The Republican general, and later marshal, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo, was well aware of how to use the rhetorical qualities of visual art for political ends. This is demonstrated, not least, by the circumstances surrounding his election as crown prince of Sweden at the Örebro Diet in the summer of 1810. Jean-Antoine Fournier, the French vice consul in Gothenburg and Bernadotte’s agent in Örebro, had as his only credentials from the marshal a now famous toothpick case. On one side, it bore a portrait miniature of Bernadotte’s wife Désirée, Princess of Ponte Corvo, and on the other, one of their son Oscar as a child. Both were painted by Jean-Baptiste Isabey (1767–1855). Fournier made skillful use of this object as evidence of his authority to act. It was left to another of Bernadotte’s supporters, General Fabian Wrede, to bring with him what remained of an edition of Pierre-Michel Alix’s (1762–1817) famous mezzotint engraving of the marshal (Fig. 1). This appears to have been handed out in such numbers to members of the Diet that it soon became...

Fig. 1 Johann Lorenz Kreul (1765–1840), Equestrian Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte. Pencil, traces of black chalk, watercolour, gouache on brownish vellum-finish paper, 41 x 29.5 cm. Purchase: Axel Hirsch Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMH 513/2016.
known as the Örebro portrait, despite being over ten years old. It does not seem to have mattered, either, that it showed Bernadotte as a defender of the French Republic. On the contrary, this reinforced the image of him as a capable general, well suited to the role of commander-in-chief in a Swedish war to reclaim Finland from Russia. In the end, a different course of events ensued, apart from the fact that Bernadotte, a rank outsider, was elected as heir apparent to the Swedish throne. In all this intrigue, images of him played a major role.²

During his active years as a French general and marshal, Bernadotte was a very busy man and rarely able to spend time in Paris. A typical illustration of this is François-Joseph Kinsoen’s (1771–1839) well-known portrait of Bernadotte as a marshal. It was made in 1804 for inclusion in the Gallery of Marshals at the Tuileries Palace. The portrait, which had to be painted in the field, subsequently provided David with a model for the head of Bernadotte in both The Coronation and The Distribution of the Eagles.³ The following year, when Bernadotte became a knight of the Prussian Order of the Black Eagle along with three other marshals, several portraits were produced. For Bernadotte, it was important to draw attention to his new honour and to his elevation in July 1806 to Prince of Ponte Corvo. He did this through a variety of portraits, both miniatures that were easy to send and representations in other techniques. At the time, Bernadotte was governor of the margravate of Ansbach. One of the artists he turned to was Johann Lorenz Kreul (1764–1840). Kreul had studied in Ansbach, but worked in nearby Nuremberg. He painted both head-and-shoulders and full-length portraits, in pastels and other media.⁴ Several of these were engraved and different variants of them distributed.⁵ One that was hitherto unknown was the equestrian portrait by Kreul recently acquired by the Nationalmuseum, done in watercolour and gouache (Fig. 1).

Fig. 2 Pierre-Michel Alix (1762–1817), General Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, 1798–99. Mezzotint on paper, 57 x 39.5 cm. Nationalmuseum, NMG 343/1914.
Fig. 3 Dawid (b. 1949), *Carl XVI Gustaf (b. 1946), King of Sweden*, 2005. Digital photography on paper, 74 x 60 cm. Gift by by the Friends of the Nationalmuseum. Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 5112.
this image, Kreul, like many other court painters, reused studies he had previously made of Bernadotte, but now with a different attitude. The result may possibly have served as the basis for a pastel, or alternatively a print to be distributed on the open market, not least to underscore the sitter’s status as a distinguished general. This conscious visual rhetoric contributed to Bernadotte’s election as Sweden’s crown prince and – as Karl XIV Johan (Charles XIV) – the founding father of the present royal dynasty.

On the occasion of Carl XVI Gustaf’s 70th birthday, the Friends of the Nationalmuseum presented the Swedish National Portrait Gallery at Gripsholm Castle with eight portraits of HM The King and members of the Royal Family. The first of these was taken by Björn Dawidsson, known as Dawid (b. 1949). He is regarded as one of Sweden’s foremost photographers and was one of the first to work with conceptual photography. Dawid made his debut in 1973, but his real breakthrough came a decade later with the exhibition Rust at the Fotografiska Museet (the Swedish Museum of Photography, now part of the Moderna Museet). He showed – then as later – how the seeming banality of a bent, rusty nail could be transformed into something unique and artistically expressive. Since then, Dawid’s work has stretched conventional concepts and the boundaries of what can be deemed to constitute photographic art. Although Dawid has mainly come to be associated with an abstract, avant-garde brand of photography, he has also produced many powerful and sympathetic portraits of friends. One of his more unusual works is his innovative portrait of HM The King (2005), which served as the design for a stamp marking his 60th birthday (Fig. 3). Despite its contemporary feel, it also echoes the classical image of the ruler viewed in profile, with roots going back to antiquity.

Another photographer who has taken a number of different portraits of His Majesty over the years is Bruno Ehrs (b. 1953). He began his career at the

![Fig. 4 Bruno Ehrs (b. 1953). Carl XVI Gustaf (b. 1946), King of Sweden, 2009 (photographed 2009). Photograph, digital print, 60 x 40 cm. Gift of the Friends of the Nationalmuseum. Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 5111.](image)
Stockholm City Museum, under the legendary photographer Lennart af Petersens. This gave Ehrs a solid grasp of architectural photography, a skill most recently demonstrated in a book about the French chateau of Vaux-le-Vicomte. Since the early 1980s he has worked freelance. For the 750th anniversary of the City of Stockholm, Ehrs took a series of portraits of famous Stockholmers, among them Carl XVI Gustaf. This image was acquired for the Swedish National Portrait Gallery and was shown at the exhibition Kings in Black and White at Gripsholm Castle, celebrating the King’s 60th birthday. Ehrs has continued to provide official portraits for the Royal Family (Fig. 4), and in 2010 produced his first designs for stamps depicting the King and Queen.

The third name to be mentioned here is Thron Ullberg (b. 1969), one of Sweden’s leading portrait photographers. Ullberg started studying history of art, but soon embarked on a photographic career. He often uses a large-format camera and traditional negatives, which he then processes digitally, a sign of his love for the time-honoured craft of photography. His portraits are consciously staged, with special visual associations and a theatrical character inspired by advertising and fashion photography, as well as film and video. They provide examples of both intimacy and distance, the personal and the official. Ullberg’s portraits are often produced for a specific context – for the press and, in particular, for various picture magazines. They may make artistic claims, but are nevertheless shaped by the context for which they were created. The familiar face, especially, is an important part of what gives Ullberg’s portraits their radiance. His image of Carl XVI Gustaf in the gardens outside the Royal Palace in Stockholm was taken specifically for an article about the King (Fig. 5). This portrait, like the others, represents a fusion of tradition and innovation. Although several of them are official in character, they nevertheless retain a distinct individuality.

Fig. 5 Thron Ullberg (b. 1969), Carl XVI Gustaf (b. 1946), King of Sweden, 2008 (photographed 2012). Digital photography on paper, 56 x 40 cm. Gift of the Friends of the Nationalmuseum. Nationalmuseum, NMGh 5109.
Notes:
2. Ibid., cat. no. 233, p. 296 (text by Magnus Olausson). See also Gunnar Ekholm, Porträtt av konung Carl XIV Johan i metallgravyr och litografi, Uppsala 1949, p. 14.