

Miljoonatohtori Miljonsotkor

H.F. Antellin taidekokoelma - H.F. Antells konstsamling
Art Collection of Doctor "Million" H.F. Antell

23.5.-30.8.2015

PRESS INVITATION

Press conference on Friday 22.5.2015 at 11–11.40 pm. Exhibition opening is on Friday 22.5. at 6–8 pm. Docent **Tuukka Talvio** from the National Museum of Finland will be present at both events.

Welcome!

Art collection of Doctor "Million" H.F. Antell

From 23 May to 30 August 2015 at Tikanoja Art Museum

The main exhibition of the year at Tikanoja Art Museum is the *Art collection of Doctor "million" H.F. Antell*. **Herman Frithiof Antell**, Lic. Med., who was born in 1847 in Vaasa and died in 1893 in Paris, France, is known for his major donation to the Finnish National Gallery. The summer exhibition at Tikanoja Art Museum will offer a unique opportunity for the art public in this part of the country to become acquainted with Antell's classical art collection in the Ateneum Art Museum as well as with the collector's colourful life story. Thanks to the research by Docent **Tuukka Talvio**, we have been provided with new information on the subject. This is the first exhibition to shed more light on the years the collector spent in Vaasa.

The exhibition produced by Tikanoja Art Museum will include both art acquired by Antell himself and notable works of Finnish art history purchased after his death. The Ateneum Art Museum has loaned for the exhibition a number of pearls of the Antell collection, such as *The Luxembourg Gardens, Paris* (1887) and *In the Outer Archipelago* (1898) by **Albert Edelfelt**, *Boy with a Crow* (1884) and *Démasquée* (1888) by **Akseli Gallén-Kallela**, as well as sculptures by **Auguste Rodin** acquired by Antell from the artist. Other artists on display in the exhibition are **Gunnar Berndtson**, **Eero Järnefelt**, **Hugo Simberg**, **Werner Holmberg**, **Victor Westerholm**, **Maria Wiik** and **Alexander Lauréus**.

"They say that the rich Antell is in Paris again." Albert Edelfelt, 13 October 1878

Herman Frithiof Antell was born in 1847 in the village of Hstvesi, Vaasa, as an illegitimate child of bailiff **P.H.Rosenberg** and a maid, **Brita Catharina Antell**. Antell spent his childhood in rather modest conditions. After his mother had died at an early age in 1854, he moved to the family of **Jonas Wiklund**, who transported prisoners for a living, on Kauppiaankatu Street. Father Rosenberg took the 13-year-old Antell as his foster child, after being widowed without any legitimate children. They moved to the new Vaasa in 1862, where "the old man" Rosenberg had a house built soon after town privileges had been conferred following the fire. The impressive wooden house in Swiss style was designed by architect **C.A.Setterberg** and was located on 1, Koulukatu Street. The bailiff himself, known as a colourful person, was left without an education, so he wanted his son to receive a proper one. Antell turned out to be a clever pupil and enrolled in 1865 in the Medical School of the University of Helsinki.

The death of his father in January 1874 became a turning point in the life of the student H.F. Antell. It turned out that Rosenberg had willed Antell a fortune of 1.2 million marks he had made through trading of currencies. "Look, there goes Doctor "million" Antell", was soon whispered in the streets of Helsinki. Antell entrusted the management of his fortune to **Joachim Kurtén**, a local banker, and completed his university studies at the end of the same year, after which he went abroad and spent the following year in London and Paris. During 1876–77 he went on a world tour via New York and San Francisco to Japan, China, Java and India, and through the Suez Canal back to Europe.

"He was an interesting mix of an old-school aristocrat: extremely polite to women especially, always dressed in a long, black, buttoned redingote, an immaculately starched upright collar, a black tie and gloves. But at times coarseness emerged." Ville Vallgren

In 1877, after having returned from his world tour, the 30-year-old millionaire settled in Paris. Collecting art became, little by little, his full-time occupation and life focus. Antell commissioned and bought works to his art collection from artists who had worked in Paris, such as Albert Edelfelt, Akseli Gallén-Kallela (at that time still Axel Gallén) and **Ville Vallgren**. In the portrait commissioned from Gallén, Antell is surrounded by objects dear to him, which provides clues about his various collections. Antell's most important objects of collection were old Swedish coins. A collection of Swedish coins purchased from **A. Stjernstedt** formed the basis of his remarkable numismatic collection, which Antell supplemented with determination. His scientific collections included various cultural-historical artefacts, seals, manuscripts, ceramics as well as Oriental and Egyptian material. Antell had a dual lifestyle: it consisted of disciplined study and cataloguing work on the numismatic collection but also of a bohemian life in artists' studios and in the nightlife of Paris.

"Oh, Antell, how extraordinary a figure he is! I just cannot understand, how he doesn't get tired of this solitude, this constant working with the coin collection and cataloguing." Albert Edelfelt

During the summer, Antell lived in Vaasa, in the house he had inherited from his father on 1, Koulukatu Street. In the late 1870s, Antell also worked there as an ophthalmologist, and he is said to have treated poor patients free of charge. He stored the collected artworks and artefacts at the house, until he transferred them to his new, prestigious residence on Avenue d'Antin at the end of the 1880s. During his visits to Vaasa Antell used to enjoy long walks, often around Onkilahti Bay to Sepnkyl and Old Vaasa. He frequently spent the whole night celebrating with his friends in the Pavilion (today Restaurant Strampen).

“Can you believe that Antell is dead? Please come to Avenue d’Antin at once.” Edelfelt’s telegram to Ville Vallgren on 6 April 1893

Antell died in Paris in 1893 at the age of 45, having never married. According to his own wish, he was buried next to his father in the Kappelinmäki cemetery in Vaasa. The administrator of Antell’s affairs in Vaasa, Joachim Kurtén, commissioned a memorial stone commemorating Antell, ornamented with reliefs sculpted by Ville Vallgren. In his last will and testament he donated all his collections and a million Finnish marks in gold to the people of Finland, as well as 800,000 marks to the University of Helsinki and 100,000 marks to the Swedish secondary school in Vaasa. According to the will, the foundations were to be named “The Foundations of Herman Rosenberg”, and they were not to be connected with the name Antell. The art collection was placed in the Ateneum Art Museum, and the Antell commission was established to administer the collection.

H.F. Antell’s bequest is probably the most substantial single private donation for the benefit of Finnish cultural institutions, and it had a significant influence on the development of the cultural life of Finland. The donation provided the final impulse to the establishment of the Finnish National Gallery. Of the greatest significance to art history were, however, the donation funds, which have made notable art purchases possible. With these funds, the Antell commission acquired, besides output by Finnish artists, works by **Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh and Munch**. At the time of Antell’s death, his art collection consisted of 44 paintings ja 28 sculptures; now the items are calculated in thousands. The Antell commission was disbanded in 1977, when the administration of both the collections and the funds was assigned to the National Board of Antiquities of Finland. The art collection is administered by the Finnish National Gallery.

An art event related to the exhibition will be arranged on Saturday 23 May at 2 pm. Docent Tuukka Talvio will give a lecture on the subject *Life in Vaasa and Paris – H.F. Antell and his art collection*. In connection with the exhibition, there will be guided tours and workshops for children between the ages 4 to 10 where they will be able to get to know Tikanoja Art Museum by pretending to be assistants to Frithjof Tikanoja and see the exhibition *Art collection of Doctor “million” H.F. Antell*.

On Thursdays and Sundays at 2 pm there will be guided tours in Finnish, and on Sundays on every even-numbered week at 1 pm in Swedish. On Herman Frithjof Antell’s name day, 12 July, and on the Night of the Arts, 6 August, admission to Tikanoja Art Museum will be free. In July (8 to 9 July and 15 to 16 July), visitors will be able to become acquainted with the local art collectors in Vaasa as well as with the exhibition *Art collection of Doctor “million” H.F. Antell* in a walking tour Taiteenkeräilijöiden korttelit round the living quarters of the collectors.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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