A Portrait Sculpted by Ida Matton

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Fig. 1 Ida Matton (1863–1940), Sculpted Portrait of a Woman, 1891. Terracotta, 35 x 40 x 30 cm (h x w x d). Purchase: Axel Hirsch Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMSk 2353.
In Paris she was one of many women artists to exhibit and work on the same terms as their male colleagues. Like many of her Scandinavian colleagues, Ida Matton remained in Paris almost all her life. She had a large network of close female friends, who were probably also important to her professionally, by supporting her socially. She won accolades at the Salon several times. In Sweden, on the other hand, she found it hard to make a breakthrough and win recognition for her art. This may have been due to the salon style of Matton’s oeuvre, which was not in line with the new tendencies in Sweden, which also had a smaller market for art. Nor did she have an influential support network there. When the Second World War started, Ida Matton moved back to Sweden; she died in Gävle in 1940. A couple of her sculptures can be seen in public spaces: The Punishment of Loke in the garden of Stockholm City Hall (1909), and Gustav Vasa in Kvarnparken in Gävle (1924).

Notes:
1. The main part of Ida Matton’s artistic estate is in the Gävleborg County Museum. We are grateful to the antiquarian Anna Larsdotter for her introduction and tour of the collections. Matton’s oeuvre was featured in a commemorative exhibition at the Museum in 1963, and a smaller exhibition in 2013. She was also celebrated with a commemorative exhibition at the Grand Palais Paris in 1930. The archive material left by Matton is kept in the Uppsala University Library. Matton is practically ignored by older literature on art history, but Barbro Norbelie made a separate in-depth study on the artist in an unpublished master thesis at Uppsala University, Ida Matton (1863–1940) Kvinnor och skulptör på det franska och svenska konstfältet, 2012. Vibeke Röstorp mentions Ida Matton’s career in France in her dissertation Le Mythe de Retour. Les artistes scandinaves en France de 1889 à 1908, Stockholm 2013. Both authors are gratefully acknowledged for participating in discussions relating to the writing of this article.
3. Women sculptors at the previous turn of the century are discussed mainly in Irja Bergström’s Skulptriserna. Alice Nordin och hennes samtida 1890–1940, Gothenburg/Stockholm 2012.
5. Röstorp, p. 81.
7. Letter to her brother Emil Matton, quoted in Norbelie, p. 15.
8. Norbelie, pp. 15–16, 53ff. In her thesis, Vibeke Röstorp shows that the Salon was highly receptive to Nordic artists.