Foreword

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FOREWORD

Foreword

THE ART BULLETIN of Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, hitherto a printed publication, has with the present volume switched to a digital format. Factors behind this change include the development of free access to scholarly information and a wish to see the Bulletin’s articles disseminated more effectively.

Competition in the world of research has increased, and both “sector-based” research and state-funded research in the humanities are coming under growing scrutiny. The discussion within RIHA, the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art, of which the Nationalmuseum is a member, suggests that this is a phenomenon seen throughout the Western world. On the other hand, it has been said that the best time for the humanities is now – a globalised society requires understanding of languages, communication and complex reflection – and it can also be argued that art history has its own particular mission in that context.

Research in museums is strongly linked to the collections held there and the materiality of the objects they contain. That being so, it should be able to hold its own in the broader research community. Like many other international art museums, the Nationalmuseum has a long tradition of research and, for twenty years, the Art Bulletin has been an important channel of communication in that connection. Quality assurance of its contents has been progressively developed, and peer review of articles is seen by the editorial team as the way forward in safeguarding the quality of the research published.

The longer articles in this volume deal with the Nationalmuseum’s acquisition of Johan Tobias Sergel’s drawings and prints, Nicodemus Tessin the Younger’s architectural library and Louis Gauffier’s politically charged portrait of Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. Alongside these topics, a series of interesting new acquisitions are reported and commented on, together with three of the Museum’s exhibitions. Other contributions include a report on work in the Nationalmuseum’s light laboratory.

The last-mentioned report is an example of the dialogue that is so important in a museum setting between curators and conservators, and between art history and conservation science. In recent times, the interdisciplinary field of technical art history has paved the way for closer ties between theoretical university research and object-based research in museums. The Bulletin’s editorial committee welcome the results of this trend, which have already made themselves felt in the Museum’s research.

This twentieth volume of the Art Bulletin retains the graphic design of the print publication. The editorial team are looking ahead and thinking of the Bulletin more and more as part of the Museum’s future website. In terms of content, this volume reflects the Bulletin’s increasingly focused approach as a scholarly publication in which critical voices, too, are permitted to be heard.