

NORDIC SOUTH ASIA CONFERENCE 1980

The aim of the Nordic South Asia conference held in Helsinki, June 10-12, 1980, was to coordinate and stimulate research and higher education concerning South Asia in the field of humanities and social sciences in the Nordic countries. South Asia was in this connection defined as consisting primarily of India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. The disciplines covered languages, literature, folklore, religion, archaeology, art, material culture and ethnography, history, sociology, economy, and development research. The conference was initiated and, jointly with the Finnish Ministry of Education, sponsored by the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies (SIAS), Copenhagen. For the SIAS, this was a first experiment to test the feasibility and effects of such multidisciplinary conferences covering one of the major areas of Asia.

The SIAS contacted the Department of Asian and African Studies of the University of Helsinki in December 1978, asking whether it would be willing to organize the conference in Finland. The suggestion was warmly welcomed, also by the Finnish Ministry of Education and several other departments of the University of Helsinki. An organizing committee consisting of the following persons was accordingly formed in the spring of 1979: Professor Pentti Aalto (chairman), Professor Jussi Aro, Mr. Harry Halén, Lic.Phil., Mr. Juho Hinkkanen, M.Pol., Professor emeritus Aulis J. Joki, Docent Asko Parpola (vice chairman), and Professor Juha Pentikäinen. Mr. Kalevi Tainio was employed as the secretary of the organizing committee. The SIAS also commissioned a member of its staff, Mrs. Leena Höskuldsson, to assist the committee during the conference days, when Mrs. Irva Hellman and Mrs. Pia Saarinen also served as conference hostesses. The lecture rooms, in Porthania and in the administrative building, were placed at the disposal of the conference by the University of Helsinki.

In May 1979 and in January and March 1980, the organizing committee sent circulars concerning the conference to about 250 addressees (both individual scholars and research institutions) in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. They were invited to participate at the conference and to hold 15 or 30 minute reports on their current research, whether completed or in progress. Suggestions concerning the planning of Nordic collaboration were also welcomed, and the recipients were asked to check the list of addressees for possible omissions. An announcement of the conference was also sent to the information bulletins of the Nordic universities.

A preliminary list of participants and papers was sent out in the second circular, and supplemented in the third. On the basis of a questionnaire, the organizing committee prepared a catalogue of the participants, recording among other things their addresses and principal publications in the field of South Asian studies, as well as summaries of the papers to be read. This catalogue comprising 108 names (including also those who were later forced to cancel their participation) was distributed, along with other conference material, to the eighty participants who registered themselves personally at the beginning of the conference.

The conference was opened by the Minister of Education, Mr. Kalevi Kivistö. In his opening address, Mr. Kivistö referred to the steadily growing importance of Asia, and the resulting need for more research and information concerning this continent, which already houses more than half of mankind. The usefulness of Nordic cooperation in this field was widely recognized already in the 1960's when the SIAS was founded. Dealing with the current problems in this field, Mr. Kivistö particularly hoped that Asian studies in Finland, which are at present in a critical situation, could be strengthened so as to reach the level in other Nordic countries. Mr. Kivistö's opening address is reproduced in its entirety, in Swedish, as delivered, in appendix I below.

The program of the conference was presented by the chairman of the organizing committee, Professor Pentti Aalto. Extracts from his address are given below:

We Westerners commonly seem to regard as "primitive" or "underdeveloped" other people who do not live in the same way as we do. And then we set out civilizing and developing them. In this vein, Ch.R. Lanman once pointed out that while the Chinese visited India to learn, the men from the west went there to teach.

However, even among the latter there were some men who understood that they had at first to acquaint themselves with the achievements of the Indian civilization before they could carry out their original tasks. This acquaintance proved most fruitful for our own Western civilization. The study of Indian laws led Sir William Jones to gain a fundamental insight into the Indo-European linguistic affinity, and this led to the evolution of modern linguistics.

Not all Sir William's prophecies turned out to be true. In 1787 he wrote to Charles Wilkins: "You are the first European that ever understood Sanskrit and will, possibly, be the last." The first professorship for Sanskrit in continental Europe was established in Paris in 1815. Even at Helsinki University, Sanskrit was taught as early as in 1835. Forty years later, in 1875, the first Professor Extraordinarius of the subject was appointed, though to the great displeasure of August Ahlqvist, the Professor of Finnish, who tremendously opposed both the person in question and the subject. According to Ahlqvist, a lecturer would have been quite sufficient for a subject which in Sweden had no academic representative at all.

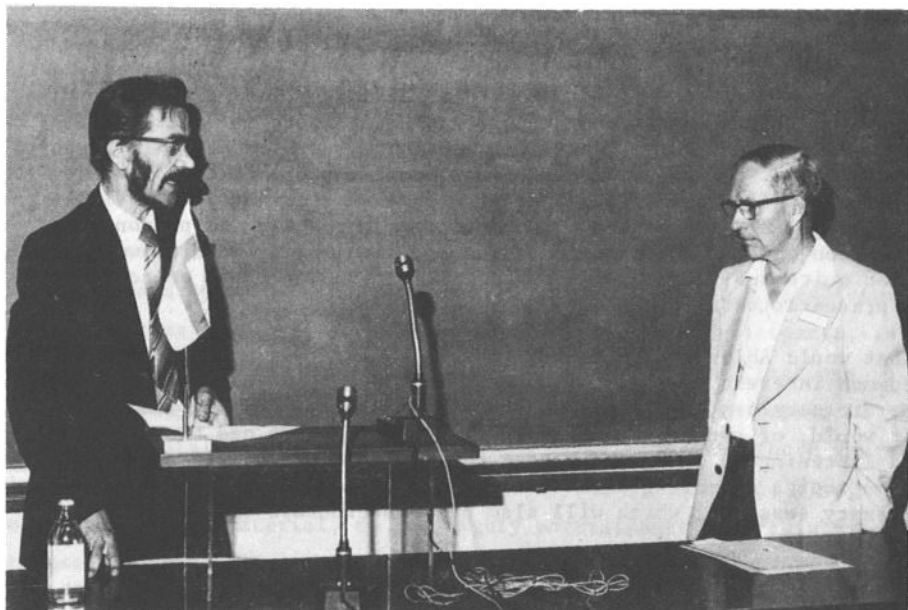
What would Ahlqvist say today, in this hall of his university, where the common interest in South Asian studies has brought together so many Nordic scholars that the conference has to work in four parallel sections? It would, of course, be ideal if every participant had the opportunity of listening to every paper read by his colleagues. This is now impossible. Some topics of more general interest will, however, be dealt with in plenary sessions, which will also plan internordic collaboration.

Professor Aalto welcomed the participants to Helsinki, hoping that they would enjoy their stay in spite of the heat wave. The weather reminded him of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's summary of his feelings on Helsinki when visiting it years ago: "Nice place but terribly hot!"

In connection with the opening ceremony, a silver medal of the University of Helsinki was awarded to Pentti Aalto, who since 1958 as a Professor Extraordinarius had occupied the chair of Sanskrit and Comparative Indo-European linguistics at the University of Helsinki, where he had also taken care for several years of the chair of Altaic Philology. In the absence of the Rector of the University, Professor Jussi Aro addressed his now retiring colleague with the following words:

All of us present here know you, Professor Aalto, as a scholar with an exceptionally wide field of interests. You started your career as a classical scholar, taking your doctorate in the field of Latin syntax. But you were also quite early a student of G.J. Ramstedt, the renowned Altaic scholar, and it is more or less in his footsteps that you have made your own career. Although your research work has not included much actual travelling, it could nevertheless be described as a kind of travelling adventure. You have penetrated the jungle of Sanskrit studies, climbed the Himalayan heights of the Tibetan language, and roamed the endless steppes of Central Asia in connection with your Mongolian and Turkic studies. All the while you never lost touch with your country,

for you have also made pioneering work in the history of Finnish Oriental studies. In recognition of your scholarly merits and long years of teaching activity, the Rector of the University has decided to award you this medal that I now have the honour of handing over to you.



Professor Jussi Aro (left) addressing Professor Pentti Aalto (right)

The actual program was initiated with the film produced in 1975 by Frits Staal and Robert Gardner, "The Altar of Fire". This film is one of the results of an international project of preserving the 3000 years old Vedic ritual traditions of Kerala in South India. The film was then commented upon by Professor J.C. Heesterman, of the University of Leiden, Netherlands, who in his inaugural lecture, entitled "Veda and Society", dealt more generally with the place of the Vedic ritual in the Indian society, including the situation today. Professor Heesterman's lecture is published in this volume along with 24 other papers, whose authors

made use of the opportunity for publication offered to all participants of the conference. Mr. Michael Vollar, B.A., (English) and Dr. Dieter Assmann (German) are responsible for checking the language of the volume, and Mrs. Saima Immonen for the typing.

The second day's plenary lectures were devoted to traditional Indian handicrafts. Professor Adalbert J. Gail of the Free University of West Berlin read a paper on "Indian craftsmen through the ages" (to be published in a volume on "Artisans & craftsmen in oriental societies" edited by Professor Gail). Mr. Oppi Untracht, M.A., an American research scholar residing in Porvoo, Finland, spoke on "Contemporary traditional handicrafts of India", illustrating their richness with over 200 exquisite slides taken by him in different parts of India.

The organizing committee had invited a few eminent scholars from the neighbouring non-Nordic countries to stimulate the conference with their guest lectures. It was planned that these would deal with topics of interest to representatives of the humanistic as well as the social sciences. This attempt at bridging the gap regrettably often felt between these two branches of study was apparently not entirely successful. Evaluating the conference in the final session, Dr. Stefan de Vylder regretted that the impression of South Asia emerging from the conference was predominantly one of a living museum - however interesting in itself - and not one of an urgently important and problematic part of today's world. Dr. de Vylder stated that his criticism was not directed against his colleagues specializing in humanistic studies, who were in the majority at the conference, and that the organizers could not be blamed for the relatively low participation of representatives from the social sciences, who had been well informed of the conference. His complaint concerned the apparent ignoring of today's socio-economic and political situation in South Asia in the selection of the papers to be read at the plenary sessions.

There would have been less reason for such a complaint had the organizing committee succeeded in its attempt to get Professor V.I. Pavlov of Moscow to deliver a guest lecture. Unfortunately he and the scholars invited from some other socialist countries were unable to come. It had been decided beforehand by the SIAS that only a handful of invitations

could be issued outside the Nordic countries, so that the Nordic character of the conference could be preserved. Distinguished foreign guests who had heard about the conference from their colleagues and had expressed an interest in participating were of course welcome: thus we had the pleasure of seeing among us Professor Dieter Schlingloff of the University of Munich and Dr. Jan Filipický of the Oriental Institute of Prague.

With these reservations, the papers presented at the conference may be held as representative of the current trends in South Asian studies in the Nordic countries: on account of the aims of the conference, the range of papers to be delivered had not been limited to any specific theme. In addition to those published in this volume, they comprized the following:

- DIEHL Anita (Lund): "Divine identity in Tamil Nadu: Samples for recognition and analysis"
- FIŠER Ivo (Copenhagen): "The learned women of ancient India"
- GAIL Adalbert J. (West Berlin): see above
- HØJGAARD Frede (Copenhagen): "National movement in the North-West Frontier Province of British India, 1928-1937"
- KAMAL Matin (Gothenburg): "Textile industry in Pakistan"
- MORRIS Rekha (Stockholm): "Structure and evolution of the North Indian temple"
- MUNCH-PETERSEN Nils (Copenhagen): "Maldives - an island state in the Indian Ocean"
- NYLUND Heikki (Helsinki): "The definition of *rāgas* according to the syntax of notes"
- PARPOLA Marjatta (Helsinki): "The South Asian collections of the National Museum of Finland"
- PERHO-NUMMIKOSKI Ulla (Forssa): "Indian textiles"
- PUDAS MARLOW Elli (Helsinki / Austin): "Uralic and Dravidian"
- SCHALK Peter (Gothenburg): "Indian royal ideology in Kampuchea's history"
- SCHLINGLOFF Dieter (Munich): "Identification and interpretation of the oldest Indian painting in Ajanta, cave 10, depicting the main events of the life of the Buddha"
- SYRJÄNEN Seppo (Helsinki): "Islam and the loss of meaning in Pakistan"
- UNTRACHT Oppi (Porvoo): see above
- VERGHESE Matthew (Helsinki): "An examination of the role of agriculture in the modernization of over-populated developing countries"
- VYLDER Stefan de (Stockholm): "Contradictions and distortions in a rural economy: The case of Bangladesh"

Other participants, including those who made informal communications in the workshops, etc., were the following:

AALTO Pentti (Helsinki), cf. above
 ANDERSON Anneli (Helsinki)
 ARO Jussi (Helsinki), cf. above
 BRANDT Harry (Helsinki)
 CHANDRASEKERAM Saverimuttu (Helsinki)
 DIEHL Agnes (Lund)
 ERONEN Jarmo (Helsinki)
 FILIPSKÝ Jan (Prague), cf. above
 FISCHER Werner
 GLOWINKOWSKI Eugeniusz (Huddinge)
 JANSSON Erland (Uppsala)
 HAMMAR Urban (Uppsala)
 HERLIN KARNELL Maria (Stockholm)
 HIETANEN Tuula (Helsinki)
 HIMANEN Hannu (New Delhi)
 HUHTALA Ari (Helsinki)
 HELLQUIST Karl Reinhold (Lund/Copenhagen), cf. below
 JOKI Aulis J. (Helsinki), cf. above
 JUURIKKA Tuula (Helsinki)
 KARSTEN Bo (Helsinki)
 LAHTINEN Matti (Helsinki)
 LAHTINEN Pirkko (Helsinki)
 MADSEN Stig Toft (Copenhagen)
 MARTTINEN Jouko (Helsinki)
 MIETTINEN Jukka (Helsinki)
 MUSTANOJA Ulla-M. (Orimattila)
 NIINIMÄKI Mikael (Helsinki)
 PENTIKÄINEN Juha (Helsinki), cf. above
 PUOTTULA Kauko (Turku)
 RATIA Alpo (Uppsala)
 ROSBERG Tiina (Turku)
 RYTÖVUORI Helena (Tampere)
 SAVELAINEN Hannele (Helsinki)
 SEPPÄNEN Jouko (Helsinki)
 SIRONEN Erkki (Jyväskylä/Helsinki)
 SIRONEN Timo (Jyväskylä/Helsinki)
 SMIDT HANSEN Bent (Århus)
 TEIVONEN Marja-Leena (Helsinki)
 TIKKANEN Bertil (Helsinki)
 VARTIA Kaarina (Helsinki)

On each of the three days, the participants assembled for one hour to discuss and plan Nordic cooperation, and to listen to Professor Gail explaining the organization of research and the forms of cooperation in South Asian studies in the Federal Republic of Germany. On Wednesday the conference was divided into several workshops dealing with specific themes, and with the Nordic field research project "Ritual in South Indian Society". The meetings on Tuesday and Thursday were held in

plenary sessions presided over respectively by Mr. Karl Reinhold Haellquist, Lic. Phil., and Mr. Per Sørensen, M.A., research fellows of the SIAS. The resolutions reproduced in appendix II below in their original Swedish were unanimously passed in the final plenary session.

The cultural program of the conference included another film, "Ashanti Sanket" or "Distant Thunder" (1972) by the leading Indian film director, Satyajit Ray.

On the occasion of the conference the Helsinki City Art Museum, the National Board of Antiquities and Historical Monuments, and the organizing committee of the Nordic South Asia Conference had jointly arranged an exhibition of approximately 400 Buddhist cult objects belonging to the collections of the National Museum of Finland. Most of these, including a series of about 60 thangkas painted in the monastery of Wu-t'ai-shan in Northwest China and bought in 1909 in Urga (Ulaanbaatar) by Dr. G.J. Ramstedt and Mr. Sakari Pälsi, M.A., were shown to the public for the first time. The artifacts were described in an illustrated trilingual exhibition catalogue prepared by Mr. Harry Halén, Lic. Phil. The exhibition took its name from the last words of the Buddha: "Oh, ye monks, strive onwards diligently!" It was open to the public in the Helsinki City Art Museum in Meilahti manor from the 18th of April until the end of June, 1980.

On the evening of the first conference day, the participants were taken to the exhibition by water bus. The Director of the City Art Museum, Mrs. Marja-Liisa Bell, M.A., welcomed the guests and the collections were introduced by Mrs. Pirjo Varjola, M.A., who is in charge of the "Exotic" ethnographic collections of the National Museum of Finland.

The Finnish Ministry of Education held a reception the next evening in the festival rooms of the Government. Here the participants could meet representatives of the Ministry of Education, the University of Helsinki, the Department of Development Aid of the Ministry of External Affairs, and other persons interested in South Asian studies.

The organizing committee wishes to thank all persons and institutions who in various ways have supported and helped it in its efforts.

On behalf of the organizing committee,
the editor.

*Appendix I: The opening address delivered by the Minister of
Education, Mr. Kalevi Kivistö*

Arvoisat Etelä-Aasian konferenssin osanottajat,
Ärade konferensdeltagare,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Der är en glädje för mig att å statsmaktens vägnar få hälsa er alla hjärtligt välkomna till Finland och Helsingfors och till denna konferens. Jag hoppas att konferensen blir framgångsrik och att den ytterligare stärker det nordiska samarbetet på detta synnerligen viktiga område.

Asiens befolkning utgör för närvarande över hälften av befolkningen i hela världen. Denna enorma värdsdel befinner sig nu i ett intensivt omväxlingsskede och dess betydelse har under de senaste decennierna avsevärt ökat på alla internationella verksamhetsområden, och utvecklingen tycks fortsätta i samma riktning.

Det är inte heller mera så säkert att den västerländska kulturen skulle vara självklart överlägsen i Asian. Tvärtom uppskattas högt i flere länder betydelsen av det egna språket och den egna kulturtraditionen, som ju utgör några av de viktigaste symbolerna för självbestämmanderättigheten. Härav följer bland annat att de, som i den hårda internationella konkurrensen önskar vara framgångsrika i sitt samarbete med länder i Asien, bör nu i sin tur lära sig känna deras språk och sedvanor. Redan av helt praktiska skäl behöver vi till exempel här i Norden allt större och mera djuptgående kännedom om främmande länder, deras språk, kulturer, ekonomi, samhällsförhållanden med mera.

Emellertid har i västerländerna redan under årtusenden funnits ett antal personer - en del av dem forskare - som, utan att önska sig materiell nytta därav, varit intresserade av Asiens kulturer och uppskattat dessa såsom föregångare. Därav beror eventuellt också uttrycket "Ex oriente lux". Det framgångsrika kulturarv, som Asien kan påvisa, har en hedersplats bland mänsklighetens historia och den är fortsättningsvis en berikande faktor även i dagens läge.

I de nordiska länderna framhävde man i början av 1960-talet bland annat betydelsen av att forska i språk, tradition, ekonomi och sociala för-

hållanden i länder utanför Europa. En särskild kommitté tillsattes på nordiskt plan för att i varje deltagarland utreda omedelbara nationella behov härvid samt möjligheter för nordiskt samarbete på detta forskningsområde. Ett betänkande - "Afro-asiatiska studier i Norden" - utkom år 1965. Detta skapade grunden till bland annat Centralinstitutet för Nordisk Asienforskning, eller CINA, i Köpenhamn samt Nordiska Afrika-institutet i Uppsala.

CINA har nu fungerat i 13 år och dess årsbudget överskrider för närvarande 2 miljoner danska kronor. Institutet har en omfattande och krävande uppgift, som inrymmer hela den humanistiska och samhällsvetenskapliga Asien-forskningen.

CINA placerades på sin tid i Köpenhamn bland annat därför att institutet där har tillgång till den betydande expertis, som Köpenhamns universitet kan presteras i form av ett tiotal professorer och ett digert bibliotek. Om CINAs verksamhet bör nämnas att den är i främsta rummet utåtriktad. Enligt statuterna strävar den till att bland annat genom stipendie- och konferensverksamhet koordinera, stödja och stimulera Asien-forskning i samtliga nordiska länder.

Särskilt har CINAs stipendieverksamhet haft en avgörande betydelse för nordisk Asien-forskning, trots att de medel, som stått till förfogande, inte alltid till sin storlek eller mängd varit i proportion med det reella behovet.

Ett annat problem som kommit fram under årens lopp har varit att de nationella forskningsresurserna inte alltid utvecklats i samma takt i alla nordiska länder. Härvid har Danmark och Sverige försprång jämfört med Norge och Finland.

Det bör härvid konstateras att man redan vid CINAs planeringsskede förutsett något av den nu en aning problematiska situationen. Förutom att stärka den samnordiska verksamheten på området utgick man då också ifrån att forskningen även nationellt skulle få sin uppföljning. Så har också skett, åtminstone delvis, till exempel i Norge. Där har man av inalles 21 (tjugoen) föreslagna forskar- eller lärartjänster stiftat tio.

Här i Finland står vi inför vissa svårigheter, då centrala forskarkrafter nu håller på att avgå eller har redan avgått med pension. En förstärkning

beträffande Asien- och Afrika-forskningen i Finland är uppenbarligen påkallad. Då Helsingfors universitet traditionsenligt varit den läroanstalt, varvid dylik forskning haft sitt naturliga säte, är det önskvärt att en viss personell och materiell förstärkning härvid kunde åstadkommas. Det beror dock på flere andra omständigheter, om dylika — i och för sig önskvärda — förstärkningar kan förverkligas.

För närvarande förbereder man emellertid på nordiskt plan, hur det vetenskapliga samarbetet, som gäller utomeuropeiska länder, deras språk och kulturer, borde förstärkas. Senaste april höll sakkunniga på området möte i Lund. Det är därför önskvärt, att snarast möjligt få taga del av konkreta förslag till åtgärder för att främja den nationella såväl som nordiska forskning, som gäller både Asien, Afrika och Latinamerika. Jag är övertygad om att Nordiska ministerrådet vill härvid hjälpa till så gott det går. Jag hoppas att de förslag, som senare ställs till ministerrådet, baserar sig på en enhetlighet från fältets sida och att realitetsbehandlingen även finansiellt kan omfattas av samtliga nordiska länder.

En del av CINAs verksamhet har inneburit anordnande av konferenser och symposier. Hittills har dessa dock närmast arrangerats i Danmark och Sverige, som härvid forskningsmässigt varit de starkaste länderna i Norden. Det är därför glädjande att denna Sydasienskonferens nu förlagts till Finland. På detta sätt bereds för forskare på området ett utmärkt tillfälle till att närmare bekanta sig med varandras verksamhet samt planera fortsatt samarbete.

Jag ber härvid hjärtligt få tacka för ett värdefullt arbete alla dem, både nordiska och nationella sakkunniga, som varit med om att fullborda denna konferens. Jag hoppas att den skall utmynna i framgångsrika resultat. Jag vill ytterligare tillönska konferensen all lycka och välgång i dess arbete.

Härmed ber jag förklara denna Sydasienskonferens öppnad.

Appendix II: Resolutions

Till Nordiska ministerrådet

Kultur- och undervisningsministrarna

Nordiska Sydasiakonferensen, som sammanträdde i Helsingfors den 10-12 juni 1980, noterade med tillfredsställelse att undervisningsminister Kalevi Kivistö i sitt öppningstal bl.a. konstaterade, att en förstärkning beträffande Asien- och Afrika-forskningen i Finland uppenbarligen är påkallad. Då Helsingfors universitets traditionsenligt varit den läroanstalt, där dylik forskning haft sitt naturliga säte, uttalade minister Kivistö, att det är önskvärt att en viss personell och materiell förstärkning kunde vid universitetet åstadkommas. Nordiska Sydasiakonferensen uttalar sitt stöd härför.

Konferensen uttalar vidare, att det är önskvärt att CINAs verksamhet förstärkes.

Konferensen har också med stort intresse tagit del av den utomordentliga buddhistiska utställningen och informationen gällande de betydande exotiska samlingar som bevaras i Helsingfors samt uttrycker förhoppningen att dessa kunde göras permanent tillgängliga för forskare och allmänheten.

Beträffande den pågående planeringen som gäller forskningssamarbete och forskarutbyte mellan svenska och indiska universitet, föreslår konferensen att även övriga nordiska länder skulle undersöka möjligheterna till liknande intensifierade kontakter och samarbete med sydasiatiska institutioner.

Deltagarna har enhälligt konstaterat konferensens kontaktskapande och stimulerande inverkan. På grund av detta uttrycker vi förhoppningen, att sådana nordiska Sydasiakonferenser kunde göras till ett återkommande evenemang.

Nordiska Sydasiakonferensen 1980 tackar Centralinstitutet för Nordisk Asienforskning, Finska Undervisningsministeriet, Helsingfors Universitet, Museiverket i Finland samt Helsingfors Stads Konstmuseum.