Delaunay and Stockholm

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Robert Delaunay to Arturo Ciacelli, 7 August 1917

LA COUVERTURE DU CATALOGUE DE L’EXPOSITION DE STOCKHOLM (1916).
ON THE DELAUNAYS, NYA KONSTGALLERIET AND LA CORPORATION NOUVELLE.

Couverture du catalogue de l’exposition de Stockholm [Cover for the catalogue for the exhibition in Stockholm], 1916, is a work on paper by Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979) in the collection of Moderna Museet. The image exists as several handmade prints, stencilled by hand with wax and polychromic colours; a few of them held in public collections. The stencil, henceforth referred to as the Couverture…, presents an extraordinary play of form and colour, but also of content. When unfolded, a continuous image is visible as the entire surface is in sight, which is the way it generally is presented, expanding it beyond its initial function as a cover. On the right-hand side, a circular form on the upper half revolves around a black point, as if the blue, golden, red and green lines have formed around the depths of a crater. Underneath and slightly to the left of this form lies another circle, this time radiating bright pink, blue, green and yellow. This is where abstraction becomes figuration, as the forms create the face of a woman in a hat, dressed in fields of composed colour. This side was the front cover of the catalogue for the exhibition in Stockholm, which was among Sonia’s earliest international exhibitions outside France. The Couverture… is a self-portrait, and several sketches and preparations for it exist. One version for example, corresponding to the front image, was printed on the cover of her self-biography, Nous irons jusqu’au soleil [We Will Go Right Up to the Sun], in 1978.

The letters on the left side, which once functioned as the back of the cover, are neither plain “typographical signs”, nor abstract forms, however they are carefully balanced within the composition, whilst simultaneously signifying letters and words. On the upper section of this side reads the full name of the artist, S. Delaunay-Terk. It is scribed in large capital letters, in a way that, again, expresses self-representation. The letters are colour-fields without contours; they are “coloured characters” to use the words of the artist in reference to an earlier work. Although the portrait is clearly female, the figures on this left side are more neutral, as is the signature. The “S.” instead of “Sonia” allows the artist’s gender to be obscured, and when the exhibition travelled to Christiania, some critics presumed the work belonged to a male artist. On this side, the image is constructed of semicircles, the higher and a lower arcs meeting irregularly in the middle of the space. Although playing with abstraction and colour, the image visibly reads as a raised figure with its head in the form of a round disc, its core body in the middle forming a circular solar plexus, and its legs spread out below.

The site of the exhibition is emphasised on the cover: Nya konstgalleriet at Strandvägen 9, in Stockholm. This geo-reference points to a burgeoning street by the Northern quay of the Baltic Sea, where other modernist galleries also clustered. The names of two cities are placed in the lower half of this circle and beyond: PARIS in green, and STOCKHOLM in blue. The first is the city Sonia had left for Spain in the summer of 1914, continuing to Portugal soon thereafter. The second is the Swedish capital,
a city that Sonia did not visit during the exhibition, and in fact never in her life. Thus, the presence of these cities is not a biographical positioning, but has other implications, indicating a broader space of intercultural connections.8

Although the Couverture... is regularly presented in museums today as singular, auratic artefacts – a logical consequence of the heroisation of the early avant-garde within the institution – it will here be read in its intended function as the cover of a catalogue, executed by Sonia in Portugal and sent in 50 numbered prints to the director of Nya konstgalleriet, Arturo Ciacelli (1883–1966) in Stockholm. Ciacelli realised the printing of the insert of the catalogue in Stockholm, producing 300 copies.9 The catalogue is a document of an interesting avant-garde exchange between artists situated at two geographic peripheries in Europe (Portugal and Sweden) from which an even larger project was intended to transpire.

Ciacelli, an Italian painter, opened his gallery in late 1915 whilst announcing his ambition to foster new Swedish and international modernist art. He ran the gallery until 1919. Ciacelli had previously spent time in Paris, where he probably frequented the Delaunays’ salon, although little details are known of their first encounters. For Robert Delaunay, as we shall see, this connection becomes a part of his ongoing international marketing of his and Sonia’s art within the project “La Corporation Nouvelle” [New Corporation], an association for the wide distribution of new art founded by a group of artists and writers in Portugal in 1915.10 The nature of the Northern axis of this cooperation and the substance of its actions, have not been previously investigated. Art exhibitions, not the least travelling exhibitions, and their catalogues are the most important vehicles for cultural transference within avant-garde formations of this era. This essay will investigate the Couverture... and the full catalogue as a document of avant-garde performance within a rare transnational context between Northern and Southern “peripheries”. The exhibition at Nya konstgalleriet and the strategies of the actors, Robert, Sonia and Arturo Ciacelli, in connection to it, will be investigated. The exhibition will be framed by an outline of Stockholm’s position within the European art market during the war, where important international actors competed for positions.

I. SONIA DELAUNAY-TERK, ARTURO CIACELLI
AND THE AVANT-GARDES

The Russian artist Sonia Delaunay and her husband, the French artist Robert Delaunay (1885–1941), left Paris for Spain in the summer of 1914, where they decided to stay when the war broke out. They continued to Portugal in 1915, where Sonia experienced a rich and fruitful working period and from where the collection for Stockholm was sent. This was eight years after Sonia’s arrival in Paris in 1907. She had a solid cultural upbringing with her uncle in Saint Petersburg, followed by training at the Art Academy in Karlsruhe 1904–1905. In 1906 she went to Paris to study at the Académie Palette, and had her first exhibition within the Parisian avant-garde the following year at Galerie Notre-Dame-des-Champs, a group-exhibition organised by the German art dealer Wilhelm von Uhde that included works by Picasso, Braque, Derain, Dufy, Metzinger and Pascin. In 1908 a solo show followed. Uhde became Sonia’s first husband, in a white liaison. Within Uhde’s circles, Sonia met Robert. The pair married and established a home and atelier at 3, rue des Grands-Augustins, in 1910.

At rue des Grands-Augustins, Sonia devoted herself to painting, excelling with works including Bal Bullier [Bullier Ballroom] (1913), featuring the bodies of dancing people rhythmically extracted over the long canvas, and Prismes électriques [Electric Prisms] (1914). She and Robert derived a practice of the simultaneous contrasting of colours from M.E. Chevreul’s theories of colour, which was launched as a new movement labelled Simultaneism. When attending Bal Bullier, the ballroom in Montparnasse intensely popular
with artists and writers, the Delaunays went dressed in costumes created by Sonia – jackets and dresses in Simultaneist fashion, with separated colour fields of textile balanced over the body. Sonia decorated their apartment with lampshades, pillows and other objects in Simultaneist patterns.

The salon of the Delaunays was frequented by artists and authors of Russian and several other nationalities. The couple had met the Swiss-French poet Blaise Cendrars at the house of the poet Guillaume Apollinaire by the end of 1912, and they became close friends. Sonia and Cendrars merged their work in La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France [Prose of the Trans-Siberian Railway and of Little Jehanne of France] (1913), the “first simultaneist book”. Cendrars’s text describes a metaphoric life journey, through the course of a tour on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Sonia, who had the idea to let the text be read vertically, was inspired to let colours develop alongside the letters. The combined poem and painting covered a two metre long piece of paper that could also be folded into a small book. The colour fields were hand stencilled by Sonia in a wax technique named pochoir in French, totalling 150 copies. La Prose du Transsibérien is, as the American poetry scholar and critic Marjorie Perloff has pointed out in her study of the work, one of the most important early expressions of revolutionary modernist life and intense urban landscape. Cendrars launched it via an extensive publicity campaign, distributing leaflets and subscription forms that referred to the work as the “first simultaneist book”. The poem-painting itself is, as Perloff put it, a “kind of advertising poster”, which in that respect refers to the futurist’s declamations and actions. Sonia would not only re-vitalise or repeat the pochoir technique a few years later in Portugal with the Couverture..., but also similarly created a graphic work that functioned as self-promotion and as a publication of artistic propaganda.

It is probably at this time that Arturo Ciacelli got acquainted with the Delaunays. The Italian painter came to Paris in 1909, after a few years in Rome where he had been taking art classes at the French Academy and Istituto di Belle Arti. He worked in stage design, and exhibited at the Salone dei Rifiutati in 1905 with Umberto Boccioni, Gino Severini and Giacomo Balla, among others. Whilst in Rome he met the Swedish artist Elsa Ström, whom he married in 1909. Details in his professional biography are difficult to establish, as he continuously reinvented himself and his avant-garde current. He claims, in retrospect, that he exhibited with “Delaunay, Lhote, Futura, Chagall, Braque and Picasso” at Salon des Indépendants at the Grand Palais from 1910–1913, a claim that has survived into some recent texts, but cannot be confirmed in the catalogues of les Indépendants. He would later inform the editors of the extensive dictionary of Swedish artists, published in the early 1950s, that he had “studied for Delaunay”. Ciacelli did not, as it appears, exhibit in Paris, but he and his wife were present in avant-garde circles. Interestingly, in a note in Paris-Journal, 22 of July 1914, Guillaume Apollinaire devotes a description to Ciacelli and his wife’s work, and inscribes Ciacelli’s painting with the concept of Simultaneism. His work reflects, as Apollinaire states, “the simultaneous impressions” experienced by the artist:

“Tumultuous cities, squares filled with signs adorned with not just a thousand passing colours, but also thousands of sounds erupting from everywhere in different hues. Perhaps what is most innova
tive about Giacelli’s [sic] creations is this colourful symphony that he strives to visually present without any hesitation.”

Little work by Arturo Ciacelli is preserved and known today, something peculiar in itself given his extensive exhibition history in Scandinavia. A published painting titled Place Clichy (1913), describes the lights and movements of its namesake at night, in a manner that corresponds to Apollinaire’s lines. Apollinaire also adds, “I believe he hasn’t explored his ways yet.” This judgement would reoccur in some of the criticism he received in Sweden.
Ciacelli travelled extensively between Paris and the Scandinavian countries from 1910, living in Denmark around 1913–14, and exhibiting in Lund, in Southern Sweden, as well as in Stockholm. In conjunction with his show at Salong Joël in Stockholm in 1913, he decided to market himself as an Italian Futurist, and included a Swedish version of the Futurist painting manifesto in the catalogue, adding his own name after the ones of Boccioni, Carra, Russolo, Balla and Severini. The show made Ciacelli widely known and was reviewed in the major newspapers with articles titled, for example, “Futurism presents itself in Stockholm”. His paintings were however received as less modernist – or “Futurist” – than was promised by the rhetoric with which they were packaged, although the intense urbanism depicted in them was acknowledged.

On January 28th, 1915, Ciacelli arranged a “futuristic soirée [sic]” at the Grand Hôtel in the Swedish capital where he was now more permanently settled with his wife. According to the daily papers, the evening was planned to present an exhibition of “futuristic paintings, sculptures and drawings”, and the large ballroom of the hotel, where the prominent guests were dining, was enlivened with “futuristic aeroplanes” and different performances, such as a futurist ballet choreographed by Ciacelli to the music of Claude Debussy. The guests were invited to dress up for a “futuristic, simultaneist masquerade”, and the most successful costumes were given a prize – ten paintings by Ciacelli himself were offered. Among Ciacelli’s collaborators for this evening were Isaac Grünewald and his wife Sigrid Hjertén, two of the leading personas in the younger avant-garde in Stockholm. Ciacelli was later reported to have been performing with one red and one brown sock, and a red-painted mouth, announcing any new number with a toy trumpet. A successful number was the Simultaneist ballet performed by Ciacelli and Hjertén. The audience was a mixture of artist circles and high society, including the Italian minister. This was the first occasion where Ciacelli showcased performance work in the city.

In October 1915, Ciacelli opened Nya konstgalleriet. His ambitions were high, as expressed in the first and only issue of Ny konst, the journal that he simultaneously released. The gallery held two exhibitions a month featuring both Nordic and International artists with “the aim and hope to here create a larger art interest than previously, especially for new tendencies that are on their way to break through and lead art in new directions”. In an interview, Ciacelli says he considers “pronounced modern international art” for his gallery, although he also would accept Swedish artists and does not fear the inclusion of academics “if only they have character”. This moderate approach was also reflected in the exhibition program. He opened with an exhibition of Axel Revold, a Norwegian painter and former student of Matisse, as the first exhibitor. Nordic artists continued to dominate the program, particularly those returning from studies in Paris, where Ciacelli had frequented the same “Nordic” circles as they had. The gallery had a program outside exhibitions, including lectures and “intimate concerts”. Professor Otello Andolfi, an Italian cellist and music critic, started out with a lecture on Futurism, where the new Italian art, exemplified by Ciacelli whose paintings were on display, were juxtaposed with Italian renaissance works. Manolita de Anduaga-Andolfi, a Swedish composer and pianist (married to Otello Andolfi), gave intimate piano concerts during the winter of 1915–16 at the gallery.

Ciacelli’s desire to reach further out to the international avant-garde, was visible in the exhibition program of the gallery from the beginning. He appears to have combined temporary gallery exhibitions with the large collection of works he kept in stock. One contact that had an importance to the activities of Nya konstgalleriet was the French Cubist André Lhote. An exhibition with Lhote’s work, alongside a number of French artists including Pola Gauguin, George Rouault, Antoine Bourdelle and Josef Heck, was presented in early January 1916. Nya konstgalleriet did not exhibit any Italian Futurism.
By this time, dialogue between Ciaccielli and Robert discussing different ideas for collaborative exhibitions had opened. The early correspondence from 1915 between the two is lost. Ciaccielli invited Robert in December of 1915 to exhibit, proposing to combine the exhibition with paintings of Henri Rousseau. Robert had already previously sent him catalogues and documentation, as well as issues of *La Prose du Transsibérien.*

Ciaccielli offered in the next letter to prepare his audience’s taste for the art of the Delaunays, which he explained he had already begun with a lecture of “the first simultanian book” on January 11th during a French exhibition in the gallery. He assures Robert, in the same letter, that in regards to an exhibition in Stockholm of the Delaunays and “their friends”, Robert just has to select and send a number of works for each artist, as the gallery generally preferred individual exhibitions. Ciaccielli also offered to tour these exhibitions in Scandinavia, which was in line with his business-idea that aimed to travel exhibitions within the region; to cities including Christiania, Malmö in Southern Sweden, and Copenhagen. Ciaccielli proudly declared to his French colleague that the French show at his gallery had been very successful – two paintings of André Lhote were even sold to Prince Eugen, a painter and collector of art. The situation appears promising for a presentation in the Nordic countries of avant-garde art by the Delaunays and their circles in Portugal and Spain, a project to which we shall return below. Shortly after, however, their correspondence switched focus to a show of Sonia’s work, with the inclusion of four works by Robert.

II. DELAUNAYS AT NYA KONSTGALLERIET

The exhibition at Nya konstgalleriet with Sonia Delaunay opened on Thursday the 23rd of March 1916, accompanied by the catalogue encased in the Couverture... At the night of the opening, Ciaccielli arranged a meeting for the editors of the *Nya konst*, the journal of the gallery. Isaac Grünwald, the leading figure of the young avant-garde, held a debate with an (unnamed) art critic, on “the subject of Simultaneism in the works of Madame”, which Grünwald defended very well, according to Ciaccielli’s report to the Delaunays.  

Robert Delaunay had sent four paintings, including one early work, *Époque de S. Severin* (*Epoch of St. Severin*) (1909–10), the fifth version in a series of seven. The slightly Cézanne-inspired painting was executed just before Robert turned to a more Cubist aesthetic. The other three all relate to his Simultaneist research, where he explores pure light and colour. They represent a group of work that he had started to promote for international shows in 1913, presenting Simultaneism as a transnational, global style. In the catalogue for Stockholm, he gave the paintings elaborate titles: *Époque de S. Severin* “1909–1910” destruction de la perspective, du clair obscur du successif du dessin (S. Severin No. 5) [*Epoch of S. Severin* “1909–1910” destruction of perspective, of the chiaroscuro succession of the drawing (S. Severin No. 5)]; *Époque des Tours* destruction du point perspective de la ligne du dessin géométrique picturale l’arabesque de l’ancien métier (la Tour No. 10) [*Epoch of the Towers destruction of perspective in the line of the geometrical pictorial drawing, the arabesque of the old metier (Tower No. 10)*]; and *Époque de l’arc en ciel* “1914 constructions du rayonnement”, simultané de la couleur-forme dans le paysage par le nouveau métier (l’arc en ciel No. 5) [*Epoch of the Rainbow* “1914 constructions of the splendid”, simultaneity of the colour-shape in the landscape using the new metier (Rainbow No. 5)]. The fourth painting was *L’Équipe de Cardiff* No. 8 [*Cardiff Team* No. 8]. No doubt, Robert had intended for Simultaneism to be exported.

Sonia’s work dominated the show. Recent inspiration from Spain and Portugal produced: *Chanteurs Flamengo* [sic, probl. *Chanteurs de flamenco*, dit *Grand flamenco*, (Flamenco Singers, known as Grand flamenco) CAM] (1915–1916), *La Portugaise*
aux pastéques [Woman with Watermelons] (1915), and studies for them, amounting to a total of seventeen works. She had also sent some paintings from her most intense “simultanian” period in Paris (1912–1914); six works, among them were studies for Prisèmes électriques (1914) and for Bal Bullier. Two early paintings, Finlandaise [Finnish girl] (1908) and Finlandaise à la table [Finnish girl at the table] (1908) are also listed, as is a study for a poster for the university in Petrograd from 1913. Not every individual title can be identified today with accuracy, due to a lack of detailed technical information, non-confirmed titles, as well as the artist’s praxis to return to the same motifs in several versions. Excluding the poster, there are 25 potential paintings listed in the collection, either on canvas or on paper. The collection represents the expanse and depth of Sonia’s painterly work at the time in a very ambitious presentation. As to show her very best and most recent work in Stockholm, she eagerly sent a 26th painting, a “painting with glue/... sketch-composition for a large painting”, separately by post after the others.39

Although the show, it seems, did not include any of the textile or decorative work that occupied the artist alongside her painterly work at the time, her fashion was represented in the catalogue by a photo of the artist wearing two of her creations: “Dress 1913 and veil in simultaneist colours 1912” [emphasis added]. The image is accompanied by a poem by Cendrars written in February 1914, “Sur la robe elle a un corps” (“On her dress she has a body”). Despite some “Italianisms” (it was Ciaccelli who had done the proofreading) and a few differences when comparing the poem to the authorised version that was published in 1919, this verse effectively underpins, and might also have inspired, the figures in the Couverture...:

“The belly a moving disc
The double hull of breasts passing under the bridge of rainbows
Belly
Disk
Sun
The perpendicular cries of the colours fall on thighs.”38

The dress in the photo was named “The first simultanian dress”, a line also inscribed in the original manuscript of the poem.52

Signed versions of La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France and an Album Delaunay with ten numbered reproductions and a preface by Guillaume Apollinaire were advertised in the catalogue. There was an announcement of an upcoming publication of an Album Delaunay-Terk, as well as an “Article on the modern woman”, of the Simultaneist dresses, objects and furniture by Sonia. These would be joined by a series of postcards with her paintings and decorative arts. The exhibition was, from the artist’s perspective, an ambitious and well-represented manifestation of her entire oeuvre, of painting, poem–painting and painting–fashion. It was accordingly met with enthusiasm within artist circles. Within art criticism, on the other hand, there was another tone.

August Brunius, an art critic who was known to use his voice in favour of modern art, wrote in a short note in Svenska Dagbladet: “the Delaunays are a rather well known Futurist couple of cosmopolitan profile. [...] M.me Delaunay-Terk makes coloured squares [...] without any meaning.” He finds Robert Delaunay’s painting peculiar, but also a testimony of “the hand and eye of a real painter”.43

The label Futurism came about due to their association with the gallery and its Futurist director, as well as from the fact that at this time different concepts of avant-garde painting were used quite freely. In a review signed with the pseudonym “Marcelle”, the Delaunays are described as the most distinguished prophets of the phenomenon of decadence of continental art.44 Brunius’s review, published some days earlier, is echoed in Marcelle’s review: Sonia’s use of colour is garish and without meaning. “The sense of form is concentrated to certain discs, that should reflect the diffraction of light, but for a profane eye they look rather like a target.”
Marcelle ends her ridiculing of both artists by discussing their use of long, “scientific” titles, claiming that this is proof of pretentious emptiness. The critical reception of this highly current international modernism must have been a disappointment to Nya konstgalleriet’s director.

The reception of the show in Stockholm, however popular in some circles, also did not meet the expectation of sales of neither Ciaccelli nor the Delaunays. Fifteen copies of the catalogue with their Couverture... were sold, along with a couple of copies of La Prose du Transsibérien. Not a painting was sold before the next winter, when on December 28th, 1916, Ciaccelli writes to Delaunay that he has had an offer from the National Museum for Robert’s painting St. Severin. After some negotiation, the purchase went through and the painting remains today in the collection of Moderna Museet.

Ciaccelli let the Delaunay exhibition travel to Christiania directly after its closure on April 14th, where it was on show between April 16th and May 14th at Galleri Blomqvist. Among the disrespectful and uninformed reviews in which more than one critic assumed S. Delaunay-Terk was a Portuguese man, the signature Alfr. Hagn offered a well-written explanation of the fundamentals of exploring different sensations. The expected success was never achieved. Ciaccelli kept parts of the collection for sale in his stock for some time.

### III. A NORTHERN AXIS OF A GLOBAL CONNECTION

In 1915, Robert and Sonia Delaunay founded a collective project in Portugal with a group of artists and poets, named “La Corporation Nouvelle”, with the aim to arrange travelling exhibitions on a global basis. These exhibitions were, according to an announcement for their first album, “EXPOSITIONS MOUVANTES NORD-SUD EST-OUEST” [TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS NORTH-SOUTH EAST-WEST], an expression emphasising the project’s profound dynamism and global ambition. It was necessary for artists to cooperate, they stated, “in protecting such art that is more than ever in danger, which is all the more a universal fact”. The formation included, as listed in the printed announcement, the Portuguese artists Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, Eduardo Viana [sic], José de Almada Negreiros and the Russian painter living in Paris, Daniel Roziné. The poets Guillaume Apollinaire and Blaise Cendrars would also be a part of “La Corporation Nouvelle”. A collective individualism was launched: “Each and everyone contributes to the Great Construction of forms of Thought with Individual Tendencies and indestructible world connections”. The production and distribution of an artist’s album, with hand stencilled images, using the pochoir technique, was the focus of their practice during early 1916.

What kind of geography do the directions in this announcement refer to? The outreach seems to be European, with the Southern axis of Paris–Portugal–Spain as a base. Exhibitions in Portugal and Spain were projected. Nya konstgalleriet and Arturo Ciaccelli could be identified as the Northern branch of the initiative, although whether the different exhibition initiatives that they discussed where within the projects of “La Corporation Nouvelle” or not, is hard to establish from available sources. Art historians have concluded that the whole project of “La Corporation Nouvelle” came to an end when the Delaunays decided to send their work to Stockholm in March 1916, and that they therefore could not participate in shows on the Iberian Peninsula. However, Ciaccelli and Robert kept discussing plans for exhibitions in Stockholm of works from a “Southern Section”, long after the Stockholm show in March 1916, so the reason the project ended cannot be sought there. Robert tried repeatedly to convince Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso to exhibit in Stockholm, first in conjunction with the Delaunay show at Nya konstgalleriet in March 1916, but also after that. In the April follow-
The Delaunays’ exhibition, Souza-Cardoso writes to R. Delaunay “As for Christiania–Stockholm, send me the details, but first and foremost, Barcelona.”52 The letters indicate that Robert was still planning to send an exhibition of at least Souza-Cardoso to Stockholm, but also, the ambivalence from the side of the Portuguese artist, as to which quarter to direct his energy.

In December of 1915, Ciacelli wrote to Robert outlining a project he had with the French dancer Adorée Villany, touring performances of plastic and rhythmic dance with projections of his own films.53 There is no evidence of this project elsewhere, but it is a fact that the famous “naked dancer” Villany lived in Scandinavia at the time, performing extensively both in art-related contexts and in more popular cultural institutions, such as circuses and varieties.54 The idea that Ciacelli would have met with her is therefore possible, and what is interesting for this context, is that it was performative work that Robert and Ciacelli foremost discussed to export from the North to the South. In another undated letter, Ciacelli further explains that his films are of such substance that they could not be sent, as they are made in a different media and could be presented only by himself.55 Ciacelli arranged a “Simultaneist concert” in Paladstheatret in Christiania in February 1916, where his coloured Simultaneist film was shown with music by a Georg Harteveld. There is no film by Ciacelli to be found today, but it is evident that he did perform repeatedly in Scandinavia with films and performative work, and was eager to report to Delaunay about it. His Simultaneist concerts in Scandinavia were in line with what the Delaunays wanted to create for the Dalmau Gallery in Spain during the spring of 1915. The manifestation at the gallery was planned to be decorated according to Simultaneist principles, and to present concerts, improvisations and exhibits, as was announced in the Spanish art journal Vell i Nou in March 1916 (a structure not far from what Ciacelli and Grünewald had tried to accomplish at the Grand Hôtel in Stockholm earlier that year).56 According to a letter by Ciacelli to Sonia Delaunay, published by Pascal Rousseau (1995), Ciacelli had offered Robert “performances of improvised piano music that would assure a rhythmic background for his coloured film projections of dance performances of his wife.” Ciacelli would also have guaranteed the participation of Swedish and Norwegian artists in the Barcelona’s exhibition.57

Another connection, previously unknown, between the gallerist in Stockholm and the project “La Corporation Nouvelle”, is the Russian painter Daniel Rossiné (Vladimir Baranoff-Rossiné) who is mentioned in the announcement as a co-founder of the association.58 The Cubist and orphist painter created experimental “painting–sculptures” with Alexander Archipenko. Rossiné lived in Paris from 1910 to 1914, exhibiting at the Salon des Indépendants in 1914, where his works were considered scandalous, despite being defended by Apollinaire. He kept an interest in transgressing the boundaries of genres, and invented an “optophonic” piano, where keyboard positions directed lights through colour filters.

In December of 1915, Rossiné resurfaced at Nya konstgalleriet in Stockholm, visiting Ciacelli.59 He was subsequently included in a group show at the gallery in early March 1916 titled “Cubists and expressionists” in the period before the Delaunay-exhibition alongside André Lhote, E. Orthon Friesz, Lipschitz, Sonneville, Alice Bailly and Ciacelli himself.60 Bailly, a Swiss Cubist, had belonged to the Delaunay circles since Paris.61 In November of the same year, Rossiné had a solo exhibition at Galleri Blomqvist in Christiania, a gallery that Ciacelli had a business relationship with.62 In the considerable advertising Ciacelli placed in Swedish daily papers of activities at Nya konstgalleriet, there is no mention of “La Corporation Nouvelle” or any of the Portuguese artists. An undated flyer for Nya konstgalleriet claims a representation of a “Northern Section”, described as a “Subsidiary of the art action in Paris”.63 Ciacelli declared in March 1916 that he was organising local artists for a Northern section of Robert’s art manifestation.64 He returns to the subject later, telling Robert that he will be able to send two crates with paintings by himself, his wife Mme Ström–Ciacelli, as...
well as "other Swedish and Norwegian artists in the whole I think I can send you around thirty paintings to represent the Northern section without me" on the first of May. In a later letter however, he regrets that despite the great joy he and his wife would have taken in being part in Roberts’s "grand manifestations of art" it has been impossible for them to send any works, as they have been painting very little as a result of working hard in the art gallery and for travelling exhibitions. He once again revisits this idea, saying that local artists were unwilling to send paintings abroad because "here, they are selling almost everything". But why did the Portuguese artists really not commit to shows in Stockholm, and for what reason was Ciacelli not capable of getting together a collection of his own art and of art from the avant-garde formations in Stockholm?

We will further discuss structures of the Stockholm art market and its influence on the artists’ decisions. Ciacelli kept works by both Sonia and Robert in his stock, and the correspondence between the artists often returns to these works and their destiny. He had new suggestions on how to exhibit them and where. Delaunay approves, stating his general philosophy: "I’d prefer it if you’d make them [my paintings] travel instead of letting them lie dormant, because my paintings are [about] movement and therefore they love movement". Ciacelli also encourages Sonia to send him "tissue and decorative objects" to exhibit during the summer of 1916, and returns to the matter of a large exhibition of Robert and Rousseau. The one exhibition that finally is realised is a "grand exposition" with Robert, and is a great success in 1920. By this time however, Ciacelli had left the gallery to the direction of his colleague Sigge Björck.

None of the other projects, except for the Nya konstgalleriet show in March 1916, which were planned as part of an association of artists creating "travelling exhibitions North–South, East–West", were actually accomplished. The Portuguese artists were devoting themselves to exhibition projects in Barcelona. In order to understand the decisions and strategies of the artists from both the North and the South, in regard to participating in these projects, it is necessary to take a look at the logic of the playground in which Robert and Ciacelli were acting; the artworld of the early 20th century in Stockholm.

IV. "THE ONLY AVANT-GARDE GALLERY IN SCANDINAVIA"

What kind of situation existed in Stockholm at the time for a Northern axis of "La Corporation Nouvelle" and for the Delaunay-exhibition in 1916? Ciacelli often returns in his letter to Robert Delaunay to the market and the role of the gallery: "In Scandinavia, millions upon millions of paintings are bought, but it’s mostly pompous and conventional art. In my publicity materials, I make every effort to study what the critics and the public like, for our benefit." He does not avoid exaggerations while describing the position of Nya konstgalleriet, claiming in January of 1916 that it was "The only avant-garde salon in all of Scandinavia [sic]".

The reality was that Stockholm during the 1910s consisted of a minor, but still, from a transnational perspective, competitive art market with at least three galleries presenting international and Scandinavian avant-garde art. Gummessons Konsthandel, Strandvägen 17, was founded in 1914 by Carl Gummesson and showed Swedish and international modernist art, including solo-shows by Franz Marc (1915), Wassily Kandinsky (1916) and Gabriele Münter (1916) in cooperation with Waldens' Der Sturm in Berlin. Ciacelli’s Nya konstgalleriet, was established just one block away from Gummesson’s in October 1915. Svensk–franska konstgalleriet was opened in 1918 by Gösta Olson. Olson developed a network of intellectuals, dealers and artists in Paris while running his physiotherapist institute before the war. He was then chosen by the leading Parisian art dealers Paul Rosenberg, Bernheim-Jeune and Durand–Ruel to direct the Swedish component of a large travel–
ling exhibition of French art in Scandinavia. He opened his gallery in Stockholm and was to become a major player by the end of the 1910s and throughout the 1920s, foremost showing French artists. These projects indicate the importance international dealers saw in the Scandinavian market during the war. When Ciacelli established his gallery, he did so in a competitive situation locally. I would, however, like to emphasise that the competition went beyond the local, as several international actors were looking at Stockholm as an alternative market within Europe during the war. This picture is important in order to fully understand the strategies of the artists and their networks. There is no question that the Delaunays, for Ciacelli, were an important link to the same international avant-garde to which he identified so intensely as an artist, and which he had an ambition to represent in Stockholm with his gallery. Robert and Sonia’s interest in approaching Stockholm, as they did during the autumn of 1915, prior to the direct invitation of Ciacelli to exhibit, has to be understood differently.

Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel has analysed the transnational strategies of Robert Delaunay during these years, describing them as a “discursive doubling.” His strategies were twofold, one for the domestic market, and the other for the international scene. In 1910–11 in Paris, Robert was closely associated with Cubism. He exhibited with Metzinger and Le Fauconnier in Salle 41, at the Salons des Indépendants in 1911, where the French Cubists made a scandalous breakthrough. He soon realised that he needed to distance himself from the Parisian Cubists in order to stand out; to be fully recognised as an artist of the new.

Robert’s new interest in theories of pure painting – of Simultaneism – coincided with these more strategic considerations, as he turned his back to the Parisian Cubists and started to reach out to an international art market. He was not invited to the larger exhibitions like Sonderbund in 1910 and 1912, or Moderne Kunstkring in Amsterdam, the latter of which Gleizes, Metzinger and Le Fauconnier were represented. Robert decided to exhibit in smaller avant-garde art galleries outside France, in Russia, Hungary and in Germany. He was invited to Herwarth Walden’s Der Sturm–gallery in Berlin, where he had a solo–exhibition in March 1912.

Robert’s dissemination of Simultaneism involved Sonia’s work. Herwarth Walden and his partner and wife, Nell Walden, visited Paris in 1913 in order to search for new artists for Der Sturm and they were introduced to Sonia’s decorative art. Together with Robert, she was invited to take part in Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon at Der Sturm in Berlin in autumn that year. After a few years in the inner circles of avant-garde formations in Paris, this was Sonia’s first step as a mature artist into an avant-garde scene abroad. The Delaunay–couple were launched heavily in the Herbstsalon, where a large space was devoted to over forty works and with special space given to Sonia’s decorative art, given Simultaneist titles like Coussin astral [Astral Pillow], Voir movement couleurs profondeur [See Movement Colours Depth]. It was a tremendous success for both artists, whose identity was now transforming into “the Delaunays” within avant-garde discourse. Robert also convinced Herwarth Walden to announce the release of La Prose du Transsibérien, which he did in the next number of the journal Der Sturm, IV 1913–14, no. 184/185, with text by Blaise Cendrars, who described the talent of Sonia.

As Joyeux–Prunel interestingly points out, Robert’s turn from Cubism to Simultaneism also included a considerable re–naming and re–framing of earlier works, adding new adjectives like “simultane” to many of his work titles, in a veritable promotion campaign of Simultaneism. It is, interestingly, precisely in his prolonged discourse of his participation in the Herbstsalon that we can understand the Nya konstgalleriet exhibition of 1916. In Stockholm, Robert presented paintings with long, elaborate “scientific” titles, as previously mentioned, and also renamed earlier work. Robert wanted to reach out internationally to partners within a network of smaller avant-garde galleries, partly to avoid the domination of French Cubism within the larger institutions. While looking for such
cooperation, in line with the “La Corporation Nouvelle” frame, both his and Sonia’s eyes redirected to Stockholm. With such a close and fruitful relationship with Der Sturm, one way of achieving representation in Stockholm could have been to work with the Waldens. In the winter of 1915–1916, the Waldens finally succeeded in establishing Der Sturm in the Swedish capital, having worked towards it since 1913. There was competition between Ciacelli and Walden in representing the international avant-garde in Stockholm and the Delaunays chose Ciacelli.

In 1913, Walden contacted the art section of the industrial “Baltic Exhibition” in Malmö (1914), which included the largest ever art exhibition at the time of the Nordic countries, with recent art from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Russia and Sweden. He had an ambition to use this international platform for Der Sturm’s international artists and establish the gallery in Sweden, while providing the exhibition with young international art. This initiative failed from the perspective of Der Sturm, as the head of the show already had commissioned the Russian Alexej Jawlensky, an artist in Der Blaue Reiter that was well informed of German art, to arrange the Russian pavilion at the Baltic. Also, Walden’s competitor, Ernst Cassirer, was involved with the selection of German artists. The show became a breakthrough for avant-garde art, showcased to the largest public in Northern Europe, before it was untimely interrupted by the war. Der Sturm’s establishment in Stockholm, after several shows in other Scandinavian cities and the presentation of Swedish avant-garde artists in Der Sturm in Berlin with “Schwedische Expressionisten” in the spring of 1915, developed from the first Der Sturm exhibition at Gummeson’s konsthandel, the neighbour of Nya konstgalleriet. This solo show of Franz Marc in September of 1915 followed on from a visit by the Waldens to Stockholm that summer. Two Der Sturm exhibitions would follow in early spring, 1916. In the same season as the Delaunay show at Nya konstgalleriet, a solo exhibition by Wassily Kandinsky and then a show of Gabriele Münter’s work at Gummeson’s was exhibited. Due to these shows, the competition between Arturo Ciacelli and Herwarth Walden propelled.

Sweden was an important target for the Waldens, clearly not just for the reason of Nell Walden being a native Swede. Nell Walden’s fundamental role in developing the Walden collection of art, promoting and financing international cooperation, has only recently been understood. In the 1990s it was revealed that the Waldens could finance their extensive art activities in Europe, primarily through the work Nell Walden did for the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, producing and translating information that was published in the Swedish media. This gave a solid platform for the international art circulation that was Der Sturm’s signum.

Another “Der Sturm artist” that, similarly to the Delaunays, had ambitions to exhibit in Stockholm during this time was Gabriele Münter, an artist in the Der blaue Reiter-circle and Kandinsky’s partner of many years. She came to Stockholm in July of 1915 to join Kandinsky in a neutral country, as he had fled to Russia in November the year before. Münter had an exhibition at Der Sturm in Berlin that opened on October 24th, 1915. Soon after arriving in Stockholm, she personally stimulated the local art scene, participating in a group show at Gummesons konsthandel that October. This was an arrangement in which the Waldens were not involved, and Herwarth commented on it in correspondence between the two with certain surprise. Münter had her own strong reasons to build up a network in Stockholm, both personal and financial, and when Kandinsky and Münter were invited to have a solo exhibition each at Gummesons konsthandel in the early 1916, this was to a large extent a result of her negotiating with the gallerist, although the exhibitions were officially framed as Der Sturm exhibitions and were advertised and facilitated by Walden. Münter stayed in Scandinavia until 1919, and had her second show in Stockholm at Nya konstgalleriet, a two-person show with Georg Pauli in May 1917. In a telling letter from Herwarth Walden to Münter in May of 1916, he...
comments on Ciacelli in a way that could not be misinterpreted, saying that he was a person not to be trusted, a false Futurist, a copyist and defrauder.87 Walden continues the letter by referring to Ny konst, the art journal that Arturo Ciacelli and Gustaf Uddgren had published in late 1915, in which Felix Bryk wrote an article titled “Vom Hirngespinnste zum Augengespinnste” [From Imaginings to Fantasies]. The article ridicules an exhibition at Gummesson’s of an unnamed artist, however Walden and most of the readers identified this person as Franz Marc.88 It is not within the limits of this article to further develop the intense competition between Der Sturm and Nya konstgalleriet. Walden, the international gallerist and the editor of a well spread journal was, as opposed to Ciacelli, an important actor in the European art scene. One could recognise the strategies of Ciacelli in developing Nya konstgalleriet as emulating the activities of Der Sturm. It was a gallery with temporary exhibitions of international and national artists, producing traveling exhibitions, lectures and concerts, and even a journal, precisely as Der Sturm had been doing. The competition included aspects of national biases, where Ciacelli went against German art. Probably, the reason for the Delaunays not working with Walden in Stockholm during the war, was of similar nature. For them, working with a German gallerist in Stockholm, when they already had access to Nya konstgalleriet, was not of interest, although they continued to exhibit with him after the war.

To understand why a Northern axis of “La Corporation Nouvelle” was not fully realised, one needs to take into account the power play at stake and the difficulty Ciacelli had, despite his ambitions both as a gallerist, an artist, and as an avant-garde Futurist, in establishing his position in the Stockholm art world. Several sources suggest that his business style was not always financially supportive of artists, which brandished his name among colleagues.89 Isaac Grünewald, the young avant-garde leader and former student of Matisse, did cooperate with Ciacelli during the first year of the gallery, as previously mentioned, and was most possibly one of the young Swedish artists that Ciacelli suggested participate in a group show in Portugal. As for most of the Swedish students of Matisse, the avant-garde experiences that were gained in Paris were rather directed towards making a career at home upon return, as opposed to initiating a real international career. This, together with Ciacelli’s unstable artistic recognition, may have been the reason Swedish artists chose not to work with him.

With the Delaunays however, Ciacelli stayed in business. The Delaunays did not exhibit with Walden during the war, which possibly was a result of political tensions.80 They did, however, exhibit with Walden after the war – Sonia presented a solo show at Der Sturm in Berlin in 1920. Robert did not need to go through a German gallerist to build up a working relation in Stockholm, as he had his friendship with Ciacelli as a departure point. It is only in 1921 that Walden included Robert in a group exhibition in Landskrona, Sweden.

So what did the exhibition at Nya konstgalleriet signify for Sonia? The ”first simultaneist book” by her and Cendrars played an important role here. The book was physically useful when Robert marketed Simultaneism to Ciacelli, but was also a model for transnational avant-garde action, that she then repeated in La Couverture… Ciacelli’s conference on the book and on Simultaneism might very well have been inspired by similar events that he had experienced in the Delaunays’ salon in Paris. Ciacelli took it as his job to promote Simultaneism to a Swedish audience. The publication was one of the most important artefacts within Robert’s international promotion for Simultaneism, as well as his and Sonia’s art.85 It also had a similar function for Blaise Cendrars, its author.

For Sonia to make the decision to create La Couverture… in po-choir for Stockholm, instead of relying on a common printed catalogue, as well as her decision to send a collection of significant work to Stockholm, are signs of how important she viewed her work at the time and the potential of exhibiting them in Stockholm. Her painting Le Grand Flamenco, which featured a head similar to the
one in the Couverture..., exists as a study of dance, as to obtain “the rhythm without end”, as she recalls. It proved to be a time-consuming painting, in her mind aiming to emulate the beauty of a painting by Veronese. The exhibition in Stockholm was a step further in terms of international outreach, building on the previous exhibition at the German Autumn Salon, and the Delaunays’ interaction with European avant-garde networks like the Waldens’ Der Sturm, as well as the formations around “La Corporation Nouvelle” in Portugal.

**ENDNOTES**

1. “I’d prefer if you’d make them [my paintings] travel instead of letting them lie dormant, because my paintings are [about] movement and therefore they love movement”; Robert Delaunay to Arturo Ciacci 12 December 1915. MF 7151, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. This is the reference to the letters below, not marked otherwise. This article emerges around this correspondence. The errors in the French language in the quoted letters are Ciacci’s.


4. For an early layout of the formal composition of the Couverture..., see Projet de couverture pour le catalogue de l’exposition de Stockholm (Autoportrait), Centre Georges Pompidou (AM 2608 D). Here the traits of the self-portrait are not yet expressed, and Paris is the only word, and thereby presumably the first word written. A development of the portrait can be seen in Autoportrait, in the CAM collection – Gulbenkian Foundation (DE16). For an illustration of the exact sketch in wax crayon used for the polder sion, see Bonhams Impressionist & Modern Art sale, 24 June 2015, Lot. 15.


9. Letter from A. Ciacci to R. Delaunay, 29 May 1916. Ciacci put the expenses for the printing, 60 Swedish crowns, in the balance for the exhibition, during which he had sold less than 10 copies of the catalogue for 2 crowns each. NAF 25650 Cote MF 7022. R. 10 44 36.


14. « Le Premier livre simulé! »


19. He mentions in the curriculum (see note 16) an exhibition at Galerie Hessel, to be confirmed.

20. « les impressions simultanées »

21. « Villes tumultueuses aux places pleines d’enseignes et qu’embellissent non seule-

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« Je la crois [la voie] peut-être française »


27 "Ny architectur i hjert", Svenska Dagbladet, 24 July 1915.

28 Concert advertisement; f.e. Dagens Nyheter 4 December 1915 and Svenska Dagbladet 1 February 1916. For a list Manifestations, see www.levandemusik.nu.

29 Advertisement in Svenska Dagbladet, 31 December 1915.

30 Letter from A. Ciacelli to R. Delaunay, 12 December 1915.

31 Letter from A. Ciacelli to R. Delaunay, 17 January 1916, and according to an advertisement in Svenska Dagbladet, 11 January 1916.


33 André Lhote, Flowers in a vase (1915) and Acts. Naked female model in three different positions (undated). In the museum Kunsthal, Malmo, Sweden.

34 Catalogue Sonia Delaunay-Terk and Robert Delaunay, Nya konstgalleriet, Stockholm, 1916. In YB3-5016 -FOL, boîte 1, cahier 1911-1925, Dep. des Estampes et Photographies, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. The paintings are not listed in numbered order – something that was noted as irritating in one of the critiques – and there is no number 13.

35 "peinture a la colle/…esquisse composition d’un grand tableau".


37 "Robe 1913 et voilette en couleurs simultané 1912" (emphasis added)


39 Cendrars 2006, note 1, p. 372


41 "Marcelle (Martha Rydté-Lindström)," Simultanisk-konst", Aftonbladet, 14 April 1916.


43 Robert Delaunay, No 5, époque du St Sévérin, 1909-1910, NM 2098.


46 Correspondance avec les artistes: 1913-1918, p. 799.
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70 Letter from A. Ciacci to R. delaunay, 16 June 1916.
71 Robert delaunay, Catalogue. sigge Björklis konsthandel. strandvägen 9, stockholm, 1920.
72 For an account of this exhibition, see the Joana Dunha Leal, “corporation nouvelle, the Barcelona exhibition plans and the simultaneist international”, in the present catalogue.
73 “En scandinave l’an à l’eau pour de millions et millions de tableaux mais le plus part art conventionel et pomiers. Donné ma propagande je faıt tous mes efforts pour étuder le gout des critiques et du public a notre benefice.”; letter from A. ciacci to r. delaunay, 12 December 1915.
74 “te seul salon d’art d’avantgard dans tout le scandinavie [sic]”; letter from A. Ciacci to R. delaunay, 27 January 1916.
81 “Eine Feindschaft zwischen mir und Nya konstgalleriet besteht nicht. Ich lehne es bloß ab, überhaupt mit derartigen Leute zu treten. Der inhaber, Herr Ciacci, bezeichnet sich zum Beispiel als Futurist, während die Futuristen also Marinetti und seine Freunde, ihn für einen Schwindler erklären. Er hat jedenfalls beis timmt nichts mit den italienischen Futuristen gemeinsam, abgesehen davon, dass er wid derrechtlich deren Manifeste zu seinen Drucksachen und seinen Bildern verwendet, ebenso wie Titeln und schliesslich sind auch die Bilder selbst, von ihm nachgemalt.” Letter from Herwarth Walden to Gabriele Münter, 13 May 1916, archive in Gabriele Münter und Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, München. Gabriele Münter did maintain, however, relations with both Walden and Ciacci.
82 Franz Byk, "Vom Hirngespinste zum Augengespinste", Ny konst, pp. 9-11. See also Lärkner, 1984, p. 156. The Swedish artist GAN would reply to this article with indignation in the journal Der Sturm, July 1916.
83 See also in Lärkner 1984, p. 156, on a conflict on business matters between André Lhote and Ciacci.
85 Jouyex-Prunel 2009, p. 188.

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