slapped it onto the canvas, repeating the operation until the painting was finished. It had a sickening effect on me, not figuratively but in a physical sense.¹

– Letter from Helena Westermarck to her aunt Alexandra Blomqvist, 30 April 1880



Albert Edelfelt, *Girls in a Rowing Boat*, 1886, oil on canvas, 33.5cm x 40.5cm
Collection Montgomery, Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Jenni Nurminen

In the late 19th century, nearly all professional Finnish artists headed to Paris. There, in the world's art capital, they confronted everything new that was developing in the visual arts – including Impressionism. However, in the 1800s, none of the Finnish artists joined this movement that radically changed the art world, nor did many other Nordic artists. One of the central starting points of the 'Colour & Light' exhibition at the Ateneum Art Museum is the question of why the effects of Impressionism were not seen in Finnish art until the first two decades of the 20th century.

Finnish artists of the day, such as the influential Albert Edelfelt, did however recognise the impact of Impressionism. In a series of articles accompanying a major exhibition of French and Belgian art that opened at the Ateneum in early 1904, Edelfelt wrote that Impressionism had affected almost all painters in some way, although, in his view, the movement itself was already history: 'Other



1 Helena Westermarck's letter to Alexandra (Sanny) Blomqvist, 30 April 1880. Blomqvist collection. National Library of Finland, Helsinki. The original letter has been lost.

movements have come and gone – such as so-called Symbolism, but what is certain is that the Impressionist painters have taken art forward by a considerable step and that all of us who use a brush have learnt a lot from them.² This exhibition of Franco-Belgian art, which took place 119 years ago, is one of the starting points for the ‘Colour & Light’ exhibition and the subject of my article. The 1904 exhibition was part of the process that led to the brightening of the palette of almost all Finnish artists in the 1910s.³

In Finland, the newspaper-reading public encountered Impressionism as a stylistic direction as early as 1870. In a travel letter from Paris published in *Helsingfors Dagbladet*, the artist Berndt Lindholm described the French ‘value party’. The term Impressionism did not come into use until later. Initially it was an ironic reference to Claude Monet’s painting *Impression, soleil levant* (1872) when it was shown in 1874 in the first group exhibition of the Société Anonyme, formed by the Impressionists.⁴ Lindholm analyses the new art aptly, but in an acerbic tone: ‘The main principle of the party is exclusively to study the true relationships of colours to each other – their values – hence the name value party – otherwise the subject of the painting is completely irrelevant, any kind of attention to detail is unnecessary, as it can easily disturb the values. Thus they turn out to be so shameless that at times one no longer has any idea what the mess is supposed to represent.’⁵ In Paris, artists could see works by the Impressionists at their regular group exhibitions (1874–86) and at the galleries of Georges Petit and Paul Durand-Ruel.⁶

However, the sources of inspiration for Finnish artists who came to Paris after Lindholm were *plein-air* naturalism, following in the footsteps of Jules Bastien-Lepage, and later the Symbolist-tinged realism of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, rather than a values-based art that ‘obscured the subject’.

From Helena Westermarck’s colourful characterisation at the beginning of this article, one can deduce something general about the prevailing attitudes of Finnish artists towards Impressionism in the late 1800s. The excerpt shows the kind of drastic, confusing effect the new colour art could have on artists. To her mother, Westermarck stated that the Impressionists were excellent at depicting powerful light effects; their compositions, on the other hand, were ‘infinitely bizarre’.⁷ Now that Impressionism has become the best-known and most beloved form of visual art, it is perhaps difficult to understand from a contemporary perspective the radicality that Anthea Callen discusses in her article ‘Impressionism: Colour and Light’ in the exhibition catalogue *Colour & Light*.⁸ Westermarck’s letters reveal how difficult it was for contemporaries to approach this new phenomenon and interpret the content of the works. In her view, the ‘innermost thoughts’ of the Impressionists could not be understood, because it was only after a long examination of the work that one could deduce

2 Albert Edelfelt. ‘Den fransk-belgiska utställningen i Ateneum’, *Helsingfors-Posten*, 30 January 1904.

3 Earlier, a 1901 exhibition of French art at the Ateneum focused on naturalism and more traditional art. Although it featured the likes of Monet, Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley, these artists were barely mentioned by the critics. The main attention was on artists who represented more traditional painting, e.g. Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Carolus-Durand, who are lesser-known today. See J.J. Tikkanen. ‘Franska konstutställningen i Ateneum’, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 6 October 1901; ‘Kirjallisuutta ja taidetta: Ranskalaisten taiteilijain näyttely’, *Uusi Suometar*, 21 September 1901; ‘Kirjallisuutta ja taidetta: Ranskalainen taidenäyttely Helsinkiin’, *Mikkelin Sanomat*, 25 July 1901.

4 See Anthea Callen. ‘Impressionism: Colour and Light’, in Sointu Fritze and Lene Wahlsten (eds.), *Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 169. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2023, 13–45.

5 Berndt Lindholm. ‘1870 Bref från Paris’, *Helsingfors Dagblad*, 18 February 1870.

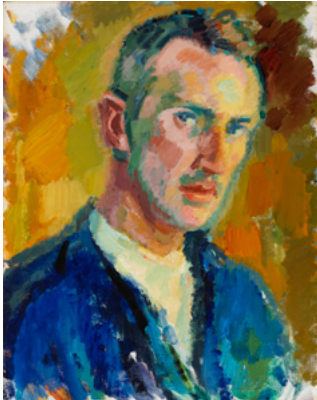
6 See Anthea Callen. ‘Paul Durand-Ruel. Dealing in Impressionism’, in Sointu Fritze and Lene Wahlsten (eds.), *Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 169. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2023, 12–23.

7 Helena Westermarck’s letter to Constance Westermarck, 16 April 1880. Åbo Akademi University Library, Turku. See Riitta Konttinen. *Totuus enemmän kuin kauneus: naistaiteilija, realismi ja naturalismi 1880-luvulla: Amélie Lundahl, Maria Wiik, Helena Westermarck, Helene Schjerfbeck ja Elin Danielson*. Helsinki: Otava, 114.

8 See Anthea Callen. ‘Impressionism: Colour and Light’, 13–45.

Magnus Enckell, Self-Portrait, 1918, oil on canvas, 42cm x 33.5cm
 Finnish National Gallery /
 Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
 Hannu Pakarinen



Magnus Enckell, Portrait of A.W. Finch, 1915, oil on canvas, 46.5cm x 36.5cm
 Herman and Elisabeth Hallonblad Collection,
 Finnish National Gallery /
 Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
 Jenni Nurminen



what it represented.⁹ Later, Westermarck, who was also an art critic, emphasised the influence of the Impressionists on artists of the day.¹⁰

Albert Edelfelt, who in the late 1800s and early 1900s was the great authority within the Finnish art scene, was another who did not seize on Impressionism, although he defended it. It is telling that even in the late 19th century the general attitude towards Impressionist-inspired works in the Nordic countries was relatively cautious.¹¹ Regarding his own relationship with Impressionism, Edelfelt wrote in 1887 about the horrors he experienced at the Galerie Petit: 'I don't remember being in such a confused state for a long time. However, my paintings seem to be doing better at Petit than I thought, despite my unspeakable concern and self-loathing. There are too many Impressionists there, and their bright Berlin-blue and ultramarine skies, their yellow and grass-green landscapes, and their purple shadows kill all the honourable and modest paintings that are hung next to them.' Despite his efforts to paint in intense, bright colours, Edelfelt felt that his works looked dusty grey and dirty alongside the Impressionists.¹²

A.W. Finch and Magnus Enckell, brighteners of Finnish artistic taste

It was precisely a certain kind of northern pallor and dustiness in the works of the Finnish art section of the 1908 Paris Autumn Salon that caused a stir in Finland and aroused its artists from their colour hibernation.¹³ However, before this mass revival, further influences were needed. Alfred William Finch (1854–1930), an internationally renowned English-born Belgian artist, brought the possibilities of colour painting to the attention of a new generation of artists. An interest in outdoor life and vitalism and a few exhibitions that shook up the Finnish art scene helped stir the winds of change in the country.¹⁴

When Finch arrived in Finland in 1897, he was known in art circles as an Impressionist theorist. He was one of the founders of the group Les Vingt (Les XX), which

- 9 Helena Westermarck's letter to Alexandra (Sanny) Blomqvist, 30 April 1880. Blomqvist collection. National Library of Finland, Helsinki; Helena Westermarck's letter to Constance Westermarck, 16 April 1880, Åbo Akademi University Library, Turku. See Konttinen, *Totuus enemmän kuin kauneus*, 114.
- 10 Helena Westermarck. *Tre Konstnärinnor. Fanny Churberg, Maria Wiik och Sigrid af Forselles*. Helsingfors: Söderström & co Förlagsaktiebolag, 1937, 89.
- 11 Albert Edelfelt's letter to his mother Aleksandra Edelfelt, Stockholm 24 March 1885. *Albert Edelfelts brev. Elektronisk brev- och konstutgåva*, utg. Maria Vainio-Kurtakko & Henrika Tandefelt & Elisabeth Stubb, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2014–20, <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:sls-3192-1403107528540> (accessed 7 November 2023). In 1885 Peder Krøyer had sold his painting depicting the beach life in Skagen to the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. However, according to Edelfelt, it was not put on display due to its 'excessive impressionism'.
- 12 Albert Edelfelt's letter to his mother Alexandra Edelfelt, Paris 12 May 1887. *Albert Edelfelts brev. Elektronisk brev- och konstutgåva*, utg. Maria Vainio-Kurtakko & Henrika Tandefelt & Elisabeth Stubb, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2014–20, <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:sls-3314-1403107529760> (accessed 7 November 2023). Georges Petit (1856–1920) was a Parisian gallerist and art dealer who showed Impressionist art. In that exhibition, Edelfelt's works which were on display included: *Girls in a Rowing Boat*, *August*, *Log Raft*, *Paris in the Snow*, *The Luxembourg Gardens* and the *Portrait Study of Countess Augusta Lewenhaupt*.
- 13 See Riitta Ojanperä. 'The 1908 Salon d'Automne Exhibition of Finnish Art', in Sointu Fritze and Lene Wahlsten (eds.), *Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 169. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2023, 69–74.
- 14 See Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff. 'An Episode of Colour in Finnish Art, 1900–1916' and Marja Lahelma. 'Sunlight and Nudity. Themes of Vitalism in Early 20th-Century Finnish Painting', in Sointu Fritze and Lene Wahlsten (eds.), *Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 169. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2023, 81–99 and 107–17.



Magnus Enckell,
From Suursaari Island, 1902,
 gouache and pencil on paper,
 46.8cm x 66.4cm
 Finnish National Gallery /
 Ateneum Art Museum
 Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
 Jenni Nurminen



defended the new movement.¹⁵ This group organised exhibitions on a regular basis between 1884 and 1893. It included a wide range of artists, from Impressionists to Symbolists and Neo-Impressionists, including Finch himself. The early 20th century was an artistically lively time in Finland, where art circles began to take note of the new avant-garde aspirations.¹⁶ Finch came to Finland as a ceramicist, not a painter, though. In emphasising the importance of the total work of art in the spirit of the Arts and Crafts movement, Finch contributed to the shift of Finnish art and crafts from nationalism towards international modernism.

However Finch was also known as a pointillist, and he began to exhibit his paintings in Finland after the Iris ceramics factory closed down in 1902. Wentzel Hagelstam wrote an extensive article about Finch for *Ateneum* magazine in 1902.¹⁷ The same year, Finch wrote an article for *Euterpe* magazine entitled 'Georges Seurat och den néo-impresionistiska tekniken' ('Georges Seurat and the Neo-Impressionist technique').¹⁸ Information was spreading in Finland about a new kind of colour art phenomenon, at least in art circles. In collaboration with Magnus Enckell, Finch began to prepare for an exhibition of French and Belgian art at the Ateneum in 1903.

Enckell apparently came to know Finch before he arrived in Finland, and both worked in the circles around the newly founded *Ateneum* (1898) and *Euterpe* (1900) magazines. Gogland (Suursaari) became the summer centre of a new kind of colour painting. Enckell

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- 15 Later, when the Septem group was founded in Finland in 1912, the choice of its name was influenced by that of the earlier group, which referred to 20 artists (Les XX).
- 16 Olli Valkonen. 'A. W. Finch taidemaalarina Suomessa 1902–30', in Anneli Lindström and Olli Valkonen (eds.), *A.W. Finch 1854–1930*. Helsinki: Valtion taidemuseo / Ateneumin taidemuseo, 1991, 28.
- 17 Wentzel Hagelstam. 'A.W. Finch', *Ateneum* 1902. Helsingfors: Aktiebolaget F. Tilgmans förlag, (1902) 1903, 258–66.
- 18 Alfred William Finch. 'Georges Seurat och den néo-impresionistiska tekniken', *Euterpe*, 14 June 1902. Seurat, who died in 1891, was often featured in the Les XX group's exhibitions. The first work by Finch known to have been painted in Finland, *An August Night* (1898), which has since been donated to the Ateneum collection (gift of Arvid Sourander, 20 February 1941), was pointillist in the spirit of Seurat.

visited the island almost every summer between 1901 and 1912. Others who spent summers on the island included Finch, Verner Thomé and Werner Åström. The architect Sigurd Frosterus and Ateneum's chief curator Torsten Stjernschantz also visited.¹⁹ In addition to artists, two prominent advocates of Neo-Impressionism, the architects Gustaf Strengell and Sigurd Frosterus, contributed to establishing a new conception of art.²⁰



Akseli Gallen-Kallela,
Otto Donner Junior, 1897,
 etching, 12.2cm x 8.2cm
 Finnish National Gallery /
 Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
 Ainur Nasretidin



Starting shot fired in 1904

The exhibition of French and Belgian art at the Ateneum was a significant step on the way to brightening the Finnish artists' palette. The friendship between Enckell and Finch was a crucial starting point for the success of the exhibition project. In December 1903, Enckell wrote enthusiastically to his sister Aina: 'Besides, we, led by Finch, are putting together a French and Belgian exhibition that it seems will be exceptionally fun.'²¹ Expectations were also high in the press, and the exhibition was hailed as a milestone in the Finnish art scene. There was clearly a sense of being at a watershed: the old was no longer working, something new was needed, with a new kind of attitude.

Using the pseudonym 'Reporter', an anonymous writer expressed great anticipation in the Swedish-language newspaper *Helsingfors-Posten*: 'The most interesting, or even revolutionary, will be the French and Belgian exhibition to be opened on the 30th of this month.' Convinced of the significance of the exhibition, the writer continued: 'This exhibition will be unique not only for our country, but for the entire Nordic region. In this exhibition, we will get to know several of the most famous flag-bearers of modern French art and their particularly representative works, many of which are world famous and admired and not just known to art circles and the few.'²² The Helsinki audience was said to have a special opportunity to see modern art in the Great Hall of the Ateneum in late January.²³

Similarly, the Finnish-language press expected the exhibition to open up new perspectives for the Finnish public.

Uusi Suometar published articles in advance of the exhibition in two issues, reflecting on how unique the exhibition was for Finland and the entire Nordic region.²⁴ In *Päivälehti*, a writer using the pseudonym P. A-i. gushed: 'What a fortune it is to see together all the great men of

- 19 Anne-Maria Pennonen. 'Magnus Enckell on the islands in the Gulf of Finland', in Hanne Selkokari (ed.), *Magnus Enckell 1870–1925*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 141. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2020, 73–87. In Enckell's 1902 painting *Boy and Sail* (Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum), one can observe the transition from asceticism of Symbolism to the stage of colour painting.
- 20 Jukka Cadogan. 'Sigurd Frosterus', in Hanne Selkokari (ed.), *Magnus Enckell 1870–1925*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 141. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2020, 118–19.
- 21 Magnus Enckell's letter to his sister Aina Helena Allén, December 1903. Magnus Enckell Archive. National Library of Finland, Helsinki.
- 22 Signatures [Pseudonym] Reporter. 'Den blifvande fransk-belgiska utställningen', *Helsingfors-Posten*, 9 January 1904.
- 23 'Fransk och belgisk konstutställning i Helsingfors', *Helsingfors-Posten*, 6 December 1903; 'Fransk och Belgisk konstutställning i Helsingfors', *Finlands Allmänna tidning*, 9 December 1903.
- 24 'Kirjallisuutta ja taidetta: Ranskalais-belgialainen taidenäyttely Helsinkiin', *Uusi Suometar*, 8 December 1903; 'Kirjallisuutta ja taidetta: Ranskalais-belgialainen taidenäyttely', *Uusi Suometar*, 10 January 1904.



Catalogue de l'Exposition d'Artistes Français et Belges, Helsingfors 1904. The catalogue for the exhibition of Franco-Belgian art organised at the Ateneum in 1904. The artworks and the prices are listed in the catalogue, e.g. Monet (nos. 40 and 41), Pissarro and Puvis de Chavannes. Finnish National Gallery Library

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Ainur Nasretdin

this movement – with the exception of its initiator, Manet, all that glorious multitude: Renoir, Degas, Sisley, Pissarro, Monet. For these names mean nothing more and nothing less than the generation of artists who created the only absolutely independent and original art of the century, the art in which the new century, the new era of human history, was most fully reflected and took its artistic form.²⁵

Then as today, the cost of staging the exhibition was a subject of interest and discussion. The insurance sum was significant: 'As an example of how highly valued these paintings are, even in the art market, one notes that a collection of 18 works alone, sent to the exhibition by the Parisian art dealer and collector Durand-Ruel, requires an insurance premium of 174,000 francs.'²⁶

Finch and Enckell convinced Otto Donner Jr., an art patron, businessman and humanist, to serve as the exhibition's financier and producer. The show was a selling exhibition, with deals overseen by Jean Poirot, a lecturer in French at the University of Helsinki, who seems to have been a significant link between Finnish cultural circles and France.²⁷ According to a postscript in the exhibition catalogue, Poirot took care of sales and other contacts.²⁸ Putting this exhibition together was no easy task, however. Edelfelt concludes his extensive article

25 P. A–i. 'Ranskalais-belgialainen taidenäyttely', *Päivälehti*, 3 February 1904.

26 Signatures [Pseudonym] Reporter. 'Den blifvande fransk-belgiska utställningen', *Helsingfors-Posten*, 9 January 1904.

27 J. J. Tikkanen. 'Impressionismen i historiskt sammanhang', *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 14 February 1904; J. J. Tikkanen. 'Den moderna impressionismen', *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 23 February 1904. In his extensive articles, J.J. Tikkanen discussed Impressionism. At the end, he had high praise for the Franco-Belgian exhibition and its organisers.

28 Elina Seppälä. *Ranskalainen Eurooppa ja suomalainen Suomi: Jean-Louis Perret kulttuurinvälittäjänä ja verkostoitujana 1919–1945*. Doctoral dissertation. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2014, 29, https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/44773/sepp%C3%A41%C3%A4_v%C3%A4it%C3%B6skirja.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed 20.4.2023).



Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Model*, undated, pastel on canvas, 86.5cm x 54.5cm
Antell Collections, Finnish National Gallery / Sinebrychoff Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Jenni Nurminen



with its comprehensive analysis of the exhibition by praising the organisers and, above all, Poirot who, he wrote, ‘does not seem to know the word “impossible”’.²⁹

From the Durand-Ruel gallery, works by Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley were shown at the exhibition. Besides Finch, the rest of the artists in the exhibition were mainly contacts from his Brussels period: Caran d’Ache (pseudonym of the satirist and political cartoonist Emmanuel Poiré), Henri-Edmond Cross, Maurice Denis, Paul Dubois, Jean-Louis Forain, Pierre-Georges Jeannot, Georges Lemmen, Constantin Meunier, Théo van Rysselberghe, Paul Signac, Jacob Smits, Théophile Steinlen and Henri Thomas.

Positive reviews and attention for the exhibition

In general, the exhibition received positive press attention. Most articles praised the works of the well-known old master, Puvis de Chavannes. ‘Of the famous names, perhaps the greatest attention can be paid to Puvis de Chavannes, who died in 1898. This painter, whose art is marked by idealism and harmony, was one of those great spirits who worked and moved forward until the final autumn of old age...’³⁰

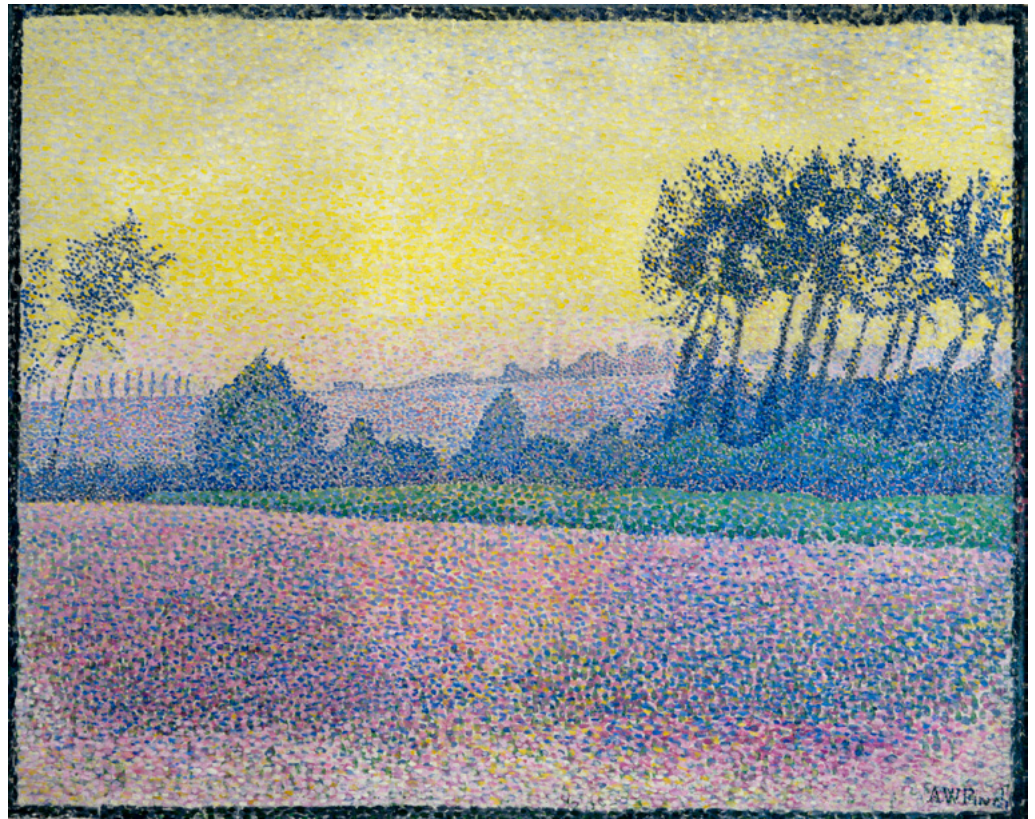
The works of the Impressionists were analysed while those of the Neo-Impressionists were also mentioned. A problem with the exhibition may have been that, in addition to the Impressionists, it included works related to the realist tradition (Meunier), as well as the Symbolist tradition and Synthetism (Denis and Puvis de Chavannes). ‘The French and Belgian exhibition, which opened a few days ago at the Ateneum, has been called impressionistic. The name is indeed correct, as the aforementioned art movement direction undoubtedly gives the exhibition its most noticeable undertone and defining stamp; but on the other hand, names that never undersigned the artistic revolution of the seventies are also represented in the exhibition.’³¹ In his series of articles, Edelfelt praised Meunier, who was linked to naturalism. The exhibition also provided a chance to encounter Finch more extensively as a painter for the first time: ‘In addition to Meunier, we are able to make a pleasant acquaintance with the new

29 Albert Edelfelt. ‘Den fransk-belgiska utställningen i Ateneum’, *Helsingfors-Posten*, 30 January 1904.

30 Signaturen [Pseudonym] Reporter. ‘Den blifvande fransk-belgiska utställningen’, *Helsingfors-Posten*, 9 January 1904.

31 E. K-vi. ‘Ranskalais-belgialainen taidenäyttely’, *Päivälehti*, 14 February 1904.

Alfred William Finch,
Sunset Landscape
 (previously known as *Road to Nieuport*), 1892, oil on
 canvas, 54cm x 67cm
 Nils Dahlström Collection,
 Turku Art Museum
 Photo: Turku Art Museum /
 Kari Lehtinen



side of our friend A.W. Finch, as a painter. Until now, we have known him only as an excellent ceramicist and etcher and as one of our best friends (...). His three landscapes are painted with pure impressionistic dot painting...³²

Some newspapers also took a historically informed perspective. Impressionism was seen as an outdated historical art form, which of course it was. According to a writer using the pseudonym E.K-vi, 'the period of upheaval shown by Impressionism has been and gone. The representatives of the movement are dead or obsolete'. However, the writer also saw in their works 'still something young and gallant, immediate and powerful. And no wonder; after all, these paintings marked the dawn of a time that strove for truth and freedom in the field of art!'³³ Architect Jac Ahrenberg was downright cynical about colour art: 'Despite the Impressionists, luminists [and] punctualists, the exhibition also features a few works by some of the most prominent artists of our time.'³⁴

Since the Ateneum exhibition was also a selling show, the Antell delegation bought a few works from it. The selections included the pastel painting *Model* (listed as *Étude de femme* in the exhibition catalogue) by Puvis de Chavannes, which was already well known to Finnish artists. It was purchased for the Ateneum collection at a cost of 10,000 marks.³⁵

32 Albert Edelfelt. 'Den fransk-belgiska utställningen II', *Helsingfors-Posten*, 31 January 1904. The works mentioned were: *The Wellington Racecourse in Drizzle* (Ostende, 1888), *Marine* (Seascape, 1903), *Meules* (Haystacks, pastel, 1890) and/or *Road to Nieuport* (1888). Today the last-mentioned painting is in the collection of Turku Art Museum, ND 33. This painting has long been known as *Country Road by the North Sea*. In connection with the 'Colour & Light' exhibition we were able to identify the original name as *Road to Nieuport*.

33 E. K-vi. 'Ranskalais-belgialainen taidenäyttely', *Päivälehti*, 14 February 1904.

34 Jac Ahrenberg. 'Den fransk-belgiska utställningen', *Finsk tidskrift*, 3 March 1904.

35 See Timo Huusko. 'The Power and Decorativeness of Colour. A History of Acquisitions from Puvis de Chavannes to Edgar Degas', in Sointu Fritze and Lene Wahlsten (eds.), *Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism*. Ateneum Publications Vol. 169. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum, 2023, 131–35.



On 13 February 1904 the satirical weekly *Fyren* drew attention to the exhibition of Franco-Belgian art at the Ateneum. The illustration on the magazine's front page depicts three men standing among the paintings. Magnus Enckell on the left and Alfred William Finch in the centre can be identified. The man on the right could be Albert Edelfelt or Otto Donner Junior. The second illustration reproduces some of the exhibited works with witty captions.

National Library of Finland, Fennica Collection

Photos: National Library of Finland

Other works acquired from the exhibition were Meunier's pastel piece *Caster* and bronze sculpture *Woodcutter*. The works were reasonably priced (600–1,050 francs). From the acquisitions, it can be concluded that the committee that wielded the greatest (purchasing) power in Finnish art was not yet ready for the revolution in colour painting. For the same price, it would have been possible to acquire, for example, a painting by Pissarro: *The Garden of the Tuileries on a Winter Afternoon*³⁶ or *La Place du Théâtre Français* (both 10,000 francs). Monet's painting *The Cliffs at Etretat* was the most expensive at 15,000 francs. Meanwhile, his painting *On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt* was priced at 12,000 francs, the same as the

36 Minutes of the Antell Delegation, 1904. Antell Delegation Archive. Library of Parliament, Helsinki. In the Antell Delegation, those in charge at that time included Professor E.G. Palmén, Mayor E. Öhman, R. von Willebrand, Professor Gustaf Nyström and artist Albert Edelfelt; see Tuukka Talvio. *H. F. Antell ja Antellin valtuuskunta*. Helsinki: Museovirasto, 1993, 87–88.



Constantin Meunier, *Caster*, 1902, pastel and gouache on paper, 80cm x 67cm
 Antell Collections, Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

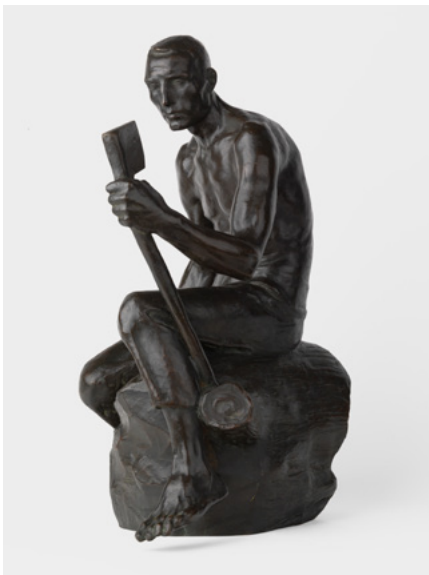
Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis



Camille Pissarro, *Place du Théâtre Français, Paris: Rain*, 1898, oil on canvas, 73.66cm x 91.44cm. A painting by Pissarro with the same motif was exhibited at the Ateneum Art Museum in 1904

The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Arts



Constantin Meunier, *Woodcutter*, undated, bronze, ht. 51cm
 Antell Collections, Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Aleks Talve



pastel by Puvis de Chavannes. Unfortunately, there is not a single Impressionist painting in the collection of the Finnish National Gallery.³⁷

The impact of the exhibition on subsequent colour art cannot be underestimated. For the first time, the Finnish art audience – albeit small in number – and artists were able to see Impressionist works and works related to the tradition in Finland. Unfortunately, despite all the enthusiasm, the exhibition was seen by only a couple of thousand visitors.³⁸ Strengell wrote with disappointment: ‘In the 25 days in which the exhibition has been open, about 1,700 visitors have visited.’ It seems to have been a kind of elite exhibition, visited by only a select few.³⁹

Elitist or not, the journey of Finnish artists moved on, perhaps on a meandering path but inexorably towards the purification of the palette and new concepts of art.

37 *Catalogue de l'Exposition d'Artistes Français et Belges: Helsingfors 1904*. Exhibition catalogue. Finnish National Gallery Library.

38 ‘Kirjekortti Helsingistä’, *Hämetär*, 3 March 1904.

39 Gustaf Strengell. ‘Den fransk-belgiska utställningen’, *Helsingfors-Posten*, 24 February 1904.

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Peder Balke's Visions of the Far North

Gill Crabbe, *FNG Research*

As the Sinebrychoff Art Museum, Helsinki, presents the Norwegian painter of the Arctic Peder Balke for the first time to Finnish audiences, Gill Crabbe meets the show's co-curator Knut Ljøgdøt to discuss his collaboration with those involved in the exhibition

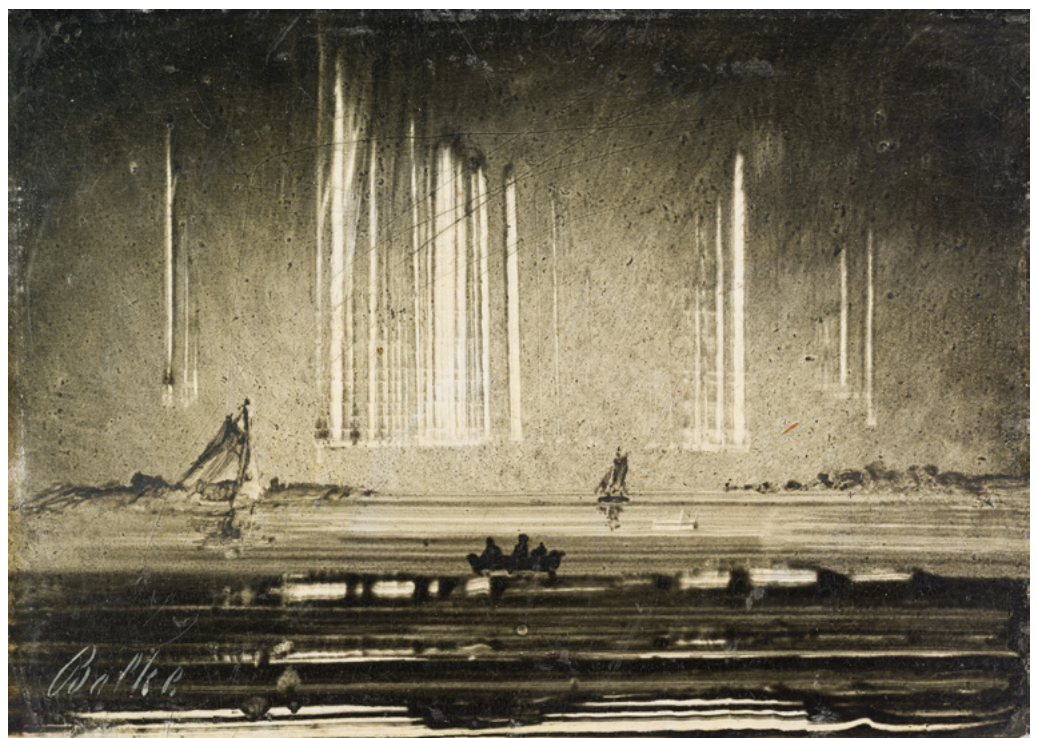
When we think of the Arctic explorers of old we might imagine elaborate maps of the Ultima Thule adorned with images of writhing sea monsters, puff-cheeked deities of gale-force winds, or square-rigged ships foundering on rocks. The extreme climate in the Far North lends itself to sublime depictions of turbulent storms, dramatic mountainscapes and awe-inspiring glaciers carving out deep valleys. Yet while much of the region remains just as inhospitable as it was centuries ago, climate change is causing a different kind of overwhelm. As global warming accelerates and we are increasingly exposed to images such as monumental chunks of glacier plunging into the ocean, the Sinebrychoff Art Museum's monographic exhibition of Peder Balke (1804–87), the first Norwegian artist to travel to the Arctic to paint its landscapes, is both timely and urgent.

'Peder Balke – The Spell of the Arctic' is the first exhibition of the Norwegian artist to be mounted in Finland. Balke himself was clearly spellbound, as his journey along the west

**Peder Balke, *Northern Lights*,
1870s, oil on panel,
10.5cm x 15.5cm**

**Private collection, Nordnorsk
Kunstmuseum**

Photo: Kim G. Skytte / Nordnorsk
Kunstmuseum, Tromsø





Peder Balke, *North Cape*, 1848, oil on canvas, 102cm x 140cm
 The Gundersen Collection, Oslo

Photo: Morten Heden Aamot / The Gundersen Collection

coast of Norway to the North Cape in 1832 was to be a lifelong source of inspiration for his paintings. Scenes of the North Cape and the Vardsø fortress painted from 1845 up until the 1870s are on display in the show, as are soaring mountains (*The Seven Sisters Mountain Range*, c. 1845–50), topological wonders (*Jostedalsglacier*, 1840s) seascapes at night (*Moonlight on the Coast of Steigen*, 1842) and magical displays of the Aurora Borealis (*Northern Lights over Coastal Landscape*, 1870s). The perfect subject matter for a painter of the sublime, even for a Romantic visionary.

Like the landscape, Balke's story had its own dramatic twists and turns. From humble beginnings, this son of landless peasants forged a career that took him to the Royal Drawing School in Christiania (now Oslo), to the Far North of Norway to paint, to Dresden to learn from his forebears in landscape painting such as Johan Christian Dahl (1788–1857), and later to Paris to receive commissions from the king of the French Louis-Philippe. Around 1850, when he was back home in Christiania, Balke's career plummeted and he retreated from public exhibitions, turning instead to social reform, politics and building community. But he continued to paint for friends and acquaintances, and his newfound freedom from the public gaze and the art market saw his work shift from grand works of sublime character (*North Cape*, 1848), to small-scale iconic works that became increasingly abstracted expressions of a Romantic visionary (*North Cape*, 1860s–70s), still articulated through the subjects closest to his heart – his memories of his expedition to the Far North.

So what and who brought Balke to Helsinki for this exhibition? It comes on the initiative of the Sinebrychoff Art Museum Director Kirsi Eskelinen, who has long been an admirer of the Romantic painters Caspar David Friedrich and William Turner, but who also knew that it would understandably be difficult to borrow works by these artists. 'I was talking to the Finnish art critic Timo Valjakka about my dreams of Friedrich and Turner, when he asked me if I knew of



Curators of the exhibition, Director of the Nordic Institute of Art, Dr philos. Knut Ljøgdø and Museum Director of the Sinebrychoff Art Museum, PhD Kirsi Eskelinen

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Hannu Pakarinen

Peder Balke,' she says. 'We had a very interesting conversation about Balke, and this was the impetus for me to organise an exhibition. It was also important to me from the start that Balke was presented in the context of his time. It therefore includes works by other Romantics who inspired him or served as his teachers, such as Friedrich.'

At the beginning Eskelinen started curating the show herself, but she soon realised that she would need a Balke expert to co-curate the exhibition. 'Then I came across the name of Knut Ljøgdø and the Nordic Institute of Art', she explains. 'I thought we also needed someone who knew the Norwegian museum scene and could introduce us to the museums. After all, this exhibition is the first time that we have collaborated with Norwegian museums on such a large scale. Balke's total output is not very extensive and the works are in numerous museums around Norway and many are in a private collection (the Gundersen Collection), which was difficult to access,' she continues. Knut Ljøgdø's expertise and networks were crucial in this respect too.

The Nordic Institute of Art (NIA) was co-founded in 2017 by Knut Ljøgdø (Dr philos.), who is co-curator of the exhibition along with Eskelinen. Ljøgdø has been one of Balke's most consistent champions in recent times. 'I had for a long time been interested in the artist, but I first collaborated on Balke outside of Norway in 2014 in the London show of his work at the National Gallery,' he says. 'It was partly to demonstrate that, actually, we do have more historic artists in Norway than Edvard Munch. I think that smaller countries tend to believe they only have one or two internationally important historic artists.'

Creating more international interest in the less well-known artists from the Nordic region is a major reason that the NIA was set up. As an alumnus of The Courtauld Institute in London (as well as of the University of Oslo) and a former curator at Norway's National Gallery and Museum Director of the Northern Norway Art Museum, his network of connections places him well for the collaboration with the Sinebrychoff Art Museum. 'Independent institutes are working to bring out those hidden artists. So for us it's important that museums and universities also stimulate this kind of research,' he says. 'This is what was so good about collaborating with colleagues at the Sinebrychoff Art Museum in order to expand the perspectives on Balke.'

Ljøgodt's vision of promoting research into neglected artists is one that concentrates on facilitating more intimate, in-depth shows. At the same time his approach also questions art-historical notions of national artistic trends. 'Rather than look at national art histories, we can consider Nordic art as a shared art history because there are close similarities in the Nordic region, especially in the 19th century,' he says. 'The Nordic artists in Paris, for example, would stick together because outside the Nordic region they felt like they were one people.' Indeed, Ljøgodt has been commissioned to write a general historical survey of Nordic art by Yale publishers which will further develop his connections across the Nordic region.

The Balke exhibition at Sinebrychoff Art Museum is a good example of the mutual benefits to be gained from the collaboration with the Institute. From the NIA's viewpoint it promotes a Nordic artist who has been under represented, putting him more firmly on the map. From the museum's standpoint it introduces a significant Nordic painter to Finnish audiences and stimulates interest in the historical transnational contexts of the painter, as well as opening new themes from the research for the show.

'We were like a team from the beginning', says Ljøgodt. 'I was first contacted by Kirsi. Then I visited the museum and Claudia de Brün, the project manager, showed us the beautiful gallery in the basement which prompted discussion on possible different angles for the exhibition – should it be Balke the painter, his technique, the way to experimentation and almost abstraction? Or should we concentrate more on the discovery of the North? Then Kirsi said, can we do both?'

The show, and its accompanying catalogue, also draws on Ljøgodt's extensive research knowledge from previous exhibitions and on his book on Balke, *Sublime North* (2020) – based on works in the Gundersen Collection – in addition to his well-established networks for securing loans. 'For this project I thought it would be interesting to look more closely at the Nordic, and especially the Finnish, connections. We knew that Balke had visited Helsinki briefly, but thanks to the collaboration with Claudia and the Sinebrychoff, we could verify it and find the specific dates. Also, I thought – in dialogue with Kirsi and Claudia – that it would be interesting to look at the so-called discovery of the Nordic and Arctic landscape and the role travelling artists played in this. Artists like Anders Fredrik Skjöldbrand (1757–1834), as well as participants of the *Recherche* expedition, all visited Finland in connection with their Arctic travels. There are so many elements here that connect the histories of our two countries.'

Ljøgodt's wish list would have included several paintings from the Louvre, and works from a private collection in New York, but budget challenges prompted the team to concentrate the search for loans to Norway, Sweden and Finland. 'However, we had so many

**Wilhelm Maximilian
Carpelan, *The Sognefjord
Meets the Sea*, 1819,
watercolour,
14.8cm x 24.6cm
Aspelin-Haapkylä
Collection, Finnish National
Gallery / Sinebrychoff Art
Museum**

Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
Hannu Pakarinen



Charles-Melchior Descourtis,
*The Lütschine River Issuing
 from the Lower Grindelwald
 Glacier*, undated, aquatint on
 paper, 21.7cm x 32.5cm
 Antell Collections, Ramsay
 Bequest, Finnish National
 Gallery / Sinebrychoff Art
 Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
 Hannu Pakarinen



museums and private collections in Norway to draw on that I don't think we lack anything to tell the full story here,' he points out.

Interestingly, such limitations can turn up new significant works. 'I think some of the works that are often reproduced in books and loaned by the larger museums that are considered part of the canon are there because they hang in the museums, but I think it's also good to find new works of importance,' he explains. Here he mentions the large-scale painting from the Gundersen Collection – which loaned 18 of its 50 works by Balke – of the North Cape, painted in Dresden in 1848, which he believes is easily on a par with the more well-known variant hanging in the National Museum of Norway. There has also been the discovery of a new small-scale painting of the same geographical landmark, *North Cape* (c. 1845), by KODE Bergen Art Museum. 'KODE's portfolio includes the house museum of the famous Norwegian composer and violinist Ole Bull (1810–80), known as the Paganini of Norway, who was also a friend of Peder Balke,' explains Ljøgodt. 'A year or two ago this work was discovered wrapped up in their archive, and they brought it to me for attribution. I said it would have been typical of Balke to give a small-sized painting like that to one of his friends.' It is on public display for the first time in the Helsinki exhibition.

As the first Norwegian artist to travel to the Arctic region, in 1832, Balke's subject matter and its art-historical context is a major theme of the exhibition. 'To find a context in which Balke is the main character we wanted to show his work in a wider perspective – that the "discovery" of the Nordic and particularly the Arctic landscape was part of a larger movement at that time,' Ljøgodt points out. Accordingly, in the first room the exhibition presents paintings by his mentors, the Norwegian landscape artist Johan Christian Dahl (*View of a Glacier*, 1844) and Sweden's leading landscape painter of the period Carl John Fahlcrantz (1774–1861, *Sunset in The Mountains*, undated) alongside Balke's works. In the second room there are drawings by Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) – whose works Balke saw when he visited Dresden in the 1830s – showing wilderness scenes (*Hilltop with Rock and Naked Tree*, 1825), as well as ruins typical of the German Romantic period, presented here in conversation with Balke's large painting *North Cape* (1848), which while it might seem to echo the typical moonlit scenes of the period in terms of atmosphere, here shows the uniquely magical ethereal light of the midnight sun filtering through clouds above serene waters.

For the museum, it was important to generate research that would reveal links to the Finnish National Gallery's collections, as it owns no works by Balke himself. Claudia de Brün therefore began to search the FNG collections, to expand the contextual history surrounding the artist by researching earlier, as well as contemporaneous, artist explorers painting the North and related archival materials such as travelogues.

'We thought it would be interesting to show the imagery of the Arctic before Balke,' says de Brün. 'In the FNG's collections there are strong connections to the Old Masters such as the Dutch painter Allaert van Everdingen (1621–75), who visited southern Norway and Sweden in the 1640s, and whose etchings in the exhibition depict the Northern landscapes of a wild and inhospitable Nordic character.'

From among Balke's immediate forerunners the FNG has fine watercolours of the North by the Finnish-born army officer Wilhelm Maximilian Carpelan (1787–1830), such as *The Sognefjord Meets the Sea* (1819), executed on one of his journeys as *aide de camp* to the Swedish governor in Norway with a view to mapping the country. While Carpelan is more widely known in Sweden and Norway, in Finland he is something of a hidden treasure. 'Carpelan is truly a Nordic artist,' says Ljøgodt. 'Born in Finland, educated in Sweden, travelled in Norway and a pioneer in depicting the Norwegian landscape.' The Finnish National Gallery's Antell Collections also bore fruit, such as Charles-Melchior Descourtis' aquatint *The Lüttschine River Issuing from the Lower Grindelwald Glacier*.

When de Brün – in dialogue with Ljøgodt – started to research illustrated travelogues from Balke's time she looked to the National Library of Finland. 'The most interesting for me were the big folio works such as the prints from the *La Recherche* polar expedition of French scientists and artists in 1838–40,' she explains.

A major contextual theme for this exhibition is presented in rooms devoted to the development of Balke's own artistic perspectives and techniques. From the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm comes J.M.W. Turner's *A View of Deal* (1835–40), this show being the first time that Balke's works are exhibited alongside his great British contemporary. 'Here we are showing how Balke's technique evolves towards what we consider as abstraction – although he might not have thought in this way himself,' Ljøgodt explains. Paintings such as *From Nordland* (1860s), show how Balke experimented with very thin layers of transparent colour, wiping back some areas to the white ground, here leaving the motif of a mountain to dominate. Visible fingerprints in several works are testament to moments where he dispenses with the brush. 'Balke might not be working in a similar painting style to Turner, but in a similar way of thinking – starting by looking at nature but eventually removing oneself so much that it's not really about nature, but rather about experimenting with form, to give form to an inner vision of the landscape.'

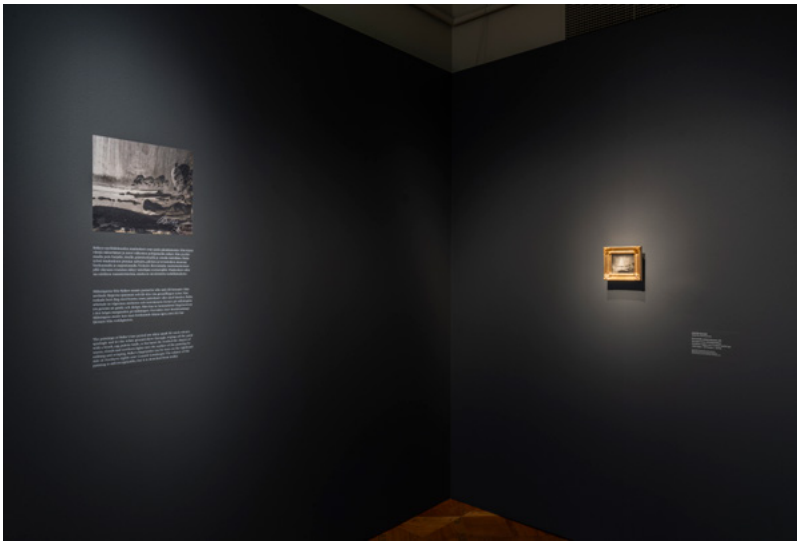
In this sense Balke belongs, argues Ljøgodt, to a tranche of visionary Romantic artists – visionary both in their depiction of the landscape but also visionary in their experimentation with form, placing Balke among the likes of Victor Hugo (1802–85), Eugenio Lucas Velázquez (1817–70) and Thomas Cole (1801–48) in the US, as well as his Norwegian contemporary Lars Hertervig (1830–1902).

This is actually the subject of another exhibition, 'Visionary Romantics', presently on show at the Stavanger Art Museum in Norway, having earlier this year been shown at the Museo Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid, organised by the two museums jointly with

Peder Balke, *Landscape Study from Nordland*, 1860s, oil on paper, 34.5cm x 26cm
Gothenburg Museum of Art

Photo: Hossein Sehatlou /
 Gothenburg Museum of Art





Installation view of Peder Balke, *Northern Lights over Coastal Landscape*, 1870s, oil on cardboard, 10.5cm x 12cm
 National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Hannu Pakarinen

the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica and the Nordic Institute of Art.

But doesn't the Northern landscape naturally lend itself to this kind of reduced colour palette and simplified form, rather than being a sign of a movement towards abstraction? 'Most depictions by mid- and late 19th-century artists were more realist, and many don't capture the grandeur of the landscape,' counters Ljøgodt. 'They were too eager to paint every little detail, whereas Balke managed to paint the bigger picture and in that sense he is truer to that nature.'

Indeed as Balke progressed, the essence of the natural forces of the Far North were captured through a reduction of scale, as well as of form. In the room usually reserved for imposing star works, Claudia de Brün suggested hanging just one tiny oil painting, *Northern Lights Over Coastal Landscape*, from the 1870s, depicted on a format measuring just 10.5cm x 12cm. It is a masterstroke of exhibition design, given that such small paintings are often swamped by larger works and thus passed quickly by. Instead one is invited to become intimate with the piece, drawn towards it by a curiosity that is complemented by the surrounding dark-coloured walls which – devoid of artworks – support close looking at this single



Peder Balke, *Shipwreck*, 1870s, oil on cardboard, 10.5cm x 12.7cm
 Drammens Museum

Photo: Drammens Museum

work. This sense of intimacy is carried through to the next room which displays just ten small works from the 1870s that appear to become almost totally abstracted, save for one or two motifs. 'Balke is working like a musician who is repeating the same *étude*; using repetition in order to refine his technique and style,' says de Brün. 'It is the same but it changes. Each time he repeats the same motifs and places and minor motifs, like the boat and the birds, they develop into something more abstract or more expressive.' Here the Northern Lights are conveyed through a vertical scraping back through the paint, while horizontal scrapes evoke the Arctic Sea at calm (*Northern Lights*, 1870s). Swirled wipings become stormy seas on which a ship struggles, while the black specks of birds flounder in the sky (*Shipwreck*, 1870s).

The final room of the exhibition presents a further shift in scale, showing Balke's commissioned wall paintings for the wealthy owner of a Norwegian manorial estate. *Presterød Manor in Tønsberg* (c. 1860) measuring 1.5m x 2.5m, depicts the manorial landscape in the pale transparent hues he typically used at this time. The room demonstrates the versatility of the artist's production and re-evaluates these works as an important part of his oeuvre – as landscape works in their own right, more than simply decorative projects.



Peder Balke, *Bird Cliff*, 1870s, oil on panel, 8cm x 11.5cm
The Gundersen Collection, Oslo

Photo: The Gundersen Collection / Morten Henden Aamot

As with all museum shows, the actual process of preparing and presenting it creates further research questions. One area of interest has been prompted by the inclusion of the Carpelan watercolour paintings. 'I think it would be good to enlarge the theme of Carpelan, as he was one of the surveyors trained to draw maps and landscapes, who put the Nordic landscape on the map. And there is plenty of material available on him in Norway and Sweden,' says Ljøgodt. Another question concerns the need for more technical research into Balke's painting methods and materials, which would help in more precise dating of his works, and assist in Ljøgodt's ongoing project of compiling a *catalogue raisonné*. 'We still have a lot to discover about his techniques,' Ljøgodt continues. 'He experimented with different kinds of colour, for example, the intense blue he used in *Bird Cliff* (1870s). Norway had cobalt mines producing cobalt blue pigments mainly for glass and porcelain ware but in a letter from Balke held in the mining museum's archives he places an order for some blue powder made from Norwegian cobalt. I would like a conservator to make a technical assessment of the colours to determine if it was cobalt blue or an artificial blue like Prussian blue.'

The Sinebrychoff Art Museum exhibition of Peder Balke undoubtedly places a less well-known artist more firmly in the public domain. Like the memories of the landmarks and features of the Arctic that sustained Balke's production during his life, the images of his paintings are ones that will endure beyond the physical encounter with them in this show.

'Peder Balke – The Spell of the Arctic', Sinebrychoff Art Museum, Helsinki, until 14 January 2024

Claudia de Brün and Kersti Tainio (eds.), *Peder Balke: Arktisen lumo – Förtrollad av Arktis – The Spell of the Arctic*. Sinebrychoff Art Museum Publications. Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery / Sinebrychoff Art Museum, 2023

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Crossing Borders, Making Links

Gill Crabbe, *FNG Research*

This autumn an international gathering of art historians, curators and researchers met in Helsinki to share their research into women artists from the long 19th century, as part of the Finnish National Gallery's research project 'Pioneering Women Artists'. Gill Crabbe reports from its 'Crossing Borders' conference

The unfolding process of shedding light on women artists who have been hidden from history is one that continues. Since the feminist movement in the 1970s kickstarted research into this neglected area, progress has been gathering pace and is opening windows onto women artists' lives and works, with new research and significant exhibitions such as Berlin's Alte Nationalgalerie show in 2019 'Fighting for Visibility: Women artists in the Alte Nationalgalerie before 1919', as well as the forthcoming monographic exhibition of Angelica Kauffman (1741–1807) at London's Royal Academy of Arts in Spring 2024.

The Finnish National Gallery's commitment to playing a part in this important work is demonstrated in its latest international research project 'Pioneering Women Artists', which held its first conference 'Crossing Borders: Transnational Networks of Pioneering Women Artists' in September at the Ateneum Art Museum in Helsinki. Focussing on the long 19th century and in particular, but not exclusively, the artistic centres in Germany of the period, museum curators, art historians and researchers from the Nordic region, the Baltic states, Germany, and Poland gathered to share their knowledge and research interests, to forge information networks and pave the way for collaborating on a research publication and future exhibition project. The two-day conference, organised by Ateneum Art Museum curators Anne-Maria Pennonen and Hanne Selkokari, enjoyed some 14 presentations, which introduced many new names, new works, transnational connections and source materials, with information being eagerly shared among international colleagues and – a first for the FNG – online streaming allowing open access for those not attending in person; around 30 joined. As the conference progressed there was a sense of community developing among the participants, perhaps not so different from the international community that the women artists felt in the 19th century who were the subjects of their research.

The conference marked the initial phase of the project, bringing together research interests, which it is hoped will develop into a research publication, online articles and collaboration for an exhibition on the theme, in Helsinki at the Ateneum Art Museum, and in Düsseldorf at the Kunstpalast, scheduled for 2025. Given that Finland, being located on the eastern borders of Northern Europe and perhaps itself considered a peripheral nation on the European art-historical map, the theme of centres and peripheries is pertinent. By focussing on the Nordic and Baltic regions' connections in the 19th century with centres of artistic excellence and learning in Germany, rather than Paris (a well-trodden art-historical path), the activities of women artists on the peripheries are given centre stage. Thus the conference heard from researchers from Poland, Romania and Latvia, resulting in an opening up of new information and fresh insights for those from the more well-known artistic hubs in Europe. With comparatively little written material published in languages other than their own,



Eduard Daege, *The Invention of Painting*, 1832, oil on canvas, 176.5cm x 135.5cm
Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin

Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie / Andres Kilger



Joseph Benoît Suvée, *The Invention of the Art of Drawing*, 1791, oil on canvas, 267cm x 131.5cm
Groeningemuseum

Photo: Groeningemuseum / Hugo Maertens



Antoine-Claude Fleury, *The Origin of Painting*, 1808, oil on canvas
Private Collection

Photo: Wikimedia Commons / ProAntic

researchers from these countries were able to share through their conference presentations information that had not been encountered before by many beyond their borders. Thus the conference heard from the Netherlands-based Romanian art historian Oana Maria Ciontu, on the travels of Romanian and Transylvanian Saxon women artists, from Latvia's Rundāle Palace Museum Dr Baiba Vanaga, on Baltic women artists in German artists' colonies, and from the National Museum in Warsaw Dr Agnieszka Bagińska on the first Polish woman to travel to Munich to study painting. In this way the conference paves the way for further integration of a wider geographical area into European art history.

From the presentations as a whole, key themes emerged and overlapped. At the centre were the travels made by women artists in search of an art life, be that through art education, forging careers as artists, making connections with like-minded artists, finding community. Constellating around and merging with this theme were further themes such as new artists, career/life strategies, finances, social conditions, networking and source materials for research, and historiography.

This last topic was arrestingly addressed by Dr Yvette Deseyve, curator at the Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin, in the opening to her keynote speech in which she demonstrated how Pliny's mythic tale of the birth of sculpture from *The Natural History* (77AD) has been reinterpreted by art historians and artists in the 19th century to deny women the attribute of artistic invention. Here she presented three paintings depicting the tale. The first, *The Invention of Painting* (1832), by Eduard Daege, shows the daughter of the potter Butades drawing the profile of her lover's shadow on the wall behind, as he prepares to go to war. Her father fills in the profile with clay to create an image, thus making the first sculpture. In the second painting, *The Invention of the Art of Drawing* (1791), by Joseph Benoît Suvée, the daughter's lover is shown supporting her in both hands, lifting her into position, and guiding her to draw his profile on the wall, thus giving agency to the man as the 'true' inventor. The third work, *The Origin of Painting* (1808), by Antoine-Claude Fleury, strays even further from



Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann,
Italian Woman, c. 1845–48,
 oil on canvas,
 60.5cm x 49cm
 Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf
 – Collection of the
 Kunstakademie Düsseldorf
 © Kunstpalast - Horst Kolberg –
 ARTOTHEK

Pliny's narrative, swapping the roles entirely, so that it is overtly the man who is drawing the profile of his beloved, which Deseyve pointed out, illogically leaves the potter's daughter to complete her own image while her lover is at war. 'This twisting of the myth,' she said, 'shows that in the 19th century there was an awareness that the myth gives women artists a creative role. These reinterpretations show that it was taken seriously.'

Deseyve went on to argue that even today we still look at women artists of the period in a distorted way: skewed in terms of both the quantity and quality of their work. In preparing the Alte Nationalgalerie's 2019 'Fighting for Visibility' exhibition, she outlined her research into enumerating the women artists active in the long 19th century in Berlin. Here she was astonished to find, for example, that the annual Great Berlin exhibition (1893–1918) showed the work of 922 women artists (an average of 90 per year). And for the Berlin Academy shows between 1786 and 1892 the number of women exhibiting was 664. 'These figures show that women were not prohibited from making work and could reach the required standards for exhibiting, despite the all-male juries.' But, she added, these achievements were hard won, with many social and economic conditions conspiring against them. Furthermore, in making an audit of women artists' works held in the Alte

Nationalgalerie, she analysed acquisitions data and found, for example, that many of the works by women artists that were purchased or bequeathed in the early 20th century never reached the museum because they were sent for display in offices and often disappeared. Those that did make it into the museum across the long 19th century were often single works, making it difficult to assess the quality of an artist's oeuvre.

Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe, associate Professor of Art History at Stockholm University, approached Swedish women artists' connections in her paper, by addressing the spaces of possibilities they inhabited: educational spaces – travelling abroad and private study networks; collegial spaces and the different strategies of dealing with patriarchy – to join a women artists' society, or to pursue connections with male academics and their artistic networks; and spaces of diversity through transnational cultural exchange.

An important hub for women artists' educational networks in the 19th century was Düsseldorf, which attracted both men and women from the Baltic and Nordic countries, as well as from the US. Here Dr Kathrin DuBois, from Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, gave an overview of women artists' educational opportunities from 1819, when the Düsseldorf Art Academy was founded, up until 1919, when it first opened its doors to women students. DuBois gave an outline of the Academy teachers who gave private classes to women (several speakers pointed out that women paid more for such classes than men) drawing out connections between them and with their mentors. These included the first Academy Director Peter von Cornelius, who encouraged women through private classes, possibly even instructing in anatomy, and who referred to the Polish-Danish painter Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann (1818–81) as 'the only man of the Düsseldorf School'. His successor from 1826–59, Wilhelm von Schadow, while being opposed to admitting women to the Academy, acquired Baumann's painting, *Italian Woman* (1845–48), but it was the only work by a woman artist to be purchased for



Victoria Åberg, A View over the Castle Olavinlinna, 1864, oil on canvas, 75cm x 101.5cm
Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis

the Academy in the entire 19th century. Hans Gude, professor of landscape art in the 1850s, gave private classes to Nordic women, including Finnish painters Victoria Åberg (1824–92) and Fanny Churberg (1845–92).


Having gained an education, many women artists committed themselves to carving out a career. DuBois' colleague at Kunstpalast Düsseldorf Nina Köppert presented research that focussed on the opportunities available to women in the city, which included selling shows at two galleries – Edouard Schulte and Bismeyer and Krauss – founded in the 1850s when the number of artists in Düsseldorf surged. Besides engaging with the art market, women artists also participated in annual shows at the Art Association of Rhineland and Westphalia and, from 1911 on, in the newly founded Association of Düsseldorf Women artists, which paved the way for the admission of women to the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1919.

Dr Anne-Maria Pennonen, in her outline of Finnish women artists' activities in Düsseldorf 1850–80, cited Victoria Åberg, Fanny Churberg and Alexandra Frosterus as key examples. In describing their art lives through letters, artworks and newspaper clippings relating to exhibitions, she constructed a picture of Nordic women's education, financial support networks and career opportunities. Åberg studied landscape under Hans Gude between 1858–62, renting a studio near her teacher so he could easily make his weekly visits. In a letter from 1868 she wrote that she had travelled to Düsseldorf to hone her oil painting skills and to develop her own motifs (not copying from masters). She felt she received equally as good an education as men but it was more costly. Her connections included

Rosa Petzel (1831–1912), one of the founders of the Women’s Art Association in Berlin. However, despite her international success – she was the only Finn to appear in the *German Catalogue of Women Artists 1700–1900* – she complained in a letter to a Finnish newspaper she had been unrecognised at home. She never returned to Finland, travelling to Italy in the 1870s, exhibiting and settling in Weimar in 1880.

In highlighting the financial and social conditions affecting their art lives, Pennonen cited travel grants awarded by the Finnish Art Society, while its Ducat Prizes from 1858 onwards for ‘promising new talent’ also enabled women to travel – Churberg was a recipient of one in 1879. Düsseldorf boarding houses took in both men and women; Alexandra Frosterus boarded at the same address as the Finnish landscape painter Werner Holmberg, as well as her teacher Hans Gude. Marital status also shaped women’s art lives; Frosterus, for example married and bore four children and, following her husband’s untimely death, supported her family as an artist through altarpiece commissions, of which around 70 are known. Her connections with women artists included the Swedish painter Amalia Lindegren (1814–91) and the Norwegian painters Mathilde Bonnevie (later Dietrichson, 1837–1921) and Anna Glad (1835–1909), who married Werner Holmberg and gave up pursuing a career in art in 1858. The conference also heard from Dr Hanne Selkokari, whose presentation on the Finnish portrait painter Eva Engman (1853–1914) focussed on her social networks in Dresden, where she and her music critic sister Anna’s salon flourished in the 1870s.

Researching the social and economic conditions of 10 women artists operating in the 19th century who were connected to the Zitadelle city museum, in Jülich, in the Rhineland region, brought a tranche of new names to the conference, causing a ripple of excitement.

Madgalena (Maria)
Andrzejkowicz-Buttowl,
Władysław Łokietek in the
Cave, 1881, oil on canvas,
155cm x 208cm
National Museum in Krakow
 Photo: National Museum
 in Krakow 





Magdalena Andrzejkowicz, *Palette dedicated to Lucjan Wrotnowski*, 1886–87
National Museum in Warsaw

Photo: National Museum in Warsaw

Marcell Perse, Director of the Museum Zitadelle Jülich, traced the rise in professionalisation of women artists in the 19th century despite the many obstacles – distinguishing the ‘brush princesses’ from the ‘bread painters’ – with visual evidence showing how women were lampooned, for example in illustrations showing them either as ‘less than feminine’ or as ‘fashion dolls who lose themselves in detail’. Other challenges that German women artists faced included taboos around frequenting the forest alone – not an issue for their Nordic compatriots however – as well as requiring permission to wear trousers to paint outdoors. In outlining the strategies the 10 women artists used to further their art lives, Perse introduced Anna Lynker (1834–1928), an early artist from the Düsseldorf school who painted watercolours – mounting them in stucco frames usually used for oil works, thus elevating their status – and who also produced lithographs of her travels in the Orient; Marie Egner (1850–1940), a landscape artist whose paintings combined motifs from her domestic environment, such as vegetable gardens, with landscape settings, and whose postcards of her motifs provided another source of income; Elisabeth Grüttefien (1871–c. 1933), a landscape painter who married a Norwegian, kept her maiden name – highly unusual – and settled in Norway, producing fjord paintings; and Hanny Stüber (1870–1955), who after studying in Berlin, Munich and Paris, set up a women’s painting school in Düsseldorf with her girlfriend Else Neumüller, which operated from 1899–1932.

Another artist that many were introduced to for the first time was presented by curator at the National Museum in Warsaw Dr Agnieszka Bagińska. Magdalena Andrzejkowicz (1852–1933) was a history painter – large-scale and academic subjects were traditionally a male preserve – who travelled to Munich in 1872 to study at the Drawing School for Women but left to take private tuition from August Cleme and Max Adam. Few of her works survive but photographs of them were exhibited during her lifetime, which provides visual source

material, in addition to critics' reviews and her letters. Andrzejkowicz was inspired by well-known German history painters such as Carl von Piloty and Gabriel von Max among others.

Reviewing *Girl in a Forest* (1879, whereabouts unknown), which Andrzejkowicz exhibited in Munich, Lviv, Krakow and Warsaw, one Polish critic said it was an imitation of Max's *Blind Woman*, but in appearance only. 'Her works were criticised as superficial imitations of Munich painters,' said Bagińska. One work now in the National Museum in Warsaw, *Cardinal Giovanni de Medici and Pomponius Laetus at Roman Excavations* (1879), which is an example of the artist's own motif / subject, drew one critic to question whether 'this painting was conceived independently by herself', asking, is a woman capable of creating a work 'with a truly masculine treatment of the subject?' Back from Munich in 1881 Andrzejkowicz made her first work in Poland, *Władysław Łokietek in the Cave at Ojców*, a large-scale nationalistic subject from the 13th/14th century showing the future Polish King hiding from Bohemian invaders. This drew positive reviews, in which one critic wrote that 'she is the only artistically independent Polish painter'. Besides Andrzejkowicz's history paintings, Bagińska showed a slide of the artist's colour palette dedicated to Lucjan Wrotnowski, from 1886–87, on which she has painted tiny compositional motifs from 32 painters in Warsaw, including her only known self-portrait, which, said Bagińska, demonstrates a clear indication that she had been accepted into the artists' circle in the city.

Connections between Munich and Romania featured in two presentations, which also highlighted some commissions for mural paintings – a rarity for women artists during this period. Oana Maria Ciontu, from the Netherlands Institute for Art History, gave an overview of travelling Romanian and Transylvanian Saxon women artists of the period,

The Music Room at Peles Castle in Romania, showing paintings by Dora Hitz

Photo: © Peles National Museum





Alice Dmitrijew, *At the Piano*, 1913, woodcut on paper, 10.8cm x 17.2cm
 Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga

Photo: Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga

while Dr Natalie Gutgesell, President of Kunstverein Coburg, focussed on the German artist Dora Hitz, who became Romania's first Court painter through the patronage of its Queen. Among the several artists Ciontu introduced was Cecilia Cuțescu Storck (1879–1969), who trained at the Women's Art Academy in Munich from 1887–89 before continuing in Paris at the École des Beaux Arts and the Académie Julian. In 1906 she married the Romanian-German sculptor Frederick Stork and settled in Bucharest, becoming Professor of Decorative Arts at the city's university, and receiving large-scale public commissions for mural paintings, including *The Triumph of Art* (1934), for the throne room of the Romanian Royal Palace.

Royal connections with Romania were also the subject of Natalie Gutgesell's presentation on the German painter Dora Hitz (1856–1924), an artist whose works she first encountered on a visit to Romania's Peles Castle, in 2014. In 1876, Hitz had taken part in an exhibition at the Crystal Palace in Munich, where she had been studying since 1869 in a private art school. She showed a genre painting that was purchased by the future Queen Elisabeth of Romania, who invited her to be a Court painter in Romania, where she lived from 1877–82. It was in the Music Room at Peles Castle that Gutgesell came across three two-metre-high panel paintings, illustrating one of Queen Elisabeth's mythic tales, written under the pseudonym Carmen Silva. Romania marked the start of an international career for Hitz that saw her exhibiting all over Europe, running her own private academy, and organising exhibitions with the Union of Women Artists in Berlin and Munich.

Several conference presentations touched into women artists' networks forged during their travels in Italy. Dr Liisa Lindgren has researched the first Finnish woman sculptor Aline Forsman (1845–99), who journeyed to Rome in 1873–75 on travel grants from the Senate. Forsman had connections to the Danish sculptor Adolf Jerichau, becoming his student in Copenhagen in 1876. In Rome, in 1845, Jerichau had met and married the Polish-Danish painter Elisabeth Baumann, who was the subject of Signe Krogh's research. Andreas Dehmer from the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, cited Swedish painter Evelina Stading



Kunstkolonie Worpswede, Fritz Overbeck with his students in Worpswede, 1896.

Photographer Hermine Rothe

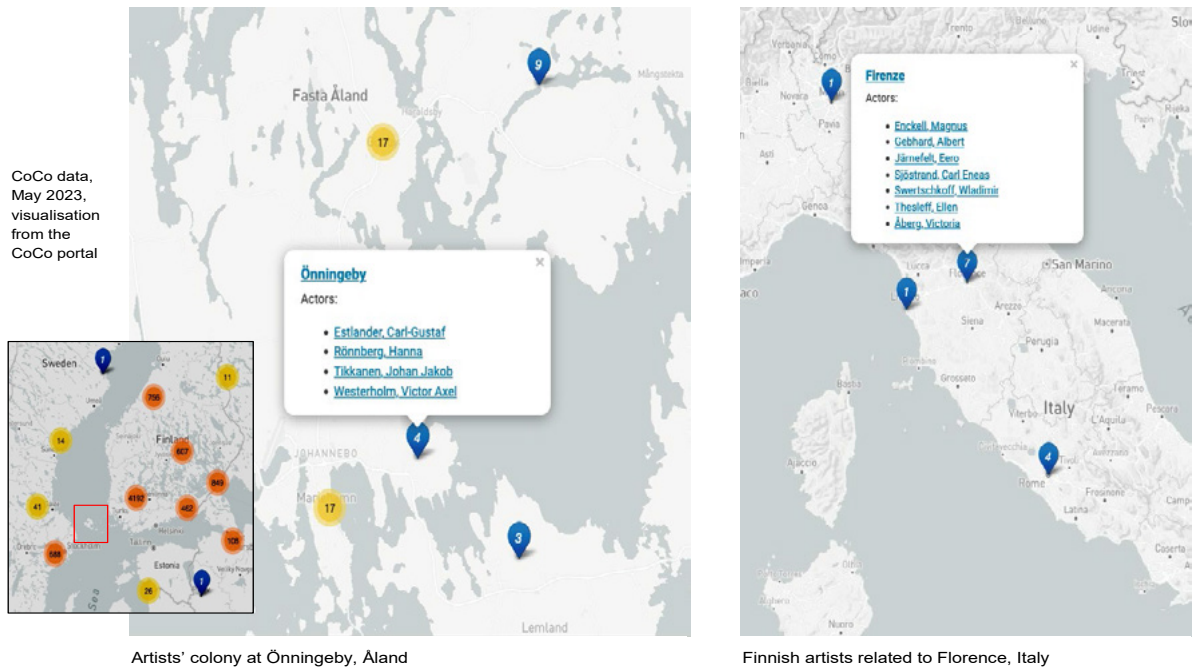
Photo: Paula Modersohn-Becker-Stiftung

(1797–1829), who followed her tutor from Dresden, the leading landscape painter Johan Dahl, to Rome in 1827 and painted views of Arricia in 1828.

Other social networks included artists' colonies, the subject of Dr Baiba Vanaga's paper on Baltic women artists in German artists' colonies. Latvian women artists travelled to such colonies as Haimhausen in Bavaria, Hiddensee off the German coast, and Lake Chiemsee near Munich, often to gain education in the summer months. Here the conference was treated to images by Latvia's emerging graphic artists in the early 20th century, among them Alice Dmitrijev (1883–1956; *At the Piano*, 1913), who was taught etching by the Finnish artist Hilda Flodin. In 1905, Dmitrijev went to paint in the summer at Worpswede near Bremen, another artists' colony that was popular with aspiring women artists.

Throughout the conference the presentations were a testament to the painstaking empirical research undertaken by the participants and here Dr Hanna-Leena Paloposki, from the Finnish Literature Society, gave an account of the Constellations of Correspondence project, which aggregates, analyses and publishes 19th-century epistolary metadata from collections of Finnish cultural heritage organisations on a Linked Open Data service and as an open semantic web portal. It aims to create a new research resource that includes, among much else, letter data that gives the possibility to create graphs on gender division, epistolary exchange by gender and the contributing organisation, and women artists' correspondence networks, for example the case study of Alexandra Frosterus is presented as a network visualisation.

Constellations of Correspondence (CoCo) project data: actors on a map (examples)



Example of map visualisations of the data in the Constellations of Correspondence Portal

Graph: CoCo Portal

From the questions from the floor following each presentation and the discussions that ensued over the two days, it is clear that the 'Crossing Borders' conference has got the 'Pioneering Women Artists' project off to a flying start. But to conclude with an observation from the Ateneum Art Museum's Director Marja Sakari, in her speech opening the conference: 'We will need to carry on research into women artists until we no longer need to use the term "women artists".'

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A Bridge between Worlds

Gill Crabbe, *FNG Research*

A seminar organised as part of the Finnish National Gallery's international research project, Gothic Modern, saw museum directors, scholars and curators gather in Helsinki to exchange ideas for a scientific publication on the topic. Gill Crabbe met Dr Ralph Gleis, Director of the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin and future Director General of the Albertina in Vienna, to find out why he was drawn to collaborate with Northern European museums and academics



**Dr Ralph Gleis at the
Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin,
where he is
Museum Director**

Photo: Staatliche Museen zu
Berlin / David von Becker

Dr Ralph Gleis is darting about the rooms and corners of the house museum we are exploring on the outskirts of Helsinki. He is here for a knowledge-sharing gathering for the Finnish National Gallery's international research project on Gothic Modernism. As part of the programme the group is visiting the 1930s home of the art collectors Signe and Ane Gyllenberg specifically to see a work by Akseli Gallen-Kallela that is regarded as pivotal to the topic of Gothic Modernism, a term that over the four years of the research project is becoming an emerging

genre. The scholars and museum professionals from the UK, Germany, Belgium, Norway and Finland have come together to explore new meanings and share their research with a view to producing a scientific publication on this theme. As we proceed through the elegant rooms of Villa Gyllenberg, replete with paintings by key Finnish painters from the 19th century, there is a mercurial quality to Dr Gleis's curiosity as he homes in on the details that have caught his eye – a small painting of angels guarding a corpse in a field of ravens, sculptures of monk-like figures placed on window sills, Buddhist statues – then opens out his gaze to the view across the sea outside. After a while we enter the dedicated space that displays Gallen-Kallela's extraordinary artwork *Ad Astra* (1907), with its androgenous female form rising through clouds, her red hair radiating fiery against the golden disc of the planet Jupiter. The curators and scholars respond and ask questions, turning over the Symbolist, mythical and esoteric themes that the painting prompts, themes which are present in the concept of the Gothic Modern project. After a while, Dr Gleis focuses on the carved gilded-wood doors attached to the frame that have been opened to reveal the canvas, and which act as a portal, giving



**Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Ad Astra*, 1907, oil on canvas, 76.5cm x 85cm,
 with frames 120cm x 117cm x 12cm
 Villa Gyllenberg / Signe and Ane Gyllenberg Foundation**
 Photo: Matias Uusikylä / Signe and Ane Gyllenberg Foundation

the artwork a hallowed status not unlike a Gothic altarpiece. He is intrigued by the tendrils represented in the openwork on the doors. These are no delicate filigrees but robust entwined stems. As the group move on, Vibeke Waallann Hansen, curator at the National Museum Oslo, hangs back and opens her cellphone to show Dr Gleis the decorative carvings of the medieval stave churches of Norway – noting perhaps a Gothic reference reimagined here by Gallen-Kallela in a modernist twist. It is informal moments like these that are invaluable when museum curators and scholars get together and share ideas and perspectives.

The main purpose of the two-day programme, which started off at the Sinebrychoff Art Museum, was to discuss and exchange information on the topics for the project's scholarly publication on the subject: six contributors, each writing a chapter on an aspect of Gothic Modernism, were giving 15-minute presentations (not formal papers), with plenary sessions to explore new questions, to distil ideas and, very respectfully, keep one another on track with the publication in mind. Unsurprisingly, given his interest in the door carvings framing the *Ad Astra* canvas, Dr Gleis's presentation for his chapter was titled 'Forces of Nature'. In addition to the publication, three museums will mount exhibitions on the topic – the Finnish National Gallery's Ateneum Art Museum, the National Museum Oslo and the Albertina, with Dr Gleis curating the Vienna show. As director of a world-class museum, with a wide range of responsibilities, Gleis is not usually able to take part so fully in a curatorial role, but in this instance he could not resist the approach from the project's Guest Curator Professor Juliet Simpson, from the University of Coventry, and Chief Curator Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, from the Finnish National Gallery – albeit he was hesitant at first.

'It was not that I wasn't completely behind this topic but at the Alte Nationalgalerie we were preparing an exhibition on Belgian Symbolism, called "Decadence and Dark Dreams",

which seemed close to the Finnish National Gallery project's theme. However, in the Gothic Modern gatherings over the past four years there have been discussions about what kind of elements the project should combine and what the limits should be in terms of its scope, and we all recognise that each of the participating partners has some differences in approach.' What is it that has drawn him in to the Gothic Modern project? 'It's on the one hand a project that touches my special interests in Symbolist art but on the other hand, and more importantly, touches the interests of the Albertina, which holds one of the finest collections of drawings and prints from the late Gothic to the present, so that a cross-epochal theme seems like a very fitting idea to me. I also think it's important to connect the institution with other leading museums in the world.'

In understanding more about Dr Gleis's special interests, a look at his career path to the Albertina reveals an impressive breadth of scope as well as focus. Starting in 1994, he studied medieval art during his masters in Art History, History and Sociology at the Westphalia Wilhelms-University in his home town of Münster, then continued his studies at the University of Cologne in 1997, where he also took an interest in the contemporary art scene and at the same time began to hone his specialism in 19th-century art: 'It seemed like the culmination of my interests, coming from the old tradition of medieval art, then meeting up with contemporary art. I found that the 19th century bridges the two.' He undertook his PhD in Cologne while also working in the cathedral as a guide, gaining further knowledge in Gothic art but also in the context of the 19th century, which was when the building was finally completed. Meanwhile, he was working as an assistant in a contemporary art gallery in the city. 'I also liked international contexts, so I spent a year studying at the University of Bologna, where I came across a different approach to art history from Germany's, which was good to get to know because art was always the bridge to other countries in all time periods and I experienced that for myself.'

Having gained his doctorate back in Cologne, in 2007 Gleis started as an assistant curator at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. 'I was always interested in the meaning of art and how art in society works. For me, art is not just an aesthetic phenomenon, but also a social force, so that has been my approach. From there I went to the Haus der Geschichte, in Bonn, to run a project on 20th-century photography. After that I became curator at the Wien Museum for eight years which, being a cultural historical museum, was like a bridge between a historical museum and an art museum since it has a large art collection, including master works. I was curator of the Painting and Drawings collection from the Middle Ages to 1900, and then broadened my role further to include sculpture since medieval times. From Vienna, Gleis moved in 2017 to his post at the Alte Nationalgalerie, becoming one of a new generation of younger museum directors in the European art museum world. 'Here I could combine all this different knowledge and content and by that time I also had experience of project management, so I have been able to return to my personal interests which are very much in the 19th century as this turning point in art history. That is why I am so involved in this project of Gothic Modern.'

Dr Gleis joined the Alte Nationalgalerie at a time when the European art canon was undergoing a major rethink by art historians and museum professionals in the field. 'Our gallery may not have such big holdings,' he says, 'but the collection is of a very high level and quality, where even the word canon has been regarded as sacrosanct.' Given the weight of the museum's history and the iconic status of many of the works in the collection, it is therefore a brave individual who might think to challenge some of the traditional norms of being its custodian. 'Of course the permanent collection is such that certain aspects and artists are shown and appreciated but at the same time I also like to experiment, so when I started there, the first thing I initiated was to focus with the whole team to make an audit of female artists in the collection. I could also bring on board the scholarly researcher Yvette Deseyve who was dedicated to this theme. Once we started, everyone on the team was on board, asking why we didn't look into this before. Our research resulted in the 2019 exhibition "Fighting for Visibility" and through that we have also integrated more previously unknown female artists of the 19th century into our permanent collection display. I guess art museums today have in some respects to get a distance to the canon, to move away from a narrower thinking and broaden it up – and that is perhaps what we are also doing with the Gothic Modern project.'

Under Gleis's watch the Alte Nationalgalerie has not shied away from experimentation, with exhibitions including 'At the Beach with the Monk', in 2019, in which Caspar David Friedrich's *The Monk by the Sea* (1808–10) was seen through virtual reality VR headsets, in a highly inventive approach to presenting Friedrich by creating an immersive and meaningful interactive experience for today's visitors. Then, in collaboration with The Glyptotek in Copenhagen last year, there was the boldly conceived 'Why Are You Angry?', a show whose title was based on the eponymous work by Paul Gauguin and which tackled from multiple perspectives the highly controversial period when the artist lived in Tahiti. In addition to works by Gauguin, the exhibition included responses from a number of contemporary artists such as, Yuki Kihara from Samoa/Japan and Nashashibi/Skaer, from the UK, along with the Tahitian activist and multi-artist Henri Hiro, from French Polynesia.

Does Gleis envisage the conversations between contemporary artists and historical artists as a trend that is here to stay? 'Maybe we will say in a few years that the moment has passed for this kind of contemporary comment from artists in exhibitions on artists from the past. At present it is a trend in many museums and it is important, especially now, to recalibrate our historical sources. You might not necessarily show the positions of contemporary art but you have to feel that the approach is contemporary. In the Gothic Modern project, we are concerned with what we think is currently relevant to us and our audience,' he points out. 'With the prospect of moving to Vienna as Director of the Albertina, I have also rethought the project and am very convinced by the approach of juxtaposing modern artists with original works of art from the late Gothic period. Such a confrontation has often been considered, but unfortunately it has rarely been seen in exhibitions.'

Gleis's presentation at the Gothic Modern seminar on his proposed chapter for the project's scholarly publication, under the heading 'Forces of Nature', is certainly coming from this kind of perspective. 'We see through artists' eyes things reflected that are also our concerns,' he continues. 'In looking at art from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, artists faced so many crises in society, just as we are finding today, and it's a sign of hope for me that we see that art opened up these discussions. Artists often have a feeling for what is going on – we see them in the *fin de siècle* struggling with tradition and yet struggling to be modern, asking will we live in a technical world with positivism or is there something deeper underneath, and maybe we should not all live in cities but go and live in the countryside. And those are similar questions we have nowadays.'

While in Helsinki Gleis also had the opportunity to take in the new presentation of the Ateneum Art Museum's permanent collection, including the works in its central hall on the theme The Age of Nature. 'I think it has a very interesting approach,' he says. 'I can see that perhaps it might not be meeting all the expectations of the traditional museum visitor, but I think it's good that the museum is open to experiment.'

From his visit to the Helsinki museums and his participation over the years in the knowledge-sharing workshops Dr Gleis has been getting to know Nordic artists in more depth. 'Of course as a 19th-century specialist I knew about Gallen-Kallela, Munch and others, but I was less familiar with some of them in detail. Like Hugo Simberg, for instance. He is interesting in terms of the Gothic Modern theme because he had been studying Holbein's "Dance of Death" series. I like this combination of strange themes with a dark sense of humour, such as *The Garden of Death* (1896). It has been great to see the actual paintings as part of the Gothic Modern project but particularly to see Simberg's prints, which are also very fine. It opens a whole new world – so many artists who have been dedicated to works on paper are less well known today, sometimes simply because these works are small scale and fragile. Even though we might know of Simberg from his large-scale paintings, he was nevertheless very strong in the field of works on paper. It reminds me of when I introduced the works of Léon Spillaert to a wider German audience, they were absolutely struck by his art. And I guess Hugo Simberg is a similar figure. What powerful art. Once you have seen his work, you won't forget it.'

The Gothic Modern project has enabled Dr Gleis to make new connections through the ideas its participants have explored. 'I have learned a lot about how Northern art was connected to Germany and to the middle of Europe through the artists' travels. The German-speaking countries, including Austria and Switzerland, were destinations for Nordic artists and it was also a time when German artists, in addition to going to Rome and Paris, travelled to



Hugo Simberg, *The Garden of Death*, 1896, gouache and watercolour on paper, 15.8cm x 17.5cm
 Finnish National Gallery /
 Ateneum Art Museum
 Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
 Jenni Nurminen

the Nordic countries to experience the nature in a new way. In a sense there was a tendency to stress national roots at the beginning of the 20th century. But as we have found out this is an international concept at this time and these artists would meet at international exhibitions and were showing their national roots. And these artists were searching for their home countries' stories and mythic tales – that happened in many different countries at the same time.'

Dr Gleis firmly believes that the exchange of ideas and knowledge in the Gothic Modern meetings has enriched the whole topic – and more. 'It is transdisciplinary and transnational and we have been working from different perspectives with different experts on different epochs of art history, so it's a very fruitful co-operation which benefits not only the project but also enables us to develop our own institutions for our audiences, who are also travelling and experiencing the world as connected. I am impressed to see that there is no contradiction in the way that, here in Helsinki, you open up these very scholarly-based topics which are delivered to an audience that is open to everything. That is one of my aims for the Albertina: The topics of exhibitions should be popular and easily accessible and at the same time the content should be produced carefully and with depth. Gothic Modern is a good example in that we undertake scholarly research with a lot of co-operation across the disciplines and across transnational boundaries in preparation for our exhibition.'

'Gothic Modern', 4 October 2024 – 26 January 2025, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki,
 see <https://ateneum.fi/en/exhibitions/gothic-modern/>

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Finnish National Gallery Call for Research Interns 2024

The Finnish National Gallery wishes to stimulate new interest in research topics based on its resources and collections and possible forthcoming exhibitions in its three museums. It also wishes to be an active and innovative partner in collaborating with the academic scene in reinforcing humanistic values and the importance of understanding the world and human culture by creating new, meaningful and relevant knowledge.

For this purpose the Finnish National Gallery organises a research internship programme for masters-level art or cultural history students internationally. The programme has two aims. The Finnish National Gallery wishes to enhance the study of its collections including artworks, archives, and objects. At the same time it wishes to support students who choose to write their masters-level theses on subjects based on physical collections and objects, archive material and data, as well as develop their practical skills for utilising archival material in research.

In 2024 the Finnish National Gallery is prepared to receive two research interns. The internship period is three months with the intern under contract to the Finnish National Gallery. The salary is equivalent to the salary of university trainees.

The intern chooses in advance the material of the Finnish National Gallery collections that they wish to study, and agrees on studying it during the internship period. It is desirable that the material will form part of the intern's thesis. The intern is required, during the period of their internship, to write a text in English, based on the material and the research carried out at the National Gallery. The text may be published in one of the sections of the *FNG Research* web magazine.

Each intern will have an in-house professional tutor at the Finnish National Gallery. The tutor and the intern will meet on average weekly.

The Finnish National Gallery is not responsible for the academic supervision of the intern's master's thesis. The role of the National Gallery is to support the intern's skills in collections research practices.

Are you interested? If so, please send your application by e-mail to fngr@nationalgallery.fi.

The applicant can contact the Finnish National Gallery in advance and inquire about the collections and collection materials.

Applications can be written in English, Finnish or Swedish.

The deadline for applications is 31 December 2023 and the appointments will be announced by 15 January 2024.

The interns are appointed by the *FNG Research* editorial board.

For more information on the application process and internship programme, please see the instructions for applying on the next page.

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How to apply for the research internship programme at the Finnish National Gallery for masters-level art and cultural history students

We are looking for research internship applications that include:

- A letter of intent answering the following questions:
 - Why are you applying for a research internship at the Finnish National Gallery?
 - Why do you want to make research based on physical collections and objects, archive material and data?
 - Why are you interested in the Finnish National Gallery collections as research material?
 - What kind of plan do you have for your master's thesis?
 - When, during 2024, would you like to work as an intern, if chosen?
- The subject of your thesis, if you have already chosen one
- The collections / collections material of the Finnish National Gallery that you would like to study
- A brief description of your studies so far
- References from your supervisor(s) at the university if you wish to attach them to the application

The editorial staff of *FNG Research* web magazine will take care of the language-checking and editing of the text to be published in *FNG Research*. The editorial board is responsible for the content and level of every published text.

We strongly advise the applicants to acquaint themselves with the collections available at the Finnish National Gallery before submitting their applications. Some suggestions for research material and research questions are available at *FNG Research* web magazine in the section FNG Resources <https://research.fng.fi>, but it is also possible to consult us about other collections material or research questions based on our collections. If needed, it is possible to make an appointment with National Gallery professionals to discuss the possible materials. Some of the suggestions may have links to the forthcoming exhibitions at the museums of the Finnish National Gallery.

The choice of the interns is made by the *FNG Research* editorial board. The board also selects the in-house tutors for the interns.

The appointments will be announced by 15 January 2024, following which replies to all the applicants will be sent via e-mail. The names of the appointed interns and their research subjects will be published in the *FNG Research* web magazine.

We will also inform the intern's possible supervisors at the university.

The internships are based in the Collection Information Unit of the Finnish National Gallery Collections Management.

Please send your application by e-mail to fng@nationalgallery.fi.

Applications can be written in English, Finnish or Swedish.

The deadline for applications is 31 December 2023.

For further information, please contact fng@nationalgallery.fi.