

**PELLE SWEDLUND**

THE ARTIST AND HIS WORK

by

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## **Dedication**

To Pelle Swedlund.

## **Abstract**

This thesis can be regarded as an introduction to the life and work of Swedish artist Pelle Swedlund. This introductory character is the logical consequence of the current lack of any existing scholarship dedicated solely to Swedlund. As the title suggests, the thesis is both a discussion of Swedlund's biography as well as of his oeuvre. The first, biographic chapter enables the analysis of the oeuvre in the subsequent chapters. Equally, the chapters which deal with his style, influences, and critical and commercial reception, also contain biographic information and as such, the elements of 'life' and 'work' intersect and add to one another. The appendices form the cornerstone of the thesis as they consist of the most comprehensive catalogue of Swedlund's painted works to date, as well as an overview of his exhibitions. By this multifaceted approach, the thesis aims to widen the knowledge of Swedlund's lifetime, deepen and contextualise our understanding of his painted works, and find a place for him in the Swedish and international art-historical canon.

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**Abbreviations**

SS. refers to Swedlundska släktarkivet or 'Swedlund family archive', National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm

INV-XXXX refers to the illustrated catalogue of painted works in Appendix 1, in which each entry has received a unique catalogue number

## Introduction

*For their nature is such that they do not, at first sight, dazzle, capture nor hold, but rather demand that one stands before them silently and calmly, and listens to the harmonies which, as if from afar, sound from them in dampened tones.<sup>1</sup>*

Perhaps this one attentive observer has - unknowingly - already answered one of the key questions this thesis sets out to uncover when they penned their exhibition review in the winter of 1906. Which is simply the following: Why is Pelle Swedlund's oeuvre not better known? Perhaps it is exactly because Swedlund's pictures appear at first sight unassuming, requiring the viewer to pause for a moment and 'listen to the harmonies', that they did not become more successful, critically and commercially, during the rapid course of the twentieth century. Yet this question cannot be answered without first expanding on what is known about his life and his work.

Although more than a hundred years have passed since the pinnacle of Swedlund's critical success, a time at which works by him were included in several institutional collections in Sweden, the existing scholarship focused on Swedlund is limited both in quantity and scope. Since 1947, there has only been

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<sup>1</sup> 'Ty deras natur är sådan att de ej vid första anblicken blända, gripa, fångsla, utan de kräfvat att man i stillhet och ro stannar inför dem och lyssnar till de harmonier, hvilka liksom ur fjärran med dämpade toner ljuda från dem', 'Konstutställningen å museet', *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 17 March 1906.

one exhibition which has focused solely on his work, yet no catalogue was published on this occasion.<sup>2</sup> Since then, works by Swedlund have been included in two other group exhibitions, each focusing on particular currents within Swedish art history, respectively Symbolism and Swedish Modernism.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Stefan Huygebaert too, in his ongoing research on Symbolist artists in Bruges, has found Swedlund to be a person of particular interest.<sup>4</sup> Of the sources which are readily available, the lexicon of Swedish artists undoubtedly holds the largest amount of relevant information on the artist.<sup>5</sup> Yet what is lacking in existing scholarship, is a publication which is dedicated only to Swedlund and his work. This is relevant as the inclusion of the artist in contemporary exhibitions and the present market demand for his works signals an emerging interest, both intellectual and commercial, in the oeuvre. Yet a long period of academic neglect has resulted in a narrative which is both fragmented and superficial. Furthermore, the shortage of published material in the English language has likely been a contributing factor to a shortage of more international appreciation.

The current lack of a monographic publication leads to the introductory character of this thesis. In its aspiration to transcend the purely descriptive, however, it also aims to answer a few key questions. Is the existing narrative, which credits his output created in Bruges as his primary achievement, a fair assessment? Was

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<sup>2</sup> *Pelle Swedlund: Symbolist och mystiker*, 2003, Per Ekströmmuseet, Mörbylånga.

<sup>3</sup> *Symbolism och Dekadens*, 2015, Waldemarsudde, Stockholm; *Moderna män*, 2016, Mjellby Konstmuseum, Halmstad.

<sup>4</sup> Stefan Huygebaert's project is titled *Redefining picturesque and symbolist qualities in the fin-de-siècle. The case of 'Bruges the beautiful/the dead'* and conducted at Ghent University, 2019-2022 (ongoing).

<sup>5</sup> Johnny Roosval, Lilja Gösta and Knut Andersson, *Svenskt konstnärslexikon* (Malmö: Allhems Förlag, 1952-67), pp. 337-338.

Swedlund a Symbolist artist? To what extent did he align with his Scandinavian peers and to what extent did he belong to a more international culture? And further to the opening paragraph – why has the oeuvre not enjoyed more recognition?

As the title suggests, the thesis is made up of a two-fold approach: Swedlund's biography and an in-depth survey of his painted works. The first, biographical chapter, is largely based on the contents found in the artist's letter archive which is currently held in Stockholm at the National Archives of Sweden. This chapter provides the necessary context for the analysis of the oeuvre in the subsequent chapters. Equally, the chapters which deal with Swedlund's style and technique, his Symbolist influences, and the critical and commercial reception he received, also contain biographical information. As such, the elements of 'life' and 'work' intersect and add to one another throughout the course of the thesis. Finally, the first two appendices form the cornerstone for the discussion of the oeuvre. They consist of a catalogue of Swedlund's painted works – the most comprehensive listing of its kind to date, as well as an overview of his exhibitions. By this multifaceted approach, focusing on all aspects of his artistic career, the thesis aims to widen the knowledge of Swedlund's lifetime and to deepen and contextualise our understanding of his painted works.

I have accessed primary sources, such as letters and exhibition catalogues from archives at the following institutions located in Stockholm: the National Library of Sweden, the National Archives of Sweden, the Thiel Gallery, the Museum

Archives of the Nationalmuseum, and the Nordic Museum. I have observed the artworks by Swedlund held at the Thiel Gallery in Stockholm and the County Museum of Gävleborg in Gävle, each time in person and in dialogue with its respective curators. In addition, I have observed artworks by Swedlund held in a number of private collections in Sweden and the United Kingdom, each time in person and in dialogue with the respective private owners. I have also maintained a dialogue with members of the Swedlund family who have descended from the artist's brother. Finally, the catalogue of works has been assembled by a multitude of sources of which physical auction catalogues, accessed in the aforementioned archives, and databases of auction results, accessed online, have formed the most substantial part. Whenever a translation from Swedish source material into English has been made, I have attempted to do so according to the best of my ability and in line with the intellectual intention which I understood the author to have had.

While the thesis aims to be as comprehensive as possible within the given framework and word count, by no means does it claim to be exhaustive. Indeed, the thesis' own limitations invite future scholarship to further expand, interpret and contextualise its contents. In regard to the letter archive, for example, I have primarily focused on the letters written by Swedlund himself. A more extensive reading which would also include all letters which were sent to him, would likely give rise to a more all-encompassing view of the artist's biography. Furthermore, not all institutions have made their collection accessible to me. Filling in the resulting gaps in the catalogue of works could possibly lead to new nuances in

the discussion of the oeuvre and its chronological development.



## Chapter One: A Biography

While the Lexicon of Swedish Artists provides us with a concise overview of Swedlund's lifetime and artistic achievements, it lacks anecdotal detail and psychological depth.<sup>6</sup> In other words, we do not really get to know the artist. The present chapter aims to fill in those gaps and provide a more comprehensive understanding of his life which, in turn, serves as the foundation for the subsequent discussions of the oeuvre. This inseparability between the course of an artist's life and the works they create call to mind Walter Crane's maxim: 'The source of art is in the life of a people'.<sup>7</sup> And in the case of Swedlund - whose paintings are so often evocative of deeply personal ideas and moods - gaining an understanding of his movements, his social circle, his innermost concerns and his aspirations, is indeed of instrumental importance in the understanding of the works he produced.

The documents which provide the most relevant information in regards to the artist's psychology as well as his practice, are the autograph letters. As such, the portion of the letter archive which forms the foundation of this chapter, consists of the correspondence which was sent by Swedlund and received by his parents and siblings. Unless stated otherwise, all anecdotal details outlined below have been derived from a reading of this selection of letters, which in turn also includes dated envelopes and postcards. In order to establish the biographical narrative,

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<sup>6</sup> Johnny Roosval, Lilja Gösta and Knut Andersson, *Svenskt konstnärlexikon* (Malmö: Allhems Förlag, 1952-67), p. 337-338.

<sup>7</sup> Taken from Walter Crane's 1891 inlaid wooden floor panel for the South London Gallery.

this information has been processed as a whole and therefore footnote references are primarily reserved for citations and whenever a piece of information is specifically linked to one particular letter. Whenever a different source was used, such as a newspaper article, this has been footnoted accordingly.

This chapter is reflective of the selected source material and its content therefore gravitates to Swedlund's life as a student and as an emerging artist. This particular period, which was largely spent abroad – first in France and subsequently in Belgium and Italy - will prove to be instrumental to the development of the oeuvre and define the course of the artist's later life.

### *The Teacher's Son*

Visiting Norra Skeppargatan 10 in Gävle today is a disappointing endeavour, as nothing remains there of the Swedlund family home. In order to catch a glimpse of the family's bygone world, one has to travel 15 minutes north of the city. There still stands a group of houses named Engesberg and Lilla Lundby, once the Swedlunds' seaside retreat (Fig. 1). The property, located on the coastal strip of Bönan, was a marker of the family's position as part of Gävle's upper-middle class. An understanding of the socio-economic world in which they lived, can be taken from Michelle Facos' description when she stated that: 'in general, the Swedish economy declined after 1850. An agricultural crisis and famine in the 1860s had catastrophic repercussions at a time when more than eighty percent

of the population were farmers'.<sup>8</sup> The Swedlund family had already left their crofter existence behind at the beginning of the nineteenth century, changing their names from Nilsson to Swedlund (after their home village of Norrsveden), and settling in the town of Gävle. In just a matter of two generations, their status had dramatically improved. One of these city-dwelling family members was Per August Swedlund. A teacher by profession, he also worked variously as a preacher, a newspaper editor, and engaged himself in local politics. Thanks to his many occupations, the Swedlund family was able to live in financial comfort at time during which Sweden faced economic challenges. He was able to provide for his wife, Emeli Lovisa, and their five children: Maria 'Majken', Per Adolf 'Pelle', Nils Gustaf 'Gucku', Sofia Helena Lovisa 'Bibbi', and Tekla Emilia.<sup>9</sup>

The family's eldest son was born in 1865: Per Adolf Swedlund, or 'Pelle' as he was lovingly referred to, first by his parents and soon after by everybody else (hereafter: *Swedlund*) (Fig. 2). Already as a young boy, Swedlund developed a talent for drawing. As we can see from his report cards, between the ages of 10 and 15 his grades for this particular class improved to the highest mark. What these seemingly reductive report cards also reveal are many hours of absence due to illness. His fixation with art and an apparently vulnerable disposition are two aspects of Swedlund's being which would remain with him for the rest of his life. Based upon the contents of the family's letter archive, it becomes

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<sup>8</sup> Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic imagination* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1998) p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Jakob Christensson, 'Swedlund', *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* (2020) <<https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=34848&forceOrdinarySite=true#KallorOchLiteratur>> [accessed 13 August 2022]

immediately apparent that the different family members had good relationships with each other and that young Swedlund grew up in a close-knit, protected environment. Swedlund continued to sign letters to his parents as 'Pappa's Pelle' and 'Mamma's Pelle' well into adulthood, an endearing token of his lasting affection. And his three sisters, who would never have any families of their own, were great supporters of Swedlund's career and avid correspondents during his long-lasting journeys (Fig. 3a). Throughout his life, Swedlund would turn to them when he wanted to exchange thoughts on literature, art, as well as matters of the heart. The *bourgeois* lifestyle they all enjoyed, is well documented throughout the photographs they left behind and the fine objects they collected.<sup>10</sup> Their home was one in which there was space for academic pursuits, culture and leisure (Fig. 3b). Constant pleas from Swedlund's family for him to return home from his travels abroad typify the nature of their family bond - even if these pleas were usually answered by appeals for more funding in order to prolong his travels even further. Because while it is true that all children benefited and in large part depended upon the family's assets, it was Swedlund in particular who had to appeal to his father's goodwill the most. The archive contains many 'beggar letters' in which Swedlund discusses his (lack of) finances with his father.<sup>12</sup> Justifying his requests and explaining recent expenses, these letters contain valuable insights into Swedlund's evolving practice and can, for example, help to distinguish whether decisions were made based on financial pressure or following

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<sup>10</sup> Based on photographs and objects which were donated by the Swedlund family to the Gävleborg County Museum.

<sup>12</sup> 'Tiggarbrev' as Swedlund himself refers to this type of correspondence.

an ideological conviction. As such, the correspondence with his family is invaluable for a discussion of the oeuvre.

### *The Art Student*

Following his father's footsteps, Swedlund enrolled at Uppsala University in 1884 with ambitions of becoming a teacher.<sup>13</sup> During the first year of his studies, however, he began cautiously to contemplate a career in the arts and at the end of the first term Swedlund travelled to Stockholm - then a 7-hour train journey from his home town Gävle. In the capital, Swedlund rented a room at Målargatan 1, which appropriately translates as '*Painters Street*', located around the corner from the Tekniska Skolan institution where he attended evening-and Sunday drawing classes for one month. While in Stockholm, Swedlund took the opportunity to visit the Nationalmuseum and afterwards wrote to his sister in complete admiration of Gustaf Cederström's *Karl XII:s likfärd* and Hugo Salmson's *Den lilla axplockerskan* (Fig. 4), the latter featuring themes which he would later explore in his own practice. He also visited the newly-opened gallery space Blanchs Konstsalong where works by Gustaf Hellqvist were exhibited. Swedlund attended classes diligently but as he prepared to return home for Christmas, he wrote to his father to express his concerns: 'If only I knew for certain that my stay here and the associated costs would be in the best interest

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<sup>13</sup> Johnny Roosval, Lilja Gösta and Knut Andersson, *Svenskt konstnärslexikon* (Malmö, Allhems Förlag, 1952-67), p. 337-338.

for my future! I'm still doubting it'.<sup>14</sup> His doubt is indeed reflected in the fact that he did not renew the lease for his room and agreed with the landlady to send her a confirmation only at the end of the year, after having discussed the matter with his family. Eventually Swedlund's doubts seemed to have been too great, as he did not return to Stockholm after the holidays. Tormented by feelings of ingratitude towards his otherwise very happy existence, Swedlund decided it would be better to study towards a career on which he could rely for a steady income and resumed his studies at Uppsala.

Still conflicted, however, Swedlund continued to produce drawings and portraits and sent a string of heart-felt letters to his sisters, confiding in them that he now regretted not going down the 'artist's path'. In these letters, Swedlund spoke of the inner artist who sought to 'come out into the light' but 'must be buried'.<sup>15</sup> Swedlund went on to compare his inner longings to the mythical boar Saehrimnir whom, according to Nordic legend, was slaughtered and consumed every evening only to be brought back to life the following day. In an attempt to defeat the so-called beast, Swedlund completed his university studies and began to work as a substitute teacher in his father's school in Gävle. Yet two years later, in 1887, Swedlund gave up his position at the school and finally decided to change direction. It was also around this time that he visited the towns of Skövde and Jönköping. The sketchbook Swedlund took with him to Skövde resides today

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<sup>14</sup> 'Om jag ändå vore viss om att min vistelse här och dermed förenade utgifter verkligen vore till mitt framtidea väl! Tviflar fortfarande derpå', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 18 December 1884.

<sup>15</sup> 'konstnärn, som vill fram I ljuset. Måste begrafvas', SS. Swedlund to Majken Swedlund, 15 March 1885.

at the National Archives and contains a sketch of the entrance of the local St. Helena's Church (Fig. 5). The drawing, again, contains parallels to painted works he would go on to create more than a decade later and testify of Swedlund's enduring fascination with religious architecture. This shows us that, although Swedlund had not even started his formal education as an artist, he was already developing his individual, painterly gaze.

Swedlund moved to Stockholm, then the only real city in Sweden with a population tenfold to that of his native Gävle, in pursuit of his artistic goals.<sup>16</sup> Although large in comparison, Stockholm only had approximately 200,000 inhabitants at this time. As observed by Facos: 'and because Stockholm was so small (...) its cultural and intellectual elite were well acquainted with each other. They read the same newspapers, frequented the same restaurants, attended the same lectures and performances, and summered at the same resorts'.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the friendships made during his first years in Stockholm would largely define his social circle for the rest of his career. Initially Swedlund lived at Klara Västra Kyrkogatan but when a fire made this dwelling uninhabitable he moved on to Holländaregatan 27.<sup>18</sup> There he took up residence in a flat on the fourth floor which he described as being 'quite close to the clouds, but artists do often live together with the sparrows and I think I will enjoy living here'.<sup>19</sup> From this moment

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<sup>16</sup> National Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Second edition. 1720-1967*, (Stockholm, AB Allmänna Förlaget, 1969), p. 61-62.

<sup>17</sup> Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic imagination* (Berkeley, California University Press, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Swedlund subsequently moved to Drottninggatan 106 and then to Olofsgatan 7.

<sup>19</sup> 'Det är visserligen bra nära molnen, men målare brukar ju bo tillsammans med sparvarne och jag tror mig komma att trivas förträffligt', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 15 April 1888.

on, Swedlund would continuously refer to himself as an artist. All subsequent life decisions were made in function of his artistic career, even down to the way he dressed. The fashionable moustache and the distinctive pince-nez he began to sport, seemed to have been a way to distinguish himself to the outside world as an artist, or at least as being wordly and sophisticated (Fig. 5).

Despite his initial optimism, this year proved to be an altogether wearing one for Swedlund. He constantly needed to appeal to his father for additional funds and the professional success of his brother Gucku, who was two years his junior, made Swedlund feel as if he was falling behind. An unrequited interest in Gerda, a young woman he had met back in Gävle, added fuel to the fire of his discontent. But after this lacklustre start of his artistic life, Swedlund's luck turned and in 1889 he was able to finally start his studies at the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts (hereafter: *Royal Academy*) and with it moved to Barnhusgatan 4.<sup>21</sup> While the respectable character of this school must have pleased Swedlund's father, Swedlund himself complained about its antiquated methods and conventional views on art in general. As Kasper Monrad observed: 'The last two decades of the 19th century was a turbulent time in art throughout the Nordic countries. Artists rebelled against ingrown traditions in culture - at the Royal Academies of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and Stockholm, the Christiania Art Association, and the Finnish Art Society in Helsinki'.<sup>22</sup> Already in 1886, three years prior to Swedlund's enrolment, 'a group of Royal Academy-alumni who called themselves the

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<sup>21</sup> In Swedish: 'Kungliga Akademien för de fria konsterna', also referred to as 'Konstakademien'.

<sup>22</sup> Nationalmuseum Stockholm, *Nordiskt Sekelskifte. The Light of the North* (Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, 1995) p. 17-18.



*Opponents* met in Paris and formalised their alliance by establishing a new organisation, named the *Artists' Association* ('Konstnärsförbundet') with artist Ernst Josephson at its helm'.<sup>23</sup> Records show that together with his fellow students Swedlund visited the yearly exhibitions organised by the Artists' Association. And while Swedlund never joined the *Opponents*, he did seek to further complement the school's curriculum by beginning an apprenticeship with artist Alf Wallander.

In 1890 Swedlund spent the summer in Visby together with a fellow student from the Royal Academy, Nils Emil Lundström. While there, Swedlund wrote a spirited letter to his sister, praising the medieval town's beauty: 'The sea and the century-old weathered walls around the city both speak a great and beautiful language, and to the painter's eye - such richness, such worthy variety of form and colour - both in character and tonality'.<sup>24</sup> A drawing of these city walls is included in the 1890 edition of *Palettskrapp*, a magazine of lithographs published by the students of the Royal Academy. Unbeknownst to Swedlund, the reaction he had upon discovering Visby in fact foreshadowed a series of paintings he would embark upon thirty years later (INV-0100). In the same letter we also get insight into his mental state at this time. Because when Swedlund's friend received a telegram stating that the latter's sister had passed away, Lundström divulged his troubled family history to Swedlund. This had a profound effect on Swedlund, as it

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<sup>23</sup> Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic imagination* (Berkeley, California University Press, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> 'Hafvet och de sekelgamla förvittrade urarne kring staden äro (...) som både tala ett stort och skönt språk och för målarögat hvilken rikdom hvilken värdig vaxling i form och färg i karaktär och toner (...) tomheten är nu ingalunda så stor eller mörkret så tungt som till förre', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 18 June 1890.

completely bewildered him how Lundström was able to appear so calm, happy, and carefree. All this while Swedlund himself, despite his own happy upbringing, continuously struggled with an emptiness, which he described as having been 'dark and heavy'. Although Swedlund was now finally pursuing the artist's path and was surrounded by beauty and inspiration, gloom-ridden thoughts still pestered him. This riddle bothered Swedlund tremendously and during early adulthood he would make varied attempts to widen his own (Christian) beliefs and complement them with other, external wisdom.

Swedlund started to read publications by, attend lectures of, and eventually befriend, novelist Viktor Rydberg. Nearly forty years Swedlund's senior, Rydberg was enjoying international fame and recognition for his influential body of work. This included popular historic novels and poetry, as well as essays on religion and antiquity, and investigations into Teutonic mythology. Why precisely Rydberg's work resonated with Swedlund could be attributed to several reasons. Albert Shaw wrote that 'one of the major long-term effects of Rydberg's publications would be the weakening of the authority of the Church over the educated classes of Scandinavia. Rydberg taught freedom of individual conscience. It was this that inspired him in the fight against the state church'.<sup>25</sup> Rydberg's compromise between the biblical teachings and self-government might have come as a liberation to Swedlund, as he immediately felt compelled to share this knowledge with his family. Rydberg's scholarship on different mythologies must have also had its appeal as Swedlund had been interested in and would

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<sup>25</sup> Albert Shaw, 'Viktor Rydberg. Reformer, The Dante of Sweden', *The American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 1906, p. 96.

continue to make references to Greek and Nordic mythology throughout his letters and his later works (INV-0260). Marie Corelli's *A Romance of Two Worlds* and Camille Flammarion's *Dans le ciel et sur la terre*, also appear in the letter archive, therewith signaling a developing interest in astronomy. Other artists of the same generation and – as it would soon become apparent in Swedlund's case – of a certain disposition for Symbolist ideas, were also attracted to comparable publications. For example, Kathleen Soriano identified the appeal Flammarion's *History of the Heavens* had to the Lithuanian Symbolist M.K. Čiurlionis: 'its ideas about the oneness of man and nature, universality and man's relationship with the cosmos'.<sup>26</sup> At this point in time, Swedlund too was willing to cross the lines towards the pseudo-scientific and the futuristic in his quest to fill the void that plagued him. And to his sister Bibbi he quoted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by writing: 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy'.<sup>27</sup>

The following year, 1891, the future started to look brighter for Swedlund. As Gucku, Tekla, and Gerda joined him in Stockholm, the mention of loneliness and dark thoughts appeared less frequently in his letters. He worked tirelessly as the newly-appointed editor of *Palettskrap*, after being a contributing artist in the preceding years, while his studies and position as a spokesperson at the Royal Academy occupied the remainder of his time. A private commission for a portrait energised Swedlund even more. With large-scale canvases in mind, Swedlund

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<sup>26</sup> Kathleen Soriano, *M.K. Čiurlionis. Between Worlds* (London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2022), p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> 'mycket gifves mellan himmel och jord, Horatio, som filosofin ej ens drömt om', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 24 October 1889.

contemplated sharing a studio with artist Albert von Stockenström to decrease costs and to be able to afford live models. In the new year, Swedlund continued his studies at the Royal Academy under the supervision of Oscar Björck, Julius Kronberg, Axel Jungstedt, Georg von Rosen, and Richard Bergh. When Swedlund wrote to his father to proclaim that his self-confidence as an artist had grown, he credited Bergh's encouragement as a contributing factor.<sup>28</sup> He also visited exhibitions by Bruno Liljefors and the Norwegian painter Erik Werenskiöld, whom he had the outmost respect for.<sup>29</sup> But while honing his craft in the context of these great, Scandinavian painters, Swedlund also continued to attend lectures by Rydberg whom Swedlund now 'loves and admires more than anybody else'.<sup>30</sup> The importance Swedlund evidently attached to supplementing his technical education with obtaining new ideas on philosophy, history and science, indicate here already that Swedlund's artistic practice would not merely be based on a visual representation of reality. Instead, the intellectual experiences of the artist would be intrinsically linked to the image that is represented on canvas.

In the autumn of 1892, after having graduated from the Royal Academy with honours, the now 27-year old Swedlund left for Paris. In his study of Scandinavian artists in the French capital, Kirk Varnedoe has found that: 'To be a young artist in Paris in the period from the late 1870s to the mid-1890s was not only to revel in such freedom and comradeship but also to feel that one was part of a

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<sup>28</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 25 January 1892.

<sup>29</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 27 March 1892.

<sup>30</sup> 'som jag älskar och beundrar mer än någon annan', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 17 February 1892.

revolutionary movement redefining the parameters of art. Having left Scandinavia to escape the conservative academicism of their native lands, the young expatriates found in the French capital an atmosphere of artistic upheaval'.<sup>31</sup> Yet the ability to continue one's education in Paris was often a matter of funding. While Swedlund could count on his father to support him financially, there was a sense of gravitas embedded in the project. After having bid farewell to his friends and to Rydberg, Swedlund embarked on his travels by taking the train to Gothenburg. Right before crossing the border to Denmark, leaving his native Sweden behind him for the first time, he wrote a letter to his parents: 'Even though I only come from Gävle, Stockholm has now become too small for me'.<sup>32</sup> He then continued to ponder in a more anguished tone, almost more to himself than to anyone else: 'Have I then really sunk so deeply into indifference's tranquillity that I now tremble before needlessly casting myself into life's howling waves'. Despite these feelings of hesitation, Swedlund continued his journey. Passing through Antwerp, Swedlund made a point of visting the Royal Museum of Fine Arts and particularly admired its collection of 'old masters'.<sup>33</sup> And upon arriving in Paris, he took up a room at Hotel St. Malo on Rue d'Odessa in the artistic crucible of Montparnasse.

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<sup>31</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light. Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting 1880-1910* (New York, Brooklyn Museum, 1982), p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> 'i Stockholm skulle jag inte velat stanna. Det förefäll så smått, fast jag kom från Gefle (...) Har jag verkligen sjunkit så djupt i liknöjdhetensro att jag bäfvar för att nödlös kastas ut på lifvets tjutande vågor', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 11 November 1892.

<sup>33</sup> 'gamla mästare', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 16 November 1892.

The pretext for his Parisian sojourn was Swedlund's enrolment at the Académie Julian, where he received instruction in painting under the supervision of Jean-Paul Laurens and Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant.<sup>34</sup> Frances Spalding, in her studies on Roger Fry, provides us with insights of this institution: 'The Académie Julian was, at that time, the largest private art school in Paris, attracting students of all nationalities though especially popular with Americans. By 1892, the school had expanded into an aggregation of studios in the rue du Faubourg St Denis, visited by well known sculptors and painters at Julian's invitation'.<sup>35</sup> Barely two months after his arrival in Paris, Swedlund wrote: 'I have already learned infinitely much more here than I would have done in Stockholm. I have never derived as much joy from my work as I do here'.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the frugal lifestyle he adopted, and a constant insufficiency of funds which caused him to sign off his correspondence as 'Broke Pelle', Swedlund experienced an unprecedented degree of desire and energy to paint.<sup>37</sup> The source of this energy, he claimed, were his surroundings: 'It's present in the air and in the food and in the tobacco and the life in this city'.<sup>38</sup> Swedlund taking a studio on 12 rue du Moulin-de-Beurre underscored this new-found energy.<sup>39</sup> Whenever he was not attending classes or working, Swedlund roamed about the

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<sup>34</sup> SS. Swedlund to Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 29 November 1892.

<sup>35</sup> Frances Spalding, *Roger Fry. Art and Life* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980), p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> 'att jag här lärt oändligt mycket mer än jag skulle gjort hemma i Stockholm, liksom jag aldrig haft sådan glädje i arbetet som här', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 27 January 1893

<sup>37</sup> in Swedish 'Panka Pelle'

<sup>38</sup> 'Sånt ligger i luften och i maten och tobaken och lifvet här i stan', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 27 January 1893.

<sup>39</sup> Atelier number four, now: Rue du Texel.

city, viewing as many buildings, sculptures, museums and exhibitions as he possibly could.<sup>40</sup> He immediately fell into a crowd of fellow Swedes. For a while he shared his studio with Albert von Stockenström, who had come to Paris to study sculpture at the Académie Julian (Fig. 7). Others in his Scandinavian circle included the sculptors Charles Friberg and Agnes de Frumerie, and the painters Per Ewert and Erik (Ecke) Hedberg. As Vibeke Röstorp has noted in her studies on Scandinavians in Paris: ‘maintaining bonds within their own national communities was a way of strengthening their own identities and thus their distinctiveness on the Parisian art scene’.<sup>41</sup> And sometimes, keeping within these communities was a matter of necessity. Von Stockenström, for example, arrived in Paris without the ability to speak French and depended on Swedlund’s knowledge of the language – which he possessed as a result from his studies at Uppsala.<sup>42</sup> Swedlund himself was also a beneficiary of this ability, as it enabled him to better integrate - or at least communicate - with the locals of their host country, as is evident from the correspondence in French present in the letter archive.

### *The Artist on the Cusp*

In April of 1893, the city had fully recovered from a bitterly cold winter and Swedlund suddenly found the heat unbearable. Packed with a small bag and

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<sup>40</sup> SS. Swedlund to Emilia Lovisa Forsberg, 29 November 1892.

<sup>41</sup> Vibeke Röstorp, ‘Third Culture Artists: Scandinavians in Paris’, in *Imagined Cosmopolis. Internationalism and Cultural Exchange, 1870s-1920s* (Oxford, Peter Lang, 2019), p. 168.

<sup>42</sup> Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, Axel Gauffin’s Letter Archive, an undated letter from Albert von Stockenström.

painting supplies, Swedlund and his friends headed for Palaiseau, just south of Paris, and took up a room at the Hotel des Nations.<sup>43</sup> In 1893, Palaiseau still was a picturesque town and despite its close proximity to the capital it had held on to its provincial ways. Swedlund used these surroundings to paint *en plein air* and to make life studies of local, elderly women.<sup>44</sup> Life there was simpler and much cheaper, the latter a welcome change for a struggling young artist. Unsurprisingly, Swedlund ended up staying in Palaiseau for over three months, the only interludes being brief returns to Paris to visit the Salons. For four days in May, he walked around the densely-hung galleries and 'nurtured his soul, looked around and mused, pondered and dreamt, studied and enjoyed works both praised and condemned'.<sup>45</sup> In the same letter to his sister Bibbi, Swedlund continued to describe the great effect the Salon had on his personal understanding of art, learning more from this single visit than from any school he had ever attended. One work in particular succeeded to completely enchant Swedlund: 'It is simply a girl with her cloak pulled over her head, standing besides a grazing white cow, leading it along a green meadow (yet it is the) most beautiful thing I have ever seen. (...) It is not at all painted with striking liveliness, nor with a technique worthy of praise. Rather, a modern painter would say it is painted badly. But it spreads a sublime fragrance and speaks of a heavenly virtue and of a Messiah's compassion for the children of men and all nature. Never before has an artist

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<sup>43</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 25 April 1893.

<sup>44</sup> SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 21 June 1893.

<sup>45</sup> 'I fyra dagar gick jag der och upbyggde min själ: kikade och musade och grubblade och drömde studerade och motståndlöst njöt på dömde och fördömde', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 1 May 1893.



spoken to my soul in this way' (Fig. 8).<sup>46</sup> Despite Swedlund's critical remarks on the artist's technical abilities, Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret was in fact applauded by critics for his lifelike renderings, aided by the use of photography. Perhaps it is unsurprising that, from the enormous multitude of works exhibited at the Salon, Swedlund responded to *Dans la Prairie (In the Meadow)*. Dagnan-Bouveret's naturalistic depiction could certainly be compared to Salmson's *Den lilla axplockerskan*, for which Swedlund had already expressed his admiration ten years prior to seeing *Dans La Prairie*. Yet it is Swedlund's description which appears to be remarkable. By imbuing the picture with the sensation of 'a sublime fragrance' and by interpreting its simple motif as the 'Messiah's compassion for the children of men and all nature', the painting suddenly gains a mystic, Symbolist character. It not only foreshadowed Swedlund's own depictions of local people in traditional dress, but also signaled that he projected certain ideas onto these people, their way of life and their surroundings. In doing so, Swedlund can be seen to participate within a larger tradition which also includes artists such as Emile Bernard and Paul Gauguin, who would choose to depict *paysannes* within their own syntheist and symbolist frameworks. Nina Lübbren, in her publication on rural artist colonies, explains that 'artists were painting a way of life that they feared was vanishing, and their paintings expressed their antipathies to the industrialisation and modernisation of their time. In other words, paintings of

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<sup>46</sup> 'Det är nämligen endast en flicka med klädningen dragen upp öfver hufvudet som star vid sidan af en betande hvit ko – som hon leder – på en grön äng. (...) Det är inte alls målad med någon slående friskhet eller beundransvärd teknik, snarare skulle en modern målare saga den vara taskigt målad, men den sprider en sådan sublime doft och talar om en himmels renhet och en messias' sympati för människabarnen och hela nature. Aldrig för hare n konstnär talet en sådant språl med min själ', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 1 May 1893.

peasants were not about peasants but about (urbanised) artists' resistance to the effects of modernisation'.<sup>47</sup> The fact Swedlund never depicted - or at least never exhibited - any views of Paris, for example, strengthens the argument for his inclusion in this group of artists.

Swedlund himself was not yet submitting any works to the Salon. Pressure from his family to do so was abruptly shut down by Swedlund by noting that he did not want to 'exhibit just for the sake of adding another cadaver on that horrible, tidal wave which drowns all. That is why I don't send any works (to the Salon) for which I feel ashamed'.<sup>48</sup> By September of 1893, Swedlund had migrated from Palaiseau to the south coast of Brittany. He first took up a room at the Hôtel Louanèque in Pont-Aven before eventually settling in the neighbouring fishing town of Concarneau at 1 rue Nationale. Nina Lübbren has noted that the artists' community there started to emerge around 1870 and that 'by 1889 there were at least thirty-eight French and seventy-nine international artists working in Concarneau. Most of the latter were Americans, drawn to Concarneau by Blanche Willis Howard's enormously popular novel *Guenn* (1884), which was set in the fictional town of Plouvenec (Concarneau)'.<sup>49</sup> It is tempting to link Swedlund's specific interest to visit this part of France to the visceral experience he had upon seeing Dagnan-Bouveret's work at the Salon a couple of months

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<sup>47</sup> Nina Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe. 1870-1910* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 39.

<sup>48</sup> 'att exponera bara får att med ännu ett kadaver öka denna ohyggliga syndaflod som dränkar allt. Därför skickar jag inte dit nån tafvla som jag skäms för', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 30 November 1893.

<sup>49</sup> Nina Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe. 1870-1910* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 167.

earlier. But from his letters it seems to have been a practical decision more than anything else. Palaiseau's natural beauty had been scorched by the sun and Swedlund longed for refreshing swims in the ocean. He first considered the coast of Normandy but was discouraged to go there by Hedberg, who claimed it would have been 50 francs more expensive per month than Brittany.<sup>50</sup> When Swedlund first set foot in Concarneau, he was brimming with excitement, self-confidence and, for a change, a full wallet, as he had just received a large sum of money from his father who had decided to support Swedlund's continental adventures for another winter to come. Swedlund's initial optimism was soon replaced with sorrow however, as he had difficulties recovering from a case of Cholera which he had picked up in Palaiseau. By the time Swedlund fully recovered and was able to leave his bed, he was met with disappointment. Concarneau had become a different, lifeless place now the season had changed. The landscape study which Swedlund had been working on before he fell ill, now had to be abandoned as the leaves had fallen and with it changed the intended motif and its colours completely. The stormy clouds covering the coastal towns in rain and snow had even found their way into Swedlund's draughty studio and indeed into his very mind. Still, life in Concarneau was significantly cheaper than in Paris, and Swedlund decided to stay on.<sup>51</sup>

This decision to stay in Concarneau would prove to be fruitful as Swedlund would undergo a near-religious experience before the year drew to a close. On the evening before Christmas Eve, Swedlund together with a friend made a short trip

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<sup>50</sup> SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, undated.

<sup>51</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 30 November 1893.

to Douarnenez, another Breton town, west of Concarneau. Walking on the beach at night, they watched the incoming waves rocking the fishing boats which were temporarily released from their duties during the Christmas holidays.<sup>52</sup> The moonlight was 'saturated with mystery' and in a most lyrically-written passage Swedlund continued to describe the events that followed: 'But what music there was in all of this. It was the song of the sea. The sea moving upwards in long silver-hooded undulations and producing sounds below me. But what was heard from the other side, were not mere sounds, but rather they were organ tones. Powerful, sonorous organ tones such as I have never heard before. Was it a tormented lament or a release of jubilation? (...) The fishermen standing on the quay also looked out at sea and soon gathered in large groups of black silhouettes as if something was happening or was about to happen. Well, I felt it. The Messiah would be born. It was the longing of the sea'.<sup>53</sup> The following day, Swedlund and his friend set out to investigate the source of these spellbinding sounds. Where the sandy beach met the steep, rugged shore, they found a labyrinth of caves in shimmering colours. Swedlund reasoned that the incoming high tide must have caused these rocks to sing their organ tones, just like 'Odin's highest idea'.<sup>54</sup> The mythological reference with which he concluded the paragraph, refers to the ending of a poem by Viktor Rydberg: *Båldersbålet*.

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<sup>52</sup> Possible location: La Plage du Ris.

<sup>53</sup> 'mättadt af mystik (...) Men hvilken musik det var i allt detta. Det var hafvets sang – Hafvet som kom stigande i långa silverhufvade dyningar med brus här under mig men der bort från på andra sidan hördes emellan inte dån, inte brus, det var orgeltoner: mäktiga sonora, men orgeltoner som jag aldrig förr hört: vard et kvalfyld jämmer eller otändt jubel! (...) fiskare på den höga strandgatan omkring mig stoga också (...) en och en utan samlade i stora svarta grupper såsom om något händt eller skulle hända. – Jo jag kände det: Messias skulle födas – Det var hafvets längtan', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 28 December 1893.

<sup>54</sup> 'Odins högsta aning', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 28 December 1893.

Already at this time, Swedlund attached great importance to poetry. Allusions to literary poems were made throughout his correspondence, and later they appear within the painted oeuvre. And effectively, critics would soon recognise a 'melancholic poetry' in Swedlund's own work.<sup>55</sup>

*As organ tones  
Hovering through the forest  
Odin's highest idea,  
The promise of world reconciliation:  
The struggle of life makes sense,  
Deepest downfall has solace.*<sup>56</sup>

Spending the rest of the winter in Concarneau, Swedlund quietly tried to focus on producing new works and integrating into his surroundings. Not until the arrival of spring and the burst of vibrant colours the change of season brought onto the landscape, did Swedlund's letters become more animated again. 'Such abundance of green everywhere that all of the paint shops in Paris wouldn't be able to provide the paint to paint it'.<sup>57</sup> The changing landscape did not only create new motifs for Swedlund however, and it also resulted in a new flock of artists migrating to Concarneau. He remarked fairly annoyed: 'Just the other day, the first four idiots of the season arrived' and 'Here we have carried on, comparatively solitary, and felt like kings of the countryside. Where I have dreamt my dreams -

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<sup>55</sup> 'melankolisk poesi', 'Tre Målare', *Dagens Nyheter*, 8 March 1905.

<sup>56</sup> 'som orgeltoner sväfvat genom skogen Odens högsta aning, världsförsoningslöftet, livets strid har mening, djupsta fall har tröst', Viktor Rydberg, *Dikter* (Stockholm, Albert Bonniers Forlag, 1882), p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> 'så är det ren så grönt öfverallt att allt grönt som finns hos Paris färghandlare inte förslår', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 11 April 1894.

with a nature which I think has spoken to me in particular. And now those profane hands will play my instrument. This I find brutal sacrilege'. In the same letter he concluded bitterly: 'I might as well start painting people again'.<sup>58</sup> Swedlund briefly travelled to Paris at the beginning of summer to visit the Louvre and the salons. While he was still not exhibiting his own work, some friends of his were showing theirs. Von Stockenström presented a relief which had earlier been published in *Palettskrap* and de Frumerie exhibited her work as well. Rather than an opportunity to showcase his own progress, Swedlund used the salon to absorb - and potentially take cues from - the achievements of others. Aman-Jean's portraits, for example, received a special mention in Swedlund's correspondence.<sup>59</sup> And Frank Brangwyn was heralded as one of the great artists of his time.<sup>60</sup> Swedlund also visited an exhibition of works by Edouard Manet, whose influence could potentially be recognised in Swedlund's depictions of Concarneau's inhabitants, which he would produce that same year.<sup>61</sup> It was also during this stay in Paris that Swedlund's friend Per Ewert, who had joined him in Concarneau, committed suicide - an incident which shook Swedlund to the core.<sup>62</sup> The fact that he was in charge of the funeral proceedings and rallying an assembly of friends, artists, and composers to attend the funeral, is both

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<sup>58</sup> 'och för resten börja de kommer de andra idioterna. Här om dank om de första fyra för säsongen (...) Här har vi gått så jmföreslevis ensamma och känt oss som landens kungar. Der jag för som (...) drömt mina drömmar med naturen som jag tyckt talat särskildt för mig, der ska nu profana händer spela på mitt instrument. Det förefaller mig som ett brutalt helgerån (...) får väl börja måla människor igen', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 11 April 1894.

<sup>59</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund and Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 2 May 1894.

<sup>60</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund and Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 17 June 1894.

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>62</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund and Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 10 May 1894.

illustrative of his closeness to Ewert, as well as of the extent to which Swedlund was integrated in the local Swedish community (Fig. 8b).

Despite this tragedy, Swedlund underwent a period of great productivity in 1894. As he wrote to his sister: 'The time we live in, flourishes in Paris. Here, one can pick ripe fruits. And from its fruit we understand the tree'.<sup>63</sup> What Swedlund tried to explain, in a somewhat cryptic manner, was that in Paris, one could feel the pulse of a changing world. The nineteenth century was drawing to a close, and people were not oblivious to this fact. Some were excited and hopeful about the positive changes this progression into the future would bring, while others were more jaded by the futility of industrial and social change, casting grey clouds of pessimism over the horizon. One thing was certain however, as playwright Maurice Donnay noted in his diary: 'These words *fin de Siècle* are now on everybody's lips'.<sup>64</sup> Almost profiling himself as an emissary tasked with enlightening the laymen of his home country, Swedlund continued to inform and educate his family of the pivotal transformation the world was about to go through. Swedlund called it 'The century's sunset', yet his personal take on the fin-de-siècle was neither positive nor hopeless.<sup>66</sup> 'There (in Paris) life has gone out the furthest into the wasteland - without life, without shade, without tracked roads - only emptiness. I could see everywhere that it cannot possibly go on this way. Yet it will likely go on for much longer before the arrival of the cataclysm which

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<sup>63</sup> 'I Paris blomstrar tidens lif på godt och ondt. Der plockas mogna frukter och af frukten känner man trädet', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 20 June 1894.

<sup>64</sup> Jean Roman, *Paris 1890's* (London, Prentice Hall International, 1963), p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> 'detta sekels solnedgång', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 23 February 1894.

will bury our entire culture. Still its arrival is a necessity, in order for life to start anew'.<sup>67</sup>

Back in Concarneau, Swedlund found himself alone once more. Per Ewert had just passed away, and his other friend, the Austrian Max Kurzweil, was engaged to be married to a local woman. So, over the rest of the summer, Swedlund devoted himself to nocturnal and twilight studies. He was able to work in relative quietude as - per his own account - none of the other artists were interested in these motifs.<sup>68</sup> It is here that Swedlund developed a *modus operandi* which he would continue to apply for several years to come and of which the result would appear in countless sketch books. At the end of the day, when the night began to fall, with it changing all light and colours, Swedlund headed out. Finding a motif that took his fancy, he made small sketches - as accurately as possible in the darkness. Swedlund then returned home and the following morning, based on his sketches and his memory, continued to work on the motif in his studio. He did not use coloured pencils nor pastels for these *plein air* impressions but instead he applied a system of colour-codes to aid his memory in remembering the different tonalities. This preparatory technique, which is actually similar to that found in Félix Vallotton's sketchbooks, is further discussed in Chapter Three.

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<sup>67</sup> 'Der har lifvet hunnit längst fört oss ut i ödemörke. Utan lif, utan skugga, utan spårad väg – tomhet. Tyckte mig öfverallt se att det inte kan gå längre – och ändå kommer det nog att gå mycket längre än – innan den overstörtning kommer som ska begrafva hela denna kultur. Ty den måste komma – och hvarefter lifvet kon börja på nytt', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 20 June 1894.

<sup>68</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 7 August 1894.



Swedlund understood that having the time and space to work on new ideas and develop new routines was of vital importance. He considered himself lucky not to paint out of necessity, needing to produce pretty pictures in order to lure potential buyers. Rather, he enjoyed being an unknown artist, as this freed him from any external pressure and allowed him to work quietly and more importantly, to evolve: 'Not just the technical ability to imitate a motif, as this is not the only thing making an artist, but rather develop myself, my thoughts and my understanding of life, towards establishing a complete personality'.<sup>69</sup> Swedlund's eagerness for development and perhaps also the lack of his usual companions, compelled him to socialise with other artists active in Concarneau. One of these was an unnamed French painter who one day introduced Swedlund to a newly discovered paint technique which guaranteed colours to keep their freshness and intensity over time. Upon seeing a sample of the artist's work for the first time, Swedlund immediately recognised it as the same method used in Greco-Roman mummy portraits, of which examples had been discovered at the end of the 1880s. Swedlund had recently seen these portraits at the National Gallery in London, when visiting his sister Majken there (Fig. 9). Swedlund had furthermore become familiar with art from this period through the lectures of Viktor Rydberg. While the extent in which Swedlund used this encaustic paint technique needs further research, the sense of permanence which was present in the mummy portraits would become increasingly apparent in his own work.

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<sup>69</sup> 'inte bara förmågan att efterbilda, ty det är inte bara den som skapar konstnären, utan mig sjelf, mina tankor och uppfattning af lifvet till full personlighet', SS. Swedlund to Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 20 August 1894.

The winter of 1894 would be Swedlund's last winter in France. Together with von Stockenström, he spent the holidays in Concarneau and intended to continue his work there. But trouble with his liver halted production completely for a prolonged period of time.<sup>70</sup> Once Swedlund had recovered from his illness, in the spring of 1895, he returned to Paris in time to visit the salons. Together with his friend, the painter Alfred Bergström, he also visited Fontainebleau, to see 'where the new French art had been born' – likely referring to the village of the Barbizon, which had become a centre for *plein air* painting in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup> This excursion marked the end of Swedlund's travels. For even though he would have wanted to prolong his stay abroad and had dreamt of travelling on to Munich, Rome, Belgium, and the Netherlands, he now had to return to Sweden.<sup>72</sup> The circumstances of Swedlund's return to Sweden may serve as an example for Röstorp's theory of the 'myth of the return'. In her research, Röstorp disproves the traditional and still dominant narrative which claims that in the 1890s, Swedish artists 'returned home with the goal of creating national art cultures'.<sup>73</sup> While this may be true for more nationalist-minded artists such as Richard Bergh and Carl Larsson, in Swedlund's case these motives were entirely external and rooted in financial restraints and pressure from his family.

Even though Swedlund felt as if his time was cut short, the three years he spent in France were so formative for his development as an artist that nearly all future

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<sup>70</sup> SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 29 March 1895.

<sup>71</sup> 'der den nya franska konsten föddes', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 25 June 1895.

<sup>72</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 14 June 1895.

<sup>73</sup> Vibeke Röstorp, 'Third Culture Artists: Scandinavians in Paris', in *Imagined Cosmopolis. Internationalism and Cultural Exchange, 1870s-1920s* (Oxford, Peter Lang, 2019), p. 165.

work contains elements of which the origin could be retraced to lessons learned during this period. As such, Swedlund could be described as one of the *gants de Suède*, defined by the artist Georg Pauli as someone 'whose skin was Swedish but who had been modelled and tailored in France'.<sup>74</sup> Here we can compare Swedlund's trajectory to that of Norwegian artist Nikolai Astrup, who spent time completing his training in Germany and France before returning to his own native country. In order to truthfully depict the landscapes of Western Norway, Astrup later sought to undo the lessons learned abroad, in order to arrive at a personal style. Yet his style remained a nuanced dialogue between the personal and the 'other', as argued by MaryAnne Stevens: 'Norwegian and international sources may indeed have provided artistic solutions at critical phases in the evolution of Astrup's art'.<sup>75</sup> In contrast, Swedlund was less concerned with the conflict between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. As will be discussed in later chapters, Swedlund embraced the effect international influences had on his style and ideas, and would strive to imbue his works with a sense of universality, rather than with a defined nationality.

Accordingly, experiments with the synthetist style which he conducted in Concarneau would form the foundation for the visual language of his entire oeuvre. His exposure to works by artists such as Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and Dagnan-Bouveret would be echoed in the thematics of his own work, which would

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<sup>74</sup> Vibeke Røstorp, 'Third Culture Artists: Scandinavians in Paris', in *Imagined Cosmopolis. Internationalism and Cultural Exchange, 1870s-1920s* (Oxford, Peter Lang, 2019), p. 168 – referring to Georg Pauli, *Konstnärsbrev* (Stockholm, Bonnier, 1928), vol I, p. 43.

<sup>75</sup> MaryAnne Stevens, 'Nikolai Astrup: National/International', in *Painting Norway. Nikolai Astrup. 1880-1928*, ed. by Frances Carey, Ian A.C. Dejardin and MaryAnne Stevens (London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2016), p. 41.

become increasingly Symbolist in its nature from the second half of the 1890s onward. The following year, Swedlund would exhibit his works for the first time - marking his self-perceived artistic maturity.

### *The Artist Lost*

'When I was down in France and felt quite abandoned in that heavy, miserable darkness, when I felt most hopeless, and when I thought about Sweden, where the darkness is even more hopeless - I could see a man with light beaming over his head, who came and laid his arm over my shoulder and warmed me with his big, warm heart. He is dead, Tekla.. Viktor Rydberg is dead'.<sup>76</sup> The second half of the year 1895 was marked by gloom. Swedlund had made his way back to Gävle without visiting any of the other places he had been longing to see. The sudden passing of Viktor Rydberg affected him greatly and cast a definite shadow over his first few months back in Sweden. Swedlund had looked forward to meeting Rydberg again upon his return and deeply regretted not being able to show Rydberg how much he had grown and was left with unanswered questions which he had expected Rydberg to resolve. It was with this distraught state of mind that Swedlund then turned thirty, which in turn urged him to reflect on his financial dependency and the apparent lack of notable achievements. He entrusted his sister Tekla - then living in the United States - with his innermost

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<sup>76</sup> 'När jag var der nere i Frankrike och kände mig så der alldeles öfvergifven och ensam i det tjocka jämmerfulla mörkret och längte hem åt på Sverige der mörkret tycktes mig allra mest hopplöst mörkt. såg jag en man med lys öfver pannan som kom och lag armen om mina axler och värmdde mig med sitt stora varma hjerta. Han är dod. Tekla – Viktor Rydberg är död', SS. Swedlund to Tekla Swedlund, November 1895.

feelings: 'I am so empty and dead. Everything has wilted. I am no longer alive. My rightful place is between four planks'.<sup>77</sup> The following year, 1896, Swedlund spent by exhibiting his works and establishing his name in Sweden. First in Gävle, Swedlund organised an exhibition at the Stadshotell together with Ecke Hedberg and Carl G. Sehlberg and together they presented sixty-five works.<sup>78</sup> While a list of artwork titles is all that remains - not attributed per artist - it is apparent that Swedlund exhibited works from Brittany and Palaiseau. As all three artists were natives to Gävle, it must have seemed appropriate to exhibit there. Yet this provincial context also seems like a shielded place to stage one's debut, as opposed to the more critically-reviewed salons of Paris or even Stockholm. In fact, the outcome of this 'separate' model seemed to have been so satisfactory to Swedlund, that he would go on to repeat it on at least five more occasions in the future. However tempting, the term 'secessionist' as used by Robert Jensen is avoided in this context as Swedlund would also continue to showcase his work at the Swedish General Art Association's salons and in a range of different national and international group exhibitions.<sup>79</sup> As such, Swedlund's 'separate' exhibitions were aimed at complementing the traditional systems, rather than opposing or replacing them.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> 'Jag är så tom och död. Allt är visset. Jag lefver inte. Min rätta plats är mellan fyra bräder', SS. Swedlund to Tekla Swedlund, November 1895.

<sup>78</sup> 'En tafvelutställning af Gefle-artister', *Norrlandsposten*, 22 February 1896.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin de Siècle Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 167.

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter Four for a more in-depth analysis of Swedlund's exhibition practice.

In June, Swedlund traveled to Gothenburg to participate in the 1896 exhibition organised by the local Art Association (Göteborgs Konstförening). Georg Pauli, who acted as commissioner for the exhibition, approached Swedlund with praise for the 'good things' he had seen in the exhibition.<sup>81</sup> The ceremony was celebrated with pomp but these festivities were not able to charm Swedlund, who preferred to bypass these altogether and instead paid his respects to Viktor Rydberg's tomb.<sup>82</sup> In Gothenburg, Swedlund was joined by von Stockenström and together with a fellow artist from Gävle, Edvard Westman, the trio made their way to a fishing town situated on Sweden's west coast, named Fiskebäckskil. While they enjoyed a daily routine of bathing, suntanning, sleeping and sailing, they were disappointed with its appearance which Swedlund described as being 'small, grey, and poor'.<sup>83</sup> Eventually, however, Swedlund would grow fond of this place and ten years later he would become fascinated by the setting sun over Fiskebäckskil's coast. One thing that Fiskebäckskil shared with Concarneau (and later Visby on Gotland and the Venetian town of Chioggia too) were the far-reaching, western-facing horizons they provided, thus rendering these places ideal vantage points for the observation of the setting sun on the water's surface. In search for 'treasures of beauty and poetry' elsewhere, Swedlund and von Stockenström traveled inland to Dalsland. But even this region, with its unspoilt landscape rich in pines and dotted with lakes, left Swedlund discontented. Finally, they continued south to the industrial town of Trolhättan, whose mighty waterfalls seemed to have pleased Swedlund, describing this place as 'beautiful, great, and

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<sup>81</sup> 'sa att jag hade sändt bra saker till utställningen', SS. Swedlund to his family, June 1896.

<sup>82</sup> SS. Swedlund to his family, June 1896.

<sup>83</sup> 'Det är smått och grått. Det är fattigt', SS. Swedlund to Majken Swedlund, 21 June 1896.

majestic'.<sup>84</sup> Here Swedlund stayed for a couple of weeks after parting from his companion. They made a vow to meet in Paris, where von Stockenström was traveling to at the end of summer. However, no source material indicates that Swedlund did travel to Paris that year, nor the year after. Instead, the next year was marked by a scarcity of written correspondence indicating that Swedlund spent most of his time with his family in Gävle where there was no need for an exchange of letters.

In the summer of 1897, still in search of inspiration within Swedish borders, Swedlund traveled to Åre. And there, in a little resort town nestled in the Scandinavian Mountains, he found it. One evening while out walking, he was met with a sunset so intensely beautiful that he described it as 'previously only being dreamt of in fairytales'.<sup>85</sup> This discovery urged him to produce a series of landscapes in which the dark night had fallen on the hills below, but the sky above, still bathing in brilliant light, was painted in even streaks of reds, blues and yellows. These paintings can be regarded as a direct continuation on a theme Swedlund studied in Gävle the year before. In *Landfill Outside of Gävle* (INV-0030), the evening sun pierces its orange glare through a dense, shadowy forest. It is possible that Swedlund was inspired to experiment with this effect after seeing comparable works (Fig. 10) by artist Prince Eugen, who had painted similar motifs just a couple of years before. Taking a closer look at the technique, one might also observe that the contrast between the night's sky and the dark

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<sup>84</sup> 'skatter af skönhet och poesi (...) vackert, storortadt, majestätiskt', SS. Swedlund to Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 24 July 1896.

<sup>85</sup> 'som jag trott endast hade lof finnas till i sagor', SS. Swedlund to Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, Per August Swedlund, and Majken Swedlund, 4 August 1897.

trees is found in Alphonse Osbert's allegorical scenes and the small, near-impressionist brushstrokes are reminiscent of those in Georges Lacombe's seascapes of the early 1890s. Comparing this work to that of other Swedish artists, one could recognise the potential influence of the Varbergsskolan, a Swedish art movement established by Nils Kreuger, Richard Bergh, and Karl Nordström. Yet, through their avid admiration of Paul Gauguin, those stylistic similarities could again be retraced to French modern art and as such, Swedlund can be seen as working in a tradition which is both national and international. Whatever framework Swedlund might have had at the time, he had never painted so daringly before and for perhaps the first time in a while, he felt excited about his own work. As Swedlund described an evening working in solitude on the Renfjället peak: 'In that vast silence and that infinite beauty, I rediscovered both myself and the big things which are life's essentials'.<sup>86</sup>

### *The Artist Found*

In the spring of 1898, packed with painting supplies and a newfound vigour, Swedlund could at long last travel south. During a brief stop in Munich he wrote to his sister Bibbi and exclaimed that he had indeed 'risen from the grave' after being 'called back to life by Beauty'.<sup>87</sup> While Swedlund never explicitly defined his personal conception of 'Beauty', it is a term which repeatedly returns in his writing. In this quotation, he attributed to 'Beauty' the potency to resurrect those who are

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<sup>86</sup> 'i den stora tystnad och den oändliga skönheten återfann jag mig sjelf och den stora ting som äro lifvets väsentliga', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund and Tekla Swedlund, 1897.

<sup>87</sup> 'då jag legat år i grafven (...) Skönheten kaller mig till lifvet', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 29 March 1898.



– in a figurative sense – deceased. If one interprets Swedlund’s metaphor of the grave as a period of depression, then ‘Beauty’ can be seen as an expression of the sense of happiness he was aspiring to attain. Swedlund made his way down to Italy, after having dreamt of visiting this country for many years. The spine of the *Baedeker* guide which was found amongst his sketchbooks from this period, suggests that he prepared his travels thoroughly and knew exactly what he wanted to see in each place he visited. In Venice, the Piazza San Marco and the Doge’s Palace left strong impressions. Then in Florence, Swedlund visited the Medici Chapel with its unfinished tomb sculptures by Michelangelo. Full of admiration, Swedlund described these as ‘Michelangelo lamenting his grief, unlike any other before or after him’.<sup>88</sup> By the time he reached Capri together with his ‘playbuddies’ Ecke Hedberg and Wilhelm Smith, Swedlund deemed himself a happy man again.<sup>89</sup> The effect Italy had on Swedlund seemed to have been more therapeutic than anything and he spent his time there by ‘bathing his soul’.<sup>90</sup> While Swedlund sometimes felt guilty for not doing all that much work, he now could feel a sense of accomplishment from being able to derive happiness from simple pleasures, such as taking walks and observing the sun and the colours around him. In fact, of the dated works recorded in the catalogue only one, showing a local scene on Capri, can be assigned to this trip. Instead, Swedlund seemed to have been saving his artistic energy for another place which was beckoning from afar.

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<sup>88</sup> ‘klagade sin sorg så som inga före och heller inga efter honom’, SS. Swedlund to Tekla Swedlund, 5 April 1898.

<sup>89</sup> ‘lekkamrater’, SS. Swedlund to his family, 17 May 1898.

<sup>90</sup> ‘att bada min själ’, SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 29 March 1898.

By July, Swedlund had left the Mediterranean and traveled up to Paris together with Smith and Hedberg, where they met with von Stockenström. Eventually Swedlund parted from his travel companions and continued his solitary journey north, to the actual destination of his travels: the Belgian city of Bruges. As Facos has noted on artists in Bruges during this period: 'Bruges' timeless beauty and melancholic stagnation captivated artists and writers. Once a prosperous and beautiful Hanseatic port, five hundred years later it lay desolate, its economy decimated by the recession of the sea'.<sup>91</sup> After the 1892 publication of Georges Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-morte*, the city had become a place of pilgrimage, captivating the interest of Symbolist painters far and wide.<sup>92</sup> Thus far it is unclear whether Swedlund had actually read Rodenbach's novel, but it is extremely likely that he had read a work titled *Brügge* by Oscar Levertin, an influential contemporary Swedish aesthete and critic. In 1895, Levertin published an ode to the city in the form of a piece of poetic prose in Swedlund's beloved *Ord och Bild* magazine and in 1898 the same piece was republished in Levertin's *Diktare och drömare (Poets and Dreamers)*. It is also possible that Swedlund had seen the works of Swedish artist Olof Sager-Nelson, who had returned to Stockholm with his own depictions of Bruges that same year. Another possible motive behind Swedlund's interest in Bruges, were the Nabi painters whom he surely had encountered in Paris and who also admired that small medieval city in the north and may have recommended Swedlund to travel there.<sup>93</sup> Or perhaps his

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<sup>91</sup> Michelle Facos, *Symbolist art in context* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, University of California Press, 2009), p. 78.

<sup>92</sup> For an in-depth discussion on Swedlund's relationship to the Symbolist movement, see Chapter Three.

<sup>93</sup> Based on a Swedlund family anecdote.

admiration for the Bruges-born Frank Brangwyn aided to strength the city's appeal. After all, he had wanted to return to Belgium as early as 1895. Whatever the reason, one could say that the town, in its picturesque desolateness, appealed to Swedlund in a similar way in which Visby and Concarneau had intrigued him before. As Daniel Prytz has commented on Swedlund's presence in Bruges: 'It is as if he fully embraced the very soul of the place - genius loci - in his very dark, almost ominous, depictions of the city's imposing facades, often rendered in a twilight bordering on complete night, with only small glimmers of light provided by, for example, the city's swans'.<sup>94</sup> Swedlund settled at Oude Burg 11, at the very heart of the city and at only a stone's throw away from the various places and motifs which he would soon be painting.<sup>96</sup> Aided by the little black card with an adjustable opening in the middle (Fig. 11), Swedlund hunted for interesting motifs. 'Much of the world's beauty has been caught through that window', he would later explain.<sup>97</sup> Here, the term 'beauty' is used by Swedlund in a more literal sense. To grasp what he understood to be the 'world's beauty', one can find it defined through the motifs he chose to depict on paper and on canvas. Not only the architecture of Bruges captured his gaze. So too did the animals and people which inhabited the city, appearing on hundreds of pages across several sketch books. The swans and women which silently grace his canvases from this period may come across as rudimentarily shaped at first. But really these figures

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<sup>94</sup> Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén and Anna Meister, *Symbolism & dekadens* (Stockholm, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, 2015), p. 112.

<sup>96</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 14 August 1898.

<sup>97</sup> 'mycket af jordens skönhet har varit i den gluggan', SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 13 March 1899.

are the outcome of countless studies of their form and character until finally Swedlund managed to transform them into archetypes of themselves (Fig. 12).

After the summer, Swedlund briefly traveled to the Netherlands to see the 1898 Rembrandt exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. The exhibition, consisting of 124 paintings and 350 drawings and etchings, had a profound effect on Swedlund who sung the Dutch master's praises upon his return.<sup>98</sup> This admiration appears to have been enduring, as is evident from the 'Kunstwart mappé' folio of Rembrandt reproductions which was only published a couple of years later and which was posthumously found amongst Swedlund's possessions.<sup>99</sup> During the same trip, he also visited the Dutch towns of Vlissingen and Middelburg.<sup>100</sup> Over the following winter, Swedlund headed back to Stockholm where he was soon joined by Hedberg, Smith, and the recovering von Stockenström. Swedlund was able to temporarily rent Anshelm Schultzberg's spacious studio and home on Mäster Samuelsgatan in Stockholm. Once he settled in, Swedlund wasted no time and at the beginning of 1899 he was hard at work with his studies from Bruges which had previously not been translated to large canvases as Swedlund never managed to find a suitable studio there.<sup>101</sup> All work was done with the annual exhibition of the Swedish Artist's Association in mind.<sup>103</sup> The exhibition turned out to be a great success for Swedlund as he received accolades for his paintings from Bruges. Fuelled by this positive

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<sup>98</sup> SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 1898.

<sup>99</sup> Kunstwart, *Meisterbilder fürs deutsche Haus* (München, Callwey Kunstwart-Verlag, from 1900 onwards).

<sup>100</sup> SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 1899.

<sup>101</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 19 August 1899.

<sup>103</sup> In Swedish: 'Sveriges Konstnärernas Konstförening'.

validation from his peers, Swedlund returned to Bruges almost immediately, determined to expand this particular body of work and make Bruges entirely his own. Following his instinct would prove to be a fruitful act as only a couple of months after the exhibition, the Gothenburg Museum of Art acquired *The Desolate House, Bruges* (INV-0122) and the Art Association for Southern Sweden acquired *Town Gate in Bruges*. It is also around this time that Swedlund started the practice of copying his own work and certain motifs from Bruges exist in up to four nearly-identical canvases. On a practical level, it enabled him to cater to commercial demand for the more popular motifs, and it allowed him to continue to exhibit those paintings which had already been sold. Some copies were made decades apart from one another, suggesting that Swedlund might have worked with large preparatory drawings from which he traced the composition. But the repetition of certain motifs also calls to mind the oeuvre of Edvard Munch. Munch not only reprised his subject matter to serve commercial or practical ends, he often did so with artistic purposes. As he noted on this practice: 'there was always progress, too, and they were never the same - I build one painting to the last.'<sup>104</sup> In his own, later practice, Swedlund would refer to works painted in these type of series as being 'variations', further underscoring their uniqueness.<sup>105</sup>

Back in Bruges, Swedlund started to look for new views, reject old ones which had lost their magic, and revisit others which still held his imagination as they had during his first visit. One of the latter was Havenhuis de Caese, which he named 'the desolate house', with its windows still shuttered upon return. Onto this

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<sup>104</sup> Oslo, Munch-museet, an undated letter from Edvard Munch to Axel Romdahl, MM N3359.

<sup>105</sup> As per the autograph inscriptions on the reverse of the painted works.

building, he bestowed his love and gratitude and every day he paid it a visit. 'There lives my poetry and the joy which I once found in painting it. Joy, in particular, that I can be alone in my affection for it. All over town there are painters but 'the desolate house' always stands alone and forsaken'.<sup>106</sup> At least one other painter, however, would also discover the beauty of this boarded-up facade and later return to install his easel on exactly the same spot across the canal. Frenchman Henri Le Sidaner had briefly visited Bruges in 1898 and came back to stay for a longer period in 1899. Le Sidaner was taken by, as Camille Mauclair described it in 1928, the 'mysticism, nobility, and the silent life behind the walls and beneath the water'.<sup>107</sup> But the city offered plenty of other prepossessing and alluring sights for those in search of them - and Swedlund soon shifted his gaze to another facade which he aptly named 'the quiet house' (INV-0116).

As before, long-lasting spells of rain and cold weather made it a challenge for Swedlund to work *en plein air*. Yet his spirits were lifted as he learned about the acquisition of *Town Gate in Bruges* and as he received a visit from Smith, who was passing through Bruges after he had received a grant to travel to Spain and Africa. The pair, lovingly referred to as 'the brothers' by their friends, traveled to picturesque Mechelen, looked at work by Rubens in Brussels, and visited the Van Dyck exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp.<sup>109</sup> They also visited the coastal towns of Ostend and Nieuwpoort, where Swedlund made sketches of the

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<sup>106</sup> 'Der bor min poesi och min målarglädje från i fjor och min särskilda glädje är att jag får vara ensam om min kärlek. Öfverallt i stan sitter målare (...) – men det stängda huset står alltid ensamt och öfvergifvet', SS. Swedlund to his family, 1 September 1899.

<sup>107</sup> Camille Mauclair, *Henri Le Sidaner* trans. by Andrew Rickard (Canada, Obulus Press, 2019), p. 10.

<sup>109</sup> SS. Swedlund to Tekla Swedlund, 17 November 1899.

church's interior. One day, as autumn rolled into winter, Swedlund and Smith woke up to find their city covered in a white veil. 'In the snow the rattle of carriages and the clatter of wooden shoes generate no sound. I stood almost struck with terror in a city of shadows. You see, I have witnessed the Middle Ages - not in chronicles or in the paintings of Breughel and Memling, but I have stood one morning by the canals and seen it'.<sup>110</sup> Both inspired by this sight, Swedlund and Smith decided to hold off on their respective departures and instead stay on, spending Christmas together. And so it was in this yuletide merriness that Swedlund, quite contentedly, greeted the new century.

The aforementioned term 'brothers', used to describe Swedlund and Smith, is deserving of a sidenote here. It is perhaps tempting to interpret their relationship – and indeed the relationships he kept with Ewert, Hedberg, von Stockenström and Hjortzberg too – through a twenty-first century lens and suppose these were of a homosexual nature (Fig. 13). Indeed, Swedlund always wrote about his friends with great affection, Ewert's suicide affected him deeply, and while in Paris, Swedlund posed nude for von Stockenström.<sup>111</sup> If Swedlund would have self-identified as homosexual, the moral conflict it would have posed, could serve as a viable explanation for the extended periods of depression and, in his own words, unexplainable self-doubt. Yet in the lack of more documentary sources on this topic and the later, contradictory correspondence with Frida Billberg, it is

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<sup>110</sup> 'I snö har vagnarnas rassel och träskors klamp inga ljud. Jag står nästan slagen med skräk i en stad af skuggor. Förstår ni jar har sett medeltiden – inte i gamla kröniker eller på Breugels och Memlings taflor utan jag har en morgon stått vid kanalen och sett honom', SS. Swedlund to his family, 18 December 1899.

<sup>111</sup> SS. Swedlund to Tekla Swedlund, 20 June 1894.

probably more fitting to attempt to understand these relationships within their own time and milieu. As Mathias Skaset and Bjorn Hatterud have perspicuously described the nineteenth century phenomenon: 'The period was characterised by a clear segregation between men's and women's spheres. This led to a flourishing of intimate friendships between people of the same sex'.<sup>112</sup>

The following year was an equally successful one for Swedlund. He returned to Stockholm and again exhibited at the Swedish Artist's Association's exhibition where he and Smith presented their new works from Bruges in a dedicated section. One reviewer remarked: 'Many of Swedlund's small-sized works – his *The Old House*, and for example *On the Canal*, carry more artistic weight than many of the exhibition's largest canvases'.<sup>113</sup> They continued to make special note of the fact that both Swedlund and Smith made use of Bruges' gas lights to enhance the historic beauty of its architecture. In the exhibition consisting of more than 200 works, only nine were acquired by the Swedish General Art Association including one work by Swedlund.<sup>114</sup> This must have had a reassuring effect for Swedlund, who would enter a particularly prolific period. Now unable to stay in Sweden for any period lasting longer than a few months, Swedlund headed south again.

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<sup>112</sup> Mathias Skaset and Bjørn Hatterud, 'Intimate Interiors' wall text at *Queer Gaze*, 2022, KODE, Bergen.

<sup>113</sup> 'Flere af Swedlunds små bitar – hans >Det gamla huset< t. ex. eller hans >På kanalen< - väga i konstnärligt hänseende tyngre än många af utställningens större dukar', 'Svenska konstnärernas förenings åttonde utställning', *Aftonbladet*, 7 April 1900, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> 'Sveriges almäna konstförening', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 10 April 1900, p. 2.



Together with Hedberg, he first traveled to Copenhagen and then on to Paris, where Swedlund visited the world's fair. What impressed him most was a pavilion showcasing sculptures by Auguste Rodin, including his *The Burghers of Calais* which left Swedlund in complete awe for this master.<sup>115</sup> In Antwerp, the pair parted ways and a lone Swedlund returned to his beloved Bruges. He was met with disappointment as things were not exactly as he left them. During his absence, unworthy 'barbarics' had wandered through Bruges' cobbled streets and even the shutters of the 'Desolate House' had been opened - with it expelling the dream which had taken residence there in Swedlund's imagination. This idea of projecting one's ownership over the world around us calls to mind Rodenbach's protagonist who, according to Facos, 'observes an interconnection between the human and the inanimate things that surround it'.<sup>116</sup> But as was becoming a custom for Swedlund, despair was again quickly replaced by an impulse of inspiration. This time it was a waterside house clad in paint 'as red as drops of blood' and caressed by a wreath of vines. Swans drifted silently across the black water of the canal. In reference to this painting he wrote to his father: 'I want to make art now - as deep as the riddle of human life itself'.<sup>117</sup> A couple of months later Smith, on his way back from Tunisia, rejoined Swedlund in Bruges and together they formed a small community which included three unnamed female painters from Sweden.<sup>118</sup> It is on this third visit that Swedlund began to outgrow

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<sup>115</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 17 June 1900.

<sup>116</sup> Georges Rodenbach, *Bruges-la-morte* (Paris, Marpon & Flammarion, 1892), p. 20. As referred to in Michelle Facos, *Symbolist art in context* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, University of California Press, 2009), p. 78.

<sup>117</sup> 'Jag vill göra konst nu – djup som manniskolifvets gåta', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 8 August 1900.

<sup>118</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 2 December 1900.

Bruges. And according to his own logic, 'when a place starts to feel too small it is time to move on elsewhere and be grateful for what it has offered you'.<sup>119</sup> It is also around this time that Swedlund began to exhibit internationally, first at the 1900 *Große Berliner Kunstausstellung*, and then at the biennale in Venice in 1901, where - likely pleasing to Swedlund - Rodin exhibited his *The Burghers of Calais*. Although it is unclear whether Swedlund actually attended the biennale, Italy was becoming an increasingly important focal point, marked by his visit in 1902.

After commencing his Italian sojourn in Rome, Swedlund soon changed coasts and settled in the town of Chioggia instead. Initially at Calle Vianelli 679 and later in an old palazzo at Calle Gabardi 104, with views of the Venetian lagoons on one side, and Padua's mountains on the other. Here he was again accompanied by Smith. Baedeker's *Handbook for Travellers*, of which Swedlund possessed a copy, described Chioggia in 1896 as 'an ancient and picturesque town at the end of the lagoons, with 31,218 inhab., mostly employed in the fisheries, (...) founded before Venice, by which it was soon conquered'.<sup>120</sup> While at first sight Chioggia must have seemed to be an odd choice for a painter, given the proximity to Venice with all its intricate architecture and famed art collections, one could say it made sense to Swedlund. Not only were living costs much cheaper in Chioggia, it was also infinitely less crowded with tourists. And the fishing town lent itself to endless opportunities for Swedlund's growing interest in painting sunsets. Still today, one

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<sup>119</sup> 'det som är smått ska vi lämna – tacksamma för hvad det gifvit', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 16 November 1900.

<sup>120</sup> Karl Baedeker, *Baedeker's Northern Italy* (London, Williams & Norgate, 1896), p. 321-322.

finds far-reaching, uninterrupted views of the sunrise over the Gulf of Venice to the East. And to the West, one catches the setting sun, with its reflection perfectly mirrored on the surface of the sheltered lagoon. Painting the light of Italy was one of Swedlund's primary occupations during his time there and from Chioggia he wrote: 'Now I am painting the sun. It has taken me a while to get into those colours - as it is really the dusk which resides in my blood from birth'.<sup>121</sup> After the sun had set however, the narrow and dark streets of the old town also succeeded in recapturing Swedlund's imagination. Reminiscent of Bruges, sketches from this period also feature canals, bridges, and cloaked figures. Here, Swedlund painted a series of paintings where the only light was sourced from a single street lamp or spilled out on the street from the window of a tavern. Using Chioggia as a base, Swedlund and Smith traveled all over Italy in search of colour and light. There was, for example, Assisi's Basilica of Saint Francis which - according to his own account - made all the riches of Rome wane in comparison. As well as the Pontine Marches and its ancient ruins, which Swedlund visited on at least two occasions. Yet in the end it was indeed Rome and its campagna where the pair spent most of their time away from Chioggia.

The extent of Swedlund's knowledge of the Italian language is thus far unknown, but the lack of any correspondence written in Italian might point to the lack thereof. Instead, Swedlund socialised amongst the local Swedish community while he lived in Rome. He celebrated Christmas with friends at the *Circolo*

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<sup>121</sup> 'Nu håller jag på och målar sol. Det har gått långt om för mig att komma in i de färgerna – skymningen ligger visst af födelsen i mitt blod', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 2 November 1902.

*Scandinavo* and rented Olle Hjortzberg's studio. Swedlund also met Frida Billberg, a Swedish expatriate and board member of the aforementioned organisation. Their lasting friendship, which was romantic in its nature, can be traced along a profusion of correspondence as well as a series of paintings featuring Billberg (INV-0257).<sup>122</sup> While previous visits to this city had not born rich fruits, in the spring of 1903 Rome laid itself out more graciously for Swedlund. Copious new ideas circulated in his mind and as he worked on multiple pictures at the same time and struggled to finish all of them, he referred to these ideas as 'stampeding one another'.<sup>123</sup> One of the results from these stampeding ideas, are Swedlund's capriccio-like works, in which features found in reality are mixed together with imaginary elements. An example can be found in *The Temple* (INV-0009), which shows an antique structure standing solitarily against a coastal backdrop. While the picture depicts a fantasy, Swedlund copied the temple's architecture from *The Temple of Diane* - which stands in the park of Villa Borghese. The park, which Swedlund referred to as his 'kingdom', was only a short distance from the top-floor dwelling at Via della Vite 11 where he resided at the time. An even more subtle example of these constructed visions can be found in a canvas painted in Chioggia the same year (INV-0141). The particularly intense shade of red Swedlund used to depict the ship's mast, is identical to Vittore Carpaccio's rendering of the cloak of St. Paul's cloak in a painting hung in

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<sup>122</sup> In the context of this thesis, I have not accessed Circolo Scandinavo's letter archive, held at the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm, nor studied the full extent of letters sent by Billberg to Swedlund.

<sup>123</sup> 'De trampa hvarandra ihjel', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 23 June 1903.

the San Domenico church (Fig. 14) - located just a stone's throw away from the depicted harbour scene.<sup>124</sup>

After having spent the summer of 1903 in Rome, Swedlund headed back to Chioggia where he was almost immediately taken ill with an inflammation of the liver, constraining him to his bed for several months. Frida Billberg was there to take care of the painter by cooking him meals, translating doctor reports, and keeping his family abreast of his condition. With Swedlund's condition not really improving, Bibbi and Gucku traveled down to Chioggia to assist with his recovery - which was extensively reported on back home in the Swedish press, underlining both the gravity of the situation and Swedlund's relative status as a social figure.<sup>125</sup> Not until January of 1904, when Swedlund finally seemed to be on the mend, did Bibbi reveal that their mother had passed away a month earlier.<sup>126</sup> Swedlund returned to Rome (this time he lives at Via Liguria 26 and later in 1904 at Via San Giuseppe 2 Capo le Case) to further his recovery using the local baths. Once Swedlund could paint again, he traveled to Montefiascone together with Hjortzberg.<sup>127</sup> It was the town's view of Lake Bolsena, in particular, which held his interest, as he made at least ten depictions of it. The following year, these works were exhibited in the first of a series of 'separate' exhibitions which Swedlund organised together with Smith and Hedberg.<sup>128</sup> Swedlund did not travel back to

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<sup>124</sup> For a more elaborate discussion of Swedlund's capriccio-like landscapes, see Chapter Three.

<sup>125</sup> 'Svenskarne i utlandet', *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, 2 December 1903.

<sup>126</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 13 January 1904.

<sup>127</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 25 July 1904.

<sup>128</sup> For a more detailed description of nature and impact of these exhibitions, see Chapter Four.

Stockholm for the proceedings however, and instead he read the positive reviews as they were sent to his address in Italy.<sup>129</sup> Nor did he travel to Munich, where he exhibited eight (mainly Italian) works at the 1905 exhibition in the Glaspalast and where his participation earned him a gold medal - arguably the highest reward he would receive during his lifetime. This string of well-received exhibitions had a reaffirming effect on Swedlund, who enjoyed seeing his success unfold from afar.

### *An Established Artist*

During the course of 1906, the success of the Stockholm exhibition was repeated in Gothenburg, Lund, and Malmö. Reviews were encouragingly positive and these exhibitions also resulted in actual sales.<sup>130</sup> Swedlund also participated in international group exhibition in Berlin and Budapest.<sup>131</sup> This need to exhibit fell very much in line with a general trend and calls to mind what James M. Kaplan wrote in reference to the 1904 St. Louis *World's Fair*, in which Swedlund too was a participant: 'The turn of the last century was the high point of what was called in Swedish "utställningsraseri", the extreme vogue for vast international expositions'. This term was quickly followed however, by another one: 'utställningströtthet' (exhibition fatigue).<sup>132</sup> While Swedlund did not always make the effort of attending his exhibitions, he understood the importance of displaying his work and as such engaging with his audience. A second marker of this chapter

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<sup>129</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 9 March 1905.

<sup>130</sup> 'Konstinköp', *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 15 October 1906.

<sup>131</sup> It is not certain if this is the same work which won Swedlund the gold medal in Munich.

<sup>132</sup> James M. Kaplan, 'Anshelm Schultzberg. At the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair', *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, 2011, p. 1.

of Swedlund's life was his enduring eagerness to travel freely, which he could likely do in a more independent manner now because of his relative commercial success and possibly an inheritance upon his father's death in 1908. But with the passing of Swedlund's parents, so too disappeared a valuable source of information found in their correspondence. It is here that Swedlund's own voice, his sharp tongue, and his melancholic reveries slowly start to fall silent and the seemingly inexhaustible letter archive finally begins to exhaust itself. This leaves us to reconstruct events based on third-party accounts: the correspondence he received from others, newspaper articles, word-of-mouth, and of course the oeuvre itself. What we know about his travel movements is that Swedlund occasionally returned to familiar places. In 1907 he returned to Bruges, in 1908 and 1909 he spent time in Paris, and as late as 1924, Swedlund visited Rome and Pompeii, in addition to Germany in 1919 and 1922.<sup>133</sup> Yet within the oeuvre, it is the Swedish landscape which has dominated Swedlund's output from 1909 onwards. In the red plastered walls of Gripsholm Castle, on the outskirts of Stockholm, he found an enchanting model for a series of allegorical canvases of the castle's architecture basking in the evening sun. Then, in the years surrounding the First World War and resulting from the impact it had on his ability to travel abroad, Swedlund painted Stockholm. The series of intensely dark canvases produced at this time, show Stockholm in its gaslit, nocturnal quietude. Then, thirty years after his first encounter with Visby, he rediscovered this ruined, medieval beauty and with it the very particular light of Gotland. The works produced on Gotland could be regarded as the crescendo of his artistic

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<sup>133</sup> SS. Postcards and travel visums.

development, as seen both from a stylistic and thematic point of view. Yet in the latter half of the 1920s, Swedlund - now in his sixties -, pushed this development even further, resulting in a late body of work which somewhat differs from the rest of the oeuvre in the extremity of the flattening depictions of their motifs. As none of the recorded works are dated past the year 1930, they form the conclusion to Swedlund's artistic output. But while productivity eventually halted and the exhibitions he participated in grew few and far between, a new opportunity arose.

### *A Museum Director*

While Ernest Thiel had made his fortune with banking, it is the vigour with which he built his art collection that he would become best known. From 1902, Thiel embarked on a collecting spree that would first centre around artists of the Artists' Association but soon also include artists of international renown such as Auguste Rodin, Gustav Vigeland, and Edvard Munch. He commissioned Ferdinand Boberg to design a home which would house this collection, and the result of this commission still stands today in a quiet corner of the Djurgården island. What is more, the collection amassed by Thiel still resides within its walls. For in 1924, after Thiel had lost his fortune, the mansion and its contents were sold to the Swedish state and soon thereafter opened as a public museum. Tor Hedberg had been its first director after the government's acquisition. But when he passed away in 1931, the gallery was in need of a new figurehead. Several candidates were considered, amongst whom were the editor and art historian Karl Wåhlin and the politically-engaged publisher Edvard Alkman. Ultimately the board



members decided Swedlund was the best candidate to take on the role as the Thiel Gallery's keeper and Swedlund, whose artistic career had come to its curtain call, gladly accepted the offer.<sup>134</sup> While the appointment was applauded amongst artistic circles, it was not welcomed by everyone. The *Swedish Daily News* made it their front-page news story: 'The painter Pelle Swedlund is, as far as we know, a blank page in museum affairs, and the public may hope that the board with this surprising choice has acted in the general interest and not merely in its own'.<sup>135</sup> The following day, the same newspaper continued to criticise the board's decision more furiously: 'All we know about Pelle Swedlund is that he enjoys a good reputation in older artistic circles, that he is represented by one painting in the National Museum, painted in the late 1890s, and that he is a discreet and cultivated man. However, the same can be said, with some slight variation, of quite a few others. One could have hardly imagined that the board would lower its standards to such an extent'.<sup>136</sup> The board did not change their mind however and in 1932, Swedlund took up residence at the Thiel Gallery. Although the criticism must have added a bittersweet note to Swedlund's appointment, in the end he proved them wrong by successfully completing a 15-year long tenure. What this reporter perhaps failed to grasp, is that Swedlund was

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<sup>134</sup> Ulf Linde and Nina Öhman, *Thiel's Gallery*, (Stockholm, Hjalmarson & Högberg Bokförlag, 2010), p. 104.

<sup>135</sup> 'Målaren Pelle Swedlund är, såvitt man vet, ett oskrivet blad i museala angelägenheter, och allmänheten får hoppas, att styrelsen för det överraskande valet haft allmängiltiga och icke blott personliga skäl att stödja sig på', 'Ny intendent vid Thielska Galleriet', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 28 October 1931, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> 'Det mesta man vet om Pelle Swedlund är åtnjuter ett got anseende inom äldre konstnärskretsar, att han är representerad med en tavla på Nationalmuseum, målad i slutet av 90-talet, och att han är en försynt och kultiverad man. Detsamma kan emellertid med någon liten variation sägas om rätt många andra – man hade knappast tänkt sig att stiftelsens styrelse skulle i så hög grad sänka anspråken', 'Allmän förvåning', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 October 1931, p. 4.

in fact more than capable of curating a collection of paintings and organising exhibitions. Artists of Swedlund's generation, especially in Sweden, did not have dealers to rely on for logistical or economical support. During Swedlund's career, every exhibition he participated in and every sale he made were the results of his own efforts. Two years after his appointment, Swedlund became a board member of the National Association for the Visual Arts<sup>137</sup> and when Sir Anthony Eden makes a diplomatic visit to Sweden, Swedlund guided him through the galleries.<sup>138</sup> During the Second World War, Swedlund managed to safeguard the museum's collection by storing it in underground vaults beneath the Skansen zoo, located on the same island as the gallery. After the declaration of peace in 1945, the works were brought back out into the daylight and Swedlund oversaw the rehang and reopening of the museum.<sup>139</sup> One year later, when old age was tapping the 81-year old Swedlund on the shoulder, he resigned from his post and passed on the baton to fellow artist Akke Kumlien. That same year, the County Museum of Gävleborg in Swedlund's hometown of Gävle honoured Swedlund with a retrospective exhibition of his works and the acquisition of two paintings. On 13 February 1947, Pelle Swedlund passed away. At his funeral, Frédéric Chopin's *C-mollpreludium* played and was followed by Cesar Franck's *Paris Angelicus*.<sup>140</sup> And as the coffin was carried out of Gävle's Old Cemetery chapel, the sounds of Emil Sjögren's *Legend* probably reached the nearby family tombstone which Swedlund had designed himself upon the passing of his

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<sup>137</sup> In Swedish: 'Riksförbundet för Bildande Konst'.

<sup>138</sup> 'Besök på Thielska galleriet och Nationalmuseum', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 October 1934, p. 17.

<sup>139</sup> 'Thielska Galleriet öppnas på nytt', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 25 July 1945, p. 4.

<sup>140</sup> 'Jordfästningar', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 20 February 1947, p. 12.

parents. Kumlien laid down a wreath on behalf of the Thiel Gallery and remarked in his eulogy 'You preferred true words over great words. Yet while devotion to duty and wholeness of character are great words, they are also true when they are said of you'.<sup>141</sup> The obituary published in the *Swedish Daily News* read: 'He (Swedlund) had the fortunate ability not to be corrupted by the rush and the restless pursuit typical of his time. He could not be coaxed by life's comforts but instead preferred to, thoughtfully and quietly, concentrate on his work'.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> 'Du älskade inte de stora orden men de sanna. Om hängiven pliktuppfyllelse och helhet i karaktären äro stora ord så äro de dock sanna när de sägas om Dig', Stockholm, The Thiel Gallery, Transcript of the eulogy given by Akke Kumlien on the occasion of Swedlund's funeral on 19 February 1947.

<sup>142</sup> 'Han hade en lycklig förmåga att ej låta sig smittas av tidens jäkt och ävlan, han knappade hellre av på fordringarna på livets behag för att i besinning och ro få sköta sitt värv', Erik Lindberg, 'Pelle Swedlund in memoriam', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 February 1947, p. 9.

## Chapter Two: Style and Technique

*Swedlund is the painter of soft and mild hues of the evening; he is not always entirely confident in their rendering, but where he succeeds, he speaks to the heart.*<sup>143</sup>

This chapter sets out to increase our understanding of the style and technique used by Swedlund in his painted works, and the evolution thereof. While records of contemporary critics describing Swedlund's work have survived, largely in the form of exhibition reviews in newspapers, these are often limited both in depth and scope. And although several posthumous studies also do exist, these too usually tend to focus on a single work, or more commonly on a single period in his oeuvre, such as the time he spent in Bruges. This lack of more all-encompassing studies may have contributed to Swedlund's modern reputation as simply a painter of Bruges. This chapter provides an opportunity to expand on those previous studies by not merely discussing Swedlund's paintings in fragments, but instead by examining a selection of works in the context of his entire oeuvre. A comparison of the works is made possible, or in any case much easier, by having assembled a preliminary catalogue of recorded works: Appendix 1. Assembling this catalogue has enabled me to examine Swedlund's output as a whole, resulting in the ability to identify what appear to be the key moments in his painterly development. It is important to already note here that

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<sup>143</sup> 'Swedlund är de vecka milda aftontönernas målare, han är icke alltid säkar i deras återgivande, men där han lyckas, talar han till hjärtat', K.W. (Karl Wählin), 'Från Stockholms konstvärld', *Göteborgs Handels- Och Sjöfartstidning*, 10 March 1905.

the evolution in Swedlund's work can hardly be described in a straightforward, linear manner. Swedlund, as many other artists throughout history, worked on parallel planes throughout most of his career. One moment he embraced the experiment and development of new techniques, and the next he harked back past styles and even replicated old motifs. Therefore, I have opted to describe Swedlund's style and technique in a number of sections, each revealing the artist taking a particularly big leap towards new stylistic ideas as well as technical experiments which were made with notable ardour.

These specific moments in Swedlund's career only receive their pivotal character when viewed within a chronological order. While non-dated works are also considered in passing, I have decided to focus primarily on those works which were dated by the artist himself and those of which the date can be established with near certainty. This allows me to demonstrate how certain of Swedlund's ideas were developed over long periods of time and also alongside one another. By no means an exhaustible analysis of Swedlund's work, the following sections simply give way to overarching perspectives on a forty-year long career. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first in-depth attempt of its kind. In addition to a stylistic investigation of the artworks, this chapter also include further details on Swedlund's life and as such can be regarded as an extension to the previous biographical chapter.

### *The Human Figure as Medium for Early Experimentation*

While Swedlund's landscapes were sometimes animated with human figures in the form of anonymous silhouettes, their presence hardly ever took centre stage and instead they supported the overall composition or the general atmosphere of the picture. There are those exceptions however, where figures have been elevated as to become the very subject of a work. As seen from a chronological viewpoint, the majority of these depictions gravitates towards the beginning of Swedlund's career. For a discussion of the artist's early artistic development, it is therefore possible to use those works as a case study to illustrate how the young artist was honing his craft and looking at the world around him, at the ready to incorporate new ideas into his own work.

In 1890, while Swedlund was studying at the Royal Academy in Stockholm, he painted a study of a male nude. The prominent addition of his signature suggests that, although likely intended purely as an academic assignment, Swedlund must have been proud of his achievement. It is both a study of anatomy and a study of light and shadow. Swedlund showed us that by this moment in time he had mastered both, as well as the principles of perspective. The model, who is seen from a rather challenging lower and sideways angle, has turned his face away from the viewer - allowing for maximum emphasis on the anatomy of his back. In *Male Nude* (INV-0075), the model's hand rests on its waist while its thumb gently presses into its skin. It is perhaps this small detail which most renders the whole

into a believable likeness. When taking a closer look, we can see how this apparently fine study is actually made up of relatively broad brushstrokes. It appears that Swedlund used the same brush to depict the subtle play of shadows on the model's back, as he used for the three large colour surfaces which provide the model with a space to stand in. In years to come, Swedlund would continue to use thicker brushes and focus on colour and tone rather than precision in form. As such we see the many colour nuances making up the model's skin. Swedlund gave special attention to the earthy tones in the subject's neck, face and ears, reddened by the sun and with this detail one could argue that the study nearly becomes a portrait. Whether or not Swedlund was aware of it at the time, by emphasizing those details he took a step into the long-standing Naturalist tradition. The sitter became a subject, and one starts to think about their social circumstances, its sunburnt skin possibly the result of outdoor, manual labour. Swedlund's biggest achievement with this picture lies in the way he was able to translate his astute observations by a subtle use of colour, with it elevating an academic study into a work of art.

The next dated work brings us to France, two years after completing *Male Nude*. While no works made in Paris nor Palaiseau seemed to have survived, Swedlund had certainly not been inactive. Likely referring to the works produced during this particular period, he would later write to his parents: 'When I come home, I shall bury those works which I no longer wish to see. (...) I am actually ashamed of almost all of it', and more specifically, '(the works) from the Palaiseau period,

when I was dumb and moreover was using bad paint'.<sup>144</sup> Several of the works Swedlund painted in the Breton town of Concarneau did survive however. These works show the first traces of Swedlund's artistic trajectory towards a personal style and while this trajectory is rarely linear, it can be said that the observations made in Brittany would inform all future work in some shape or form. First, let us consider *Woman in Concarneau* (INV-0073), painted in 1894 and depicting an elderly woman seen in full-length profile. With this picture, Swedlund continued his efforts along the tradition of French naturalist painting. The preceding year, he had experienced an impassioned reaction at the Salon when standing eye to eye with Dagnan-Bouveret's peasant woman of *Dans la prairie* (Fig. 8).<sup>145</sup> But while the thematics and the atmosphere exuding from *Woman in Concarneau* to some degree corresponds to that one found in Dagnan-Bouveret's works, stylistically and compositionally speaking, Swedlund was looking at other examples. In the spring of 1894 while again visiting the Paris salons, Swedlund visited a solo exhibition consisting of around forty works by Edouard Manet, 'a master who has exerted - and rightly so - a great influence on modern art, which will probably still be felt long into the future'.<sup>146</sup> Swedlund did not mention any specific works by Manet in his letters but one painting which he could have

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<sup>144</sup> 'När jag kommer hem sjelf, ska jag nog begrafva hvad jag inte längre vill se (...) Jag skäms nämligen för nästan alltihop (...) Från Paleseau-tiden då jag var dum och förrestenhade dåliga färger', SS. Swedlund to Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 1 September 1895.

<sup>145</sup> For a more detailed description of Swedlund's interpretation of Dagnan-Bouveret's *Dans la prairie*, see the comments in Chapter based on Nina Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe. 1870-1910* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 39.

<sup>146</sup> 'En mästare som utöfvat – och med rätta – ett stort inflytande på modern konst, hvilket nog kommer att skännas ännu långt in i tiden', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund and Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 2 May 1894; and *Manet*, 1894, Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris.



possibly seen is *A Matador* (Fig. 16).<sup>147</sup> This full-length, life-sized portrait of a bullfighter certainly bears compositional similarities to *Woman in Concarneau*, which Swedlund would paint in the months that followed. In both works, the background has been reduced to a nondescript, infinite space while the figure itself is painted in a naturalistic, yet spontaneous manner. In its sheer compositional and tonal sombreness, *Woman in Concarneau* also calls to mind the paintings of Diego Velázquez. Of the printed reproductions of this artist's oeuvre, which were posthumously found amongst Swedlund's possessions, the print of *Infante Don Carlos* (Fig. 16b) is perhaps most illustrative of the Spanish artist's influence.<sup>148</sup> When taking a closer look at the figure of the elderly woman, one can discover a contouring line of brilliant blue around her headdress and collar, and even subtler around her hand and the edges of her clogs. This technique, harkening back on the theory that daylight is not purely white but also blue, is a lesson taken from the impressionists. Swedlund may have seen this technique used by Manet, who used cobalt blue and cerulean blue to visualise the reflection of incoming light on, for example, the black velvet of a subject's dress. A particularly relevant example of this effect can be found in the artist's *Corner of a Café-Concert* (Fig. 16c) in which Manet glazes the white sleeves of the depicted waitress with translucent strokes of blue.<sup>149</sup> And despite the broad brushwork of the collar of the woman's dress, more akin synthetist techniques,

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<sup>147</sup> *A Matador* (1866-67) was purchased by Durand-Ruel in March of 1894 but only exported from Paris to New York in the autumn - rendering it likely that Swedlund would have seen it during his visit to Paris at the end of April.

<sup>148</sup> The reproduction was posthumously found amongst Swedlund's possessions and is now held in a private collection.

<sup>149</sup> David Bomford and Ashok Roy, 'Manet's 'The Waitress': An Investigation into its Origin and Development', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 7, 1983.

her face and ultimately the overall effect of the picture are of a naturalist nature. If *Woman in Concarneau* reveals Swedlund looking back to the past, then the work *The Old Woman at the Stairs* (INV-0008), can be seen as Swedlund taking a step into the future.

Do these two works form diptych-like companion pieces? The different mediums and dimensions surely contradict this theory, but still it is difficult to disregard the possibility that these works relate to each other, possibly depicting the same figure - hands tucked away in the apron, standing slightly hunched over - in the same place and in the same moment, as seen from opposing viewpoints. One recognises again the ultramarine outline skirting the human figure as well as the top of the balustrade. Finally, the placement and style of the signatures on each painting respectively could form another argument to say that these two works were made *in tandem*. But for all the similarities between both works, there are also fundamental differences. One figure is lit by a light source coming from behind the artist, while the other is back-lit by a flow of daylight coming in from a window overlooking the landing. This simple element transposes the focus away from the woman and towards the space she is standing in. While the figure still occupies a large part of the canvas, it is now her context we are trying to understand and give meaning to. Who are the figures seen through the door at the bottom of the staircase? Is the old woman looking at them? The composition lends itself to an imagined narrative, more than *Woman in Concarneau*. Yet it is the different manner of presentation, rather than the symbolic interpretation, that lends the present picture its feeling of modernity. With *The Old Woman at the*

*Stairs'* large colour surfaces, contoured shapes and flattened space, Swedlund fully partook in the new synthetist direction pioneered by Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard. One of Swedlund's acquaintances in Paris was Swedish sculptor Ida Ericson.<sup>150</sup> Together with her husband, musician William Molard, Ericson opened up her home to many prominent Scandinavian artists, writers, and composers. Paul Gauguin, who lived just upstairs from the Ericson-Molard family, had painted Molard's portrait in 1893 and incorporated a reference to the couple's daughter, Judith, in his work *Annah the Javanese*. Still, the respective friendships between Ericson and Gauguin and Swedlund do not prove the two men actually met. But the fact that Swedlund was in possession of a collection of woodcuts from Gauguin's *Noa Noa* series, which he subsequently took with him upon returning to Sweden, does indicate that he was at least familiar with the latter's work.<sup>151</sup> Even without this knowledge, the present picture in itself attests of a gentle nod to the hooded figures found in Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon* (Fig. 17).<sup>152</sup>

The productive summer months Swedlund spent in Concarneau were preceded by a period of self-doubt and desperation. Earlier in 1894, while Swedlund was living in Paris, his artistic anguish took the form of an imaginary demon living in his studio. In a letter addressed to his sister Bibbi, he wrote: '(the demon) jumps up on my shoulder and, with a satanic grin, whispers in my ear about my

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<sup>150</sup> SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 1893.

<sup>151</sup> Based on verbal accounts of the Swedlund family.

<sup>152</sup> *Vision of the Sermon* has also been referred to in relation to the present work in Michel Descours, 'Bretonne dans un intérieur, Concarneau, 1894', <<https://www.peintures-descours.fr/oeuvres/bretonne-dans-un-interieur-concarneau-1894-2378>> [accessed 17 November 2021]

weakness, which then echoes many times from walls of my atelier, covered with my poor studies, each one repeating shamelessly “weak”, “wretched”. All that I have made is miserably bleak, dead. I take them all down to avoid confrontation with this sorrow’.<sup>153</sup> In just a matter of a couple of months however, Swedlund managed to turn his situation around. He later mentioned *The Old Woman at the Stairs* as having ‘certain merits colour-wise’.<sup>154</sup> This seemingly modest description in fact defies the extremely self-critical tone found throughout his letters from the early 1890s and signifies a substantial leap in Swedlund's self-confidence as a painter. In other words, the stylistic experiments he made in the summer of 1894, provided Swedlund with a new sense of direction during the first years of his artistic career.

#### *Goldfishes in Ink: The Development of a Modus Operandi*

In the middle of the 1890s, Swedlund began to truly devote himself to the exploration of the landscape as a genre and the stylistic opportunities this created for him. While it is true that he had already studied the shores of Brittany in the preceding years, it is upon returning to Sweden that Swedlund really began to use this genre to its full potential in his growing interest in colour harmonies. As described in the previous chapter, Swedlund stumbled upon the beauty of the

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<sup>153</sup> ‘Han hoppar upp på axeln och hviskar med sataniskt hångrin i örat om min ‘vanmakt’, som mångföldt ekor från de med mina arma studier fullsatta atelierväggarna, så hvarende en upprepar skamlöst vanmäktig, ‘uselhet’. Allt hvad jag gjort är eländigt blekt, dödt – Jag plockar ner dem allihop för att slippa se bedröfvelsen’, SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund, 2 January 1894.

<sup>154</sup> ‘och gumman i trappen har vissa förtjänster i färgväg’, SS. Swedlund to Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 1 September 1895.

mountainous landscape at Åre during a family holiday, after he had initially been searching for interesting motifs on the country's west coast and the nearby Dalsland region. Yet, in his quest for that 'vast silence and that infinite beauty', it was not the actual mountains which most captured his interest, but rather the far-reaching horizons and the large open skies that covered them.<sup>155</sup> Swedlund consistently depicted these skies in last stages of nightfall, as it was during those particular moments that they presented themselves in their richest colours. While - according to his own account - the evening light presented itself to him for the first time as a sort of apparition, the manner in which Swedlund depicted it was not the result of divine inspiration, but rather the continuation of ideas already implanted into his mind.

The works painted at Åre are, in fact, all variations on the same stylistic theme which consists of a dark foreground and a light-filled space behind it. This compositional idea did not only present an opportunity for experimentation with strong colour contrasts, it also created a simple but effective illusion of depth. It is very likely that Swedlund saw this technique applied to the landscape in his compatriot's Prince Eugen's 1892 painting titled *The Forest* (Fig. 10). This work, which would prove crucial to the development of the Varberg School's Symbolist brand of nature painting, exudes the melancholy typical of the Nordic National Romanticism painting of the 1890s.<sup>156</sup> Swedlund's own *Landfill Outside of Gävle*

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<sup>155</sup> SS. Swedlund to Bibbi Swedlund and Tekla Swedlund, 1897.

<sup>156</sup> Kristoffer Arvidsson ([http://emp-web-34.zetcom.ch/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultDetailView/result.inline.list.t1.collection\\_list.\\$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=13&sp=Sartist&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=SdetailView&sp=4&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=T&sp=0&sp=SdetailList&sp=0&sp=F&sp=Scollection&sp=l2090](http://emp-web-34.zetcom.ch/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultDetailView/result.inline.list.t1.collection_list.$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=13&sp=Sartist&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=SdetailView&sp=4&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=T&sp=0&sp=SdetailList&sp=0&sp=F&sp=Scollection&sp=l2090)) [accessed 13 August 2022]

(INV-0030), painted in 1896, could possibly be seen as an interpretation of this work. Both works depict a Swedish forest with its trees, already covered in a brown and black darkness, interspersed with bursts of intense, orange light. But while Prince Eugen's *The Forest* presents a more densely populated woodland resulting in a more mystical aura, the trees in Swedlund's work stand further apart. This allows him to shift the focus away from the foreground and onto the contrasting evening sky behind, with its bright colours like goldfishes swimming in ink.<sup>157</sup> Swedlund repeated the exercise from Gävle while in Åre, but there the different topography forced him to rethink his compositional approach. Climbing the mountains to a certain altitude provided him with an open view of the landscape. Trees and sky were no longer mingled, but instead they were separated by this newfound perspective. Here, Swedlund was able to observe the changing evening colours uninterrupted by the forest beneath, which was moved to the lower side of the canvas. Further experiments with these far-reaching mountain views, sometimes led Swedlund to turn the canvas ninety degrees into a vertical position, which adds to the flattening effect. One such work is *Summer Night on Högfjället* (INV-0045), painted in 1897 and illustrative of how Swedlund applied the same stylistic idea to a new motif. While the peak of the Högfjället mountain, with its reflective pools of water, take up two thirds of the canvas, the viewers' gaze is quickly guided to the bands of blue, green and yellow at the top of the picture. With small dabs of his brush, Swedlund was able to portray the specific moment during the earth's rotation when the last rays of sunshine are cast onto the sky, illuminating it in bright hues, seconds before

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<sup>157</sup> Metaphor taken from Truman Capote, *The Muses Are Heard* (London, Heinemann, 1957).

disappearing and ultimately leaving the scene in nocturnal darkness. The intensity of the evening sky is achieved by the offset of the dark foreground, but upon closer examination we find that even here Swedlund's keen eye for colour observation was at work. No mere black paint, but instead a richness of the very darkest shades of umber, cobalt blue, and emerald green. In addition to a contrast in tonality between sky and land, there is also a contrast to be found in the brushwork, as Swedlund opted for more heavy-handed strokes to depict the rock massif and its pools.

The overall effect Swedlund achieved in works such as *Landfill Outside of Gävle* and *Summer Night on Högfället* is in fact not dissimilar to the aforementioned *The Woman at The Stairs*. And as such these works can be regarded as a continuation of his earlier experiments made in Brittany, as much as an echo of the works created by his contemporaries in Sweden. In the subsequent years and throughout his travels, Swedlund repeatedly returned to this particular exercise of dusky foregrounds and colourful backgrounds. By reducing the details of the landscape, which he would do in an increasingly extreme manner as time went on, Swedlund was able to maximise the focus on the works' colour harmonies. And as a result of this continued simplification of form, these works became even more synthetist in their style. A series of landscapes on board made in 1904, illustrates this development. Swedlund found himself north of Rome, in the hilltop village of Montefiascone. This time the altitude led to views of the volcanic lake Bolsena and the mountains that loom over it from the opposite side. While the works in this series are not identical copies of one another, they all consist of the

comparable composition (INV-0038). Each time, the horizontal view of Bolsena is partly obstructed by a ridge at the bottom of the canvas and a large vertical tree under which a bench seats either a single person or a couple. While Swedlund chose to animate the foreground with these black, flattening silhouettes, the whole remains simple and static. With broad brushstrokes, Swedlund reduced the entire scene to a handful of large colour surfaces. The series is reminiscent of early landscapes by his fellow Scandinavian, Harald Sohlberg. In the latter's *Natteglod* (Fig. 18), painted already in 1893, the same composition was used to depict a lake view in Norway as the setting sun transformed its colours. In this example, a black-clad tree also takes up a prominent position in the foreground to create a similar effect. While there is no mention of Sohlberg in Swedlund's letter archive, it is likely that Swedlund was familiar with the Norwegian's work. It is in any case true that both artists were subject to some of the same influences. While studying in Copenhagen, Sohlberg had encountered the work of Paul Gauguin in the home of the artist's wife, and was also familiar with Jens Ferdinand Willumsen, whose works from Pont-Aven he had seen in exhibition.<sup>158</sup> So even if Sohlberg's landscapes would have informed Swedlund's stylistic approach in the Montefiascone paintings, their visual language could in fact be retraced to the same synthetist origins.

Throughout the rest of his artistic career, Swedlund continuously returned to this modus operandi of dark foregrounds and intensely contrasting skies. A series of paintings made on the Swedish island of Gotland in the 1920s form a late

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<sup>158</sup> Øyvind Storm Bjerke, *Edvard Munch and Harald Sohlberg: Landscapes of the Mind* (New York, National Academy of Design, 1995), p. 52.



example, and as such perhaps the apogee of this idea. Swedlund painted at least seven versions of a particular view of the town of Visby and the Baltic Sea beyond. Dominating the composition are the darkly-painted, medieval ruins of the St. Nicolai Church (INV-0160), which serve their purpose of shifting the viewer's gaze toward the bright colours of the twilight horizon. Seemingly solid and heavy, a cloud stretches from one side of the canvas to the other in a single flat, monotonous shape. The extreme blackness in some of these works is the result of Swedlund's application of Ripolin. This unusual, commercial paint popularised at the turn of the century, was sometimes used by artists for its hard and glossy appearance, and often had surface 'wrinkling' or downward dripping as a byproduct. Yet, what these works, and other similar works found in Swedlund's oeuvre have in common, is that the synthetist techniques were utilised to create landscapes with a symbolist atmosphere. For it is not the modernity of the style itself which impresses the viewer most, but rather the intense moods which Swedlund was able to transfer onto the canvas, by using these stylistic principles of simplification of colour and form.

#### *Divisionism: Swedlund's Neo-Impressionist Experiments*

While Swedlund habitually switched between different styles, not all were practiced with the same prolificacy. One stylistic direction of which not many examples are known, but of which those works count amongst his most valuable today, are those in the divisionist style. The earliest known painting in which Swedlund deliberately interprets the pointillist technique in order to achieve a

divisionist effect, was painted in 1893: *The Beggar from Concarneau* (INV-0144). I should note that throughout this section, I will be using the term 'pointillist' to denote the specific technique of using dots of paint to achieve a certain visual effect. The more overarching term 'divisionist' on the other hand, refers to the broader practice of systematically dividing the painting's colour surfaces by varying techniques. This terminology follows Paul Signac's interpretation as explained in his 1899 essay *D'Eugène Delacroix au Néo Impressionisme*.<sup>159</sup> Rejecting the term 'Pointillism', Signac argued that the dot is not indispensable and that divisionist painters often replace it with the brushstroke, the patch of colour, the comma, or even the tessera which gives the canvas such a distinctive, mosaic-like appearance.<sup>160</sup>

Swedlund's apparent caution in using this novel approach in *The Beggar from Concarneau*, perhaps for the very first time, is reflected in the fact that it only covers a small part of the canvas. The full-length portrait shows a Breton man, leaning against his crutch in the middle of an empty street. The otherwise darkened street, and indeed the man himself, are partially basked in the potent sunlight of the late afternoon, coming in from the lower right of the picture and extending the man's shadow towards the left. Swedlund chose to only paint the illuminated section of the road using dabs in shades of yellow and rose-white. This reduced interpretation of the divisionist method may seem trivial at first, but as Swedlund would later return to this technique it is relevant to explore this early

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<sup>159</sup> Paul Signac, *D'Eugène Delacroix au Néo Impressionisme* (Paris, Éd. de la Revue blanche, 1899).

<sup>160</sup> Christophe Flubacher and others, *Mastery of Color? Effusion of Color!* (Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz, 2014), p. 17.

example and determine where he might have first encountered divisionist works by other artists. As we know from his letter archive, Swedlund visited the 1893 salons in Paris. At the Salon des Indépendants he could have seen Paul Signac's *Maisons du port, Saint-Tropez* (Fig. 19), with its dotted harbour scene aglow in the Mediterranean sun. At this point in time, Signac had already taken over the torch from the deceased Georges Seurat as figurehead of this new artistic direction which was continuing to gain a following throughout Europe. One such disciple was the Swiss artist Cuno Amiet, who studied at the Académie Julian at the same time as Swedlund, and in 1893 also was an *émigré* working in neighbouring Pont-Aven. This is to say that Swedlund may have had plenty of opportunities to see and study examples of divisionist art while in France at the beginning of the 1890s. But even in Scandinavia, where artists were ever eager to explore new ways of depicting their northern light, Swedlund could have already seen this technique applied. One example, which is especially interesting in comparison to *The Beggar from Concarneau*, is Edvard Munch's *Spring Day on Karl Johan Street* (hereafter: *Spring Day*) (Fig. 20), painted in 1890. Munch, in turn, had likely seen relevant works by Seurat, Vincent van Gogh and Camille Pissarro during his own stay in Paris, a couple of years prior to Swedlund's arrival. As noted by Emily Braun in respect to *Spring Day*: 'Munch's division of colours does not conform to Seurat's strict method, nor is his application of paint consistent across the canvas. Nonetheless, his Pointillism effectively creates the sense of shimmering light on the open street'.<sup>161</sup> This nonconformist and

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<sup>161</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting, 1880-1910* (New York, Brooklyn Museum, 1982), p. 188.

concentrated application of dabbed paint to depict a street flooded with light, was used by Swedlund to equal effect.

After this singular experiment, Swedlund seemingly did not return to the application of this technique for another fifteen years. During the intervening period in the 1890s and the early 1900s, Swedlund instead opted to concentrate his efforts to the development of a more synthetist style which more closely corresponded to his Symbolist ambitions. Many Swedish colleagues, however, did continue to work towards their own interpretations of the pointillist technique during this time. Amongst these artists Prince Eugen, Nils Kreuger, Gustaf Fjaestad, and Björn Ahlgrensson could be mentioned. But most relevant to our discussion is perhaps Carl Wilhelmson who also had developed his own divisionist style. Swedlund was well acquainted with Wilhelmson and might have taken some cues from this artist. Indeed, they are known to have painted side-by-side when Swedlund visited him in the town of Fiskebäckskil on Sweden's West Coast. So, it is in 1909 that we again encounter works by Swedlund which are somewhat divisionist. Of two motifs, he painted each time a study and a larger version: an interior scene titled *An Old Letter* (INV-0010) and a seascape titled *August Night on the Baltic Sea* (INV-0124). I should note here that the term 'divisionist' is again used broadly. Because while the paint is indeed applied with small dabs of his brush, Swedlund does not at all follow the principles of colour theory and optical mixture in these works. The overall tonality used in his brushwork actually corresponds to the colours as we understand them to be in reality - in line with more traditional manners of painting. Swedlund only used the

blotted technique to fill in large surfaces which visually lean more toward his own, synthetist approach. In the darkest elements of *An Old Letter*, such as the dress of the central figure, the dabs are in fact so large and similar in colour, that they nearly create one monochromatic shape. The rays of the sun, stemming from the horizon and the window respectively, seem to travel away from their source in the form of dabs of paint and slowly dilute across the canvas. Neither work read as synthetist, nor as divisionist. Instead Swedlund arrives at, strangely enough, an effect which appears to be altogether impressionistic. In a laboured attempt - as is evident from the preparatory versions - Swedlund tried to capture the light as his eyes experienced it in the moment, and as the impressionists had done half a century before him. The end result calls to mind the atmospheric cityscapes of Henri Le Sidaner (Fig. 21) who, also influenced by the impressionists and divisionists and inspired by nocturnal Bruges and Venice, achieves a similar technical effect. Another potential source of inspiration for Swedlund's return to this style in 1909, could be traced to his travels to Italy during the preceding years. There, artists such as Giovanni Segantini, Umberto Boccioni, and Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo had developed an Italian counterpart to French divisionism which was at times closely interlaced with Symbolist themes.<sup>162</sup> In any case, Swedlund would increasingly incorporate the lessons learned from the neo-impressionists and indeed the impressionists in his own, sunlit landscapes. In 1911, for example, Swedlund paints a rendition (INV-0103) of the aforementioned *Summer Night on Högfället* using new techniques. The rays of sunlight, and the reflection of these in the mountain pools, are now depicted as thick, systematic

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<sup>162</sup> Christophe Flubacher and others, *Mastery of Color? Effusion of Color!* (Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz, 2014), p. 94.

dashes of paint. These lay on the canvas side-by-side, as Swedlund opted not to blend these into one flat surface. This difference in technique nearly gives the new version, despite its larger scale and later date, the impression of being a preparatory study. As the colour palette was simplified, and the thickness of the *impasto* increased, we are left with a picture exuding a more spontaneous, albeit less mystical atmosphere. Appreciated as these works are today, they play a less prominent role in the entirety of Swedlund's oeuvre as not the experiment in Concarneau, nor its later correlated works, heralded the beginning of a major divisionist period. Instead, they exist as successful but sporadic events which were abandoned just as quickly as they had been initiated.

### *A Brush with Abstraction*

Through experimenting with increasing simplification of form, Swedlund was able to direct his attention to the works' composition and colour harmonies to an increasing degree. Perhaps it is unsurprising then that Swedlund, at times, ended up with a visual language which bordered on the abstract. As a starting point, let us consider one of the works in which abstraction comes most drastically into fruition. *The Red and the Black Gate* (INV-0118) exists in at least three variations, painted as early as 1923 and as late as 1925. Here, the 1925 version is discussed as it is likely the final version and Swedlund deemed it representative enough to include it in the 1929 *Swedish Exhibition* at Musée du Jeu De Paume in Paris. In it, Swedlund placed the viewer before what appears to be a blind alley. With four angular and rigid, monochromatic surfaces, he created a suggestion of two low

gates, set in between of two high walls which vertically extend across the length of the canvas. In the two shapes to the right, minor architectural elements were added in the form of windows. At the rear of this series of shapes making up the spacial foreground, a tree towers over the scene, so imposingly that only a couple of slivers of sky are visible. A slim green band at the bottom of the canvas, representing the grass on the ground, completes the composition and aids the perspective. But Swedlund's manner of representation was indeed stylised to such an extent, that the spectator benefits from knowing the title he gave to the work in order to understand its composition. Yet, upon closer examination we find that the flat colour surfaces of slate gray, anthracite, carmine red, and cobalt blue are painted using different techniques, and as such Swedlund provided us with hints toward understanding the varying materialities of the shapes. The central gate, for example, was painted by using long, vertically-directed strokes of his brush. This suggestion of wooden planks sets a contrast to the neighbouring wall, of which its plastered surface was translated by a painted flatness. The underlying tree too, with its irregular strokes of thick impasto, comes to life by the technique Swedlund applied it with. By stepping closer to the canvas, one is also caught by surprise to learn that the seemingly even colour surfaces are in fact made up of a multitude of different tones. Layer upon layer, Swedlund applied heavy coats of paint which intensify the overall tonality and also provide the painting with an air of robustness. The painting thus possesses a hidden complexity, as is typical for Swedlund. The work only regains its abstract quality by stepping away again from the canvas.

As by now we know that Swedlund was well informed of the artistic developments of his own countrymen, as well as the progress made by his international colleagues, it is tempting to place this picture in a wider context. Purely based on its outward appearance, *The Red and the Black Gate*, immediately calls to mind Henri Matisse's wartime canvases such as his *French Window at Collioure* (Fig. 22). In both of these pictures, the depicted world was reduced to a combination of lines, shapes and colours by using, what Matisse called, 'the methods of modern construction'. By 'construction', he referred to the production of a true compound in which the elements of a picture fit securely together like the parts of a house or a human body.<sup>163</sup> This description certainly seems to correspond well to Swedlund's work. But while it is unlikely that Swedlund had seen the aforementioned work, he must have been at least familiar with Matisse's Moroccan paintings of 1912-13, as *Paysage marocain (Acanthes)* (Fig. 23) found its way into the collection of Stockholm's Moderna Museet already in 1917. What this picture has in common with *The Red and the Black Gate* is certainly its flatness. Because while the viewer understands the imaginary perspective in Swedlund's work, the homogeneity of its incoming light and complete lack of shading, pushes every element right to the canvas' surface.

The earliest occasion at which we can state with near-certainty that Swedlund encountered abstraction in its most recognisable form, was at the 1914 *Baltic Exhibition*. Swedlund, who exhibited eight works of his own making in the exhibition, would have also come across five compositions by Wassily Kandinsky

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<sup>163</sup> Stephanie D'Alessandro and John Elderfield, *Matisse: Radical Invention 1913-1917* (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2010), p. 19.



and one by Hilma af Klint. The subsequent years, as the First World War held its firm grip, Swedlund remained in Sweden. But even there, artists such as Georg Pauli and Gösta-Adrian Nilsson were exploring new ways of painting inspired by cubism, futurism, and abstract art. After the war, Swedlund traveled to Germany three times, first in 1919, then again in 1923 and 1924. He may have been intrigued by what he had seen in the German section of the *Baltic Exhibition*, which included works by modern painters such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Max Pechstein, but also Symbolist artists such as Franz von Stuck and Arnold Böcklin.<sup>164</sup> Appealing as it may be however, we currently cannot attach any significance to these travels until more details of their content are known.

And perhaps it is not necessary to look at external influences at all. It could actually be argued that abstraction already lay dormant in Swedlund's own, earlier work. The execution of some of the works painted in Bruges at the end of the 1890s, for example, renders them almost illegible. Their nocturnal motifs are depicted by covering the surface of the canvas in the very darkest grays, browns, and blacks. When looking at *The Sleep of the Swans, Bruges* (INV-0054) with the foresight of abstraction, one recognises its extreme boldness. The canal's swans, which Swedlund studied obsessively throughout his sketchbooks, are reduced here to their very essential outlines. Their white silhouettes recall, by seemingly floating in a dream-like space of black, green, and burnt Sienna-red, the abstract figures found in Joan Miró's *painting-poems* of the 1920s (Fig. 24).

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<sup>164</sup> *Katalog öfver Baltiska utställningen i Malmö. Konstafdelning* (Malmö, Förlagsaktiebolaget i Malmö boktryckeri, 1914).

As we have established previously, Swedlund often worked on these paintings *en plein air* until the point when the evening had fallen and he could no longer see what was before him. Darkness does abstract one's vision, and as such these works are indeed some kind of abstractions of the visual reality of Bruges. In relation to the oeuvre from Bruges, one critic noted in 1905: 'Swedlund's technique gives me the impression of modern woodcuts in colour, as in such the tones are laid next to each other in planes and these tones resemble paint which has been laid on the drawing, of the paint material rather than of air and light. Already in his older motifs from Bruges - in *The Desolate House* etc. - I imagined to have found something in the style of coloured woodcuts'.<sup>165</sup> So while the origins for Swedlund's simplification of form can be retraced to synthetism and the revival of the woodcut-technique in the 1890s, he did take it one step further still. This exploration of the boundaries between the figurative and the abstract, can also be illustrated by some of Swedlund's sunsets. One example is *Sunset* (INV-0091), in which an undulating stroke of red against variety of horizontal grays forms the only clue of its motif. Or *Sunset over the Baltic Sea* (INV-0034), made out of four horizontal bands of colour in which two peculiarly-shaped clouds cause a sense of unnatural symmetry and with it, losing its credibility as a seascape.

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<sup>165</sup> 'Swedlunds teknik ger mig intryck af moderna träsnitt i färg, liksom i dylika äro tonerna lagda invid hvarandra i planer, och dessa toner ha något af på teckningen lagd färg, af det materialla färgstoffet snarare än af luft och ljus. Redan i hans äldre Brüggemotiv – i 'Det stängda huset' m. fl. – inbillade jag mig finna något af kolorerade träsnitts stil', 'Tre Målare', *Dagens Nyheter*, 8 March 1905.

## *Swedlund's Draughtmanship*

While Swedlund was a student he submitted drawings to be reproduced in *Palettskrap* magazine, and in 1921 he included a drawing in *The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation's* publication, as an accompaniment to a piece of prose he wrote about an old linden tree standing on the family estate at Engesberg.<sup>166</sup> But Swedlund only occasionally exhibited his works on paper. Whenever a work is described as a study in other lists of exhibited works, it is more likely to concern a painting, as certain studies were priced higher than other oil paintings within the same exhibition. This tells us something about the value Swedlund bestowed upon paper as a medium and the role he reserved for drawings within his artistic practice. Swedlund's family archive holds over two thousand sheets of pencil drawings, mostly contained within small sketch books. They reveal Swedlund's many occupations and amongst other things, we learn that he was responsible for the blueprint of the family's tombstone, designed household objects and several pieces of furniture, as well as *ex libris* bookplates on behalf of acquaintances. They show the artist at work, traveling, or sometimes just passing the time. The sketchbooks also provide valuable information in the form of annotations on budgeting, addresses, and precise instructions for the production of picture frames. The majority of these documents however, consists of preparatory drawings for paintings.

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<sup>166</sup> Pelle Swedlund, 'Gamla lind vid Engesberg, Gävle yttre fjärd', *Sveriges Natur. Svenska Naturskyddsföreningens årsskrift*, 1921, p. 162.

These skillful studies formed a key part of Swedlund's methodology and today play an equally important role in the understanding of his oeuvre. What they reveal to the viewer, instantly, is the amount of consideration that went into each painting. Swedlund's broad brushstrokes, which at times can appear spontaneous or even heavy-handed, were in fact only applied to the canvas in the final stages of an extensive process. Swedlund first went searching for interesting motifs. As explained in Chapter One, he did so with his sketchbook in hand and was sometimes aided in this search by a piece of cardboard with a cut-out opening through which he directed his gaze. Next he attempted to accomplish a pleasing composition by making small line drawings of the motif. Swedlund could make as many as sixteen sketches in the planning of a single painting, with varying degrees of complexity. Comparing the drawings with the corresponding paintings, we often find that human and animal figures that were present on paper, were eliminated in the transition to canvas. The simplification of the composition as a whole, was also applied to each individual form. Swedlund studied certain elements separately in order to implement them afterwards in the composition within a process which can be described as the aforementioned 'method of construction'. These elements, such as cloaked figures, horses, swans, windows, and branches to name a few, were sketched over and over again, dispersed across hundreds of pages within Swedlund's sketchbooks. With their increasingly simple forms, it appears as if Swedlund was not only trying to benefit the composition but also to grasp the being or object's very essence by condensing it to its most reductive outlines. Once Swedlund settled on a composition, he made notes on light and tonality. These were of significant

importance because, while Swedlund at times painted *en plein air*, he often preferred to work from the comfort of his studio. And as Swedlund became increasingly focused on the setting sun as a subject, with its typically transient nature, these sketches became a necessity within his practice. Capturing a fleeting moment was, paradoxically, achieved by a process of careful observation in the moment and an unhurried reconstruction in the studio. The letters 'V' and 'K' annotated across the drawings possibly refer to the first letters of the Swedish words for warm and cold. He furthermore added varying abbreviations and numbers to denote the different tonalities he observed (Fig. 25). This exercise testifies to the importance Swedlund attached to the truthful observation of nature. It thus adds another important dimension to the understanding of Swedlund's paintings in knowing that, while they show an extricated version of the world, what we see depicted on their canvas is nearly always rooted in observed reality. The studies which are held in abundance in the family archive, profoundly inform our knowledge of Swedlund's methods and even affect the interpretation of his paintings.

Photography too appears to have been, at times, part of Swedlund's preparatory process. Found amongst Swedlund's possessions, a series of black and white photographs of Stockholm's landmarks served as a model for the series of nocturnal cityscapes he created during the First World War.<sup>167</sup> On several copies, Swedlund used his pencil to draw a raster over the image, which enabled him to accurately transpose it onto canvas. When comparing an image of

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<sup>167</sup> The photographs were posthumously found alongside other belongings of Swedlund and are currently held in a private collection.

*Kungsträdgården* (INV-0268) with the photograph (Fig. 25b) depicting the same scene, it is clear that their composition is identical. Yet Swedlund also reworked certain elements, such as the omission of the gardeners and the passersby, as well as the picture's tonality, which was most likely observed in reality. As a stamp on the reverse of one of these photographs would indicate, these positives were purchased or commissioned from a professional photographer. Yet it is not improbable that Swedlund owned and used a camera himself - as one letter, in which the correspondent expresses their gratitude for Swedlund's photographs of their child, would indicate.<sup>168</sup>

One part of this methodology still remains to be explained however, as Swedlund's practice of repeating motifs theoretically hints at the production of large-scale drawings. For how else was he able to make different versions, sometimes with decade-long intervals, of certain paintings? The drawings in his sketchbooks and those on smaller sheets of paper, helpful as they must have been in preparation for works on canvas, would not have been sufficiently accurate for the replication of those painted works. While no blueprints of this kind have been found or even described, more in-depth technical studies of the paintings and their underdrawings could possibly give way to a better understanding of this particular practice.

In conclusion, the time Swedlund spent in France in the 1890s was of formative importance for his entire career, as the origins of many of his stylistic

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<sup>168</sup> SS. Elodie and Henri (surname written illegibly) to Swedlund, 2 December 1898.

developments can be retraced to that period. His exposure to works painted using impressionistic, naturalistic, and especially synthetist techniques informed his own, early experiments. Those new ideas were implemented and developed with varying scope and at different speeds during the years that followed, resulting in overlaps in time as well as apparent anachronisms in the chronological list of works. Still, the oeuvre which we have inherited from Swedlund certainly forms a coherent entity. This coherence may be attributed to Swedlund's artistic integrity, which he was able to retain throughout the development of his style and technique. 'Paint, not the thing, but the effect it produces', wrote Symbolist poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé.<sup>169</sup> This idea, in my view, brings us one step closer to understanding Swedlund's versatility as an artist. For despite the stylistic diversity found in his output, the 'effect', or 'Idea', which Swedlund wanted to transpose onto the canvas and the viewer, changed little throughout his career. Changes in style and technique were thus never aimed at innovation per se, but rather made with the purpose of finding the most potent manner of projecting the effect onto the visual plane.

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<sup>169</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé on his unfinished work *Hérodiade*, in a letter to Henri Cazalis dated 30 October 1864, as translated in Rosemary Lloyd, *Mallarmé: The Poet and his Circle* (Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 48.

### Chapter Three: An Other World of Beauty or A Symbolist Reading of the Oeuvre

*Do not think that what I have painted until now, fulfils me. I carry within me an other world of beauty.*<sup>170</sup>

When standing before any given painting by Swedlund, our contemporary gaze is quick to identify their Symbolist aesthetic. But is this an accurate observation? The recent exhibitions including works by Swedlund, at Per Ekstrommuseet and at Waldemarsudde, seem to point to the validity of this attribution. But the term itself was not used by Swedlund in his correspondence. Nor did he exhibit together with the prominent Swedish Symbolists from his generation, instead preferring to exhibit with his personal friends, who each worked in distinctly different styles from himself. In the international exhibitions Swedlund participated in, he did so as a representative of Swedish art, not as a disciple of Symbolism. Yet despite this individualistic approach to his own practice, the oeuvre which he produced, attests to an artist working in a very particular framework which appears to be Symbolist in nature. The term 'Symbolism', after all, traditionally covers a wide spectrum of diverse artists, each working within their own intellectual contexts and employing their own, particular style and technique. To avoid any confusion, I note here that I will follow Gustave Kahn's definition of Symbolism, as he formulated it in response to Jean Moréas' 1886 manifesto *Le Symbolisme*: 'As to subject matter we are tired of the quotidian, the near at hand,

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<sup>170</sup> 'Inte skall du tro att hvad jag hittills förråkt måla är det som fyller mig. - Åhnej, jag har inom mig en annan skönhetsvärld', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 29 January 1893.



and the compulsorily contemporaneous; we wish to be able to place the development of the symbol in any period whatsoever, and even in outright dreams (the dream being indistinguishable from life)... The essential aim of our art is to objectify the subjective (the externalization of the Idea) instead of subjectifying the objective (nature seen through the eyes of a temperament).<sup>171</sup> While the term 'Symbolist' was not used in relation to Swedlund's oeuvre until later, Kahn's concept is described by critics – albeit in paraphrasis - already in 1905: 'He (Swedlund) paints his inner fantasies over realistic motifs which may appear quite trivial and, to the eyes of some, insignificant: a gas lamp shining sleepily over a section of an old wall (...) But the simpler the motifs, the more intense and accomplished the mood'.<sup>172</sup> The examples featured in this chapter each contribute to the notion that Swedlund did not merely depict observed reality as it was presented to him. Instead he entered the world around him with certain preconceived, Symbolist ideas and used observed reality as source material to create on canvas a world which was entirely his own.

### *Symbolist Imagery: Reproductions of Puvis, Böcklin and Gauguin*

*Never before had artists been brought up to such an extent on ink, ink with which the philosophers and theoreticians whose works they read so avidly were printed, ink of engravings which gave their imaginations new vision, ink in reproductions in which they found their ideal.*<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Gustave Kahn, 'Réponse des Symbolistes', *L'Événement*, 28 September 1886.

<sup>172</sup> 'Tre Målare', *Dagens Nyheter*, 8 March 1905.

<sup>173</sup> Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists* (Oxford, Phaidon, 1973), p. 11.

While Swedlund was living in France in 1894, his sister Tekla requested him to send a couple of reproductions of famous artworks. In his careful selection of the prints he sent her (or did not send her), he did not only provide an artistic education for his family, but incidentally also provided us with insight into his own artistic value system. William-Adolphe Bouguereau and his work, for example, were to be despised. Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier was not worthy of Swedlund's admiration either, and he only reluctantly sent Tekla a reproduction depicting one of the artist's smoking gentlemen. Jean-François Millet however, that 'god-like painter' was worthy of every praise.<sup>174</sup> And so was Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, whose frescoes at the Panthéon (Fig. 26) Swedlund had seen in person and regarded as 'one of the artist's - and therewith modern art's - best works'.<sup>175</sup> Swedlund continued to describe the pictured scenes from the life of Sainte Geneviève as exuding a simple greatness and radiating with a naive purity. By 1885 Puvis, in spite of his personal reluctance to the term 'Symbolism', had been adopted as a leader by the young men calling themselves followers of that movement.<sup>176</sup> Swedlund's veneration of Puvis' work, and the characteristics which he extracted from it, thus form one parallel between himself and the self-proclaimed French Symbolists. Yet there is another print which appears to be of greater interest in discussing Swedlund's oeuvre, as its influence reappears more evidently in his own work. It hung on the walls of the family's residence in Gävle,

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<sup>174</sup> 'gudafödde', SS. Swedlund to Tekla Swedlund, 20 June 1894.

<sup>175</sup> 'ett af hans och dermed den moderna konstens bästa verk', SS. Swedlund to Tekla Swedlund, 20 June 1894.

<sup>176</sup> Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories. A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, University of California Press, 1994), p. 40.

and that is where it was captured in a family photograph (Fig. 27). The print, which was likely introduced to the Swedlund sisters by their brother in a similar manner to the aforementioned reproductions, shows a work by Swiss artist Arnold Böcklin. Exactly when Swedlund encountered works by Böcklin in person for the first time is unclear. But he likely read Viktor Rydberg's 1894 essay *Något om Böcklin*. In this extensive and lyrical ode to the painter's work, Rydberg literally proclaims Böcklin to be 'the greatest painter of our century'.<sup>177</sup> Given Swedlund's reverence for Rydberg's ideas, it is unsurprising that in the 1890s, parallels between Böcklin and Swedlund's work first began to appear. This admiration was indeed widespread amongst the young generation of European Symbolist artists and, similar to the following of Puvis, by 1893 one could speak of a Böcklin cult. Henrik Hans Brummer has pointed out that Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead* became an especially valued image amongst Sweden's cultural elite: 'Its reproduction was found in the homes of Ellen Key, (August) Strindberg, and many others'.<sup>178</sup> It likely inspired Richard Bergh's 1893 work *Silence*, Oskar Bergman's 1905 work titled *The Sacrificial Grove* and is echoed in Prince Eugen's melancholy-imbued landscapes. The latter had been an early admirer and promoter of Böcklin and also collected reproductions of his work. Prince Eugen was also instrumental in bringing two of the artist's works to the 1897 *Stockholm Exhibition*.<sup>179</sup> There, Swedlund could have encountered Böcklin's 1877 painting titled *Treasure Keeper* and *The Sanctuary of Hercules*, dating from 1884. The Norwegian artist Nikolai

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<sup>177</sup> 'Arnold Böcklin, vårt århundrades störste penselskald', Viktor Rydberg, 'Något om Arnold Böcklin', *Vintergatan. Sveriges författarförenings litteraturkalender*, Stockholm, 1894, p. 205.

<sup>178</sup> Hans Henrik Brummer, *Böcklin* (Stockholm, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, 1993), p. 121.

<sup>179</sup> *Allmänna konst- och industriutställningen*, 1897, Stockholm.

Astrup too, sought out Böcklin's work during his travels abroad and thus we can place Swedlund's appreciation of Böcklin in a particular framework of modern Nordic artists influenced by Symbolist elements found in these works.<sup>180</sup>

The particular print in the Swedlunds' possession, depicting the 1882 original *Heiliger Hain* or *The Sacred Grove* (Fig. 28), shows a curious ritual in which white-cloaked, ghost-like figures approach and kneel before a sacred fire set in a marsh. The reflective surface of the shallow water mirrors the ignited shrine and the autumnal trees which encompass the scene. Through the stems of the trees on the right side of the picture, one can just make out a hint of a classical column, alluding to the presence of a temple. Brought to life by Böcklin's realistic rendering of its natural elements, as well as the processionist movement of the figures, the picture still exudes a great quietude and urges the viewer into a state of introspection. This would have resonated with Swedlund who, through his own work, would constantly attempt to achieve a similar effect. Many of Swedlund's artistic hallmarks can be retrieved from Böcklin's imaginary world: the temple ruins, the hooded figures, the fantastical, stillness in nature, and the solitude of man. Swedlund did not only borrow figurative features from Böcklin, but also adopted certain elements from his style and technique which he used to create similar moods. When discussing Böcklin's *The Isle of the Dead*, one of the nineteenth century's most celebrated paintings, Michelle Facos has noted: 'Compositional simplicity and a restricted tonal range reinforce a sense of stasis

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<sup>180</sup> MaryAnne Stevens, 'Nikolai Astrup: National/International', in *Painting Norway. Nikolai Astrup. 1880-1928*, ed. by Frances Carey, Ian A.C. Dejardin and MaryAnne Stevens (London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2016), p. 32.

and foster reflection, memory, longing, and nostalgia. As with Puvis's *Poor Fisherman*, subject, color, and line convey an ambiance of calm and silence'.<sup>181</sup> These descriptions could have easily been written upon seeing Swedlund's cloaked figures wandering through Bruges or his temple ruins painted in Italy. Facos' coupling of Böcklin and Puvis furthermore underlines the fact that Swedlund was indeed working within a coherent framework of artistic references. Böcklin moreover had a practice of repeating motifs, each time projecting a slightly different mood onto the canvas through changing details such as the season or the time of day. *Villa by the Sea*, for example, exists in five versions painted in the 1870s. The small metamorphoses which exist in between each version, almost give way to an overarching narrative. Are the versions connected to one another and do they form a storyline? This begs the question whether we should re-examine Swedlund's practice of repeating his own compositions. Perhaps there is more to it than merely producing multiple versions for commercial ends. In his determination to create a certain Idea on canvas, Swedlund might have benefitted from doing so multiple times over again, even if the actual changes he made in between each work were only minor.

Finally, there is the aforementioned suite of woodcuts by Paul Gauguin (Fig. 29). Richard S. Field described the context of their production, which took place when Gauguin returned to Paris in 1893, as follows: 'he organised an exhibition of his Tahitian works at Durand Ruel's and he began to write a self-conscious narrative

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<sup>181</sup> Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, University of California Press, 2009), p. 59.

of his two years in Oceania. It was in conjunction with this largely fanciful journal we know today as *Noa Noa* that Gauguin 'conceived the suite of ten woodcuts'.<sup>182</sup> Swedlund could have made his acquisition as early as May of 1894, while visiting the spring salons in Paris, as the suite had been finished by that time. Alternatively, Swedlund may have encountered Gauguin himself upon return to Concarneau that same month. While it is tempting to conjure up the possibility of these two artists meeting in Concarneau - a theory which is supported by the verbal accounts of the Swedlund family - there is no mention of it in the letter archive. What we do know, however, is that Swedlund held onto these woodcuts back in Sweden where they stayed in the family's possession until even after his death in 1947. This underlines the value which Swedlund attached to the *Noa Noa*-suite, perhaps as souvenirs of his journey abroad, but likely also as objects of great artistic significance. As discussed in the previous chapter, the synthetism and Symbolism as practiced by artists such as Gauguin played its part in Swedlund's stylistic development. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that Field's description of Gauguin's *Noa Noa* series could easily be applied to Swedlund's oeuvre from the mid-1890s and onwards: 'In his struggle to preserve the delicate balance between bold, decorative, and subtle suggestive forms, there was an attempt to unite two essential -and often opposed- ingredients of Symbolism'.<sup>183</sup> But one could argue that Gauguin's influence is not only reflected in a visual sense, but also in a correspondence of Ideas. While Swedlund did not cross any oceans in his own travels, he would go on to cast his painterly gaze onto the

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<sup>182</sup> Richard S. Field, 'Gauguin's Noa Noa Suite', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 110, no. 786, 1968, p. 500.

<sup>183</sup> Richard S. Field, 'Gauguin's Noa Noa Suite', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 110, no. 786, 1968, p. 500.

towns of Bruges and Visby in a manner that is similar to Gauguin's visions of Tahiti. To Swedlund and his contemporaries, these places represented exotic or lost worlds, somewhere in between the historical and the imaginary. The character of these places was strengthened or even defined by their histories and the – sometimes imagined - rituals that took place there, whether stemming from Polynesian folklore, catholic devotion, or Viking history. They transcended their everyday reality, and instead one could feel that 'overtones of contemplation, superstition, self-consciousness, and fear impinge on the otherwise idyllic charm of the simple life'.<sup>184</sup> Both Swedlund and Gauguin used these places and the feelings connected to them, as visual representations of their individual Ideas.<sup>185</sup>

### *Mythology*

*What he (Viktor Rydberg) has accomplished in his poems, I dream of accomplishing in art.*<sup>186</sup>

While Swedlund's landscapes most often lack human figures and narrative, a small group of paintings distinguish themselves within the oeuvre by their figurative and allegorical nature. They are canvases featuring frightening but intriguing depictions of, for example *Prometheus* (INV-0260) or the biblical *Job*

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<sup>184</sup> Richard S. Field, 'Gauguin's Noa Noa Suite', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 110, no. 786, 1968, p. 500.

<sup>185</sup> Swedlund also possessed printed reproductions of works by Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, Jacob van Ruisdael and Diego Velázquez. As these image relate more to Swedlund's stylistic development, they are discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>186</sup> 'Han har i dikten förverkligat hvad jag drömmer om i konsten', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 22 July 1893.

(INV-0204). Or more joyous scenes such the classical-inspired *The Galley* (INV-0223), with its bacchant figures joyfully congregating around a tree, luring in a passing ship. Here, I will try to identify some of the source material for another three of these rare works and attempt to derive to which extent these are part of a Symbolist tradition.

One pictorial element which first appeared in Swedlund's work in the late 1890s, is the swan. In the depicted cityscapes of Bruges, these winged animals perform a compositional role as unassuming figures of white, set against pools of black. They furthermore aided the desired effect of creating an atmosphere of peacefulness and inner contemplation, in a similar way to the swans occupying fellow Bruges-visitor Olof-Sager Nelson's *Princess Maleine* (Fig. 30) of 1895. Also other Scandinavians, who had not visited Bruges, used swans in their work to express a sense of purity, stillness, or magic. Finnish Symbolist painter Magnus Enckell let his nude youths first serenade (Fig. 31) and later even battle these mystical birds. In Edvard Munch's *Vision* (Fig. 32) from 1892, the swan is used to almost emphasize the state of mind of the central figure, who's head is the only part of her body seen above water. At the beginning of the twentieth century, John Bauer created a series around the theme of the *Swan Princess*, while Hilma af Klint used contrasting black and white swans in several of her compositions. Historically throughout Europe, swans had featured prominently in art, with many nineteenth-century artists such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, Gustave Moreau, Paul Cézanne, and Odilon Redon continuing the long-standing tradition of interpreting the legend of *Leda and the Swan*. Böcklin, whose influence on



Swedlund and other Scandinavians should not be underestimated, populated the waters of his Elysian landscapes with these white birds. The performing arts too, gave prominence to the figure of the swan. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* underwent a revival after the 1895 production of the Imperial Ballet, and the storyline for Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* was based upon the medieval tale in which its protagonist's boat is pulled forth by swans.

Despite the popularity of the theme, one could argue that the image of white swans is so interwoven with the city of Bruges, that their presence in those paintings should not be given an in-depth reading. However, when Swedlund produced *Swan and Sun* (Fig. 33), it becomes evident that he was indeed aware of the allegorical weight these animals could carry. This undated, mixed-media drawing may be a preparatory sketch for a painting, as a work titled *The Swan* is listed on leaflets of 1905 and 1906 exhibitions. Here, he did not draw from nature, but instead depicts a vision entirely made up in his own mind. The animal is elevated to be the principal subject of the painting. It is no longer docile in its movement and no longer abstracted in its form. The swan flies across the foreground and only shares the sheet with a golden disc and a bright blue background. While it is possible that the disc represents the moon, I will assume here that Swedlund depicted the sun. The combined presence of a swan and the sun then immediately opens up the interpretation of a mythological scene. Was it not Phaeton, son of Apollo, who allowed himself to ride his father's sun-chariot, ending in a fatal plunge towards the earth? And did Zeus not transform Phaeton's lover Cynus, lamenting over his grief, into a mute swan? With this narrative in

mind, the picture, despite the dominant position of the sun, suddenly becomes imbued with melancholia and the feeling of unattainable or lost love. Swans furthermore play a significant role in Norse mythology, being mentioned in the *Poetic Edda*, and even become active participants in different Germanic stories as transfiguring swan-maidens. Swedlund would have also been familiar with these sources through the writings and lectures of Rydberg. Or perhaps Swedlund was alluding to the words of poet Bo Bergman who, heavily influenced by the writings of Charles Baudelaire, wrote of clouds as 'gliding past like white swans on heaven's lake. But they are silent as they move, for swans sing only when they die'.<sup>187</sup> Although this drawing may appear unassuming at first, Swedlund selected this romantically-charged motif as it corresponded to a certain idea or mood he wished to convey to its viewers. When shifting back to the works painted in Bruges, now with *Swan and Sun* informing our gaze, one could argue that, although swans are omnipresent in the city's canals, Swedlund made a conscious decision to include them on the canvas in his aim to amplify the pictures' Symbolist character.

Another allegorical work (INV-0195) depicts a knight in armour, astride his rearing horse. The dragon-like beast on the other side of the canvas is forced to the ground by the knight's impaling spear. The scene is set against a backdrop of spindly trees which one may associate with Rome's pines, but equally with the windswept trees found along the waterways outside of Bruges or the Stockholm archipelago. An orange glow fills the pictorial sky, perhaps alluding to the

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<sup>187</sup> Set to music in 1903 by Wilhelm Stenhammar in the song *Adagio*.

breaking of dawn. As far as we know, this picture exists in three different painted versions. Exhibition leaflets of 1914 and 1917 mention a work titled *The Knight* and in the latter it was categorised as being a work from Bruges. It is then plausible to identify the knight, or at least the motif's origins, as one of the Middle Ages' most venerated figures: Saint George. Indeed, depictions of this saint and his legendary slaying of the dragon are to be found throughout the medieval remains of Bruges in the shape of stone-carved architectural details and oil paintings by the Flemish Primitives. Swedlund furthermore made sketches of horses during his stay in Bruges which possibly served as preparatory studies for *The Knight*-series. Another reference to this tale is found in poet and author Verner von Heidenstam's *Sankt Göran och Draken*, which was coincidentally published in 1900. Heidenstam first appeared in Swedlund's letters through the character of Hans Alienus, the protagonist in a novel of the same name. Within Swedish literature, *Hans Alienus* took in a similar position as the novel *À Rebours* by Joris-Karl Huysmans, which in turn spurred an entire generation of French Symbolist authors and artists. Both poetic novels revolve around themes of decadence and degeneration, as illustrated by their respective protagonists who are each the last of the family line. One could therefore, albeit in a circuitous way, draw a parallel between Swedlund's admiration of Heidenstam and the Symbolists' following of Huysmans. If Swedlund indeed made visual a reference to Heidenstam's new publication, then he was acting in a comparable fashion to his French counterparts who used allegorical imagery to transpose their Ideas onto canvas.

One could also argue that the knight's armour hints at a more ancient retelling of the tale. Taking into account Rydberg's influence on Swedlund's intellectual world, the correspondence to Norse mythology is not one which would have escaped Swedlund when selecting this motif. The tale of the dragon-slaying hero Sigurd is one written about by Rydberg in his 1887 *Our Fathers' Godsaga* and in more detail in his 1886 *Teutonic Mythology*. The same story was already popularised throughout Europe by Richard Wagner's character Siegfried in the *Ring-cycle* of the 1870s. In reference to the founding of *La Revue wagnérienne* by prominent Symbolists in 1885, the magazine's co-founder Édouard Dujardin has been quoted saying: 'Wagner was one of the masters of Symbolism (...) It was impossible to go to the heart of Wagnerism without encountering Symbolism'.<sup>188</sup> Whether Swedlund was prompted to implement this motif into his oeuvre by way of historic Bruges, Heidenstam, or interpretations of Norse mythology, it is clear that Swedlund was exposed to and aware of its potential source material, which was rooted in a distinctly Symbolist atmosphere.

The aforementioned cultural references make it possible for the dragon-slaying knight to be understood as a metaphor. A poignant example is Carl Larsson's 1886 cartoon (Fig. 34), in turn based on the statue of St George by Bernt Notke which is found in Stockholm's Old Town twice: as the wooden original of 1489 and as a bronze copy of 1912.<sup>189</sup> By adding a couple of inscriptions referring to

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<sup>188</sup> Édouard Dujardin, 'La revue musicale', *La Revue wagnérienne, Wagner et la France*, 1923, p. 149.; quoted in James H. Rubin and Olivia Mattis, *Rival Sisters. Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism. 1815-1915* (Farnham & Burlington, Routledge, 2014), p. 153.

<sup>189</sup> A postcard of Robert Haglund's depiction of the same motif was found amongst Swedlund's possessions.

the different art organisations in Sweden, its message was quickly understood: the new *garde* prevailing over the established order. So while the motif itself hails from Symbolist origins, it could possibly have been employed by Swedlund as a private metaphor. This idea stems from a letter which Swedlund wrote from Bruges in 1900, addressed to his father, in which he described himself as 'riddaren af penselen' or 'the knight of the paintbrush'.<sup>190</sup> Following this train of thought, we could interpret the hero as the artist, and the victorious defeat of the dragon as a metaphor for Swedlund's overcoming of his artistic self-doubt of preceding years. As such, Swedlund would have used mythological imagery to visualise a deeply personal concept, again objectifying the subjective in the process. The importance Swedlund attached to this series can be understood from its inclusion in the 1914 *Baltic Exhibition* in Malmö - underlining its representative quality within his oeuvre.

In *The She-Wolf of Rome* (INV-0033), Swedlund transports the viewer to an imagined landscape. Set within far-reaching, undulating hills of emptiness, we come across a solitary bronze statue atop an imposing, stone pedestal. In the distance, the setting sun disappears behind a mist of dark clouds. The statue is that of Rome's *Capitoline Wolf* who, according to Roman legend, found and suckled the abandoned infant twins Romulus and Remus. The twins were then taken into the care of a local shepherd and grew up to become leaders of their community. In a course of events first described as early as the third century BC, Romulus would have gone on to kill his brother Remus before ultimately founding

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<sup>190</sup> SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 2 December 1900.

the city of Rome on the Palatine Hill. During one of Swedlund's numerous visits to this city of which the first took place in the late 1890s, he would have encountered a bronze rendering of the *Capitoline Wolf* in the collection of Musei Capitolini. This sculpture, consisting of a bronze she-wolf originally believed to be Etruscan, and with the figures of the suckling twins added during the Renaissance, served as a model for the statue in Swedlund's painting. The painting exists in at least two different versions, each of similar size. In one version, the sculpture is unmistakably based on the original bronze, while in the other, Swedlund abstracted its form to a greater extent. Another difference between the two canvases lies in their tonalities. While one is painted in overall cooler tones of green and gray, the other shows the same scene but doused in a darker, sultrier palette. The earliest recorded reference to these works is a 1917 exhibition leaflet.

While the models for Swedlund's sculpture and pedestal are to be found in reality, the depicted scene only came together within his own imagination.<sup>191</sup> The technical approach is similar to *The Temple*, in which he isolated the Temple of Diana from the gardens of Villa Borghese and transferred it to another setting. Yet, while this structure is less well-known, resulting in a motif which appears to be more of a universal archetype of a temple, the motif of the she-wolf and twin infants is so referential for the city of Rome, that the viewer is immediately transported to that particular place. The effect is nearly surreal, as the viewer finds oneself in an unspoilt Roman Campagna, before a tribute to a city which

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<sup>191</sup> The two circular plates on the pedestal are possibly based on the plinth supporting the *Statue of Giordano Bruno* at Campo de' Fiori in Rome.

never seems to have been built. Or has it disappeared? Swedlund confronted us with a 'lieu de mémoire', or a 'site of memory', as coined by Pierre Nora.<sup>192</sup> It is a monument for collective remembrance of an event from the past. But taken out of its original context, the sculpture confuses us. This imaginary setting, which simultaneously is recognisable and unrecognisable, becomes a place of ambiguity and mystery. Older, comparable examples of the same concept are to be found in the *capriccios* of artists such as Claude Lorrain and Giovanni Paolo Pannini which show landscapes conceived by a conflation of real and imaginary architectural elements and ruins. Swedlund furthermore possessed a printed reproduction of Jacob van Ruisdael's *The Jewish Cemetery* (Fig. 34b).<sup>193</sup> In this picture, the same principle was applied as it consists of a pastiche of two different sites placed within a third, imaginary setting.<sup>194</sup>

The landscape itself is somewhat evocative of the image brought to life by Rydberg in his *La Campagna di Roma*: 'a wilderness stretches out in all directions - to the azure slopes of the Appenines, to the Alban mountains and the sea', and further on in the same text: 'These districts, one may during certain months of the year travel over, almost without meeting a human creature'.<sup>195</sup> Rydberg also continued to describe these hills as a 'lonely' place and it is exactly this desolate mood which exudes from these paintings. A Swedish critic recognised this in

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<sup>192</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, p. 7.

<sup>193</sup> The reproduction was posthumously found amongst Swedlund's possessions and is now held in a private collection.

<sup>194</sup> Ernst Scheyer, 'The Iconography of Jacob van Ruisdael's *Cemetery*', *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, vol. 55, no. 3, 1977, p. 133-146.

<sup>195</sup> Viktor Rydberg, *Roman Days* trans. by Alfred Corning Clark (London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1879), p. 314.

Swedlund's painting too when he noted: 'Swedlund has lived in the sunny and colourful climes of the south, but an unmistakable touch of the north's melancholy, of the Germanic fascination with the mysterious, still prevails in his work'.<sup>196</sup> The fact that Swedlund purposefully conceived certain melancholic moods while painting in Rome, can be derived from one of his letters. During a particularly productive period in 1903, Swedlund wrote: 'I am working on an old fountain, which stands in the twilight, sloshing about underneath tall trees. Rome is the city of singing water and this is the third fountain. It sings for my old gods: loneliness and quietude'.<sup>197</sup> This excerpt confirms once more how, on canvas, Swedlund interlaced the surrounding visual world with his own emotions and thoughts. Every selection from reality and subsequent adaptation of it, was made to support a specific sentiment. Swedlund used the sculpture of the *Capitoline Wolf* because he knew any viewer would have made the association to by-gone classical antiquity and the romantic ideals that are attached to it. Exhibiting this work under the title *The She-Wolf of Rome* furthermore underlines the importance of its mythology to Swedlund.

### *The Symbolist Landscape*

Many Symbolist artists turned to painting landscapes as their primary means of expression. And even those who were more prolific in other genres, such as figure painting, still often used the landscape in addition to their main practice. The

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<sup>196</sup> 'Swedlund har lefvat i söderns soliga och färgstarka nejder, men ett omisskännligt drag af nordbons melankoli, af germanens spörjande inför det gåtfulla hvilat dock som förhärskande öfver hans arbeten', RK, 'Erik Hedberg, Wilhelm Smith och Pelle Swedlund', *Stockolms-Tidningen*, 6 March 1905.

<sup>197</sup> 'Så håller jag på med en gammal fontän som står i skymningen och sqvaler under höga träd. Rom är de sjungande vattnens stad. Detta är den tredje fontänen – sjunger för mina gamla guder: ensamheten och tystnaden', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 12 June 1903.



theory behind this successful marriage between Symbolism and landscape painting has been described as follows: 'It (landscape) is within the experience of all of us; we are used to responding to nature - the liveliness of sunshine, the power of a storm, the melancholy of twilight, and so on. Thus landscape provided the raw material for the artist to use with precision or nuance, simplification or distortion, to manipulate mood'.<sup>198</sup> Portrayals of the landscape were especially prevalent amongst Symbolist artists and writers in the Nordic countries. For these were citizens of nations with a vast, sparsely-populated countryside and also long histories of biocentric beliefs amongst its peoples. So in their aim to evoke a certain mood or Idea within their audience, landscape painting could be a particularly powerful and effective medium for artists of the north.

Examples of Swedlund's own affinity for the natural world can be found in two articles he submitted to the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation's publication, respectively in 1913 and 1921.<sup>199</sup> Both texts of prose centre around the old trees on the Engesberg estate, of which some were cut down when its new proprietors took over in 1911. The text from 1921, accompanied by a drawing in pencil (Fig. 35), serves here as a case in point for Swedlund's biocentrism, as understood through its detailed description and the personification of nature:

*At the far end of Engesbergsviken, where the country road through Källgrind on the high bank of the river winds into Sältan towards the old farm - now cleared of the several hundred-year-old maple trees - stands alone a giant linden tree (Tilia europæa par-vifolia), surveying across the bay and the sunset, over the passing centuries and successive generations. On gnarled roots which - like claws - clench into the hard,*

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<sup>198</sup> Richard Thompson and others, *Van Gogh to Kandinsky. Symbolist Landscape in Europe 1880-1910* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2012), p. 13.

<sup>199</sup> Pelle Swedlund, 'De gamla lönnarna vid Engesberg. En sköftad hemidyll', *Sveriges Natur. Svenska Naturskyddsföreningens årsskrift*, 1913, p. 130-132; Pelle Swedlund, 'Gamla lind vid Engesberg, Gävle yttre fjärd', *Sveriges Natur. Svenska Naturskyddsföreningens årsskrift*, 1921, p. 162-163.

*clay-mixed gravelly soil, rises the mighty trunk, opening at its western base into a great conch and ascending its magnificently pronounced skeleton to an imposing height and width. At breast height, the trunk measures 6 metres and 65 centimetres in circumference. The leaves are small, cold dark-green, their underside a silver-grey. The folded and furrowed bark has the colour of a church's old, oxidised silver. The entire tree is cavernous - high up in its coarsest branches, an empty shell - and should have been so for generations. Yet it stands and defies the storm. It blossoms and gives of a scent even in its old age with life's impressive fullness and splendour. In the stillness of midsummer, it pours forth waves of fragrance, and in its great crown resounds a thunderous chorus of the murmuring buzz of millions of wings. The mighty tree exudes power and a sense of victory like a greek statue.*<sup>200</sup>

But while the above excerpt dates from 1921, the natural landscape already featured prominently in Swedlund's oeuvre throughout the 1890s. This period seemed to have been an exceptionally fertile time for the development of Swedish landscape painting, and many artists spent great efforts on trying to capture the country's light, which they found to be unique. This trend has been described by Kirk Varnedoe in his *Northern Light*: 'Young Scandinavian artists directed their attention beyond their traditional training centers in Northern Europe, chiefly

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<sup>200</sup> 'Längst in i Engesbergsviken, dar landsvägen genom Kälgrind pa hög strandbank svänger in over Sältan mot den gamla gården - nu skövlad pa de flerhundra-åriga härliga lönnarna - står ensam en jätte-lind (*Tilia europea par-vifolia*) och skådar ut over fjärden och solnedgången, over seklers och släktleds växling. Pa knotiga rotter, som kloligt gripa ner i den hårda, lerblandade grusbänken, stiger den mäk-tiga stammen, öppnande sig vid basen åt vänster till en väldig snäcka, och reser sitt praktfullt utbildade skelett till im-ponerande höjd och om-fång. Stammen mäter vid mans bröst höjd 6 meter och 65 centimeter i omkrets. Bladen äro små, kallt mörkgröna, på undersidan silvergrå. Den veckiga och fårade barken har färg som gammalt mörknat kyrksilver. Hela trädet är ihåligt - ett tomt skal högt upp i de grövsta grenar - och torde varit så sedan generationer. Men det star och det trotsar stormen. Det blommar och doftar ännu i sin sena ålderdom med livets imponerande fullhet och prakt. Det utströmmar i högsommarens stillhet vågor av vällukt, och i dess väldiga krona genljuder en dånande kör av miljoner vingars mumlande surr. Det mäktiga trädet utströmmar kraft och seger-känsla som en grekisk staty', Pelle Swedlund, 'Gamla lind vid Engesberg, Gävle yttre fjärd', *Sveriges Natur. Svenska Naturskyddsföreningens årsskrift*, 1921, p. 162.

towards France. Then, around 1890, a second major change occurred as Scandinavia's international orientation of the 1880s was replaced by a strong resurgence of nationalist, isolationist sentiment that brought Scandinavian painters back to their homelands'.<sup>201</sup> The term 'nationalist' should be discussed briefly here, as this characteristic indeed fiercely resonates within the work of many artists considered to be part of the Northern Light-movement and is often found in the work of the Symbolists in general. Michelle Facos turns this concept around, however, when writing that 'National Romantic artists adopted Symbolist strategies to stimulate emotional attachment to the nation'.<sup>202</sup> But whichever way one approaches the ties between National Romanticism, Nationalism and Symbolism, this relation does not seem to ring true for Swedlund's work. As the artist noted in 1895: 'I long for Sweden, as I am Swedish. But I hate his modern, augmented so-called fatherland pride - which actually should be called brother hate which doesn't build up or pushes people forward, but rather dumbs them down and makes them primitive'.<sup>203</sup> So while Swedlund's landscapes could be categorised as being part of the Northern Light-tradition, his motives for painting those depictions of his home country were not coloured by politics. Another argument to support this theory is the fact that, whenever sufficient funds were made available to him, Swedlund preferred to travel South - unbothered to be separated from the northern light and its followers.

The importance Swedlund attached to landscape as a medium for expression of an Idea, can be understood when considering the quantity in which these pictures appear within his oeuvre. Approximately a quarter of all recorded works feature a

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<sup>201</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light. Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting 1880-1910* (New York, Brooklyn Museum, 1982), p. 13-15.

<sup>202</sup> Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, University of California Press, 2009), p. 165.

<sup>203</sup> 'Jag längtar gem till Sverige, ty jag är svenskt fastän jag hatar den moderna uppskrufvade s.k. fosterlandskärleken som egentligen skulle kallas broderhat och som inte förädlar eller för manniskorna framåt, utanfördummar dem och gör dem råare', SS. Swedlund to Emilie Lovisa Forsberg, 3 March 1895.

landscape in a substantial way. I should note here that this term is also used to denote sea -and skyscapes, but not cityscapes as these works are discussed separately in this chapter. Using the landscape as a vehicle, rather than a motif, Swedlund imbued his pictures with such pronounced Ideas, that these images surpass their observed natural beauty and become altogether something different. One of the first dated landscapes in which we can detect an unmistakably meaningful mood, is the canvas *Evening, the West Coast* (INV-0076). The title refers to the western coast of Sweden, where Swedlund, joined by von Stockenström, spent the summer in 1896 while recuperating from illness. When he arrived in the fishing town of Fiskebäckskil, Swedlund was physically weak and mentally despondent. While the works from Brittany he exhibited earlier that month in Gothenburg were well-received, a certain gloom hung over him. 'I wanted to wander off by myself and weep. Weep over I don't know what. Weep in longing, away from the festivities', he wrote to his sister at the time.<sup>204</sup> As mentioned in the first chapter, Swedlund was still mourning the passing of Viktor Rydberg and visited the author's mausoleum in Gothenburg during that same trip. He was furthermore searching, but not finding, inspiring places of great beauty within his country's borders. With this context in mind, the atmosphere found in *Evening, the West Coast* becomes even heavier. The dark rugged shore, filling more than half of the canvas, pushes the viewer to the ground while leading their gaze upward to the sky. But there too, one's eyes are met with an overcasting blanket of clouds. Twilight has washed the sky into varying shades of deep reds and oranges which form a significant contrast to the intense darkness beneath. For while the sun has disappeared following the earth's rotation, its light still echoes and illuminates the bottom of the clouds. Following this reading, Swedlund could have used the actual landscape in order to commemorate the passing of a loved one.

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<sup>204</sup> 'ville jag gå ut i ensamheten och gråta gråta öfver jag vet ej hvad gråta i längtan bort från detta gyckel', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 21 June 1896.

Clouds were often used by Swedlund in order to weigh down a picture's mood. A most theatrical example can be found in *The Mountain Cabin* (INV-0053). Here, a solitary cottage is held hostage by a summer storm, sweeping overhead like a giant wave. While undated, stylistically seen the picture was most likely painted in Sweden, after Swedlund's stay in Brittany. This assumption renders it possible for him to have seen Joseph Mallord William Turner's *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps* (Fig. 36), to which the present picture carries a strong resemblance, when visiting London's National Gallery in 1894. It is clear to see why a painter like Turner would have resonated with Swedlund, as in the former's work, 'nature always reflects and expresses man's emotions'.<sup>205</sup> Turner's work was no secret to the Symbolist generation of artists, and artists as diverse as James Ensor and Eugène Carrière all venerated this Romantic master.<sup>206</sup> Yet, no element of the natural world captured Swedlund's imagination as much as the setting sun did. With the exception of a handful of works, most of his landscapes are set at the end of day, at times ranging between the setting of the sun and the very last moments of dusk. This comes as no surprise, for the particles contained in the evening air (more abundantly present than in the morning air) cause the sun's light beams to transform into fields of colouration. This phenomenon fed into Swedlund's constant quest for interesting colours and provided him with endless opportunities for motifs. The result is a theme that recurs time and time again throughout a 40 year-long career and bears witness to the development of the artist's style and technique.

When observing the quantity and prominence in which sunsets and twilight appear throughout Swedlund's oeuvre, one quickly realises that these were not

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<sup>205</sup> Ernst Hans Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (1950; repr., London & New York, Phaidon, 2016), p. 491.

<sup>206</sup> Pierre-Louis Mathieu, *The Symbolist Generation. 1870-1910* (Geneva, Skira, 1990), p. 126; Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists* (Oxford, Phaidon, 1973), p. 45.

merely experiments in tonal harmony. Instead, these pictures, like most of Swedlund's oeuvre, urge the viewer to reflect on the inner world which was externalised by the artist. In order to increase our understanding of these paintings, it is therefore relevant to try and determine what these motifs meant to Swedlund. This particular word, 'sunset' appears in fact throughout Swedlund's writing. It is used as an evocative term, most often in relation to the turn of the century. And indeed, it is a powerful metaphor - one of imminent endings, darkness and eventual regeneration. The transformation of light, as found during the setting of the sun and the succeeding twilight, thus corresponds to the passing of time and the changes to the human soul which are caused by it. This Idea proved to be so impactful to Swedlund's artistic sensibilities, that even after the momentous year 1900, these motifs persist. In the above text of 1921, for example, Swedlund indisputably connects these concepts when he puts them side by side: '(...) across the bay and the sunset, over the passing centuries and succeeding generations'. A similar atmosphere is represented in *Sunset, Chioggia* (INV-0015), which he painted in 1903 while boarding in the Veneto fishing town with the same name. In this work, the tranquil waters of the Venetian Lagoon to the West provided him with a reflective surface upon which the evening sky was mirrored. The scattered clouds and the absence of a discernible horizon result in a nearly abstract and camouflage-like composition, adding to the allure of the image. Yet one becomes very aware of the fact that this beautiful view will soon vanish. For it is precisely the transient nature of sunsets that compel the spectator to enter a temporary state of contemplation. Swedlund achieved to recreate this effect and even prolong it by immortalising on canvas this otherwise fleeting moment, allowing the viewer more time to consider this state of mind.

In a few instances, Swedlund populated his landscapes with solitary figures. These pictures differ however, from the *Lakeside Bench*-series and other comparable series painted later on Gotland and Sweden's west coast. In those

examples, Caspar David Friedrich-like spectators (Fig. 36b) as seen from the back contributed to an increased feeling of engagement and introspection as the viewer beheld the setting sun together with them. But rather than acting as fellow onlookers, Swedlund sometimes introduced figures which truly entered into the landscape and in a certain way became part of it. In a scribbled note dated 1923, Swedlund wrote that he painted the degree of his rapture over the wonders of life and nature.<sup>207</sup> And it is during this time that Swedlund painted *Father in a Park* (INV-0171), which illustrates this sentiment. A lone figure representing the artist's late father, is seen with his hands behind his back as he stands still on a woodland path. While the man's facial features are not depicted in great detail, the picture breathes an air of inner contentment and serenity. Perhaps we perceive it to be so because the figure is seemingly engulfed by the natural world around them. Two towering trees - no doubt a reference to Engesberg - and their undergrowth speckled with sunlight were painted by Swedlund in a flat and unreal manner which adds to their enveloping character. As such, the picture is reminiscent of Vincent Van Gogh's *Wheatfield with Reaper* (Fig. 37) in that Swedlund too shows 'the capacity to give profound associations precise visual form'.<sup>208</sup> In one of Swedlund's last known sunset paintings, the Idea of the powerful relationship between nature and humankind is represented in an even more dramatic way. In the 1928 *The Sun Worshipper* (INV-0004), of which two versions are known to exist, a figure with a downcast head stands atop a white cliff. Occupying more than half of the canvas, the setting sun's intense orange glow fills the sky. The elements of the figure's pose and the nearly-disappeared sun, both add to the pictures loaded atmosphere. The mood which Swedlund meant to contrive is further underscored by the works title. Similar to James Abbott McNeill Whistler,

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<sup>207</sup> SS. Swedlund, 18 March 1923.

<sup>208</sup> Richard Thompson et al., *Van Gogh to Kandinsky. Symbolist Landscape in Europe 1880-1910* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2012), p. 146.

who titled his canvases after musical compositions, Swedlund used the title as an opportunity to refer to the poem on which the present work must surely be based.<sup>209</sup> The 1878 poem with the same name was written by Carl Wilhelm Böttiger and centers around the worship of a sun. Not the one closest to the earth, nor any of the stars visible in the night's sky, but instead 'There is one behind all those, a sun of suns, a queen of systems, and him alone I want to call upon, only before him I want to kneel'. This poem, which deals with religion as much as it does with nature and science, in fact corresponds to Swedlund's Idea based upon a parallel between one's soul and the universe. This interrelation is repeated throughout the text, such as 'in every world, from pole to pole, the smallest creature has its orbit of stars'. Observation of and immersion into the natural world could thus function as a vehicle for awareness of the self.

### *Nocturnal Cities and Dark Dwellings*

*Night is not a subject for naturalistic painting.*<sup>210</sup>

*Every town is a state of mind, a mood which, after only a short stay, communicates itself, spreads to us in an effluvium which impregnates us, which we absorb with the very air.*<sup>211</sup>

One could make the generalisation that Swedlund reserved the landscape for sunset and twilight scenes, while he fixed his gaze towards more urban environments for the subsequent stages of dusk and night-time. For it is there, in

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<sup>209</sup> 'Det finns en någon bakom dem alla, en solarnas sol, en systemernas drott, och honom allena jag vill åkalla, blott honom jag vill till fota falla (...) i alla världar, från pol intill pol, det minsta kräk har sin stjärnebana', excerpt from Carl Wilhelm Böttiger's 1878 poem *Soldyrkaren*. Viktor Rydberg also referred to Böttiger in his *Roman Days* rendering it likely that Swedlund would have been acquainted with the poet's work.

<sup>210</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art*, (London, John Murray, 1979).

<sup>211</sup> Georges Rodenbach, *Bruges-la-Morte*, trans. by Mike Mitchell (Sawtry, Dedalus, 2020), p. 93.



the cities, that daylight lived on in its surrogate forms. Candle sticks, torches, and modern street lanterns were the only sources of light illuminating the works Swedlund made there. In these painted visions of alleyways, canals, and public monuments, he visualised their alternative lives, as found during the hours when the town centres had grown silent and their streets were unoccupied by their daytime dwellers. Yet it was not his country's capital which first compelled Swedlund to paint the darkest hours of the night. In line with a predominant inclination amongst fellow Symbolist artists around the turn of the century, Swedlund was drawn to a different type of city. No portrayals of, for example, Paris or London are found within the oeuvre - as these were places associated with the 'tremendous development that dazzled in the sunset of this century', which according to Swedlund only led to despair and emptiness.<sup>212</sup> Instead, he favoured small, forgotten towns which had somehow been overlooked by progress and modernity. In reference to Fernand Khnopff but applicable to Swedlund too, Sharon L. Hirsh has noted: 'the perfect city for a Symbolist (...) would be, in fact, a noncity, or a dead city - one that had existed, at one point in time, without the confusing technology, the accelerated time, and especially the crowds of the modern metropolis'.<sup>213</sup>

The first urban center to feature prominently in Swedlund's art as a subject was, just like Khnopff, the Belgian city of Bruges. While the city had known great prosperity during the Middle Ages, the loss of its harbour activity caused Bruges to fall into a long-lasting state of poverty while its neighbouring cities became prosperous commercial hubs. The city's poverty had its positive side as well, however. Above all it had the effect of staving off large-scale urban developments

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<sup>212</sup> 'denna väldiga utveckling, som bländar i detta sekels solnedgång', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 23 February 1894.

<sup>213</sup> Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 257.

and thus ensured that the historic fabric of the city remained intact.<sup>214</sup> This city emitted a powerful attraction to the Symbolists, which has been described by Jullian as being rooted in 'its Gothic stones reflected in the waters of the canals, the sanctuary of the Golden Fleece, and the shrine of Memling's St Ursula, the city of mystery in which a canon of whom Huysmans knew celebrated black masses, where Rodenbach's characters died of jealousy, a city like the partially submerged and half-forgotten town of Ys, deserted like the town shown by Khnopff in his best drawings'.<sup>215</sup> While it is unclear whether any of the references to Symbolist literature were familiar to Swedlund, Jullian's comparison of the mythical city of Ys is interesting, as it was its alleged location - the Breton bay of Douarnenez - where Swedlund had a near-religious experience a couple of years prior to his arrival in Bruges. It is in any case clear that, judging by his repeated sojourns and the painted oeuvre itself, Swedlund was intrigued by the city's atmosphere. While there, he actively searched for motifs which could convey the aforementioned sense of mystery which Swedlund personally projected onto the city. He found it in the shapes of grand desolate houses, quiet processions, and abandoned landmarks. By depicting these places during night-time, he furthermore stripped them of all remaining contemporary noise. For by the 1890s, Bruges was rapidly becoming a tourist attraction. This was cause for concern for many Symbolist artists who feared that the accompanying modernisation could result in the city irrevocably awakening from its treasured slumber. Swedlund, who regarded himself as one of the initiated few, rather than a common tourist, thus roamed the city at nightfall. The world which he found there and subsequently transposed onto the canvas, existed in an ambiguous place between the past and the suspended present. It was the same vision of Bruges, apotheosised but also eerily within reach, which has also been depicted by the

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<sup>214</sup> André Vandewalle et al., *The Fascinating Faces of Flanders. Through Art and Society* (Tielt, Lannoo, 1998), p. 40.

<sup>215</sup> Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists* (Oxford, Phaidon, 1973), p. 20.

Belgian Symbolists Khnopff, William Degouve DeNuncques and Xavier Mellery. A work worth considering in this context is *Church Gate in Bruges* (INV-0039) - as its presumed inclusion in the 1914 *Baltic Exhibition* may serve as an indicator of its importance to Swedlund. Cloaked figures silently tread into an opened doorway from which light is emitted onto the otherwise dark street. The surface of the canvas is dotted with peculiar dabs of blue and purple paint. At first sight, one would assume these were drops of rain - as the umbrella carried by the figure on the right would indicate. But upon closer examination, one notices that the dabs follow the directions of the arched entryway and the horizontal flatness of the sidewalk. They are applied more thickly on the human figures and are completely absent within the illuminated doorframe. The surreal and jewel-like qualities they bestow onto the picture as a whole, renders it more like something of an amulet or an icon, again adding to its perceived ambiguity. The depicted entrance is that of the Heilig Hart Church, situated in the city's Vlamingstraat. Likely known to Swedlund at the time, this was a newly-built church, erected in the neo-Gothical style and inaugurated as late as 1885. With this in mind, we recognise Swedlund developing a particular approach which would come into full fruition in Rome, years later. In these paintings, observed reality only served as a starting point. From there, Swedlund used his artistic liberties by extracting authentic fragments in order to reconstruct them into an image existing in his mind. So by reducing our view to architectural elements which we instinctively identify as being Gothic, Swedlund successfully transports us to a scene reminiscent of Medieval times, or which perhaps exists outside of time altogether. Even the figures seem more like duplicates of an archetype, rather than real individuals. The bright yellow-green light pouring out from the church's interior could indicate the presence of electricity, but would sooner be read as a divine glow instead. The picture owes its suggestiveness in part because of the gate itself, which may potentially be recognised as a metaphor. Gates are universally

understood as places of transition from one state to another.<sup>216</sup> As portals they can divide the exterior from the interior, the earthly from the heavenly, and the conscious from the unconscious. And indeed portals are inherent to the outward appearance and structure of all cities, resulting in their presence in many of Swedlund's nocturnal paintings. While in Bruges, Swedlund wrote that, 'through the night', he was painting 'the inexorable course of fate'.<sup>217</sup> This highly-charged sentiment demonstrates the state of the artist's mind while working on these particular paintings. So perhaps it is not too contrived to think that Swedlund was indeed inviting us to follow the cloaked figures' direction, and cross the threshold into another, interior world.

What this interior world could look like, is portrayed in a handful of works set within labyrinth-like dwellings. In *The Staircase* (INV-0088), for example, Swedlund created such an interior consisting of an architectural network of arched, Romanesque rooms. The hollowness of the space is accentuated by the fact that Swedlund used a mixed media technique, allowing him to scratch into the pigment in a Redon-like manner and recreate on board the effect of the weathered plastered walls depicted. Most prominent to the composition is a flight of stairs, leading toward an upper landing and an open window through which we can see a blue sky and which allows an orange glow to enter the dark space. An indistinct figure ascends the staircase and approaches the window, creating a narrative similar to the hooded figures approaching the church gates mentioned earlier. The act of wandering through a complex of passages, of descending and ascending, in search of light, undoubtedly points to being a metaphor for an inward quest. In representing this mental state, the depiction of portals play an effective role. In fact, they are found throughout Swedlund's oeuvre and nearly

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<sup>216</sup> Ami Ronnberg, *The Book of Symbols. Reflections on Archetypal Images* (Cologne, Taschen, 2010), p. 558.

<sup>217</sup> 'Jag håller på och målar ödets obevekliga gång genom – natten', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 16 November 1900.

always carry the suggestion of significance. Their perceived function differs greatly from one picture to another. The view through a window may reveal a candle-lit interior or be protected from the outside world by curtains and shutters. An open door may serve as a proposal for entry, such as *Church Gate in Bruges*, while others seem to remain locked, indefinitely barring passage onto world behind. Such is the case with the 1913 painting *Door in the Park* (INV-0093), also exhibited in the *Baltic Exhibition*, in which four steps lead to a seemingly impenetrable door, lacking both handle and keyhole. Here, Swedlund again achieved a world suspended in time and space, as he painted the building's exterior in the red and white colours of traditional Swedish housing but crowned the door with a classical pediment, reminiscent of more ancient, Italianate environments.

The cities Swedlund resided at in Italy, each in their own way akin to Bruges, proved to be an ideal breeding ground for the continued development of his Ideas. There was the fishing town of Chioggia, rebuilt in the Middle Ages and held together by a network of canals and bridges. Then there was Rome, the Eternal city, its glorious but distant past still visible at every turn. And ultimately the town of Montefiascone, where Swedlund painted the ruins of a papal fortress and its views of the valley below - seemingly untouched since antiquity. In the 1904 painting titled *Rome* (INV-0094), an elderly woman wrapped in a shawl and leaning onto her walking stick, slowly strides towards the viewer. The alley, of which she is the sole occupier, leads towards an abyss-like arched passageway. The entire scene would be clad in a nightly darkness, were it not for a single torch from which a warm light spills forth, defining the figure's silhouette. The earthy tones which make up the entirety of the picture were applied by thick strokes of Swedlund's brush. While he clearly recycled some of the familiar themes from Bruges, its atmosphere is decidedly more heavy. In the description of a comparable work painted in Chioggia at this time, Swedlund spoke of creating a

picture which 'shall burn like wine - and blood'.<sup>218</sup> By using this warmer palette and allowing the viewer to meet the figure head-on, the picture gains a vitality which was not present in his work from the preceding years. With this confrontational approach, Swedlund reacted to an urban phenomenon which he acknowledged in Concarneau as well as in Bruges, but was clearly more visible here: poverty. Aside from the fact that this social class was omnipresent in the Italian capital, Swedlund's fascination for these people was likely stirred by Rydberg's description in his *The Beggars of Rome*. For it is indeed the wretchedness of the woman which underscores the perceived heaviness of the picture. This theme was also picked up by Swedlund in *The Slums, Winter Evening in Chioggia* (INV-0170), of which at least four versions exist. This work depicting a night-time alleyway in an impoverished part of the town, deals as much with the colouration resulting from the street lantern, as with social tragedy. Following the aforementioned description of another work, Swedlund wrote: 'Recently I have painted a poor woman with a child in her arms, who approaches a wine tavern and looks inside through a lit window- to see if her "jewel" was inside. I have had the opportunity to witness this same scene so many times and how she then quietly disappears in the darkness, only to continue her search at the next tavern. What is deeply human, is the same in every country. But here I have succeeded in finding a painterly expression for it - though it shall be beautiful as well'.<sup>219</sup> As described in his own words, Swedlund performs a balancing act in creating a painting which is both aesthetically pleasing and imbued with a distinct idea - in this case the universality of human suffering.

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<sup>218</sup> 'Hela taflan skallbrinna som vin – och blod', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 2 November 1902.

<sup>219</sup> 'Senast har jag målat en fattig qvinna med ett barn på armen som kommer (...) utanför en vinkrog och tittar in genom upplysta fönstret – om henner 'juvel' är der. Har haft tillfälle att se den scenen så många gånger och hur hon sen tyst försvinner i mörkret – för att söka på nästa krog. Det djupt menkliga är det samma I alla land. Men jag har här lyckats få tag i ett målariskt uttryck för det – ty det skall vara vackert också', SS. Swedlund to Per August Swedlund, 2 November 1902.

After Swedlund's return to Sweden, his attention was first geared toward the Swedish landscape but gradually found its way to urban centers. Amongst the dated works, the first depiction of Stockholm is inscribed as only being executed in 1914. This seems rather late, when one considers that Swedlund had been living in the capital on and off since 1885. One obvious reason would be the fact that, during the course of the first World War, Swedlund's travel movements were restricted. This shift becomes apparent when dissecting the leaflet for his 1917 exhibition in Gävle. Listed according to the place in which each work was executed, Stockholm is now listed as a subcategory for the very first time and accounts for over a quarter of the entire exhibition. But perhaps Swedlund also needed to be enamoured by the more exotic cities of Bruges and Chioggia first, before being able to rediscover his home country and finding that Stockholm, with waterways and churches of its own, also grew quiet at night. One result of Swedlund's nocturnal outings in Stockholm is *Square of Charles XII* (INV-0089), which was executed in at least three different versions. Amid this square, which was originally a royal kitchen garden turned Baroque pleasure garden, stands a bronze statue representing King Charles XII by Johan Peter Molin, atop a granite pedestal. The sculpture raises one arm to the East and is faced towards the Royal Palace on the other side of the Stream of Stockholm, while thirteen elm trees form an impressive backdrop. Barely any of these details are clearly visible in Swedlund's depiction, however. While it is indeed true that Swedlund based the compositions for these views of Stockholm on photographs, the effects of light and tone in the *Charles XII*-series of paintings differs so profoundly from their original that they must have been rooted in local observation.<sup>220</sup> Its nightly blues, browns, and blacks are in fact so dark that the viewer might find it difficult to distinguish their individual forms. Two electric street lights, flanked on either side of the gravel square, have just made it onto the canvas (in another version only

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<sup>220</sup> For a description of the photographic models found amongst Swedlund's possessions, see Chapter Two.

their emitted light is seen). Appearing as two dots applied in a thick impasto of yellow and white, they attempt to illuminate the scene but to little effect - achieving only vague outlines of the square's features. Of the other artists active in Stockholm at the time, perhaps Eugène Jansson came closest to creating a similar atmosphere. But in *Square of Charles XII* and the comparable *The Riksbank* (INV-0051), which shows the exterior of Sweden's national bank, accurate parallels may also be drawn to other, international artists of the Symbolist generation. In their mystic darkness, these works are akin to the oeuvre of Mellery and Vilhelm Hammershøi and just like the canvases of Degouve de Nuncques, they show identifiable places which have been reworked, diffused, and depopulated to create an eerie sense of dislocation.<sup>221</sup> In the extremity of their obscurity, these works arguably position Swedlund closer to Whistler than any other Swedish artist.

After the First World War, Swedlund revisited Gotland. But he was not the sole admirer of this island and its capital, which had spoken to him in 'a great and beautiful language' in his youth.<sup>222</sup> Since his first visit, which had taken place nearly thirty years before, others too had discovered its *genius loci*. As Sharon L. Hirsh commented on its rise in popularity: 'In the late 1890s, the hamlet of Visby on the island of Gotland, enjoyed a revived interest on the part of Swedish artists and poets who were influenced by their native National Romanticism's celebration of medieval cities as well as their Symbolist love of quiet places for contemplation. (...) The Scandinavians who loved Visby were also influenced, however, by contact with the premiere medieval city of Symbolist lore: Bruges'.<sup>223</sup> So while Visby had remained largely unchanged since Swedlund's initial visit, its

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<sup>221</sup> Richard Thompson et al., *Van Gogh to Kandinsky. Symbolist Landscape in Europe 1880-1910* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2012), p. 107.

<sup>222</sup> 'som både tala ett stort och skönt språk', SS. Swedlund to an unnamed sister, 18 June 1890.

<sup>223</sup> Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 258.



status as a place of artistic importance had grown because of the international impact of the Symbolist movement. Swedlund effectively contributed to this rediscovery, as the body of work he produced there bears the mark of a technique and Symbolist sensitivity developed over the course of three decades and beyond Swedish borders. By Swedlund reappraising Visby with his personal Ideas, he increased its aforementioned status as a place of poetic quality.

Based on quantity, the motif which captured most of his painterly interest there was the sun setting over the Baltic Sea. This resulted in two series of paintings in which the dark outlines of Visby's topography are set against a bright orange backdrop: *Church Ruin by the Sea* (INV-0160) and *The Blue Girl* (INV-0126). But Swedlund continued to wander the cobbled streets long after the sun had set. In *Street in Visby, Drottensgatan* (INV-0042), a work on board dated 1919, such an occurrence is presented. Some of the sun's light is evanescently present in the clouded sky above and against it we can make out the ghostly silhouette of a tower belonging to the medieval cathedral. The world below has already succumbed to nightfall. A lone street light has assumed its duty and illuminates the facade of a house which stretches horizontally along the width of the picture, as well as fragments of other buildings on either side. What strikes the viewer instantly, is the abundance of colour which Swedlund saw in this nightly scene. The warm tones he found in the houses' red clay roofs form a dynamic contrast to the turquoise sky. And the windows, with their red, green, and blue curtains rhythmically intersperse the weathered, ochre facade. So what draws us in at first, is the beauty in contrasting tonalities which Swedlund achieved to bring into effect in this picture. Yet, as mentioned in relation to *Rome*, the pleasing aesthetics are only part of the work's magnetism. As is typical for Swedlund's oeuvre: while the eye travels, so does the mind. The doorway, central to the picture's composition, has been left open. Given the lack of any human presence and the night-time hour, one begins to wonder why it has not been shut. Stepping

back, one understands that the entirety of the picture - from the contrasting warm hues, to the attention-grabbing light bulb and the open doorway - is a carefully plotted device aimed at luring the unsuspecting passerby into the house's interior.

The paintings discussed in this chapter, were persistently and purposefully imbued by Swedlund with invitations for reflection and introspection. He achieved this effect by a carefully selected choice of motifs of which the atmosphere corresponded to *a priori* Ideas and often related to the passing of time, the pursuit of happiness, and a romanticisation of lost cultures. By injecting a sense of gravity and ambiguity into the world he recreated on canvas, Swedlund successfully used painting as a means to objectify the subjective. The fact that his practice can be defined by the principles of Symbolism, and the fact that Swedlund worked in an intellectual framework comparable to other Symbolist artists, thus make a reading of the oeuvre within this context relevant if not imperative.

## Chapter Four: Critical and Commercial Reception

*High, Pegasus with winged race  
rises towards the summit of Parnassus,  
Where the high deity of art is enthroned,  
A disgusting fly went with it.  
Hidden beneath its tail, proudly it rode  
And stung occasionally, till it hurt,  
And whistled, 'Fly, you beast of burden, I will not spare thee.'*

*So, artist, if the ideal  
Thou seek'st in longing's throes  
In the dark realms of imagination:  
Then thou art Pegasus in flight.*

*And then the fly! It buzzes naughtily  
From the back, where it lurks safely,  
And its name is: art criticism.<sup>224</sup>*

It is unclear in what year and following which review Swedlund penned the words of the poem *Pegasus*, but its message is very clear: critics were a pest to the artist and his mission. It seems inherent to Swedlund's character to have fixated on the negative, as in fact he was the recipient of great accolades and artistic achievements. In contrast to the rest of the thesis in which I have attempted to position myself as closely to Swedlund as possible, in this chapter we will pivot back and approach his career as it was perceived by others: critics and collectors. In the first part, the focus lies on an overview of his exhibition practices and the critical reception these shows received. The second part centres around the commercial success the oeuvre has known during and after Swedlund's own

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<sup>224</sup> 'Högt, Pegasus med vingadt lopp, sig höjer mot Parnassens topp, där konstens höga gudor tronar; Men under svansen följer med – en äcklig fluga. Stolt hon red och qnagde så det sved, och pep: Spring ök, jag ej dig skönar. Så, konstnär, om ditt ideal du söker under längtans qual i fantasiens dunkla riken (Då är du Pegasus i flykt.) Och flugan då! Hon surrar styggt i baken, där hon lurar tryggt, och hennes namn är konstkritiken', SS. from an undated note. A slightly different version of the same text by an unidentified author was published in *Svenska akademiens handlingar ifrån år 1886*, vol. 13, Stockholm, 1886, p. 304.

lifetime. The combination of both approaches provides us with an outside perspective of his artistic career. Gaining a better understanding of how people and institutions have interacted with the works during the last hundred years, will also inform the question of his posthumous obscurity which, to some degree, was the motivation for writing this thesis.

### *Critical Reception: Debut*

The first critical reviews of Swedlund's work appear in 1899, in conjunction with his debut at the Swedish Artists Association's exhibition. This may seem late, as he had been active as a painter for more than a decade at that point. Yet it can easily be explained by Swedlund's extreme apprehension to exhibit any works which did not meet the high standards which he set out for himself, as described in his own words in Chapter One. And so it was only at the tail-end of the 1890s, when Swedlund was in his mid-thirties, that he finally felt artistically mature enough to exhibit. At the foundation of this sense of arrival was the oeuvre produced while in Bruges. This critical moment in his self-development did not go unnoticed. In fact, Swedlund would later refer to this debut as having been 'a success of exceptional proportions'.<sup>225</sup> The timing to exhibit works from Bruges had been very fortunate too as Oscar Levertin had just republished the popular *Brügge* in his 1898 tome *Diktare och drömmare*. One review in particular, by Karl Wåhlin, must have been significant to Swedlund. Wåhlin had founded and, during the 1890s, edited the Swedish periodical *Ord och Bild*, developing it into the

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<sup>225</sup> Nils Gösta Sandblad, *Anders Trulson* (Malmö, Gleerups, 1944), p. 321.

leading cultural publication of its time. Indeed, whenever Swedlund was abroad, he continuously requested issues of the magazine to be posted to him by his obliging sisters. When Wåhlin reviewed the exhibition, he compared Swedlund to the Danish artists Johan Rohde and Vilhelm Hammershøi who each had depicted similar motifs. This comparison is notable in itself, because while these artists were of the same generation as Swedlund, their reputations were much more established. Not only did Wåhlin elevate Swedlund to their level but he actually made him surpass these new-found peers: 'He has come to Bruges and painted the city immersed in medieval dreams, with its canals, church towers, stepped gables and old houses with closed shutters, without the decadent culture of the Danes' style but powerful, beautiful and painterly solid'.<sup>226</sup> The institutional acquisitions which followed seemed to echo this enthusiasm. It seems only natural for an artist to want to prolong such momentum. So Swedlund returned to Bruges and the following year, these works were again met with a positive response from the audience. When Swedlund participated in the 1901 Venice Biennale with one single work, it was a scene from Bruges. But already by 1902, the Swedish public started to lose interest, as is hinted within a single line in a review for the landscape exhibition at Valand: 'And Swedlund also chooses foreign motifs, yet this time he does not reach the same heights with his views from Bruges'.<sup>227</sup> This may seem like an unimportant opinion in a local newspaper,

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<sup>226</sup> 'Han har kommit till Brügge och målat den i medeltidsdrömmar försänkta staden med dess kanaler, kyrktorn, trappgaflar och gamla hus med tillstängda luckor, utan den dekadenta kulturen i danskarnes stil men kraftigt, vackert och måleriskt solidt', Karl Wåhlin, 'Intryck från Konstutställningarna', *Ord och Bild*, Stockholm, 1899, p. 375.

<sup>227</sup> 'Utländska motif väljer ock alltjämt Pelle Swedlund, som dock denna gång ej når fullt så högt som förut med ett par Brüggebilder', J.A., 'Konstutställningen å Valand. Landskapet', *Göteborgs Handels- Och Sjöfartstidning*, 20 January 1902.

but considering the abundance of cut-out reviews found in the letter archive, it may be assumed that Swedlund was at least aware of it and it may even have been an underlying motivation to travel to Italy that year, looking for new motifs to diversify his oeuvre. Still, while the works from Bruges may have lost some of their novelty at this point, his debut had been impressive enough to decidedly establish his reputation within the Swedish art scene. Examples of this can be found in the continuation of museum acquisitions at this time, and the string of articles related to his being taken ill in Chioggia the following year, in which the adjectives 'prominent' and 'distinguished' are used in relation to his status as an artist.<sup>228</sup>

### *Critical Reception: Across Borders*

At the beginning of the 1900s, Swedlund participated in a number of international group exhibitions. This practice may point to Swedlund seeking to regain some of the recognition which he had lost on Swedish soil but it simultaneously confirms that he had been accepted into the established order. The fact that Anselm Schultzberg was the commissioner for many of these ventures, such as the St. Louis *World's Fair* in 1904 and the Swedish exhibition in Budapest in 1906, may have been beneficial to Swedlund. After all, both artists were well-acquainted as shown by Swedlund taking over Schultzberg's studio space in Stockholm in 1899. Even if Swedlund's inclusion in these exhibitions might have been partly based

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<sup>228</sup> 'den bemärkte Gefle-födde artisten', 'Dödsfall', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 12 December 1903; 'känt som framstående konstnär', 'Svenskarne i utlandet', *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, 2 December 1903.

on personal relationships, he was continuously met with favourable reviews by local critics. In a review of the 1904 *World's Fair*, Swedlund was described as a 'well-known Swedish painter'.<sup>229</sup> And when in 1904 Swedish correspondent Axel Tallberg educated British readers of *The Studio* magazine on modern Swedish painting, he noted: 'The landscape men are more promising and more interesting than the figure-painters here as well. The best is no doubt the splendid colourist, Pelle Swedlund, who has, during the last few years, painted some very fine works'.<sup>230</sup> The Italian critic Vittorio Pica included one of Swedlund's sunsets (INV-0136) in his 1915 publication on contemporary Swedish artists.<sup>231</sup> The 1929 exhibition at Jeu de Paume in Paris, which was organised by Prince Eugen and featured the works of the 42 most prominent living Swedish artists, marked the last time Swedlund showed his work outside of his home country. In spite of the positive response foreign critics had bestowed upon him throughout his career, a breakthrough on the international scene never came to fruition. This is perhaps understandable as it was inherent to the format of these large group exhibitions that their visitors could only encounter small fragments of each artist's oeuvre and therefore never truly immerse themselves in the complex worlds some artists, such as Swedlund, created on their canvases. One could state that the most significant outcome of these international projects was the prestige it exuded toward his Swedish audience.

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<sup>229</sup> Gabriel Francis Powers, 'Art in the Twentieth Century. Foreign Pictures at the World's Fair, St. Louis', *The Messenger*, vol. 42, no. 4, October 1904, p. 164.

<sup>230</sup> Axel Tallberg, 'Modern Painting in Sweden', *The Studio*, vol. 31, London, 1904, p. 109.

<sup>231</sup> Vittorio Pica, *Arte Ed Artisti Nella Svezia Dei Giorni Nostri* (Milan, Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1915), p. 163.

### *Critical Reception: A Tactical Approach*

The year 1905 marked a pivotal moment in Swedlund's exhibition practice as he began a series of iterations on the 'separate' exhibition he had staged in Gävle in 1896.<sup>232</sup> Now set in Stockholm, the exhibition only included the works of three artists: Smith, Hedberg, and Swedlund himself. The following year, the same exhibition traveled to Lund, Malmö, and Gothenburg, and the same concept was reprised in 1908 (although Swedlund withdrew due to health issues) and finally once more in 1912. While exhibiting outside of the annual salon structures had become common practice in - for example - Paris, at the onset of the twentieth century the Swedish public still required more guidance towards the understanding of this concept. In relation to the trio's first series of exhibitions, a reporter felt an explanation was required by informing his readers that 'when a larger number of an artist's works are brought together, the features which are peculiar to his artistic personality appear more clearly; one feature helps to explain another; each painting shows a different shade of this personality, and together they bring out the character of the artist'.<sup>233</sup> And while Swedlund still participated in the salons hosted by the Swedish Artists Association – with it losing its secessionist quality - this complementary strategy indeed had its desired effect as he no longer needed to compete with dozens of other artists for

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<sup>232</sup> As discussed in Chapter One in relation to secessionism.

<sup>233</sup> 'Då ett större antal arbete af en konstnär finnas samlade, framråder tydligare de drag, som för hans konstnärspersonlighet äro egendomliga, det ena draget hjälper till att förklara det andra, den ena taflan ger en annan skiftning af hans egendomlighet än den andra, men tillsammans låta de det för hans konst karaktäristiska bättre framstå', 'Konstutställningen å museet', *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 17 March 1906.



the attention of the critics. The same critics were now able to see a larger grouping of works for each artist, and they were able to explore the artists' accomplishments 'more clearly than before'.<sup>234</sup> What tied this artistic alliance together was the friendship and experiences Hedberg, Smith, and Swedlund shared, more than any parallels in the style or thematics of their individual practices. Most articles reviewing these exhibitions therefore did not strive to provide overarching commentary, but rather aimed at analysing the output of each artist separately. The result is a string of colourful reviews which allow Swedlund's originality to shine through. With an unprecedented dedication, the oeuvre was dissected in an attempt to understand it better. One critic looked at the painted works and acknowledged the likely influence of woodcuts. Of Swedlund's colour use it was now noted to contain 'seriously personal expressions, in several of these feverish moods there is a unique, melancholic poetry, at once delicate and of a biting timid sensibility'.<sup>235</sup> A particularly fine example of an exploration into the artist's psyche was written upon the opening of the first exhibition: 'He (Swedlund) is the dreamer, the painter of moods, more so than his two companions. At twilight, when the day comes to a close, or in places where solitude lives its silent life in the shadow of high, desolate walls or under dense foliage, there his imagination loves to spread its wings and soar in soundless flight'.<sup>236</sup> The image of Swedlund which was created within the

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<sup>234</sup> 'tydligare än tidigare', Adauctus, 'Konstnärstrio', *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, 8 March 1905.

<sup>235</sup> 'ett allvarligt personligt lynne uttryck i flera af dessa malariastämningar finns en egen melankolisk poesi, en på en gång vek och skygg, kärf känslighet', 'Tre Målare', *Dagens Nyheter*, 8 March 1905.

<sup>236</sup> 'Han är drömmaren, stämningmålaren, i högre grad än sina båda kamrater. I skymningen, då dagen slocknar eller där ensligheten lefver sitt tysta lif i skuggan af höga, ödsliga murar eller under täta löfhvalf, där älskar hans fantasi att breda ut sina vingar till ljudlöst sökande flykt', RK, 'Erik Hedberg, Wilhelm Smith och Pelle Swedlund', *Stockholmstidningen*, 6 March 1905.

confines of these articles, for example through the persistent usage of the terms 'poet' and 'dreamer', formed the foundation of the way the Swedish public was to identify him for the next hundred years.

### *Critical Reception: Later Years and Posthumous Appreciation*

In time, the exhibitions in which Swedlund participated grew fewer and further between. In fact, already in a 1915 newspaper article written on the occasion on the artist's 50th birthday, it was noted that there had been 'rather long breaks' in between his more recent exhibitions.<sup>237</sup> The same article also provides us with insight on how Swedlund's career - now precisely mid-way between his exhibition debut and the last dated work - was understood. While places such as France and Italy, as well as people like Hedberg and Smith, were all included in the outline of his life, it is clear that the works produced in Bruges were perceived as the crowning glory of his artistic career. One cannot help but notice that this view is at once praising and deadening. Why, if it was decided that the epitome of one's career was already in the past, would one continue to go on? Already in 1912, as in defiance of the narrative that was being created about his career, Swedlund started to categorise the listed works in his exhibition leaflets by location. Smith and Hedberg did not follow suit with this categorisation, which would underscore that it was particularly important to Swedlund alone to emphasise the diversity of his work. He would repeat this exercise in the 1917 exhibition leaflet as well.

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<sup>237</sup> 'Med tämliga långa mellanrum har Svedlund utställt', 'Personalnotiser', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 5 October 1915, p. 12.

The next exhibition review takes us to 1925. Swedlund, now aged sixty and considered to be part of the old garde, contributed works which were noted to be 'unfortunately of a harsh and unpleasant colouration'.<sup>238</sup> In Georg Nordensvan's survey of Swedish art of the turn of the century, published the same year, Swedlund is remembered only for his oeuvre from Bruges, in particular for his 'shuttered buildings by the still waters which possess poetic charm'.<sup>239</sup> Another six years later, Swedlund is described as 'he who patented Bruges'.<sup>240</sup> The lack of exposure of and appreciation for his new output, and the continued focus on his early career, paved the way for a pigeonhole which Swedlund would struggle to escape. Subsequent articles dealt primarily with the appointment to and course of his directorship at the Thiel Gallery. From this point onward, his second career takes the forefront whenever Swedlund appeared in the media and the oeuvre appears to have lost nearly all public interest. Even the 1946 retrospective exhibition in Gävle, and the 1947 posthumous exhibition at the Thiel Gallery, did not catch the attention of the critics. The obituaries published after his death contain little praise of his artistic achievements, indicating that Swedlund 'the artist' had already been forgotten during his own lifetime. What some *in memoriam* articles do provide, however, is a useful insight into his personality, which in turn may provide some explanations for his exhibition practices. Erik Lindberg, for example, speaks of Swedlund's extremely high standards in the art

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<sup>238</sup> 'tyvärr med en hård och obehaglig kolorit', Karl Asplund, 'Konstförenings Utställning. II. Måleri och grafik', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 18 October 1925.

<sup>239</sup> 'Pelle Swedlunds öde, tillbommade bygnader vid de stilla vattnen äga poetisk charm', Georg Nordensvan, *Svensk konst och svenska konstnärer i nittonde århundradet / II. Från Karl XV till sekelslutet* (Stockholm, Albert Bonniers förlag, 1925), p. 416.

<sup>240</sup> 'han som tagit patent på Brügge', 'Dagens profil', unidentified newspaper, 31 October 1929.

of others as well as his own, ideals which only 'sharpened over the years and made him an increasingly rare guest at the major exhibitions, which he did not enjoy. This withdrawal has been interpreted as a consequence of long-term ill health. Nothing could be further from the truth: Pelle Swedlund had a healthy physique and, until his last illness, constant energy when it came to his work'.<sup>241</sup> While trying to avoid speculation, the emphasis on the physical aspect of his health could imply that perhaps it was Swedlund's mental health which had caused the periods of withdrawal and had kept him from a more vigorous, self-promotional attitude towards his own career.

From Swedlund's death in 1947 until now, the publications featuring his name most frequently are auction catalogues. Whenever a short note was included with the lot entry, it generally replicated the narrative of his career in its simplified, Bruges-orientated form as developed during Swedlund's lifetime and in artist lexicons. Due to a lack of institutional interest, no exhibitions and no catalogues were organised in the second half of the twentieth century. With the singular exception of inclusion of work by Swedlund in a 1985 exhibition at the Shepherd Gallery in New York, the oeuvre disappeared entirely from public view until the early 2000s when a solo exhibition, titled *Symbolist och Mystiker*, was organised at the Per Ekströmmuseet in Mörbylånga. More recently, Swedlund was included in the group exhibitions *Symbolism och Dekadens* at Waldemarsudde and

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<sup>241</sup> 'Dessa krav skärptes med åren och gjorde honom till en alltmer sällsynt gäst på de stora utställningarna, som han dessutom inte älskade. Denna tillbakadragenhet har man tolkat som en följd av långvarig ohälsa. Intet är oriktigare, Pelle hade en kärnsund fysik och ända till hans sista sjukdom obruten arbetskraft', Erik Lindberg, 'Pelle Swedlund in memoriam', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 February 1947, p. 9.

*Moderna män* at Mjellby Art Museum. These exhibitions bode well for contemporary understanding of Swedlund's painting, as the oeuvre is finally being exhibited - and thus interpreted - in a framework which is very much focused on its intellectual content, rather than categorising Swedlund merely as being 'Swedish', as was previously the case.

#### *Commercial Reception: Institutional Acquisitions*

Works produced by Swedlund have found their way into the public collections of Sweden (but not those of other countries) in various ways. Since the 1899 exhibition, a total number of nineteen works have been acquired or gifted to these institutions. It should be pointed out, however, that these works have resided in the museums' storage facilities and likely none of them have been part of the respective institutions' permanent displays in the past. Currently no works by Swedlund are on view in Sweden. The majority of motifs depicted on these canvases show views of Bruges and Sweden and largely correspond to the stereotyping discussed earlier. When considering the chronological overview of these acquisitions, one could recognise three different waves. During the first ten years after Swedlund's debut and at the concurring height of his popularity, museums acquired works directly for their collections. These acquisitions by the Nationalmuseum and the Gothenburg Museum of Art would prove to be instrumental in establishing Swedlund's credibility as an artist. A second wave comes much later when, in 1923, a national lottery was organised to the benefit

of contemporary Swedish artists in financial need.<sup>242</sup> Under the name 'Konstnärshjälpen' (The Artist's Aid) and chaired by Prince Eugen, approximately 520 works by over 200 artists were purchased and subsequently dispersed across national museums, schools, and other public buildings. The Nationalmuseum, who had previously acquired only a single work by Swedlund, suddenly received five additional works for their collection. While details remain unclear, it is likely that other works by Swedlund were acquired too and bestowed elsewhere. While the extent of the financial difficulties he was encountering at the time is difficult to estimate, their nature can be hinted at. In the trying period directly after the First World War and still years before his appointment to the Thiel Gallery, Swedlund only exhibited sporadically, which plausibly reflected on his sales and the associated income. Yet our perception of the situation's gravity is somewhat altered when considering that many of his most highly esteemed colleagues were also amongst those to receive support - Georg Pauli, Carl Wilhelmson, Axel Törneman, and Gottfrid Kallstenius amongst others. Finally, a third wave consisted of donations made by private individuals to public institutions. The County Museum in Gävle, which had been inaugurated in 1940, benefitted particularly well from this practice. In fact, the founding collection of the museum, that of John and Antonie Rettig, already included one work by Swedlund: *St. James' Church in Bruges* (INV-0114). All subsequent additions to the museum's collection were donations, some of which came from the Swedlund family, including Pelle himself.

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<sup>242</sup> 'På Svenska konstnärernas förenings grupputställning', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 9 December 1924, p. 14.

Yet not all institutional activity lies in the past. As recent as 2020, the Nationalmuseum acquired a still life of 1897, titled *Vanitas* (INV-0062). This may seem like an oddity, considering that the second most recent museum acquisition (other than by donation) took place in 1947. So, from where does this renewed interest derive? Predating any other work by Swedlund in their collection, the museum may have aimed at complementing the collection's timescale. A more convincing theory, however, lies in the nature of its motif - a skull placed beside a candle which attracts a flurry of moths. In the 2015 exhibition at Waldemarsudde, and in the adjoining catalogue, Swedlund is for the first time presented to the wider public in a context which is distinctly Symbolist. In comparison to the other works owned by the Nationalmuseum, *Vanitas* could be seen as a more obvious example of the thematics associated with the Symbolist movement. Furthermore, it should be noted that when the very same work came up for auction in 2011, it failed to sell - thus validating the theory that Nationalmuseum's interest in Swedlund was established only more recently. Despite the singularity of this acquisition, the fact that the institution seems to be following the new direction of scholarship on Swedlund can be seen as a very positive development since it not only speaks of a renewed appreciation but also of an expanded understanding of the oeuvre.

#### *Commercial Reception: The Primary Market*

As discussed in the biography, Swedlund never consigned his works to a dealer. As was common practice in Sweden at the time, and also in line with his

perfectionist character, Swedlund was in charge of his own sales. But how well did he do? With the resources available, it is possible to gain some insight into the price evolution of the works Swedlund sold between the years 1904-1917.<sup>243</sup> Taking the average price for a work offered for sale in 1904 as a starting point, it seemingly increases with 50% by 1912 and with more than 100% by 1917. Yet this apparent upward trend in pricing is not reflected when taking into account historic values. Factoring in inflation alters the story as the average value indeed rises by 50% in the first half of his career, but it then declines again with the same percentage. On total, the average price for a work by Swedlund in 1917 is 20% higher than in 1904. In this context it should be remembered that Swedlund was the driving force behind these exhibitions and the prices are therefore reflective of his personal opinion of the works' market value. By comparison, the most expensive work in his arsenal in 1912 was priced at 3,000 Swedish crowns, while Anders Zorn - arguably Sweden's most successful artist of this period - had sold his painting *The Hinds* for 20,000 Swedish crowns two years earlier.<sup>244</sup> In terms of the price evolution after the year 1917 it is possible, despite the lack of any records, to cautiously assume that prices followed a *status quo* or even a downward trend based on the aid he received from the Konstnärshjälpen-fund during the recession of the 1920s. If pricing may indeed be used as an indicator of market demand, it is possible to conclude that Swedlund's overall commercial success was moderate but relatively steady. The practice of copying his own

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<sup>243</sup> Based on the average price per work exhibited in the years 1905, 1912, and 1917. While other exhibition catalogues of other years are available, these do not include price details and are therefore not taken into consideration.

<sup>244</sup> Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Pedro Westerdahl, Zorn and the Art Market, online video recording, YouTube, 4 February 2014, <<https://youtu.be/76d5ad1j0dM>> [accessed 13 August 2022]



works also confirms that there was indeed an existing demand for particularly popular motifs. For the last twenty years of his life few records relating to his commercial endeavors exist. This, perhaps, is unsurprising since his appointment to the Thiel Gallery provided Swedlund with a fixed income and private accommodation, and at the late stages of his career he was often seen gifting his works rather than selling them.

The publication *Svenska Hem* - an illustrated survey of fine interiors in Sweden which ran between 1913 and 1964 – provides some insight regarding the individuals who collected works by Swedlund. Axel Lilja, for example, was a superintendent at the Swedish Royal Court and executive director of a printing house. His collection included at least two paintings by Swedlund, one of which was recorded as being a gift, amongst works by Olle Hjortzberg and Ecker Hedberg.<sup>245</sup> Attorney Erik Lidforss, in turn, owned at least four pictures by Swedlund within a collection also containing work by Wilhelm Smith.<sup>246</sup> Another, anonymous, collector who lived in the same village as Lidforss also possessed at least four works by Swedlund. Here, Swedlund was again joined by Hedberg and Smith, as well as Anselm Schultzberg.<sup>247</sup> The presence of multiple works by Swedlund in each collection, together with the recurrence of other artists which were part of Swedlund's own artistic circle, indicates that Swedlund was generally

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<sup>245</sup> Knut Barr, 'Hofintendenten Axel Liljas hem', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1916, p. 148.

<sup>246</sup> Holger Nyblom, 'Liden. Advokat Erik Lidforss hem å Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1915, p. 62.

<sup>247</sup> Waldemar Swahn, 'Ett hem på Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1914, p. 185.

collected within a certain context. Furthermore, both Lilja and Lidforss were – as was Swedlund - members of The St. Erik Association, again underscoring the similarities between the individuals in his collecting audience.<sup>248</sup>

### *Commercial Reception: The Secondary Market*

As mentioned, from 1947 Swedlund's name began to appear more frequently in auction catalogues. This illustrates that there was a continued, posthumous demand for his work and was a logical result from the inability to purchase works directly from the artist. Since these auction catalogues generally did not include estimates, discussion of the commercial interest in Swedlund moves forward to the beginning of the 21st century, when such details are available. When outlining the secondary market in the same manner as the primary market - using the average auction results instead of the catalogue prices and placing these against historic currency values - one can see that on average the cost for a work by Swedlund sold in Sweden has not altered much in the last hundred years.<sup>249</sup> In fact, on average it is slightly more affordable to purchase a work at auction now than it was during the height of Swedlund's career. Where the market does pick up in recent years, however, is in the paintings' sell-through rate, meaning that it is becoming increasingly less likely that a work remains unsold at auction. The rising sell-through rate of the last five years, achieved either by the amount of

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<sup>248</sup> 'Samfundet S:t Erik' is an organisation which promotes the preservation of historical structures in Stockholm and was founded in 1901.

<sup>249</sup> These calculations cover the years 2000-2019 and are based on auction results found on the databases Artnet and Artprice. These databases exclude certain online-only auctions and those results are therefore not considered in this overview.

bidders per lot or by the degree of their competitiveness, is indicative of a shift in the oeuvre's desirability.

Still, one could wonder why it is that, of a career spanning half a century, only little more than 200 paintings are currently recorded. In part, this can be attributed to the artist's high standards. The early works produced in Paris, for example, were destroyed by Swedlund himself due to the low opinion he had of them. Then, there is the fact that Swedlund sometimes sold works through the The Swedish General Art Association's lottery, meaning that paintings could be dispersed across Sweden at random, and might not have been treasured in the same way as when collectors bought them directly from the artist. Lastly, there is the aforementioned, relative financial comfort in which he lived for most of his life. This may have had an impact on his prolificacy, as artistic productivity was a matter of choice rather than need. But no factor impacted the size of Swedlund's oeuvre as we know it today, as much as the tragic occurrence which took place in either the late 1950s or the early 1960s. Of anecdotal, but convincing nature, the story of this event centres around the Swedlund estate which consisted of hundreds of paintings kept in a storage unit in Gävle. As there were no children, nor a spouse to inherit the estate in 1947, it was transferred in its entirety to Swedlund's younger brother Gustaf, who was the estate's custodian until his own death ten years later. Again by descent, the responsibility now fell onto his two sons: Nils and Robert Swedlund. Not knowing how best to deal with this inheritance, they sought the advice of a local dealer who advised them to burn

the lot - which the man subsequently did on their behalf.<sup>250</sup> Destruction of this scale would be detrimental to any artist's estate, but considering the other factors which played a role in the case of Swedlund's productivity, it seems to have been all the more damaging. This story, assuming it is indeed true, markedly alters one's perception of the existing share of the oeuvre. The paintings which did survive, suddenly become survivors, bringing with them an added appreciation and perhaps increased valuation. It should be borne in mind that the story has, to my understanding, never been published before and therefore its impact on the market for Swedlund can only be perceived through the relative scarcity of current supply.

#### *Commercial Reception: The International Market*

The international exhibitions Swedlund participated in led to a couple of notable sales. For example, when the Hungarian minister and art collector Count Andrassy visited the Swedish exhibition in Budapest in 1906-07, he purchased a work by Swedlund depicting a sunset.<sup>251</sup> And the sale of Swedlund's *The Vineyard on the Mountain*, resulting from the 1910 exhibition at Vienna's Hagenbund, was reported on in the Swedish press.<sup>252</sup> But whether Swedlund sold works to local collectors during his prolonged visits abroad, is rather unclear. The rare instances in which a painting has appeared at a local auction outside of

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<sup>250</sup> Claes Holmgren, interviewed by Mattias Vendelmans, 4 June 2022. The anecdote is based on information provided by Katarina Brink (daughter of Nils Swedlund) as well as the local dealer in question.

<sup>251</sup> 'Hazai krónika', *Művészet*, 1908, p. 126.

<sup>252</sup> 'Pelle Swedlund på Hagenbund', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 23 October 1910, p. 9.

Sweden, could be seen as indicators of this practice. Actually, the number of works by Swedlund in European collections could be greater than we think, as he often only signed his canvases with the monogram *PS*. The way Swedlund signed his works could have made it difficult for future owners to identify the artist by name, thus potentially leading to the picture's anonymity. Another indicator of Swedlund's presence in international collections, could be found in the inclusion of his works in the Scandinavian sales conducted at Sotheby's and Christie's in London and New York during the 1980s and 1990s. But were these works really sourced from international collections and, in turn, acquired by international collectors? Pedro Westerdahl of Swedish auction house Bukowskis found, by interviewing one of the specialists active at Christie's during that period, that these sales 'weren't quite as international as the auction firms in London would have us think. Most of the consigned works were, in fact, purchased by Swedes'.<sup>253</sup> The soundness of this statement could be supported by the number of works by Swedlund (and other artists for that matter) which reappeared on the Swedish market after having previously been sold at Christie's and Sotheby's. However, in the context of this thesis I have found three prominent private collections in Britain in which Swedlund makes an appearance, thereby nuancing the idea that the current market for his works is confined to Sweden alone.

Perhaps the sheet of paper on which Swedlund wrote the words of the *Pegasus*-poem holds more truth than was assumed at the beginning of this chapter. In his

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<sup>253</sup> Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Pedro Westerdahl, Zorn and the Art Market, online video recording, YouTube, 4 February 2014, <<https://youtu.be/76d5ad1j0dM>> [accessed 13 August 2022]

best efforts to rise above the success of his debut, Swedlund produced a unique and diverse oeuvre. And despite the challenges brought on by his own temperament, he found exciting ways of exhibiting and selling his works to audiences in Sweden and abroad. But these efforts ultimately only led to a career of moderate stature, as seen from both a critical and commercial point of view. Paradoxically, the positive critical acclaim he had received early on also led to a pigeonhole which would define the rest of his career. It is reflected in the lack of secondary literature dedicated to Swedlund and in our consequently one-sided understanding of the oeuvre. This chapter has also illustrated that change is afoot however, as is demonstrated by Swedlund's inclusion in recent museum exhibitions and by a thriving secondary market.

## Conclusion

The thesis opens with the observation that historic scholarship has, to a large extent, disregarded Pelle Swedlund. As a result, each of the foregoing chapters can be understood as being introductions to the artist's life and his work. It also leads to the original contribution this thesis makes to scholarship, as most descriptions and observations made in these chapters have not been made elsewhere prior to its publication. In the first, biographical chapter, I have outlined Swedlund's life and career path. There is pronounced focus on the years around the *fin de siècle*, as it was this period of which the most extensive primary source material has survived. As such, the biography is centred on Swedlund's artistic coming of age, chronicling his life as a student and the early and mid-stage of his career. The financial resources provided by his family made it possible for him to pursue a career in the arts and enabled him, despite hailing from a provincial town in Sweden, to travel across Europe for prolonged periods of time. These sojourns abroad proved to be of instrumental importance for the development of his artistic framework. Throughout the biography, an attempt is made to create an understanding of the artist's character, as he navigated through bouts of depression and came to grips with a world which was rapidly changing around him. This struck me as a particularly relevant element to discern as it would aid the later discussions of the oeuvre, which proved to be deeply personal and often reflective of his state of mind. The second chapter, which is a discussion of Swedlund's style and technique, has focused on a selection of works in which – in my view – we witness the artist experimenting or making particular progress.

The years Swedlund spent in France in the early 1890s were especially formative for his artistic development, and much of the later work can be retraced to the syntheist visual language which he first encountered and applied during this period. Yet I have also shown that the overall progression of Swedlund's style did not occur in an entirely linear manner, but instead he continuously experimented and migrated between different styles. In contrast, what remains largely consistent throughout his artistic career, is the particular atmosphere which he attempted to conceive on canvas. Following the changeability of style and the consistency of atmosphere, I have argued that Swedlund attached more importance to depicting moods and psychological depth through tonality and composition than representing external reality, which in turn corresponds to the Symbolist character of the oeuvre. This specific interpretation has been discussed in depth in the third chapter. For, despite the fact that, Swedlund did not move amongst or exhibit within Symbolist circles, he did operate within an intellectual framework which aligns with that of other Symbolist artists. Using Gustave Kahn's definition of Symbolism, I have illustrated that Swedlund created works of which the motifs were usually rooted in reality, but which were then reconstructed in function of a particular preconceived Idea, such as 'longing' or 'universal suffering'. The fourth chapter, which consists of an analysis of his exhibitions and their reviews, as well as his commercial success, aimed at increasing the understanding of how the oeuvre was appreciated by others during Swedlund's lifetime and how it has been understood by the public since.

While the thesis aims to make a significant contribution to the scholarship on



Swedlund, its findings are not exhaustive. One examples of areas deserving of further research is the correspondence between Swedlund and Frida Billberg. Analysis of these letters would provide a greater insight into Swedlund's biography during the first half of the 20th century. Also, an in-depth study of the physical objects and their materiality would enhance the ability to arrange the undated works in chronological order within the oeuvre. Furthermore, research into those ephemeral communities of Swedish artists which formed around Swedlund in Bruges, Paris, and Rome would, by proxy, add to the understanding of his own life and career.

As to Swedlund's posthumous obscurity, a multitude of explanations may be proposed. Firstly, the lack of a more well-formed framework to champion and preserve Swedlund's legacy and indeed his estate, is a significant contributor. Then, the act by his contemporaries of critically pigeonholing the oeuvre also appears to have been detrimental for the way the oeuvre was perceived before and after Swedlund's death. While I can only reconfirm the significance of the works produced in Bruges, I have argued that the rest of his output is equally rich in depth and quality and cannot be excluded from a meaningful discussion of the oeuvre. The disproportionate attention given to Swedlund's early career calls to mind a comment Édouard Vuillard once made on the disintegration of Les Nabis: 'The march of progress was so rapid. Society was ready to welcome cubism and surrealism before we had reached what we had imagined as our goal. We found

ourselves in a way suspended in the air'.<sup>254</sup> This sense of unresolved suspension is, in my view, also omnipresent when examining Swedlund's career as an artist. He simply arrived at a point where the oeuvre fell out of favour with his critics. And yet, Swedlund decided to concentrate on pursuing his own, personal conviction regardless. This sense of integrity is increasingly valued today as we recognise an artist who 'had the fortunate ability not to be corrupted by the rush and the restless pursuit typical of his time'.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Pierre Bonnard and Ingrid Rybeck, 'Chez Bonnard a Deauville', *Konstrevy no. 4*, Stockholm, 1937, as referred to in Isabelle Cahn and Guy Cogeval, *Les Nabis et le décor* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay, 2019), p. 65.

<sup>255</sup> 'Han hade en lycklig förmåga att ej låta sig smittas av tidens jäkt och ävlan', Erik Lindberg, 'Pelle Swedlund in memoriam', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 February 1947, p. 9.

## Illustrations



Figure 1. Unknown photographer, Woman with Children Outside of Engesberg Manor, *circa* 1890-1900, photograph, dimensions unknown, County Museum of Gävleborg (<https://digitaltmuseum.se/021018388345/kvinna-med-barn-utanfor-engesbergs-herrgard>)



Figure 2. Carl Artur Samuel Berggren, Pelle Swedlund, 1884, Photograph, dimensions unknown, County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle (<https://digitaltmuseum.se/021018427996/pelle-swedlund>)



Figure 3b. Unknown photographer, The Swedlund siblings (Pelle on the right), undated, photograph, dimensions unknown, Private Collection



Figure 3b. Unknown photographer, The Swedlund Family in the Garden at Engesberg (Tekla wearing a student cap, Pelle wearing the pince-nez, Bibbi Swedlund in the far back next to Pelle, Gucku smoking a cigar, Majken on the far right), circa 1890-1900, photograph, dimensions unknown, County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle (<https://digitaltmuseum.se/021018339165/familjen-swedlund-i-tradgarden-pa-engesberg-norrlandet-tekla-swedlund-i>)



Figure 4. Hugo Salmson, Den lilla axplockerskan, undated, oil on canvas, 74 by 61cm., Nationalmuseum, Stockholm ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hugo\\_Salmson-Den\\_lilla\\_axplockerskan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hugo_Salmson-Den_lilla_axplockerskan.jpg))



Figure 5. Pelle Swedlund, The tower and entrance of St. Helena's Church in Skövde, 1887, sketch, dimensions unknown, Swedlundska Släktarkivet



Figure 6. Unknown photographer, *Pelle Swedlund*, undated, photograph, dimensions unknown, County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle (<https://digitaltmuseum.se/021017015850/per-pelle-adolf-swedlund-fodd-6-oktober-1865-i-gavle-i-gastrikland-gavleborgs>)



Figure 7. Unknown photographer, *A group of students at the Académie Julian*. Swedlund can (possibly) be seen in the centre, resting his head on the shoulder of the model on his left and with Albert von Stockenström (possibly) on his other side, undated, photograph, dimensions unknown, location unknown (<https://oneartymminute.com/lexique-artistique/academie-julian>)



Figure 8. Pascal-Adolphe Dagnan-Bouveret, *Dans la Prairie (In the Meadow)*, 1892, oil on canvas, 95.9 by 90.9cm., Private Collection ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pascal\\_Dagnan-Bouveret\\_-\\_In\\_the\\_Meadow.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pascal_Dagnan-Bouveret_-_In_the_Meadow.jpg))



Figure 8b. Unknown photographer, *Pelle Swedlund, Ecke Hedberg and Alfred Bergström (possibly)*, 1894 ca., photograph, dimensions unknown, Private Collection



Figure 9. Unknown artist, *Portrait of woman wearing necklace of twisted gold and gold hair-pin*, circa 140-160, central portion of limewood panel bearing tempera, 30.5 by 7.4cm., The Trustees of the British Museum, London ([https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA5619](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA5619))



Figure 10. Prince Eugen, *The Forest*, 1892, oil on canvas, 150 by 100.5cm., Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg ([http://empweb34.zetcom.ch/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultLightboxView/result.t1.collection\\_lightbox.\\$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=Slightbox\\_4x5&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F&sp=T&sp=0](http://empweb34.zetcom.ch/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultLightboxView/result.t1.collection_lightbox.$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_4x5&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F&sp=T&sp=0))



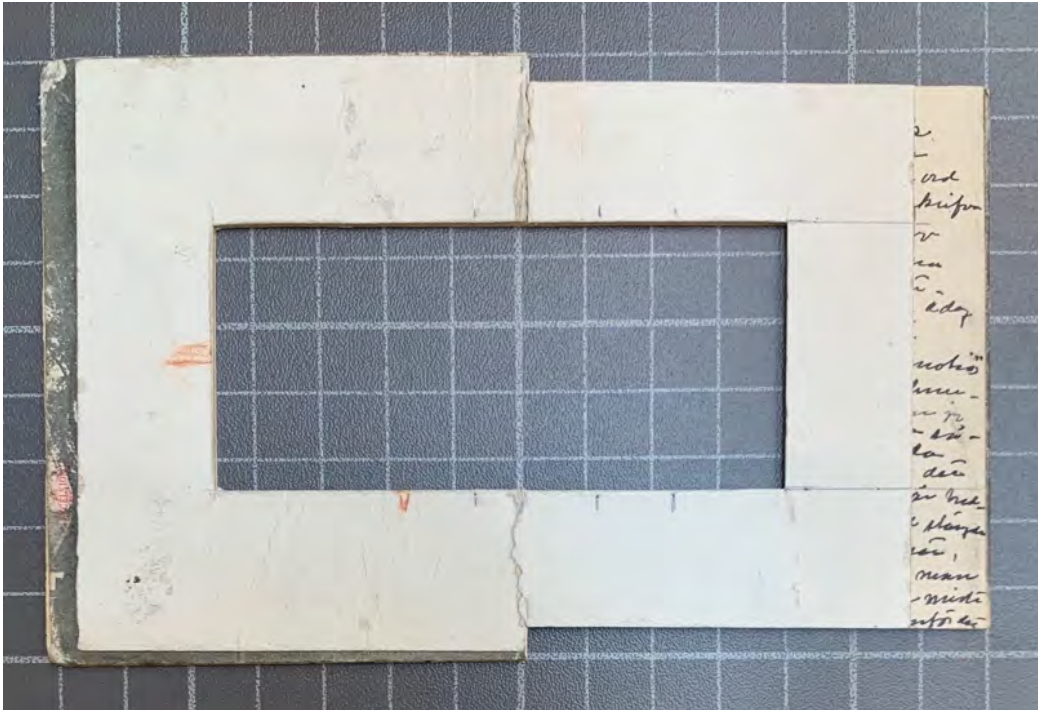


Figure 11. Pelle Swedlund, *Self-made 'looking window'*, undated, cardboard, dimensions unknown, Swedlundska Släktarkivet



Figure 12. Pelle Swedlund, *Sheet of a sketch book*, undated, dimensions unknown, Swedlundska Släktarkivet

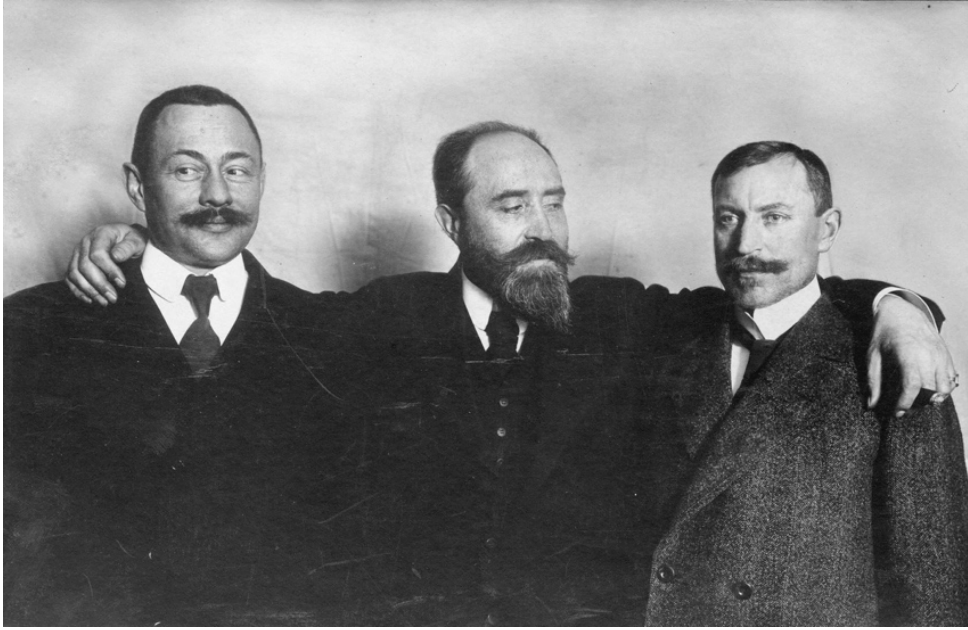


Figure 13. Unknown photographer, *Ecke Hedberg, Pelle Swedlund and Wilhelm Smith*, 1912, photograph, dimensions unknown, County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle (<https://digitaltmuseum.se/021016736460/ecke-hedberg-pelle-swedlund-och-vilhelm-smith-utställningen-varen-1912>)



Figure 14. Vittore Carpaccio, *San Paolo stigmatizzato*, 1520, oil on canvas, 188 by 134cm., Santuario di San Domenico, Chioggia (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SanPaolo-stigmatizzalo-Carpaccio-1520.jpg>)



Figure 15. Unknown photographer, *The Swedlund family grave at Gamla Kyrkogården in Gävle*, undated, photograph, dimensions unknown, Svenska Kyrkan Gävle



Figure 16. Edouard Manet, *A Matador*, 1866-67, oil on canvas, 171.1 by 113cm., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436960>)



Figure 16b. Diego Velázquez, *Infante Don Carlos*, 1626-27, oil on canvas, 209 by 125cm., Museo del Prado, Madrid (<https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/infante-don-carlos/b813eb73-28a8-463b-ade3-75de28fe231a>)



Figure 16c. Edouard Manet, *Corner of a Café-Concert*, probably 1878-80, oil on canvas, 97.1 by 77.5cm., National Gallery, London (<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/edouard-manet-corner-of-a-cafe-concert>)



Figure 17. Paul Gauguin, *Vision of the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)*, 1888, oil on canvas, 72.2 by 91cm., National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/4940>)



Figure 18. Harald Sohlberg, *Natteglod*, 1893, oil on canvas, 31 by 24cm., Private Collection ([http://www.artnet.com/artists/harald-sohlberg/natteglod-t0tQeT1EH\\_fDRI0cnjnqHQ2](http://www.artnet.com/artists/harald-sohlberg/natteglod-t0tQeT1EH_fDRI0cnjnqHQ2))

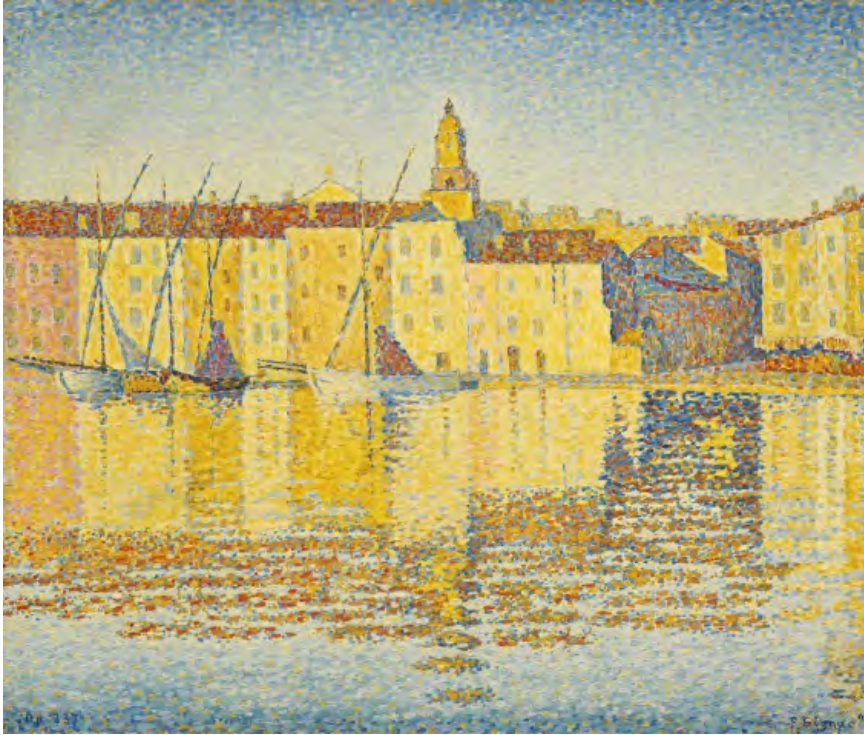


Figure 19. Paul Signac, *Maisons du port, Saint-Tropez*, 1892, oil on canvas, 46.5 by 55.3cm., Private Collection (<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/impressionist-modern-art-evening-sale-n09497/lot.8.html>)



Figure 20. Edvard Munch, *Spring Day on Karl Johan Street*, 1890, oil on canvas, 100 by 80cm., Art Museums of Bergen, Bergen (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MunchFrühlingaufderJohanKarlStrasse.JPG>)



Figure 21. Henri Le Sidaner, *Le petit canal, soir gris, Venise*, 1907, oil on canvas, 65.5 by 81cm., Private Collection (<https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/henri-le-sidaner-le-petit-canal-soir-6251825-details.aspx?from=salesummery&intObjectID=6251825&sid=5b2c34ec-067e-4271-9add-1bc26705af47>)



Figure 22. Henri Matisse, *French Window at Collioure*, 1914, oil on canvas, 116.5 by 89cm., Centre Pompidou, Paris (<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/ressources/oeuvre/5dq7df1>)



Figure 23. Henri Matisse, *Paysage marocain (Acanthes)*, 1912, oil on canvas, 115 by 80cm., Moderna Museet, Stockholm (<https://sis.modernamuseet.se/objects/2197/paysage-marocain-acanthes>)



Figure 24. Joan Miró, *Peinture (Femme au chapeau rouge)*, 1927, oil on canvas, 130 by 97.2cm., Private Collection (<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2020/evening-sale-london/joan-miro-peinture-femme-au-chapeau-rouge?locale=en>)





Figure 25. Pelle Swedlund, *Sheet of a sketch book*, undated, dimensions unknown, Swedlundska Släktarkivet

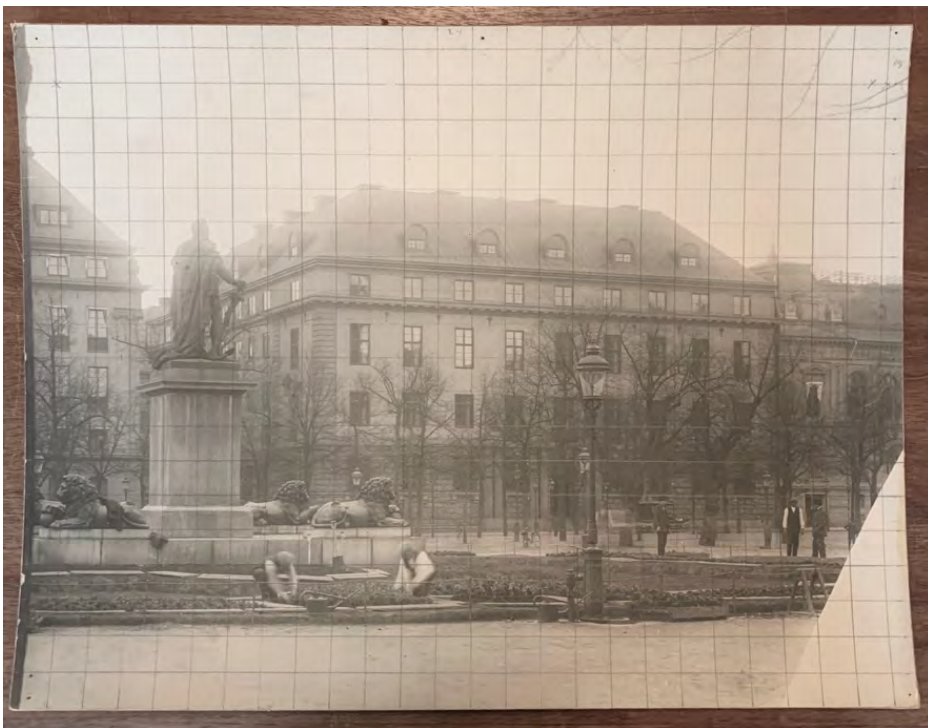


Figure 25b. Pelle Swedlund, *Preparatory study for 'Kungsträdgården'*, undated, pencil on photograph, dimensions unknown, Private Collection



Figure 26. After Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Childhood of Saint Genevieve*, 1897, colour lithograph reproduction of poster, 38.9 by 56.7cm., The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City ([https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/\\_van012199501\\_01/\\_van012199501\\_01\\_0009.php](https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_van012199501_01/_van012199501_01_0009.php))



Figure 27. Joh Johnson, *Bibbi, Majken and Tekla Swedlund*, 1931, photograph, dimensions unknown, County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle (<https://digitaltmuseum.se/021016736466/systrarna-swedlund-vid-kaffebordet-julen-1931-fran-vanster-bibbi-majken>)



Figure 28. After Arnold Böcklin, *Heiliger Hain* reproduced by JJ Weber, 1898, 23.3 by 33cm., black and white woodcut on applied Japon paper, location unknown ([https://www.1stdibs.com/art/prints-works-on-paper/figurative-prints-works-on-paper/arnold-boecklin-after-holy-grove-original-woodcut-jj-weber-1898/id-a\\_4955732/#skuld=a\\_4955732S1](https://www.1stdibs.com/art/prints-works-on-paper/figurative-prints-works-on-paper/arnold-boecklin-after-holy-grove-original-woodcut-jj-weber-1898/id-a_4955732/#skuld=a_4955732S1))



Figure 29. Paul Gauguin, *The Universe is Created (L'Univers est créé)*, from *Fragrance (Noa Noa)*, 1893-94, woodcut on china paper, block: 20.3 by 35.4cm., sheet: 27.3 by 42.4cm., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/337886>)



Figure 30. Olof Sager-Nelson, *Princess Maleine*, 1895, oil on canvas, 60 by 50cm., Private Collection (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/amber-tree/32549590605>)



Figure 31. Magnus Enckell, *Fantasy*, 1895, gouache, chalk and pencil on paper, 47 by 44cm., Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki (<https://www.kansallisgalleria.fi/fi/object/422655>)



Figure 32. Edvard Munch, *Vision*, 1892, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, The Munch Museum, Oslo (<https://munch.emuseum.com/objects/2901/visjon>)



Figure 33. Pelle Swedlund, *Swan and Sun*, undated, watercolour and pastel on paper, 39 by 29cm., Private Collection



Figure 34. Carl Larsson, cartoon parodying Notke's 'St George and the Dragon', as illustrated in Kirk Varnedoe's 'Northern Light. Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting 1880-1910', New York, 1982, p. 41



Figure 34b. Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Jewish Cemetery*, 1654 or 1655, oil on canvas, 142.2 by 189.2cm., Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit (<https://dia.org/collection/jewish-cemetery-60034>)



Figure 35. Pelle Swedlund, *Gamla lind vid Engesberg, Gävle yttre fjärd*, 1901, pencil on paper, 60 by 46cm., Private Collection (<https://www.barnebys.se/slutpriser/objekt/pelle-swedlund-kolteckning-l49WeXlW4>)



Figure 36. Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, undated, oil on canvas, 146 by 237.5cm., Tate, London (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-snow-storm-hannibal-and-his-army-crossing-the-alps-n00490>)



Figure 36b. Caspar David Friedrich, *Woman before the Rising Sun (Woman before the Setting Sun)*, circa 1818, oil on canvas, 22 by 30cm., Museum Folkwang, Essen ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar\\_David\\_Friedrich\\_-\\_Woman\\_before\\_the\\_Rising\\_Sun\\_\(Woman\\_before\\_the\\_Setting\\_Sun\)\\_-\\_WGA08253.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Woman_before_the_Rising_Sun_(Woman_before_the_Setting_Sun)_-_WGA08253.jpg))



Figure 37. Vincent Van Gogh, *Wheatfield with Reaper*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.2 by 92.7cm., Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0049V1962>)



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## **Appendix 1: List of Painted Works**

For the ease of using this listing as an accompaniment to the thesis, the works are ordered by inventory number. The inventory number itself only indicates the order in which works were added to the inventory and thus, this listing does not reflect a chronological or thematic order. Any gaps in the numbering are due to the exclusion of works on paper and the exclusion of works which have been merely attributed to Swedlund.

In collating this overview I have also made notes on provenance, exhibition history, and literature for each work, as well as included multiple images and notes on condition where possible. For the appendix, I have decided to omit these additional details as they are irrelevant for the discussions within the thesis.



INV-0001  
*Gävle Castle*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
129 by 137cm.  
Painted *circa* 1930.

Provenance

Family of the artist (sold: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 23 February 2021, lot 589)  
Private Collection, Gotland





INV-0002

*Night at the Swan's Nest*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on canvas

58 by 69cm.

Painted *circa* 1900.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 June 2013, lot 1843

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 3 March 2020, lot 781

Private Collection (acquired at the above sale)



INV-0003

*The Riddarholmen Church (Riddarholmskyrkan)*

signed with the monogram (lower left) and dated '14' (lower right)

oil on canvas

160 by 120cm.

Painted in 1914.

Provenance

Sale: Sotheby's, London, 25 March 1987, lot 81

Sale: Christie's, London, 2 October 1992, lot 84

Sale: Christie's, London, 17 June 1993, lot 32

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 26-28 November 2008, lot 2132

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 3 November 2016, lot 368465

Private Collection (acquired at the above sale and sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 11 December 2019, lot 393)



INV-0004  
*The Sun Worshipper (Soldyrkaren)*

signed with the monogram and dated '1928' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
65 by 76cm.  
Painted in 1928.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 December 2019, lot 2416



INV-0006

*Sunset With Sailing Boat (recto); Sunset on the Archipelago (verso)*

oil on canvas  
21.5 by 27cm.  
Painted *circa* 1900.

Provenance

Family of the artist (until 2019)

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, 27 August 2019, lot 1128



INV-0007

*Ruin on the Campagna (Ruin på campagnan)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on board

47 by 34.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 3-6 December 2002, lot 77

Sale: Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 4 February 2003, lot 727 (possibly)

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 18 May 2009, lot 8361

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 29 January 2019, lot 875



INV-0008

*The Old Woman at the Stairs (Gumman i trappan)*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund', inscribed 'Concarneau' and dated '94' (lower right)

oil on canvas

55 by 43cm.

Painted in 1894.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 2 October 2018, lot 161

Sale: Stockholm Auktionsverk, Auktionsverk, 2 July 2019, lot 653888

Galerie Michel Descours, Lyon (by 2021)



INV-0009  
*The Temple (Templet)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas  
74 by 63cm.

Provenance

Church of Sweden, Gävle (sold: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 7-10 June 2017, lot 304)  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 14 June 2020, lot 1189110



INV-0010

*An Old Letter* (recto); *Interior* (verso) (*Ett gammalt bref* (recto); *Interiör* (verso))

signed and dated 'PS 09' (lower centre); titled, signed and numbered '11' on a label on the reverse of the stretcher bar.

oil on canvas

93 x 109 cm

Painted in 1909.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 7-10 June 2017, lot 305

Private Collection, Gotland





INV-0011  
*Church Ruin by the Sea (Kyrkoruin vid havet)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas  
72 by 93cm.

Provenance

Church of Sweden, Gävle (sold: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 7-10 June 2017, lot 306)  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 6 December 2018, lot 354



INV-0012  
*Street in Bruges*

signed with the monogram and dated '1924' (lower centre)  
oil on board  
105 by 71cm.  
Painted in 1924.

Provenance

Church of Sweden, Gävle (sold: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 4 April 2017, lot 1392)  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0013

*The Slums, Winter Evening in Chioggia (Fattigmanshem, Vinterqväll i Chioggia)*

signed with the monogram and dated '03'

oil on canvas

62 by 51cm.

Painted in 1903.

Provenance

Gustaf Swedlund

Bengt Ivar Robert Swedlund (by descent from the above and sold: Christie's, London, 24 March 1988, lot 236)

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 17 January 2016, lot 739403

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 24 January 2017, lot 115



INV-0014

*The White Bank in Visby (Vita banken i Visby)*

signed with the monogram (lower left); signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled on a label on the reverse  
oil on board  
53 by 59cm.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, 27 September 2016, lot 789  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0015  
*Sunset, Chioggia*

signed with the monogram (lower right), inscribed 'CHIOGGIA' and dated '1903' (lower left), inscribed 'Av Farbror Pelle Swedlund den 14 december 1941' on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
51 by 63cm.  
Painted in 1903.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 9-12 June 2015, lot 120



INV-0016

*The Lakeside Bench (Bänken vid Sjön)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)

oil on board

29.5 by 42.5cm.

Provenance

Probably gifted by the artist *circa* 1920-30.

Private Collection, by descent from the above (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 4-6 June 2013, lot 1845)

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammar, Uppsala, 17 Februari 2015, lot 639



INV-0017

*Morning in the gardens of Villa Borghese (Morgon i Borgheses park)*

signed with the monogram and inscribed 'Roma'

oil on canvas

96 by 81cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholm Auktionsverket, Stockholm, 25 November 1997, lot 1075

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 1-4 December 2009, lot 142



INV-0018  
*The Blue Girl (Blå flickan)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
51 by 36cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 13 May 2020, lot 770700





INV-0019

*Sunset*

signed with the monogram (lower right) and dated '08' (lower left)

oil on canvas laid down on board

21 by 27cm.

Painted in 1908.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverket, Stockholm, 10 May 2020, lot 765435



INV-0020

*Study Fiskebäckskil (Studie Fiskebäckskil)*

dedicated and dated 'till Rickard från farbror Pelle 13/5 30' and titled 'Studie Fiskebäckskil' on the reverse

oil on board

55 by 45cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 24 February 2020, lot 740933

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 4 March 2020, lot 745549



INV-0021  
*Sunset over Visby*

dedicated and signed 'Till Rickard och hans brud med varm välönskan och vänskap från Pelle Swedlund' on the reverse  
oil on board  
47 by 55cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 24 February 2020, lot 740925 (titled 'Motiv från Visby')



INV-0022

*View From Smögen Towards Hållö Lighthouse (Utsikt från Smögen mot Hållö fyr)*

signed with the monogram and dated '1911' (lower left); signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled 'Utsikt från Smögen mot Hållö fyr' on the reverse

oil on board

118 by 92cm.

Painted in 1911.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 15 December 2014, lot 284119

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 19 June 2019, lot 655934

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 27 January 2020, lot 729284



INV-0025

*The Slums, Winter Evening in Chioggia (Fattigmanshem, Vinterqväll i Chioggia)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)

oil on canvas

80 by 60cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms auktionsverk, Stockholm, 28 February 2019, lot 618988

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0026  
*Gävle Castle*

signed with the monogram and dated '1930' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
130 by 136cm.  
Painted in 1930.

Provenance

SEB Trygg och Liv

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 22 July 2015, lot 320907

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 October 2018, lot 577674



INV-0027  
*Capri (Capri)*

signed with the monogram, inscribed 'Capri' and dated '98' (lower right); signed 'Pelle Swedlund', inscribed 'Capri' and dated '1989' on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
46 by 37cm.  
Painted in 1898.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 13 September 2017, lot 482909



INV-0028  
*Moonlight Over the Water (Månsken över vatten)*

oil on canvas  
28 by 46cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 7 December 2016, lot 426859





INV-0030

*Landfill Outside of Gävle (Afstjälpningsplats utanför Gefle)*

signed with the monogram and dated '96' (lower right) and titled and dated on the back of the stretcher bar.

oil on canvas

58 by 73cm.

Painted in 1896.

Provenance

Gustaf Swedlund

Bengt Ivar Robert Swedlund (by descent from the above and sold: Christie's, London, 24 March 1988, lot 235)

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 6 January 2016, lot 739414

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 July 2016, lot 393270

Sale: Gästriklands Auktionskammare, Gävle, 23 February 2019, lot 1015676



INV-0031  
*Sunset*  
oil on board  
24 by 40cm.

Provenance

Gävle Museum, until February 1960  
Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 May 2016, lot 382330  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 5 Augustus 2019, lot 1168450  
Private Collection

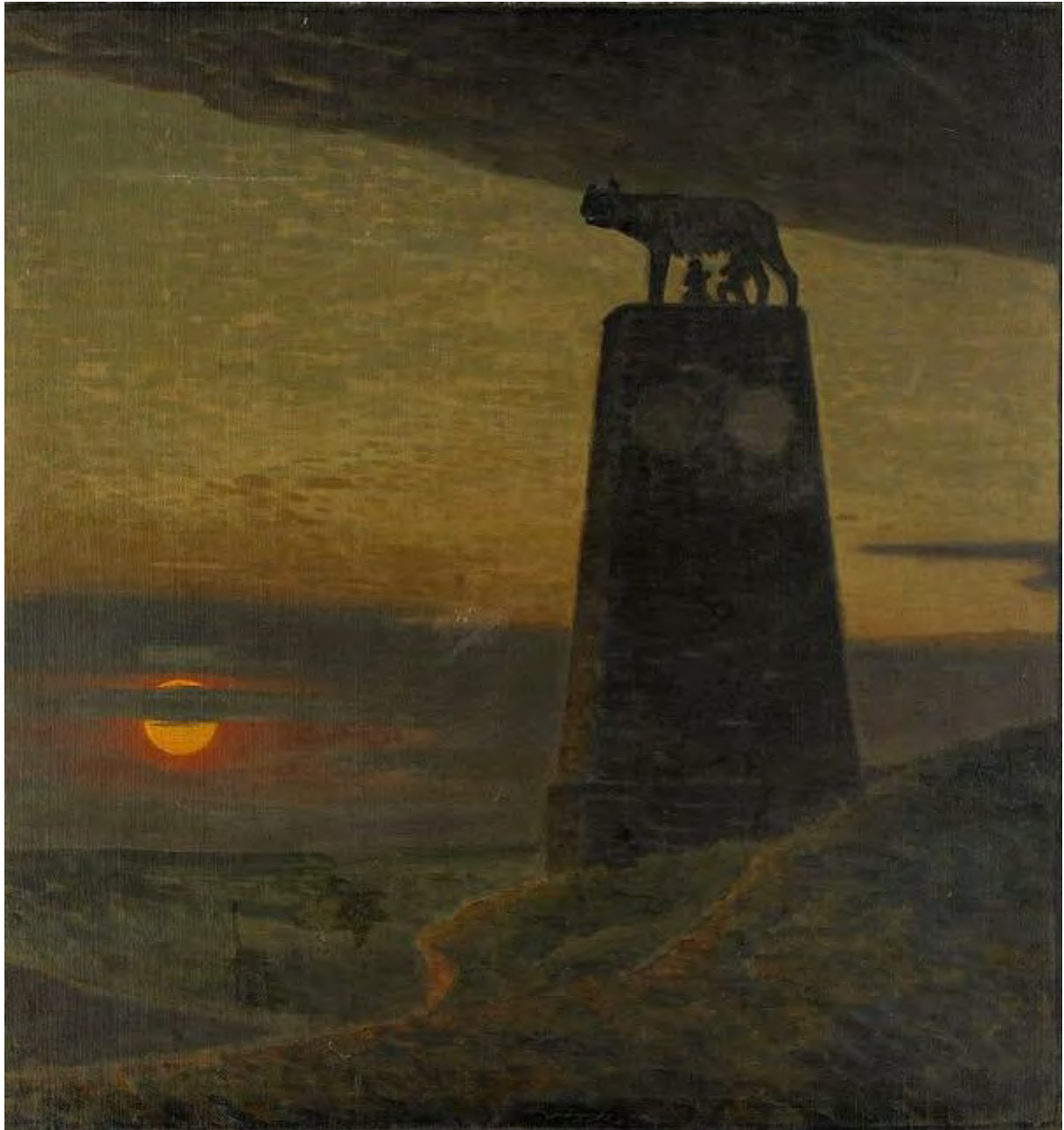


INV-0032  
*Interior with Figure*

signed with the monogram and dated '03' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
60 by 71 cm.  
Painted in 1903.

Provenance

Sale: Dalecarlia Art Fair, Börlänge, 1989



INV-0033

*The She-Wolf of Rome (Roms varginna) or Le soleil de Rome, Campagna Romana*

signed with the monogram (lower left?)

oil on canvas

103.5 by 98.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 27-30 November 2007, lot 121

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 7 December 2011, lot 1997

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 3 March 2016, lot 368467



INV-0034  
*Sunset on the Baltic Sea (Solnedgång på Östersjön)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
59 by 41.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357557



INV-0035

*The Sun Worshipper (Soldyrkaren)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on canvas

58 by 73cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357546



INV-0036  
*Interior*

signed with the monogram (upper right) and inscribed on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
58 by 48cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357551



INV-0037  
*The Artist's Parents*

inscribed indistinctly 'P. Swedlund' on the stretcher bar  
oil on canvas  
122 by 152cm.  
Painted *circa* 1929-30.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357558





INV-0038

*The Lakeside Bench (Bänken vid Sjön)*

signed with the monogram (lower left) and dated '04' (lower right)

oil on board

29 by 46.5cm.

Painted in 1904.

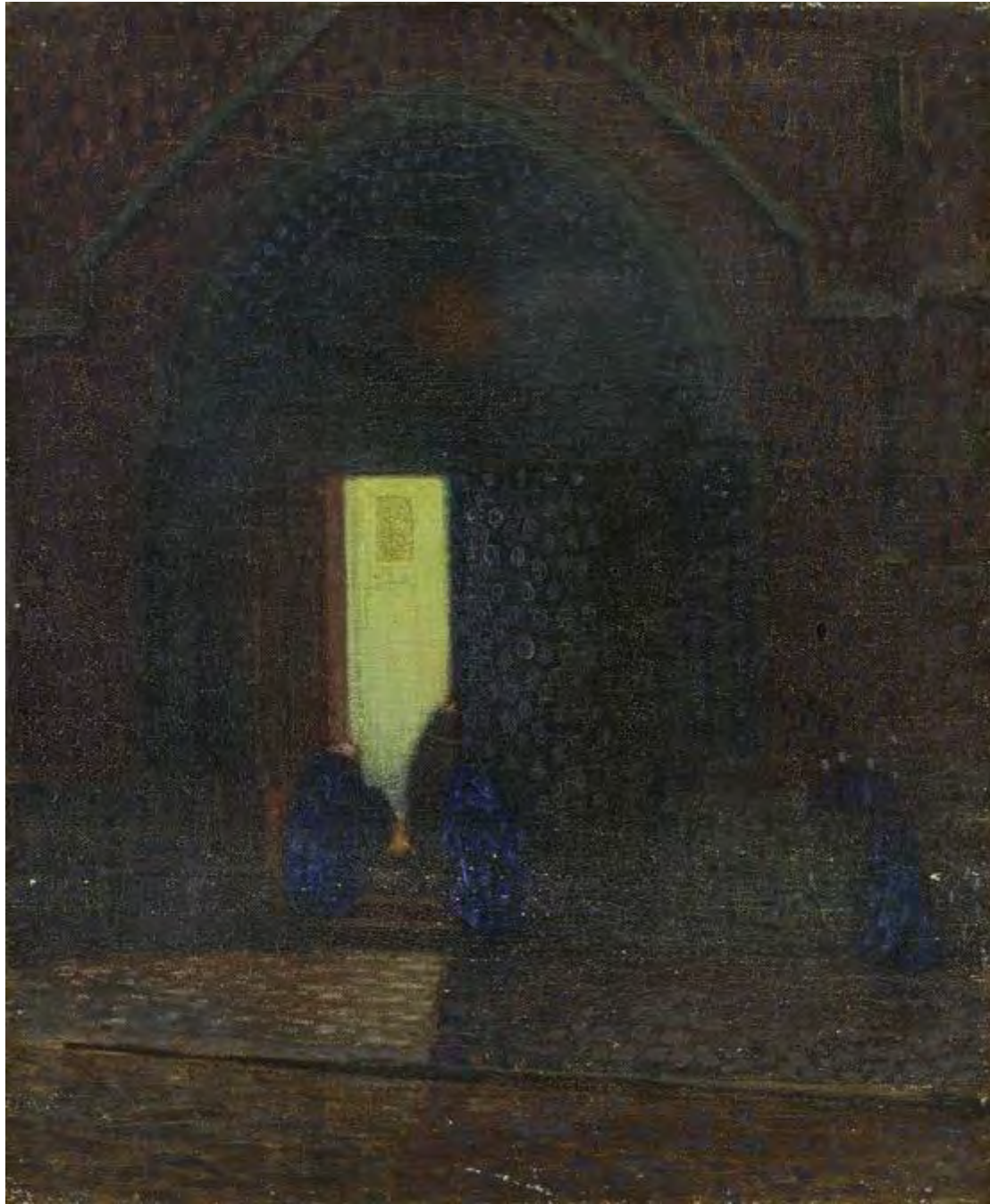
Provenance

Sale: Nordén, Stockholm, 23 April 1997, lot 167

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357552

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 20 May 2021, lot 400

Private Collection



INV-0039  
*Church Gate in Bruges (Kyrkport i Brügge)*

signed  
oil on canvas  
70 by 57cm.

Provenance  
Stockholm Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357554  
Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188934)



INV-0040

*By the Swan's Nest, Bruges (Vid Svanboet, Brügge)*

signed with the monogram (lower left) and dated '24' (lower right); titled, signed, dated and dedicated 'Till min lilla ljusa Romvän Märtha med varm välönskan från farbror Pelle' on the reverse

oil on board

57 by 68cm.

Painted in 1924.

Provenance

Konsthandel Moser & Klang, Stockholm

Sale: Stockholm Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357550

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 21 June 2018, lot 1039020



INV-0041

*Sunset at the Fortress - Rainstorm (Solnedgång vid Borgen - regnby)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on canvas  
50 by 61.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowski Auktioner, 1987, lot 248

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 3 April 2018, lot 1036835

Private Collection



INV-0042  
*Street in Visby, Drottensgatan (Visbygata, Drottensgatan)*

signed with the monogram and dated '19' (lower left); titled and signed on the reverse  
oil on board  
60 by 50cm.  
Painted in 1919.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357547



INV-0043

*The Desolate House, Bruges (Det öde huset, Brügge)*

indistinctly signed (lower left)

oil on canvas

57 by 82cm.

Painted in 1898.

Provenance

Konsthandel Moser & Klang, Stockholm

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357549

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0044  
*Evening at Bönan (Afton vid Bönan)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on board  
21.5 by 26.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357545



INV-0045  
*Summer Night on Högfället (Sommarnatt på Högfället)*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '97' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
91.5 by 61.5cm.  
Painted in 1897.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357544





INV-0046  
*On the West Coast (På Västkusten)*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled on a label on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
37 by 46.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 10 March 2016, lot 357556



INV-0047

*The Beguinage Church, Study (Beguinagekyrkan, studie)*

signed with the monogram and dated '99' (lower left)

oil on canvas

32.5 by 38cm.

Painted in 1899.

Provenance

Ejnar Nielsen

Vasa Konst Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 May 2015, lot 332359)



INV-0048  
*Gentpoort*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
52.5 by 63.5cm.

Provenance

Private Collection, Storängen (acquired by 1914)  
Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 23 December 2013, lot 221475

Literature

Waldemar Swahn, 'Ett hem på Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1914, illustrated p. 193.

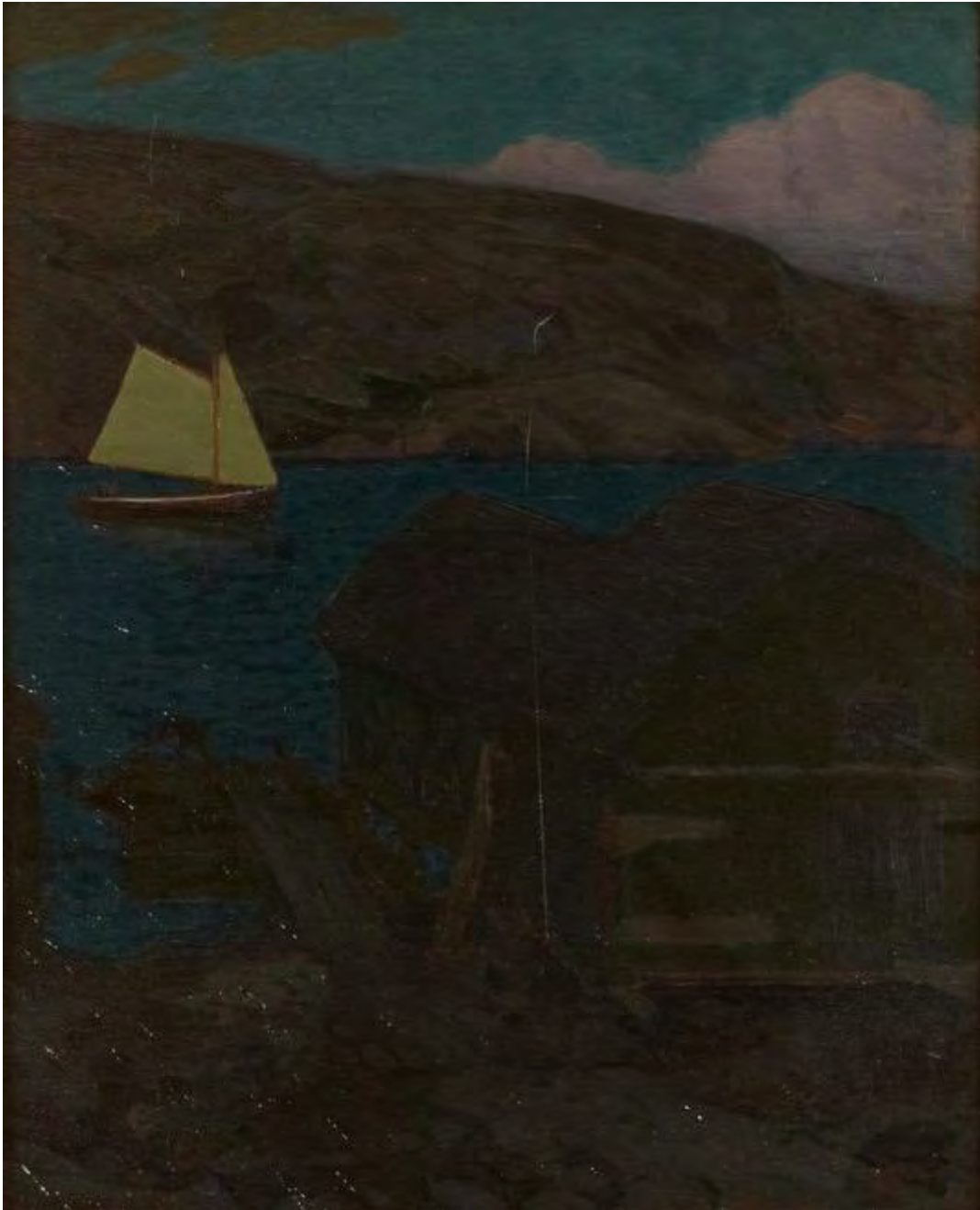


INV-0049  
*Moonlight (Månsken)*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund'  
pastel on canvas  
40.5 by 66cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 15 September 2013, lot 199575



INV-0050

*Klockarn's Boathouses, Fiskebäckskil (Klockarns sjöbodar, Fiskebäckskil)*

signed with the monogram and dated '96' (lower right)

oil on canvas

50.5 by 62.5cm.

Painted in 1896.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 15 September 2013, lot 199573

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0051

*The Riksbank - Autumn Evening (Riksbanken-Höstkväll) (recto), Bridge (verso)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas; charcoal on canvas

59 by 70cm.

Painted *circa* 1917.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 30 June 2013, lot 193435

Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188949)



INV-0053  
*The Mountain Cabin*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
35 by 49cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 18 July 2012, lot 141360  
Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188977)



INV-0054

*The Sleep of The Swans, Bruges (Svanornas sömn, Brügge)*

signed with the monogram (lower left); signed, titled, and inscribed 'N. 2' on the back of the stretcher bar

oil on canvas

75 by 91cm.

Painted *circa* 1900.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 28-30 May 2008, lot 2126

Private Collection, Gotland





INV-0055  
*Sunset, Visby*  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
41.5 by 52cm.  
Painted *circa* 1910.

Provenance  
Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 24 May 2011, lot 2406)



INV-0056  
*House in Gävle (Gäfle hus)*

signed with the monogram and dated '95' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
39 by 62.5cm.  
Painted in 1895.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 25 May 2011, lot 2409)



INV-0057

*Church Ruin by the Sea (Kyrkoruin vid havet)*

signed with the monogram inscribed 'visby' and dated '21' (lower left)

oil on canvas

50 by 60cm.

Painted in 1921.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 7 December 2011, lot 1996



INV-0059  
*The Cloud (Molnet)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on board  
35 by 50cm.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 7 December 2011, lot 1999)



INV-0060  
*Landscape*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
32.5 by 41cm.

Provenance

Private Collection

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 22 July 2020, lot 1188980



INV-0061  
*Manor House*

oil on board  
31 by 44cm.  
Painted *circa* 1905.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland

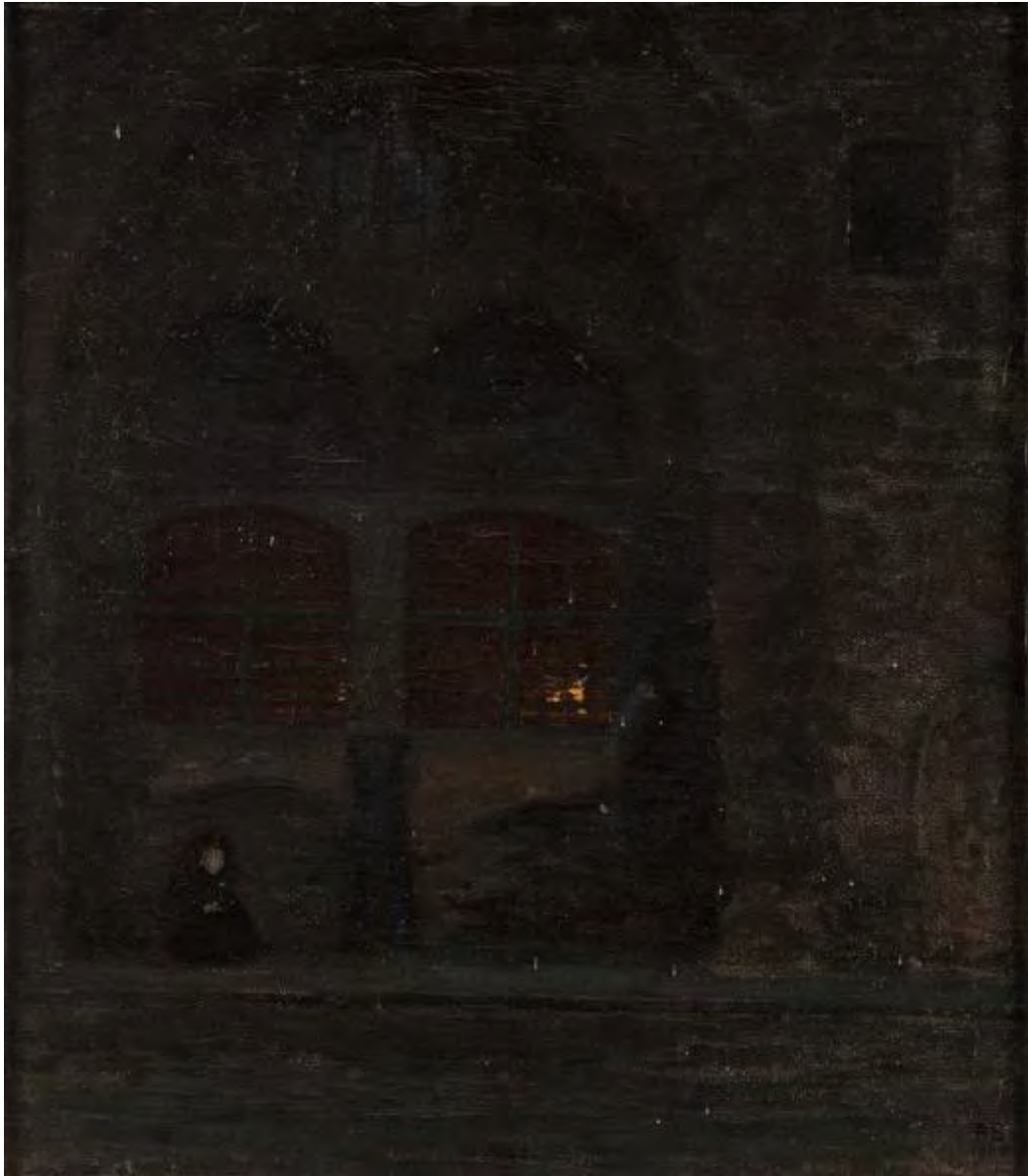


INV-0062  
*Vanitas*

signed with the monogram and dated '97' (upper right)  
oil on canvas  
37.5 by 54cm.  
Painted in 1897.

Provenance

Private Collection, Gävle  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188954  
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (acquired in 2020 through the Hedda and N.D. Qvists Memorial Trust)



INV-0063

*The Hospital of St. John, Bruges (Hôpital de S:t Jean, Brügge)*

signed with the monogram and dated '1900'; signed and titled on the reverse

oil on canvas

56 by 48.5cm.

Painted in 1900.

Provenance

Herman Neanders Collection, Gävle Moser & Klang, Stockholm

Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188938)





INV-0064

*Sunset on the Mountain (Solnedgång på fjället)*

signed with the monogram and dated '1911'; signed, titled and numbered 'III' on a label on the back of the stretcher bar

oil on canvas

115 by 150cm.

Painted in 1911.

Provenance

Estate of the artist (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 December 2012, lot 2197)

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0065  
*Sunset* (recto); *Figures in a Forest* (verso)

oil on board  
22.5 by 31.5cm.

Provenance

Estate of the artist (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 December 2012, lot 2198)



INV-0066

*In the Garden at Engesberg*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on canvas

90 by 67cm.

Provenance

Estate of the artist (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 December 2012, lot 2199)

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0067  
*Prometheus*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas  
81.5 by 62cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 June 2013, lot 1785  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0068

*Evening in Brittany - Decorative Study (Qväll i Bretagne - dek. studie)*

signed 'P Swedlund' (lower left); signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled on a label on the reverse

oil on canvas

27 by 45.5cm.

Painted *circa* 1894.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 5 June 2013, lot 1844



INV-0069  
*West Coast Fjord (Västkustfjärd)*

signed with the monogram (lower right); signed 'Pelle Swedlund', titled and numbered '4' on a label on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
60 by 73cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 4 December 2013, lot 2077



INV-0070

*At Gripsholm (Ute i Gripsholm)*

signed with the monogram (lower left) and dated '1913' (lower right); signed, titled and inscribed 'Banergatan 13 Stockholm' on the stretcher bar

oil on canvas

96 by 83.5cm.

Painted in 1913.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 4 December 2013, lot 2078

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 17 September 2018, lot 1075718



INV-0071  
*Sunset on the Mountain (Solnedgång på fjället)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
59 by 80cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 3 June 2015, lot 2002





INV-0072  
*The Lighthouse (Fyren)*

titled on the reverse  
oil on board  
21 by 27cm.  
Painted *circa* 1986.

Provenance

Family of the artist (until 1900)  
Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 12 June 2019, lot 1286



INV-0073  
*Woman in Concarneau*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund', inscribed 'Concarneau' and dated '94' (lower right)  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
73 by 46cm.  
Painted in 1894.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 21 October 2008, lot 9005  
Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188968)



INV-0075  
*Male Nude*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '-90' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
80 by 56cm.  
Painted in 1890.

Provenance

Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188985)

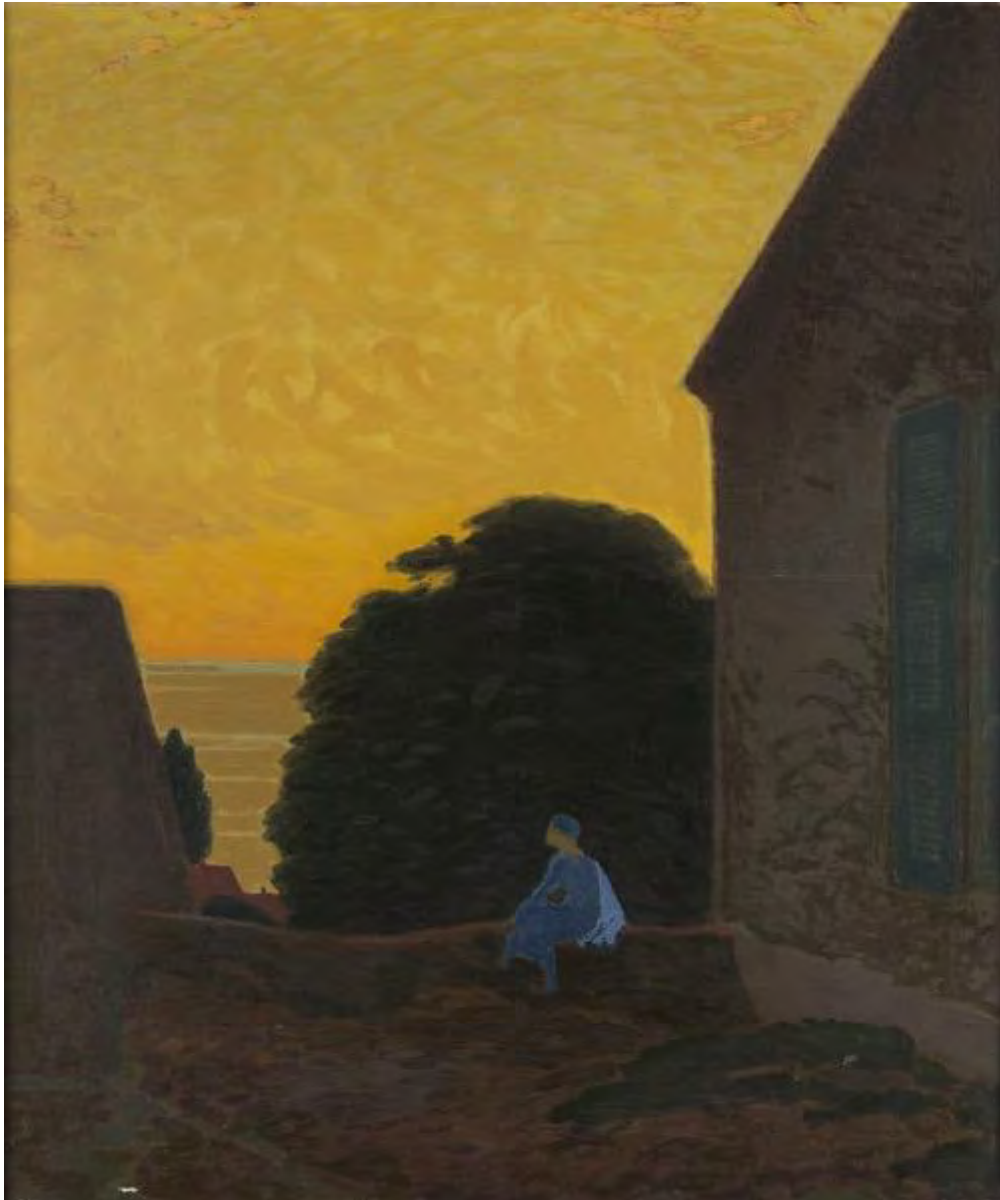


INV-0076  
*Evening, the West Coast (Kväll, Vestkusten)*

signed with the monogram and dated '96' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
26 by 42cm.  
Painted in 1896.

Provenance

Jan Eric Löwenadler  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 April 2018, lot 1041171  
Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 14 March 2020, lot 782



INV-0077  
*The Blue Girl (Blå flickan)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas  
85 by 70cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm 2-5 December 2003, lot 153  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 29 January 2019, lot 1129796  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 1 November 2021, lot 1356600



INV-0078  
*Street in Bruges*

oil on board  
24 by 32cm.

Provenance

Estate of the artist  
Bengt Swedlund, Stockholm  
Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188969)



INV-0079  
*Romulus and Remus (Romulus och Remus)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
105 by 102cm.

Provenance

Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188917)  
Galerie Michel Descours, Lyon (by 2021)



INV-0080

*The Fortress on the Mountain (Borgen på berget (Montefiascone))*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas

52 by 63cm.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 28-30 November 2007, lot 2292)

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188944





INV-0082  
*Square of Charles XII (Karl XII:s torg)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on board  
62 by 50cm.

Provenance  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 4 August 2019, lot 1075696



INV-0083

*August Night on the Baltic Sea (Augustinatt på Östersjön)*

oil on board

33 by 40cm.

Painted *circa* 1909.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 26-28 May 2003, lot 119

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 28-30 May 2008, lot 2125)

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 4 September 2018, lot 1075693



INV-0085

*The Desolate House, Bruges (Det öde huset, Brügge)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on canvas

59 by 83cm.

Painted *circa* 1898.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 8 May 2018, lot 1047291

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0086  
*Sunset*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
48 by 66cm.  
Painted *circa* 1905.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 29 November 2007, lot 2293)  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 20 July 2019, lot 1075698



INV-0087  
*On the Threshold (På tröskeln)*

signed  
oil on canvas  
84 by 70cm.

Provenance

Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188965)  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0088  
*The Staircase*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil and pastel on board  
127 by 104cm.  
Painted before 1925.

Provenance

Estate of the Artist  
Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 25 May 2020, lot 1188924)  
Private Collection (acquired at the above sale)



INV-0089

*Square of Charles XII (Karl XII:s torg)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)

oil on board  
57 by 47cm.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 28-30 May 2008, lot 2123)

Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 23 May 2020, lot 1188947)



INV-0090

*The Beguinage (Le Béguinage)*

signed with the monogram (lower right); signed and titled 'Le Béguinage Brügge' on the stretcher bar  
oil on canvas

73 by 92cm.

Painted *circa* 1898.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 20 October 2008, lot 8614

Private Collection, Gävle (sold: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 25 May 2020, lot 1188966)

Private Collection (acquired at the above sale)





INV-0091  
*Sunset*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
27 by 41cm.

Provenance

Estate of the artist

Private Collection, Visby (acquired by May 1995)

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 29 March 2021, lot 1188960

Private Collection (acquired at the above sale)



INV-0093

*Door in the Park (Dörr i parken)*

signed with the monogram and dated '13' (lower right); dedicated 'Till Aggas Dahl på 50 årsdagen med varm hälsning från Pelle Swedlund' on the reverse

oil on canvas

79 by 65cm.

Painted in 1913.

Provenance

August Dahl, Svängsta

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 28 October 2016, lot 838031

Private Collection

Literature

Christian Faerber et al., *Konst i svenska hem*, vol. II, band 4, Gothenburg, 1942-43, no. 306, illustrated p. 212 (titled 'Röd vägg med dörr')

*Katalog öfver Baltiska utställningen i Malmö. Konstafdelning*, Malmö, 1914, no. 511, p. 38



INV-0094  
*Rome (Rom)*

signed with the monogram, dated '1904' and inscribed 'ROMA' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
86 by 107cm.  
Painted in 1904.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 1 October 2016, lot 835517  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0095  
*Portrait of a Woman*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '88' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
35 by 30cm.  
Painted in 1888.

Provenance

Sale: Gästriklands Auktionskammare, Gävle, 11 June 2015, lot 273548



INV-0096  
*Portrait of a Man*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund', inscribed 'Engesberg' and dated '88' (lower right), inscribed 'Tillhör Pelle Swedlu' on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
27.5 by 22cm.  
Painted in 1888.

Provenance

Sale: Auktionshuset Kolonn, Sundbyberg, 27 December 2017, lot 745360



INV-0097

*Sunset*

signed with the monogram and dated '90' (lower right)

oil on canvas

17.8 by 21cm.

Painted in 1890.

Provenance

Sale: Gästriklands Auktionskammare, Gävle, 29 June 2015, lot 273547



INV-0100

*Church Ruin by the Sea, Variation no. 3 (Kyrkoruin vid havet, variation no. 3)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on board

85 by 96cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 2-5 December 2003, lot 156

Sale: Auktionshuset Kolonn, Sundbyberg, 26 December 2017, lot 744443

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0102  
*Moonlight Landscape (Månskenlandskap)*

inscribed with the monogram on the reverse of the frame  
oil on canvas  
37 by 55cm.

Provenance

Församlingshus Staffans Hus at Brynäs, Gävle  
Sale: Gästriklands Auktionskammare, Gävle, 30 November 2020, lot 1520326  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired at the above sale)





INV-0103

*Summer Evening on the Mountain (Sommarkväll på fjället)*

signed with the monogram (lower right) and dated '1911' (lower left); signed and inscribed on an old label on the reverse

99 by 80cm.

Painted in 1911.

Provenance

Erik Lidforss, Storängen (acquired by 1915)

Sale: Auktionsverket, Stockholm, 16 October 1989, lot 346

Sale: Christie's, London, 29 March 1990, lot 240

Literature

Holger Nyblom, 'Liden. Advokat Erik Lidforss hem å Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1915, illustrated p. 64



INV-0104  
*Visions of Terror (Skräcksyner)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on board  
64.7 by 81.3cm.

Provenance

Sale: Christie's, London, 6 October 1989, lot 127



INV-0105

*Church Ruin by the Sea, Variation no. 6 (Kyrkoruin vid havet, variation no. 6)*

signed with the monogram and inscribed on the reverse 'Variation no. 6'

oil on canvas

72.4 by 92.7cm.

Painted *circa* 1920.

Provenance

Gustaf Swedlund

Bengt Ivar Robert Swedlund (by descent from the above)



INV-0106

*James' Church (Jakobs Kyrka)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas

107 by 87cm.

Painted *circa* 1914.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Christie's, London, 24 March 1988, lot 240)

Private Collection (purchased at the above sale and sold: Sotheby's, London, 13 June 2002, lot 194)

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 26 May 2005, lot 2099

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 30 May - 2 June 2006, lot 107

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 29 May 2008, lot 2204



INV-0107

*Sunset Over The Mountain (Solnedgång över bergen)*

signed with the monogram and dated '97' (lower right)

oil on canvas

36.8 by 50.8cm.

Painted in 1897.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 4-6 December 2001, lot 238

Elisabeth Hylander

Sale: Christie's, London, 15 May 2008, lot 95



INV-0108  
*Church Ruin by the Sea (Kyrkoruin vid havet)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
84.5 by 96.5cm.

Provenance  
Sale: Sotheby's, London, 25 March 1987, lot 79



INV-0109  
*Autumn in Jämtland (Höst i Jämtland)*

oil on board  
36.5 by 24.3cm.  
Painted *circa* 1896-97.

Provenance

Gustaf Swedlund  
Bengt Ivar Robert Swedlund (by descent from the above and sold: Christie's, London 24 March 1988,  
lot 237)



INV-0110  
*Street Corner in Fiskebäckskil (Gathörn i Fiskebäckskil)*

signed with the monogram (lower right); signed and inscribed on an old label on the reverse  
82.9 by 96.5cm.

Provenance

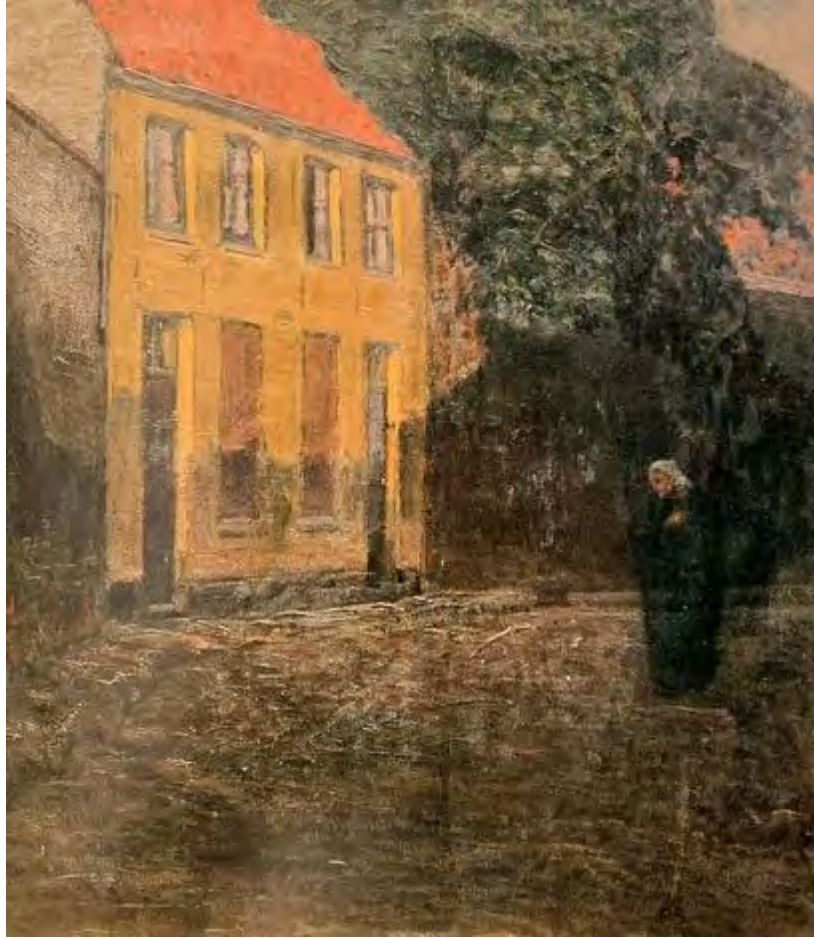
Gustaf Swedlund

Bengt Ivar Robert Swedlund (by descent from the above and sold: Christie's, London, 24 March 1988, lot 238)

Literature

Tony Curtis, *The Lyle Official Arts Review 1900*, Glenmayne, 1900, illustrated p. 493





INV-0111  
*The Yellow House (Det gula huset)*

signed with the monogram, inscribed 'Brügge' and dated '1899' (lower right); signed and inscribed on an old label on the reverse  
64.5 by 56cm.  
Painted in 1899.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Christie's, London, 5 October 1989, lot 119)



INV-0112

*Old Townhouse in Gävle (Gammalt borgarhus i Gefle)*

signed with the monogram and dated '29' (lower right) (according to the 1940 catalogue; date not visible according to 2019 report from Läns museet Gävleborg)

oil on board

86 by 99.5cm.

Painted in 1929.

Provenance

Gifted to Läns museet Gävleborg by the artist (in 1940)



INV-0113  
*From Holland (Från Holland)*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated 93 (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
39 by 59cm.  
Painted in 1893.

Provenance

Gifted to Läns museet Gävleborg by Thorsell, Anna-Lisa (in 1952)



INV.0114

*St. James' Church in Bruges (Kyrkan St. Jacob i Brügge)*

signed with the monogram and dated '1899' (lower left); signed and titled on a label on the back of the stretcher bar

oil on canvas

101 by 78cm.

Painted in 1899.

Provenance

John and Antonie Rettig

Gifted to the city of Gävle by the John and Antonie Rettig's Museum Fund (in 1933)

Länsmuseet Gävleborg, Gävle

Literature

Gävleborgs Läns Konstförening, *Nutida konst Gästrikland Hälsingland*, 1943, illustrated p. 12



INV-0115  
*Laduvägg, Engesberg (Laduvägg, Engesberg)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
50 by 62.5cm.

Provenance  
Gifted to the Läns museet Gävleborg by the artist



INV-0116

*The Old Swan's Nest (Det gamla svanboet)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on board

92 by 104cm.

Painted *circa* 1900.

Provenance

Gifted to the Läns museet Gävleborg by Majken Swedlund, Tekla Swedlund, and Bibbi Swedlund (in 1935)



INV-0117

*Portrait of Nils Zetterström*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '1896' (lower left) and inscribed  
'+NILS+ZETTERSTRÖM+I+SITT+73DIE+ÅR+' (upper left)

oil and charcoal on canvas

84.3 by 63cm.

Painted in 1896.

Provenance

Victor Schwartz, Stockholm

Gifted to the Läns museet Gävleborg by Lil Danielsson, Mjölby (in 1988)



INV-0118

*The Red and the Black Gate (Den röda och den svarta porten)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas

99 by 113cm.

Painted in 1925.

Provenance

Gifted to the Länsmuseum Gävleborg by Tekla Swedlund and Bibbi Swedlund (in 1946)





INV-0120  
*Procession*

oil on canvas  
34 by 41cm.

Provenance  
Ecker Hedberg, Järbo  
Ecker Hedberg Konstnärshem Tallbo, Järbo



INV-0121

*The Fortress on the Mountain (Montefiascone) (Borgen på berget (Montefiascone))*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas

62 by 74cm.

Provenance

Ecke Hedberg, Järbo

Ecke Hedberg Konstnärshem Tallbo, Järbo



INV-0122

*The Desolate House, Bruges (Det öde huset, Brügge)*

signed with the monogram, inscribed 'BRUGGE' and dated '98' (lower left)

oil on canvas

59 by 83cm.

Painted in 1898.

Provenance

Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Gothenburg (acquired in 1899)

Literature

Axel L. Romdahl, Göteborgs konstmuseum, *Tvåhundra bilder med inledande text av Axel*

*L. Romdahl*, Göteborg 1925, illustrated p. 189

Jeffery Howe, *Nature's Mirror. Reality and Symbol in Belgian Landscape*, Boston, 2017, illustrated p. 87

Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén and Anna Meister, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism & Dekadens*, Stockholm, 2015, no. 110, illustrated p. 55



INV-0122

*St. James' Church in Bruges (Kyrkan St. Jacob i Brügge)*

signed with the monogram, inscribe 'BRÜGGE' and dated '98' (lower left)

oil on canvas

81 by 60cm.

Painted in 1898.

#### Provenance

Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Gothenburg (acquired in 1906)

#### Literature

60 Svenska målare, 60 reproduktioner i tontryck efter fotografier af originalen (yngre), Lund, 1920, illustrated p. 52

Jeffery Howe, *Nature's Mirror. Reality and Symbol in Belgian Landscape*, Boston, 2017, illustrated p. 87

Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén and Anna Meister, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism & Dekadens*, Stockholm, 2015, no. 106, illustrated p. 54



INV-0124

*August Night on the Baltic Sea (Augustinatt på Östersjön)*

signed with the monogram and dated '09' (lower right)

oil on canvas

73.5 by 100cm.

Painted in 1909.

Provenance

Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Gothenburg (acquired in 1910)

Literature

Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén & Anna Meister, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism & Dekadens*, Stockholm, 2015, no. 111, p. 226



INV-0125

*Visby Houses (Visbyhus)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas

62 by 72cm.

Provenance

Konstnärshjälpen (acquired in 1923)

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (transferred to their collection from the above in 1950)

Literature

Marie Topelius, *Barnens konstbok. bilder från Nationalmuseum*, Stockholm, 1999, illustrated p. 108 and 310



INV-0126  
*The Blue Girl (Blå flickan)*

oil on board  
63.5 by 50.5cm.  
Painted in 1922.

Provenance  
Konstnärshjälpen (acquired in 1925)  
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (transferred from the above)



INV-0127  
*Summer Evening (Sommarkväll)*

signed with the monogram, inscribed 'BRÜGGE' and dated '98' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
103 by 71cm.  
Painted in 1898.

Provenance

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (acquired in 1899)

Literature

Nils Gösta Sandblad, *Anders Trulsson. En studie i sekelskiftets svenska måleri*, Lund, 1944, illustrated p. 328



INV-0128

*The Yellow House. Motif from Visby (Det gula huset. Motiv från Visby)*

oil on canvas

55.5 by 47.5cm.

Painted in 1922.

Provenance

Konstnärshjälpen (acquired in 1925)

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (transferred to their collection from the above)



INV-0129  
*Church (Kyrka)*

oil on canvas  
47.5 by 37.5cm.  
Painted in 1898.

Provenance

Florence Löwenadler  
Karin Manwarig Robertson (by descent from the above and gifted to the Nationalmuseum in 1946)  
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

INV-0130  
*On the Telephone (I telefon)*

oil on canvas  
115 by 92cm.

Provenance

Konstnärshjälpen (acquired in 1923)  
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (transferred to their collection from the above in 1950)

INV-0131

*The Red and the Black Gate (Den röda och den svarta porten)*

oil on canvas

71 by 61cm.

Painted *circa* 1920-23.

Provenance

Konstnärshjälpen (acquired in 1923)

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (transferred to their collection from the above in 1950)



INV-0132  
*Portrait of a Hooded Figure*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '1888' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
45.5 by 38cm.  
Painted in 1888.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0133  
*Country Road*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
53.5 by 36.5cm.  
Painted *circa* 1894.

Provenance

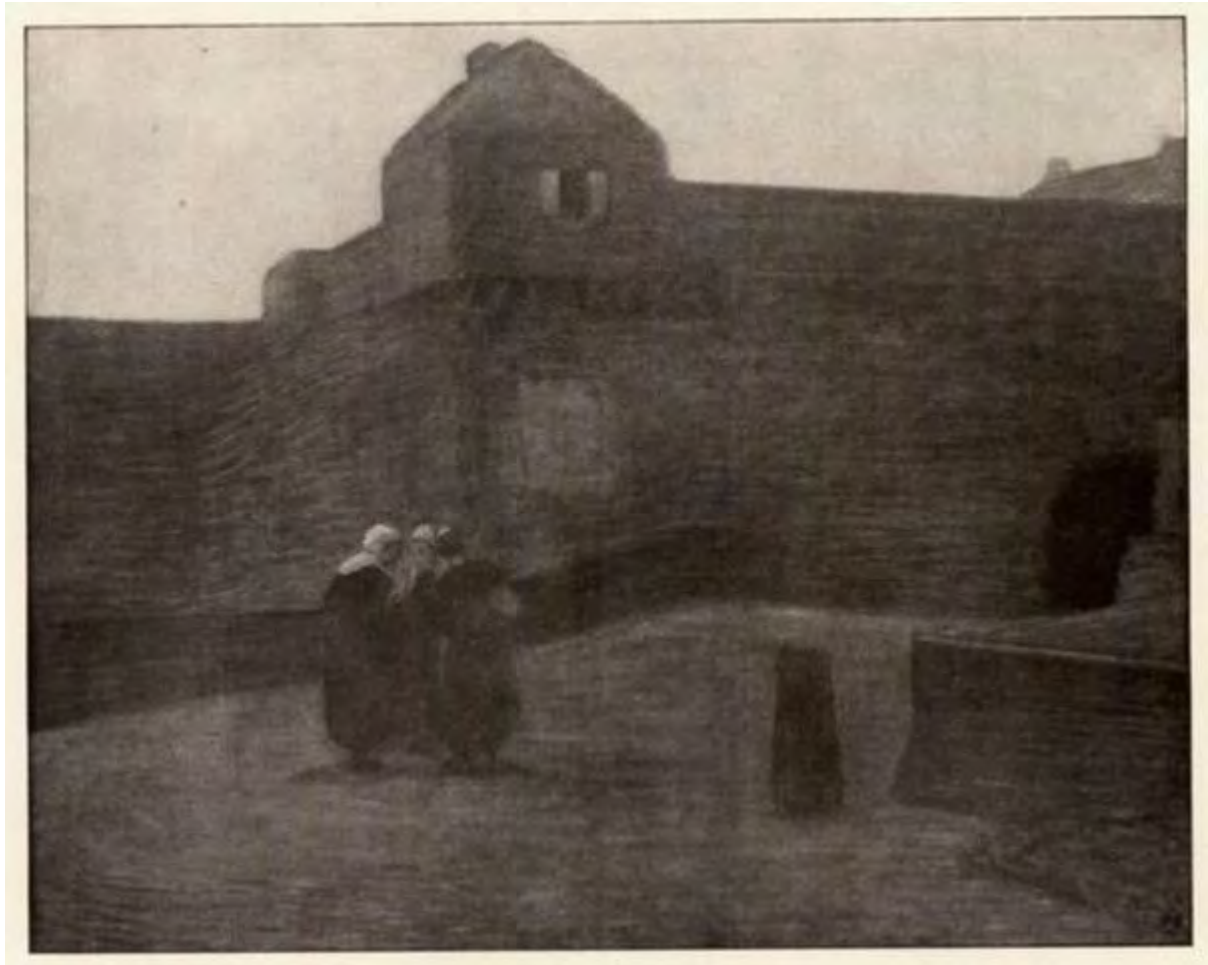
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 30-31 October & 1 November 1946, lot 59 (possibly, titled 'Solbelyst väg, sommardag')  
Dalarnas Auktionsbyrå, Borlänge, 6 April 2016  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0134  
*By the Elm on the Hill (Vid almen på bärget)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas

Literature  
*Hvar 8 dag*, 1904-05, illustrated p. 377



INV-0135  
*Gossip, Spring Evening (Skvaller, vårväll)*

oil on canvas  
Painted in 1909.

Provenance  
Erik Lidforss, Storängen (acquired by 1915)

Literature  
*Konst och konstnärer*, 1912, illustrated p. 58  
Holger Nyblom, 'Liden. Advokat Erik Lidforss hem å Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1915, illustrated p. 63





INV-0136

*The Sun Sets (Solen Går Ner)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil

Literature

Vittorio Pica, *Arte ed artisti nella Svezia dei giorni nostri*, Milan, 1915, illustrated p. 170 (titled 'Tramonto')

E.H.-n, 'De Tres Utställning', *IDUN*, 9th March 1905, illustrated p. 126



INV-0137  
*Canal in Chioggia*

oil on canvas  
50 by 60cm.  
Painted in 1902.

Provenance

Sale: Metropol Auktioner, Stockholm, 26 March 2007, lot 4593229



INV-0138  
*Sunset*

oil on canvas or board  
34 by 43cm.

Provenance

Sale: Metropol Auktioner, Stockholm, 18 May 2009, lot 5831807



INV-0139  
*Sunset*

oil on board  
34 by 27cm.

Provenance

Estate of the artist  
Thence by descent (sold: Metropol Auktioner, 15 July 2019, lot 565831)



INV-0140

*Woman from Brittany (Kvinna från Bretagne)*

inscribed 'Pelle Swedlund Bretagne' on the back of the frame

oil on canvas laid down on board

16 by 18cm.

Painted in 1895.

Provenance

Estate of the Artist

Sale: Metropol Auktioner, Stockholm, 23 August 2010, lot 6525152

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 8 October 2015, lot 672877



INV-0141  
*Canal in Chioggia*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas  
55.5 by 46.5cm.  
Painted *circa* 1903-04.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverket, Stockholm, 29 May 2008, lot 2124)



INV-0142  
*Man in a Park (Man i park)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas  
78 by 67cm.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 25 January 2010, lot 1256  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0144

*The Beggar from Concarneau (Tiggaren från Concarneau)*

signed with the monogram, dated '93' and inscribed 'Concarneau' (lower right)

oil on canvas

56 by 28cm.

Painted in 1893.

Provenance

August Dahl, Svängsta

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 6 May 2014, lot 538097

Literature

Christian Faerber et al., *Konst i Svenska Hem*, vol. II, Gothenburg, 1942-43, no.306, p. 212 (titled 'Fransk gubbe, 1893')





INV-0145  
*Sunflower (Solros)*

signed with the monogram and dated '12' (centre); inscribed 'Målad av Pelle Svedlund på Rosendal'  
on the back of the frame  
oil on canvas  
58 by 38cm.  
Painted in 1912.

Provenance

August Dahl, Svängsta  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 6 May 2014, lot 538059  
Private Collection, Gotland

Literature

Christian Faerber et al., *Konst i Svenska Hem*, vol. II, Gothenburg, 1942-43, no. 306, p. 212



INV-0146  
*The Lakeside Bench (Bänken vid Sjön)*

signed with monogram (lower right)  
oil on board  
15.5 by 22.5cm.

Provenance  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 30 May 2012, lot 322446



INV-0147

*The Evening Star in Hästgatsbacken, Visby (Aftonstjärnan i Hästgatsbacken, Visby)*

signed with the monogram and dated '20' (lower right)

oil on canvas

73 by 62cm.

Painted in 1920.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 7-9 April 1943, lot 68

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverket, Stockholm, 18 October 2012, lot 353534



INV-0148

*The Old Court House and the Vasa Bridge (Gamla Rådhuset och Vasabron)*

Painted by 1917.



INV-0149  
*The Lakeside Bench (Bänken vid Sjön)*

Painted by 1917.



INV-0150  
*The Foreign Ministry 1917 (Utrikesdepartementet 1917)*

80 by 110cm.  
Painted in 1917.

Provenance

Hedvig and Charlotte Ulfsparre, Kungsgården (acquired by 1942)

Literature

Christian Faerber et al, *Konst i Svenska Hem*, vol II, 1942, no. 908, p 536



INV-0151  
*John's Church (Johannes kyrka)*

Painted by 1917.



INV-0152

*The Old Court House - Façade Towards the Square (Gamla Rådhuset - fasaden åt torget)*

Provenance

Nya Rådhuset, Stockholm

Painted before 1917.





INV-0153  
*Jacob's Church (Jakobs kyrka)*

Painted by 1917.



INV-0154  
*Fiskebäckskil*

Painted by 1917.



INV-0155  
*Interior*

Painted by 1917.



INV-0156  
*Canal in Chioggia (Canal i Chioggia)*

inscribed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on panel  
18 by 22.5cm.

Literature

Shepherd Gallery, *The Swedish Vision. Landscape and figurative painting 1885-1920*, New York, 1985, no. 70 (erroneously titled 'A Canal in Bruges')



INV-0157

*The Grip Tower as Seen From the Park (Griptornet från parken)*

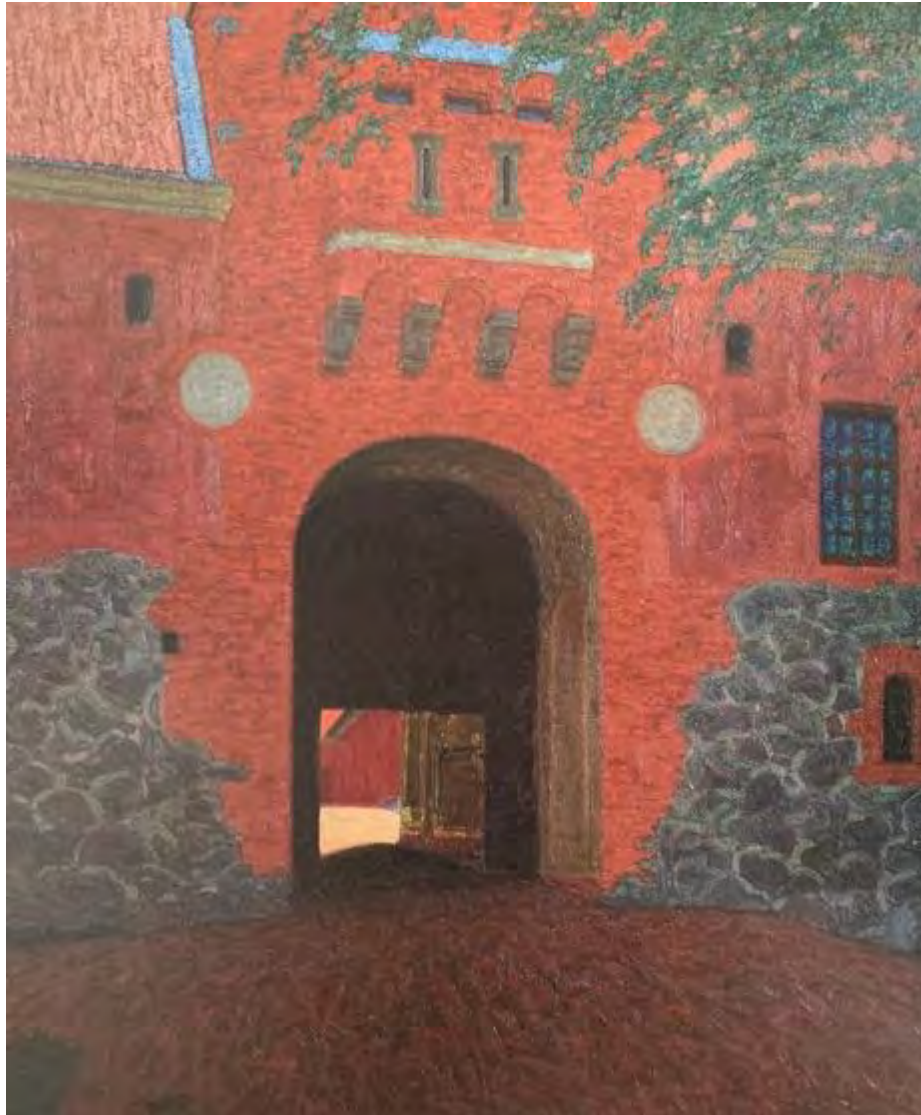
signed with the monogram (lower left)

136 by 118cm.

Painted by 1914.

Literature

*Katalog öfver Baltiska utställningen i Malmö. Konstafdelning, Malmö, 1914, no. 510, illustrated p. 21*



INV-0158  
*The Big Gate (Stora porten)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
87 by 73cm.  
Painted *circa* 1914.

Provenance

Sale: Falkkloo's, Malmö, 8 April 2000, lot 397  
Per Ekströmmuseet, Orrefors



INV-0159  
*Sunset with Tree*

oil on board  
21 by 26cm.

Provenance

Family of the Artist (sold: Metropol Auktioner, Stockholm, 29 April 2019, lot 560831)



INV-0160  
*Church Ruin by the Sea (Kyrkoruin vid havet)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on board  
60.5 by 79.5cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverket, 29 November 2007, lot 2290)





INV-0163  
*Interior with Couple*

dedicated 'till bror Gust Swedlund' on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
38 by 46cm.

Provenance  
Gustaf Swedlund (a gift from the artist)  
Bengt Swedlund (by descent from the above)



INV-0165  
*The Temple (Templet)*

oil on canvas  
73 by 63cm.

Provenance

Per Ekström museet, Orrefors

Literature

Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén and Anna Meister, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism & Dekadens*, Stockholm, 2015, no. 107, illustrated p. 7



INV-0166  
*Church Ruin by the Sea (Kyrkoruin vid havet)*

oil on board  
84.5 by 96.5cm.

Provenance  
Per Ekström museet, Orrefors

Literature  
Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén and Anna Meister, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism & Dekadens*, Stockholm, 2015, no. 112, illustrated p. 113



INV-0167

*Evening, Visby (Afton, Wisby)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on canvas

47 by 62cm.

Provenance

Per Ekström museet, Orrefors

Literature

Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén and Anna Meister, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism & Dekadens*, Stockholm, 2015, no. 109, illustrated p. 114

INV-0168  
*The Sun God (Solguden)*

oil on canvas  
73.5 by 58cm.

Provenance  
Per Ekström museet, Orrefors

Literature  
Daniel Prytz, Karin Sidén & Anna Meister, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism & Dekadens*, Stockholm, 2015, no. 108, p. 226



INV-0169  
*Street in Visby (Gata i Visby)*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '90' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
40.5 by 30.5cm.  
Painted in 1890.

Provenance  
Norrköpings Konstmuseum, Norrköping (acquired in 1923)



INV-0170

*The Slums, Winter Evening in Chioggia (Fattigmanshem, Vinterqväll i Chioggia)*

signed with the monogram (lower center); signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled on the back of the  
stretcher bar

oil on canvas

99 by 80cm.

Provenance

Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm (posthumously gifted by the artist in his testament in 1947)



INV-0171  
*Father in a Park (Far i park)*

signed with the monogram and dated '1922' (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
106 by 90cm.  
Painted in 1922.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)





INV-0172  
*Sunset*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' on the reverse  
oil on board  
21.5 by 27cm.

Provenance

Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0175

*Engesberg Roses (recto); Engesberg Roses (verso) (Engesbergsrosor (recto); Engesbergsrosor (verso))*

signed with the monogram (lower right); dedicated 'Till systrarna från deras tacksamma bror Pelle', titled 'Engesbergsrosor', and signed 'Pelle Swedlund' on the reverse  
oil on board  
45 by 32cm.

Provenance

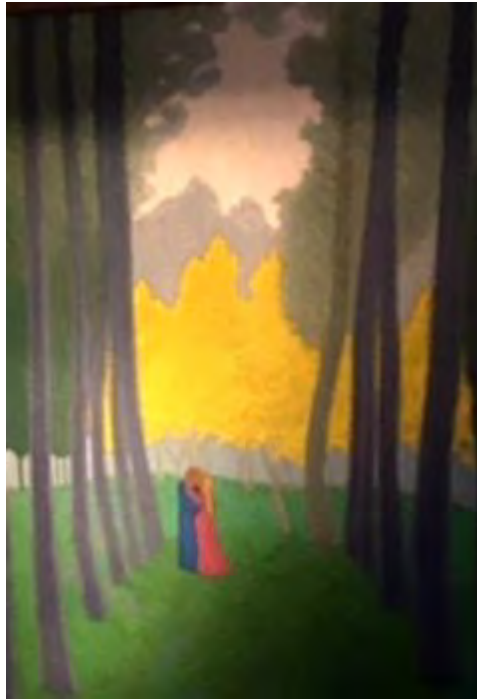
Gifted by the artist to his sisters  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent from the above)



INV-0176  
*Sunset*

oil on board  
22 by 27cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0177  
*The Parting (Avskedet)*

oil on canvas  
118 by 88cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0178  
*Brittany*

oil on canvas  
39 by 63cm.  
Painted in 1893.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0179  
*Gate at Gripsholm (Gripsholms port)*

oil on canvas  
86 by 72cm.

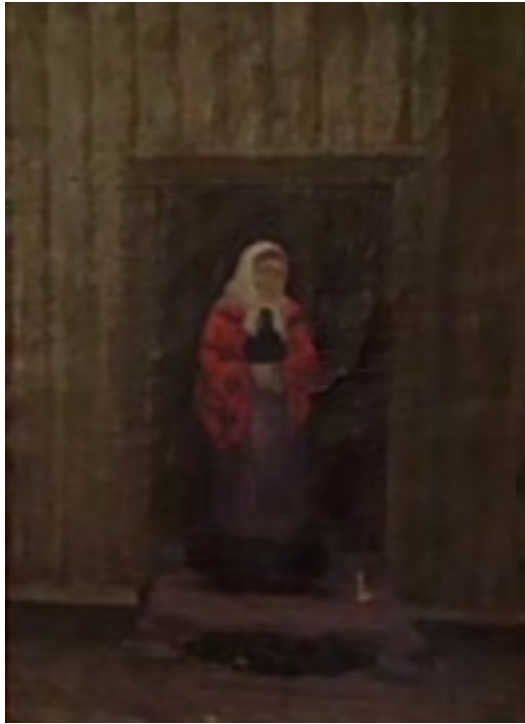
Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0180  
*Yellow and Green House*

oil on canvas  
62 by 72cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0181  
*On the Threshold (På tröskeln)*

oil on canvas  
47 by 38cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)

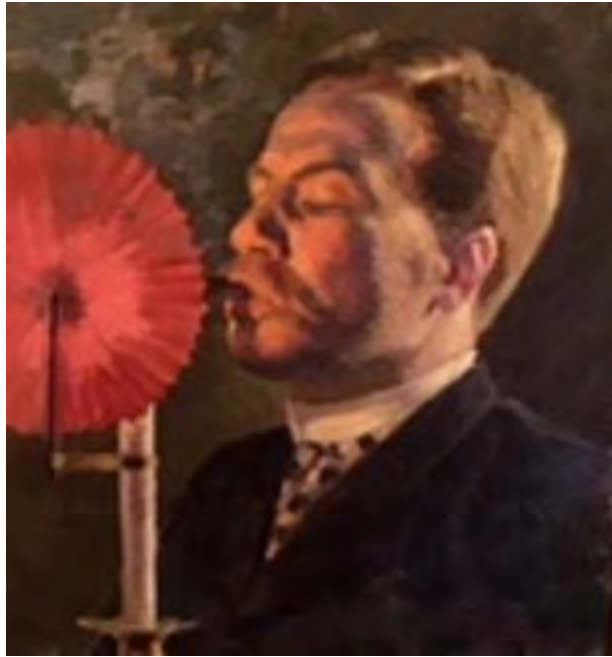




INV-0182  
*The Kitchen at Engesberg*

oil on canvas  
73 by 94cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0183  
*The Artist's Brother*

oil on canvas  
34 by 32cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0185  
*Concarneau*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
44 by 30cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0186  
*Are (Åre)*

signed with the monogram and illegibly dated (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
45 by 54cm.  
Painted *circa* 1897.

Provenance

Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0188  
*Concarneau*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '1893' (lower right)  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
52 by 72cm.  
Painted in 1893.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Sweden (by descent)



INV-0189

*Canal in Chioggia (Kanal i Chioggia) or The Emergency (Nöden)*

signed with the monogram and dated '03' (lower right)

oil on canvas

72 by 90cm.

Painted in 1903.

Provenance

Sale: Stockholm Auktionsverket, Stockholm, 8 June 1998, lot 4501 (possibly)

Sale: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 4-6 December 2002, lot 1737

INV-0193  
*Autumn Evening, Bruges (Höstkväll, Brügge)*

32 by 40cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 14-16 October 1953, lot 109



INV-0194  
*The Blue Girl (Blå Flickan)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
49.5 by 35cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 28-31 May 2002, lot 182



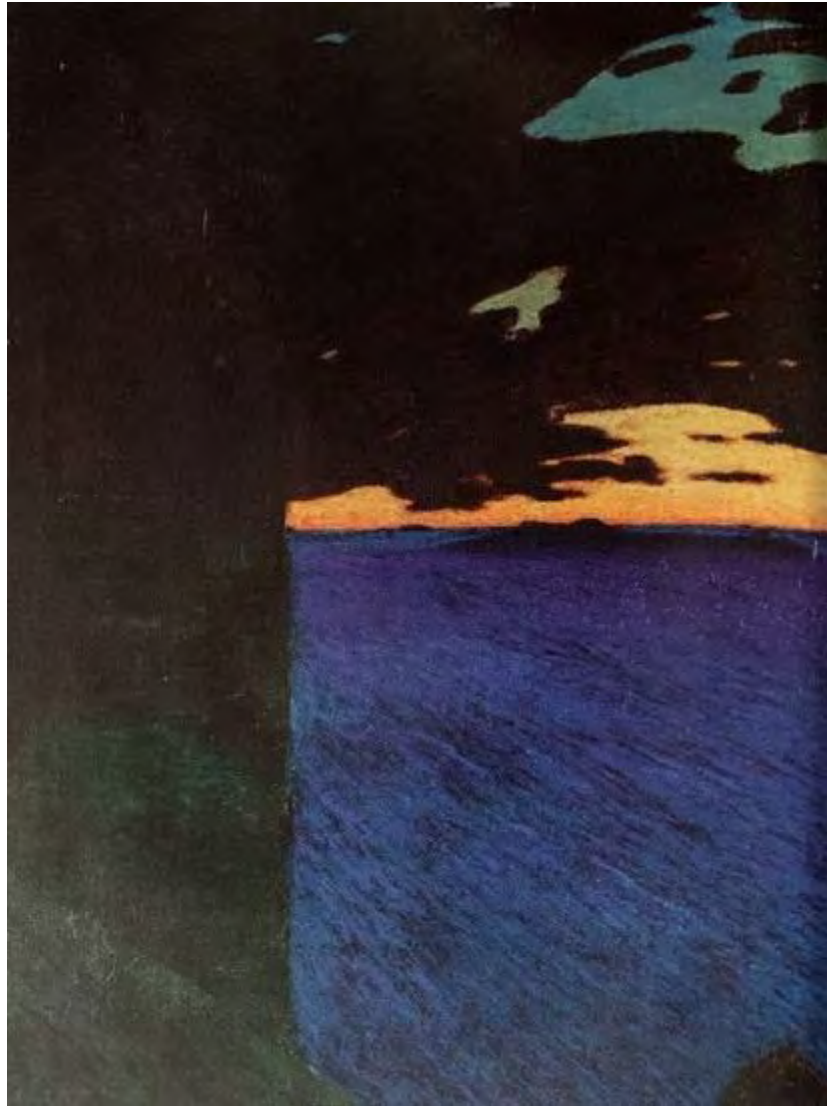


INV-0195  
*The Knight (Riddaren)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on canvas  
63.5 by 75 cm  
Painted *circa* 1900.

Provenance

Gustaf Swedlund, Gävle  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 2-5 December, 2003, lot 154



INV-0196

*The Lighthouse is Lit, Autumn Evening (Fyren tändes, höstkväll)*

oil on board  
122 by 93cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 25-28 May 2004, lot 219



INV-0197  
*Autumn Sunset... Visby (Höstsolnegång... Visby)*

signed  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
36 by 44cm.

Provenance  
Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 30 November - 3 December 2004, lot 120



INV-0198

*Evening on the West Coast*

signed with the monogram (lower centre) and inscribed 'AE 254' (inventory number of the Albert Engström Museum in Grisslehamn) on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
82 by 65cm.

Provenance

Gift from the artist to the artist Albert Engström  
Thence by descent and gifted to the Albert Engström Museum  
Claes Moser, Stockholm (acquired from the above)  
Peter & Renate Nahum, London (acquired from the above in 2011)



INV-0199  
*The Lakeside Bench (Bänken vid Sjön)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on canvas  
66 by 81.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 29 November - 2 December 2005, lot 130



INV-0200  
*Manor House*

oil on canvas  
63 by 82.5cm.  
Painted *circa* 1910.

Provenance

Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 28-30 November 2007, lot 2289)



INV-0201  
*The Fishing Fleet's Departure (Fiskeflottan går ut)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on board  
65 by 81 cm.  
Painted *circa* 1920-30.

Provenance  
Private Collection (sold: Stockholms Auktionsverk, Stockholm, 28-30 November 2007, lot 2291)

INV-0203

*The Old Writing Desk - Interior (Den gamla sekretären - interiör)*

signed with the monogram

oil on canvas

73 by 81cm.

Provenance

Sale: Auktionsverket, Stockholm, 10 October 1988, lot 204





INV-0203

*The Outermost House (Yttersta huset)*

signed with the monogram and dated

oil on canvas

40 by 32cm.

Painted in 1899.

Provenance

Sale: Crafoord Auktioner, Lund, 1 December 2012, lot 40



INV-0204

*Job and his Friends (Job och Hans vänner)*

signed with the monogram (lower left) and signed and titled on an old label on the reverse  
oil on canvas

85.2 by 66cm.

Provenance

Sale: Christie's, London, 16 March 1989, lot 343

Private Collection, Gotland (acquired from the above)

INV-0205

*Evening Light over Mountains and Houses (Aftonljus över berg och hus)*

signed

oil on canvas laid down on board

24 by 40cm.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 16 March 1991, lot 375

INV-0206

*Sunset over Mountains (Solnedgång över berg)*

signed, dated '-97' and inscribed 'Åre'

oil on board

26 by 41cm.

Painted in 1897.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 28 March 1992, lot 440

INV-0207  
*A Walk Along the Avenue (Promenad i allén)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on canvas  
76 by 66cm.

Provenance

Sale: Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 16 January 1995, lot 391



INV-0208

*An Old Letter (Ett gammalt bref)*

signed (lower right)

oil on canvas

75 by 83cm.

Provenance

Carl Erik Schlyter, Kevinge, Stocksund (possibly)

Sale: Tajan, Paris, 22 November 1996, lot 63

Literature

Christian Faerber et al., *Konst i Svenska Hem*, vol. II, Gothenburg, 1942-43, no. 283, p. 202 (possibly, titled 'Den gamla sekretären')



INV-0209

*The Red and the Black Gate (Den röda och den svarta porten)*

signed on the reverse

oil on board

64 by 50cm.

Painted *circa* 1920-25.

Provenance

Sale: Norden, Stockholm, 23 April 1997, lot 168

INV-0210

*Medieval Knight on Horseback in Front of a Castle (Medeltida riddare till häst framför borg)*

oil on canvas

105 by 93cm.

Painted *circa* 1900.

Provenance

Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 26 January 1999, lot 478 (bought in)





INV-0211  
*Street light (Gatlykta)*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on board  
90 by 115cm.  
Painted in 1911.

Provenance

Sale: Nordén, Stockholm, 27 May 1999, lot 30

INV-0212  
*Yacht Off Capri*

signed with the monogram and dated '98' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
75 by 54.5cm.

Provenance

Sale: Christie's, London, 27 May 1999, lot 86



INV-0213

*Underneath the Holly Oaks, Villa Borghese (Under stenekarne, Villa Borghese)*

signed with the monogram and inscribed 'Roma' and dated '04' (lower right)

oil on canvas

108 by 89cm.

Painted in 1904.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 8 December 2002, lot 155

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0214  
*Ship in the Harbour (Skepp i hamn)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
63 by 51cm.

Provenance  
Sale: Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 12 June 2006, lot 25  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0215

*Wijngaardplein, Bruges (Vijngaardsplats, Brügge)*

signed with the monogram, dated '99' and inscribed 'Brügge' (lower right); signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled on the reverse

oil on canvas

35.5 by 49cm.

Painted in 1899.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 15 March 2010, lot 583 (erroneously dated '94' in the catalogue)

Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0217  
*The Knight (Riddaren)*

signed  
oil on canvas  
63 by 73cm.

Provenance

Sale: Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 20 August 2007, lot 277



INV-0218  
*The Desolate House, Bruges (Det öde huset, Brügge)*

oil on canvas  
58 by 82cm.  
Painted *circa* 1898.

Provenance

Sale: Metropol Auktioner, Stockholm, 29 April 2019, lot 560836  
Claes Moser, Stockholm

INV-0219  
*Skymning*

signed, dated '94' and inscribed 'concarneau'  
oil on canvas  
39 by 46.5cm.  
Painted in 1894.

Provenance

Sale: Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 13 December 2005, lot 780





INV-0220  
*Bruges, in the Evening Sun (Brügge, i kvällssolens sken)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on canvas  
56 by 47cm.

Provenance  
Sale: Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 13 June 2005, lot 426



INV-0221  
*Still Life with Tin Pot (Stilleben med tennkanna)*

signed with the monogram  
oil on canvas  
35 by 45cm.

Provenance  
Sale: Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 14 December 2004, lot 635



INV-0223  
The Galley

oil on board  
50 by 66cm.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 26 June 2019, lot 1160370  
Private Collection, Gotland

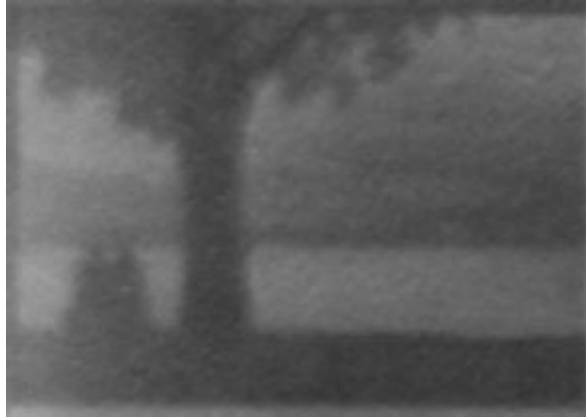


INV-0224  
*The Gate*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
73.5 by 67cm.  
Painted by 1922.

Provenance

Family of the artist (by 1922)  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0225  
*The Lakeside Bench (Bänken vid Sjön)*

Painted by 1922.

Provenance  
Family of the Artist (by 1922)



INV-0227

*The Slums, Winter Evening in Chioggia (Fattigmanshem, Vinterqväll i Chioggia)*

Painted by 1922.

Provenance

Family of the Artist (by 1922)



INV-0228  
*On the Threshold (På tröskeln)*



INV-0230  
*The Swan (Svanen)*

inscribed on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
32 by 40.5cm.

Provenance  
Publisher P.W. (possibly)  
Claes Moser, Stockholm





INV-0232  
*The Artist's Parents*

signed with the monogram (lower centre)  
oil on canvas  
120 by 150cm.  
Painted *circa* 1929-30.

Provenance  
Kyrkans Hus, Gävle  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0233  
*Square of Charles XII (Karl XII:s torg)*

oil canvas laid down on board  
76 by 63cm.  
Painted by 1917.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0234

*The Fortress on the Mountain (Borgen på berget)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas

107 by 130cm.

Provenance

Private Collection, Gävle

Private Collection, Gotland (acquired from the above by 1975)

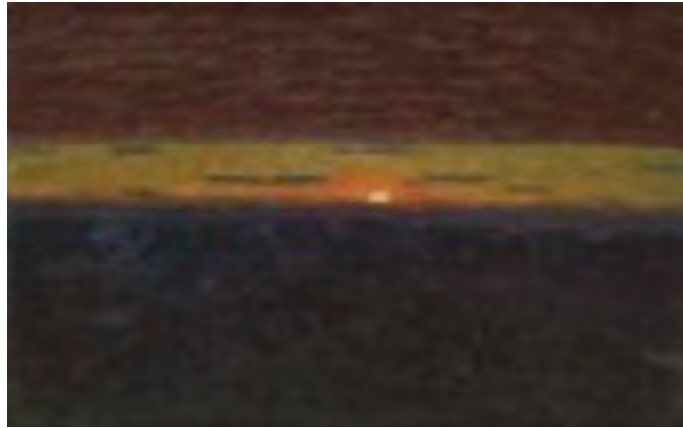


INV-0235  
Thunderstorm (Åska)

signed with the monogram (lower left); indistinctly titled and signed 'Pelle Swedlund' on the reverse  
oil on board  
76.8 by 81.4cm.

Provenance

Isabel Goldsmith (sold: Christie's, London, 14 July 2022, lot 61)



INV-0236  
*Sunset (Solnedgång)*

signed  
oil on board  
26 by 41cm.  
Painted in 1897.

Provenance  
Sale: Lilla Bukowskis, Stockholm, 30 August 2005, lot 720



INV-0237  
*A Letter (Ett Rek)*

signed and dated '92' (lower right)  
Painted in 1892.



INV-0238  
*Street in Bruges*

later inscription on the reverse of the stretcher bar 'ej avslutad af P. Svedlund. Brüggemotiv från 1890talet'  
oil on canvas  
32 by 40cm.

Provenance

Anshelm Schultzberg, Stockholm  
Hans Schultzberg, Uddeholm (by descent from the above)  
Private Collection, Sweden (acquired from the above)  
Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 16 August 2022, lot 152



INV-0240

*The Fishing Fleet's Departure (Fiskeflottan går ut)*

signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas  
27 by 45.5cm.

Provenance

Robert Swedlund

Karin Petterson

Private Collection, Gotland (acquired by 2016)





INV-0241  
*Chapelle de la Croiby, Concarneau*

15.5 by 21cm.  
Painted *circa* 1894.

Provenance  
Estate of the Artist  
Ingrid Swedlund  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired from the above in 1984)



INV-0242

*Forest Road (Väg genom skog)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)

oil on canvas

32 by 37cm.

Provenance

Katarina and Rolf Brink, Stockholm

Private Collection, Gotland (gifted by the above in 1987)



INV-0243  
*Sunset over Lake Bolsena (recto); Study (verso)*

oil on board  
16 by 24cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0244

*The Mill at Fiskebäckskil (Kvarnen vid Fiskebäckskil)*

signed, titled and numbered 'Nr 7' on a label on the reverse  
oil on board  
29.5 by 21cm.

Provenance

Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1985)



INV-0245  
*Roses (Roser)*

signed with the monogram (lower left); signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled on the stretcher bar  
oil on canvas  
65 by 56cm.

Provenance

Sale: Stadsauktion, Stockholm, April 2016, lot 378339  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0246  
*Autumn Evening in Bruges (Höstkväll i Brügge)*

indistinctly signed with the monogram (lower left) and titled on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
53 by 69.5cm.

Provenance  
Ingrid Swedlund  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1985)



INV-0247  
*Moonlight (Månsken)*

signed 'P Swedlund' and dated '95'; signed, dated '1895' and titled on the stretcher bar  
oil on canvas  
28 by 40.5cm.  
Painted in 1895.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1996)



INV-0248  
*Thunderstorm (Åska)*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on board  
50 by 55cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland





INV-0249  
*To the Evening Mass*

signed with the monogram, inscribed 'BRÜGGE' and dated '1900' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
72.5 by 92.5cm.  
Painted in 1900.

Provenance

Axel Lilja, Stockholm (acquired by 1916)  
Uppsala Auktionskammare, Uppsala, 20 April 2021, lot 31  
Private Collection, Gotland

Literature

Knut Barr, 'Hofintendenten Axel Liljas Hem' in *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1916, illustrated p. 150



INV-0250  
*Figures in a Forest*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
24 by 32.5cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0251  
*Torsåker*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
16.5 by 35cm.  
Painted *circa* 1889.

Provenance  
Estate of the Artist  
Private Collection (acquired in 1995)



INV-0252  
*Gable (Gavel)*

indistinctly signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
27 by 38.5cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1989)



INV-0253  
*Portrait of a Woman, likely Tekla Swedlund*

oil on canvas  
35 by 23cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-254  
*Study of a Boy*

oil on canvas  
30.5 by 22.5cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0255  
*Portrait of a Woman, likely Emilia Lovisa Forsberg*

oil on canvas  
35.5 by 30cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland

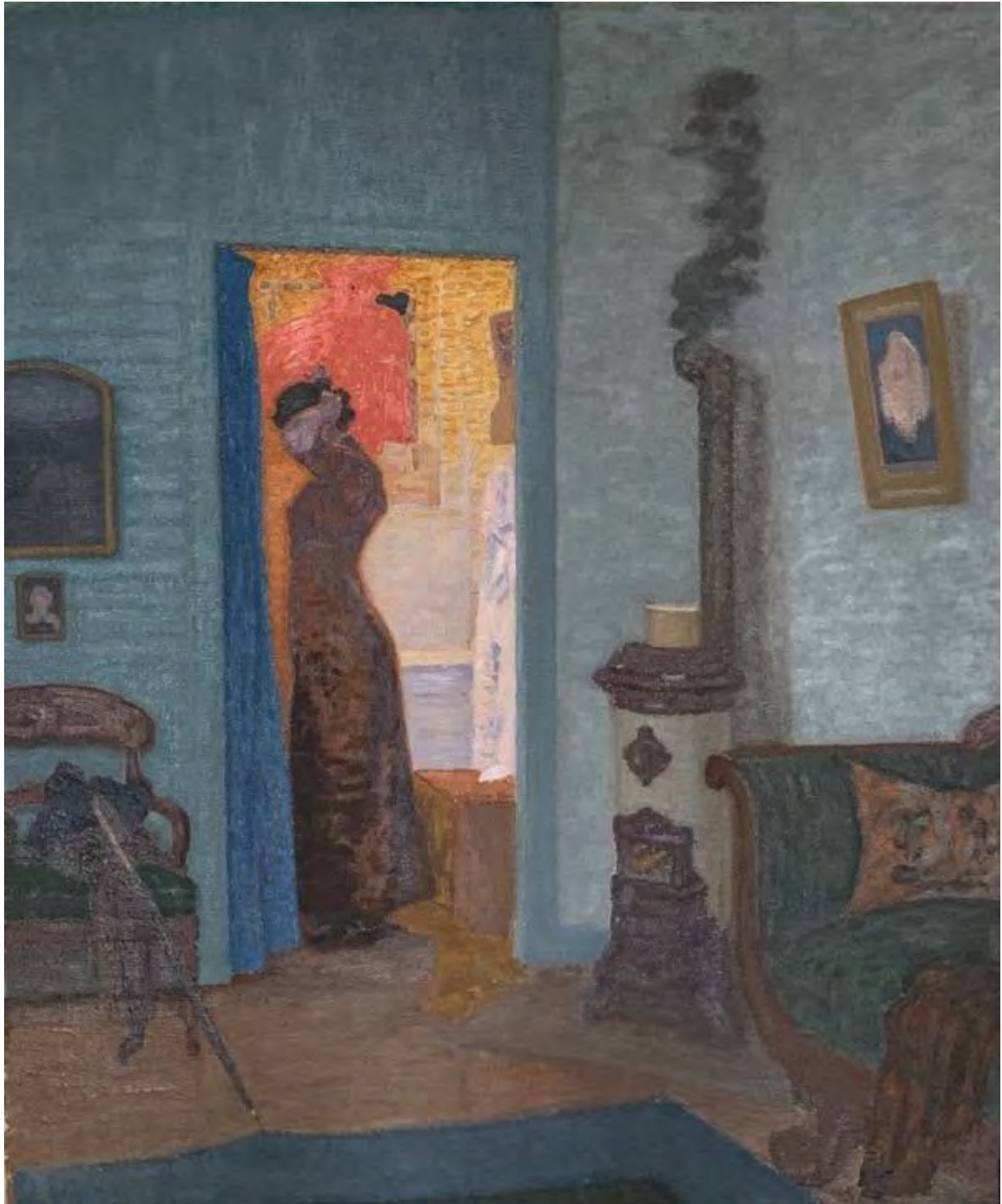


INV-0256  
*Study of a Branch*

oil on canvas  
45.5 by 25.5cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland





INV-0257  
*Frida (Frida)*

signed with the monogram; signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and indistinctly titled, dated '1913' and inscribed on a label on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
89 by 74.5cm.  
Painted in 1913.

Provenance

Sale: Bukowskis, Stockholm, 31 August 2008, lot 6071  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0258  
*Cloud Study*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
17 by 29cm.

Provenance  
Bengt Swedlund, Stockholm  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired from the above in 1985)



INV-0259  
*Järfös (Järfös)*

inscribed 'Järfös' and dated '91' (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
22.5 by 14cm.  
Painted in 1891.

Provenance  
Estate of the Artist  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1995)



INV-0260  
*Prometheus* (recto); *Prometheus* (verso)

indistinctly signed with the monogram on the reverse (lower left)  
oil on board  
59 by 39.5cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0261  
*Landscape*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
26 by 39cm.  
Painted *circa* 1893.

Provenance

Sale: Gästriklands Auktionskammare, Gävle, 12 May 2015, lot 273551  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired from the above)



*INV-0262*  
A Street in Town

oil on canvas laid down on board  
39 by 31cm.  
Painted *circa* 1893.

Provenance

Bengt Swedlund, Stockholm  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired from the above in 1985)



INV-0263  
*Landscape with Figure*

signed with the monogram (lower left)  
oil on canvas  
49 by 65cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0264  
*The Old Parsonage in Gävle (Gamla Prästgården i Gävle)*

signed with the monogram (lower right); signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and titled on the stretcher bar  
oil on canvas  
49 by 65.5cm.

Provenance

Estate of the Artist  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1984)

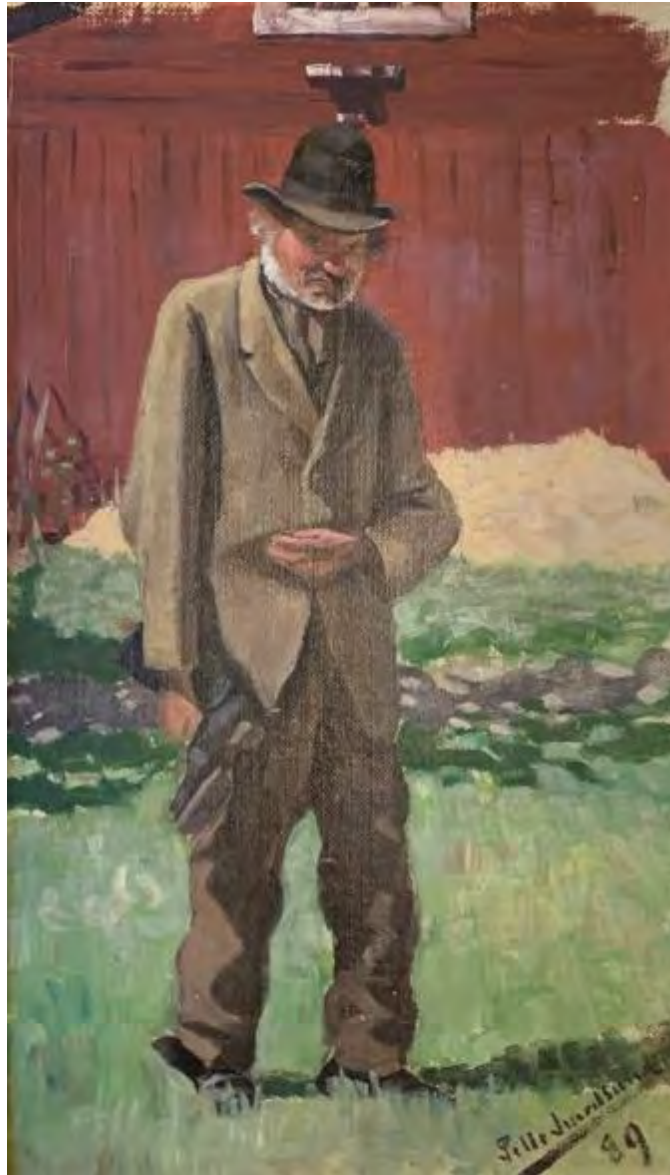




INV-0265  
*Sunset*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
17 by 16cm.

Provenance  
Dagmar Månsson, Uppsala  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1997 from the above)



INV-0266  
*Man with Boot*

signed 'Pelle Swedlund' and dated '89' (lower right)  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
40 by 24cm.  
Painted in 1889.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0267  
*A Canal in Bruges*

oil on canvas  
Painted *circa* 1899.

Provenance  
Axel Lilja, Stockholm (acquired by 1916)

Literature  
Knut Barr, 'Hofintendenten Axel Liljas Hem' in *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1916, illustrated p. 148



INV-0268

*Kungsträdgården (Kungsträdgården)*

dated '1916' (lower left) and signed with the monogram (lower right)

oil on canvas

Painted in 1916.



INV-0269  
*Woman with Sleeping Child*



INV-0270  
*Portrait of a Woman*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
26 by 36cm.

Provenance  
Dagmar Mansson, Uppsala  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired from the above in 1995)



INV-0271  
*Visby*

signed with the monogram and indistinctly dated (lower right)  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
27.5 by 45cm.  
Painted *circa* 1890.

Provenance  
Estate of the Artist  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1995)



INV-0272  
*Landscape*

oil on board  
13 by 21cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland





INV-0273  
*Head of a Woman*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
11 by 15cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0274  
*Landscape*

oil on canvas laid down on board  
32 by 40cm.  
Painted *circa* 1896.

Provenance  
Estate of the Artist  
Private Collection, Gotland (acquired in 1995)



INV-0275  
Study of a Female Nude

oil on canvas  
Painted *circa* 1890.

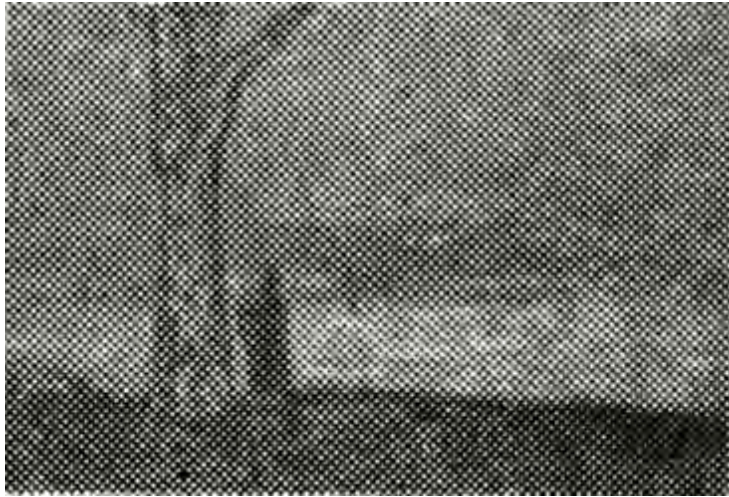
Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0276  
*Woman at a Shrine*

signed with the monogram (lower right)  
oil on canvas  
95.5 by 80.5cm.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Gotland



INV-0277

*Landscape with Man and Tree*

Painted by 1915.

Provenance

Erik Lidforss, Storängen (acquired by 1915)

Literature

Holger Nyblom, 'Liden. Advokat Erik Lidforss hem å Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1915, illustrated p. 63



INV-0278

*Landscape with Pine Tree*

Painted by 1915.

Provenance

Erik Lidforss, Storängen (acquired by 1915)

Literature

Holger Nyblom, 'Liden. Advokat Erik Lidforss hem å Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1915, illustrated p. 64



INV-0279  
*Gate with Horse*

Painted by 1914.

Provenance  
Private Collection, Storängen (acquired by 1914)

Waldemar Swahn, 'Ett hem på Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1914, illustrated p. 193.



INV-0280  
*Woman in an Interior*

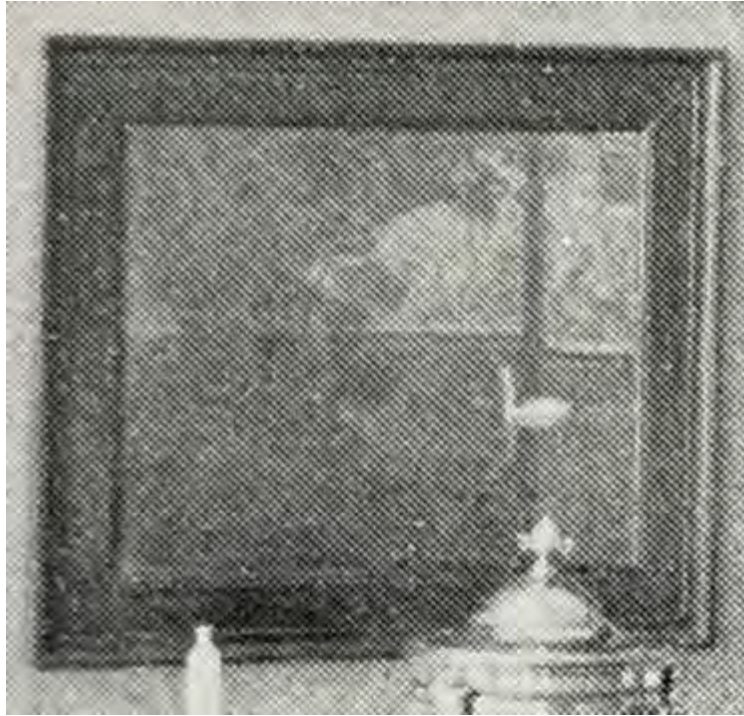
Painted by 1914

Provenance

Private Collection, Storängen (acquired by 1914)

Waldemar Swahn, 'Ett hem på Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1914, illustrated p. 193.





INV-0281  
*The Swan*

Painted by 1914.

Provenance

Private Collection, Storängen (acquired by 1914)

Waldemar Swahn, 'Ett hem på Storängen', *Svenska Hem i Ord och Bilder*, Stockholm, 1914, illustrated p. 193.



INV-0282

*By the Elm on the Hill (Vid almen på båret)*

oil on canvas  
132 by 110cm.

Provenance

Gästrik-Hälsninge Nation, Uppsala



INV-0283  
*Church Ruin by the Sea (Kyrkoruin vid havet)*

oil on board  
69 by 69cm.

Provenance  
Gästrike-Hälsinge Nation, Uppsala



INV-0284  
*The Yellow House*

Provenance  
Margaretakyrkan, Oslo

## Appendix 2: List of Exhibitions

### 1896

Gothenburg, *Konstutställningen*, 1896

Gävle, Stadshotellet, *Carl G. Sehlberg, Erik Hedberg och Pelle Swedlund*, 1896

### 1899

Stockholm, *Svenska konstnärernas förening*, 1899

### 1900

Stockholm, *Svenska konstnärernas förening*, 1900

Berlin, *Große Berliner Kunstausstellung*, 1900

### 1901

Venice, Palazzo dell'Esposizione, *Biennale di Venezia*, 1901

### 1902

Gothenburg, Valand, *Landskapet*, 1902

### 1904

Stockholm, Konstakademien, *Svenska konstnärernas konstförening*, 1904

St. Louis, *The Louisiana Purchase Exposition or World's Fair*, 1904

### 1905

Munich, Kgl. Glaspalats zu München, *Internationalen Kunstausstellung*, 1905

Stockholm, Konstnärshuset, *Erik Hedberg, Wilhelm Smith och Pelle Swedlund: separatutställning i Konstnärshuset*, 1905

### 1906

Gothenburg, Valand, *Erik Hedberg, Wilhelm Smith och Pelle Swedlund*, 1906

Lund, *Erik Hedberg, Wilhelm Smith och Pelle Swedlund*, 1906

Malmö, Malmö Museum, *Erik Hedberg, Wilhelm Smith, Pelle Swedlund och Bengt Hedberg*, 1906

Budapest, Künstlerhaus, *Internationalla konstutställningen*, 1906

### 1907

Berlin, *Große Berliner Kunstausstellung*, 1907

### 1910

Gothenburg, *Sveriges allmänna konstförening*, 1910

Malmö, Malmö Museum, *Konstföreningens för södra Sverige*, 1910

Vienna, Hagenbund, *Schwedische Künstler*, 1910

Prague, The Mánes Association of Fine Artists, *Švédské umění*, 1910

### 1911

Stockholm, *Sveriges allmänna konstförening*, 1911

Rome, Palazzo delle Belle Arti, *International Exhibition of Art*, 1911

**1912**

Stockholm, Konstnärshuset, *Separatutställning Erik Hedberg, Wil-helm Smith och Pelle Swedlund*, 1912

**1914**

Malmö, *Baltic Exhibition*, 1914

**1916**

Copenhagen, Charlottenborg, *Svenska konstutställningen*, 1916

**1917**

Gävle, Stadshusets Stora Sal, *Pelle Swedlunds Utställning*, 1917

**1919**

Stockholm, *Cirkeln*, 1919

**1922**

Stockholm, *Sveriges allmänna konstförening*, 1922

**1924**

Stockholm, Liljevalchs konsthall, *Levande Svenskt konst*, 1924

**1925**

Stockholm, *Sveriges allmänna konstförening*, 1925

**1929**

Paris, Musée de Jeu de Paume, *Exposition de l'art suédois*, 1929

Stockholm, *Sveriges allmänna konstförening*, 1929

**1931**

Stockholm, Liljevalchs Konsthall, *Måleri från 1880- och 1890-talen*, 1931

**1932**

Stockholm, *Sveriges allmänna konstförening*, 1932

**1943**

Stockholm, Gillet, *Sällskapet Idun*, 1943

**1946**

Gävle, Gävle Museum, *Pelle Swedlund*, 1946

**1947**

Stockholm, Thielska Galleriet, *Minnesutställning*, 1947

**1985**

New York, Shepherd Gallery, *The Swedish Vision: Landscape and Figurative Painting 1885-1920*, 1985

**2003**

Mörbylånga, Per Ekströmmuseet, *Pelle Swedlund: Symbolist och mystiker*, 2003

**2007**

London, Peter Nahum at The Leicester Galleries, *Swedish Northern Light & Scandinavian Vitalism*, 2007

**2015**

Stockholm, Waldemarsudde, *Symbolism och Dekadens*, 2015

**2016**

Halmstad, Mjellby konstmuseum, *Moderna män*, 2016

### Appendix 3: List and Graph in Support of Chapter Four

A. List of institutional acquisition of works by Swedlund, sorted by acquisition date.

Acquisition Date	Institution	Artwork Title, Artwork Date (Acquisition Method)
1899	Nationalmuseum, Stockholm	<i>A Summer Evening</i> , 1898
	Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg	<i>The Deserted House, Bruges</i> , 1898
1906	Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg	<i>Church in Bruges</i> , 1898
1910	Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg	<i>August Night on the Baltic</i> , 1909
1923	Nationalmuseum, Stockholm	<i>The Black and the Red Gate</i> (acquired through Konstnärshjälpen) <i>House in Visby</i> (acquired through Konstnärshjälpen) <i>On the Telephone</i> (acquired through Konstnärshjälpen)
1925	Nationalmuseum, Stockholm	<i>Blue Girl</i> , 1922 (acquired through Konstnärshjälpen) <i>The Yellow House</i> , 1922 (acquired through Konstnärshjälpen)
1933	County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle	<i>St. James Church in Bruges</i> , 1899 (gifted)
1935	County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle	<i>The Old Swan's Nest</i> , 1898 (gifted)
1940	County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle	<i>Old Townhouse in Gävle</i> , 1929 (gifted)
1946	Nationalmuseum, Stockholm	<i>The Church</i> , 1898 (gifted)
	County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle	<i>The Red and the Black Gate</i> , 1925 (gifted)
1947	The Thiel Gallery, Stockholm	<i>The Slums, Winter Evening in Chioggia</i>
1952	County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle	<i>Landscape</i> , 1893 (gifted)
1988	County Museum of Gävleborg, Gävle	<i>Portrait of Nils Zetterström</i> , 1896 (gifted)
2020	Nationalmuseum, Stockholm	<i>Vanitas</i> , 1897

B. Graph illustrating the price evolution for works by Swedlund. The 'Average Price per Work' shows the actual values (in SEK, divided by 100). The 'Representative Value' shows these values taking into account historic inflation.

