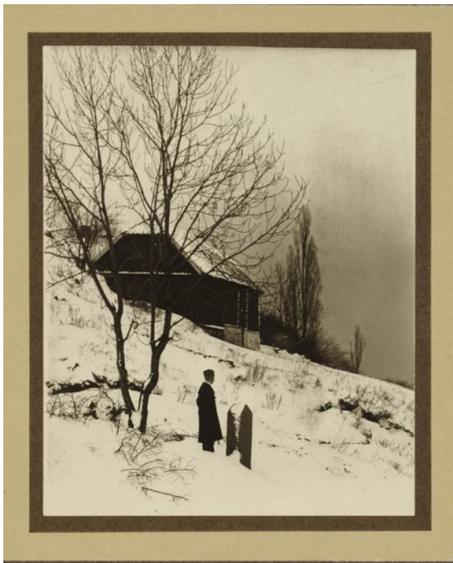


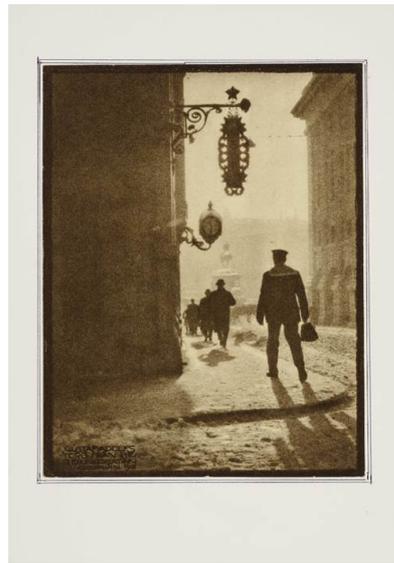
Hanne Holm-Johnsen

The Pictorialist Movement in Scandinavia, with Emphasis on Norway

*Lecture on November 23, 2013 on the occasion of the symposium
"Inspirations – Interactions: Pictorialism Reconsidered"*



Thomas Blehr: Without title, ca. 1900-10
(carbon print, 120 x 94 mm (image))



Henry B. Goodwin: Gustav Adolf's Market, seen from
Regerings Street, 1916 (photogravure, 215 x 170 mm (image))

The Collection

The Preus Museum's collection began to take shape in the 1970s. Through his company Preus Photo Laboratory Inc., a major contributor in the growing market for private color photography, Leif Preus was in a position to gather a primary international collection of photographs, specialized literature, and technical equipment. Preus had systematically built his expertise and begun his purchases, through the big auction houses, using the photohistories of Newhall and Gernsheim as inspiration. Gradually he became part of a network that put him in contact with agents and specialized dealers internationally.

Norway, on the other hand, has never had a milieu for the sale of older original photographs. Thus, the majority of Norwegian photographs are acquired through direct purchase or as gifts from photographers or their heirs. The most comprehensive Norwegian private archives, like that of the Oslo Camera Club (OKK) and image collections or archives of Inga Breder (1856–1934), Thomas Blehr (1875–1949), Olaf Christoffersen (1899–1984), and the album with images by Robert Collett (1842-1913) from 1906, came to the museum after its transition to governmental ownership.

Of the approximately 69 photographers in the collection who fully or partially produced photographic art during the period between 1880 and 1940, about twenty were essential to

Pictorialism's beginning and apex of achievement: photographers such as Emerson, Cameron, and Frank Meadow Sutcliff (1853–1941) of Great Britain, Heinrich Kühn (1886–1944) of Austria, Léonard Misonne (1870–1943) of Belgium, and Henry B. Goodwin (1878–1931) of Sweden. The countries reveal the international scope of the movement and the museum's collection. The preeminent French photographers are represented only to a small degree, while American photographers of that time have an especially broad representation, with Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), mostly through *Camera Work*, and Edward Steichen (1879–1973) at the forefront.

The majority of the 69 represented in the collection can be called late Pictorialists, that is, photographers who produced pictures within this stylistic demarcation after World War I, among them many Americans and the Austrian Rudolph Sulke (1885–1964). Most of the Norwegians also fall into this category, such as Breder, Christoffersen, Kinni Sandahl (1876–1958), Rolf Mortensen (1899–1975), and many more not mentioned here today.

Political background

As a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Norway was forced into a union with Sweden in 1814 after having been part of Denmark for more than four centuries. It was not until 1905 that the country gained its independence through a referendum. Thus there were close ties to both former and present allies in Norway around 1900 as well as a strong national undercurrent.

In Scandinavia, including Norway, active and interested professional and amateur photographers were following the developments in Europe and the US with eager curiosity at the end of the century. Because of the nineteenth century political situation, there was a natural migration between Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Great Britain, Germany and the US. Interchange between Norway and Sweden had political reasons; Denmark maintained importance because the Norwegian culture still was quite "Danish"; Germany was attractive mainly due to trade and education. Artists, architects, engineers, and craftsmen had a tradition of seeking out Germany before World War II. Great Britain's shipping industry was great, and the country offered the first step to the "new world," and the US generally enjoyed great emigration from Norway. About 800,000 Norwegians emigrated in that century, with a peak of about 30,000 each year in the 1880s.

The Norwegian scene and Nordic collaborations 1888–1907

In Norway, professional photographers founded Det fotografiske Selskab (the Photographic Association) in Oslo (at that time called Christiania) in 1882, but the group died out rather quickly. In 1894, they tried again, and this was the beginning of what is today the Norges Fotografforbund. In 1888, amateur photographers organized into Amatør-Fotografen (the Amateur Photographer). Similar groups consisting of professional or amateur photographers were formed in 1888 and 1889 in the other Scandinavian capitals and in Gothenburg.

Communication among photographers was aided by the inter-Scandinavian *Fotografisk Tidsskrift* (Photographic Journal), also founded in 1888, and published in Stockholm by the Fotografiska Föreningen (Photographers Association), with professional and amateur photographers as the target audiences. From 1891, the journal was also sent to the Norwegian organized photographers, and they had correspondents in Christiania, Copenhagen, and by 1896 also in Helsinki. The following years brought other magazines like the Danish *Tidsskrift for Amatørfotografer* (Journal for Amateur Photographers), the Norwegian

Foto-Revy. Organ for fag og amatør fotografi (Photo-Review. Journal for Professional and Amateur Photography), *Svenska Fotografen* (The Swedish Photographer) and *Nordisk Tidskrift för Fotografi* (Nordic Journal of Photography), also published in Stockholm.

The first inspiration for this organizing activity among those interested in photography in Scandinavia seems to have been the large 1888 Nordic exhibition in Copenhagen, where photography was represented. The exhibition was discussed in *Fotografisk Tidsskrift*. The journal, however, not only presented information produced in Stockholm about activities in the Nordic countries but also published translated articles from other journals in Europe, discussions about art versus photography, and notes about exhibitions, competitions, and new cameras and processes. The journal was an important source for the esthetic discussions between Emerson, Robinson (1898) and later Davison in Great Britain, and it printed articles by Richard Neuhaus (1897), Heinrich Kühn (1897), and the Brothers Lumière about the different color experiments at the time (1901). These journals did, of course, also show images of and write about different photographers and their work.



Heinrich Kühn: Kinderspiel II, ca. 1907
(autochrome, 180 x 260 mm)

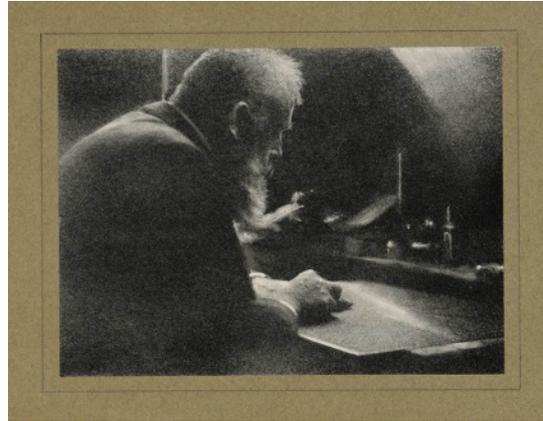


Peter Henry Emerson: Quanting the Gladdon, 1886
(platinotype, 215 x 293 mm)

One of the interesting conflicts reported on by the Danish *Tidsskrift for Amatørfotografer* was Ernst W. Juhl's forced resignation in 1902 from both *Photographische Rundschau* (Photographic Outlook), as a result of his publishing photographs by Steichen, and from Juhl's wide-ranging work *Camera Kunst* (Camera Art) where he presented the newest in photography. The young Edward Steichen was considered by many an extreme exponent of manipulated photography. He was admired and criticized; he was well known among Scandinavian artists and photographers. The author of the journal's article was clearly critical and criticized Juhl's inability to distinguish between good and bad at the same time he singled out Steichen's pictures for attack, among which *Dolor* received a thorough analysis: "It can depict a cloud, but just as easily a sack of grain. From the caption, however, one sees that it is called 'Dolor,' and one therefore surmises that it is a human being. With a bit of good will one can grasp something that could resemble a back, but where are the head and legs?" Steichen also was given room to present his vision: "Why should one wish to restrict an artistic mode of expression, which in its development's early childhood already belongs to modern knowledge?"



Edward Steichen: Dolor, 1903
(photogravure, 195 x 150 mm)



Edward Steichen: Frits Thaulow at his drawing desk, ca. 1901
(photogravure, 159 x 215 mm (image))

Exhibitions were important sources of inspiration, and they were held at national and international levels. In 1897, the General Art and Industry Exhibition in Stockholm had plans to be an even grander event than the International Exhibition in Paris the year before. Despite the 850 participants from Denmark and Norway, only the professional photographers participated. The Amatør-Fotografen members of Christiania exhibited outside the program, and *Fotografisk Tidsskrift* wrote, "They are not all of impeccable technical quality, but the exhibition is interesting because of its variety of motives and treatment of these. (1897: 199).



Gertrude Käsebier: Mother with two children,
ca. 1903-04 (platinotype, 130 x 145 mm)



Robert Collett: Page from album with «April-day,
Gudbrandsdalen» and «Sun in Fog, Christiania»,
1892-1906 (collodion pop, 115 x 154 mm (images))

In 1904, another international exhibition was mounted in Copenhagen. The professional photographer Gertrude Käsebier participated as did the Norwegian amateur photographer Robert Collett. Individual photographs by Käsebier were published in *Tidskrift for Amatørfotografer*, and an article by J. C. Stockholm remarked on the Norwegian representation: "From Norway only Prof. R. Collet [sic] took part [...] but unfortunately [...] Prof. Collet's [sic] remaining pictures were hung in such bad lighting that they were not done justice." Two of Collett's photographs were also depicted earlier in the journal: *Korsedderkoppens Spind* (The Cross Spider's Web) and *Paa vej til Holmenkollen* (On the Road to Holmenkollen), the latter corresponding to what he titled *Sol i Taageveir, Christiania* (Sun in Fog, Christiania) in the album belonging to the Museum's collection. Robert Collett was an educated zoologist and worked all his life in different capacities at the University of Christiania's Natural History Museum. Collett published many books and used his photographs as illustrations.

It would seem that the extreme painterly techniques and manipulation did not find a footing in the Nordic countries until later. Johanne Seines Svendsen thoroughly discusses the work of Robert Collett in her dissertation. She shows that, although his photographs belong to a time long preceding the period the Norwegian photohistorian Roger Erlandsen links with Pictorialism in Norway – the 1920s and the later camera clubs – Collett's work occurred



Robert Collett: Page from album with «Tang kjører, Jæren» and «From Onsø, Christiania fjord», 1892-1906, (collodion pop, 320 x 230 mm (page))

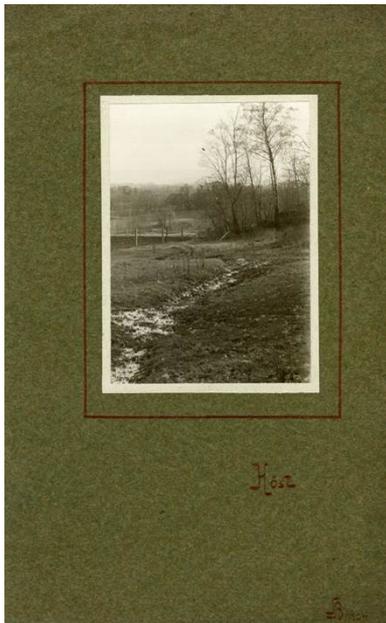


Frank Meadow Sutcliffe: At the seaside, ca. 1880-1900 (albumen print, 153 x 201 mm)

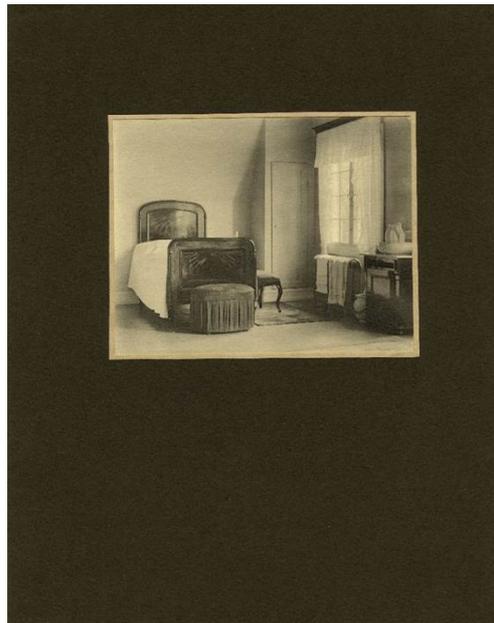
precisely when the movement was at its most innovative and active. We can assume that Collett, who traveled widely and took part in international exhibitions (as mentioned above), was familiar with the great photographers and pictures of the time. Emerson is named in several contexts with Collett. The photograph *Quanting the Gladdon* (1886), from the series *Life and Landscapes on the Norfolk Broads* in the Preus Museum's collection, precisely depicts nature but with a suggestion of soft focus. Sutcliffe also combines a sharp rendering of detail, a suggestion of selective focusing, and a carefully considered composition in many of his pictures. Some of his photographs from the small English coastal city Whitby parallel

Collett's pictures from Jæren. Collett appears to have seen the possibility of combining his professional ambitions with those involving his amateur photography; he hoped to give his pictures of natural and animal life what was, for his time, modern esthetic expression.

We can follow the organization Amatør-fotografen through its reports in *Fotografisk Tidsskrift*. The board or organizing committee consisted of men with different backgrounds, but none photographic. They met about six times a year at different places in the city. In 1891, they decided to take in members from outside Christiania. At the meeting in November, for instance, 27 members attended a lecture about Lippmann's color process. There were portfolio reviews and the member Blixrud showed a Laterna Magica he had bought in London. The landscape painter Wilhelm Peters, who was a member, showed lantern slides he had made himself. In 1897, the business executive and accountant Thomas Blehr became a member, but Robert Collett never seems to have been one. The club functioned until it was disbanded in 1907, but it had actually ceased operations in 1905. At its best, the group had almost one hundred members, 14 of them women, and the last years they met at J. L. Nerlien A/S, Norway's dominant firm for the import of photographic equipment founded in 1894. There one had free access to the darkroom and could discuss the newest equipment and processes. The organization's last chairperson was Thomas Blehr, a skilled photographer who experimented with new processes and had contact with the Royal Photographic Society in Britain. His motifs are largely taken from nearby surroundings, family life, and vacations. After he began photographing his own family in 1922, his production took a more private turn, and it seems he no longer competed or exhibited.



Thomas Blehr: Autumn, 1904
(carbon print, 112 x 80 mm (image))



Thomas Blehr: Without title, 1905
(carbon print, 95 x 120 mm (image), 251 x 202 mm (paper))

One would think that with all this activity, the established art institutions and museums would have been interested in this photographic activity, but this does not seem to have been the case. The only exhibition of interest in the Norwegian capital at the time that I could find was an exhibition that was shown at Kunstindustrimuseet (Museum of Decorative Arts and

Design) in 1908. It included 184 photographs and was divided into four sections. A juried part came from Erzherzog Rainer Museum in Berlin, another section was from the collection of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld, and a further portion consisted of photogravures “by the last decade’s finest amateur photographers from nearly all European countries and America.” The exhibition had an additional section: “To make the audience acquainted with the most recent major advances in the area of direct color photography, the Museum has gratefully accepted the offer of the photographer Herr Stani Szacinski to place a series of such photographs at our disposal,” wrote director H. Grosch in the catalog. Use of the term “direct” indicates that the process involved was not gum print but most likely autochrome.



Anders Beer Wilse: Changing the guards, ca. 1915
(gelatin silver print, 290 x 390 mm)



Anders Beer Wilse: Fritjof Nansen, 1921
(gelatin silver print, 205 x 160 mm)

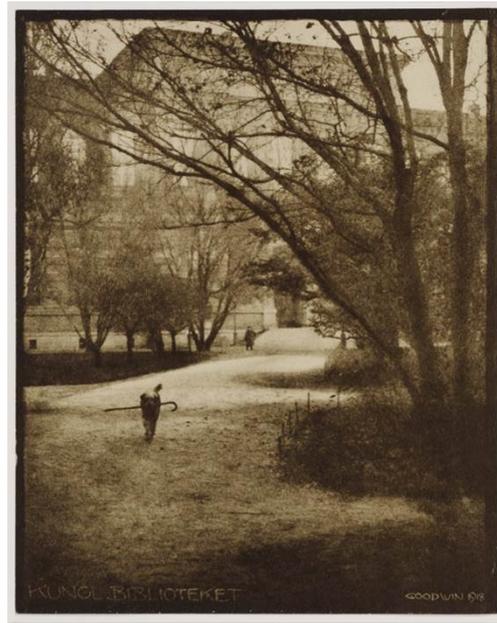
Between the clubs, 1907–1921

Anders Beer Wilse (1865–1949) and Waldemar Eide (1886–1963) belonged to the group of “professional amateurs.” Photography was their profession, giving them high status and prestige in the camera-club milieu. Wilse was unquestionably one of the most advanced photographers; his superior is rarely to be found in the Norwegian history of photography. He had a breadth of motif that included portraiture, reportage, theatrical and folk-life photography, and landscape. In terms of expression, his work has a similarly broad spectrum, which manifested the shifting character of tasks and challenges he faced as well as the time period itself: 1897–1901 in the US, mainly in Seattle, and 1901–1949 in Norway. There is little but technical advice in the writings he left. Even in his 1914 article “Fotografi, Natur og Kunst” (Photography, Nature, and Art), in which he attempted a discussion of art in photography, the language seems terse and searching: “On photography as art there have been arguments for and against, and it is difficult in our day to answer what is really meant by art. I think the large majority would agree nevertheless that art is reproduced from nature with an eye for the characteristic, the beautiful, together with a fine taste for the harmonious and for the working of light, and the observer would then say, even agree, that to feel such things is a delight. And we also see, of course, in foreign works the most beautiful, the most artistic results in photography. In addition, it has been the amateur photographer who has taken this furthest. I mean in landscape pictures with or without figures.”

Wilse himself was never afraid to clip several pictures together into a new one, retouch or remove details on negatives, or hand-color photographs. And some of Wilse's portraits and landscapes reveal characteristics clearly inspired by the more painterly style of the period. This applied above all to his atmospheric landscapes, like *Drøbak, Dr. Morteruds Vagtavløsning* (Drøbak, Dr. Morterud's Changing of the Guard) from 1915, or other landscapes from the same period. The portraits, however, are often sharp, showing the new attitude of the time and interest in the model's own milieu, or are concentrated on the face or the figure to reveal personality.

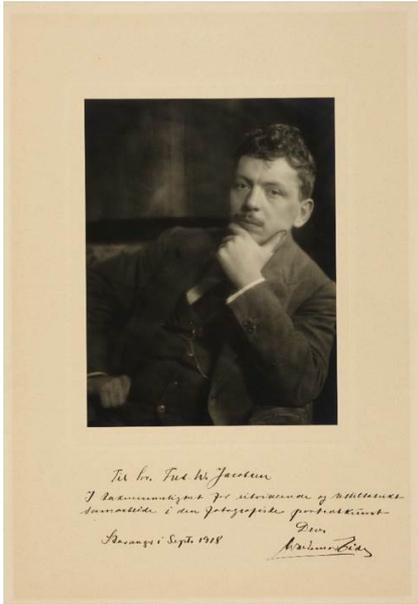


Alvin Langdon Coburn: Henry B. Goodwin, 1914
(gelatin silver print, 249 x 195 mm)

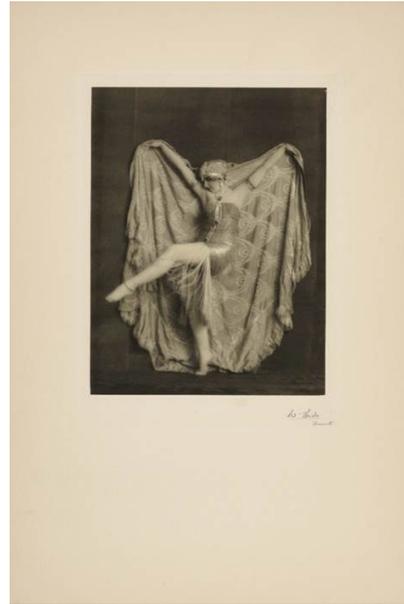


Henry B. Goodwin: The Royal Library, 1918
(photogravure, 205 x 162 mm)

Heinrich Karl Hugo Bürgel (1878–1931) studied philology at the universities in Munich, Copenhagen and Leipzig before receiving his doctorate in 1903. He moved to Sweden in 1905 and received citizenship there two years later. In 1915, he changed his name to Henry B. Goodwin, established his own professional portrait-studio in Stockholm, and had his first one-man show. Goodwin had been fascinated by photography since 1900 and is thought to have gone to Leipzig to study with Nicola Perscheid. In 1913, he arranged for Perscheid to come to Stockholm to lecture to Swedish photographers, and he was himself an active lecturer. Goodwin was deeply interested in the creative possibilities photographic pictures offered.



Waldemar Eide: Selfportrait, 1918
(gelatin silver print, 227 x 171 mm (image))



Waldemar Eide: Vera Fokina, 1919
(gelatin silver print, 210 x 170 mm (image))

The Stavanger-based portrait photographer Waldemar Eide was among the leading Norwegian photographers at the beginning of the twentieth century. He had established himself as a photographer in 1907 after, among other things, a short stay at the Vereinigte Fachschule für Photographie und Malerei (School for Photography and Painting) in Dresden. A popular and sought-after practitioner, he also gave lectures and counsel to amateurs and was one of the few Norwegians exhibiting at the London Salon of Photography. His portfolio of pictures released in 1919 of the famous Russian ballerina Vera Fokina places him directly in the group of European and American photographers who were leading a renewal of portrait photography at the time. Eide's images at the Scandinavian exhibition in Stockholm in 1919 prompted Goodwin to write an overwhelming article about him in *Nordisk Tidskrift för Fotografi* that same year: "He belongs to the few camera portraitists in Europe that one can take seriously."

Like Goodwin, Eide was not solely a portrait photographer. They were colleagues with common interests and great mutual respect. Both combined the amateur photographer's love of the medium with the serious working practitioner's knowledge and professionalism. Both exhibited actively, and Goodwin, like Eide, willingly shared his own attitudes and esthetic with amateurs via lectures, interviews, and articles in periodicals. Goodwin used camera lenses and processes preferred by the Pictorialists, elements that yielded soft focus and matte surfaces as with graphics. Alvin Langdon Coburn was Goodwin's great inspiration. His use of the term *Kamerabilder* (camera pictures) instead of "photographs" and the publication of books with portraits of well-known figures appear to have been inspired by Coburn. Certain similarities also occur among their atmospheric urban landscapes.



Kinni Sandahl: Double Portrait, 1920s
(gelatin silver print, 245 x 196 mm)



Inga Breder: In the Field, first half 1920s
(gelatin silver print on baryta, 272 x 217 mm (image))

Kristiania (Oslo) Kamera Klub 1921-1940

A new club for amateurs, Kristiania Kamera Klub (Christiania Camera Club), was founded in 1921; after the Norwegian capital changed its name to Oslo in 1925, so did the club. Several other camera clubs were also established in Norway throughout the 1920s and 1930s, but the capital's group remained the largest. In 1927, the Norsk selskap for fotografi (NSFF, or the Norwegian Association for Photography) was formed as an umbrella organization for the clubs. Both still exist today.

In individual clubs and also nationally, initiatives such as exhibitions, portfolio clubs for mutual critical conversation, lectures, and other activities were organized to elevate the members. In the 1920s, the majority of Norwegian photographers and clubs also had closest contact with the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. Many considered British photographers “world-class practitioners of photography, photography's aristocrats, [...] The strength of the English is in pure photography, built on a pictorial and technical foundation,” as portrait photographer Aage Remfeldt wrote in 1926.

Most of the Norwegian photographers chose more consistently painterly solutions than Collett and Wilse. Eide and several of the members of the Oslo Kamera Klub, for instance Inga Breder and Olaf Christoffersen, primarily selected processes, paper types, and lenses that produced mood-filled landscapes and tactile effects, but their motifs were often of a more modern type. One can clearly see indications of the slow arrival of other influences during the 1920s and 1930s.



Olaf Christoffersen: Winter evening, 1924
(gelatin silver print, 272 x 214 mm (image))



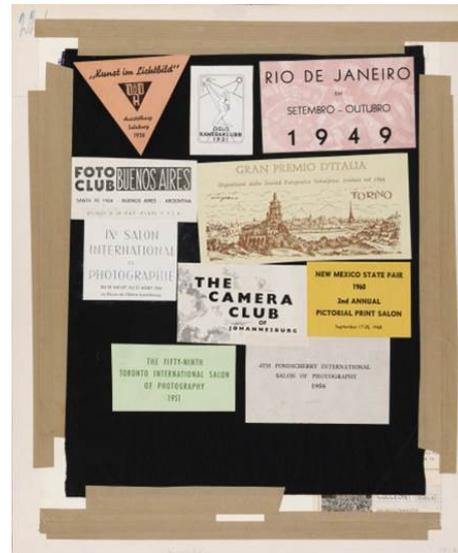
Inga Breder: Akerselven, first half 1920s
(gelatin silver print, 157 x 216 mm)

Through the 1920s there was close cooperation between Blomqvist Kunsthandel (Blomqvist Art Dealers) and OKK regarding exhibitions. This culminated in the 1926 international exhibition for which H.M. Queen Maud was the high patron. The exhibition presented a large number of photographs from 16 countries in addition to 127 by Norwegian photographers, among them founding member and spinster Inga Breder. The exhibition was a major effort but a disappointment economically, for in spite of good press coverage and a comprehensive advertising campaign, the number of visitors was far below anticipated, reaching only five to six thousand.

The Preus Museum's collection includes some large photographs bearing the stamps of a long exhibition history. The reverse sides of these pictures carry the stickers and marks of various exhibitions or camera clubs. Thus, we know that exactly the bromoil prints *Church going* and *Colleoni (Venecia)* by Rudolf Sulke (1885–1964) were part of the international exhibition in 1926. Prior to the show in Norway, the Colleoni image had been shown at the Foto Club Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1924. We can also see that it also led an extensive exhibition-life after Oslo; *Kunst im Lichtbild* (Art in the Photograph) in Salzburg (Austria) in 1936, the 59th Toronto International Salon of Photography (Canada) in 1951, 4th Pondicherry International Salon of Photography (India) in 1958, and the 2nd Annual Pictorial Print Salon, New Mexico State Fair (USA) in 1960, to give only a partial listing.



Rudolf Sulke: Colleoni, Venezia, 1921
(bromoil print, 360 x 258 mm)



Back of «Colleoni, Venezia» with stickers from Oslo Camera Club and many others

Other new and younger photographers, active members such as the engineer Olav Christoffersen, also showed work at the 1926 exhibition. Christoffersen worked for Kverner Brug for over 50 years, and was one of the leading facilitators in Oslo's industrial community. Vaterland, Akers Mekaniske Verksted, the port of Oslo, and the city's old harbor district (Gamle Vika) are his motives. Christoffersen was a central member of OKK starting in 1924. The photograph *Vinteraften* (Winter Evening) from 1928 is typical of his style. The picture won awards and was accepted for exhibition at the Royal Photographic Society. It also appeared in numerous exhibitions in the US.

Conclusion

As indicated by way of introduction, the original photography movement had dissolved by the outset of World War I. The large group of late Pictorialists in the Preus Museum collection, however, show us that activity was far from over when the pioneers gave up or sought other forms of expression. This is primarily true of the Americans, but additionally nearly a hundred exhibition pictures by Austrian Rudolf Sulke also put the Norwegian material in perspective. As stated earlier, the Museum has received parts of the OKK archives and of individual photographers' estates since 1998. This amounts to several thousand pictures, which suggests a level of activity in a milieu over a period of about fifty years that has been little noted by art historians or other researchers. Aside from the discussion by Tone Svingningen in her dissertation about OKK's work and participants between 1921 and 1940, the writing about Norwegian amateur photographers and Pictorialism has been based on a few individual examples and some literature of that time. The goal, someday, is to do what Christian A. Petersen did in 1997 when the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts conducted a thorough study in its exhibition *After the Photo-Secession: American Pictorial Photography, 1910-1955*. There, Petersen makes it apparent that Pictorialism in the USA after Stieglitz changed from a strictly elitist to a more popular movement. Several forces were involved: the camera clubs housed a combination of amateur and professional photographers, as was the case in Scandinavia,

and, furthermore, there were new groups with different social backgrounds than those prevailing in the more traditional associations.

Something similar has never been done regarding Norwegian Pictorialism. Similar developments seem to have occurred in Norway, even though a figure of Stieglitz's caliber was lacking around 1900. Stimuli came through reciprocal contact across borders, among the Scandinavian countries as well as other sources. Furthermore, painterly expressions were established in Norway as a folk-cultural expression, and some of the finest and most creative work in our history of photography has origins in the camera club movements of the time.



Rolf Mortensen: Golgota, 1928
(gelatin silver print, 176 x 238 mm)



Olaf Christoffersen: Little girls reading, 1923
(gelatin silver print, toned, 135 x 170 mm (image))

Art historian **Hanne Holm-Johnsen** studied at Munich's Ludwig Maximilians Universität and at the University of Oslo. She has been curator at the Preus Museum, Norway's national museum of photography, since 1997, where she directed the exhibition *Art or Kitsch. Pictorialism in the Preus Museum Collection* in 2010/2011. Her previous posts have included director of the Oslo Art Society (1988–1992) and artistic director at Fotogalleriet, Oslo (1992–1996).