



Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

Bruno Liljefors

Wild Sweden

1st October 2024 - 16 February 2025



Bruno Liljefors, *Hare in winter*, 1905. Oil on canvas, 86×115 cm. The Thiel Gallery, Stockholm. © Courtesy Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm / Photo Tord Lund

After two exhibitions devoted to Swedish painters Carl Larsson (2014) and Anders Zorn (2017), the Petit Palais pays tribute to Bruno Liljefors with the last chapter of its programme focusing on the illustrious Swedish trio known as “ABC”, a combination of the initials of their first names. Less known than his peers, Bruno Liljefors was nevertheless an important figure on the Scandinavian arts scene in the late-nineteenth century. By showing his work for the first time to the French public, the Petit Palais seeks to highlight his pictorial skill and Liljefors’ original contribution to the construction of the imaginative repertoire of Swedish nature. This unique exhibition features an ensemble of some one hundred pieces, including paintings, drawings, and photographs from the collections of Swedish museums like the Nationalmuseum of Stockholm—partner of the exhibition—the Thiel Gallery, and Gothenburg Museum, as well as numerous private collections.

The exhibition, both chronological and thematic, addresses the various aspects of Liljefors’ art, from his inspirations and influences to his highly unusual working technique. Liljefors grew up in Uppsala, a town north of Stockholm, surrounded by vast expanses of wilderness. The young man practiced drawing from life from a young age and proved to be particularly gifted, especially when it came to caricatures and illustration. In 1879, he enrolled in the Royal Academy of Painting, where he met Anders Zorn who would remain a friend throughout his life. After trips to Germany and Italy, Liljefors visited Paris to complete his training. He stayed for a while in Grez-sur-Loing to the south-east of Paris, where there was a lively community of Scandinavian artists, including Carl Larsson. Unlike his painter friends, Liljefors did not stay long in France. He returned to Sweden permanently in 1884 where he devoted himself exclusively to the representation of Swedish nature and animals.

An astute observer, Liljefors captured real families of foxes lurking in the woods or hares darting through the snow, as well as ospreys perched at the top of maritime pines, eiders flying across the chilly waters of the archipelago, and grouse performing their nuptial parade in the forests. He worked in and from nature, using his skills as an acrobat and gymnast to climb trees. The painter also made use of hunting techniques such as camouflage and the construction of

Press release
August 2024

GENERAL CURATOR

Annick Lemoine, Head Curator,
Director of the Petit Palais.
In collaboration with Anne-Charlotte
Cathelineau, chief curator at the
Petit Palais.

SPECIALIST CURATORS

Sandra Buratti-Hasan, Curator at the
Musée des Beaux-arts de Bordeaux;
Carl-Johan Olsson, 19th-
century Painting Curator at the
Nationalmuseum of Stockholm.

PRESS CONTACTS

Mathilde Beaujard
mathilde.beaujard@paris.fr
+33 (0)1 53 43 40 14
+33 (0)6 45 84 43 35
Ximun Diharce
ximun.diharce@paris.fr
+33 (0)1 53 43 40 23i



hideouts to observe animals without being seen. His creative process included the use of photography in the elaboration of his compositions which often present a high or even absent horizon line, thereby placing the viewer at the heart of nature. This immersion is amplified by his skill in transcribing the light and atmosphere characteristic of Scandinavian countries.

Even if he denied it, his aesthetic research was heavily influenced by Japonisme and Far Eastern art. Liljefors liked to arrange some of his paintings within large golden frames, forming compositions inspired by the Japanese technique of harimaze, where prints present several images independent of each other. These decorative ensembles, created subjectively by the artist, and associating scenes with no obvious connection between them, leave the viewer with the possibility of creating their own narrative and interpretation.

His art must also be understood in the light of the Darwinian discoveries that permeated European culture in the nineteenth century. In Liljefors' universe, animals, plants, insects, and birds were all part of a larger whole, each with a specific role to play. At a time when the preservation of biodiversity has become a major issue, Liljefors, beyond his role as champion of Swedish nature, invites viewers to better observe the entire living world of which we are a part.

Exhibition designed with the Nationalmuseum of Stockholm.



GENERAL INFORMATION

PETIT PALAIS - MUSÉE DES
BEAUX-ARTS DE LA VILLE DE PARIS
Avenue Winston-Churchill,
75008 Paris
Tel : +33 (0)1 53 43 40 00
petitpalais.paris.en

Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 a.m to
6:00 pm

Late opening on Friday and Saturday
until 8:00 pm

ADMISSION

Full rate : 12 €

Reduced rate : 10 €

Reservation of a recommended visit
time on petitpalais.paris.en

Accessible to people with
disabilities.



Bruno Liljefors, *Foxes*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 71,5×91,8 cm. Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg. © Gothenburg Museum of Art.