



SCANDINAVIAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING 1840-1910

CAROLINE LEVISSE

The Arts Society Fylde
Lowther Pavilion Theatre
14 May 2025 at 2.00pm

There is something about Scandinavia that evokes quite strong feelings of open spaces, grey skies and a rather ascetic approach to life - the literature can feel, well, a bit bleak and, as we all know, having little sun for half the year is not without its challenges. Plenty of “Scandi noir” police dramas on TV have hardly dispelled that impression. So, when today’s speaker says, “there is something special about Nordic nature. Its vastness, wilderness and remoteness are some of the reasons it is so fascinating”, we’re likely to echo her views. Dr Caroline Levisse, on her first visit to The Arts Society Fylde, counsels that we should not forget the exceptional light conditions in the Nordic countries, with effects such as the midnight sun and auroras. “Surely,” she says, “nature has been a cornerstone of life in the Nordic countries. This importance is reflected in the history of art by the significant place held by landscape painting”. So, for the moment, we can put aside our IKEA catalogue, tidy away the Lego and that wonderful old Nokia phone - along with the stylish Swedish and Danish glass (not to mention the frankly staggering cost of that glass if it contains red wine in Norway); with Dr Levisse as our guide, we are promised a chance to explore the various ways in which nature has been represented by Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish painters from 1840 to 1910. She adds that we will see how “nature was rarely just represented in a transparent, unmediated manner. It mirrored a national identity or an artist’s inner world”. An intriguing chance to look at a perhaps rather less well-known genre.

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Dr Caroline Levisse is an art historian based in London. She was born in France where she studied art history before moving to Copenhagen. In Denmark, she focused on research work and completed a PhD on the relations between art and religion in contemporary Scandinavian art. After graduating in 2013, she moved to London and started teaching art history with adult education providers. She has since developed a range of courses focusing on 19th and early 20th century Western art. She has published articles in French and English in academic journals as well as magazines and newspapers, such as *Church Times* and *Arts sacrés*.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Torsten Gunnarsson (et al.), *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910*, exhibition catalogue, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006

Torsten Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Yale University Press, 1998

Lise Svanholm, *Northern Light: The Skagen Painters*, Gyldendal, 2003

Stefan Koja (ed.), *Nordic Dawn: Modernism’s Awakening in Finland, 1890-1920*, exh. cat., Munich, Prestel Publishing, 2005

Illustration: Hans Gude and Adolph Tidemand, Bridal Procession on the Hardangerfjord, 1848, oil on canvas, 93 x 130 cm, National Gallery Oslo (public domain)