

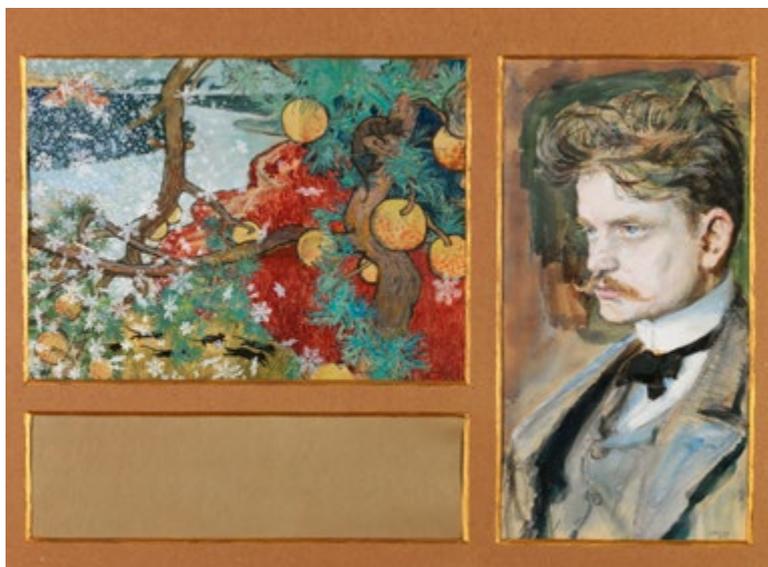
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Between Sounding Canvas and Visual Music: from Sibelius to Kupka

Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, PhD, Chief Curator, Ateneum Art Museum,
Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki

AAH annual conference, London, April 2018

The following abstract is from the paper that was given at the session entitled:
Seeing and hearing the 'Beyond': Art, Music and Mysticism in the Long 19th Century



Akseli Gallen-Kallela,
*En Saga (Jean Sibelius and
Fantasy Landscape)*, 1894,
gouache and watercolour
on paper,
31cm x 17cm and
24cm x 30cm
Ainola Foundation
Photo: Finnish National Gallery /
Hannu Pakarinen

This paper examines one of the intriguing aspects in European art and music around 1900: how spiritual ideas permeated the environment around European artists, especially those who were involved in the Theosophical movement. As visual artists drew inspiration from music and musical structures, interestingly, composers also collaborated with artists.

The aims of this paper are twofold. First, to discuss the common feature of a deeper strand which connects artists such as Axel Gallén, Wassily Kandinsky, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis and František Kupka: all were involved with the rediscovery of pagan mysticism. Second, to explore the interconnectedness between music and art that is reflected in the way the composers turned to visual arts or used art as an inspiration for creating music. One of these

was Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), the Finnish composer, who was also synaesthetic and responded to colours. Both Gallén and Sibelius interpreted the Finnish epic, *Kalevala*. However, it was also the case that Sibelius' music inspired Gallén's work.

The world of art and the occult were brought together in the 1890s by the notion of the existence of a higher wisdom and masters who were initiated into its secrets. For example, Sibelius was presented in Finnish art as a *seer-master*. And as this interconnectedness between art and music continued into the 20th century, I argue that it actually took a new turn with artists such as Kupka. This ambitious trajectory towards abstract art, based in music and pagan mysticism, takes his art to a *sounding abstraction*.