

Medieval Murals in the Church Attics of Östergötland

TECHNICAL ART HISTORY | RECEPTION HISTORY | VALUE



PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM HELD ON THE 8-9TH SEPTEMBER 2015 AT NORRKÖPING
ART MUSEUM ORGANISED BY ICOMOS SWEDEN'S SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP
FOR MURAL PAINTINGS

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Technical Art History | Reception History | Value

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Edited by: Anna Henningsson, Charlotta Hanner Nordstrand, Thomas Warscheid

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ICOMOS SWEDEN is the Swedish National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, a worldwide non-governmental organisation for cultural heritage professionals, and the advisory body to UNESCO for the cultural heritage and the World Heritage Convention. National Committees are organisations at the different national level in the countries. The organisation functions as an international network of experts that defines, improves and promotes conservation/preservation principles and standards, as well as education/training, research and practice. An important part is elaborating charters and other international documents. ICOMOS work is based on interdisciplinary cooperation and exchange between many categories and disciplines concerned with cultural heritage. ICOMOS SWEDEN brings together individual and institutional members and offers a framework for discussion and an exchange of various themes and issues related to the cultural heritage. More information: www.icomos.org and www.icomos.se.
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FRONT COVER: View of the Skönberga Wall Painting in the Attic of Skönberga Church by Söderköping.

Photographer: Karin Hermerén

BACK COVER: Part of Wall Painting in the Attic of Kaga Church near Linköping.

Photographer: fokus GmbH Leipzig

FULL PAGE PHOTOS: Page 6: Part of Skönberga Wall Painting (Photographer: fokus GmbH Leipzig).

Page 8: Detail of Fornåsa Wall Painting (Photographer: Anna Henningsson). Page 112: In the Attic of Skönberga

Church (Photographer: Henrik Lindblad). Page 117: The Lillkyrka Church (Photographer: Henrik Lindblad).

Content

Foreword	7
Introduction	9
Historic Church Interiors – Professional and Public Perception	12
W. (Bill) Wei	
Reflections on Technical Art History for Sacred Art in Swedish Churches	22
Anna Henningson	
Accessing the Past in the Present: A Search for Meaning in Polychrome Medieval Art	34
Kaja Kollandsrud	
Depiction of the Last Judgement on the Romanesque Wall Painting in Skönberga: Iconographic Idea, Questions, Explanations	48
Küllli Erikson	
Hidden Dimensions of the Medieval Mural Painting in the Attic of Lillkyrka Church	58
Anna Henningson	
Conservation: Increasing or Decreasing Value	76
Karin Hermerén	
Iconography, Narrative and Meaning – Situating the Romanesque Mural Paintings in Östergötland	84
Johan Eriksson	
Aron Borelius and the Romanesque Mural Paintings in Churches in Östergötland	98
Ann-Charlotte Hertz	
Observations and Thoughts on the Symposium	108
Henrik Lindblad, Johan Eriksson, Thomas Warscheid	
Presentation of Contributors	112



Foreword

The title of this publication was the topic for a symposium in September 2015. The mural painting ensemble, situated in the attics of eight churches in Östergötland, Sweden is since 2007 a topic for art-technological investigations. Investigations are undertaken on pro bono basis and are not part of any assignment from cultural heritage authorities or a part of a research project connected to an institution. This makes the funding that has been granted crucial to enable investigations and sharing of findings. I am incredibly indebted to the *Berit Wallenberg Foundation* and I would like to emphasise my gratitude to the foundation for being the main contributor to the scientific analyses and orthophotographing as well as the symposium and this publication. I am also very grateful to *Claes och Greta Lagerfelt's Foundation* for enabling a printed version of the publication. The financial support from *ICOMOS Sweden* as well as the encouragement from ICOMOS colleagues was essential for the symposium arrangement.

This symposium connects to a 60 year old project, related to *Norrköping Art Museum*, its first director Aron Borelius and his research on the mural paintings. I wish to express my appreciation to Norrköping Art Museum for generously hosting of this symposium. The venue of the museum with its interesting art collection created an inspiring atmosphere during the day where over 50 participants met.

This publication of the proceedings would not have been possible without a great generosity in sharing knowledge and thoughts related to the symposium topics. I would like to express my thanks to the authors and editors for their contributions and very nice collaboration.

In addition, individuals, companies and institutions abroad as well as in Sweden have contributed to the ongoing investigation of these mural paintings. I would like to send my deepest thanks to all of you concerned.

Norrköping, August 2016

Anna Henningsson

INITIATOR OF THE TECHNICAL ART HISTORY INVESTIGATIONS
ICOMOS SWEDEN'S INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE COMMITTEE ON WALL PAINTINGS



Introduction

*“Seeing the world is not about how we see but what we make of what we see.
We put together an understanding of the world that makes sense
from what we already know or think we know.”*

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World* (2015)

These are the proceedings of an international symposium, which took place on the 8-9th of September 2015, hosted at Norrköping Art Museum and organised by ICOMOS Sweden’s Scientific Working group for Mural Paintings. The aim of the symposium *Medieval Murals in the Church Attics of Östergötland* was to share new perspectives of the medieval mural paintings in the church attics of Östergötland. These mural paintings are being investigated through an art-technological approach and international collaborations. During the symposium the retrieved results were discussed in relation to *Technical Art History, Reception History* and *Value*.

In the attics of eight different churches in the county of Östergötland in south-east Sweden, an ensemble of medieval mural paintings are present, spanning the time period 1180 to 1330. The wall paintings became hidden at their current location, on the attic walls, during the 15th century when the churches flat wooden ceilings were replaced with brick vaults. The paintings remained hidden in the attics of the churches for centuries and were rediscovered in connection with roof repairs in the beginning of the 20th century. Some of these mural paintings have never been treated by conservation products. The lack of modern conservation products in the medieval materials provides a very rare and exclusive opportunity for art-technological investigations in a Swedish as well as an international context. The absence of a complex conservation history makes them rare sources for retrieving new knowledge about the character and origin of contexts related to medieval art-making. Furthermore, this can give us, in present society insights into cultural transfer through material and medieval workshop practice. Through retrieving these aspects, visual messages and meanings that present-day viewers of this art do not perceive, may again become accessible.

The execution processes of these medieval mural paintings have remained unexplored until 2003 when the first investigation was undertaken on one of these murals. This investigation revealed interesting findings as well as highlighted possible methods for improved documentation and communication of these hidden and not easily accessible wall paintings. Since this initial examination, investigation of the other murals is on-going based on a pro bono project.

Art historical investigation of these paintings was undertaken already in the early of 1950s by Professor Aron Borelius, the first director of Norrköping Art Museum. He initiated, alongside

this a documentation of the medieval murals in the church attics. Aron Borelius' art historical research was accompanied by extensive photographing and drawings. The result was published in the 400-page opus *Romanesque Mural Paintings in Östergötland* and placed the medieval paintings in a stylistic context and as common for the discipline of history of art that time, seeking for international influences as well as the origin of the paintings. The publication introduced the artworks to a broader audience, outside the community of art history scholars. A testimony to this is the names of almost 160 citizens, enterprises and associations who financially supported the publishing of the opus described above in 1956. This fundraising for sharing knowledge of art 60 years ago is significant in the discussion of the value of this art today.

It is a pleasure for us today to have the opportunity to continue sharing new aspects of this ensemble of medieval paintings with the symposium and this publication of the proceedings.

Norrköping, August 2016

Editors

Anna Henningsson, Charlotta Hanner Nordstrand, Thomas Warscheid



Program ICOMOS Sweden's National Committee Symposium

Medieval murals in the church attics of Östergötland

- A Symposium on Technical Art History, Value and Reception History -

9th of September 2015 at Norrköping Art Museum, Sweden

- 8:45 - 9:15** **Registration**
- 9:15 - 9:50** **Welcome and Introduction**
Nils Ahlberg, President ICOMOS Sweden and Malin Myrin, Vice President ICOMOS Sweden
Anna Henningson, ICOMOS Sweden's representative for Wall Paintings
ICOMOS Wall Painting Charter, Thomas Warscheid, LBW-Bioconsult
What is valuable? Bill Wei, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands
- 9:50 - 10:20** **Technical Art History and the Study of Romanesque painting and polychromy**
Mark Richter, History of Art department, University of Glasgow
- 10:20 - 10:50** **Hidden and Forgotten Dimensions of the investigated Romanesque Mural Paintings**
Project results
Anna Henningson, Disent AB
- 10:50-11:20** **COFFEE**
- 11:20-11:50** **Depiction of the Last Judgement on the Romanesque Mural Painting in Skönberga: Iconographic Idea, Questions and Explanations**
Project results
Küllli Erikson, freelance Art Historian (M.A)
- 11:50 - 12:05** **Aron Borelius and the Romanesque Mural Paintings above the Church Vaults in Östergötland**
Ann-Charlotte Hertz, former City Antiquarian, Municipality of Norrköping
- 12:05 - 12:30** **Discussion: How can the new knowledge regarding these paintings be used?**
- 12:30 - 13:15** **LUNCH**
- 13:15 - 13:35** **Methods used in investigating the Romanesque Mural Paintings in Östergötland**
Project results
Anna Henningson, Disent AB and Mark Richter, History of Art department, University of Glasgow

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- 13:35-14:05** **Iconography, Narrative and Meaning: Situating the Romanesque Mural Paintings in Östergötland**
Johan Erikson, Department of Art History, Uppsala University
- 14:05-14:35** **Enlightened by Colour in Medieval Norway**
Kaja Kollandsrud, Museum of Cultural History/IFIKK, University of Oslo
- 14:35-14:55** **COFFEE**
- 14:55-15:25** **Historic Church Interiors – Professional Values and Public Perception**
Bill Wei, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands
- 15:25 - 15:45** **Conservation: Increasing or Decreasing Value?**
Karin Hermerén, Department of Conservation, University of Gothenburg
- 15:45 - 16:10** **Discussion: Values of the Mural Paintings and conducted Investigations?**
- 16:10 - 16:30** **Knowledge Building and Communication of Religious Heritage**
Henrik Lindblad, Cultural Heritage Division, The Central Church Office Church of Sweden
- 16:30-16:50** **Summary and Reflections**
- 16:50-17:00** **ICOMOS Sweden close the day**
- 17:00-17:15** **Refreshments**
- 17:15-ca 18:00** **Guided Tour in Norrköping Art Museum: An Introduction to its History and Collections**
Martin Sundberg, Curator of Collections, Norrköpings Art Museum
- 19:00** **Dinner**

Foto: Fokus GmbH Leipzig

Moderator during the day is Alexandru Babos,
Senior advisor in Cultural Heritage for Linköping City

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These are the proceedings of the symposium *Medieval Murals in the Church Attics of Östergötland*, held in September 2015, at Norrköping Art Museum, organised by ICOMOS Sweden's Scientific Working Group for Mural Paintings. The purpose of the symposium was to bring different disciplines together to shed light on diverse aspects of an ensemble of medieval wall paintings, located in the attics of eight churches in the county of Östergötland in south-east Sweden.

This ensemble of medieval art, hidden in the attics of the churches, offers a rare opportunity for gaining new insights into sacred art. The absence of a complex conservation history makes this medieval wall painting ensemble unique. The paintings are thus an extraordinary historical source of information about medieval art and the messages embedded in the materials.

An art-technological approach was applied in recent investigations of these mural paintings. Interesting results were obtained by exploring the material composition and its effects on the visual appearance. Through a collaborative effort, the messages and significance of the paintings, which present-day viewers cannot perceive, may again become accessible.

The contributors to the proceedings share their experience, insights, and opportunities related to art-technology, value and the reception history of this type of sacred art in historic churches.