Evert Lundquist as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

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Fig. 1 Evert Lundquist (1904–1994) sitting in his studio in Drottningholm. Photography by Anders Engman, 1956. Nationalmuseum Archives, EB 1:3.
Evert Lundquist’s Personal Archive
The archive of the Swedish artist Evert Lundquist (1904–1994), comprising 77 volumes, was processed, arranged and described in spring 2015 by Emilia Ström at the Nationalmuseum Archives, using the archival management software Visual Arkiv. The material consists of a total of 68 volumes donated by Lundquist himself, together with 9 volumes of documents collected by the artist’s sister, Elsa Burnett.

Evert Lundquist gave the Nationalmuseum the greater part of his personal archive, 43 volumes in all, in November 1984. This material consists mainly of the artist’s “work surveys” and press cuttings (EL1). In January 1986, Lundquist also presented the Museum with 14 ring binders, containing transparencies (EL2), films and cassette tapes (EL3). Up to the end of his life, he regularly visited the Nationalmuseum Archives to make notes in and add to the material. Those additions are now arranged in a further 11 volumes.

Elsa Burnett’s archive relating to Lundquist was given to the Museum in September 2003 and consists primarily of six 43 x 30 cm ring binders containing family albums, two photograph albums, and press cuttings. Like Lundquist’s personal archive, Burnett’s material is made up of scattered documents, correspondence, notes, drawings and sketches, together with extensive collections of photographs and printed matter.

The list of the two archives in Visual Arkiv was prepared on the basis of Evert Lundquist’s own listing, retaining the structure of the material and the original headings. In the volume comments, the contents of each volume are given in broad outline, while letters and selected drawings, sketches and photographs are listed at the individual item level. In the process of arranging the archives, as little material as possible was moved, so as to preserve the context of the documents and Lundquist’s own work flow.

Explaining the rationale behind his working archive, Evert Lundquist wrote:

Memory binds our life together, gives it context, continuity and meaning. My archive has come about as the result of a strong need for continuity – as an aid to the memory. It is and has been an invaluable aid; the past becomes a living present, and the context is made clear. Both the visual material – my “work surveys” – and the tape recordings, with the judgements and reflections on my work which they contain, as well as those of others in the form of published articles etc. – are material that has been necessary and indispensable to the progress of my work. (EL 6:2)

The contents of the 43 volumes which the artist himself arranged and listed can seem somewhat complex and difficult to navigate. Nevertheless, the Nationalmuseum Archives wished as far as possible to retain this “disorder”, which represents the context of the documents. The archive – like Lundquist’s own art – thus becomes an expression of self-reflection and introspection. Here, too, the artist engages in a dialogue between tradition and innovation. Out of this seemingly free amalgamation of professional and private life, of the work and testimony of the artist, teacher, writer and private individual, the great existential issues are able to emerge. This is something Lundquist himself expresses, not least in “An Artist’s Intellectual Testament – on the personal and on the value and purpose of Art”, which he committed to writing on 16 June 1940 (EL 1:1).

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As in his art, so too in his archive we can make out the two contrasting sides of Evert Lundquist: on the one hand a controlled reserve, on the other a wish to hold up to view and carefully document his life. Lundquist would presumably have been pleased to see an inventory of his archive now made available through the online Visual Arkiv system, given his comment: “A contributory factor behind the creation of the archive was a desire to try, to the best of my ability, to offer a ‘picture’ of an artist’s life and times” (EL 6:2).

The portion of the archive collected by the artist’s sister Elsa Burnett includes a portrait photograph of Evert Lundquist sitting – according to an inscription on the back – in his studio in Drottningholm (Fig. 1). Taken by the photographer Anders Engman in 1956, the image reflects Lundquist’s entire personality and, in a sense, sums up his artistic achievement. The artist’s reflection appears in a heavy Rococo frame, his head resting on his hand, surrounded by both his own works and reproductions of some by the great masters – works that inspired him in his own creative practice. Here we see, not least, Lundquist’s own copy of the Nationalmuseum’s Young Student Drawing by Jean Siméon Chardin (1699–1779).

The gold frame of the mirror encapsulates the bourgeois respectability Lundquist was so keen to project, in the same way as the heavy gold frames in which he often mounted his own works. But this is a divided picture within a picture. The ambivalence, the contradictions and the impenetrability are made clear by the evasive gaze of the sitter. At the same time, a dialogue is taking place here – as in Lundquist’s art – between tradition and innovation, between the well-known objects close at hand – still life – and movements of light and form. As in many of Lundquist’s works from the 1950s, an all-embracing – non-hierarchical – composition is created, all of its parts of equal value.1 The room, blocked by a wall, feels cramped.2

Håkan Pettersson, for many years a library assistant at the Nationalmuseum – Moderna Museet Art Library, recalls how he guided Evert Lundquist through his archive and heard him say that, for him, the most important things in life were his art and his wife Ebba.3 Lundquist’s great affection for his wife was shown not least by his love letters, often illustrated with his own drawings. The archive includes 120 sheets, written between 1960 and 1987, with Lundquist’s own explanation on the accompany-
Fig. 2 Evert Lundquist (1904–1994), *Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde* (recto), 1951. Ink and watercolour on paper, 297 x 210 mm. Nationalmuseum Archives, EL 1:34.
The notes, correspondence and other material in the archive testify to the great importance which the Nationalmuseum as an institution, and individual members of its staff, had for Evert Lundquist. His two self-portraits, dated 1927 (NMGrh 3222) and 1929 (NMGrh 3531), were donated by him to the Swedish National Portrait Gallery at Gripsholm in 1968 and 1975, respectively. In 1990, Lundquist presented 24 prints to the Tessin Institute in Paris, whose art collections the Nationalmuseum has managed since 1982.

Notes:
3. Conversation between the author and Håkan Pettersson of the Nationalmuseum Art Library, in April 2015.
4. “Mannen med Janusansiktet eller Dr Jekyll och Mr Hyde eller Ludde målar och målar inte.” Letter dated 7 January 1951, Nationalmuseum Archives, NM/EA EL 1:34.

Fig. 3 Evert Lundquist (1904–1994), Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde (verso), 1951. Ink and watercolour on paper, 297 x 210 mm. Nationalmuseum Archives, EL 1:34. “By covering the opposite, unwanted half (whichever it may be) with the enclosed piece of paper, you get a clear picture of Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde.”