

EARLY ARTISTS IN THE EURO- ARCTIC REGION:

Arctic Culture and Nature as
a Motif in Art from the 1870s to 1930s

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This article deals with the artistic portrayal of the Arctic and Northern areas and how artists depicted the way of life and nature in the Euro-Arctic region from the 1870s to 1930s. The focus will be on paintings by four pioneer fine artists who were born and lived in the Euro-Arctic region. The artists are Anna Nordlander (1843–1879) from Sweden, Juho Kustaa Kyyhkynen (1875–1909) from Grand Duchy of Finland, Aleksandr Borisov (1866–1934) from Russia and Sámi John Savio (1902–1938) from Norway. They had a close relationship with nature, and they were the first artists who depicted the life and cultures of indigenous peoples using the Arctic scenery, weather and climate.

This research is based partly on traditional art history, especially E. H. Gombrich's ideas and Erwin Panofsky's methodology. According to Gombrich (1991), the way people and landscapes are depicted is related to how artists of the time see their world. He also claimed that artists can learn to present the external world by learning from previous artists and adopting their methods (Gombrich, 1991). Although artists are influenced by their past and contemporary counterparts, the expressions and perspectives they choose are varied and creative. Panofsky (1972) noted that pictures are a part of the current ideological and social history; hence, a picture is always a subjective creation: the artist's individual life history is included in it; his/her memories, emotions and experiences form a subjective relation to the subject to be pictured (Panofsky, 1972). Perhaps, the idea of social constructivism offers opportunities to understand how previous art, illustrations, photos and science influence artists' way to select topics

and interpret Arctic nature and indigenous people in their artworks. In Vivien Burr's (2015) words, knowledge is constructed through interaction, so art and literature can be interpreted in a context-specific manner concerning their time of creation and knowledge of that time.

Anna Nordlander: A Pioneer in Illustrating the Life of the Sámi in Sweden

Swedish artist Anna Nordlander (1843–1879) is known for her portraits and is considered a pioneer in the illustration of the Sámi culture, especially the life of the Forest Sámi.¹ Swedish painter Johan Fredrik Höckert, who was interested in Arjeplog-Piteå's Sámi region, visited Nordlander's home in 1850 (Tham, 1989). Höckert sketched and later, between 1853 and 1858 in Paris and Stockholm, painted five oil canvases. He did not depict the Sámi as 'noble savages' or reindeer herders but as human beings with Christian beliefs (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2011a). Anna was the daughter of Nils Norlander, a vicar, in the Skellefteå and died of tuberculosis at the age of 35 (Andersson, 2009). She grew up in the vicarage, which had a connection with the intellectuals in Stockholm and was influenced by the capital's pattern of lifestyle and cultural norms. (Werkmäster, 1993). At that time, Skellefteå was a small city village of about 500–600 inhabitants and one of the youngest cities of Norrland, founded in 1845 by Nordlander's father (Jonsson, 1993).

After moving to Stockholm in 1863, Nordlander was Höckert's private student before her studies at the Royal Swedish Academy of Arts from 1866–1871. She was considered a gifted female art student (Andersson, 2009). In 1873, she studied in Brussels where her teacher was a Belgian painter known as Jean-François Portaels. Orientalism was very popular among the Parisian painters, and after obtaining the Prix de Rome in 1842, Portaels made his Grand Tour and visited Jerusalem. He continued visiting many countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Spain and Hungary from 1844 to 1847 (Portaels, 2019). Nordlander became acquainted with exotic gender scenes from Romani and Arabic life; however, she appreciated a representative of Belgian historical painter Henrik Lyes and older Flemish art made by Peter Paul Rubens and Anton van Dyck (Möller, 1993).

A PLEIN AIR PAINTING: AN INSPIRATION

In her early career, Anna Nordlander's painting style was quite idealised and romantic. Even though the teaching was academic in Paris, she was inspired by plein air painting and Impressionism (Möller, 1993). In autumn 1877, Nordlander studied at the Académie Julian for one year and became acquainted with Finnish artists Amelie Lundahl and Maria Wiik (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1999). The most important and highly admired teacher was Tony Robert-Fleury (Andersson, 2009). He was known as Salon

¹ The Sámi are an indigenous Finno-Ugric people living in Norway, Sweden and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. The population of the Sámi is between 76,000 and 100,000; they are considered a minority whose languages and dialects are in danger of dying out (Lehtola, 2015).

des Artistes Français and influenced by the standards of the French Académie des Beaux-Arts; nonetheless, he was a good teacher who corrected, advised and encouraged his female students (Möller, 1993). Academic artists were mainly interested in historical and mythological topics, gender and landscape painting; their favourite movements were Neoclassicism and Romanticism or a synthesis of both styles (Kontinen & Laajoki, 2005). According to Möller (1993), Nordlander spent all summer and Christmas at home in Skellefteå until her father's death in 1874. After Paris and during her last years, she opened her studio in Stockholm (Andersson, 2009). Today, there are about 90 works of art by Anna Nordlander, 12 of which concern the Sámi people or Northern landscapes (Möller, 1993).



Illustration 1. Anna Nordlander: *Landscape with House and Moon* (1875), oil on canvas, 17,5 x 31 cm, Skellefteå Municipality, Sweden.

In three oil paintings, *Winter Landscape from Norrland* (the 1870s), *Winter Landscape with Houses* (n.d.) and *Landscape with House and Moon* (1875, Illustration 1), there are mystical and poetic atmospheres. The first painting illustrates the upstream of the Skellefteå River. Nordlander used shades of dark and light bluish grey and relied on the intensity of white and dark grey in her composition. It seems to be an afternoon and the sun is behind the clouds; the light is neutral without shadows. This atmosphere and weather are quite common in northern Sweden. A similar expression is noticeable in *Winter Landscape with Houses*; however, the colours are more greyish. The windows of the houses have a bright yellow light for the variation of the colour composition.

Nordlander used a bright, pale colour scheme, which is dominated by light in *Landscape with House and Moon*. The night's obscurity and whirling and frosty air blot

out the details and soften the contours. She painted both landscapes (i.e. *Landscape with House and Moon* and *Winter Landscape with Houses*) sketchily and in the style of open-air artists while also adopting her own style. In Stockholm, she probably saw the impressionist landscape paintings made by one of the most significant Swedish artists of that time, Carl Fredrik Hill (Andersson, 2009). At least, during her study period in Paris, Nordlander acquainted herself with open-air realism and Impressionism. Her most spontaneous painting is *Two Skiing Sámi* (c. 1875). The landscape plays the central role in this artwork, and the two Sámi skiers create the impression of quick momentum and movement. They seem to merge into their snowy environment and its misty whiteness. No one had previously depicted a subject similar to Nordlander; hers was a new and personal way of representing the Sámi folk life (Möller, 1993). Her paintings were based on her own experiences.

INTIMATE SÁMI MOTIVES

There is a sense of intimacy, proximity and domesticity in some of Nordlander's paintings, such as *Sámi Boy Feeding Dogs* (1877), *Near the Cradle I* (c. 1875), *Near the Cradle II* (1878–1879) and *Sick Sámi* (n.d.). *Sámi Boy Feeding Dogs* is full of ethnographical details. The young Sámi is on his knees in a hut, and six dogs surround him, waiting for food. Contrasts of light are visible in the painting. The forms have been painted firmly, and the colour composition is based on harmonious, brownish grey tones. Sámi people lived in Skellefteå; however, they no longer lived in huts and wore their traditional clothes for everyday life. The sketch *Sámi Boy with Dogs* (c. 1876–1877, Illustration 2), made for the oil painting *Sámi Boy Feeding Dogs*, shows that she had met the Forest Sámi.



Illustration 2. Anna Nordlander: *Sámi Boy with Dogs* (c. 1876–1877), graphite on paper, 20 x 16 cm, Skellefteå Municipality, Sweden.



Illustration 3. Anna Nordlander: *Sámi Cot*, oil on wood panel (n.d.), 30 x 22 cm, Skellefteå Municipality, Sweden.

Nordlander visited Advidsjaur, where the Forest Sámi lived and followed their traditional way of life. She painted *Sámi Cot* (n.d., Illustration 3) sketchily and based on her observations. The Forest Sámi worked in the woods hunting and fishing and, unlike the reindeer-herding Sámi, did not migrate to the fells during summer (Lehtola, 2015). The Forest Sámi used to move to the seaside and visit Skellefteå to attend the important biannual religious festivals and buy different supplies, such as salt, sugar and coffee from the markets (Lundström, 1993).

In *Near the Cradle I* and *II*, a young Sámi mother can be seen sitting, rocking and swinging a cradle hanging from the roof of a cottage or hut. J. F. Höckert's influence on Nordlander's art is evident in *Near the Cradle I*. Her painting seems to resemble Holy Mary of the Sámi with the religious aspects in the colour composition (Andersson, 2009). *Near the Cradle I* is based on Christian iconography and symbolism, which is reflected in the colour composition. The dress, which is normally in the colours of red, green or blue, is white, implying innocence and integrity. The Sámi women's hat is normally red while men's is made of blue fabric. Nordlander chose blue to emphasise a mother's love and loyalty. Some years later, she painted the same theme using brownish and darker colours (i.e. *Near the Cradle II*), which is more realistic than her earlier painting (Möller, 1993).

The theme of a mother and a child concerns birth and the beginning of life. *Sick Sámi* refers to the

fragility of life and its end. Five people in a hut who seem to be members of a family symbolise different attitudes towards illness and death. The sick person under a reindeer hide, along with the mother, is at the centre of the composition. The mother appears to take care of the sick person. The father looks sorrowful and worried; while the son seems curious, the sister looks hopeful. One person seems unable to cope with the situation and is thus going out with the family dog. In the late 19th century, the theme of having relations around a deathbed was common (Möller, 1993). Also, this theme emphasises the role of the mother and other relations during illness and death. Family signifies stability and togetherness, especially in crises (Andersson, 2009). *Near the Cradle I* and *II* and *Sick Sámi* also reflect the artist's Christian worldview and the values placed on family.

During the 19th century, Swedish art had a national focus, and artists were interested in Swedish folk culture, especially the rural lifestyle. Nordlander discovered the previously unknown culture of the Forest Sámi. Trusting her experience, she painted spontaneously and tried to depict Sámi authentically (Andersson, 2009). It is worth recalling that pan-European interest in exotic topics and distant regions was prevalent, which was illustrated in Höckert's example and Gustaf von Dübe's (1873) illustrated book about the Sámi; however, Nordlander liberated herself from the bonds of Romanticism and ethologic illustrations. She lived in the region and understood Arctic weather and Northern landscapes (Werkmäster, 1993). Because she knew the life and culture of the Sámi, she appreciated them (Möller, 1993). An excellent example of her thinking is the realistic and nuanced portrait *Sámi Girl* (the 1870s, Illustration 4).



Illustration 4. Anna Nordlander: *Sámi Girl* (the 1870s), oil on canvas, 60 x 47, 5 cm, Skellefteå Municipality, Sweden.

Russian Aleksandr Borisov and Finnish Juho Kyyhkynen: The Painters from the Russian Empire

The first Russian expeditions with artists were made to the far north: Novaya Zemlya, and Russians Lapland and Varanger Fjord in 1837 and in 1840 (Rjabkov, 2008); at the same time, two other artists made the La Recherche Expedition of 1838–1840; it was a French expedition to the North Atlantic and Scandinavian islands (Borm, 2014). The artists who participated in the expeditions portrayed romantic ideas in their paintings, including dramatic landscapes and tiny people travelling in vast natural landscapes or the sea. Often they represented the North as a human struggle against the Arctic nature, and artists and explorers seemed to be heroes. Lack of roads made traveling difficult, and mainly artists in the 19th century relied on literal documents and their imagination and fantasy. A Swedish-Finnish artist Alexander Lauréus created one of the earliest art depictions *Sámi by Fire* (1814 or 1818). He never visited Lapland, and he seemed to seek a romantic atmosphere based on the idea of ‘noble savages’, who lived in harmony with nature (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2013).

Aleksandr Borisov and Juho Kyyhkynen were the first artists who tried to represent Arctic landscapes and indigenous people more realistically by way of open-air painting. Both artists were born in the peripheral northern villages of the Russian Empire. Until 1917, Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire.² Borisov was born in 1866 in the small village of Gluboky Ruchey on the Northern Dvina River in the northern part of the Russian Empire (now located in the Arkhangelsk Oblast). He was one of four children in a peasant family (Ruznikova, 2006). Kyyhkynen was born in 1875 in the small village Leväranta of Kemijärvi Municipality, which is about 30 kilometres away from the Arctic Circle in Finnish Lapland and about 90 kilometres south from the Sámi region. He was one of the five children in a rural family (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993).

At the age of ten, Borisov had an accident and lost his ability to walk. His parents promised to God that if their son’s conditions improved, they would send him to serve in a church for a year. Borisov recovered, and he travelled to the Solovetsky Monastery in 1881. He fell in love with the Arctic scenery: ‘The landscape that produced the greatest impression on me ... was the ice and white nights of the Solovetsky, and perhaps that was the reason why I’ve always felt the attraction of the North’ (Matsegora, 2018). To Kyyhkynen, the Arctic and Northern lakes, rivers, forests and fells were his native regions. He liked to fish and hunt and was not interested in agriculture, and when other sons were working on the field, he was drawing (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993). His parents realised that he could not become a farmer, so they decided to send him to

² The concept of Finnish Lapland dates back to 1809. In the peace treaty of Hamina in 1809, Finland was detached from Sweden. The old Swedish province of Lapland was split into two, and Finland became an autonomous part of the Russian Empire until 1917 when Finland became an independent country (Lähteenmäki, 2006).

school. Kyyhkynen had to live in Rovaniemi about 100 kilometres to the south from his home village where the nearest primary school was located (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2009).

BACK TO THE NORTH AFTER ART STUDIES

At the age of 18, Borisov went back to Solovetsky and became a student in the monastery's icon painting studio (Matsegora, 2018). In 1885, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich visited the monastery and saw Borisov's paintings and decided to help the young artist (Borisov Aleksandr Aleksejevits, 2018). The following year, Borisov obtained a fellowship to continue his studies at an art school in Saint Petersburg. In 1888, he enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts and graduated in 1892 (Ruznikova, 2006). His achievements were honoured with two small medals and one encouraging large silver medal (Aleksandr Borisov, 2018). He wished to continue his art education, and in 1893 he became a student at Ivan Shishkin's workshop. The master insisted that Borisov should study drawing with concentration. His second private teacher was Arkhip Kuindzhi who introduced Borisov to world of colours (Matsegora, 2018). Borisov's art teachers had studied in Düsseldorf, and they were predecessors of the Russian national Romanticism and open-air realism. Although the Düsseldorf art school emphasised the realistic sketching of nature and sophisticated landscape painting, Shishkin depicted nature in all its pure, unadorned beauty, and his late landscapes were painted with exceptional realism (Mejias-Ojajärvi, 2006). Kuindzhi was more interested in lighting conditions and, in his mature period, he depicted the illusion of illumination and used dramatic light effects and intense colours (Mejias-Ojajärvi, 2006). Borisov used the doctrines that he received to describe the Arctic and Northern nature.

In Rovaniemi, the school teacher noticed Kyyhkynen's drawing skills and his ability to portray people the way they look. At the age of 18, he began art studies at the Central School for Applied Arts in Helsinki. He was then accepted at the School of the Finnish Art Society in Helsinki, where he studied for three years beginning in 1894 (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993). Similar to Borisov's teachers, his art teacher Thorsten Waenerberg had studied in Düsseldorf (Willner-Rönholm, 1996), but Waenerberg's style was old-fashioned and Romantic with many details. Mainly, Finnish artists of the late 19th century trusted open-air painting and created the so-called Golden Age of the Finnish Art, which was characterised by pro-Finnish attitudes and patriotism. (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2009). In 1896, Kyyhkynen received the third prize in the Ducat Competition for young and talented artists and the second prize in the following year. Besides, he obtained a grant from Hoving's Foundation and a state travel fellowship to study at the Académie Colarossi in Paris from 1899 to 1900. Kyyhkynen saw exhibitions with new styles, such as Impressionism, Symbolism and Synthetism. Later in 1902, he completed his art studies (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993). One of his teachers was young Finnish painter Väinö Blomstedt, who had been Paul Gauguin's pupil in Paris and knew Symbolism and Synthetism (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2009).

Borisov and Kyyhkynen decided to live outside of art centres and build their studios far away from cities. In 1905, Kyyhkynen built his studio in Kemijärvi, 85 kilometres from Rovaniemi and about 900 kilometres from Helsinki (Hautala-Hirvioja,

2009). Despite the long distance, he actively participated in exhibitions and the art world of the early 20th century in Helsinki and other cities in South Finland. In 1908, he organised a successful solo exhibition in Helsinki while also contemplating more solo exhibitions in other big southern cities of Finland. However, Kyyhkynen was wounded in the shoulder in a hunting trip in Kemijärvi and died in 1909 in a Rovaniemi hospital at the age of 34 (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993).

After his exhibitions (1900–1905) in Saint-Petersburg, Borisov took his artworks to Europe (Austria, Germany, France and Great Britain) and the United States in 1908 (Jubileju Aleksandra Borisova Pocvjashaetsja, 2018). His Arctic art was highly appreciated; the French government awarded him the Order of the Legion of Honour, and the governments of Sweden and Norway declared him a knight and conferred on him the Order of Saint Olaf (Aleksandr Borisov, 2018). In 1909, his wooden studio was built resembling his Art Nouveau design in the village, close to Krasnoborsk. The village is located on the banks of the Dvina River, about 530 kilometres from Arkhangel. At home in Krasnoborsk, he worked on a railway construction project, linking the Russian North with Siberia and Central Russia (Matsegora, 2018). In 1922, the sanatorium Solonikha based on Borisov's idea was built. The resort is located on lands with mineral waters not far from the artist's home, near the village of Krasnoborsk. He was the first director of the sanatorium, which he patronised until his death in 1934, aged 67 (Ruznikova, 2006).

ARCTIC LANDSCAPE AND NATURE AS THE PRIMARY MOTIVES

Aleksandr Borisov and Juho Kyyhkynen studied art in the 1890s when realism, open-air painting, Impressionism and picturing landscapes of the Russian and Finnish agrarian culture and folk were prevalent as part of nationalism from the mid-1800s. In Finnish and Russian art, the choice of subject was similar, and national, Romantic features emerged at the same time (Mejias-Ojajärvi, 2006). They chose unusual subjects, such as Arctic landscapes and indigenous people, and wished to show people the Arctic and Northern nature and how difficult life could be for indigenous populations. Despite the harsh living conditions, people are shown adapting and living, relying on their respective lifestyles and cultures.

Kyyhkynen's home village was located away from the Arctic Circle. His painting *Summer Landscape* (1897, Illustration 5) is an open-air study about 15 kilometres away from his home (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993). Originally, the humble house and smoke sauna were built by hunters and fishermen; however, the dam is a sign of forest industry in Lapland. The excess amount of timber was taken, and logging camps came into Lapland. The nearby regions of his village were no longer wildernesses but man-made Arctic cultural landscapes with marks—dams, campfire sites, paths in a forest or tracks on a snowy field (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2009). Longing for the real wilderness and the desire to meet the Sámi encouraged him to travel to the Sámi region. In summer, he travelled on foot or by boat or horse and in winter, he skied or travelled with his white reindeer.

In his youth, Borisov wished to visit the Arctic and depict its outstanding scenery. He visited the Arctic areas several times, including the Kola Peninsula, the tundra and the coasts of the White Sea and Novaya Zemlya and learnt about the Nenets, formerly



Illustration 5. Juho Kyyhkynen: *Summer Landscape* (1897), oil on canvas, 52 x 70, 7 cm, Turku Art Museum, Finland (photo: Vesa Aaltonen).

Samoyeds.³ In 1894, he travelled to the Kola Peninsula (Ruznikova, 2006) and two years later visited the coasts of the White during summer. In autumn 1897, Borisov participated in the exhibition of Academy Students (Jubileju Aleksandra Borisova Pocvjashaetsja, 2018). Two paintings and about 60 sketches and studies depicting the Arctic coast were bought; comments from the critics and other artists were most favourable, which encouraged Borisov to continue with this theme (Teslenko, 2018). Borisov began to plan a longer journey to the Novaya Zemlya and set off on a training expedition along the Bolshezemelskaya tundra in 1898 to learn to sleep outside and eat raw deer meat (Ruznikova, 2006).

³ The home region of the Nenets begins in northern Russia at the White Sea and extends to eastern Taimyr in the large zone between Arkhangelsk and the Yenisei River. The population of Nenets is 44,640. About half of the people speak Nenets as their first language. Nenets or Samoyed languages belong to the Uralic language group—the same group as Finno-Ugric languages. The Nenets are the biggest of the ‘small’ indigenous groups of Russia (A People of the Tundra: Nenets Culture, 2018).



Illustration 6. Aleksandr Borisov: *Night in the Bolshezemelskaya Tundra in April* (1898), oil on cardboard, 34 x 51 cm, Museum Association, Arhangelsk, Russia.



Illustration 7. Aleksandr Borisov: *Samoyeds' Camp in the Settlement of Nikolskoye (the Yugorsky Shar)* (1898), oil on cardboard, 27, 3 x 44, 3 cm, Museum Association, Arhangelsk, Russia.

Open-air studies of nature had a degree of privacy and intimacy. Similar to keeping a diary and without intending publication, these encouraged a spontaneous rhythm of work in recording fleeting impressions, whether visual or emotional. There is similar momentum in many Borisov's landscapes, such as *A Study of Ice in the Yugorsky Shar* (1898) and *Night in the Bolshezemelskaya Tundra in April* (1898, Illustration 6). Later in his book *By the Samoyeds* (1907), the artist described the view from the tundra of April; he felt the whole sky was covered with golden reflection and resembled a warm summer evening; only cold white and blue snow broke this illusion (Ruznikova, 2006). Similar to Kyyhkynen, Borisov was interested in depicting landscapes during different seasons and weather conditions. Borisov's *Samoyeds' Camp in the Settlement of Nikolskoye (the Yugorsky Shar, 1898, Illustration 7)* depicted the village with Nenets' huts and cottages in the fog. The mood is silent and stagnant without any marks of human beings. The colour scheme is based on grey scales of blue and brown, which support the atmosphere of the foggy landscape.

Borisov and Kyyhkynen were interested in different seasons and lighting and colours of the Arctic region. Borisov's *Night in the Bolshezemelskaya Tundra in April* (Illustration 6) depicts a bright night in the Arctic tundra during spring. Kyyhkynen's *Summer Landscape* (Illustration 5) and *Dam* (1897) could present either day or night scenery because the midnight sun shines strongly at the turn of June and July in Lapland. He painted *Dam* in the same place but in the opposite direction of the view of *Summer Landscape*. Kyyhkynen's *Forest Landscape* (1901, Illustration 8) is a description of a dense and bushy birch forest with a narrow creek. There are only

a few yellow leaves in the trees, and the grass and the trees are yellowish and brownish green. The work is an intimate view of the autumn nature which is ready for the first snow. There is first, melting snow between willows and pines in Landscape (early 20th century, Illustration 9). Behind pines, the evening sun of October reflects a pink glow in the sky. Kyyhkynen painted two different moments of autumn in his works. The same pink is also in Borisov's sea landscape *Midnight in the Land of Ice* (1898), which depicts the Arctic Ocean with ice during spring.

Teslenko (2018) wrote that it took Borisov two years to prepare for his polar art expedition. For the trip, a special design yacht *The Dream* was built, and for wintering on Novaya Zemlya, a house was erected with a workshop nearby Nenets' camp. Travellers spent winter in the new house, and Borisov spent the whole winter painting landscapes and making portraits of the Nenets with coal (Teslenko, 2018). Before settling into the house for winter in autumn 1899, Borisov and his expedition decided to visit the eastern coast of Novaya Zemlya shortly. However, the sea was frozen, and their vessel *The Dream* got trapped in ice (Matsegora, 2018). In this dangerous situation, Borisov painted *A Sailing Ship in Ice* ('*The Dream*' Sailing Ship, 1899, Illustration 10). The work is a part of his diary-like thinking; on the bottom right-hand side of the painting, his signature can be seen with the letters A. B. and the date 27. VIII 99. The mood of the picture is harmonious, and *The Dream* seems to rest in the middle of the ice with the brown snow-capped mountains and light cloudy sky in the background. On September 27, the expedition left the yacht and began living on drifting icebergs, which were swept 200 kilometres to the south; on October 3, a group of hunting Nenets rescued them (Matsegora, 2018).

After passing winter in April 1900, the expedition travelled along the coast of the archipelago, discovering glaciers, capes, rivers and straits. At every opportunity, Borisov painted. The expedition returned to Arkhangelsk in September 1901 (Teslenko, 2018). In Novaya Zemlya, Borisov's expedition discovered and described 35 geographical objects, including capes, bays, mountains, glaciers, rivers and straits, which subsequently appeared on the map of Novaya Zemlya. Later, Borisov wrote several books based on his travel diaries. He also had a lot of material and sketches for his paintings (Aleksandr Borisov, 2018). He was the first



Illustration 8. Juho Kyyhkynen: *Forest Landscape* (1901), oil on canvas, 25, 5 x 19, 7 cm, Hämeenlinna Art Museum, Finland.



Illustration 9. Juho Kyyhkynen: *Landscape* (early 20th century), oil on canvas, 41 x 27 cm, Rovaniemi Art Museum, Finland (photo: Arto Liiti).



Illustration 10. Aleksandr Borisov: *A Sailing Ship in Ice* ('The Dream' Sailing Ship) (1899), oil on canvas and cardboard, 32, 5 x 50, 5 cm, Museum Association, Arhangelsk, Russia.

Russian painter to leave for the Arctic artistic expedition and paint Northern landscapes (Teslenko, 2018) and today in 2019, he is known as 'a painter of eternal ice' and 'Russian Nansen' (Mantsegora, 2018).

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

In late winter 1897, Juho Kyyhkynen made his first long painting journey to the northernmost Lapland, near Lake Inari (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2009). He painted his first Sámi portrait *Sámi Woman* (1897) with realistic style. After his journeys, he visited Lapland and the Sámi regions annually (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993). At the same time, because of Finnish national Romanticism, other Finnish artists travelled to Carelia in the southeast of Finland to look for a real blue-eyed and light-haired native Finn. The motivation for this travel was partly due to nationalism to find the roots of Finnish culture and identity and partly because of the general notion of a peaceful and innocent nation in Europe—the French were looking for original French in Bretagne and Paul Gauguin as far as Tahiti islands (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2006). Kyyhkynen thought that the Sámi were innocent and indigenous people and wanted to introduce them and their culture to Finn living in Southern Finland (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1993). A firm emotional and physical bond linked Kyyhkynen and the Finnish Lapland and its nature; he respected the Sámi way of life and that of other inhabitants in Lapland (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2009). One of his sketchbooks contains several phrases and words in the Sámi language because he tried to learn the language.



Illustration 11. Juho Kyyhkynen: *Reindeer Sleds* (1902), oil on canvas, 65 x 172, 5, the collection of Rovaniemi City, Rovaniemi Art Museum, Finland (photo: Arto Liiti).

Borisov and Kyyhkynen showed how incredibly powerful the colours of the Arctic sky could be during sunrise and sunset or even during the polar nights. Kyyhkynen painted *Reindeer Sleds* (Illustration 11). in February 1902. In the front part of the canvas, five Sámi people are pictured travelling with reindeer across a snowy and frozen swamp. A cold fog floats between the pines, pictured behind the people, and reindeer illustrate the cold weather. There are strong yellow and orange colours in the dark polar sky, and the silhouettes of fells are outlined against the sky. Perhaps *Reindeer Sleds* is the first painting in Finnish art which presents the polar night when the sun is absent. Today in 2019, the audience can regard the work as a Romantic and idealistic interpretation of the Sámi. Until the Second World War and even the 1960s, reindeer sleighs were necessary and practical for moving in winter. Borisov also fell in love with the tundra and its extent and infinity as well as the sky and ice that always change its colours. He compared sky and ice to gems that simultaneously reflect greenish, bluish and yellowish rays (Teslenko, 2018). *Coast of Novaya Zemlya* (1901, Illustration 12) is a depiction of the Arctic polar night that Borisov painted in February 1901. The reflections of the moon and the sun going below the horizon are strong and make the snowy mountains glow bright and white. There is also a deep contrast between light mountains and the dark sky, which gives the painting a tense atmosphere. Borisov was interested in polar nights and depicted them in many paintings, even after his Arctic excursions (e.g. *Polar Night in the Cara Sea* (1916)). The Arctic Ocean is free of ice; however, huge ice walls are visible on the right-hand side of the composition. The sea burns with deep red colours, the sky is dark and even black-blue, with bright yellow sunshine on the horizon.

During his expeditions, Borisov learnt about Nenets' way of life and began to appreciate their culture and ability to survive in the Arctic. Kyyhkynen knew the Sámi way of life and their culture well. Both artists portrayed indigenous people in their various



Illustration 12. Aleksandr Borisov: *Coast of Novaya Zemlya* (1901), oil, Museum Association, Arhangelsk, Russia.



Illustration 13. Aleksandr Borisov: *A Samoyed is Fishing Loach* (1901), oil on canvas and cardboard, 33 x 54, 5 cm, Museum Association, Arhangelsk, Russia.



Illustration 14. Aleksandr Borisov: *Lost in Reverie. The Industrial Hunting a Polar Bear* (1901), oil on canvas and cardboard, 28 x 45 cm, Museum Association, Arhangelsk, Russia.

everyday situations (e.g. travelling, cooking in a hut, working with reindeer, fishing, hunting, etc.). Borisov's paintings such as *A Samoyed is Fishing Loach* (1901, Illustration 13) and *Lost in Reverie. The Industrial Hunting a Polar Bear* (1901, Illustration 14) represent the everyday life of the Nenets on Novaya Zemlya. A fishing Nenets wearing traditional clothes is lying on the ice and fishing through the hole made in the ice. He is focused, and even his body is tense; he seems to be alone among the vast surrounding icebergs in a bright and cold day. The Arctic environment seems to be in harmony; the shadows are deep blue and light purple. Nature is similar in *Lost in Reverie. The Industrial Hunting a Polar Bear*; however, the Nenets hunter is very close, and the composition is focused on him. He is sitting with a rifle crossing his arms and waiting for a polar bear. The hunter does not seem to be focused at all; however, he has immersed in his thoughts or dreams.

Juho Kyyhkynen painted many works dealing with the Sámi everyday life, such as taking care of reindeer, travelling in reindeer sleighs, sitting in the Sámi hut, Sámi children playing with sleighs in the snow, etc. He also painted many portraits of the Sámi which are only facial images with the Sámi hats and shawls. *Sámi Mother with Her Child* (1908, Illustration 15) is a portrait in which a young mother is standing with her child in her arms, and behind them, a Sámi village is visible in the background. Kyyhkynen studied in Helsinki in 1902 and was influenced by the symbolism and synthesis of his teacher Vainö Blomstedt. The stylistic aim of these styles is a simplified visual structure with an emphasis on surfaces and decoration as well as the purity of the aesthetic considerations of line, colour and form (Ringbom, 2000). The artist's feelings about his subject are important. Symbolism stresses the intensity of soul, forcing both the artist and the audience to concentrate on the inner life of the model (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2009). *Sámi Mother with Her Child* is not an exotic interpretation but a picture of maternal love.

The environment of *Sámi Mother with Her Child* seems to offer the same geographical aid as *Sámi*

Village (Illustration 16) based on Kyyhkynen's painting. Justifying the existence of a national state presupposed a variety of provincial and regional types of landscape and helped teachers explain the differences of Finnish nature and people; the Enlightenment (*Valistus* in Finnish) Organisation published a series of classroom aids illustrating landscapes based on the paintings by various Finnish artists (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2011b). *Sámi Village* contains four big Sámi *goahtis*⁴ with an open fire inside and smoke rising straight out and two storehouses with high legs. In the middle of the painting are a small boy with a reindeer and a Sámi woman. In the foreground of the picture, there are horns, skis, a dog, a sleigh and piles of firewood. It seems to be a typical Sámi winter village where the Sámi lived during the coldest winter months.

John Savio: An Educated Sámi Visual Artist from Finnmark

Many Norwegian artists have depicted the fishermen and landscapes and sceneries of the Arctic Ocean; however, they have not displayed much interest in the life of the Sámi (Hautala-Hirvioja, 1999). One earliest such artist was Peder Balke, who became known for portraying the landscape of Norway in a Romantic and dramatic manner. He visited Finnmark, the north-eastern part of Norway, in spring 1832. In the 1850s, 1860s and even the 1870s, he completed several of the paintings he had outlined on his Finnmark tour (Peder Balke, 2014). The themes of his paintings are quite

⁴ A *goahti* is a Sámi hut or tent of three types of covering: fabric, peat moss or timber.



Illustration 15. Juho Kyyhkynen: *Sámi Mother with Her Child* (1908), oil on canvas 132 x 104 cm, Oulu Art Museum, Finland (photo: Mika Friman).



Illustration 16. Juho Kyyhkynen: *Sámi Village* (1908), *Valistus* geographical teaching aids (1903–1932). Geographical aids no. 10/Tilgmann, Finland, 56 x 95 cm.

exotic, such as when a Sámi man and reindeer seem to be a part of the night sun fjord scenery in *Northern Lights* or Sámi with *Reindeer under the Midnight Sun* or sometimes dangerous as in *Shipwreck off the North Cape*. H. J. F. Berg, an aquarellist, travelled by boat from Bergen north along the coast to Hammerfest in summer 1861 and 1870. During these journeys, he painted watercolours using Sámi themes with accurate details and ethnological correctness (Falahat, 2002). The first educated Sámi John Savio was an artist who depicted his own people as late as the 1920s and 1930s.

John Savio was born in 1902 in Bugöyffjord on the bank of Varangerfjord in Finnmark, although he spent his early years in Kirkenes. He was descended from Kven and Sámi people. According to Moksnes Gjelsvik (2012), Savio had a tragic childhood; his mother died from tuberculosis in 1905, and only two days later, his father drowned while fetching a coffin from Vadsø. Savio's maternal grandparents felt obliged to look after their grandchild. Because of their wealth, Savio could go to school (Moksnes Gjelsvik, 2012). He knew Johan Turi's book *Muitalus Sámiid Birra* (An Account of the Sámi, 1910), which contained illustrations made by the writer. Turi was a fisherman and hunter as well as a self-taught artist and the first Sámi author to publish a secular book in the Sámi language (Lehtola, 2015). Later as an artist, Savio extended the work of Turi (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019).

According to Nerhus (1982), in autumn 1920, Savio moved to Christiania (later Oslo) to complete the upper secondary school. At the same time, he made drawings during the day and evening classes at the State College of Crafts and Design. Unfortunately, Savio fell ill with tuberculosis requiring surgery. After his lung surgery in 1921, he resumed his studies but worked most of the time independently. He studied the history of art using a library and the collections of the National Gallery, copying the art of old masters (Nerhus, 1982). Savio was interested in woodcut; he learnt about this craft and other graphic art by Norwegian Edvard Munch (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019).

Savio's nomadic years started in 1926; he lived in different villages of Finnmark over two years and visited Oslo from time to time (Moksnes Gjelsvik, 2012). In 1929, he made woodcuts in parts of South Norway and in the early 1930s, he travelled throughout Central Europe. Travelling abroad was easy for him because he spoke many languages: Sámi, Finnish, Norwegian, English, German and some French (Nerhus, 1982). In 1933–1934, it is believed that he studied in one of the free art academies in Paris and held a solo exhibition in summer 1936. In spring 1938, Savio fell ill with tuberculosis again and died in Oslo in April 1938, aged 36 (Moksnes Gjelsvik, 2012).

ART OF THE SÁMI LIFE

Even though John Savio painted with oil and watercolours, he is known for woodcuts depicting the Sámi people, sceneries, Northern villages and seaports. His works have precise compositions, and since they are black and white, their atmospheres are intense. Many scenes related to his childhood's landscapes and the life of reindeer herders are depicted in his works (Rasmussen, 2006). His landscapes are dynamic and full of events. People, animals and plants receive equal attention in his landscapes. His way of expression contains features of impressionistic momentariness and expressionistic emotions.

In Savio's landscape woodcuts from the late 1920s, such as *Fine Weather*, *Early Summer* and *Summer* (n.d., Illustration 17), the weather is good, and life after the cold winter is easy. In the woodcut *Summer*, a Sámi man is sitting cross-legged, meditatively smoking a pipe. Behind him, Savio depicts a summer landscape, the Sámi man appear happy, nature seems beautiful, and the atmosphere is pastoral and poetic (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019). *Environment I* represents a harmony between the Sámi and nature but also good connections between the sea, Sámi and reindeer Sámi. In these woodcuts, Savio seems to be asking, 'What is the meaning of life, and what is the position of human beings?' When the sun is shining, a Sámi person appears to be a part of harmonious nature; however, sometimes life means much hard work with reindeer herding, fishing and hunting.

Savio depicted the Sámi and their life using both positive and negative emotions, such as love as in the woodcut *Boy and Girl* (n.d.), as well as trust, anger, frustration, jealousy and loneliness. In the woodcut *Boys with Lasso* (late 1920s or early 1930s), boys are seen to be training to use a lasso—an essential skill in reindeer herding. The compositions of these pictures are vivid and full of movement, and even the surrounding landscape and sky appear to be dynamic. There is almost always a dog to help the herd reindeer; Savio depicts skiing and wandering Sámi and always with a loyal dog. *Love for Icicles* depicts two children and a young boy who want to eat or lick ice. He portrays the adult Sámi during their leisure time and while sitting by a campfire, playing cards, socialising or expressing love. There are also problems with alcohol as in *Aqua Vita*, violence and anger in *Rivals* and bad feelings in *Jealousy*

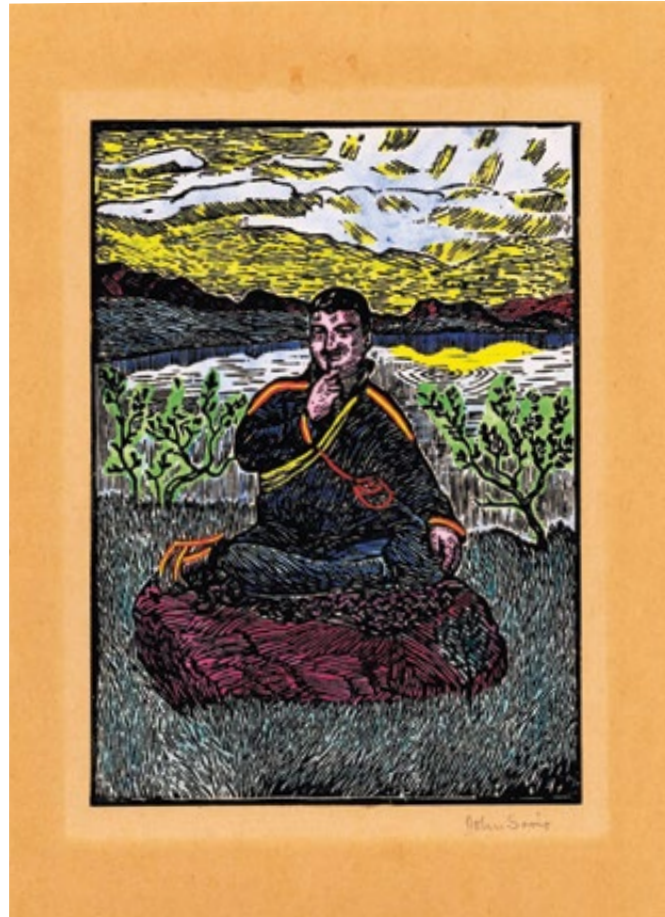


Illustration 17. John Savio: *Summer* (n.d.), hand-coloured woodcut, 27 x 18,5 cm, Saviomuseet, Kirkenes, Norway.



Illustration 18. John Savio: *Jealousy* (n.d.), woodcut 30 x 18 cm, Saviomuseet, Kirkenes, Norway.

(Illustration 18), which depict angry and frustrated figures (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019).

In Savio's art, the wolf is a common theme. For instance, he drew *Crossing the Plains* (Illustration 19), *Wolf and Reindeer I*, *Wolf, Sámi and Reindeer*, and *Jompa with Wolf* in which a Sámi is shown fighting with a wolf. The wolf motif has been interpreted to represent the Norwegianisation policy which threatened the life and existence of the Sámi people (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019). In the catalogue of John Savio's exhibition, Sigrun Rasmussen (2005, p. 13) describes the woodcut *Crossing the Plains* thus:

We find examples of this in the motif of *Crossing the Plains*, where the wolf in the foreground is chasing the sleigh driver. The tracks of the sleigh reveal the speed and we can realise they must be in a hurry, and at the same time the lines create depth in the picture. Also here the motif is cut; it is the terror of the moment Savio presents to the viewer, the wolf gaining in on the reindeer pulling the sleigh and reindeer dog. The man is fleeing to save his life as well as that of his reindeer.

During Savio's lifetime, the Sámi culture underwent a transformation and the old, traditional way of life, based on natural economy, changed. There were also increasing conflicts between the economies of the majority and minority populations. A growing industrial community with increasing class polarisation and dependence on global business and harsh Norwegianisation policy produced a sharp contrast to the Sámi way of life, which awakened activism (Solbakk, 2006). In Savio's woodcuts, the Sámi did not give up but rather continued resolutely with their lives; this is evident by their efforts to take good care of their reindeer and expel wolves from their land. Using the Sámi costumes was an indication of their resilience and opposition to the modernising society around them. Portraying the life of the Sámi people could very well be a sign of Savio's search for his own identity or desire to pluck the Sámi from obscurity. With his art, he made the Sámi the subject of art and depicted Sami people as actors not only as anthropologically interesting objects, and showed that a Sámi person could become a professional artist and earn respect for his/her art.

Landscapes of Arctic Colours and Indigenous People in the Euro-Arctic Regions

The landscapes depicted by Anna Nordlander, Aleksandr Borisov, Juho Kyykynen and John Savio are more diverse, open and broader than those painted by the visiting artists. All four artists could represent different seasons and weather conditions with their experience, and they depicted the Arctic landscapes and northernmost national frontiers. However, they were aware of bright snowy spring, light summer night, autumn colours and the intense colours of the polar night. Juho Kyykynen told a journalist that sometimes the light of night could be colourful and even flashy, and people living in the South could not believe that the landscape could offer them these colours (Hautala-Hivrioja, 2009). The artists had travelled in harsh weather conditions and felt coldness, winds and rains and problems with snow. All these experiences became part of their paintings as Andrews (1999) stated that authenticity in a landscape is not a transcription of nature, but it is a subjective response of the whole environment; it is a complex of different sensations, of light, colour, sounds and tactile experience.

It is possible that behind Norlander's, Borisov's and Kyykynen's motivations to depict indigenous people was a dream to find innocent people. Perhaps the French philosopher Hippolyte Taine's milieu theory influenced their style of painting as well as the details and colours in their compositions. Under the influence of mathematician August Comte and scientist Charles Darwin, Taine sought to introduce the methods of nature into the humanities, he was a strict determinist (Kultermann, 1993).



Illustration 19. John Savio: *Crossing the Plains* (n.d.), woodcut, 19, 4 x 24, 4 cm, Saviomuseet, Kirkenes, Norway.

In the 1860s, Taine developed his theory on the analysis of literature and art. He wrote that the human being is the product of their natural environment, and so is art. The analysis of the environment could deepen understandings of artwork (Taine, 1915).

According to Taine (1915), art is not the spontaneous creation of an individual and genius painter, but rather a painter is part of a community where nation or race, surrounding or environment and moment or time are influencing art. The painter has to find the basic features of a human being and depict them honestly, and the environment should support the painter's intentions and offer the audience the possibility of identifying with the content of artwork (Sarajas-Korte, 1989). Hence, artists tend to begin to seek the distinctive features of their countries and people (Palin, 2004). According to art historian Salme Sarajas-Korte (1989), the Finnish artists began to learn about Taine's theory from the 1880s onwards. Drawing on Taine's idea, milieu portrait became popular. This kind of idea forces the artist to depict people in a characteristic and natural environment. Hence, background, milieu, landscape and village of a portrait are essential and should support the character and the personal features of the model or models (Palin, 2004).

Borisov, Kyyhkynen and Nordlander portrayed Nenets and the Sámi in a typical Arctic environment; they also depicted landscapes with Arctic characteristic features, such as fells, mountains, seasons, weather and lights. Unlike her male colleagues, Nordlander depicted the Sámi as members of the family and very religious, not only because of the female gender but also in the light of the ideal of romance. John Savio intended to fight against colonisation by showing that the Sámi were as strong and equal as Norwegians and that their culture was varied and lively. In the end 1920s and 1930s Norwegian artists began to develop the new theme of social critical painting and expressive style and motives that had an impact on Savio's woodcuts, (Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019).

All the four artists discussed in this paper wished to raise public awareness of the Arctic nature and the lives of the Sámi and Nenets in their countries for different reasons. Orientalism, for example, inspired Anna Nordlander; Aleksandr Borisov and Juho Kyyhkynen tried to offer the motifs of arctic and northern landscapes and the indigenous people to Finnish and Russian art and nationalism, and John Savio wanted to oppose Norwegianisation. They had a solid emotional and physical relationship with nature and the people that they depicted using different styles, from open-air realism to Expressionism. Their works of art were not part of the mainstream of national or international art, and the artists did not belong to the canon of notable artists. Only Borisov gained significant recognition during his lifetime; despite this, he is not considered one of the masters of Russian art. Nordlander, Kyyhkynen and Savio died early. Perhaps Nordlander's problem was her gender, as female artists were expected to paint only themes of home and flowers. Kyyhkynen did not succeed in depicting the characteristics of nature and the Sámi life because his landscapes were too exotic, and Lapland was too far away. Finnish art concentrated on depicting the Finnish nation, and the primitive Sámi could not be seen as part of it. Savio's woodcuts were perceived to belong to Western fine art tradition. Changes in art history research and attitudes were necessary; it came about during the 1980s when the art of these four artists gained immense value.

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