

An Important Auction in Stockholm

The big news at this moment, is a large auction of Gunnar's paintings taking place in Stockholm at Stockholm Auktionsverket. The auction features thirtyone of his paintings, primarily from early in his career. The paintings come from one of his family members and a descendant of Gunnar's close friend Carl Häggart. Carl was a pharmacist and an amateur painter and he would often join Gunnar on his travels and paint with him. Carl went on to become the director of pharmaceutical giant Astra.

If you have always wanted one of Gunnar's paintings, now is a great time to find one. There are some really excellent works including this fabulous one of the archipelago.



Coast Scene with Tree, 1913, Watercolor on paper, 30 x 46 cm.
GWCR 393.

Here is a link to the auction web site

<https://auctionet.com/sv/events/996-the-signature-sale?is=&q=gunnar+widforss>

A week before the live auction, Fredrik Sjöberg will be doing a presentation in the auction gallery with the curator Cecilia Berggren. Here is what Cecilia wrote about the event –

*In conjunction with the screening of *The Signature Sale*, we invite you to an in-depth conversation about Gunnar Widforss, an artist whose work was long in the shadows but who is today considered one of the most significant landscape painters in Swedish art history. The starting point for the conversation is “*Flyktkonsten*” by Fredrik Sjöberg, the book that already in 2006 predicted the Widforss renaissance we are now clearly witnessing*

*Together with Cecilia Berggren, Widforss's life, artistry and his unique position between the Nordic tradition and the monumentality of the American West will be discussed. The conversation is linked to two significant collections of Widforss's work that are now presented at *The Signature Sale* – both with an unusual cultural-historical value. One comes directly from the artist's family, the other from a close friend of Widforss. Together, they provide an intimate and multifaceted picture of an artistry that spans different periods, techniques and motifs.*

Welcome to a conversation about light, atmosphere and landscape – and about an artist whose time is now.

Of course, I have to agree with Cecilia's assessment of Gunnar's career and importance and especially how Gunnar's time is now!

Dynamite

In September, I spent two weeks in Stockholm visiting Gunnar's family and doing research in the National Library and the Stockholm City Archives. I also gave a talk on Gunnar and the influence of Swedish National Romanticism on his work at the Ljungbergmuseet in Ljunby where I assisted with an exhibition of his work in 2018.

The focus of my research at the library and archives wasn't Gunnar, but rather his father Mauritz. I really wanted to learn more about Mauritz and his role as a businessman in Stockholm. I had known that he owned at least a couple of shops that sold hunting and outdoor supplies. I also knew that he sold gunpowder that was used for excavations for construction projects in Stockholm. There was a lot of construction going on in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the city modernized. I also learned from one of my friends that Mauritz sold dynamite! What I found was remarkable.



In addition to his hunting shops and the gunpowder magazine at the base of the hill that the old observatory sits on, Mauritz ran a housewares shop, a grocery, and a pharmacy, all located on the fashionable shopping street Drottninggatan, a few blocks from the Widforss home on Nortullsgatan.

He advertised in the Stockholm newspapers regularly, sometimes several times a week. So Mauritz was really an entrepreneurial businessman! And, with all of the building activity, the sale of dynamite would have been lucrative.



Summer Houses and Boathouses

As I've shared in the past, one of my absolute favorite things to do is to find the locations where Gunnar painted. Like many Stockholmers, the Widforss family had a summer home in Grisslehamn about one-and-a-half hours north of the city. Gunnar did a number of beautiful paintings there and I've always wanted to visit, and this was the trip to do it. Joining me was my dear friend Anders, who, like me, loves to find Gunnar's painting locations and he is very good at it! Anders has helped me by finding a number of Gunnar's painting locations in Norway and Italy. If you look at some of Gunnar's paintings of Venice and the map that identifies their locations, it was Anders who found them all.

<https://www.gunnarwidforss.org/archives/entry.php?id=10271>

Anders and I set out from Stockholm in his Audi for Grisslehamn on a blustery fall day. After we arrived and enjoyed a bit of lunch, we set out to see what we might find. And it didn't take long.

We walked around the small harbor looking for an old boat shed featured in some of Gunnar's paintings and, based on Ander's hunch, we walked right to it! It doesn't look quite so good anymore as it did in Gunnar's paintings. But, there it stood. Notice that the white bathing house is now gone.

After we walked around the harbor a little more, we went to the coast to look at the sea. We found a beautiful view that also could have been the subject for some of Gunnar's paintings from that area.



The scene in September.



The scene in 1913.
Coast Scene, Grisslehamn, 1913, Watercolor on paper, 10 1/4 x 18 1/2 in. (26 x 47 cm). GWCR 875.



The boat shed can also be seen in this painting from the same year and a nearby location. *Coast Scene, Grisslehamn, 1913, Watercolor on paper, 12 x 18 in. (30.5 x 45.7 cm). GWCR 950.*





A Newly Revealed Grand Canyon Painting

This year I added an outstanding painting of Shiva Temple (in the Grand Canyon) to the catalogue raisonné after the present owner contacted me. Their grandparents purchased the painting at the South Rim around 1930. It's among Gunnar's finest Grand Canyon works and only one of a few that really focuses on Shiva Temple, the large flat-topped butte framed between the tree on the left and the cliff edge on the right.

It was painted from near Hopi Point in the late afternoon, as indicated by the shadows. Gunnar's composition is masterful. The tree and the edge of the cliff frame his primary subject and their vertical shapes help to emphasize the great depth of the canyon.



Shiva Temple, c.1930, Watercolor on paper, 24 x 29 in. (61 x 73.7 cm). GWCR 997.

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Alan (and Gunnar)

