



# Anders Zorn

SWEDEN'S  
MASTER PAINTER

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*Johan Cederlund*

*Hans Henrik Brummer*

*Per Hedström*

*James A. Ganz*

FINE ARTS MUSEUMS  
OF SAN FRANCISCO



**Skira RIZZOLI**  
NEW YORK

Published by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Skira Rizzoli Publications, Inc., on the occasion of the exhibition *Anders Zorn: Sweden's Master Painter* on view at the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, November 9, 2013–February 2, 2014, and at the National Academy Museum, New York, February 27–May 18, 2014.

*Anders Zorn: Sweden's Master Painter* is organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Zornmuseet in association with the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

The honorary patron of the exhibition is Her Royal Highness Princess Madeleine of Sweden.

The exhibition is sponsored by

**President's Circle**

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Additional support is provided by The American-Scandinavian Foundation.

The exhibition catalogue has been funded by Bukowskis.

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Library of Congress Catalog Control Number:  
2013934796

ISBN 978-0-8478-4151-6 (hardcover)  
ISBN 978-0-8478-4152-3 (paperback)

Front cover: *Reveil, boulevard Clichy*, 1892 (detail, pl. 46)

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First published in the United States of America in 2013 by

Skira Rizzoli Publications, Inc.  
300 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10010  
[www.rizzoliusa.com](http://www.rizzoliusa.com)

in association with

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco  
Golden Gate Park  
50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive  
San Francisco, CA 94118-4502  
[www.famsf.org](http://www.famsf.org)

For the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco:  
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For Skira Rizzoli Publications, Inc.:  
Margaret Rennolds Chace, Associate Publisher  
Giulia Di Filippo, Editor

Texts translated by Andrew Young

Designed by David Skolkin

Indexing by Susan Burke

2014 2015 2016 2017 / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4

Printed in China

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# Foreword

*Colin B. Bailey*  
Director of Museums  
Fine Arts Museums of  
San Francisco

ANDERS ZORN IS A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN SWEDEN, but his reputation in the United States has never reclaimed the stratospheric levels it reached during his lifetime. It is our hope that with this exhibition and catalogue, Zorn's stunning body of work will become better known in America. The Zornmuseet, or Zorn Museum, located in the artist's hometown of Mora, Sweden, expresses his and his wife's wish to establish an arts institution for the people of the Dalarna region. Taken together with the Zorn House; the artist's Gopsmor cottage; and Zorn's Gammelgård, the open-air folk museum he built, it shows how important the artist has been to the cultural landscape of his homeland. In his lifetime, Anders Zorn was an international artist with significant bodies of work produced in Paris, London, and the United States. This exhibition and publication reveal both the man who appealed to homegrown nationalism through depictions of Swedish landscapes and country dances, and the artist whose impeccable brushwork drew admirers from around the world.

We are indebted to Dr. Johan Cederlund, the director of the Zornsamlingarna (Zorn Collections), which include the Zornmuseet, for overseeing this project and providing a substantial number of important paintings, watercolors, prints, and sculptures to the exhibition. Dr. Cederlund also facilitated significant loans from Scandinavian private collections. And we must acknowledge the generosity of the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, under the leadership of Berndt Arell, for lending a group of Zorn masterworks that are considered among the national art treasures of Sweden. We also thank James A. Ganz, curator of the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, who organized the exhibition for the Museums. We are equally grateful to Barbro S. Osher, honorary consul general of Sweden in California, for her inspiration and support. We thank our early patrons The Barbro Osher Suecia Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, The Diana Nelson and John Atwater Family Foundation, Greta R. Pofcher, Kristi and Art Haigh, and The American-Scandinavian Foundation. We also thank Bukowskis, who have long been professionally committed to Zorn, for funding this catalogue. And we gratefully acknowledge our honorary patron, Her Royal Highness Princess Madeleine of Sweden.

This is the first major retrospective exhibition of Zorn's work in the United States in nearly a century. We are very pleased to introduce our audiences to this masterful painter.





# Anders Zorn

A SWEDISH PAINTER IN THE WORLD

*Johan Cederlund*

THE LIFE OF ANDERS ZORN (fig. 1) is like the tale about the boy born empty-handed who works hard, wins fame and fortune worldwide, and returns home a hero. As a celebrated and successful artist, Zorn was happy to speak about his background, and he liked to spice up the story by exaggerating the hardships of his childhood.

The truth is that Anders Zorn, born on February 18, 1860, grew up in humble circumstances, but not poverty, in the small parish of Mora, just the same as many other children at that time in the region of Dalarna, Sweden. His father, Leonhard Zorn,

was a Bavarian brewer whom his mother, Grudd Anna Andersdotter, had met during seasonal work in a brewery in Uppsala. There was never any talk of marriage. The boy was born on his maternal grandparents' small farm and began his life as Grudd Anders (which meant that he came from the Grudd farmstead). Until the age of twelve, he lived there with his mother and grandparents, good people whom he would always remember with warmth and gratitude.

In Zorn's childhood Mora was still a relic of ancient Sweden, representing a way of life that led back, uninterrupted, to Viking times. The great events of the year were connected with the work of



FIG. 1. Anders Zorn painting, 1892





FIG. 2. Anders Zorn, *View of Lake Siljan from Garberg*, 1886. Watercolor, 6<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (17.7 x 25.2 cm). Zornmuseet, Mora

the seasons, the sowing and harvest, the fall market, and the feasts of the ecclesiastical year, Christmas and Midsummer (Saint John's Day). Even now Dalarna is regarded as the most typical and traditional of all Swedish landscapes. The beautiful countryside around Lake Siljan, with its deep forests and blue mountains, bright summer evenings, colorful parish costumes, and picturesque one-room timber farmsteads where the daylight from small opaque windows mingled with flames from the fire—all these impressions from youth never lost their grip on Zorn (see fig. 2).

Zorn's father passed away in Helsinki in 1872 without ever having seen his son. A small inheritance improved the boy's future prospects. After attending his first school in Mora, Zorn continued for three years in a grammar school in the small town of Enköping. Because his Christian name, Anders, was regarded as too rustic, he was presented as Leonard Zorn, a name he kept until 1884.

In the fall of 1875, at the age of fifteen, Zorn was accepted into the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. His intention was to become a sculptor, but watercolor soon became his medium of choice. His natural talent seemed a divine gift; it was obvious to the entire academy. Fellow art student and friend Bruno Liljefors wrote in his memoirs,

When I was nineteen years old, I came to the Stockholm Art Academy. In the middle of a new world among a host of young artists with jauntily angled academy caps I perpetually heard the name Zorn mentioned, and it was enveloped in an aura of wonder and admiration, both for the man's phenomenal artistic



gifts and for his whole original personality. . . . Everyone could see that here was a man who had something to say, and who said it in such a clear and distinct voice that no contradiction was possible. If anyone asked what it was that caught us in the work, whether it was a trick of coloring, something original or modern, we could only answer: "It is so damned good."<sup>1</sup>

Zorn's artistic breakthrough came in 1880 with the watercolor *In Mourning* (pl. 1), which was exhibited at the academy's student show. Many competed to acquire it, among them King Oscar II of Sweden, for whom Zorn later made a picture with a similar motif.

The next year, a conflict led Zorn to drop out of school to go his own way. His fellow students thought they had found in him someone to lead in their struggle against the academy, which in their eyes was too conservative. And, certainly, Zorn was on their side, but first he had to make ends meet and secure a future for himself. That included plans to marry a girl, Emma Lamm, whom he had met while painting a portrait (fig. 3). They were the same age but had completely different backgrounds: she belonged to an upper-middle-class Jewish family from Stockholm. But it was true love, and the couple became secretly engaged; however, a wedding would depend on whether Zorn could make a success of himself in the world.

As an artist, Zorn was captivated by the work of Egon Lundgren, an older Swedish artist whose watercolor technique was based on the British tradition, with its focus on

(BELOW LEFT) FIG. 3. Anders Zorn, *Emma Lamm*, 1881. Watercolor, 16  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 12 in. (41 x 30.5 cm). Zornmuseet, Mora

(BELOW RIGHT) FIG. 4. Egon Lundgren (Swedish, 1815–1875), *Spanish Girl with Mantilla*, ca. 1850. Watercolor, 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 4  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (17.1 x 12.3 cm). Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMH A 362/1981



transparency and realistic detail (fig. 4). “Zorn paints in the manner of Egron Lundgren,” wrote a contemporary, “but is bolder.”<sup>2</sup> This boldness translated into paintings more sketchlike and succinct than his predecessor’s, producing sensitive effects. Zorn quickly learned to use the full range of possibilities offered by watercolors, from the thinnest glazing to saturated brushstrokes and the sponging off of paint. Gouache was also included as a natural part of the work.

Lundgren was an artist constantly on the move, and he portrayed his travels in books. At his commemorative exhibition in Stockholm in 1876, the public could view his picturesque paintings from southern Spain, filled with imagery of toreros, flamenco dancers, and pretty girls. Zorn was just one of many Swedish artists who found the work fascinating. Foreign countries beckoned, and it was in Lundgren’s footsteps that Zorn wanted to follow.

In August 1881, Zorn departed for Spain via London and Paris. He traveled with Ernst Josephson, a Swedish artist ten years his senior. By late September, the friends reached Seville. “It is hot here, sunny, with nice girls and picturesque beggars, a paradise for painters,” wrote Zorn in a letter to his future brother-in-law, Hugo Geber.<sup>3</sup> Zorn spent six months in Spain, mostly in Seville and Cádiz.

His stay resulted in a maturing of his artistic talent and a portfolio filled with pictures of velvet-eyed Spanish women—his favorite subject. One watercolor, *The Cousins* (pl. 2), painted in Cádiz, was accepted for the Paris Salon in 1882 and gave Zorn his first international recognition. The picture shows a daughter of Ramón Rodríguez Barcaza, a painter-professor at the Cádiz Art Academy, and her cousin. Zorn skillfully used the medium’s entire register, from the concentration of black pigment and details in the girls’ faces and hair, where he produced the right sheen with the help of India ink, to the feather-light glazes used to depict the textiles. He further demonstrated his virtuosity by allowing the paint to run over the paper here and there in blotches. Some critics, however, perceived Zorn’s ability to make painting appear effortless as affected and a sign of nonchalance.<sup>4</sup>

In the fall of 1882, Zorn settled in London. He set himself up in an expensive studio on Brook Street, in fashionable Mayfair, and used credit to equip himself and purchase first-class art materials. Artistic talent and hard work were all well and good, but Zorn understood that a respectable appearance, an elegant studio, and a good manner were also crucial factors in establishing himself. It was not long before he received his first commissions, starting with portraits of London’s resident society of Swedes. These were soon followed by portraits of some American and English clients. Zorn’s reputation as a portrait painter spread, and he became increasingly daring with his pricing. With a sure eye and brilliant technique he reproduced the splendor of fabrics, skin, and hair and managed to create a feeling of exclusivity in his pictures. His watercolors were completely in line with the fashionable portraits of the day. During a visit to Madrid in 1884—his second trip to Spain—Zorn demonstrated what he was capable of achieving. In the portrait of Cristina Morphy, daughter of the Spanish king’s secretary, he amplified the picture’s splendor and created an illusion strong enough to compete with oil painting (pl. 7).

With the exception of this trip in Madrid and another to Sweden in the summer of 1883, Zorn remained in London until 1885. In June of that year, he returned home to wed Emma Lamm; her family now considered his financial situation to be stable enough. On October 16, the couple was married in a civil ceremony in Stockholm City Hall (fig. 5).



FIG. 5. Double portrait of Anders and Emma Zorn before their marriage, 1885

Emma made it clear from the start that she was entering the marriage as her husband's intellectual equal. She was educated and intelligent, interested in culture, and outgoing. Her wish was to help her husband's progress, not just keep house. Through the years, she lived up to her self-imposed role as an active artist's wife. She was his critic and his administrator, organizing shipments and insurance in conjunction with exhibitions, managing contacts with other artists, and playing the model in various guises. After the wedding, Zorn's art became their common concern.

For Zorn, joining the Lamm family meant access to a large and significant network of contacts. Indeed, he had already made social connections as a friend of Emma's family prior to the marriage, receiving a number of commissions from her relatives,