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Charting the Beyond. On the Two “First” International Surrealist Exhibitions in Scandinavia

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Abstract
This article examines two exhibitions introducing international surrealism in the North: Paris 1932 in Stockholm 1932 and Kubisme = Surrealisme in Copenhagen in 1935. Focusing on contents, networks and agents, the analysis shows competitive negotiations of national and local identities in interaction with the promotion of surrealism as a universal international phenomenon. Using a decentralising approach, the article reflects on the role of Paris and other cities as stations as well as elucidates national, transnational and transcultural processes and interactions in the international dissemination of surrealism.

Sammanfattning

Med fokus på innehåll, nätverk och aktörer visar analysen tävlingen och förhandlingen mellan nationella och lokala identiteter i samband med surrealismens lansering som universellt internationellt fenomen. Ur ett decentraliserande perspektiv reflekterar artikeln över Paris och andra städers roll som stationer samt belyser nationella, transnationella och transkulturella processer och interaktioner inom den internationella spridningen av surrealismen.

Andrea Kollnitz is Associate professor of Art History at the Department of Culture and Aesthetics at Stockholm University, Sweden. Her research focuses on art and nationalism, art- and fashion discourses during the early 20th century, the Nordic avant-garde from transnational perspectives, the avant-garde artist’s role and artistic self-fashioning.
Introduction

In 1932 Stockholm art critics announced and debated the “first international exhibition of surrealist art” outside of Paris, *Paris 1932 – 10 nationer, 24 konstnärer* (Paris 1932 – 10 nations, 24 artists), at the Swedish Nationalmuseum.1 Three years later, in 1935, the catalogue for the *International kunstudstilling kubisme = surrealisme* (International Art Exhibition Cubism = Surrealism) at Den frie udstillings bygning in Copenhagen proudly proclaimed “the first international exhibition of surrealism ever held in Scandinavia”.2 The questions arising from these two statements are less about who actually came first, or was right, but rather why such an evaluation would even matter and what such an indirect competition between positions might be able to reveal about the early 1930s cultural climate in the Nordic art world. While being first, twice, is a mathematical and chronological impossibility, the somehow contradictory statements emerging in the context of these two significant events, promoting surrealism in Sweden and Denmark, open up several arguments: They indicate the desire of cities and cultural zones beyond Paris to brand and put themselves on the modern cultural map of Europe. They point at the paradigmatic evolutionary models of avant-garde art historiography, as well as strategies of modern capitalist commerce, where being first is equal to being original and of primary importance, as well as being of genuine quality. They further reflect the internationalist intentions and self-identity of the surrealist movement in its strive for universalism and resistance to nationalism, national boundaries, or restricted identities overall.3 Finally, both exhibitions highlight the impact of intricate and engaged network activities and international endeavours between different transnational agents—from artists and curators to businessmen. Active in different nations from all over Europe, they stand as the initiators of deliberately multinational displays, promoting surrealism as well as their home cities and artistic homelands, and not least their personal (artists’) positions as international and open.

This article will shed light on the exhibitions *Paris 1932* and *Kubisme = Surrealisme* in order to discuss the complex interactions between national, transnational and international agendas during the rise of surrealism in Sweden and Denmark in the 1930s. Questioning interpretational models that have prevailed in the historiography of surrealism in Sweden, it raises decentralising perspectives and concepts beyond polarisations between Paris and the North, or centre and periphery, and the imagined “belatedness” of Northern reactions to avant-garde movements such as surrealism.4 *Paris 1932* coincides with the first and late breakthrough of surrealism in Sweden and has never been researched in depth, which makes it relevant to reflect on its reception and significance in the Swedish art world.3 *Kubisme = Surrealisme*, the first exhibition organized by the international surrealists themselves, has already gained a pivotal role in the historiography of international surrealism. Here it will be examined with a special focus on its organisation through inter-Nordic/European networks and its programmatic layout as presented in the catalogue.6 Discussing the two exhibitions, this article will test new concepts elucidating transnational mechanisms and revising relational models between established protagonists and neglected side-figures of the avant-garde, in terms of their regionally directed identities. In this it is aligned with the aspirations of the project behind the exhibition *Surrealism beyond Borders* (Metropolitan Museum New York, 2021 and Tate Modern, London 2022), which aims to “develop a more nuanced definition

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2 *International Kunstudstilling Kubisme=Surrealisme*. Exhibition catalogue (Copenhagen: Den frie udstillings bygning, 1935). There occurs an interesting ambiguity in the title of this exhibition as the sign between its two main concepts may be read as equal sign as well as a stylised hyphen. This will be discussed later on in the article.

3 On the internationalisation of surrealism see Michael Richardson, “‘Other’ Surrealisms: Center and Periphery in International Perspective” in: *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*, ed. David Hopkins (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2016) 131–143.

4 For a perspective on the Nordic avant-garde in terms of its “belatedness” see Hubert van den Berg et. al (eds.), *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900-1925* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011) 37.

5 For a perspective on the Nordic avant-garde in terms of its “belatedness” see Hubert van den Berg et. al (eds.), *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900-1925* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011) 37.

of Surrealism from the perspective of current transnational and transhistoric discussions [...] challenge the hierarchies of cultural dominance” and take a “non-hierarchical approach” allowing “for a transnational and multivalent reimagining of Surrealism.”

Paris 1932 – 10 Nations, 24 Artists, Stockholm 1932

In 1932 the National Gallery of Sweden (Nationalmuseum) staged the exhibition Paris 1932 – 10 Nations, 24 Artists (Paris 1932 – 10 nationer, 24 konstnärer; Fig. 1). The exhibition was later transferred to Gothenburg and was also intended to move on to Oslo, however, Stockholm had “the honour of being the first” to show it. According to the catalogue it contained “post-cubist and surrealist art” and displayed works—mainly water colours, graphic works and drawings—by Hans Arp, Sophie Täuber-Arp, Georges Braque, Massimo Campigli, Otto G. Carlsund, Marc Chagall, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, J. Torres Garcia, Eric Grate, Stanley William Hayter, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Henri Laurens, Fernand Léger, Jean Lurcat, Louis Marcoussis, André Masson, Joan Miró, Erik Olson, Georges Papazoff, Francis Picabia, Pablo Picasso and Gaston Louis Roux.

The title of the exhibition manifests a hierarchical or vertical, and at the same time horizontal, transnational approach. The centre of Paris comes first and seems to lead into or be the common focal point for what follows: 10 nations and 24 artists. The title also conveys the up-to-date ambitions and profile of Nationalmuseum, at this point the main platform for not only historical but also modern international art in Sweden. With its “international” (10 nations) and modern (1932) profile it aims to give an insight into the very latest developments of an art scene coming from the centre of Paris, that by this period has held the position of a “capital of art” for more than a century, not least in Swedish art discourse. Tellingly, the exhibition was supported by the Stockholm Association for French Art (Förenningen Fransk Konst) and the Swedish collector Rolf de Maré, who was also one of the main agents in establishing the famous avant-gardist Ballet Suédois in Paris. Looking at the Nationalmuseum’s exhibition catalogues, these show a predilection for multinational approaches during the early 1930s and exemplify the paradoxically differing agendas that generated such an interest. Strikingly, Paris 1932 is followed by an openly nationalist exhibition of national schools in 1933 with the title Exposition d’un choix de dessins du quinzième au dix-huitième siècle (À l’occasion du XIIIème Congrès International...
The latter was an event connected to the international congress of art history that held its annual gathering in Stockholm, with the aim to discuss and define national differences in art. Not least these two exhibitions with their close yet contrary programmatic agendas, show the tight and inevitable interactions and dialogue between nationalism and internationalism as two paradigms that need and define themselves against one another, much like nationalism and globalisation today. A close reading of the catalogue introduction to _Paris 1932_, written by art historian and museum curator Ragnar Hoppe, reveals further inter/nationalist intentions. Hoppe is regarded as one of the foremost and earliest promoters of French modernism in the Stockholm art world and was highly engaged in the purchase of modern French art at Nationalmuseum. He starts by pronouncing the strong and living interest the Swedish public feels for “these kinds of manifestations” and further legitimises the exhibition through the major role the post-cubist and surrealist movements have played in Paris, where they are still winning terrain. Hoppe speaks of his astonishment when realizing that these movements not only consisted of Frenchmen but to a large amount of “foreigners” (utlänningar). Such a feeling shows the fascination and exotic appeal provoked by “international” and foreign art/ists in the Nordic region of Sweden, which experienced itself as outside and beyond the European centres. When introducing surrealism, Hoppe’s first argument and selling point is its “international” character. Obviously initiated in a conversation between himself and the surrealist sculptor Eric Grate, the idea was to offer Stockholm an exhibition of “abstract and surrealist” art. The combination of abstract or cubist and post-cubist with surrealist art shows an interesting material and conceptual fusion between avant-garde movements. Their common denominators are not in stylistic similarities, but, as I see it, in new or innovative approaches to art and to visual techniques. As the most novel of all avant-garde artistic expressions at the time, abstract art and surrealism together provide a captivating look, a shock of the new, a resistance towards given perceptions of reality, and a striking, even spectacular visual performance for a curious, predominantly uninitiated audience. We see a similar (con-) fusion of identities at _Kubisme = Surrealisme_ in Copenhagen three years later (see below). Interestingly, the combination of post-cubism with surrealism also echoes the development of Sweden’s only canonized surrealist group, the Halmstad Group, consisting of six artists—Erik Olson, Axel Olson, Waldemar Lorentzon, Stellan Mörner, Sven Jonson and Esaias Thorén. According to their established history, these artists took their first stylistic inspiration from post-cubism, such as Léger, amongst others, and later turned to surrealism in order to free themselves from the mathematical rigidity of the former. Also Grate’s art works and sculptures of deity-like figures and human-animal hybrids, with their primitivist shapes and mythical contents, demonstrate a fusion between surrealism—as a philosophical model—and abstraction—as a formal one, a double-identity that probably inspired his selection of the artists and artworks. Hoppe motivates the selection of artists as not based on their different national origins, but on a “spiritual physiognomy shaped entirely by Paris”. Here the artist's actual place of birth and origin seems replaced by a symbolic place of artistically formative origin, of rebirth, provided by the fuelling ground of Paris. Individual artists’ identities are unified not through their national, but through their self-chosen belonging. Their adopted new home, the city of Paris becomes a space of spiritual dimensions, of _l’Esprit moderne_, in what resembles an almost religious community. Hoppe elaborates on the role of Paris, stating that it is hard to draw a line because “with our time’s international disposition and intense

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11 There is no Swedish title for this exhibition, which demonstrates not only the French organisation behind it, but also the familiarity of the Swedish art world with French culture and centrality of French art in the international art world.
12 https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Mobil/Artikel/13797
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
connections also in art life it is clear that we can expect ramifications of the above-mentioned movements, even far beyond the focal point of Paris. However, a narrow selection had to be made from “artists that have stayed in Paris for a longer period and can still be considered to be living there, especially when it comes to Swedish artists”. In the geographical metaphoric used by Hoppe and in his almost mathematically thorough motivation for the selection of artists, he draws a model recalling a road system, connecting and ranking different points on a map, with Paris as the obvious centre. This model elevates Paris as more than artistically formative. The city with its high cultural profile provides a place legitimizing, branding and marketing the (Swedish) artist that has chosen to live in Paris more permanently, as truly modern and deserving attention. As Hoppe apologetically explains, not living in Paris, but in other art cities, like Berlin, has led to the exclusion of significant avant-garde artists such as Gösta Adrian-Nilsson (GAN), in spite of his position as “the pioneer of abstract art and foremost theoretical advocate for modern art in Sweden”.

Paris as a Station

The case of Hoppe’s geographically based principles of selection instigates one of my central theoretical arguments. Following the horizontal approach to analysing relational aspects of spaces of and for art, that has evolved with the theorisation of Kunsthgeographie and been developed by Piotr Piotrowski, my study seeks to overcome the emphasis on Paris as a centre of modern art. It proposes an alternative and perhaps more democratic spatially based metaphor for understanding the role and place of Paris in the historiography of modern art: Paris functions as a station. Compatible with an analogy of movement permeating the narratives of modernism and the avant-garde, the concept of station implies a movement actively stopped at a certain significant geographically as well as temporally based point. It stresses the individually variable significance and meaning of such a voluntary or involuntary stop, dependent on why and when a station comes to be/becomes, and for whom. It implies a significant moment between a before and an after, where new things can happen, where old things can be consolidated or reconsidered, and which may lead into a future life and development, with further stations to pass on to. A station may imply a mental and spiritual space of transformation, as in ritual and religious processes of development and growth, as well as a real and material space enabling unexpected or strategic encounters with transformative potential. A station is not dependent on the size, centralised position and metropolitan qualities of a place—it may be a small village, a crossing between streets, a space for (individual or collective) contemplation—as it gains its meaning and significance from the personal experiences of an individual or a collective. Last, but not least, a station is a station only if left after a while. The idea of station is dependent on its ephemeral, temporally limited existence. The stationary character of important art cities may be illustrated not only by the “Paris-Swedes” chosen for Paris 1932, but also by the many Swedish (and international) artists spending time in Paris during the late 19th century. After experiencing a new space and working in new ways, they left in order to “become themselves”, back “home” in Sweden. Paris thus made an important station, experienced and passed-by, in the rise of national-romantic Swedish painting (for example Carl Larsson or Karl Nordström). Station and the idea of Paris being a main or central station on the route of personal artistic development, is then further expandable to the concept of contact zone coined by Mary Louise Pratt or convergence point, which the exhibition Surrealism beyond Borders acknowledges as one of its thematic nodes. The term contact zone makes another point, raising the hybrid qualities and social dynamics of a station, where

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18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
deliberately staying at a place opens up meetings with other agents, things and experiences. Besides the symbolic space of Paris as a ritual station in the artistic development of individual artists, as well as of the movements they identify with, actual material conditions must be considered. As Hoppe explains, Grate (who had lived in Paris for eight years) knew many international artists and personally invited them to participate in the exhibition while meeting them in different studios or socializing with them in the urban spaces of Paris, from cafés to museums. Thus, the symbolic role of Paris as the pinnacle of a vertical hierarchy is not only based on art-historical value systems, but on practical realities and social mechanisms that simplified and effectuated its manifold impact. Hoppe’s text demonstrates the predominant importance of place and local identification as a main selection principle, of great interest to the implied reader and exhibition audience. He hardly mentions or explains the art, styles and movements themselves. More philosophical and poetic, resembling a manifesto, the following text by Grate himself also appears in the catalogue.22 While Hoppe emphasizes the role of space and place, Grate discusses time and the need for contemporary expressions. He starts by stressing the timelessness of art: “A great artist once said ‘Art has no past and nothing coming either.’ Art changes, but it does not develop.”23 Rejecting any evolutionism in art, rather he believes, recalling Alois Riegl’s Kunstwollen and the Vienna School, that “every time strives to express itself, to manifest itself against previous generations and every time’s art comes to exist as a consequence, or in spite of its recent predecessor.”24 Grate continues, explaining the basics of abstract art. He emphasizes art and nature as two different phenomena: “When the older [masters] sublimated their impressions of nature, their masterworks did not arise through imitation of nature, but through following their spirit that solidified and crystallised their impressions.”25 Abstraction is thus explained (and defended) as a spiritually based intensification of natural impressions. Grate then creates a subtle transition from abstract expressionism to surrealism, showing their common denominators:

Our environment contains inexhaustible treasures of forms and shapes, but we experience them with different levels of intensity. As much as one can express the inner life of things through their exterior shape, one can express the idea and symbols of things with images from man’s inner world of dreams, from the wondrous caves of the subconscious.26

Abstract art and surrealism seem thus united through the key concept of expression, where the interior, the inner life and idea of things is made exterior, or comes to appear through either abstract form, or images from dreams and the subconscious. In his final visionary statements Grate builds on the rhetorical tropes of youth and life in antithetical contrast to age and death in order to passionately proclaim the urgency of modern art:

New thoughts demand new shapes and [...] the young generation fights for the right to these new pictorial expressions. It stands at the border of a period, rich in impulses and ideas, a period of exploratory joy for what the world offers in things that no other times have beheld. One has predicted the approaching extinction of such creative force and the critics have scourged what they deemed stillborn, in strivings that they were not able to grasp. But this force is as intense as ever and the wonderful game of creative drive maybe opens up for an even richer flourishing today. Art is a kind of magic where the symbols of things open up windows towards new worlds, where new clothes are waiting to enclose poetic and ancient forms. Art becomes the source whose water gives us possibility to quench our thirst for new adventures, new suns, new dawns.27

In heroic words Grate defends the vitality and energy in modern art coming from a younger generation of artists, against those that have questioned

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
its rights of existence. His final words echo the visionary rhetoric and imagination that characterized avant-garde and surrealist writing internationally, not least in Sweden. This dramatic rhetoric found its way into the historiography of surrealism in Sweden, for example the art historian and surrealist artist Ragnar von Holten’s survey on *Surrealism in Sweden* from 1967 (the only one which exists to date; Fig. 2). Von Holten’s book is further permeated by a romanticising polarisation between Paris and Sweden (or the North) and his subtitle for a chapter on Grate’s role in Swedish surrealism is telling: “Eric Grate – in Paris and at home”. He calls the selection of works for *Paris 1932* “symptomatic for the Paris-Swede Grate’s personal situation at this time” and points to the exhibition *Paris 1932* as a key event in Swedish surrealist history, not least due to the “scandal” it provoked in contemporary Swedish artistic life while it today is seen as one of the classical events of modern art in Sweden.\(^28\)

What is/does Surrealism?

Shifting perspective from the “senders” of the exhibition to its “receivers”, the heated debate that followed

\(^{28}\) Von Holten, 1969, 40.
in the Swedish press demonstrates the stumbling block and the explosive potential avant-garde art, not least surrealism, represented in the sociocultural climate of 1930s Sweden. First of all, we must ask ourselves what kind of works were displayed. A look into the catalogue illustrations (Figs. 3 and 4), chosen as representative of the exhibition content, shows predominantly works of a more abstract character. The only artists with a more typically figurative surrealist style are de Chirico and Olson. The visual impressions of these illustrations confirm my findings about the main ambitions of the exhibition: its focus is not a certain style, movement or way of expression, but a "spiritual physiognomy" shaped in Paris. Paris itself is its protagonist—on one hand as a sign or label for modern art and the modern artist creating his (or rarely her) works in Paris and on the other, as a supranational universalist sign or brand triggering and uniting all nations. Yet reactions to the exhibition show the dangers of misrepresentation and easily disappointed expectations that such a highly evaluated sign raises.

When stressing the scandal caused by the exhibition, which provides the dramatic climax in his profile of Grate’s art and role as a surrealist, von Holten particularly focuses on the debate that exploded between a, by then, well-established and canonized leading figure in Swedish modernism, the colour expressionist and former Matisse-student, Isaac Grünewald, and Grate, as well as other defenders of surrealism. 29 On October 16th art critic Gustav Näsström reported that “Grünewald made a loud scene at the opening [...] and greeted the organiser Eric Grate as a ‘humbug’”. 30 Grünewald went on to proclaim his own statement in the same newspaper the day after, where he complained how “disgusting

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29 Ibid.
it is to see adult people consciously produce worse things than they are capable of and [...] at their age imitate children and idiots." Grünewald’s rhetoric reverberates the tropes of conservative Swedish critics when reacting to German expressionism and “degenerate” art in the 1920s, which appears rather paradoxical as Grünewald himself, being an avant-garde artist and Jewish, was attacked early on for similar reasons.32 Yet, what seems to irritate him most of all is the exhibition’s combination of artists and art works that puts Picasso, Braque and Chagall in such “bad company”. Surrealism is for Grünewald more repulsive than post/cubism and the attribute of “surrealist”, here obviously also connected to iconic artists such as the above, seems to provide a disgracing label.

Grünewald’s reaction to surrealism as “disgusting” or abject reflects a larger discourse in Swedish reactions towards, for example, the Halmstad Group. A discourse where the transgressive figurative language of surrealism with its investigations of the subconscious, the irrational, sexual desires, emotionally charged dream worlds, etc. is recurrently experienced as distressing and repulsive, or also dangerously out of bounds.33 The debate around surrealism in Paris 1932 further raises a question repeatedly asked in later Swedish history writing about surrealism: the question of how surrealism is supposed to look. What exactly identifies an artwork as surrealist and what empirical visual attributes a surrealist artwork ought to display. While von Holten, following André Breton’s manifesto, pronounces the identity of surrealism as mainly ideological and philosophical, he simultaneously keeps looking for visual, stylistic and iconographic evidence for possible surrealist phenomena in Swedish art history. These he mainly identifies through motifs evoking magical, fantastic, “visionary”, and deviating themes and minds, ranging from medieval sacral sculptures

31 Isaac Grünewald, Stockholms-Tidningen 17/10 1932.
32 For a discussion of Swedish art critical reactions on European avant-garde art, see Andrea Kollnitz, Konstens nationella identitet. Om tysk och österrikisk konst i svensk konstkritik 1908-1934 (Stockholm: Dramat förlag, 2008).
to the schizophrenic drawings of the late 19th century artists Carl Fredrik Hill and Ernst Josephson. As revealed by some of the reviews, but not mentioned in the catalogue, the latter were actually displayed in a side-room of Paris 1932 as an addition, confirming the timelessness of surrealism.

Concentrating on clearly readable signs of identification and similarity, Grünewald cannot accept possible proximities between Picasso’s abstractions and the figurative yet dissolved irrational worlds of surrealism. Grünewald’s attack from October 17th is answered by Grate on October 18th, where he defends the selection, reminding us of the fact that also Breton has identified Picasso, Braque and Chagall as surrealists in his work Le Surréalisme et la peinture and that the three artists actively chose to participate. Grünewald, looking for further fuel, goes back to focussing on the participants’ age, disqualifying them as too old to represent young Paris. Several further arguments and voices were raised in the debate that went on for ten days, ranging from more neutral and objective statements to inductive and jealously outbursts.

While Näström opposes Grünewald, later on in his review he shows irritation about the exhibition title, which he calls “pretentious” as “post-cubism and surrealism take a quite small space in the Parisian art life”. In fact his comments confirm the branding mechanisms I have stressed above:

... there is a quite frank advertising technique in the attempt to identify modern cosmopolitan art life with exactly these movements, even if they have grown in scale and significance. Especially surrealism has particularly gained terrain. And why not? It is well needed. It can open a window and create a cross-breeze in an atmosphere that currently is dominated by tame and soulless realistic painting.

Näström’s analogy between surrealism and open windows providing fresh air recalls the reverse air-metaphoric used in contemporary reactions to other avant-garde movements, where for example the effect of German and Austrian expressionism is likened to poisonous gas suffocating its spectator. Surrealism is here presented as an antithesis of the status quo. Indirectly described as bold and soulful (not tame and soulless) it offers enlivening oxygen in a stagnating stuffy room where new movement and dynamics are of the essence. Indirectly this brings us to the context of the Swedish (art) society and the role/s surrealism may have been assigned in the specific socio-cultural and cultural-political climate of 1930s Sweden.

In summary it becomes clear that this exhibition was a spectacular event of fundamental symbolic significance in the Swedish art world of the 1930s, in spite of its limited format, leading to more than 20 reactions in the Stockholm daily press during the course of about two weeks. Repeatedly it is called the very first gathering of international surrealism outside of Paris—a striking claim, also meant to put the provincial city of Stockholm on the map of the international art world. The basic art critical tendencies arising also include insightful introductions and explanations of what surrealism implicates. A few critics embrace and celebrate surrealism in terms of a heroic, romanticizing metaphoric, connected to the rhetoric of the avant-garde claiming “the new”, the forces of the “young”, wells of new life watering the dried out grounds of realism and naturalism, etc. Others use analogies relatable to fundamentalist religion and the contemporary Swedish Christian revival movement and thus indirectly confirm contemporary political agendas to secularize the nation. Surrealism is evoked as a (dangerous or ridiculous?) cult with charismatic leaders, followers engaged in idolatry, a cult spreading its gospel, with its spiritual centre of pilgrimage in Paris, endangering notions of control and rationality. As mentioned above another question repeatedly asked is how to visually identify, evaluate and interpret surrealism. In several long and intricate texts, critics thoroughly discuss the
question of how visual art works based on the rejection of rationality can be created and understood at all. How the common viewer could possibly attempt to read the contents of such paintings and drawings with concrete titles, which at the same time refused to represent reality. Accordingly automatism is suspected of hiding a lack of technical and artistic control and skills—if the surrealist genius needs to be crazy, how can s/he ever be trusted?41 Another recurrent analogy lies in relating surrealism to fashion, commercialist modernity and its mechanisms of rapid change, dependent on shifting tastes and seasons.42 Fashion, not least Paris fashion, as connoting superficiality and ephemeral beauty as well as sensationalism and empty spectacle, figures both as an evaluation of the exhibition, as well as the phenomenon of surrealism as a sensationalist trend. Surrealism emerges as a fashionable concept, a fashion-label, a marketing device. In the heated and expansive debate between the earlier enfant terrible and avant-garde icon Grünewald, now an academy professor, Grate, and the critics, Grünewald is accused of “changing his shirt” too often.43 Fashion as a sign of modernity is then interlinked with another phenomenon of the modern urban scene, the boxing ring. In its skilful verbal battle the debaters liken themselves to opponents in a boxing match taking different rounds, with different physical qualities and attacks coming from different “bodies” and star qualities. A truly entertaining rhetorical masterpiece, it shows the urgency, presence and potential of “surrealism” in its manifestations, as well as in its conceptual meaning, as a stumbling block, an instigator of change and alternative thinking, and a projection surface for dealing with the “new” and “other” in the rise of modern Swedish society.

**Cubism = Surrealism, Copenhagen 1935**

As far as the remaining sources testify, the existence of Paris 1932 in Stockholm and its later re-enactment at Göteborgs Konstmuseum (Gothenburg Art Museum) seems “forgotten” or irrelevant to the organizers of Kubisme=Surrealisme in Copenhagen (Fig 5). While the two projects share an ambition to introduce international surrealism to a Scandinavian public—both are titled with an emphasis on being international manifestations—they are created by differing networks with differing strategies. In spite of certain collaborations and exchanges, Grate and his networks, as well the Stockholm art world at large, might have been seen as competition to the West coast surrealist Halmsstad Group and its business minded manager and patron, the machine engineer, amateur painter and collector Egon Östlund. As a matter of fact, the recognised event of Paris 1932 in September 1932 overshadowed another smaller event in the same city during the same period: the first exhibition of the

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41 Edvard Alkman, "En konst 'befriad' från förståndet", Göteborgsposten 20/10 1932.
42 Nästström 16/10 1932.
43 Tebe, "Isaac låter ej lura sig av surrealism, förlegat mode. Äckligt att vuxna medvetet göra saker sämre än de kan, säger professor", Stockholms Tidningen-Stockholms Dagblad 17/10 1932.
Halmstad Group in Stockholm at Galerie Moderne and the first occasion where they were identified as “surrealists”. Taking a more fundamental step the group’s participation at *Kubisme = Surrealisme* in 1935, according to José Vovelle, can be counted as an action confirming its identity as a group. As presented above, the Halmstad Group, consisting of six artists from the region in and around Halmstad on the Swedish West coast, made a common move from post-cubist painting, following the inspiration of Fernand Léger, towards a more “liberating” surrealist expression in about 1929.

This was also the year when “the group” was officially founded and consolidated through the strategic leadership of Östlund, one of the main forces behind branding the Halmstad Group as Sweden’s most outspoken (and longest enduring) artists’ group, significant from both a national and an international perspective. The “brand”, with its brand name became tightly connected to the city and region of Halmstad, whose urban identity was strongly influenced by the cultural marking it received through its famous artist’s group. The Halmstad group—symbolically as well as materially—instigated the rise of local institutions created and reinforced through its networks—for example Mjellby art museum, created by Viveca Bosson in honour of her father Erik Olson and his colleagues. Although much smaller in scale, Halmstad, like Paris or Stockholm, put itself on the map of the international avant-garde through an interaction between artistic and cultural profiling with city branding—a process driven not least by an agent as Östlund, who presented the opposite of a romantic unworldly avant-garde artist, with his skills in economic awareness and business experience.

Östlund is also mentioned as one of the initial organizers of *Kubisme = Surrealisme*. The exact information given on the cover page of the catalogue lists the arrangers as “engineer E. Östlund, Halmstad” and “the painter Vilh. Bjerke-Petersen, Copenhagen”. Bjerke-Petersen, according to Camilla Skovbjerg Paldam, was “a leading force in transmitting the ideas of surrealism to a Nordic audience”, not least through his book *Surrealismen* (1934), “the first comprehensive introduction to surrealism in a Nordic language”. He had first met the Halmstad artists in 1934, found them very interesting and later on became their friend. Considered a “natural theoretical leader”, it was on his initiative and request that Olson and Max Ernst collected the art works for *Kubisme = Surrealisme*. According to Skovbjerg Paldam, he turned to the Halmstad group and oriented himself towards Scandinavia because he had a falling-out with the Danish Surrealists Eiler Bille and Richard S. Mortensen. Tellingly, these artists are mentioned by Breton in the exhibition catalogue, but not represented at the exhibition. The catalogue further states that “the selection of French surrealism has been made by André Breton, Paris, Max Ernst, Paris and Erik Olson, Paris.”

**Surrealism as Universal, Transnational and National**

This striking compilation of international names and agents is telling for the network-effects in organizing and marketing avant-garde events: A Swedish businessman (the founder of the group, Östlund); a Danish artist (Bjerke-Petersen, of decisive importance for Danish surrealism not least through his book *Surrealismen*); the ancestor and central leader figure of (French) surrealism at large (Breton); one of the heroes of “French” surrealism (the German artist Ernst), and the Swedish surrealist and one of the Halmstad Group’s most outspoken leaders (Olson). Identities are marked, blended, maybe deliberately con/fused, both in terms of national and urban categorisations and in terms of different kinds of professions and agency. This confusion though—where Swedes and Germans belong to Paris and a small town like Halmstad is...
performatively positioned as equal to metropolises like Paris and Copenhagen—I interpret as a positive, boundary-transgressing message, staging the universalism and international identity of surrealism. It also exemplifies, what Bjerke-Petersen calls an “inter-Scandinavian collaboration”, aiming to bring the Nordic countries up to date with the international avant-garde.50 Still, the legitimising label of Frenchness as the dominant and authentic origin of surrealism prevails.

A most significant participant, central as the originating “author” of surrealism, was of course Breton who, if not organizing the exhibition, helped select its “French” (international) participants and agreed to write an introductory text for the exhibition catalogue, thus consecrating the event and Copenhagen as significant stations and convergence points in the international dissemination of surrealism. Breton’s role as selector and his involvement in the exhibition also provides an explanation of its self-declaration as the “First international exhibition of Surrealism in Scandinavia”. It is a novelty and the second in a series of international exhibitions involving the agency of Breton. The Copenhagen exhibition came shortly after the first exhibition entitled *Minotaure* in Brussels in 1934 and took place a year before the first exhibition explicitly labelled as such—the “International Surrealist Exhibition” in London 1936.51 Benedict Hjartarson calls the exhibition “a turning point, not only as concerns the role of surrealism in the region, but also in the sense that it marked the beginning of a direct participation by groups of Nordic artists in one of the central networks of the international avant-garde.”52 He further stresses its significance for Breton as “a strategic step in the process of disseminating the international enterprise of his movement, demonstrating its geographical scope and gaining and presenting new allies.”53

Following Östlund’s marketing skills the catalogue text may be read in terms of a brand declaration and guarantee of quality. The organizers, “on behalf of the exhibitors”, explain:

ANDRE BRETON, author of the two fundamental surrealist manifestos, has on occasion of this, the first international surrealist-exhibition held in Scandinavia, shown our exhibition the extraordinary interest to write a preface—an introduction to surrealism—for our catalogue. The article is written specifically for our exhibition, but will later be published in France. The Scandinavian surrealists give André Breton their warmest thanks for this highly valuable contribution and for the accommodating understanding of our work.54

Apart from displaying the consecrating power given to Breton this announcement pronounces the importance of being *first* as a paradigmatic ingredient in the mechanisms of the avant-garde. The term avant-garde in itself presents a spatial and temporal metaphor of moving forward, in front of and before all others. Not only is the exhibition elevated as the first of its kind in Scandinavia, but the text produced by Breton also seems to be written first and specifically for the Scandinavian surrealists. Only later will it be published in the homeland of surrealism, France.55 Again, such a performative statement or action by Breton (as well as by the exhibition) marks the city Copenhagen as an important convergence point, and raises “the Scandinavian surrealists” to a distinctive position on the map of modern art. An action aligned to the mechanisms of the surrealist movement in general, it participates in the dynamics of an almost political or religious revolutionary movement that needs to spread, that cannot stay in one place (Paris). A movement whose innermost drives and beliefs urge and instigate travel and transgression, a movement in need of stations, outposts, sentry towers, convergence points.

Breton’s preface provides a both pedagogically structured and philosophically advanced introduction,
explanation and implicit defence of surrealism, addressing a well-educated and culturally engaged reader, or an audience of professional artists, critics and writers. Surrealism is emphasised as an intellectual movement, far from fanatic, and actually relatable to realism. While earlier artistic expressions have focused on observations of the visible exterior world, it has now become necessary to express inner experiences. Using the avant-gardist metaphor of fight and battle, Breton writes that photography, which went to extremes in "mechanizing pictorial representation", forced "painting to retreat in order to fortify itself in an impregnable way behind the inner necessity to express inner observation visually. One could say that it found itself forced to take possession of a terrain that lay bare."56 Based on this "necessity", maybe recalling Wassily Kandinsky’s concept of innere Notwendigkeit, Breton explains the development of art towards expressions of inner experiences leading into abstraction and surrealism. “The only area that the artist could use now was the purely mental imagination, in so far as it extends far outside the purely real imagination, yet without coinciding with the hallucinatory.” Here, Breton emphasises, it may be hard to see where the borderline are and “any attempt to thoroughly define the borders can become a subject of dispute.” Indirectly Breton recognises the on-going debates on how to relate to and differentiate surrealism from other art movements, as well as claims that surrealism and the focus on interior experiences beyond the “real” are the only option for the contemporary artist. “Most important is that the turn to the mental imagination (beyond the physical presence of objects), as Freud has said, infects ‘sensations, that spur a development in the most diverse, the deepest layers of the psyche.’ ” Thus Breton sees the main purpose of art (or surrealism) as affecting one’s deepest mental state and subconscious. He develops further:

Increasingly art is looking for these sensations in order to bring the “I” into the “It” [...] This search tries more and more to liberate the instinctive impulse to turn down the counter that rises in front of the civilised human being, a counter that the primitive and the child do not know.

Thinking of the exhibition title Kubisme = Surrealisme, where cubism and surrealism are presented as not only of equal importance, but seemingly as one and the same, Breton’s reference to primitivism shows how abstract art (cubism) and surrealism meet in their aims to free art from mimetic, realistic form and exterior observation, and turn to the expression of inner processes and sights instead (also reflected in Grate’s catalogue text for Paris 1932). While I have chosen to cite the exhibition title as above, its printed original appearance is in fact ambiguous as the sign between its two main concepts may be read as an equal sign as well as a stylised hyphen. Read as a hyphen it would indicate a processual connection where one movement leads to or is directly connected to another. Read as an equal sign it would mean a total equalizing of cubism and surrealism which creates a provocative, slightly paradoxical art theoretical statement, creating attention and puzzling the audience. Either way the connection of the two concepts seems to proclaim an explanatory evolutionary model, where surrealism gains its legitimacy from being naturally related to and also a developmental step from and after (post-) cubism. Interestingly though, and differently from the catalogue of Paris 1932, the exhibition title is never motivated in the catalogue. As proposed above, it gains the function of a proclamation and slogan close to a manifesto, again confirming a wish to create a sensation of new and revolutionary movements in organic union, entering the Nordic art sphere.

Breton also defends surrealism in assuring that its interest for mental and psychological processes does not mean that the artist creates spontaneously. Here we may think of the Swedish critics in 1932 that questioned the actual technical skills of automatist surrealist painters. In spite of their free creation surrealists are bound to go back to and use elements of the real visual world, yet reorganizing them in new constellations and expressions of both individual and collective significance.

The possible genius of these painters is due less to the always relative novelty of the materials they

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56 Catalogue Kubisme=Surrealisme, 1935. All following quotes from Breton’s preface are from the catalogue.
apply, than to the initiative they show in the use of these materials. That is why the works of surrealism, purely technically from the first moment on, have consisted in multiplying the paths that could reach the deepest layer of the soul. ‘I say one has to be a seer, make oneself a seer.’ For us it has been about finding the means to use this password by Arthur Rimbaud.

The surrealist artist while dependent on visual elements and materials from the real world thus finds new and multiple ways to use these in order to dive into the depths of the interior and subconscious and like a seer create sights of the unknown. After these fundamental premises Breton moves on to a pedagogical explanation of the different methods used by surrealists, from psychic automatism and Salvador Dalí’s paranoid-critical method, to Max Ernst’s “new artistic optics” and use of Symbolical and oneiric objects. He stresses the potential of surrealism to synthesise the outside with the inside, reality with imagination and fantasy, and the revolutionary force coming from its merging of subjective experience with objective reality. Finally, Breton’s last paragraph brings us back to the transnational and universalist self-identification of surrealism:

For a long time, fate has stopped playing its game with the idea of surrealism and those that once were the first bearers of the idea see it today moving and following its difficult, but safe path, not only in Paris, but in Copenhagen, as well as in Barcelona, in London, Brussels, Prague, Belgrade, New York, Buenos Aires, Tokyo, it radiates with all its splendour, with the light of salt, through the works of our friends Erik Olson, Vilh. Bjerke-Petersen, Eiler Bille, Richard S. Mortensen who have fraternally encouraged the surrealist artists in France to join them, and the idea thus makes us more impatient to be confronted with later works which are always more common and which bear the imprint of the desire that inflames the rejuvenated eye of the world.

This conclusion, one very long sentence, like a climactic crescendo, comes close to a heroic glorification of surrealism while also summarizing its historical narrative as spreading from an original centre into the whole world. After fate has played its games with surrealism it finally has become strong enough to leave Paris and is about to conquer the world in a spirit of internationalisation and brotherhood. An avant-gardist analogy of movement and expansion is here united with an analogy of family relations common in nationalist rhetoric. Not least the Nordic artists who, having invited their French siblings to join them, now meet them in Copenhagen, leaving a decisive mark with their “light of salt”. Thus, while internationalisation is promoted and celebrated as testifying to the success, growth and relevance of surrealism and furthermore aligned to its belief in anti-nationalist, universalist values, national and regional specificity is pronounced in almost national-romantic terms. In a few words Breton characterises the expressions of Swedish and Danish surrealism as permeated by “light of salt”—a composite metaphor evoking the notion of the maritime, sunny and salty atmosphere of the Danish north and the Swedish west coast. An atmosphere, that is generally supposed to have shaped the specific mental experiences animated in Nordic artist’s paintings, not far removed from the idea of Nordic light as an essential quality in Swedish and Danish national-romantic painting.

Grouping Artists’ Identities

The theme of national and urban characterisation and branding can even be found in the listed artist names and art works as they are presented in the exhibition catalogue. The exhibiting groups are labelled with the following names: “French surrealism”, which also includes the “Group Gravitations”; “Germany”; “Sweden”; “Halmstad Group”; “Norway”; “Denmark” (Figs. 6 and 7). Clearly, these demarcating labels are quite inconsistent, although performative of a certain hierarchical order. The only nation directly connected to surrealism is France and surrealism is performed as essentially French, while all other countries are mainly defined

as geographical national entities, without implying any artistic specificity. Interestingly Germany is mentioned—an unexpected category, neither French nor Scandinavian. Even more tellingly, the Halmstad Group is taken out of any national context (Fig. 8). Like a country of its own, it gains a unique role and identity apart from any more collective national identities and in obvious differentiation from its Swedish artist colleagues. The group is making its first distinctive imprint in an international exhibition.

Who then do these more or less defined groups (identities) include? French surrealism contains iconic artists from many different nations: Hans Arp, Victor Brauner, Salvador Dali, Oscar Dominguez, Marie-Berthe Ernst (who appears to be included mainly due to her portrait of Max Ernst), Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, Valentine Hugo, Paul Klee, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Man Ray, Yves Tanguy and Meret Oppenheim. None of these by then already famous artists is defined in terms of their country of origin, instead the label of French surrealism, just like the label of Paris 1932, appears at once supranational, multinational and diverse. The symbolic city of Paris and attribute of French is all-embracing, liberating its artistic visitors from their national identification and boundaries and providing the dynamics and diversity of a station, where all can find themselves momentarily at home and in free inter/action. Ernst who could have been part of “Germany” is a central representative of French surrealism. He has left his German roots and belonging behind and become an a-national and universal (French) surrealist. The only representative for Germany, strangely, is a
single artist, Erni Graumann, living at an address in Copenhagen, as the catalogue announces. The inclusion of Germany (in spite of only one artist, living in Denmark) could be seen as another way of performing the multi-nationality of the exhibition in service of the bigger label and series of "International Surrealist Exhibitions", which Kubisme = Surrealisme was part of.\(^{58}\)

A further striking component lies in the role of Erik Olson, one of the organizers, who appears at different places and also was represented at Paris 1932. He is mentioned as part of the group Gravitations (within French surrealism), yet none of his works are listed. Singled out amongst all the French artists of the group, Louis Cattiaux, Pierre Ino, Jean Lafon, Jean Marembert and René Paresce, Olson is listed as “Erik Olson (Paris) (The artist’s pictures are presented in ‘Halmstadgruppen’)”. Through this double presentation in the catalogue and also through his works being the most numerous in the exhibition, Olson distinguishes himself as a significant and main agent in and behind the exhibition. This is aligned to the leader’s role he assumes in most of the narratives on the Halmstad Group, a role partly constructed through his daughter’s writings, but apparently also by the artist himself.\(^{59}\) He is also part (and maybe a self-declared leader) of both groups demarcated and marketed in the exhibition and its catalogue.

It is after the section on French surrealism together with Gravitations that the catalogue starts to list the prices of the artworks. Such a shift could be interpreted as staging the “French” iconic surrealists and their works as beyond commercial value, invaluable or unachievable, different from the less established Nordic artists who are more accessible and less exclusive. On the other hand, it could be seen as a strategic choice by the Nordic organizers in order to avoid the competition by the French “stars” and their works. After all, the latter were still rather poor and in need of economic support.\(^{60}\) After “Germany” there comes “Sweden”, which strangely contains only one artist’s (20) works, Gösta Adrian-Nilsson, while all his other Swedish colleagues belong to the following section, the Halmstad Group. Adrian-Nilsson, commonly known as GAN, makes an interesting case, as he has been described as one of the indirect founders and inspirational figures behind the Halmstad Group.\(^{61}\) It is he who supposedly “detected” the talent of the young artists in Halmstad, especially the brothers Erik and Axel Olson and initiated their artistic career, also putting them in contact with important agents such as Östlund. He is

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\(^{58}\) On international surrealist exhibitions see Mahon, The Politics of Eros.

\(^{59}\) My on-going research will give further revisions of the relations, positions and interactions within the group where also Olson’s brother Axel Olson and Stellan Mörner come forward as artists of central importance and agency in the group’s professional dynamics and career.

\(^{60}\) For this information on the strained economic situation of, for example, Max Ernst I thank my colleague Kristoffer Noheden.

\(^{61}\) See for example Bosson, Halmstadgruppen, 48f.
sometimes called an additional member of the group and defined as both post-cubist and surrealist. Tellingly, GAN—one of the most significant avant-garde artists in Swedish art historiography and close to the Halmstad Group as both a friend and artist’s colleague—is given a large space, almost a main role, in 1935’s exhibition. In contrast, he is honourably mentioned, but omitted from Paris 1932, due to his never having lived in Paris for a longer period. A further hypothetical thought might lead into the problem of regional juxtaposition and opposition between the Eastern centre of Stockholm versus the West and South. The different handling of “Gösta Adrian-Nilsson” by the two exhibitions points to the identity of GAN as “belonging” to more of a South-Western Swedish periphery. With an international education from Berlin, not Paris, he was a solitary artist who never felt at home, but rather an outsider in the Stockholm art world. Norway is represented with two artists, Karin Holtsmark and Bjarne Rise, and Denmark—the nation where the exhibition is staged—with nine artists: Vilh. Bjerke-Petersen, Harry Carlsson, Franciska Clausen, Freddie, Heerup, Rita Kern-Larsen, Gustaf Munch-Petersen, Egon Möller Nielsen, Rie Nissen and Mille Heerup.

A final point of interest regards the description or local definition of the artists within the Halmstad Group section. These include not only the official members—Erik Olson, Axel Olson, Waldemar Lorentzon, Esaais Thorén, Sven Jonson and Stellan Mörner—but also two close collaborators, Bengt Österblom and the sculptor Christian Berg (“invited by the Halmstad Group”). Each artist is again placed at a certain address. Thorén, Jonson, Mörner and Axel Olson are localized in Halmstad, Österblom and Lorentzon obviously live in Stockholm, while Erik Olson stands out again—his address is in “Sèvres, France”. Olson, through the role and regional definitions given to him in the context of the exhibition (catalogue) as well as through his actual networking activities, seems to ultimately personify what could be called an avant-gardist leader. A truly hybrid identity and transnational profile, rooted in Halmstad, working in Denmark, and obviously at home and highly active in Paris and France, his profile brings us back to the selection principles for Paris 1932. Yet, the same could be said about Bjerke-Petersen and, as indicated earlier, Olson’s possible centrality and role as a leader figure in the Halmstad group was strongly elevated by the later narratives of his daughter, a construction that will be revised in my upcoming research on the individual artists and group dynamics within the Halmstad group.62

Finally, reconsidering the metaphor of the station, both Copenhagen and Halmstad could be called important stations, yet of different size and function. Copenhagen may be seen as more of a central station and major point of connection or contact zone between Europe and Scandinavia, where many and continuous cultural exchanges and encounters enabled transnational collaborations and networks, leading to avant-gardist events of ground-breaking significance, such as *Kubisme = Surrealisme*. Halmstad was much smaller in scale and diversity and, also due to its position as a coastal town, not a capacious station for transnational connections. Yet it became a crucial convergence point for several artists and cultural agents, finding artistic as well as social community, a station and place holding them together, a home station to return to and a place constantly growing in cultural self-consciousness. Last but not least, Halmstad provided a decentralised, yet substantial connection point and station between the South—Copenhagen and Denmark—and the Swedish West coast cities farther North, such as Sweden’s second largest city, Gothenburg. It contributed to the rise of a Western Swedish art scene, a movement in parallel and counterbalance to the Eastern capital of Stockholm and its more dominant institutions.

**Conclusion**

What then should we finally conclude from juxtaposing these two exhibitions? Of course, they differ in

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62 My ongoing research project on Surrealism in Sweden (2020-2024) includes several revisional case studies on the Halmstad group, partly in collaboration with Mjellby Konstmuseum. For example I focus the central role of Stellan Mörner as an important, yet overlooked ambassador and organiser within the group. An anthology is planned to be published in 2023.
several ways. The two institutions hosting the exhibitions could not be more different—a free and quite small exhibition space with avant-garde ambitions in Copenhagen, versus a traditional National Museum, at the time probably one of the largest and most powerful art institutions in Scandinavia. Yet, while taking place in a large and dignified museum, the Stockholm exhibition was focused mainly on art on paper, which probably gave it a less impressive and representative impact than the Copenhagen exhibition, with its many paintings. Unmentioned in the international history of surrealism, Paris 1932 was nevertheless met with enormous interest and critical engagement by the Swedish art world, a scandalous success, demonstrating the significance of surrealism as a new provocative force in a Swedish cultural-political context. And while staged in a smaller venue, Kubisme = Surrealisme appears to have gained avant-gardist energy, international fame and an iconic place in the historiography of surrealism through its high ranking, internationally active organisers, its being part of a strategic project of “inter-scandinavisation”, internationalisation and dissemination, and through its many powerful exhibits.

In spite of these differences, the exhibition’s common denominators are several. They share an ambition to introduce and promote an art movement, coming from and legitimised by Paris, for a Scandinavian audience in two Nordic capitals and countries. While introducing this movement, not entirely new, yet in need of more visibility and thus serving the cause of surrealism and its international dissemination (as related to Breton’s ambitions as well) they simultaneously elevate two Nordic nations and cities to a stronger cultural profile, marking them as important stations of surrealism in a European international context, where the North still takes a peripheral position. Both exhibitions show a partial confusion and/or complex interaction between nationalist and internationalist agendas, in their programmes and catalogues, the transnational networking activities and strategies of their makers, and their principles of selection and (re-) presentation. Both events also shed light on the significance, not to say the explosive force, attached to the concept and ideas of surrealism in a contemporary national art world and socio-cultural situation, where surrealism and its transgressive, irrational and universalist values provocatively stand against socio-political ideals prioritizing rationalism, functionalism and realism, especially when it comes to Sweden and its social democratic welfare-model. Thus the “Beyond” addressed in the article’s title can be understood in three different ways. Firstly it refers to the aims of surrealism to explore experiences and phenomena beyond the real, conventional and rational, beyond any kinds of boundaries and fixed (national) identities, and the Nordic art nations’ ambitions to chart this “Beyond” for its audiences. Secondly it refers to Northern Europe, placed beyond the main European centres, aiming to put its capitals onto the cultural map. Last, but not least it evokes the significant activities of Swedish surrealism emerging from the West coast during the 1930s, beyond the centre of Stockholm—activities not only implying the production of artworks in the spirit of surrealism, but also the intensive building of transnational networks and synergetic hubs of collaboration, of utmost importance in the still partially unwritten history of surrealism in Sweden.