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Caspar David Friedrich, poet of animated landscapes

Caspar David Friedrich, the leading painter of the German Romantic era, is nowadays regarded as one of the greatest figures in the history of art. Nevertheless, he remains relatively unknown in Sweden outside art history circles. This October, Nationalmuseum will set out to change this by presenting Scandinavia's first monographic exhibition of works by Friedrich. In all, over 90 artworks will be on show, including some 40 paintings. In his paintings, Friedrich depicts the Romantic belief in an animated nature where the divine permeates everything.

Fairly small images lead the onlooker into suggestive landscapes of mountains, sea and land. Silent human figures are lost in their surroundings, and the images convey a contemplative mood charged with a spiritual presence below the surface.

In Friedrich's view, the artist's emotions alone should determine the character of the work. Artists should paint not only what they saw in front of them, but especially what they saw inside themselves. Thus a landscape painting becomes a kind of self-portrait reflecting the artist's personality.

A number of Scandinavian connections feature in Caspar David Friedrich's life and art. He was born 1774 in the port city of Greifswald in the north German province of Pomerania, which at the time belonged to Sweden. He attended the Copenhagen academy of fine art. During his many years in Dresden, he was close friends with the Norwegian painter Johan Christian Dahl. Friedrich's world of imagery also has some obvious Scandinavian features. But despite these links, not one work by Friedrich hangs in a Swedish gallery.

"Obtaining loans of Friedrich's art is a laborious process", explains Torsten Gunnarsson, exhibition curator. "There is not one known work in a Swedish collection. So we are delighted to be able, thanks to our international contacts, to present a monographic exhibition to the Swedish public for the first time."

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PRESSRELEASE

When the Museum Folkwang in Essen and the Hamburger Kunsthalle staged a Friedrich exhibition three years ago, the response was hugely enthusiastic. The honorary patron of Nationalmuseum's exhibition is HM Queen Silvia, who, at the opening of the Essen exhibition, expressed a desire to present Friedrich's works to a Swedish audience.

Friedrich has inspired many artists in our own time. In parallel with the main exhibition, The Gallery on the ground floor will be showing how eight Swedish contemporary artists have maintained and developed Friedrich's legacy. On display will be works by Karin Mamma Andersson, Ann Böttcher, Cecilia Edefalk, Denise Grünstein, Jan Håfström, Lars Nilsson, Håkan Rehnberg and Sigrid Sandström. The exhibits will show that interest in Friedrich is not confined to painting but also extends to other techniques: sculpture, drawing, photography, collage and film.

Caspar David Friedrich – Nature Animated will be on show on the 2nd floor at Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, from 2 October 2009 until 10 January 2010. During the same period **Friedrich – Eight Contemporary Commentaries** will be on show in The Gallery on the ground floor (admission free).

Further information:

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Email us to request advance previews of selected articles from the forthcoming exhibition catalogue: lmr@nationalmuseum.se or ism@nationalmuseum.se

Press images:

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