

Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis
Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture 6
ISSN 0348-4114
Editor: Lena Johannesson

Doctoral thesis at Göteborg University 2000

ABSTRACT

Wängdahl, Lars, "En natur för män att grubbla i." Individualitet och officialitet i varbergskolonins landskapsmåleri ("A nature for men to brood in". Individuality and officiality in the landscape painting of the Varberg Colony).

Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis,
Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture 6, 219 pp., Göteborg.
Written in Swedish. With an english summary.
ISBN 91-7346-376-0

This thesis deals with landscape paintings by Karl Nordström (1855-1923) Richard Bergh (1858-1919) and Nils Kreuger (1858-1939), made during their stay in Varberg, a province town on the western coast of Sweden 1893-95. The purpose is to establish an understanding of the relation between what the artists produced, and their parallel interests in the artist organization Konstnärsförbundet. Nordström, Kreuger and Bergh went to Varberg at a point when many of the members of Konstnärsförbundet had decided to leave the organization. The remaining group formed a smaller but more coherent circle, for which Nordström and Bergh became the leaders. It had started as a conglomerate of artists with the common denominator that they were locked out of the institutions of art. Now it increasingly became an exhibiting society for a limited circle that more unequivocally pronounced that its *raison d'être* was its artistic coherence, quality and newness, rather than being representative in quantitative terms. The founding of the Varberg colony may be regarded as an attempt to present an artistic production that could back up these claims, and the claims for a public standing for their organisation. To this end the colonists paintings are characterized with the aid of the concepts of absorption and theatricality, which in their turn are related to a stipulated shift in 19th century landscape painting. The realistic practice, preoccupied with individuality as a possible experience for onlooker and artist alike, was replaced by one where a representative standing in relation to publicity and to the public had to be made clear. For the Varberg colonists this shift also gained emphasis from the fact that they at the same time had to be representatives of an organization that was trying to assume a public standing – here expressed through the concept of officiality.

Keywords:

Absorption and theatricality, aesthetics of reception, nationalism, naturalism, synthetism, symbolism, mood painting, the artist as social construction, nineteenth century art, landscape painting, individuality, officiality.

Lars Wängdahl, Departement of History of Art, Dicksonsgatan 2, Box 200, SE-405 30 Gothenburg.