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# Modern Impressionist or Idyllic Genre Painter? Zorn's European Fame from an Italian Perspective

ALEXANDER AUF DER HEYDE

IN 1887, WHEN THE DIRECTORS OF THE UFFIZI GALLERY IN FLORENCE decided to enlarge their collection of self-portraits with the most representative faces of modern Scandinavian art, they asked the Italian Consulate in Stockholm to compile the names of the best-known living painters in Sweden and Norway.<sup>1</sup> Eilif Peterssen and Anders Zorn were chosen to represent their countries together with the Danish painter Peder Severin Krøyer. Zorn's dominant position in the contemporary Swedish art world had recently been acknowledged by the government, as we can see from the purchase of his watercolor *Our Daily Bread* (fig. 15), a naturalistic scene of peasants, for the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. Zorn was asked by the Uffizi directors to execute a portrait of himself, which he eventually completed in 1889. But even by this time Italians were not familiar with the body of artwork behind this face. They did not know much more in 1891, when the artist was described as the "victor of the day among young Scandinavian painters" in the Milan journal *Cronaca d'Arte*.<sup>2</sup> We can regard the *Self-Portrait* in the Uffizi, then, as something of a curiosity, an incubating seed of what was to become Zorn's early European fame (cat. 15 and fig. 13).

It was not until 1895—on the occasion of the first Biennale in Venice—that the Italian public was able truly to confront Zorn and Swedish painting. But before discussing this Italian chapter of the artist's critical reception, we must pause to take a look at his reputation in France, Germany, and Austria, something that has not been undertaken before. After all, Zorn was a pan-European phenomenon. In each of these countries, he was widely successful, but in each he was perceived in varying ways. As we will see, Zorn's reception tells us at times more about the specific cultural climate in that country than about the artist himself. The same can be said for the United States.<sup>3</sup>

## Zorn's Success Story

As his nation's most famous painter, Zorn shaped Sweden's image abroad in a way few other artists of the time could do. His oeuvre also prompts reflection on the role of modernism in the development of late nineteenth-century art. Zorn alternated highly labor-intensive stays in European and American cities with extended periods of retreat in his own country. His modern urban-life scenes and representations of his native environment were two sides of one coin. Consequently, most critiques of his work tend to banish the artist to one of two opposite niches—modernist, or idyllic genre painter. But we should not see Zorn



Fig. 13  
ANDERS ZORN  
*Self-Portrait* (detail of cat. 15)

This essay was translated from the German by Ilse Andrews.

- 1 See files in Archives, Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino, Florence. 1890 (A2), 37; 1891 (A2), 19. For Zorn's *Self-Portrait*, see cat. 15.
- 2 Grubicy de Dragon 1891.
- 3 This topic is explored in this catalog with essays by Hans Henrik Brummer, pp. 66–78, and Anne-Marie Eze, pp. 54–65. See also Hagans 2009.



Fig. 14  
ANDERS ZORN  
*The Fisherman of St. Ives*, 1888  
Oil on canvas, 128 × 86 cm  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, on permanent  
loan to Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau

as a passive victim in this process. He was skilled at manipulating the critical reception of his work by selecting which paintings to show at important exhibitions, and by conscious dramatization of his personal life.

### *Zorn in France*

Zorn's Florentine *Self-Portrait* has been described as "like a parade—it is a showcasing of his artistic attributes and his awards."<sup>4</sup> The painting shows an elegantly dressed man about thirty years old, surrounded by unfinished works in his studio: the clay *bozzetto* of his wife, Emma Lamm, suggests that Zorn viewed himself as a universally skilled artist in the Renaissance tradition.<sup>5</sup> The only spot of color in the nearly monochrome painting is the prominently displayed Légion d'honneur on his lapel, a sign of recognition he had obtained for, among other accomplishments, his success at the annual Salon in 1888 with *The Fisherman of St. Ives* (subsequently purchased by France for the Musée du Luxembourg; fig. 14). With this painting and two portraits, Zorn triumphed at the 1889 World's Fair. Two paintings by him of nudes were also honored by prizes at the annual Salon that year. Moreover, Zorn's membership of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, founded in 1890, opened the door to the Parisian liberal art establishment. But how did these early awards come about? Why did the Parisian public fall in love with an unknown artist from Sweden who had only recently begun painting in oil?

Zorn arrived in Paris shortly after the impressionists' last joint exhibit in 1886, when Georges Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* had already pointed the way towards a new quest for order and a scientific approach to painterly representation. It goes without saying that Zorn's Parisian paintings had very little in common with this new trend, which was first described by art critic Felix Fénéon in 1887 as "neo-impressionism." Nevertheless, the Swedish painter's work was not backward or *retardataire*. Instead, we can see it as connected to the *longue durée* (long-term history) of realistic representative conventions in the nineteenth century, as studied by Gabriel Weisberg.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, Louis Gonse, editor-in-chief of the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, remarked that the Scandinavian painters included in the 1889 World's Fair had "intensively studied" the works of French artists such as Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet, Edgar Degas, and Claude Monet, among others.<sup>7</sup> All of these artists were powerfully brought to the public's attention on the occasion of the Exposition Centennale in 1889, an ambitious retrospective of one hundred years of artistic creativity in France. The exhibition aimed to do full honor to France for its role in sparking Europe's artistic renewal, including the invention of modern

4 Brummer 1989, p. 59.

5 On Zorn's *Self-Portrait*, see Brummer 1994, p. 84.

6 Weisberg 1980.

7 Gonse 1889, p. 449.

Fig. 15  
ANDERS ZORN  
*Our Daily Bread*, 1886  
Watercolor, 680 × 1020 mm  
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm



outdoors painting. The Scandinavian artists were celebrated as examples of triumphant French *plein-airisme*—we can note how successful Zorn had been in France with his *Fisherman of St. Ives* and nudes, all painted outdoors.

By this time and already by the late 1880s, French *plein-air* painting was no longer regarded as a purely ‘realistic’. Indeed, the critic Charles Ponsonailhe’s essays on Scandinavian art show that *plein-air* painting was undergoing an aesthetic reinterpretation subject to a new paradigm of order and construction. Ultimately, it was seen as having very little in common with its origins as a means to capture the effects of natural light.<sup>8</sup> Ponsonailhe credited the Scandinavians with perfecting the tradition of working outdoors that had been begun by the French.

For Ponsonailhe, Zorn’s brush acrobatics were a result of his experience as a watercolorist. Other contemporary critics, however, including Georges Lafenestre, considered Zorn’s painterly virtuosity to be decadent. According to Lafenestre, his portrait of Rosita Mauri (see fig. 47) in particular revealed “a sickly over-excitement, an excessive need for rumpled cloth, for blurring, for tricks, for a *boulevardier*’s affectation of indifference or the disdain for solid and exact form—all of which indeed seem like symptoms of decadent contagion.”<sup>9</sup> This critique stands in contrast to the general appreciation of the freshness and novelty of the Scandinavians.

Once the French critics detected the first signs of any civilized malaise creeping into Zorn’s oeuvre, he needed, it seems, to return to Sweden, where he could again be an ‘authentic’ Scandinavian painter. There, his art could achieve a kind of unity with his roots. At the same time, critics such as Maurice Gandolphe were revising their literary perceptions of Scandinavia (influenced by Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg) in favor of an anthropological view of the

<sup>8</sup> Claustrat 2008, pp. 17–25.

<sup>9</sup> Lafenestre 1889, p. 165.

‘primitive’ or primeval character of Scandinavian life. Nordic landscape painting in particular was taken as the expression of a “naive and sincere cult” of Mother Nature—no longer feared, but now admired for her beauty.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Gandolphe saw in Zorn’s *Our Daily Bread* (fig. 15) “the first appearance of a primitive and popular philosophy.”<sup>11</sup> The artist became a kind of pictorial anthropologist, whose images fed a European imagination fascinated by all things exotic.

### Zorn in Germany

In a related vein, Otto Brandes, a correspondent for the journal *Die Kunst für Alle*, remarked on Zorn in an article covering foreign painters at the World’s Fair in 1889: “[The artist], who gave us repeated occasions to praise him in the Salon, loses his original flair by surrendering excessively to French artificiality.”<sup>12</sup> In the context of Wilhelminian Germany, Zorn’s reputation as a “Frenchman of the North” should by no means be interpreted as a compliment. His art was caught in the maelstrom of politically charged controversy about modern French art. Enlightened and francophile critics such as Julius Meier-Graefe, Richard Muther, and Cornelius Gurlitt strived for a conceptual incorporation of German art into the modern era of Europe. However, their arguments were opposed by an institutionally well-placed opposition of artists, cultural politicians, and critics, whose declared objective it was to defend the German national spirit in art against an allegedly standardizing, ‘gallicizing’ or cosmopolitan modern development.<sup>13</sup>

The Berlin painter Max Liebermann was among those artists who were champions of modern French art and especially of *plein-air* painting. It is likely that Zorn had known of him since 1889, when Liebermann participated in the Paris World’s Fair in spite of the Prussian boycott. The two artists met in 1891, the year in which Zorn executed a drypoint portrait of Liebermann entitled *Impressions of an Impressionist* (fig. 16).<sup>14</sup>

Liebermann’s role as a prime mover in the process of cultural renewal—as an artist as well as a collector and cultural politician—was controversial in Germany. This is revealed by the frosty reaction to Herman Helferich’s ‘Essay on Naturalism and Max Liebermann’ in *Die Kunst für Alle*: in a footnote by journal editor Friedrich Pecht, it was made clear that Helferich’s contribution as a guest author was “intelligent and stimulating” but by no means reflected the journal’s point of view. Pecht went so far as to question the innovative character of impressionist *plein-air* painting, claiming that “today’s” impressionism was no more than a mindless variant of sixteenth-century Venetian chiaroscuro. Talented artists such as Liebermann and Fritz von Uhde, he counseled, should emulate Paolo

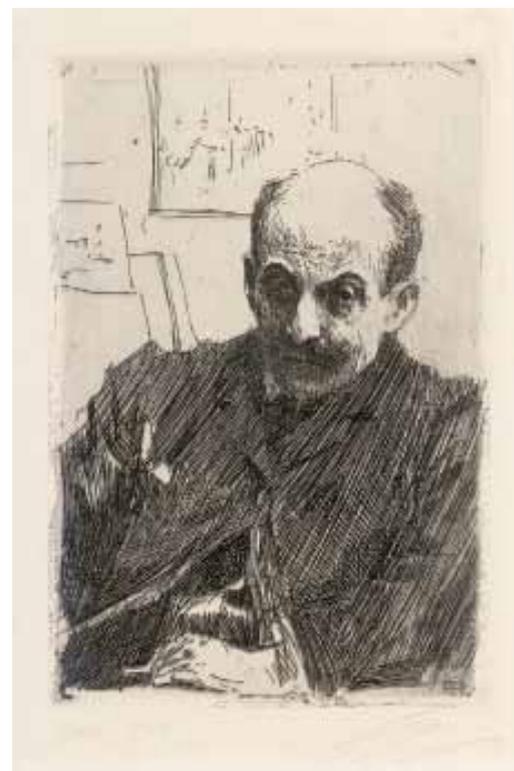


Fig. 16  
ANDERS ZORN  
*Impressions of an Impressionist*  
(Max Liebermann), 1891  
Etching, 238 × 159 mm, ZG 55  
Zorn Museum, Mora

10 Gandolphe 1897, p. 198.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

12 Brandes 1889, p. 43.

13 On the problematic relationship between German and French art in this period, see Belting 1992.

14 Lengefeld 2012, p. 133.

Fig. 17  
ANDERS ZORN  
*Summer Evening*, 1894  
Oil on canvas, 80 × 55 cm  
Zorn Museum, Mora

Veronese and Tintoretto rather than less gifted, modern descendants.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps with Liebermann's help, Zorn exhibited a selection of his works in Berlin's Salon Gurlitt as early as 1892. But, while liberal critics welcomed the Swedish artist's appearance as invigorating, overall Zorn's paintings received little notice in the Prussian capital city. The breakthrough followed four years later, in 1896, when Zorn exhibited four paintings (including *Night Effect*, cat. 6a, and *Summer Evening*, fig. 17) as well as a bronze statue at the Internationale Akademieausstellung (International Academy Exhibition) and was awarded a large gold medal by the jury. It is interesting to note that by this time even a conservative critic—Ludwig Pietsch—praised Zorn as knowing his craft well, despite all the gallicizing modernity: "Everything in these pictures is painted with ingenious skill and freedom, yet without any negligence and coarseness."<sup>16</sup>

This opinion caused Kaiser Wilhelm II, who valued Pietsch's judgment, also to see Zorn in a positive light. In the same year, when the Nationalgalerie in Berlin purchased Zorn's female nude *Summer Evening* on the initiative of Hugo von Tschudi, its new director, there were no overly polemic reactions. While Tschudi's acquisition of foreign painters, particularly French impressionists (such as Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Edgar Degas) for this temple of German art was decidedly unorthodox, the Kaiser had no complaints about Zorn during a two-hour tour with Tschudi. On the contrary, Zorn's representation of "a woman bathing" is said to have particularly appealed to the illustrious guest.<sup>17</sup>

Wilhelm II's interest in Zorn's oeuvre may well have something to do with the Kaiser's enthusiasm for Scandinavia. Since the summer of 1889, he had been sailing to Sweden and Norway regularly on his yacht *Hohenzollern*, and this had launched a Scandinavia-bound tourist mania in Germany. For the Kaiser, the North stood for a "cradle of Germanic identity," and it was his goal to have this joint "Germanic heritage" evolve into a political alliance with Oscar II of Sweden.<sup>18</sup>

With this pan-Germanic ideology as background, a palpable reinterpretation of Zorn's oeuvre was meanwhile taking place in Germany. He was now increasingly perceived as a Nordic "genre painter."<sup>19</sup> His decision to turn his back on modern urban life and live in his native Mora in harmony with tradition and nature impressed the German public, influenced as it was by a critical stance toward civilization and by the Romantic idealization of country life. For example, in the *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* (1903–04), fellow artist Walter Leistikow described a visit to Mora, where Zorn had furnished his home with costumes, old equipment, and memorabilia, turning it into a kind of local museum: "He is mindful of all the old traditions and customs, he protects the beautiful old native costumes; in any way and everywhere he tries to care for them and preserve them by making people see how precious they are."<sup>20</sup>

15 Pecht 1887, pp. 337–39.

16 Cited in Lengfeld 2004, pp. 138–39.

17 Lengfeld 2004, p. 146.

18 Marschall 1991; Büechten 1997.

19 Lengfeld 2004, pp. 293–318.

20 Leistikow 1903–04.



A fitting match for this description of Zorn as a genre painter was the cover of Franz Servaes's first monograph about the artist (1910), depicting a blonde woman from Zorn's home region in traditional dress. Entirely in the spirit of fashionable stereotypes critical of civilization, Servaes mentions "the naive joy of young people living in the woods" and "children of nature," rendering the rural population into an ideal "ethnic community" which "now only exists away from the great cultural centers with their race and class distinctions."<sup>21</sup> It is one of the tragic aspects of his artistic after-life that "media star" Zorn fueled the ideologies of Nazi Germany through such representations of unspoiled "Nordic" individuals living in communion with nature.<sup>22</sup>

### *Zorn in Austria*

An important, still unwritten chapter of Zorn's success story in German-speaking countries occurred in Vienna, for here—in the Sezession's brand-new building—the artist exhibited a selection of his works in 1898. Particularly impressive, according to critic Ludwig Hevesi, was the "ultramodern evening painting *The Iceskater* (cat. 8) with its incomparably felt and represented night air and the skating girl in the foreground so astonishingly captured in the moment."<sup>23</sup> The reaction by Hermann Bahr, who was probably the most supportive critic of the Sezession, exemplifies the perception of Zorn. He compared Zorn's aggressive painting technique with bullfighting:

He is like an *espada*; stabbing twice is shameful. Like such an *espada*, Zorn lies in wait for events, crouches, coaxes them, until the right moment comes. Then he lunges at them and slays them. He seems to feel that things will deny themselves to us unless we assault and catch them.<sup>24</sup>

Emulating life, "seizing" natural phenomena at precisely the right moment, and capturing them on canvas by means of an artistic sensibility—these are qualities that Bahr linked to the overall renewal of painting.<sup>25</sup>

Zorn's oeuvre, probably familiar to Bahr since his years in Paris (1888–89), provided the critic with an opportunity to characterize the Vienna Sezession, which aimed solely to be a renewal movement rather than a school or stylistic model. In contrast to its counterparts in Munich and Paris, which were characterized by aesthetic conflict between traditionalists and modernists, the Vienna secession was primarily concerned with "the right to be artistically creative," and with liberating art from any kind of mercantilist logic.<sup>26</sup> According to Bahr, there was no single Secessionist style.

<sup>21</sup> Servaes 1910.

<sup>22</sup> Rogers 1997–98, pp. 424–26.

<sup>23</sup> Hevesi 1898, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Bahr 1898a, pp. 66–67.

<sup>25</sup> Barker 1983. On Bahr's relationship to Gustav Klimt, see Daviau 1980.

<sup>26</sup> Bahr 1898b, pp. 8–13.

Fig. 18  
*III<sup>eme</sup> exposition internationale  
 des beaux-arts de la ville de Venise*  
 (Second Venice International  
 Fine Art Exhibition)  
 Poster, 1897

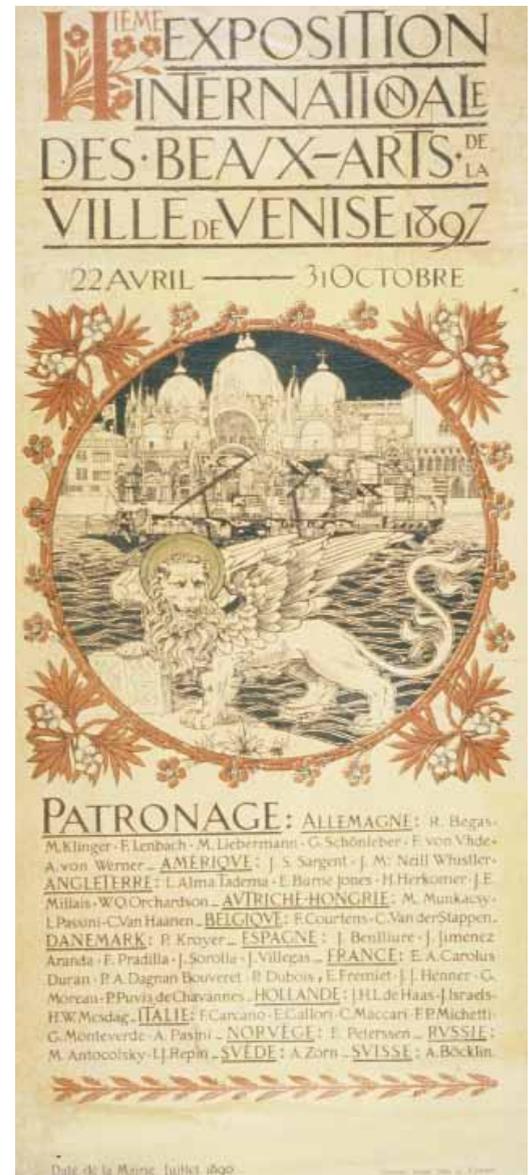
No, playing with a few new forms is not “Secession.” It is not “Secession” to be unconventional at any cost. This is not why these artists left the business building of the Genossenschaft [Cooperative Society]. Instead, they left because they felt that a person is only an artist if he can sense life in his own way and express this feeling in its own form. This is why they protest against the phrase “Secessionist style.” This is why they are now showing us Anders Zorn—an artist so unique as to be inimitable.<sup>27</sup>

### Zorn and the Biennale in Venice

In Italy—which had been a unified nation-state for no more than thirty years at this time—liberal elites sought to begin integration into the European modern style of art. In this context, the Biennale international art exhibition in Venice, established in 1895 and modeled after similar events in Paris, London, Brussels, and Munich, provided an important instrument for liberating the country from what was perceived as the stiflement of its centuries-old artistic tradition (fig. 18).<sup>28</sup> The Italian public had the opportunity all at once to become familiar with the whole range of modernist *fin-de-siècle* art. The example of the Scandinavians proved to be particularly compelling, because the painters on exhibit in Venice were seen as having assimilated the achievements of modern French style without abandoning their own national identity.<sup>29</sup>

From the first Biennale to a grandly staged retrospective in 1909, Zorn participated in the exhibition both as an artist and as a member of various artists’ committees. Immediately on his first appearance in Venice in 1895, he attracted attention with the paintings *Fair at Mora* and *A Toast*.<sup>30</sup> The widely distributed journal *L’Illustrazione Italiana* regarded him as a brush virtuoso, a kind of reincarnation of Baroque masters such as Luca ‘*fa presto*’ Giordano. According to art critic Eduardo Ximenes, the paintings, perfect and executed at rapid speed, resembled painterly shorthand.<sup>31</sup> Besides the general fascination with an exotic Norseman who could wield a brush with such incredible facility, the editors of the official catalog also celebrated Zorn as a modernist who pointed the direction for a renewal of Italian history painting:

As the saying goes, Zorn is a professing modernist. He is convinced that we should look for beauty in the customs and circumstances of our own era, not in the picturesque guises of the past. However, this beauty is more hidden and therefore harder to capture. With that extremely rare sobriety of means that also typifies his portraits of contemporaries, he has represented the interior of a bus, the markets and typical characters of urban



<sup>27</sup> Bahr 1898a, p. 70.

<sup>28</sup> On the history of the Venice Biennale see Venice 1995, Ceschin 2005, and Fleck 2009.

<sup>29</sup> On the critical reception of the Scandinavians, see d’Ayala Valva 2009 and Piantoni 2002.

<sup>30</sup> *Fair at Mora*, 1892, oil on canvas, 133 × 167 cm, Zorn Museum, Mora; *A Toast in the Idun Society*, 1892, oil on canvas, 89 × 81 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

<sup>31</sup> Ximenes 1895.





Fig. 19  
ANDERS ZORN  
*Midsummer Dance*, 1897  
Oil on canvas, 140 × 98 cm  
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Fig. 20  
ANDERS ZORN  
*Nude on the Embankment*, 1900  
Oil on canvas, 112 × 94 cm  
Galleria Moderna di Ca' Pesaro,  
Venice

life in Paris. Last year in Venice, he studied the factory in Baschiera and, I believe, that of Jesurum because—as he states—while your St. Mark's, your monuments, are divine, only close observation of all the human gatherings of our day, of all the conceivable crafts, will reveal a hitherto untouched supply of motifs and suggestions, approaches and contrasts.<sup>32</sup>

Such affirmation of modern themes is among the core topics of Vittorio Pica's critical writing on art. A native of Naples, Pica was a successor to the brothers Goncourt and to Joris-Karl Huysman; he was also a significant collector of art and prints throughout his life. In essay collections such as *Arte aristocratica* (1892) he championed a cosmopolitan reorientation of Italian art, arguing that it suffered from paralyzing academic traditions and regionalist tendencies.<sup>33</sup> His popularizing essays in the journal *Emporium*, but above all his richly illustrated handbooks, acquainted the Italian public with the newest trends in the art life of Paris. These included Japanese art, the impressionists, and the Scandinavians, whose freedom and apparent lack of tradition he envied.<sup>34</sup> Within Zorn's oeuvre, Pica esteemed the balanced combination of impressionist painting technique and realistic portrayal of everyday events. Zorn's masterwork in this regard was the *Midsummer Dance*, on exhibit at the 1897 Biennale (fig. 19). Pica mentions it again and again, especially in a long essay published in 1905.<sup>35</sup>

The unanimous praise for his technical skill notwithstanding, opinions about Zorn's portraits were less positive, chiefly because they were seen as lacking in psychological depth.<sup>36</sup> Reaction to his nudes was also mixed. Their disarming

<sup>32</sup> *Prima Esposizione 1895*, pp. 63–64.

<sup>33</sup> On Pica's aesthetics and his role as a popularizer of modern art in Italy, see Lamberti 1975.

<sup>34</sup> Pica 1915.

<sup>35</sup> Pica 1905.

<sup>36</sup> Severi 1909, p. 384.

Fig. 21  
ANDERS ZORN  
*Hilma Eriksson*, 1908  
Oil on canvas, 80.5 × 60.5 cm  
Civico Museo Revoltella, Trieste



honesty elicited piqued reactions from the public. In an essay dated 1912, art critic Carlo Waldemar Colucci emphasized that Zorn's women were much more chaste than the French painter Carolus-Duran's stylized representations, for "they elicit nothing but pure and honest feelings in the observer, no matter how veristic they may be."<sup>37</sup> Another critic, Romualdo Pantini, praised Zorn's "lightness of brush stroke," but ultimately found nothing in Zorn's paintings—such as the *Nude on the Embankment* (1900; fig. 20)—"that would stand up to [...] a second look."<sup>38</sup> In his article for the Florentine journal *Il Marzocco*, he lamented "the decadence of nudes."

Luciano von Ingenheim struck back with a critical retort. He described encountering a friend while visiting the 1909 Biennale. In a state of excitement, the friend drew his attention to one of Zorn's recent paintings, and offered to introduce him to "Miss Hilma Eriksson." The reference was to Zorn's painting of a seated nude Stockholm housemaid (fig. 21), whom the artist displayed like a modern Cleopatra in a regal chair. Ingenheim described the philistine outrage

<sup>37</sup> Colucci 1912, p. 207.

<sup>38</sup> Pantini 1905.

of his male companion, ending the essay with a few general remarks on the customs and mores of the Norse people:<sup>39</sup>

They [the Scandinavians] consider nudity as something entirely natural, noble, and pure. Therefore, they do not hesitate at all to state the name of a woman with such unrestrained habits [...] Here, we just barely make ourselves say a fully clothed woman's name; in Anders Zorn's country, where it is by no means warmer than in Italy, a nude woman's name is printed.<sup>40</sup>

In Italy, as in the rest of continental Europe, Zorn's paintings were perceived by the public as credible illustrations of Nordic mores. Yet, the debate on nude painting reveals that a need for moral renewal on the part of the secular elites in Catholic Italy hid an erotically motivated longing for freedom and naturalness.

### *Zorn is Shot Down by the Avant-Garde*

On the occasion of the 1901 Biennale, Pica spoke of the "Nordic obsession" of a few Italian artists, who, he said, had only recently criticized their colleagues from Scotland, Germany, and Scandinavia, then became their admirers, and were now imitating them. Pica's stance toward this process of cultural assimilation was by no means hostile. Instead, he viewed it as a symptom of the phase in which current Italian painting found itself. Pica believed that the modern style was inevitably cosmopolitan, and that the less prejudiced and more receptive Italian artists were to the work on exhibit at the Biennale, the more a rebirth of national art would result.<sup>41</sup> But acerbic attacks were launched against the Neapolitan critic and the artists whom he sponsored for two reasons: in Italy, the discourse on art was nationalistically charged and increasingly hostile towards foreign influence; and Pica, although interested in a representative show of all tendencies of modernism, showed absolutely no interest in the current avant-garde in Paris, nor in their post-impressionist 'ancestors' like Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin. In fact, at the end of his popular book *Gl'Impressionisti Francesi* (The French Impressionists; 1908), Pica indicates his shock at the Fauves exhibiting at the Salon d'Automne in 1905. He could not accept these recent "aberrations."<sup>42</sup>

This generational contrast became particularly obvious in 1909, when the directors of the Biennale intended to honor Zorn, the recently deceased Peder Severin Krøyer, Franz von Stuck, Albert Besnard, and Zorn's Venetian friend Ettore Tito in dedicated separate galleries. In a letter to the writer Giovanni Papini, Tuscan painter and critic Ardengo Soffici expressed his outrage at the Biennale, the "graveyard of art and of the Italian spirit," which not only continued to bar his friend Pablo Picasso from exhibiting there (as had occurred

39 Mazzanti 1995, pp. 228–29.

40 von Ingenheim 1909.

41 Pica 1901.

42 Pica 1908, p. 208.



Fig. 22  
 ANDERS ZORN  
*At the Barn Door*, 1910  
 Oil on canvas, 91 × 61.7 cm  
 Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Rome

in 1905), but also the post-impressionists Paul Signac and Édouard Vuillard, and even such artists as Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Cézanne.<sup>43</sup>

In the context of these failures of Pica's *fin-de-siècle* cosmopolitanism, Soffici's rejection of Zorn's painting style, which he saw as soulless machination, becomes comprehensible. Soffici saw nothing but arrogant virtuosity in the Swedish painter, who he claimed could not draw, had no feeling for shades of color or for planned structures, and who was, moreover, unjustly celebrated by critics:

With a broad and liquid brushstroke, half a face is blobbed down. With another blob, it is completed. He dresses a man or woman with a few pressed brushstrokes [...] He does not care one bit. It brings him fame anyway. Indeed, fame (that fame!) comes even when it seems impossible—but come it does. Just ask Vittorio Pica and the rest.<sup>44</sup>

Even more radical statements are found in Umberto Boccioni's *Pittura scultura futurista [sic]* (Futurist Painting and Sculpture) of 1914. Boccioni called the Biennale of Venice a “sewer,” from which the Italians—following Pica's instructions—piously fished accumulated “aesthetic garbage.” The Scandinavians' fresh and natural approach so often praised by the Neapolitan—their view of people and nature free from artistic conventions—was now labeled “shallow modernity” and a folkloric spectacle (fig. 22). According to Boccioni, the “young nations” (Scandinavians, Serbs, and Americans) strove to “undo their centuries-old anonymity” and therefore tended toward “grotesque verism” or else “rummage in the folklore closet, brushing in the crude and sentimental babble of their historic childhood on the model of what they have learned in Munich or Paris.”<sup>45</sup> Such reactions reveal that the European avant-garde was verbally arming itself to wage war against the non-ideological eclecticism of the *fin-de-siècle*. As favorite artist of a generation which had declared internationalism to be its aesthetic program, Zorn thus became *persona non grata*.

43 Rodríguez 1994, p. 8.

44 Soffici 1909, p. 199.

45 Boccioni 1914, p. 6.