The Friends of the Nationalmuseum

Eva Qviberg
Chair

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Fig. 1 Catarina Hållzon (b. 1976), Necklace, Grissfälster (Pork Casing). Silver, pork casing, resin, L. 54 cm. Gift of the Friends of the Nationalmuseum, Bengt Julin Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMK 11/2015.
The years when the Nationalmuseum building is being renovated are special to the Friends. Many of us cannot wait for the project to be finished, so we can once again visit the Museum to enjoy its remarkable collections. Nevertheless, this period offers the potential to try new roads, since objects are being lent to museums both in Sweden and other countries. As part of our support to the Nationalmuseum, and to bring more knowledge to our members, we have the ambition of accompanying the Nationalmuseum’s art objects on their international visits. Therefore, a group of members went to the Netherlands in March. We have also organised trips on various themes to the UK, Italy and California, USA.

Our rich calendar of events last year included many study tours where our members could learn about a wide range of subjects. One of the highlights was a visit to Herman Bergman’s art foundry, where we received a very enlightening presentation of how the art objects are made, from start to finish. Fortunately, this tour coincided with the exhibition on the sculptor Rodin. Moreover, we have offered a variety of guided tours, including the Swedish Academy, the Tändstickspalatset, the exhibitions Hertha Hillfon at Liljevalchs Konsthall, Louise Bourgeois at Moderna Museet, and Prince Eugen’s 150th Anniversary: Facets of a Life at Prince Eugen’s Waldemarsudde. All with the aim of stimulating and enhancing our members’ knowledge in the arts.

In 2015, the Friends of the Nationalmuseum also celebrated Queen Hedvig Eleonora (1636–1715), an avid patron of the arts who commissioned the building and refurbishing of several royal palaces and castles, and has been an inspiration to many. We visited Hedvig Eleonora church, the Drottningholm Palace Park with Museum de Vries, and Gripsholm Castle, to share her life work with our members.

For more than a century, the Friends have contributed towards a large number of acquisitions for the Nationalmuseum collection. Without our funding, the collection would probably not have been as extensive, or the Museum in a position to buy several of its masterpieces. In the past year, the Friends of the Nationalmuseum has helped fund the purchase of a number of objects. Our contribution came from donations made by members, and dividends on the Friends’ funds and foundations.

Acting on the initiative of members Ernst and Carl Hirsch, the Museum bought Carl Hörvik’s unique furniture suite that was shown at the Paris International Exhibition of 1925. The Hirsch Family and the Friends each contributed half of the sum required (see article on p. 57).

The Friends also had the pleasure of purchasing a study by Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert. This study was made for his monumental painting, Amor Triumphant Amongst the Emblems of Art, Science and War, which was already in the Museum’s collection (see article on p. 11).

As in previous years, Bengt Julin’s Fund has helped fund several acquisitions for the Nationalmuseum’s collection of design and decorative arts. Among these are the necklace Grissfälster (Pork Casing) by Catarina Hällzon (Fig. 1), which, as the name implies, is made of pork casing. The Fund has also contributed to the purchase of the vase Stone, made of whitened silver by Yoki Ferdinandsen. Ida-Lovisa Rudolfsson was the 2014 recipient of the Young Applied Artists Scholarship, and in 2015 her textile Det var något med himlen (There was something about the sky) could be bought by the Museum. In the category of unusual materials, we find Thread Wrapping Machine Chair 060115 by Anton Alvarez, a chair made of pieces of wood and plastic tubes, thread and glue. Also the shoulder bag Louis no. 1 by Aia Jüde, made of plaited birch bark, organically tanned leather, wood embossed with 23 carat gold and ink.

In line with the Nationalmuseum’s design focus, the Friends of the Nationalmuseum last year formed a design committee and started a design fund, to which we have already gratefully received a donation.

For several years now, the Friends invites applications from staff at the Nationalmuseum for research and travel grants. Last year, the total awarded grants amounted to SEK 97 200. Thanks to careful management of the Friends of the Nationalmuseum’s funds and foundations, amounting to SEK 1 150 000 on 31 December, 2015, the Friends could donate a total of nearly SEK five millions to the Nationalmuseum. At the end of the year, the Friends had 4 070 members. The annual general meeting in May 2015 was held in the Rikssalen in the presence of their Majesties the King and Queen, and we are deeply grateful for the generosity we have been shown during the refurbishment of the building on Blasieholmen.

The board would like to thank the staff at the Nationalmuseum warmly for generously sharing their expertise with our members. We also wish to thank our volunteers for their valuable help, which is deeply appreciated by the Nationalmuseum and its Friends.