The Adelborg Donation – A Collection of Drawings

Wolfgang Nittnaus, Titel
Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, is published with generous support from the Friends of the Nationalmuseum.

Nationalmuseum collaborates with Svenska Dagbladet and Grand Hôtel Stockholm. We would also like to thank FCB Fältman & Malmö.

Cover Illustration

Publisher
Berndt Arell, Director General

Editor
Ludvig Florén and Magnus Olausson

Editorial Committee
Janna Herder, Linda Hinners, Merit Laine, Lena Munther, Magnus Olausson, Martin Olin, Maria Perers and Lidia Westerberg Olofsson

Photographs
Nationalmuseum Photographic Studio/
Linn Ahlgren, Bodil Beckman, Erik Cornelius, Anna Danielsson, Cecilia Heisser, Sofia Persson, Per-Åke Persson and Hans Thorwid

Picture Editor
Rikard Nordström

Photo Credits
© Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen (Fig. 5, p. 21. Fig. 1, p. 36) © Amsterdam Historisch Museum, Amsterdam (Fig. 2, p. 32) © Trustees of the British Museum, London (Fig. 3, p. 33. Fig. 6, p. 38) © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (Fig. 2, p. 36) © The National Library of Sweden, Stockholm (Fig. 4, p. 38. Fig. 21, p. 211. Fig. 28, p. 215) © Alte Nationalgallerie, Berlin (Fig. 2, p. 40) © Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (Fig. 3, p. 41) © Neue Pinakothek, Munich (Fig. 5, p. 43) © The Morgan Library & Museum, New York (Fig. 4, p. 109. Fig. 32–33, p. 217) © The Mathiesen Gallery, London (Fig. 1, p. 108) © The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Fig. 2, p. 122) © Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis (Fig. 3, p. 123) © Robilant + Voena (Fig. 4, p. 124) © The Swedish National Archives, Stockholm (Fig. 3, p. 204) © The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Photo: Joshua Ferdinand (Fig. 4, p. 205) © Musée du Louvre, Paris. RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY (Fig. 5, p. 205) © Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Fig. 8, p. 207) © The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program (Fig. 10, p. 208. Fig. 30, p. 216) © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Fig. 11, p. 208) © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Fig. 18, p. 210. Fig. 23, p. 212. Fig. 31, p. 216) © Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (Fig. 24, p. 213. Fig. 26, p. 214) © Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis. John Herron Fund. (Fig. 25, p. 213) © Stockholms auktionsverk (Fig. 8, p. 196)

Graphic Design
BIGG

Layout
Agneta Bervokk

Translation and Language Editing
Gabriella Berggren, William Jewson, David Jones and Martin Naylor

Publishing
Ludvig Florén, Magnus Olausson (Editors) and Ingrid Lindell (Publications Manager)

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

Nationalmuseum
Box 16176
SE-103 24 Stockholm, Sweden
www.nationalmuseum.se
© Nationalmuseum, the authors and the owners of the reproduced works

ISSN 2001-9238

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum Volume 23, 2016 4
In 2015 the Nationalmuseum received a collection of drawings as a gift from the Adelborg family. Per Otto Adelborg (1781–1818) and his two sons, Anders Otto (1811–1862) and Bror Jacob Adelborg (1816–1865), were among quite a long succession of military officers in 19th-century Sweden who were also active as artists – a type Georg Nordensvan referred to as “the uniformed dilettante”. In recent years, other scholars have devoted a number of publications to military men who drew and painted.

Like their forefather Eric Otto Adelborg (1741–1787), these younger members of the family made careers in the armed forces: Per Otto became a lieutenant colonel, Anders Otto a captain and Bror Jacob Adelborg a commander in the navy. Military training traditionally included tuition in the art of drawing, a skill that was needed to make maps, document terrain, plan sieges and draw up strategies, and that was considered to hone an officer’s powers of observation. Augustin Ehrensvård (1710–1772) took a similar view when he established a school of drawing at the fortress of Sveaborg.

Fig. 1 Per Otto Adelborg (1781–1818), Per Otto Adelborg and Gustav IV Adolf, 20 May 1809, Gripsholm. “On 20 May, the King Asked Me…”. Pen and ink, wash and watercolour. Nationalmuseum, NMH 21/2016.
As far as Per Otto Adelborg is concerned, the Nationalmuseum already had a number of drawings and prints by him in its collections, including his well-known series of *Caricatures of the Reign of Gustav IV Adolf*, published anonymously around 1810–1811. With the 48 included in the recent gift, the Museum now has a total of 212 drawings by this artist. Taken together, they provide a good picture of his eventful career.

That view was still very much alive when a Military Academy was founded at Karlberg in 1792 to train young army and navy cadets, with a curriculum that again included drawing. It was at Karlberg that Anders Otto and Bror Jacob Adelborg received their training in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The drawing tutor at that time was Carl Gustaf Gillberg (1774–1855).

(present-day Suomenlinna) in 1763, modelled on the Drawing Academy at Stockholm’s Royal Palace. The purpose of this teaching was made clear in his “Address on the training of young men as soldiers”, delivered to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1743. The often-quoted motto he advanced was: “When the hand is trained to reproduce what the eye sees, the capacity for analysis is also sharpened.”

As far as Per Otto Adelborg is concerned, the Nationalmuseum already had a number of drawings and prints by him in its collections, including his well-known series of *Caricatures of the Reign of Gustav IV Adolf*, published anonymously around 1810–1811. With the 48 included in the recent gift, the Museum now has a total of 212 drawings by this artist. Taken together, they provide a good picture of his eventful career.

Fig. 2 Per Otto Adelborg (1781–1818), *The Crown Jewels are Inspected at Gripsholm Castle, 13 July 1809*. Pen and ink, wash and watercolour. Nationalmuseum, NMH 22/2016.
life. The sheets donated in 2015 supplement the earlier holding with drawings of a more private character. Here we find depictions from the artist’s childhood – reminiscences of life with his immediate and wider family. They are drawn in a sketchy manner, with a light hand. Their portrayals of individuals are often exaggerated, almost caricatured. Per Otto was a tall man, a characteristic he self-mockingly overstates in many of his drawings. His images of life with his fellow officers are frequently humorous in tone, and his family and relatives are represented in a similar vein.

Per Otto Adelborg was born in 1781 in Lovisa in Finland, at that time the eastern half of the Swedish realm. He lost his parents at an early age, his mother in 1785 and his father in 1787, and as a consequence became very close to his sister, Virgine Sophie Adelborg (1780–1853). He trained at Sveaborg, and in 1800 he was a pupil of the naval sculptor Johan Törnström in Karlskrona. There, he drew from the antiquities kept in the sculpture workshop, as well as copying other drawings and prints. In his workshop Törnström also had a collection of drawings by Carl August Ehrensvärd.

These were eventful times, with a series of dramatic changes. The war of 1808–1809, in which Sweden lost Finland to Russia, was followed in 1809 by a coup that led to the deposition and imprisonment of Gustav IV Adolf, and in 1814 by a military campaign against Norway. A drawing depicting a meeting between Per Otto and the deposed king is a good illustration of the private character of the collection (Fig. 1). It shows Gustav IV Adolf during his imprisonment at Gripsholm in 1809. Adelborg was one of his guards, giving him access to the king on several occasions and in a variety of situations. The features are exaggerated, and Per Otto draws himself standing a chest taller than the king. The drawing is done on a sheet of notepaper, with a decorative frame in blind relief. It was very probably sent as a letter to his sister, Virgine, as the words Per Otto has written on the back suggest. They record a conversation he had with the king, which prompted his choice of subject: “On 20 May, the King asked me if I had a sister / – how many children she had / – if she was married / – if she was young / – if she was beautiful / – why she was not married. / – How, dear sister, do you want me / to answer him?” The drawing was letterfolded and was presumably never intended to be made public.

Another drawing from Gustav IV Adolf’s time at Gripsholm documents the moment at which the crown jewels were inspected and returned to the state by the deposed king and his queen, Fredrika Dorotea (Fig. 2).
One of the more tender drawings by Per Otto is one he made of his immediate family in their home (Fig. 3).

The 2015 donation also included 142 sheets by Anders Otto Adelborg, bringing the Museum’s total holding of drawings by him to 144. Anders Otto began his military training as a cadet at Karlberg in 1825. He then served with the Second Life Guards in Stockholm throughout the 1830s, as a second lieutenant and subsequently a lieutenant. In 1840 he resigned from the army with the rank of captain. After he was married in January of that year to Louise Bohnstedt, who brought a considerable fortune into the marriage, he returned to civilian life.

The drawings by Anders Otto Adelborg date largely from the 1830s, and thus document a limited period of his life. They consist mostly of small portrait sketches and scenes from his life as a guardsman, along with a handful of civilian portraits. Anders Otto is a skilled draughtsman, but his portrayals of people are somewhat stereotyped. His military subjects are drawn with humour and tend towards the burlesque. He also directs his humour and irony at himself, as in his portrait of himself as a self-assured young guardsman (Fig. 4). The character of the portrait is accentuated by the imprecation “The deeeevil take me!” Another example of the burlesque strand to his work is his drawing of a non-commissioned officer called Lagerheim on horseback (Fig. 5). The same Lagerheim was also portrayed by Fritz von Dardel (1817–1901), during his time with the Life Guards.

The Nationalmuseum’s first drawing by Bror Jacob Adelborg was acquired as early as 1860.22 With the 255 sheets included in the 2015 donation, the Museum now has a total of 280 drawings by this artist. Of Per Otto Adelborg’s sons, it is Bror Jacob who shows a similar temperament in his drawings to his father, and who is the more accomplished as a draughtsman. He seems to have drawn on an almost daily basis,

Fig. 4 Anders Otto Adelborg (1811–1862), The Deeeevil Take Me! Self-Portrait? Pencil, pen and ink, wash and watercolour. Nationalmuseum, NMH 109/2016.
and the results stretch from his early youth to the end of his life. His drawing is on a par with Fritz von Dardel’s.

Like his brother, Bror Jacob trained at Karlberg, beginning as a cadet there in October 1830. He then continued in the navy, serving on a number of ships during the 1830s as part of his training. In 1840–1842 he was a member of the expedition to Latin America led by Göran Adolph Oxehufvud, sailing on the brig Oscar. From 1842 to 1845, a scholarship enabled him to serve in Britain’s royal navy, with postings that took him to such places as the West Indies, North America, the Cape and West Africa. A self-portrait showing him as a mate in the British navy dates from this period (Fig. 6).

Bror Jacob also had a series of tours of duty as a ship’s officer on vessels of the Swedish navy. He drew numerous scenes from the various places he visited, as well as images of life on board and of his companions. In addition to these drawings from life in the navy and from his travels, he produced many self-portraits and portraits of his family. In May 1848, he married Hedvig af Uhr (1820–1903) and the couple set up home in Karlskrona. One drawing shows them standing at the stove in their first apartment, on Landborggatan in the town (Fig. 7). The sheet also includes a plan of the apartment and an elevation of the building.

When the Adelborg drawings were presented to the Museum, they were kept in a portfolio box and a ribbon-tied folder. Embossed in gold on the box was the name of the collection, “The Adelborg Drawings Collections”. The drawings in the box were all mounted on soft grey cardboard, while those in the folder were stored as loose sheets.

The earliest references to the collection are to be found in the writings of Ottilia Adelborg (1855–1936), the second youngest child of Bror Jacob and Hedvig Adelborg. As early as 1907, in a text in

Fig. 5 Anders Otto Adelborg (1811–1862), God Daaamu Me! I am Mightily Confused. Caricature of Lagerheim. His Horse Breaks Wind. Pencil, pen and brush and ink. Nationalmuseum, NMH 142/2016.
her Bilderbok (Picture Book) entitled “Reflections on drawings”, Ottilia mentions that there were drawings in her childhood home by her father and her paternal grandfather. She returns to the subject in “Barndomsminnen” (Childhood Memories), although there she refers only to drawings by her father. Her clearest memories are recorded in a short piece she was asked to write for the Blekinge Museum’s 1936 yearbook, recalling her childhood years in Karlskrona. In that text, Ottilia describes how the drawings were kept in portfolios and talks of the pleasure it gave her and her sisters to be allowed to leaf through them:

…we possessed great riches in the portfolios in which our grandfather’s and father’s drawings were kept. As children, with a freedom we now find almost surprising, we were allowed to amuse ourselves with them and, in some childish way, study and absorb them as best we could.

The drawings by Eric Otto Adelborg which Per Otto had inherited from his father were lost in the fire that swept through Karlskrona in 1790, with the result that the collection only included works by Per Otto and Bror Jacob Adelborg. Presumably it also contained sheets by Johan and Carl Törnström. The drawings Per Otto and Bror Jacob had given to relatives and friends during their lifetime eventually found their way back into the Adelborg collection, as secondary inscriptions on various drawings and mounts make clear.

In 1903, on the death of their mother, Hedvig, the collection passed into the hands of Bror Jacob’s daughters, Maria (1849–1940), Gertrud (1853–1942) and Ottilia Adelborg (1855–1936). Most of the mounted drawings bear inscriptions by Ottilia in ink or pencil. Usually, these identify the individuals portrayed, provide explanatory titles, record personal recollections, give details of provenance and so on. One of the oldest drawings in the collection, repaired by a conservator at some point after 1907, has an inscription
on the reverse stating that it “Belongs to the drawings collection of the Misses Adelborg”.

In September 1938, following Ottilia’s death two years earlier, her sisters, Maria and Gertrud, bequeathed the drawings to their cousin’s son Otto Adelborg (1883–1982).21 Around this time, we find references to the collection as “The Adelborg Drawings Collections”. It was probably at this point that most of the sheets by Anders Otto were added. From Otto Adelborg, the collection passed by inheritance to his nephew Hugo Adelborg. Hugo’s wife and cousin, Beatrice Adelborg, added further drawings by Anders Otto to the collection.

Notes:
1. The collection, comprising 516 drawings (NMH 2–510/2016), 2 prints (NMG 1–2/2016) and an oil sketch, had been kept in the Adelborg family, where it had come to be known as “The Adelborg Drawings Collections”. It was given to the Nationalmuseum by Louise and Görel Adelborg, the daughters and heirs of the late Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Adelborg (1924–2015) and his wife, Beatrice Adelborg (1925–2011). The gift was arranged by the daughters’ cousin Lars Fredborg. Drawings by Per Otto Adelborg (1781–1818) and his two sons, Anders Otto (1811–1862) and Bror Jacob Adelborg (1816–1865), make up a major part of the donation. In all, it includes 445 drawings by these three artists. Another 57 are by other members of the family: Louise Adelborg (1813–1899, née Bohnstedt), Anders Otto’s wife, and their children, Ottilia (1841–1879, married name Rålamb), Fredrik (1842–1890), Otto Ehrenfried (1845–1900), Hugo (1848–1940) and Ludvig (1850–1869). In addition, there are two texts by Lovisa Eleonora Adelborg (1786–1841, née Ramsay), Per Otto’s wife. The few other artists represented include the naval sculptor Johan Törnström (1744–1828) and his son Carl Törnström (1778–1815). Finally, the gift includes a drawing dated 1791 by L. J. Törnmarck, who could be the author Lars Johan Törnmarck (1752–1801); one initialled G. L., from the middle of the 19th century; a Chinese drawing from the end of that century, Chinese Man in a Blue Costume, gouache on pith paper, NMH 510/2016; two prints, Auf dein Wohlergehen, NMG 1/2016, published in Berlin in the early 1800s, and Das ist mein lieber Sohn an dem ich Wohlgelitten habe, NMG 2/2016, a caricature of Napoleon as the devil’s son from c. 1814 (the print in the Nationalmuseum is in German, but...
there are versions in other languages) the donation also include a small oil study of “Mrs Köhler” by Bror Jacob Adelborg, not yet inventoried.


3. I have been greatly helped in my work on the donation by Lars Fredborg’s book about his family: Lars Fredborg, Adelborg – en svensk adelssläkt under 200 år, Stockholm 2012.


9. At the top of the decorative blind-relief frame is the word “Sincère”, also in blind relief.


12. The drawing, NMH A 163/1973, was included in the Swedish Anckarsvärd Collection of 1860, as no. 117. At the time, it was attributed to Fritz von Dardel.

13. Details of Bror Jacob Adelborg’s life are taken from Fredborg 2012, pp. 61 ff.


15. Otilia Adelborg, Bilderbok samlad ur barn-täningar, Stockholm 1907, unpaginated.


18. Welin and Honkala 2014, p. 32; the authors quote from a letter sent by Per Otto Adelborg’s uncle Anders Borgh to a family friend called Guttofksi on 22 May 1791.

19. Fredborg 2012, p. 32. On the death of Per Otto’s sister Virginie Sophie Adelborg in 1853, Bror Jacob inherited her estate, which presumably included the letter drawing of Per Otto and Gustav IV Adolf. This and other drawings Per Otto had given to his sister were thus reunited with the collection.

20. NMH 7/2016, Per Otto Adelborg after Carl August Ehrensvärd, Figure Group, Old Man/ Philosopher Accompanied by Geniuses and Minerva.

21. This information comes from a conversation and interview with Lars Fredborg on 3 February 2016 and from the deed of gift, dated 26 February 2015.