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Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe
Stockholm University, jessica.skrubbe@arthistory.su.se

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Routes and Ruptures. Swedish Artistic Mobility in the Early Twentieth Century

Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe
Stockholm University

Abstract
This article presents the results of an empirical study of Swedish artistic mobility during the first decades of the twentieth century, a period associated with the emergence of modernism in Swedish art and with Paris as an unquestionable point of reference. Without questioning Paris as an artistic node, it highlights the discrepancy between art history's narrativisation of transnational mobility and the diverse artistic itineraries that empirical material evidences. Focusing on Swedish artists' travels in France, Germany, Denmark, and Italy, it offers a geohistorical trajectory that differentiates established narratives.

Résumé
Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude empirique portant sur la mobilité artistique suédoise au début du XXe siècle, période marquée par l'émergence du modernisme dans l’art suédois et la domination parisienne. Sans remettre en cause l'importance de Paris, il confronte le récit officiel de la mobilité artistique transnationale aux différents itinéraires artistiques mis en lumière par les données empiriques. Centré sur les voyages des artistes suédois en France, en Allemagne, au Danemark et en Italie, il propose une trajectoire géohistorique qui questionne les récits établis.

Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe is Associate Professor of Art History at Stockholm University. Her publications include Nell Walden, Der Sturm, and the Collaborative Cultures of Modern Art (Routledge, 2022) and the edited volume Curating Differently: Feminisms, Exhibitions, and Curatorial Spaces (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).
In 1892, at the age of sixteen, Agnes Cleve travelled with her father from her native Sweden to London, Brighton, and Scotland. This, her first journey abroad, was to be followed by many subsequent travels in Europe and beyond: as an art student at the Valand art academy in Gothenburg, Cleve in 1906 toured through Germany and Italy with a friend; in 1914 she studied in Paris; two years later, in the midst of the First World War, she visited the USA together with her husband, the artist John Jondald; between 1921 and 1927, she travelled yearly through Germany, Italy, and France, as well as making her first visits to Tunisia and Algeria; in 1931, on her way to and from Turkey, she passed through (today’s) Poland, Romania, Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Germany; and in 1935 she again crossed the Atlantic and returned to the USA. Throughout her career, Agnes Cleve was on the move and she registered her journeys just as she documented her exhibitions and the sales of her paintings. Travelling was obviously an important part of her life as an artist and hers is thus a case that manifests that being a modern artist was synonymous with being mobile (Fig. 1). But how can Swedish artists’ itineraries be characterised on a grander scale and what are the broader patterns of mobility?

This article presents the results of an empirical study of Swedish artistic mobility during the first decades of the twentieth century, a period generally associated with the emergence of modernism in Swedish art and with Paris as an unquestionable point of reference. The point of departure for the discussion is the observation that the pivotal artist journey to Paris, which is a dominant trope in the narrative on Swedish modern art, serves as a simplistic and reductive description of artists’ actual movements, practices, and networks. More often than not, Swedish art historiography has taken a hierarchical centre-periphery divide for granted and reproduced the idea of a one-directional cultural transfer is the often reiterated story of the Swedish artists, among them Isaac Grünewald and Sigrid Hjertén, who trained with Henri Matisse around 1910 and returned home with modernism, as it were. Blomberg’s 1923 publication is only one of numerous art historical overviews and exhibition catalogues that have narrativised Swedish modern art as firmly rooted in Paris. Owing to the strong focus

that expressionism, as a dominant modernist mode, reached “a unifying focal point in the studio of Matisse”.1 Indeed, the most prominent example of the construction of a one-directional cultural transfer is the often reiterated story of the Swedish artists, among them Isaac Grünewald and Sigrid Hjertén, who trained with Henri Matisse around 1910 and returned home with modernism, as it were.

Blomberg’s 1923 publication is only one of numerous art historical overviews and exhibition catalogues that have narrativised Swedish modern art as firmly rooted in Paris.2 Owing to the strong focus

All translations from Swedish to English are mine.


2 See e.g. Axel Romdahl, Det moderna måleriet och dess förutsättningar. En orientering (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1926); Rolf Söderberg, Den svenska konsten under
in art historiography on Paris as a compulsory pas-
sage point for every aspiring modern artist, diverse travelling patterns and further destinations—and thus presumably also professional networks and artistic practices—have been overlooked or reduced to marginal episodes of lesser interest, despite the fact that many artists travelled widely. Without questioning Paris as an artistic hub, this article highlights the discrepancy between art history’s narrativisation of transnational mobility and the patterns of mobility that empirical material suggests. Agnes Cleve, while not the subject of a deeper study in this context, returns as a significant example throughout the text.

**Tracing Artistic Routes**

Recent research has convincingly argued that the numerous established narratives about modern artistic mobility are in need of critical revision and that the transnational circulation of subjects and objects must be recognised as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It has been noted that art historiography’s focus on occasional events is an inadequate method as it cannot process and analyse the diversity and broader patterns of artistic mobility. Critical issues of transnational mobility are thus intimately related to questions of methodology and source material. But how can one trace and restore the multifaceted and varied mobility of artists on a grander scale? Studies of the transnational circulation of artworks in exhibitions benefit from the abundance of information in exhibition catalogues, but there is a lack of equivalent source material for artists’ travels. For sure, artist biographies often offer detailed information about transnational mobility, but biographical literature is limited to a narrow selection of practitioners and thus omits the larger population of active artists. Using only information given in artists’ monographies moreover risks merely consolidating the established modernist narrative as biographical writing in itself is part of the canonisation process. Archival material such as correspondence, travelogues (which were sometimes printed for public circulation), and registers of awarded travel scholarship or student rolls (if they existed and/or are preserved at all) of art schools beyond the Swedish borders would naturally offer essential primary sources, but exceeds the limits of what is realistically feasible within the given framework.

The empirical foundation for this article is thus the most extensive artist encyclopaedia of Swedish artists, *Svenskt konstnärslexikon*. The large-scale project conducted by major art historians and curators with the aim of assembling all available information on artists active in, or connected to, the Swedish art world from the Middle Ages onwards. The biographical accounts in these volumes build on excerpts from primary sources in archives, museums, and libraries, from artist biographies and literature on art history and cultural history, and from exhibition reviews and catalogues. The material was complemented with interviews with artists, who also delivered written accounts with first-hand information on, for example, their training, travels, and exhibitions, and

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1. Johnny Roosval, Gösta Lilja, and Knut Andersson, eds., *Svenskt konstnärslexikon*. The largest population of active artists. Using only information given in artists’ monographies moreover risks merely consolidating the established modernist narrative as biographical writing in itself is part of the canonisation process. Archival material such as correspondence, travelogues (which were sometimes printed for public circulation), and registers of awarded travel scholarship or student rolls (if they existed and/or are preserved at all) of art schools beyond the Swedish borders would naturally offer essential primary sources, but exceeds the limits of what is realistically feasible within the given framework.

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correspondence with relatives and artists’ friends. As such, Svenskt konstnärslexikon offers the most extensive mapping of practising artists in Sweden ever conducted. Despite the encyclopaedia’s objective, documentary ambitions, the content on occasion reflects the same norms and values that characterised contemporary art historiography in Sweden. Basic facts given in the entries nevertheless serve well as source material for a quantitative study.

In the empirical research that forms the basis for this article, information on the travels abroad of nearly 1000 Swedish artists who became professionally established in the first decades of the twentieth century has been collected from the encyclopaedia. Excerpts with information on the artists’ education both in Sweden and abroad, as well as transnational travels and exhibitions have been structured and processed in a database in order to reveal patterns of mobility. The artists included in the study belong to the generation of artists credited with the so-called modernist breakthrough in Swedish art, most of them born in the 1880s. As the events of the historical past rarely match the neat ‘decadisation’ of chronological generations, I have opted for what could be called artists born in the ‘long 1880s’, that is born between 1875 and 1895. In order to avoid repeating the qualitative value judgements of canonical art history, all artists with a professional training and/or career have been included in the study regardless of their historical success on the art market, their status in modernist

7 More precisely, the database contains information on 995 artists’ date of birth, gender, main professional area of activity, education in Sweden and elsewhere, and travels and exhibitions abroad.
art history, or institutionalisation in public museums and archives. Importantly, the diversity of destinations and the patterns of mobility that this study shows, is thus generated from the itineraries of a much broader scope of Swedish artists than is usually discussed in scholarly literature and thus offers a representative, rather than selective, overview of artistic mobility.

The first decades of the twentieth century represent a period when most artists of the long 1880s generation initiated, established, and consolidated their artistic careers. The empirical material not only contains information on studies abroad early in their careers, but also includes travel and training throughout their professional lives. Focusing on a period of several decades is a methodological choice intended to show that mobility was more than unidirectional routes or isolated movements in the artists’ formative years. As already suggested by Agnes Cleve’s itineraries, artistic mobility was rather characterised by durational movements. More precisely, mobility was a circulatory practice of departing and returning that was repeated more or less frequently along diverse routes and in different directions during a longer period of time.8

The accounts in Svenskt konstnärslексikon almost always include information about artists’ journeys abroad and, it should be noted that, fundamentally, all of them did indeed travel to a greater or lesser extent. The collected data shows that Swedish artists travelled all over the world, to more than sixty countries on all continents but, as expected, most journeys were to European destinations. With few exceptions, travels further afield rather occurred as solitary events compared to the steady stream of the larger number of artists heading for continental Europe.

The numerous accounts in the empirical material on travels, visits, or study trips do not always indicate exactly where (e.g. to which cities within a certain country) artists travelled and only occasionally provide detailed information on the specific purposes of the journeys. The genre of the short biographical account obviously does not contain exhaustive discussions about cultural encounters and their possible effects on artistic practices. However, even a cursory comparison with biographical literature reveals that the notes on transnational mobility in Svenskt konstnärslексikon refer to a plethora of activities and it is clear that artists were on the move for different reasons. Some went abroad for basic training, even if most travelled in order to get further education once they had initiated or even completed their artistic training at home. Some toured Europe in order to familiarise themselves with major art museums and the cultural heritage of churches, monuments, urban centres and so on. Others worked side by side in artist colonies abroad, where some would stay for years while others would repeatedly travel back and forth.

It should be noted that all statistical information in this article—years, numbers, or percentages of artists—is based on the information provided by the encyclopaedia. Approximately two-thirds of the accounts on travels abroad in the assembled data from Svenskt konstnärslексikon contain information on when training, journeys, or seasonal migration occurred. There is, however, a lack of information at the detailed level about the duration of travels and study trips. Most often the encyclopaedia provides information about which years travel occurred, but not if it was a matter of a few weeks’ visit or a sojourn of several months. Despite these lacunae, the information at hand clearly adds to the selective narrative of modernist art history and helps differentiate some of its dominating tropes.

It would of course be a mistake to conceptualise artistic mobility as merely a matter of facts about individuals or groups moving from one place to another. Geographer Tim Cresswell has suggested that mobility is better conceptualised as “the entanglement of movement, representation and practice”.9 Cresswell’s tripartite conceptualisation suggests

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that mobility would have to be related to the narrativisation of movement and to questions of social or cultural relations and habitualised practices. Thus, when I explore some of the most frequent destinations of Swedish modern artists, it is not only the movements between particular locations that are the focus. The meanings ascribed to those routes in modernist art historiography as well as questions about how mobility was performed and what professional relations it involved are also, to some extent, addressed.

The Mandatory Passage Point

Unsurprisingly, France was by far the most attractive destination for Swedish artists travelling abroad in the early twentieth century; two-thirds of the artists of the long 1880s generation travelled there at some point in their career. Also, there is no doubt that from an artistic point of view, France was more or less synonymous with Paris. It is clear that a majority of the artists travelled to Paris in order to seek further training, whether in one of the many académie libres or through self-instruction in museums and galleries. Before the outbreak of war in 1914, at least 150 Swedish artists of the long 1880s generation had received training in Paris. About thirty of them studied at the short-lived Académie Matisse. A small group of artists, to which Agnes Cleve belonged, studied with Henri Le Fauconnier and André Dunoyer de Segonzac at the Académie La Palette (Fig. 3). However, the vast majority of Swedish artists in Paris trained elsewhere. Académie Colarossi, in particular, was a popular institute with more than sixty Swedish students attending classes. The neighbouring Académie de la Grande Chaumière as well as Académie Julian also attracted many Swedish students. The majority of Swedish artists who studied in Paris before the First World War trained with painters such as Lucien Simon, Émile-René Ménard, and Christian Krohg or sculptors such Jean-Antoine Injalbert and Antoine Bourdelle.

However, the narrativisation of Swedish artists in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century has focused mainly on a small group of artists who had already established a social and professional network during their training in the art school of Konstnärsförbundet (the Artists’ Union)—the Swedish secessionist movement established in the 1880s—in Stockholm and consolidated their bonds through the foundation of the exclusively male artist group De unga (The Young) in 1907. Several of its members, including Isaac Grünewald, Gösta Sandels, and Birger Simonsson, headed for Paris and trained...
with Henri Matisse between 1908 and 1911. This clique of former students of the Konstnärsförbundet's school jointly challenged the National Romantic ideals and hegemonic position of their teachers through a series of exhibitions in Stockholm during 1909–1911. The symbolic parricide they thus conducted may be described as a patrilinear strategy whereby they claimed an avant-garde position through a paradoxical oppositional bond to the hegemonic elite. This gesture has epitomised the modernist rupture in Swedish art historiography. It was swiftly picked up by contemporary critics and soon enough consolidated by modernist art historiography as the story of modernism in Sweden.11

The Stockholm–Paris route that has been reiterated in art-historical literature thus represents a translocational connection that is even narrower than the circulational artists between two capitals implies. The dominant position of the Swedish Matisse students not only perfectly manifests modernist art historiography’s desire for avant-garde ruptures, but is also indicative of how the artists benefited from both a locally anchored network and joint international experiences when they positioned themselves on the national art scene. Indeed, what united the artist of De unga was less a common aesthetic programme than a shared experience of having learned new habits of thought and practice in Paris.

If Paris was the mandatory passage point for a majority of Swedish artists, it should be remembered that the realities and practices such as economic constraints, language barriers, and national coterie were an integral part of artistic mobility. In his autobiography, Carl Palme, who was one of Matisse’s Swedish students, stated that many artists of his generation had the opportunity to stay in Paris for a couple of months or half a year only, thus having “barely smelled” the city before returning to their native country.12 But Palme also critically referred to the relative lack of cultural encounters that a sojourn in Paris in the first decades of the twentieth century might suggest:

As soon as a Swede came to Paris, he stumbled upon Café Versailles (at Gare Montparnasse) to ask for compatriots, order Swedish newspapers and learn to drink absinthe. Of all the Swedes in Paris, only a few learned French. This also applies, albeit to a lesser extent, to the Norwegians. They locked up together and did everything to prevent contact with French cultural life and French painters. […] They were very diligent in their respective academies, especially everyone who went to Matisse. But an interpreter always had to be present when the teacher came on Saturdays and this also applies to those who had lived in the country for two and three years!13

Unsurprisingly, Palme concluded his anecdotal memories of Scandinavians in Paris by stating that “many returned home as they arrived, empty-handed”,14 Palme was not alone in his observations. It has been noted that only a few Swedish artists in Paris, both before and after the First World War, nurtured close contacts with artists from the European continent, but rather entertained in Scandinavian coteries.15 A Parisian sojourn thus did not necessarily entail artistic contacts with French or international peers, but could rather involve the cultivation of Scandinavian networks, which is also indicated by the trans-Scandinavian collaborations of the 1920s that took place or originated in Paris.16


15 Lärkner, Det internationella avantgarden, 116, 152.

In general, Swedish artists’ mobility in Paris and elsewhere needs to be further explored in order to fully grasp not only the extent and character of cultural exchange and connectivity, but also the possible lack thereof.

Dispersed Translocal Connections

If Paris was the main attraction for those 1000 or so artists of the long 1880s generation included in this study, it should be noted that 46 per cent, 453 artists, also travelled to Germany at some point during their careers. Before the outbreak of the First World War, at least eighty Swedish artists sought training in Germany, approximately fifty of which turned to the Munich area in Bavaria. In contrast to France, where Paris was the dominant location, there was no equivalent incontestable artistic centre in Germany, at least not from the Swedish perspective, but several regional art scenes of importance. While the Swedes predominantly opted for Munich, Berlin, or Dresden, Swedish artistic mobility in Germany was nevertheless enacted through numerous dispersed routes and destinations. As isolated events, these itineraries may appear as negligible deviations from the major road to Paris. Taken together, though, they testify to a significant transnational connection.

One could perhaps expect that art historiography would somehow reflect the fact that so many artists spent time in Germany. However, Swedish artistic mobility in Germany is usually represented by a few prominent examples that figure as the exceptions that confirm the rule, as for instance Gösta Adrian-Nilsson’s connections to the Sturm Gallery in Berlin, Carl Palme’s training under Wassily Kandinsky in the Phalanx art school in Munich prior to his transfer to Paris and Matisse, or Axel Törneman and Tora Vega Holmström’s studies with Adolf Hölzel in Dachau.

On closer examination, Törneman and Holmström’s education in Dachau seems to be part of a translocal connection whose networked structure is comparable to the community of Stockholm-based artists that studied with Matisse. A small group of a dozen artists, the majority of whom had studied with Carl Wilhelmson at the Valand art academy in Gothenburg on the Swedish west coast, relocated to Dachau, close to Munich, in order to continue their training with Adolf Hölzel in the early 1900s. Like the Swedish artists who a few years later would study with Matisse in Paris, several of Hölzel’s Swedish students already constituted an artistic clique upon arrival in Dachau and they continued to maintain their network after returning to their native country, although they partly settled in different regions of the country, and some even had to give up their artistic careers. Carl O. Petersen was more firmly connected to the Bavarian art scene and remained in Germany until the late 1930s. He had studied under Hölzel and in Hans von Hayeck’s private art school in Dachau and with Emil Orlik in Munich, settled permanently in Dachau, and established himself as a regular contributor of illustrations to Simplicissimus and Jugend. It should be noted that several Swedish artists nurtured the connection with Hölzel after their formative years of early training in Germany and he would also visit some of his former students in Sweden.17

Modernist art history’s disinterest in the translocal connection between Gothenburg and Dachau could easily be described as an effect of the general Francophile attitude among Swedish critics and art historians. Arguably, though, it is most of all indicative of a geohistorical narrative structure that privileges perceived centres over alleged peripheries, and radical novelties over gradual change. Hölzel’s Swedish students were generally older than those who opted for Matisse a couple of years later. As for their Swedish teachers, the age structure was the opposite. As we have seen, many of Matisse’s students had studied at Konstnärsförbundet’s school in Stockholm, whose teaching staff consisted of first-generation National Romantic painters. Wilhelmson, though, was a second-generation National Romantic painter.18 Even when

18 Wilhelmson had studied for Carl Larsson at the Valand art school in Gothenburg before seeking further training in graphic techniques in Leipzig. He then worked as a commercial artist while also studying for Paul Serusier and Maurice Denis at
focusing on depictions of Swedish west coast fisherfolk, perpetuating the national subjects defined by first-generation National Romanticists of Konstnärsförbundet. Wilhelmson diverged from the pictorial style favoured by the painters that dominated Konstnärsförbundet by adopting post-impressionist painterly techniques. Moreover, Wilhelmson was based on the Swedish west coast and thus not part of Konstnärsförbundet’s hegemonic clique in Stockholm and he was generally highly regarded among his students, not least those who happened to be women.19 On arriving in Dachau, Wilhelmson’s former students encountered a similar professional milieu. Hölzel fostered an equally liberal attitude towards women artists, and his theoretically focused tuition, in which he put much weight on colour theories, resonated well with those students interested in the expressive potential of a bright palette.

Hölzel’s Swedish students, then, were neither frustrated with the artistic ideals and authoritative position of their former teacher Wilhelmson in Gothenburg, nor found a radically different pictorial programme in Hölzel’s own artistic practice (it was only later that he began with the abstract pictorial style that has granted him a prominent position in modernist art history). Consequently, they did not establish oppositional bonds or join together in group exhibitions that presented radically different aesthetic ideals. For most of them, relocation from Sweden to Dachau represented continuity or was part of a gradual artistic advancement. However, modernist art history prefers the construction of avant-garde ruptures. Thus, it is perhaps only logical that the 1906 public display in Stockholm of Nattcaféet (Fig. 4) by Axel Törneman—who had spent

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several years in Paris after his Dachau sojourn—has on the one hand been recognised as an incident that “must have been a sensation for the coloristically starving young people”, but on the other has been narrativised as an intermediate event that only fore-shadowed and encouraged the future expressionist elaborations of the slightly younger Matisse students, whose joint exhibitions could perform the “proper” modernist breakthrough a couple of years later.

Finally, not only did the majority of Hölzel’s students arrive in Germany from Gothenburg, upon return to Sweden several of them settled in the southern province of Scania. Their route from Gothenburg to Dachau and back to Scania thus represented a multi-stage translocal connection that in many ways deviated from the normal route between Stockholm and Paris, cities that were positioned as artistic centres at the national and international level. Arguably, dis-interest in this route in Swedish art history is thus also related to the construction and consolidation of Stockholm as the artistic centre within the Swedish borders.

Temporary Moorings and Liminal Spaces

Nearly one-third of the artists of the long 1880s generation spent time in Denmark. If France, Germany, and Italy attracted a relatively steady stream of Swedish artists during the first two decades of the twentieth century, Denmark saw an increasing number of Swedish artists arriving in the 1910s. Just as France was synonymous with Paris, Denmark was equivalent to Copenhagen from an artistic point of view. Many Scandinavian artists who had been practising in various European places, returned to their native, and neutral, countries during the First World War. Swedish artists who had travel scholarships now had to find alternative locations as the scholarship statutes required them to reside abroad. Copenhagen was obviously close at hand. Moreover, during the war, Denmark’s economy flourished, resulting in a favourable impact on the art market. The closed borders thus transformed Copenhagen into a Scandinavian art metropolis that in some ways substituted for the international milieu of Paris.

Previous research has rightly pointed out that Scandinavian artists who resided in Copenhagen during the war had access to artworks of some of the most radical artists from continental Europe through several major private collections. However, what distinguishes the Swedish connections in Denmark from those in France, and to some extent those in Germany and Italy, is the number of Swedes who only exhibited in Copenhagen but refrained from visiting Denmark. Copenhagen offered crucial opportunities for Swedish artists to exhibit their work for an international public. According to the accounts in Svenskt Konstnärslexikon, there were as many Swedish artists of the long 1880s generation who exhibited in France as in Denmark—about 150—but the prospects of exhibiting in France were clearly associated with travel to, or sojourns in, the country: only 4 per cent of the Swedes who exhibited in France had not visited the country, in contrast, 53 per cent of the Swedish artists who exhibited in Denmark did not travel there. Thus, Swedish artistic mobility in Denmark was just as much about circulating artworks as travelling artists. During and shortly after the First World War, there were several Swedish group exhibitions of importance in Copenhagen as well as some significant solo exhibitions. Agnes Cleve’s first international show together with John Jon-And in Den frie Udstilling in 1919 tellingly illustrates the exhibition opportunities in the Danish capital.

It has been noted that not only is mobility always intertwined with immobility, but it is also necessarily

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21 Lindwall and Åström, ‘Vår egen tids konst’, 556.
23 Lärkner, Det internationella avangardet, 118f.
24 Among the Swedes who exhibited in Germany and Italy, 23 and 37 per cent, respectively, did not travel there.
25 See e.g. Ung svensk kunst (Gäteborgskolen), Kunstenforeningen, 1915; Svenska konstutställningen, Charlottenborg, 1916; Udstillingen av moderne svensk kunst, Den frie Udstilling, 1916; Isaac Grünwald, Den frie Udstilling, 1917; Föreningen Svenska Konstnärinnor, Den frie Udstilling, 1920.
configured and enabled by “spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings”\textsuperscript{26} Copenhagen’s close proximity, its flourishing markets, rich collections, and exhibition venues provided precisely the temporary moorings that facilitated the gathering of Scandinavian artists in the Danish capital in the 1910s. Many artists abandoned Copenhagen after the end of the First World War, in favour of destinations beyond the Nordic borders. Representing Copenhagen as only a substitute for Paris during the war would, however, misrepresent the continuous flow of artists across the Swedish-Danish border and the entanglement of Scandinavian art scenes in the region both before and after the First World War. Copenhagen had long attracted Swedish artists and the Danish capital was more than a “surrogate” where artists “hibernated” while waiting for the chance to return to Paris.\textsuperscript{27}

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Denmark had attracted as many Swedish artists of the long 1880s generation as Italy, some forty-five to each. Copenhagen had for quite some time been the first choice for aspiring artists from Sweden’s southern province, Scania, seeking professional training. Some Scanian artists, such as Gösta Adrian-Nilsson or Nils Möllerberg, never trained in Sweden at all, but opted for Copenhagen before venturing on to further travels in Europe. Kunstnernes Frie Studioskoler in Copenhagen, with its influential teachers, Kristian Zahrtmann and Johan Rohde, played a major role for a younger generation of artists in Denmark and attracted students not only from Scania but from throughout Scandinavia. The transnational movement and activities of yet other artists testify to the region as an artistic border zone. Swedish-born artists such as Gerhard Henning or Karl Isaksson, who settled in Denmark, or Danish-born artists such Jules Schyl and Esther Henriques-Gehlin, who were central figures in Scanian art life, simply resist national labelling. Owing to its geographical proximity, Scania and the Copenhagen area is best described as a liminal space where national borders to a high degree were dissolved by artistic practices and networks.

From the dominant and Stockholm-based perspective of modernist art historiography, Scania has represented the periphery of Swedish art life. Moreover, trans-Scandinavian artistic connectivity has predominantly been recognised when it occurred in the perceived “real” centre, as for instance the Scandinavian coteries in Paris. Modernist art historiography has thus positioned Scandinavian artists as “close Others”, that is as cultural actors who were part of the same episteme as the dominating centre but whose marginalised position seemed to require that any communication, exchange, or transfer among them had to be narrativised as passing through the centre, whose privileged position was thus accepted and confirmed.\textsuperscript{28} Indeed, the confirmatory reflex is perfectly represented by the repeated references in art historiography to Scandinavian artists’ access to French modernism in Danish private art collections during the First World War.\textsuperscript{29}

Finally, it should be noted that the empirical material studied, to some extent, suggests that Scanian artists were not only more closely entangled with Danish art life than their peers in central Sweden, but also that they seem to have been more inclined to seek artistic training in Germany. If we provisionally define “Scanian artist” as someone who started her or his artistic education in the region, it can be concluded that among the nearly forty artists of the long 1880s generation who received their initial training in Scania, almost 40 per cent also studied at an art academy or independent art school in Germany and 74 per cent travelled there. The number of artists who began their careers in Stockholm was, of course, significantly higher, nearly 620. Among these 45 per cent travelled to Germany at some point, but only 10 per cent sought further training in the country.


\textsuperscript{27} Lärkner, \textit{Det internationale avantgardet}, 118.


\textsuperscript{29} See e.g. Lidén, ‘1900-talets bildkunst’, 301; Thomas Millroth, ‘Målaren och skulpturen’, in \textit{Signums svenska konsthistorie} (Lund: Signum, 2002), 66.
The Scanian artist group *De tolv* (The Twelve), who made their first public appearance in a group exhibition in Malmö in 1924, is a typical example. The group included Danish-born painter Jules Schyl, but all other members, such as Albert Abbe, Svante Bergh, and the previously mentioned Tora Vega Holmström, were born in Scania and the majority had begun their artistic education in the region and continued their international training in Copenhagen and Lund in Scania, followed by studies for Carl Wilhelmson in Gothenburg before she turned to Adolf Hözel in Dachau. Later she travelled to France, where she became acquainted with the Spanish artist María Blanchard.

The Scanian artist group *De tolv* (The Twelve), who made their first public appearance in a group exhibition in Malmö in 1924, is a typical example. The group included Danish-born painter Jules Schyl, but all other members, such as Albert Abbe, Svante Bergh, and the previously mentioned Tora Vega Holmström, were born in Scania and the majority had begun their artistic education in the region and continued their international training in Copenhagen and/or different locations in Germany before the First World War. All of them had spent some time in Paris and several sought further training with André Lhote during the interwar years (Fig. 5). Their shared artistic experience of acquiring professional knowledge along different routes—that is, transnational circulation within the liminal space of Copenhagen/Scania and back and forth to both Germany and France—formed the basis for a regional group formation. According to the linear logic of modernist art historiography, their public appearance in joint exhibitions during the 1920s has not qualified as a modernist rupture on the national level as they represented "belated" events, but has instead been narrativised as representative for a modernist breakthrough in Scania.

### Seasonal Migration and Mediterranean Touring

After the end of the First World War numerous artists of the long 1880s generation set off again to the European continent and beyond. Many of the artists who were unable to seek further training abroad before the outbreak of war headed for Paris, where André Lhote was by far the most popular teacher with some sixty Swedish students.30 Whereas travel to Germany increased only marginally after the war—the country had obviously been culturally stigmatised after the conflict—the most noticeable difference in travelling patterns was now the veritable flow of Swedish artists who opted for Italy. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, interest in Italy among this generation of artists had been lower compared to both Germany and France.31 After the end of the First World War, though, travellers to Italy increased dramatically and during the 1920s more than 210 Swedish artists of the long 1880s generation visited the country for longer or shorter periods of time.32

This growing mobility during the interwar years was not only motivated by an accumulated desire for novel impressions and experiences after years of closed borders, but also reflects the “external” conditions that set people and objects in motion or, conversely, impeded the traffic along certain routes or between particular destinations, in short what Tim Cresswell has theorised as the politics of mobility.33 In the interwar years, the opportunities

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30 On Lhote’s importance as teacher for several generations of Swedish artists, see Anna Meister and Karin Sälen, eds., *Form och färg. André Lhote och svensk kubism* (Stockholm: Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, 2017).  
31 According to the accounts in *Svenskt Konstnärslexikon*, some forty-five Swedish artists travelled to Italy, about 100 to Germany, and about 145 to France during the first decade of the century. The corresponding figures for the 1910s are seventy to Italy, 110 to Germany, and 180 to France.  
32 The same decade saw some 140 Swedish artists in Germany and more than 280 in France.  
33 Cresswell, ‘Towards a Politics of Mobility’.
for Swedish artists to travel increased through the introduction of new travel scholarships and an increase in the awarded amounts of existing ones.\textsuperscript{34} Moreover, favourable exchange rates after the war helped to reduce travel costs to the European continent for Swedish artists and a journey to Italy could be economically more advantageous than a sojourn in Paris.\textsuperscript{35} In other words, international monetary policies had its effects on the growing mobility in the Mediterranean area.

As suggested in the above discussion, the accounts in \textit{Svenskt konstnärsslexikon} contain copious information about artists who studied at art schools or took private art lessons in France, Germany, or Denmark. As regards Italy, the artists of the long 1880s generation clearly did not travel there for further formal training, because, in the early 1920s, many of them were already established artists. The Italian sojourns rather seem to have involved a quest for \textit{Bildung}, a cultivation of artistic networks, and, presumably, the hope of producing artworks that would be viable on the art market upon return to their native country.

The Italian sojourns of Swedish artists in the interwar years have been described as temporary “excursions”\textsuperscript{36}. Given the recurring, circulatory movements between Sweden and Italy in this period they might be better described as seasonal migrations that were also associated with the relatively widespread touring of the Mediterranean area in general. \textit{Svenskt konstnärsslexikon} contains numerous accounts of artists who travelled back and forth to Italy during the 1920s or stayed there for a longer period of time. It should also be noted that in the interwar years an increasing number of Swedish artists extended their Mediterranean journeys to the North African countries that were under French colonial rule: Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Although the seventy or so Swedish artists who travelled to French North Africa were not as numerous as those who spent time in Italy, no other region beyond the European borders attracted as many artists of the long 1880s generation as did Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. For sure, the colonial relations and infrastructures—transport, local institutions, financial transactions—facilitated the mundane realities of travelling.\textsuperscript{37} It is also clear that these journeys to French North Africa were often intimately connected with travels to Italy, Spain, or France. Significantly, Agnes Cleve’s first visit to Tunisia in 1922 was an integral part of a longer sojourn in Italy (Fig. 6).

Like the artistic mobility in Germany, there were numerous places in Italy that attracted Swedish artists, rather than a single dominant artistic centre. Unsurprisingly, Rome and Florence were two of the most favoured cities, but artists also settled beyond the city borders in small villages such as Anticoli Corrado or Settignano. In fact, quite a few artists formed informal working communities or small artists’ colonies, whose precise compositions still has to be mapped. In these villages, artists found appealing subjects for their paintings that went beyond the familiar motifs of urban metropolises and native landscapes. One of the many frequent Italian travellers, Hilding Linnqvist, reported home that Anticoli Corrado was precisely a “city of motifs” where nothing in the scenery at hand had to be changed.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition, numerous artists were attracted by the aesthetic ideals of Italian late Medieval and early Renaissance painting. In the Swedish artist colony in Settignano, Linnqvist joined with Leander Engström, whose biographer has reported that after Engström’s first visit to Italy in 1920, he returned to Sweden with the aim of creating “a Nordic-Italian group of painters […] who would stand in clear opposition to Paris, whose influence according to Engström now threatened Nordic art”.\textsuperscript{39} In other words, Engström, who had been a student of Matisse some ten years earlier, anticipated that travelling and

\textsuperscript{34} Lidén, ’1900-talets bildkunst’, 340.
\textsuperscript{35} Lindwall and Åström, ”Vår egen tids konst” , 575; Bo Lindwall, Då och nu. Svenskt konstvit under 150 år [Stockholm: Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening, 1982], 96.
\textsuperscript{36} Lärkner, Det internationella avantgardet, 151.
\textsuperscript{38} Hilding Linnqvist in letter to Frithiof Schüldt, quoted in: Millroth, ’Måleriet och skulpturen’, 110.
\textsuperscript{39} ”Hans idé var att en nordisk-italiensk målaregrupp borde bildas, som skulle ställa sig i klar opposition mot Paris, vars inflytande enligt Engströms mening nu hotade den nordiska konstensunda växt”. Nils Palmgren, Leander Engström (Stockholm: Svensak litteratur, 1947), 115.
working beyond the Parisian centre together with like-minded peers would create and maintain a professional community, whose joint interests and ideals could be mobilised in order to advance on the national art scene.

Leander Engström succeeded only as far as public visibility is concerned. Together with Hilding Linnqvist and other Swedish artists who had discovered new ideals and motifs in Italy during the early 1920s, he left a clear mark, as it were, in the autumn salons of Liljevalchs Kunsthalle in Stockholm in 1920 and 1921. Numerous paintings in these exhibitions depicted motifs from Venice, Assisi, Florence, Rome, or Naples and some artists even displayed copies after canonised painters such as Giotto or Piero della Francesca.

However, the seeming anachronism of the “detour” to Italy and cultural pasts was a perfect mismatch with prevailing ideas about linear progression and modernist art historiography’s insatiable desire for avant-garde ruptures. A couple of years after the Italian autumn salons at Liljevalchs Kunsthalle, art historian Erik Blomberg dismissed the departure from modernist norms by stating that “for many, the connection to tradition has degenerated into spineless eclecticism”. 40 Also in subsequent art historical overviews, the “eclecticism” has often been received with more or less explicit bewilderment or embarrassment. Recently, art historian Lena Johannesson has recalled that the problem rather lies with the reluctance of scholars of art history “to accept that art does not develop symmetrically in ever-innovative cycles”. 41 However, the broader

Figure 6. Agnes Cleve, Sidi-Bou-Said, 1922. Drawing on paper, 30 × 41.5 cm. Private collection. Photo: Bukowskis, Stockholm.

40 'Hos många har anknytningen till traditionen urartat i hållningslös eklekticism' . Blomberg, Den nya svenska konsten, 13.
reception has not always been so lukewarm. It has, for instance, been noted that Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening (the Swedish Association for Art), a national organisation that supports contemporary art by annual acquisitions which are distributed to a wider public through annual lotteries, happily bought precisely this kind of realist or classicist painting during the 1920s. Indeed, in 1922, Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening acquired Den givmilde gossen (Fig. 7), one of the major paintings from Leander Engström’s second Italian sojourn at the Swedish artist colony in Settignano.42

Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from the patterns of mobility outlined above and how can they be related to the itineraries of individual artists? From a historiographical perspective this study both confirms and challenges established narratives. The focus in art historiography on Swedish artists’ connections to Paris and France corresponds to the fact that two-thirds of the artists of the long 1880s generation travelled there. As we have seen, though, nearly half of the artists travelled to Germany, just as many to Italy, and almost one-third to Denmark. The scope of these transnational connections does not match their relatively neglected position in art historiography and their precise mapping remains a research desideratum.

Let us return to Agnes Cleve. In its singularity, her travels may appear as isolated events. However, in light of the numerous artists that studied in Paris or Germany in the first two decades of the twentieth century, those who visited or exhibited in Copenhagen during the First World War, and the many that travelled to Italy or toured the larger Mediterranean area in the interwar period, Cleve’s training at La Palette in Paris, her study trips to Germany and Italy, her solo show in Copenhagen, and her recurrent travels in French North Africa appear to show her as part of a much larger itinerant community or transnational context maintained by numerous artists’ movements and habitualised practices.

Indeed, despite the lack of detail, the empirical material presented here provides the outline of a broader geohistorical trajectory of the transnational mobility of Swedish artists of the long 1880s generation. During the first decade of the century, France and Germany, in that order, attracted the most artists. Travels to, or studies in, Germany seems to have been more closely related to artists beyond the dominant art centre in Stockholm, which indicates that there are transregional connections yet to be explored. By the 1910s, Paris had consolidated its allure as regards the number of travellers, but given that the sheer numbers of artists who travelled there, the so-called Matisse pupils, who have been the focus in art historiography, were only a small part of much larger context of transnational exchange that could be further scrutinised. It is well known that Copenhagen attracted an increasing number of Swedish artists during the First World War, but the empirical material confirms that there was a continuous flow of artists, even if not in such large numbers, across the Swedish-Danish border and that Denmark, not least, provided opportunities to exhibit artworks to an international audience. The most distinctive feature, in the 1920s, was the rapidly growing interest in Italy. The scope and duration of the Italian journeys exceed the temporary excursions hitherto noted in art historiography and require in-depth studies to be fully mapped.

Moreover, the patterns of mobility presented in this article suggest how journeys abroad shaped professional communities with shared experiences and habits of thought and practice, and contributed to the formation and maintenance of artistic networks. In this way, transnational experiences and networks seem to have become entangled with professional competition along generational and regional lines on the national art scene. The complexity of transnational, or rather transregional and translocal, connections has been misrepresented in modernist art history’s narrativisation of artistic mobility, where avant-garde ruptures have been privileged and the centre–periphery divide of diffusionist art history has sometimes been mimicked in the construction of regional hierarchies within national frameworks.

The obvious should finally be noted: establishing where, when, and why Swedish artists travelled to different places neither reveals anything about the actual encounters, possible entanglements, or relational connections that were made beyond the Swedish borders, nor elucidates on the more profound effects or importance of travelling on artistic practices. However, the artistic movements along diverse routes, the habitualised practices of departing, lingering, and returning, and the narrative representations of mobility in art historiography that have been discussed and suggested here, offer an empirical and historiographical framework that may guide the direction for further research.