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The Nordic Art Journal: Writing New Art History

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Remembering and Forgetting the Enlightenment



Tidskrift för bildande konst och konstindustri (Journal of Fine Arts and Arts and Crafts) 1875

Finnish National Gallery Library

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The history of art history is famous for the names of individual scholars. Less attention has been paid to groups of scholars, especially those who were considered to be at the margin. My Nordic example takes us to the heart of the formation of art history in the Nordic countries in the 1870s.

The key example I present is a new art journal of the period, *Tidskrift för bildande konst och konstindustri* (*Journal of Fine Arts and Arts and Crafts*) that was published in Stockholm in 1875–76. The journal was established immediately after the 1873 art historians' conference in Vienna and the driving ideological force was the idea of enlightenment. The editor-in-chief of this bimonthly journal was the art scholar Lorentz Dietrichson (1834–1917), and the permanent editorial team consisted of members from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland: Professors Carl Rupert Nyblom (Uppsala), G. Ljunggren (Lund), Marcus Jacob Monrad (Kristiania, now Oslo), Carl Gustaf Estlander (Helsinki) and adjunct professor Julius Lange (Copenhagen). Each member was a prominent scholar of his own time and had published widely.

I argue that this new journal provided Nordic authors with a platform to manifest their concept of art history: what was valued within the arts and especially why. It can be claimed that, in its brief existence, the journal showcased Nordic art to the wider public, and became a statement that still today gives us an idea of what was considered valuable and important within the arts in the mid-1870s.