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Nationalmuseum Photographic Studio/
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Graphic Design
BIGG

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Publishing
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Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum is published annually and contains articles on the history and theory of art relating to the collections of the Nationalmuseum.

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Box 16176
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www.nationalmuseum.se
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ISSN 2001-9238
In parallel with the ongoing renovation of the Nationalmuseum building from 1866, preparations have continued for the new regular display of the collections. Far-reaching changes are planned. The traditional arrangement according to art forms and national schools is to be abandoned. Instead, the public will be offered a chronological tour, beginning on the top floor. Different forms of art will be shown in an integrated manner, with the possibility of rotating significant parts of the display. The main survey of the Museum’s holdings will be supplemented on the ground floor with two study collections and a special display for children and young people – to which admission will always be free. In addition, more public space will be opened up for a range of activities, including studios for creative work, a sculpture courtyard, an auditorium space, a café and a restaurant.

As already suggested, one aim at the reopened Nationalmuseum will be to show well-known works from the collections in a new way, and at the same time to rediscover others which, for one reason or another, have been overlooked. A review of our extensive collections has also revealed a number of gaps. The Museum has therefore invested considerable effort in a range of strategic new acquisitions, with a view either to further enhancing existing areas of strength in the collections, or building up previously weak holdings which nevertheless have potential. An important criterion has been that the works of art concerned must be part of a context, tell a story, or strengthen a body of work that already exists in the collection. Major artists and the mutual relationships between them have been important in guiding the choice of works. On the other hand, the Museum has not primarily been looking for artistic “autographs”, in the sense of artists whose fame would in itself be enough to justify an acquisition or works that would hold their own independently of others on display from our holdings. This is also a natural consequence of the new presentation of the collection being based on an integration of art forms and on clearly visible narratives and themes.

A more active acquisition effort has of course only been possible thanks to several major financial donations to the Nationalmuseum. These, combined with the Museum’s existing funds and a well-oiled organisation, have produced results. Compared with many museums around the world, and in particular several in North America, the Nationalmuseum does not have especially large resources at its disposal, but it is on the other hand able to respond quickly, without convoluted decision-making procedures. What is more, the Museum has chosen to think beyond well-known artists who are seen as particularly iconic, and to focus instead on qualitatively strong, but overlooked, figures and works from art history.

Additions to the Nationalmuseum’s collections during the year have been published monthly on the New Acquisitions pages of the website, attracting attention both in Sweden and abroad. Of the new acquisitions, a set of four tapestries, later known as “Grotesques de Bérain” and designed by Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, was nominated for the prestigious Apollo Acquisition of the Year Award 2016. The tapestries, woven at Beauvais, were commissioned in 1695 by Count Carl Piper (1647–1716) for his palace in Stockholm (see p. 111). They probably left Sweden at the end of the 19th century and ended up on the international art market. These unique and exceptionally well-preserved tapestries, four of an originally larger set, could recently be acquired through the American art trade, thanks to a very generous bequest from Gunnar (1924–2015) and Ulla Trygg (1924–2015). The Beauvais tapestries are not the only example of an important...
part of Sweden’s cultural heritage that has been returned to the country. Another is a pair of magnificent Medici-style vases made at the Åldalen porphyry works in the early 19th century and once belonging to Princess Sofia Albertina (1753–1829). These, too, were acquired in New York using funds bequeathed by Gunnar and Ulla Trygg.

In contrast to this, works from the Golden Age of Danish art have long been lacking in Sweden and have hardly had a natural home in our culture, despite the geographical proximity of the two countries. One of the articles in this issue (p. 19) describes the varying success of the Nationalmuseum in acquiring significant works by the great masters of our Scandinavian neighbour. It also presents the many acquisitions made in the last year, which have doubled the Museum’s collection of Danish Golden Age paintings. Particularly noteworthy are the purchases of five paintings and a drawing by the leading exponent of the school, Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783–1853), who is also referred to as the “father of Danish painting”. Of these, special mention may be made of his masterpiece “Una Ciociara” – Portrait of a Roman Country Girl (named after Ciociaria, an area in the vicinity of Rome), from 1816. This painting, like most of the Danish Golden Age art added to the collection, has been acquired with a generous donation from the Wiros Fund.

It was in and around Rome that the practice of plein-air painting first emerged in the late 18th century, primarily among a group of foreign artists. The Frenchman Pierre Henri de Valenciennes (1750–1819) is regarded as one of the pioneers. In his landscape paintings, as in the work of the Flemish artist Simon Denis (1755–1813), the light and the weather conditions were just as important as the specific motif. During the year, several rare works by these artists were acquired, many of them painted as early as the 1780s (see p. 51).

It was in the same international artistic environment that the Swede Johan Tobias Sergel met the Swiss artist Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825). Despite differences in temperament and Sergel’s initial scepticism of Füssli’s expressive and theatrical style of painting, they became inseparable friends before the two of them left Rome in 1778. As a memento of this friendship, Sergel owned several drawings by Füssli, which are now in the Nationalmuseum, but no painting. In the past year, that gap has been filled with the acquisition of the painting Leonora Discovers Alonso’s Dagger, a scene from Edward Young’s play The Revenge (1721). As a result, the Museum’s collections now offer a fuller account of the work of one of the great pre-Romantic artists, replete with violent movement, powerful lighting effects and a mood of terror. This was another acquisition made possible by support from the Wiros Fund (see p. 35).

The Nationalmuseum has in its collections a great many important works by the masters of world art. They include one of the world’s finest holdings of 18th-century French art, although for historical reasons the emphasis is on the Rococo period, with the later part of the century less well represented. From this later period, two important acquisitions have now been made: Marie-Victoire Lemoine’s (1754–1820) representation of an unknown woman artist, and Joseph Ducreux’s (1735–1802) characterful pastel portrait of his mother. The Museum’s collection of 19th-century French paintings has likewise been strengthened by the purchase of several significant works. In particular, we may note Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson’s (1767–1824) head study of Capaneus, known as The Blasphemers, for a larger composition on a theme from Greek antiquity (see article on p. 35). Mention may also be made of two works by the vedutista Auguste-Xavier LePrince (1799–1826): a view of Barrière de la Villette in Paris, and a scene showing the entrance to a courtyard. A French work from the second half of the 19th century that has been added to the collections is a painting by the Orientalist Jean-Raymond-Hippolyte Lazerges (1817–1887), called Young Man Distracted. Exhibited at the Salon of 1850, it is an interesting example of well-executed official painting. If Lazerges has remained an unknown name in Sweden, the same cannot be said of Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884), who exerted a considerable influence on the country’s artists. His unadorned images of peasants were widely noted; less well known, perhaps, are his portraits, a superb example of which is Madame Waskiewicz, painted in 1881. Another acquisition that should be mentioned, finally, is Henry Lerolle’s (1848–1929) The Organ Rehearsal (À l’Orgue). This is a replica of a larger version by the artist in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which was shown at the 1885 Salon. Lerolle was an art dealer and a close friend of both Edgar Degas and Auguste Renoir. In this picture he has included himself, several members of his family, and his friend Claude Debussy (see article on p. 47).

Dutch and Flemish painting has long found a home in Sweden, and hence at the Nationalmuseum. Recent additions to the collection include, in particular, Isaack Luttichuys’s (1616–1673) Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Pair of Gloves and Hieronymus van der Mij’s (1687–1761) Portrait of an Unknown Man. The London-born Dutch artist Luttichuys demonstrates here that he was an unusually capable portraitist with a feel for refined details, such as the elegantly patterned lace. Van der Mij’s portrait reflects the fijnschilderij tradition of Leiden and is contemporary with the Swede Alexander Roslin, pointing to the latter’s Dutch sources of inspiration (see article on p. 13). Even more spectacular than these portraits is Jan Weenix’s (1640–1719) Still Life with a Dead Swan, a Peacock and a Dog by a Garden Fountain. Elegant game pieces of this kind were
a sought-after status symbol among the wealthy burghers of 17th-century Holland, where hunting was a favourite pastime of royalty and the aristocracy, strictly regulated and even prohibited to the emerging burgher class.

Swedish art has a natural place at the Nationalmuseum. During the year, systematic efforts to enrich the collections with works by important but neglected women artists continued. Here, special mention may be made of a portrait of a woman by Amanda Sidwall (1844–1892), Eva Bonnier’s (1857–1909) Odalisque, painted in Paris in 1884, and Hanna Pauli’s (1864–1940) studies for her large composition Friends (see article on p. 59). Another key acquisition was a portrait in terracotta, made in Paris in 1891 by the sculptress Ida Matton (1863–1940). The work is an excellent example of expressive naturalism and illusionism, closely reflecting trends in contemporary French sculpture (see article on p. 97).

To mark the 70th birthday of Carl XVI Gustaf, the Friends of the Nationalmuseum presented the Swedish National Portrait Gallery at Gripsholm Castle with eight photographic portraits of HM The King and members of the Royal Family. They were taken by four celebrated Swedish photographers: Dawid (Björn Dawidsson), Bruno Ehrs, Thron Ullberg and Mattias Edwall. Although several of the portraits are official in character, they retain a distinct individuality. They all represent both tradition and innovation in Swedish portraiture (see article on p. 65).

The Nationalmuseum also made a series of significant acquisitions of jewellery during the year, including older, modern and contemporary pieces (see articles on pp. 71 and pp. 79). At the same time, two exhibitions were held on this theme: The Jeweller’s Art – Precious Objects from the 17th Century to the Present Day at Läckö Castle, and Open Space – Mind Maps at Nationalmuseum Design. The first, which proved a major public success, offered a broad survey of the Museum’s collections of jewellery and precious objects from 1650 onwards. The second made it clear how, in recent decades, Swedish jewellery has moved closer to the world of art. It featured pieces exploring questions of identity, sexuality, prejudice, and our relationship to nature. The materials used included plastics, leather, antlers, paper, wood and base metals, alongside the more traditional precious metals of the jeweller’s art. In the course of the year, the Museum was able to acquire no fewer than 18 pieces of jewellery created over a five-year period beginning in 2011.

In 2016 the ceramic artist Mårten Medbo gained Sweden’s first ever doctorate in applied art, an event that not only put artistic research firmly on the map, but also turned the spotlight on contemporary ceramics. In his thesis, Medbo drew attention to a separation currently taking place in the applied arts – between conceptual theorising and material, craft-based creative activity. As Sweden’s premier museum of art and design, the Nationalmuseum made important acquisitions during the year in both these categories of ceramics. In addition, the Museum received a major gift from the Taiwanese state, resulting from an exciting collaboration between a Swedish applied arts collective led by Matti Klenell and a corresponding Chinese group. Together, these practitioners attempted to confront contemporary design with traditional craft techniques.

During year two of the temporary Nationalmuseum Design arena at the Stockholm House of Culture and City Theatre, three exhibitions were shown that were very different in both expression and theme. 2016 began with the international art jewellery exhibition Open Space – Mind Maps, curated by Ellen Maurer Zilioli, Munich, in which around thirty international and Swedish jewellery artists were represented. A generous and multifaceted presentation of the Swedish design icon Ingegerd Råman, reflected in some fifty different projects and commissions, provided the year’s summer exhibition. Embodied – Ongoing Craft at the Fringe, finally, which featured works by twelve contemporary applied/fine artists, touched and engaged many visitors throughout the autumn and winter.

In the Project Container, a total of five different projects were shown, with a presentation of the winner of the Young Applied Artists Award 2016 – jewellery artist Mårtta Mattsson – to round off the year.

For the fourth year in succession, the Nationalmuseum exhibited visual art at the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts. Before its temporary display space there closed at the end of 2016, the exhibition The Artist was produced in collaboration with the Academy and the Moderna Museet. An exploration of the artist’s role, today and in historical perspective, it sought to show how artists have related to the values, audiences and markets of their times. Another central theme of The Artist was power relations, constructed around notions of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class. In all, around a hundred works by many of the best-known names of art history were shown.

Collections of the Nationalmuseum that have achieved worldwide fame include its holdings of French Rococo and Nordic fin-de-siècle art. The first of these was the focus of a major collaboration with the Louvre on the exhibition Un Suédois à Paris au 18e siècle: La collection Tessin, which resulted in both a richly illustrated catalogue and a series of seminars in Paris. Most spectacular among the exhibits was François Boucher’s The Birth of Venus, which was shown in the French capital for the first time since 1740. A reworked version of the exhibition was subsequently presented at the Morgan Library in New York. The Museum’s other French exhibition, De Lumière et de Silence: Peintres scandinaves fin XIXe – début XXe siècle, was mounted at the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi. This presentation of Scandinavian
fin-de-siècle painting, too, was a collaborative project and was accompanied by a catalogue.

A key responsibility of the Nationalmuseum is to develop and represent research in art history, primarily in connection with the display and care of its holdings. Research undertaken by the Museum will form an important and integral part of the future display of the collections. Exchanges with foreign scholars are one aspect of this work. In this issue of the *Art Bulletin* we have great pleasure in publishing the latest Tessin Lecture, given by Colin B. Bailey, Director of the Morgan Library & Museum in New York (see article on p. 203).

The present issue of the *Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum* is the fourth to be published exclusively in a digital format. Steady growth in the number of downloads shows that this allows knowledge about the Museum to be disseminated more easily and more widely, including to an international audience. The Nationalmuseum’s aim is to expand the digital publication of its collections and research findings. In 2016, additional work was done to register, among other holdings, drawings acquired between 1970 and 2016, as well as various smaller collections in the care of the Nationalmuseum and kept at royal castles and country houses. A project was also initiated to include the full entries from the catalogues raisonnés of the paintings collection in the Museum’s database.