



Foreword

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Foreword

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The Nationalmuseum in Stockholm is one of the oldest public art museums in Europe. It was founded as early as 1792, a year before the opening of the Louvre in Paris. Today, the Nationalmuseum's vast art and design collections are the largest in the Nordic countries, with more than 700,000 items. This issue of the Art Bulletin (Vols. 24–25) showcases some of the new acquisitions that will contribute to a better understanding of both the history of art and individual objects. One of the leading principles is that the new acquisitions should become an active part of the collection. They also provide an inspiring basis for new research.

The Nationalmuseum was reopened to the public in October 2018, after an ambitious five-year programme of renovation. Architects Gert Wingårdh, Josefin Larsson and Erik Wikerstål, together with specialists from the Nationalmuseum and the National Property Board of Sweden, worked to transform the old, low-tech museum building from 1866, originally designed by the German architect Friedrich August Stüler, into a celebration of forms and colour responding to the technological needs and requirements of today.

During the first weekend the Museum had 16,650 visitors, and by the end of the year the number had risen to 310,000. The feedback was encouraging: people came pouring in to see the Museum and its collections. The national and international press focused on the renovation and the collections, which were displayed

according to a new principle that brings both fine and applied arts and Swedish and international art within the same frame. More than five thousand artworks and objects on display celebrated the story of art from the 16th century to the present, i.e. the number of items shown was tripled. A visitor with a sharp eye could also see that many of the artworks and objects displayed were relatively new acquisitions.

It is worth mentioning that the Nationalmuseum published two significant books in connection with its re-opening. *Nationalmuseum in a New Light*, edited by Associate Professor Helena Kåberg, presents the rich history of the Museum through a great selection of articles. *Art Treasures from the Collections*, edited by Associate Professor Magnus Olausson, highlights a selection of the celebrated items in the collection. By publishing books like these, the Nationalmuseum wants to encourage its visitors to acquire a deeper understanding of art and design and of the Museum's history. In addition, the Museum made a major investment in an app featuring all the works on display, thus making the collections available to smartphone users.

Ambitious acquisitions programme

The Nationalmuseum has a rich collecting history, and every year a new layer will be added to the collection. There are several factors to be analysed when looking at the formation of a collection. The first of

these tends to be the stated aims, i.e. what the museum in question wants to acquire and why. In the Nationalmuseum's case, the field is large, from the 16th century to the present in the area of applied arts and design, and to the early 20th century when it comes to the fine arts. Secondly, it is necessary to look at the funding mechanisms at the museum's disposal. The Nationalmuseum does not receive any funds for acquisitions from the state, which makes it dependent on private funders, endowments and donations – the Friends of the Nationalmuseum being a great example of this. The third factor relates to the availability of works – what is on the market – and what kinds of networks and connections the museum has. Finally, one has to be aware of how decision-making mechanisms impact on what is possible in terms of acquisitions.

At a very general level, it can be said that most museums operate under fairly similar conditions as far as the first three factors are concerned. Defined areas to work with (some wider, some narrower), limited funds and eyes on the market. The biggest differences relate to decision-making processes. In this sense, the Nationalmuseum is an agile actor. It avoids a bureaucratic, top-down, committee-based approach and favours deep expertise and connoisseurship.

In 2017 the Nationalmuseum acquired fifteen paintings and three sculptures by Swedish artists, thirty-eight paintings and one sculpture by foreign artists (including many Danish painters), ten miniatures,

FOREWORD

numerous pastels and drawings, silverware, glass, ceramics, gold and silver, stone objects, clocks, jewellery, furniture, textiles and fashion, as well as industrial design and prototypes. In 2018 the Museum acquired eight paintings and nine sculptures by Swedish artists, forty-four paintings and four sculptures by foreign artists, seven miniatures, and a great many objects belonging to the other categories mentioned.

The museum collection encompasses different areas, such as Swedish and Nordic artists, French art, portrait miniatures, and contemporary and industrial design. Within these fields we have chosen to focus on a number of themes, such as the Danish Golden Age, the Troubadour style, self-portraits, the plein-air movement of the early 19th century, Swedish women artists in Paris in the late 19th century, and the Swedish Grace style of the 1920s. Some of the names are world-famous, such as the French painter François Boucher, while the Swedish sculptor Agnes de Frumerie (1869–1937), for example, is far less well known to a wider audience.

The objects cover the work of a wide range of individual artists, among them a rare drawing on wood by Salvator Rosa, *A Rocky Landscape with a Tree and Two Figures* (see article on p. 17), or a recently discovered daguerreotype by Joseph Weninger (see p. 53). On the one hand, we have the finest of objects, such as gilt-bronze *Retour d'Égypte* candlesticks (see article on p. 45), and on the other, items such as the iconic *Flora margarine tub*, designed by Carl-Arne Breger (1923–2009), which was first launched in 1965 and revolutionised the way margarine was served at the breakfast table. Innovations such as Anna Haupt and Terese Alstin's *Bicycle helmet* (2015) or Anders Wilhelmsson, Peter Thuvander and Camilla Wirseen's *Disposable toilet* reflect the new needs and changing values of a consumer society, with safety and environmental aspects mirrored in the product design.

This is also one of the strengths and beauties of the collection. It takes us elegantly through the decades and centuries, and connects design ideas from the past to the present.

Connection with research

An active and dynamic collection concept means that the works acquired are put to use. Some of the purchases are directly linked to ongoing research projects. As an example, the Museum has acquired Danish art over the last few years as part of an in-depth research and exhibition project undertaken in collaboration with Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen. The *Danish Golden Age* exhibition was first shown in Stockholm in 2019 and continued from there to Copenhagen. In 2020, it will open at the Petit Palais in Paris. By the time the exhibition opened, the Nationalmuseum had purchased eighty paintings and ninety drawings by Danish artists, including Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, Constantin Hansen, Johan Thomas Lundbye, Wilhelm Marstrand, Peter Christian Skovgaard and Thorald Læssøe.

Every now and then the Museum has an opportunity to broaden its collection with a larger selection of one artist's works. This was the case in 2017, when we acquired a collection of drawings by Carl Christoffer Gjörwell (1766–1837), who had studied at the *Målar- och bildhuggareakademien* in Stockholm and made his first study trip to Rome in 1794 (see article on p. 121). As another example, in 2018 the Museum received as a gift a selection of drawings by Anna Helena Alströmer (1764–1792). They provide a very intimate insight into the artist's training: how she practised drawing ears, noses, mouths and faces.

Sketches and drawings like these are an invaluable source of information for scholars working with the individual artists concerned. Works on paper tell us about the artistic process: ways of looking at people, the landscape or even individual objects, but also the development

of style in relation to the traditions of teaching art at the academies of Rome, Paris, Dresden, Düsseldorf and Stockholm, to mention just a few. They are particularly interesting if the final work is already in the collection.

Sketches can even bring the past to life again, as some of the acquisitions demonstrate. Fritz von Dardel (1817–1901), who was known for his sharp portraits and caricatures, drew a series of pictures from board meetings at the Nationalmuseum in the 1880s and 1890s, representing Per Daniel Holm, Hampus Huldt, Albert Theodor Gellerstedt and Nils Fredrik Sander (see article on p. 71). These spontaneous drawings open a small window onto the Museum's boardroom. Such acquisitions remind us why it is important to collect not only the big and glorious paintings and sculptures, but also material in a smaller and more modest format. Images like this can illustrate the rapid and yet fragile moments of creation.

Telling the story of the collection

The Nationalmuseum is committed to communicating about its most important acquisitions. It releases monthly acquisition highlights to the press and reports on them in the *New Acquisitions* section of the website. Acquisitions attract a great deal of attention nationally and internationally. Publications such as *Apollo Art Magazine* and *La Tribune de l'Art* closely follow the latest additions to the Nationalmuseum's collections.

For the Museum itself, acquisitions are a gateway to new research. In July 2019 the Museum re-established its Research Department. The role of the department is to build close collaboration between the Nationalmuseum and both universities and individual scholars in Sweden and internationally. We are thus looking forward to researching our collections together with a community of curious scholars who wish to contribute to the history of art.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this issue of the *Art Bulletin*.