

# Foreign Language Press Survey

Permanent Link: [http://flps.newberry.org/article/5423404\\_2\\_1439/](http://flps.newberry.org/article/5423404_2_1439/)

The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey was published in 1942  
by the Chicago Public Library Omnibus Project of the Works Progress



II A 3 c, IV

Swedish

*Svenska Tribunen-Nyheter*-- December 28, 1921

## Among Swedish Artists in Chicago

In order to get a better understanding of the background and development of Swedish-American art and its exponents here in Chicago, it is necessary to let our minds wander to Sweden, where Swedish-American art and artists had their origin.

Like the majority of Swedes, most of our artists came to this country in order to make a better living for themselves. And, of course, they hoped to win honor and fame in this land of opportunity. Only a few of them had managed to study art back home. Most of them came from country districts where they had worked on farms or in various industries, and during the first years after their arrival in America, they had to take whatever work they could find, and go to school at night to learn the language. As time passed, they became accustomed to their new environment. The spark of love for the fine arts grew stronger in their hearts, and their thoughts went back to their childhood years, when they drew pictures of Santa Claus and of elves and gnomes, copying the originals from

**2** Swedish Christmas magazines, or when they carved horses and other animals from pieces of wood. The results were not very artistic, perhaps, but they indicated a trend in the child's mind.

In the middle of the daily drudgery for existence, the young immigrant would wistfully wonder if the day would ever come when he could do anything that might be called art. After playing with such thoughts for a time, he would suddenly make a decision, and would register in an art school, attending night classes to start with. But as these became inadequate and his studies progressed too slowly, he would turn to regular day classes, even though it might mean many sacrifices, even privation, because of lack of funds.

Thus, many of our young men and women, whose ambition it was to become artists managed to get formal instruction. But it was no easy life for them. They often had to give up necessities in order to pay for their education. Many of them worked nights from six to eleven o'clock, handling freight in railroad depots. Others worked as ushers in theaters, as janitors, and so on. Those that were **3** fortunate enough to have learned a trade worked in the building industry, for instance, during the summer, and studied art in the winter.

No sacrifice seemed too great. The difficulties which they encountered spurred them on to even greater efforts to reach their goal, and made their art even more dear to them. Many a time they were both hungry and cold.

When his more fortunate friends stepped out on a Saturday or Sunday night to enjoy themselves, the poor artist had to sit home and study anatomy, perspective, and other subjects, which it was necessary for him to master before he could realize his ambitions. But his interest in the work was usually so great that he did not mind.

The years passed, and the period of formal schooling came to an end. The young man and woman were apt to think that they were now full-fledged artists. But they soon discovered that this was an illusion, and that their troubles were far from being over. The real battle for existence was just about to start, and unexpected difficulties piled up. They brought their work, which they themselves thought was pretty good, to art shows, but they were turned down time and again. Their confidence in themselves reached the point of despair, but they just had to try again. Some of them finally succeeded, and they will probably never forget the satisfaction and thrill they experienced when their work was accepted by an art jury. To be represented at an art exhibit brought a new and hitherto unknown feeling. The artist began to dream happy dreams, and the future looked bright. He could now allow himself more artistic freedom, and could concentrate on developing his own individual style.

The first Swedish art exhibit here in Chicago was held about fifteen years ago in the Anderson Art Gallery, which was then located on Wabash Avenue. Even though it did not produce a sensation in art circles, it served as an encouragement for Swedish artists, and they began to be talked about.

Nothing else happened until 1911, when C. S. Peterson, in co-operation with the Swedish Club, arranged a Swedish-American art exhibit in the club building.

Some of the work exhibited was quite good, but, on the whole, it was not far above the level of good student work. However, weak as the exhibit was, it attracted attention and stimulated interest, and it was decided to arrange another one the following year. This time the works of Charles Hallberg, Arvid Nyholm, and Alf Jansson were outstanding, and caused much favorable comment. Hallberg, who in his younger days had been a sailor, excelled in marine painting. Nyholm was a portrait painter, and Jansson specialized in winter scenes. In the course of years, new names have been added to the list of Swedish-American artists who have won a distinct place for themselves, all with their individual mode of artistic expression.

The following Swedish-American artists live and work in Chicago, and are well known from exhibits held in the Swedish Club and from other representative art shows: Gerda Alm, M. J. Ahlstromer, G. Ahlman, Charles Borgstrom, A. Burkland, August P. Burklund, Hugo Brunquist, Edward W. Carlson, Gustaf Dahlstrom, Nils Dahlstrom, Ada Enander, Eugene W. Franzen, Harry A. Geijer, Charles Hallberg, Bessie Hellstrom, Hugo von Hofsten, Alf Jansson, Raymond C. Jonson, Knute W. Johnson, Axel Linus, Oscar Larson, Reverend R. Lund, Martin Lundgren, Leon Lundmark, Arvid Nyholm, Signe Palmblad, Torey Ross, Einar Soderwall, E. Sandberg, Carl E. Wallin, and Axel Westerlind. These are all painters. The sculptors are: Agnes V. Fromen, Frank Gustafson, Carl J. Nilson, Edwin Pearson, Axel E. Olson, and Chas. Haag.

Some of the artists mentioned have thus far participated in only one or two art shows, while others are seasoned exhibitors. When studying the exhibits which have been held in the Swedish Club from year to year, one has to admit that Swedish-American artists

*t from the National Endowment for the*

*tions expressed here do not necessarily reflect  
ies.*

*berry's Dr. William M. Scholl Center for American*

studying the exhibits which have been held in the Swedish Club from year to year, one has to admit that Swedish-American artists from the East and from Kansas are, on the whole, ahead of those from Chicago, while all of them must bow to their cousins in Sweden, who now rank among the foremost in the world. However, some of our Chicagoans have made a name for themselves, are widely known, and have won distinguished rewards.

Charles S. Peterson of Chicago, has generously donated both time and money for the purpose of obtaining recognition for Swedish-American art not only in this country, but in Sweden as well. On his initiative, exhibits have been held in the cities of Stockholm, **7** Gothenburg, and Malmo. The State Bank of Chicago, a Swedish-owned institution, has also shown its interest by offering prizes for the best works at the exhibits held in the Swedish Club.

The reader might ask about the future prospects of Swedish-American art in Chicago. The answer is that if our most promising artists, especially the young ones, keep on working hard, one may expect much from the future: Raymond Johnson, for instance, has the makings of a future master. His canvases are already powerful and daring, indicating a strong realism, and his works have won recognition at the largest American exhibits.

Carl E. Wallin is another who should be able to make a secure place for himself in the world of art within a few more years. His sunsets are remarkable and have attracted much attention among critics. He is also an excellent portrait painter, as is demonstrated by his "Old Peasant Woman". One may also expect to hear much more of Gustaf Dahlstrom.

Of all the exhibits held in the Swedish Club, the last one was undoubtedly the best. Besides the old-timers with well-known **8** names, there were several young artists who exhibited for the first time, and among them one noted especially Leon Lundmark, whose work was outstanding. He has, however, previously exhibited his work at American art shows, but this was his debut in the Swedish Club.

The portraits by Axel Linus were very good, and Nils Dahlstrom had a painting with a motif from Sweden which showed remarkable originality, and it will be interesting to follow his future career. E. Sandberg was a newcomer to the exhibit, and was represented by a well-executed landscape. Arvid Nyholm is already well known; his portraits are unexcelled.

Charles Hallberg loves the sea, and his marine paintings are masterpieces. Alf Jansson has a fine reputation as a landscape painter. The winter, with its deep snows, seems to be his favorite season, but he can also bring out the beauty of spring, summer, and autumn. Torey Ross likes to paint the silent, dreaming night over the Chicago river, and his work is getting better right along.

**9** Einar Soderwall specializes in sunsets on the ocean. Elmer Forsberg, who is an instructor at the Chicago Art Institute, has done much for art in this city. He devotes most of his time to his teaching job, and seldom exhibits his work.

In conclusion, it should be noted that since annual exhibits by our artists have become the rule, the Swedish public in this country has begun to show more interest in art, and even the great metropolitan dailies have given considerable space to articles on Swedish-American artists and their accomplishments. The result is that the general American public is getting acquainted with this phase of Swedish cultural life, and the Swedish-Americans are gaining in the esteem of their fellow citizens.

## Primary Listing

Swedish // Contributions and Activities > Vocational > Aesthetic > Painting and Sculpture (II A 3 c) ?

## Secondary listings

Swedish // Representative Individuals (IV) ?

## Card Images



