

*M*innesota Painters of No

An exhibition, Painting by Minnesotans of Norwegian Background, 1870–1970, opened at the James J. Hill House, St. Paul, on April 1.

Guest-curated by Marion Nelson and sponsored by the Minnesota Historical Society, the exhibit will remain open through October 14, 2000.

The following images are selected from the work of 28 artists on view in this and lively show.

NO MINNESOTA PAINTER of Norwegian background ever gained the stature of Ole Rolvaag in literature, Knute Nelson in politics, or F. Melius Christiansen and his St. Olaf choir in music, but Norwegian Americans have contributed significantly to the state's visual arts. Rather than making reputations as ethnic artists, they have been a well-integrated part of the Minnesota art scene from its beginnings. Settling in Minneapolis in the 1880s, Peter Lund, Haakon Melvold, and Herbjorn Gausta were among the state's first professional artists and showed their work in its earliest exhibitions.¹

The affiliations of the Norwegian immigrant painters were largely with American art groups. In 1910 the professional artists' organization known as the Attic Club was founded in Minneapolis by a visiting artist from San Francisco, who was serving as assistant director of the school of art. The watercolorist and stained-glass designer Andreas R. Larsen, originally from Norway, was a mainstay of this organization from its founding to its demise in about 1930. Artists of Norwegian background were also well represented in the Minnesota Artists Association, founded in 1937, and the somewhat more radical Artists Union,

Norwegian Background, 1870–1970

organized at about the same time. Many participated in the federal art programs of the 1930s and early '40s.

There was nothing “ethnic” about these artists’ involvement. They participated as individuals concerned with the plight of art in a country that was more oriented toward the material than the cultural. Many had little contact with the ethnic community. Peter Teigen’s father was a founder of the Sons of Norway, for example, but there is no indication of Peter’s participation or of his ever visiting Norway in his extensive travels.

Perhaps one reason for the low visibility of Minnesota’s artists of Norwegian background was that, unlike their compatriots in several other areas, they had no enduring ethnic art organization or special site for exhibitions. In Chicago, for example, the Norwegian Club sponsored annual juried exhibitions through the 1920s and later, and in New York the Brooklyn Art and Craft Club organized exhibitions in the 1930s and '40s. As near as Minnesotans came to such representation was the Norwegian Art Society, which consisted of community leaders who wanted to see Norwegian art represented at the Second Annual Minneapolis Industrial Exposition in 1887.

MARION J. NELSON

Marion John Nelson is professor emeritus of art history at the University of Minnesota and former director of Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa. His many publications concentrate on the arts and material culture of Norwegians in America. He also curated the traveling exhibit Norwegian Folk Art: The Migration of a Tradition sponsored by the Museum of American Folk Art, New York, and the Norwegian Folk Museum, Oslo.

Moderately successful, the group remained active through several later expositions but disbanded before the turn of the century. The idea was revived as the Scandinavian Art Society of America in 1914 at the Odin Club, an organization of Scandinavian business and professional men. This time the goal was to ensure that Scandinavian art would be well represented at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, then under construction. The group did not succeed and disappeared in 1922.²

The Odin Club itself made several attempts to support Scandinavian immigrant art. It was supportive of Norwegian American artist Lars Haukeness of Chicago who in 1914 exhibited in Minneapolis, and ten years later it organized a juried show for artists in the immigrant community with the misleading title “Scandinavian Artists.” This was the only major juried exhibition of its kind sponsored by a Twin Cities organization.³

Ironically, given the low profile of Norwegian American art in Minnesota, the only national exhibition of it was held in St. Paul in June 1925 as part of the Norse-American Centennial commemorating 100 years of Norwegian immigration to America. In spite of the convenient location for Minnesota artists, they numbered only 21 of the 55 admitted. (One of these was the Swede Elof Wedin, who somehow got in under the fence.) In both oil and watercolor painting, the highest awards went to New Yorkers, but Minnesotans took second place in both categories.

WHAT WERE MINNESOTA artists of Norwegian background painting? After a short, early phase in which the homeland and the sea remained fairly prominent, they painted largely what their new countrymen did: rural life and landscape, the growing city, times of crisis, people, and finally, art as art.

For painters with years of academic training in Norway like Melvold, Gausta, and, apparently, Lund, adapting to new subject matter was a challenge. The titles of Melvold’s known paintings indicate that he may

never have tried, although a painting such as *Waterfall in Gudbrandsdalen* (see page 77) could have incorporated studies made at Minnehaha Falls. Lund, who continued to portray ships, the sea, and forests, used generic titles like *Sailboat Off Lighthouse* (page 77). While we can place his scenes where we will, our strongest association with many is Norway. Gausta, who had studied not only in Norway but in Germany, was influenced by French Naturalism. This training prepared him better than Melvold and Lund, who were late Romantics, to paint precisely what he saw rather than alter it to fit old formulas of representation. While he was the best Minnesota painter of Norwegian subjects at the turn of the century, he could also portray with remarkable freshness the charm of American country life, as in his parsonage painting (page 78–79).

Although most of the early immigrants from Norway, including the families of Margit Mindrum (page 78–79) and Orabel Thortvedt (page 79), settled in the country, many painters were drawn to the city. Probably out of fascination more than intimate understanding, they painted urban scenes at least as frequently and often better than local painters with deeper American roots. For example, Norwegian-born Magnus Norstad’s lyrical *City on a Hill* (page 85), a painting of St. Paul, received the silver medal in oils plus the highest popular vote and a purchase award at an exhibition at the St. Paul Institute in 1917. His countryman Sverre Hanssen picked up on Norstad’s motif in *Train Yard* (page 80–81) but put more emphasis on the energy inherent in the city. This fine painting ranks with those of the second-generation Norwegian American Arnold Klagstad, the major local city portraitist several decades later.

Norstad, Klagstad, and Hanssen stand out among Minnesota painters of their era for portraying the expanding inner city. More common were paintings of neighborhoods where the poor lived in their boxlike houses clustered together as if to shelter each other. Carl Olderen was following a precedent set by Minnesota artists Anthony Angarola, Dewey Albinson, and others when he painted his *River Flats in Winter* (page 80). One might call this beautifully nuanced work an outdoor still life.

Although purely aesthetic qualities, as in Olderen’s work, are often strong in paintings by Minnesotans of Norwegian background, people and hard times also have their place. Carl Boeckmann shows so much of the combat between regular soldiers in his sketch of the battle at Chickamauga (page 80–81) that the death of the Norwegian American Civil War hero Hans C. Heg, the central subject of the work, is almost lost. The plight of the common person is even more strongly the



(continued on page 85)

Gallery

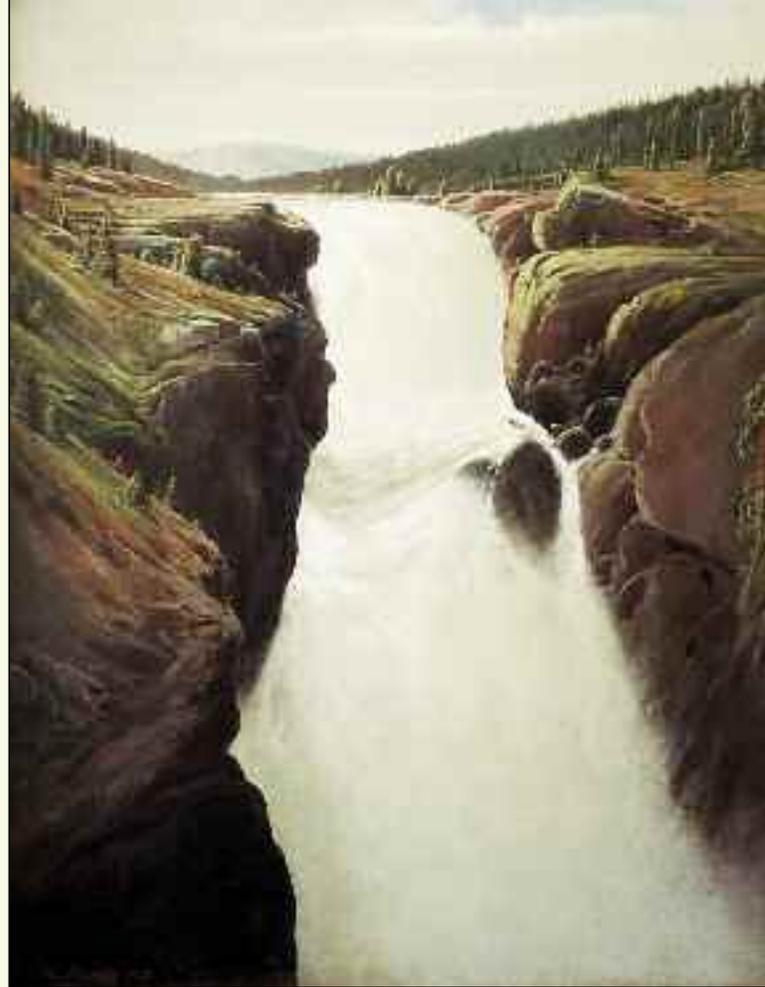
Haakon Melvold, *Waterfall in Gudbrandsdalen*.

Oil on canvas, 44" x 35", 1887.

Courtesy Clark and Karen Lyda, Denver, CO.

Haakon Melvold (1841–88) spent only the last four years of his life in Minnesota. As a boy near Hamar, Norway, he had shown artistic talent and was one of the first students given free tuition to the Oslo drawing school of the Dusseldorf-trained landscape painter J. F. Eckersberg. With at least seven years of study and a good recommendation from his teacher, Melvold emigrated to Chicago in about 1870, only to return home a year later at the time of the great fire.

Minneapolis was his destination when he crossed the Atlantic again in 1884. Still a pioneer town, it had few patrons for his meticulously executed works. Malnutrition combined with already failing health led to Melvold's death in 1888. Just a year earlier he had painted *Waterfall in Gudbrandsdalen*, which was shown at the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition of 1887. Although the title refers to a region in Norway, Melvold may have been inspired by Albert Bierstadt's *Vernal Falls*, shown at the previous year's exposition, or even by the actual Minnehaha Falls.¹



Peter F. Lund, *Sailboat off Lighthouse*.

Oil on canvas, 26" x 18", ca. 1895.

Courtesy Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota, Duluth; gift of George H. Crosby Estate.

Lund (dates unknown) is a phantom figure among painters of Norwegian background in Minnesota, and ships of phantom character—like this one—are often seen in his work. Even his Norwegian origin is an assumption. He apparently was fully trained as a marine painter when he arrived in Minneapolis in 1883, because he immediately rented a studio downtown in addition to a residence near Lake Calhoun. That year he exhibited *Stormy Night* in the first public loan exhibition of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, the earliest known example of a Norwegian American exhibiting in the Twin Cities.

Lund's *Storm on the Coast* was among the few works illustrated in the art catalog of the first Minneapolis Industrial Exposition of 1886, where the caption said, "Mr. Lund is a local artist whose best work should be better appreciated." In 1893 he left for Duluth, where his haunting *Sailboat off Lighthouse* was probably painted. Five years later he departed for the East where he exhibited *Night Scene on Lake Superior* at the National Academy of Design, New York, in 1897. He is said to have died in Boston five years later.²



Herbjorn Gausta, *Washington Prairie Parsonage*.

Oil on canvas, 10" x 15", 1883.

Courtesy Vesterheim, Decorah, IA.

The parsonages of early Norwegian American Lutheran churches were farms from which the pastors were expected to derive part of their income. The parsonage at Washington Prairie in rural Decorah, Iowa, occupied for two generations beginning in about 1855 by the distinguished Rev. U. V. Koren and his family, acquired the character of a small Norwegian country estate. It is the genteel nature of life there, where Gausta was often a guest, that the painter presents.

Gausta (1854–1924) may have painted this modest work in gratitude for Koren's financial contribution, eight years earlier, to a community effort to send him to Norway and Munich for study, an exceedingly early and rare example of community support for the arts among Norwegian Americans. The son of immigrant farmers from Telemark, Gausta had been totally without means, living in rural Harmony, Minnesota, 20 miles north of Decorah.

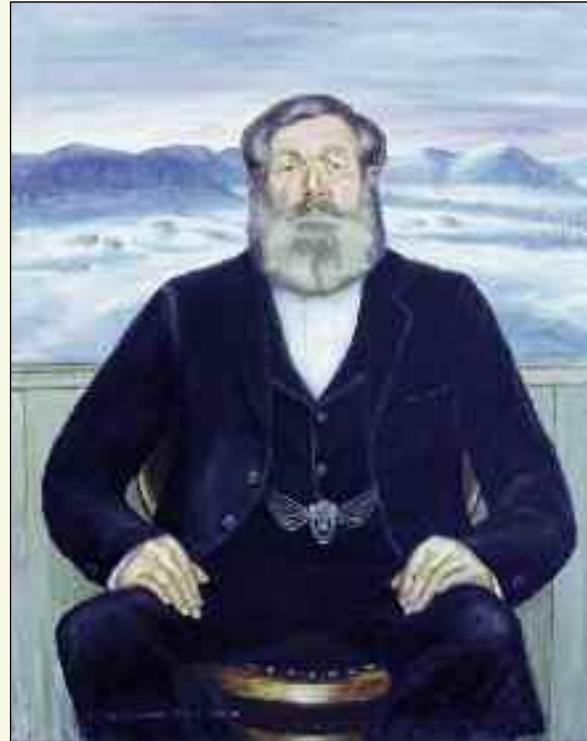
In 1888 Gausta settled in Minneapolis, becoming a successful painter of altarpieces. A bachelor who devoted his life to art, he also continued to produce small works with scenes from both Norway and America for exhibition and occasionally for sale to a small but dedicated group of admirers.³





Orabel Thortvedt,
Ola G. Thortveidt.
Oil on canvas, 42" x 36", ca. 1940.
Courtesy Eva and Carl Hedstrom,
Anoka, MN.

Orabel Thortvedt (1896–1983) was born in Glyndon, Minnesota, of immigrant parents from Telemark, Norway. She had some training both at the Minneapolis School of Art and the University of Minnesota but was largely self-taught. The 1870 trek of her grandfather Ola Thortveidt, who led a caravan of immigrants from Houston County in southeast Minnesota to the Buffalo River area in Clay County east of Moorhead, acquired mythological dimensions for Orabel. It became the core of her art, research, and writing, although it always competed with her immediate love, domestic animals. Her depictions of them led the Minneapolis Athletic Club's *Gopher* magazine of April 1938 to call her "a Minnesota Rosa Bonheur."



Thortvedt's power as an artist, however, is seldom more evident than in her monumental presentation of Ola. Living in the Red River Valley, she understood the hardships as well as the joy of getting one's living from the land. It is this stoicism that she conveys in her portrait. Ola appears seated in a traditional Norwegian log chair of his own making in front of what seems, from the signature on the lower right, to be Orabel's painting of the landscape in Houston County where her grandfather's Minnesota journey began.⁴



Margit Mindrum, *Haying.*
Gouache, 16" x 28", 1971.
Courtesy Stanley and Janet Oian, Dent, MN.

Unlike Gausta, Margit Mindrum (1899–1975) had very little training in art. Some counsel from her brother Halvor Landsverk, an accomplished wood-carver who had learned the fundamentals of drawing through a correspondence course, was the extent of it. A Houston County farmer's wife and a mother, Mindrum did not begin to paint until after the age of 50. Her medium was Carter's watercolors, an opaque gouache-type paint that she bought in small jars at the dime store, and her subject matter was almost exclusively her environment in rural southeast Minnesota.

Mindrum's art, like nature itself, changed with the seasons, about which she wrote, "All have their own pleasure." Behind them, she believed, was a God who gave special meaning to each. *Haying* captures the essence of southeastern Minnesota summers with convincing perspective and shading arrived at more through observation than the application of academic rules.⁵



**Carl Olderen, *River Flats in Winter*. Oil on canvas, 24” x 28”, 1930.
Courtesy Arling Olderen, Minneapolis.**

Twenty-year-old Carl Olderen (1879–1959) emigrated to the Twin Cities in 1899 from Tromsø in north Norway, the home region of Norstad and Hanssen. His training in art may have been limited; until 1912 the city directories list him as a common laborer. From then on he appears as a painter and, in 1917 only, as a decorator. Olderen studied at the Minneapolis School of Art in 1906 and at Dunwoody Institute.

The training most directly reflected in *River Flats in Winter*, however, is a short period of work in 1927 with the Swedish American painter Dewey Albinson. The so-called Bohemian Flats under Minneapolis’s Washington Avenue bridge were a favorite subject of Albinson, and he too reduced the motif to regularized facets of shifting color. But while Albinson’s work generally had a flair both in color and brushwork, Olderen’s was painted with measured precision in subtly nuanced hues. He seems to have been attracted not only by the uniform simplicity of the buildings but by their harmonious relationship to the landscape. Albinson won most of the attention and awards at the local exhibitions in which both participated, while Olderen, whose work now seems exceptional in its balance and refinement, often went unnoticed.⁶





Carl L. Boeckmann,
Col. Hans C. Heg and the 15th
Wisconsin at Chickamauga, 1863.
 Oil on canvas, 29" x 36", ca. 1915.
 Courtesy Charles Holt, Excelsior, MN.

Although he did not participate in organizations or exhibitions, Norwegian immigrant Carl L. Boeckmann (1867–1923) was a professional artist known in the Twin Cities art scene largely through his dapper appearance and his work restoring T. B. Walker's collection before it became the core of the old Walker Art Museum. Boeckmann made his living largely from commissions for portraits, altarpieces, small heads of Norwegian pilots (a specialty), and large historical paintings like that of the 1864 battle at Killdeer Mountain, North Dakota, originally in the Senate conference room of the Minnesota state capitol.

This sketch of the Civil War battle at Chickamauga where the Norwegian hero Colonel Heg met his death was, according to the artist, prepared at the request of people who hoped to commission a major work. The funds did not materialize. The sketch was, however, the basis for a color lithograph and was exhibited in St. Paul in 1925. The minimizing of heroics and the natural integration of the action into the landscape make it a fine example of military painting.⁷



Sverre Hanssen, *Train Yard (St. Paul)*. Oil on canvas, 33" x 42", ca. 1940.
 Courtesy Ah-Gwah-Ching Historical Society, Walker, MN.

Most early Minnesota artists of Norwegian background made their living as designers or decorators. Hanssen (1891–1968), a 1924 immigrant to St. Paul from the northern islands of Lofoten, was among the last of these. Trained in Norway, he was immediately employed by established decorating firms in St. Paul and got major commissions on his own. His work on the state capitol ranged from interior painting and stenciling to applying gold leaf to the horses over the entry and to the dome. A professed agnostic, he nevertheless did decorative work in about 75 churches and had a special rapport with the Catholic clergy.

Hanssen produced *Train Yard* while participating in the federally funded WPA arts program in the late 1930s and early '40s. In this painting, he presents St. Paul from much the same location as did Magnus Norstad, his fellow immigrant from north Norway, in his 1917 painting *City on a Hill*, a popular work at the St. Paul Art Institute probably known to Hanssen. (It is now in the Minnesota Historical Society.) While Norstad's work is lyrical and sketchy, Hanssen's is detailed and precise, acquiring its airy quality through light and delicate color. The urban energy of the railroad tracks, steam power, and expansion—both out and up—together with the linear movement and strong composition make this one of Minnesota's great city portraits. A new element on the horizon is the First National Bank, built in 1931.⁸

Olaf H. Aalbu Sr., *Sunflowers*. Oil on canvas, 32" x 14", ca. 1925. Courtesy Jeanette Aalbu, Minneapolis.

Like Hanssen and Grinager, Olaf Aalbu (1879–1926) was primarily a decorator. He arrived in Minneapolis in 1901 from the Trondheim area in Norway, where he had trained with Einar Ofstie, who had been active in Minneapolis in the late 1880s. By 1903 Aalbu was employed in the prestigious firm of John S. Bradstreet. Aalbu's early work included the decorations in Minneapolis's Metropolitan Opera Building and University and Commercial Clubs. A portrayal of Columbus discovering America in the Minneapolis Knights of Columbus hall, reportedly by a German artist from the East, was instead painted by Aalbu.

Aalbu was also a prolific easel painter but exhibited only during his last 13 years. His style evolved from academic to loosely impressionistic to a distinctive kind of pointillism. *Sunflowers* represents this late development, which is without known counterpart in Minnesota painting of the early 1920s.⁹



Syd Fossum, *The Meeting*. Oil on canvas, 36" x 48", 1937. Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society.

Despite his 100-percent Norwegian background, political activist Syd Fossum (1909–78), who received more newspaper attention than any other local artist in the 1930s and 1940s, never presented himself as an ethnic artist—nor was he considered to be one. The son of an architect in Aberdeen, South Dakota, Fossum carried on a constant battle with the Twin Cities art establishment, both when it was conservative and when it went modern. He was arrested twice over conflicts with the WPA art project but was released in one instance and acquitted in the other, actually affecting change in the program.

The victims of poverty and war were prominent subjects in his prolific output during the 1930s and '40s. A typical example is *The Meeting*, in which the poor are gathering to agitate for social change. The presence of women, a child, and an African American reflects the breadth of Fossum's concerns. While messages were often important to him, he was an artist of great scope whose fine work won awards both locally and nationally.¹¹



Alexander Grinager, *Boys Bathing*. Oil on canvas, 34" x 59", 1894. Courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Like Gausta, Grinager (1865–1949) was able to enter the art world early because of support from those around him. His parents took him to Europe in 1886 and enrolled him in art school. For six years he studied at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen and the Julien Academy in Paris.

A few years after his return he discovered a scene on the Minneapolis river flats under the Washington Avenue bridge that led to *Boys Bathing*. He negotiated with the children to serve as models while he painted on site. A number of artists, including Gausta, came to watch him apply a new technique that he had observed in the work of Monet in Paris. Three years later Grinager left for New York, where he gained prominence as a mural painter and stage designer while continuing to exhibit in Minneapolis.¹⁰





**Peter Teigen, *Young Man in Kimono*.
Oil on canvas, 34" x 27", ca. 1935.
Courtesy Vesterheim, Decorah, IA.**

Born Carl Peterson (1895–1936), Teigen was a shooting star from a Norwegian American liquor merchant's family in north Minneapolis who rose to an associate professorship in the art department at Princeton University and died at age 41 in the romantic Glenveagh Castle, County Donegal, Ireland. After taking a B. A. degree at the University of Minnesota, he entered Harvard University where, aided by scholarships, he earned a masters of architecture and took an assistant teaching position in 1919. Receipt of the coveted Robert Bacon fellowship for painting enabled him to study abroad for two more years.

Through it all he painted and exhibited, even sending a painting to the 1925 national Norse-American Centennial exhibition in St. Paul which took a second-place award. A special attraction to handsome youths reveals itself in Teigen's work, not least in *Young Man in Kimono*, which presents the subject in a mystically lit interior worthy of Whistler.¹²



Einar Dahl, *Basic Forms*.

Oil on canvas, 27" x 37", 1961.

Courtesy Jan and John Kordash and John Kordash Jr.

While most male artists of Norwegian background in Minnesota earned outside income from related activities such as house painting or decoration, Einar Dahl (1884–1976) lived two lives, one as a painter and another as a harness maker, artificial-limb maker, and shoe salesman. He began leather work in Lennox, South Dakota, after emigrating from Hedemark, Norway, in 1902. In 1907 he settled permanently in Minneapolis.

Dahl had always drawn and painted, but his art training was limited to minor, informal assistance from the Minnesota painters Otto Moilan, Carl Erickson, and Knute Heldner. From 1923 he participated regularly in local exhibitions and those of the Norwegian Club in Chicago. His greatest honor was having a landscape purchased by the American Art Today gallery for showing at the New York World's Fair in 1940. At this time he was moving toward abstraction, more as a personal development based in spiritualism and music than as the result of outside influence. Although dated 1961, *Basic Forms* closely resembles a painting shown in a newspaper photograph of Dahl's studio from April 1940.¹³

GALLERY NOTES

1. Notes and manuscripts of Dr. Erik Melvold, Oslo, 1971, made available to the author by Lena Nordstrom, Minneapolis, including information from *Budstikken*, Feb. 24, 1885, and the *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 24, 1888. Early training is covered in "Eckersbergs Malerskole," *Byminner* (Oslo) 3 (1966): 12–13.

2. Minneapolis city directories, 1883–93, and local exhibition catalogs for these years, Minneapolis Institute of Arts and Special Collections, Minneapolis Public Library, hereinafter cited as Special Collections.

3. Marion Nelson, "Herbjorn Gausta, Norwegian-American Painter," *Studies in Scandinavian-American Interrelations*, Americana Norvegica Series, vol. 3 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 103–128, plates 1–12.

4. Extensive collection of articles from Fargo and Moorhead newspapers by and about Orabel and her father, Levi; copies of many in Vesterheim archives through the efforts of Eva and Carl Hedstrom, Jim Skree, and Betty Bergland.

5. Marion Nelson, *Three Landsverks: The Art of an Immigrant Family* (Decorah, IA: Vesterheim, 1990), 7–13, with information on Margit supplied largely by her daughter Frieda Nowland.

6. Mary D. McElroy Bass, "Carl Olderen: A Twin City Norwegian-American Artist," unpublished paper, Mankato State University, Nov. 10, 1996; interviews with Olderen's son Arling; Minneapolis city directories.

7. Marilyn Boeckmann Anderson, "Carl L. Boeckmann, Norwegian Artist in the New World," *Norwegian-American Studies* 28 (1979): 309–23; G. N. Ekstrand, "Manden og Maleriet," *Vikvaeringen* (a publication of the Kristianialag, Minneapolis), Jan. 17, 1917, p. 28–31.

8. Gareth Heibert, "St. Paulite on Display," *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, June 16, 1968; George Grim, "I Like It Here," *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 25, 1968 (not wholly reliable); A. K. Larson, "Om en Nordmann," *Western Viking* (Seattle), date unclear, copy in Special Collections.

9. "En Kunstner," *Minneapolis Tidende*, May 5, 1912; memories and documents shared with the author by his family, primarily son Olaf H. Aalbu Jr. and daughter-in-law Jeanette Aalbu.

10. Information, compiled by the artist's son Mons Grinager, made available by his widow, Viva; exhibition catalogs, Minneapolis Institute of Arts and Special Collections; Minneapolis city directories; W. H. N., "Alexander Grinager: An Appreciation," *International Studio* 52 (Mar. 1914): 24–25.

11. Syd Fossum Papers, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS); notes and clippings in artist files of both MHS and Special Collections; exhibition catalogs, Minneapolis Institute of Arts and MHS. Genealogical information from Fossum's niece, Carly Ryman, Aberdeen, SD, Sept. 21, 1999, and "Andrew C. Fossum," in Martin Ulvestad, *Nordmaendene i Amerika* (Minneapolis: History Book Co. Forlag, 1913), 2: 621.

12. The only major source for Teigen is a massive collection of primary materials from the artist's estate donated to the archives at Vesterheim, Decorah, IA, by James E. Billings, Minneapolis.

13. Extensive newspaper clippings, Special Collections; interviews with the artist's daughter Alice Bobey and grandchildren Jan Kordash and Roger Stene. A large, representative collection of Dahl's paintings and drawings is in the Robbinsdale Historical Society.



City on a Hill, Magnus Norstad's oil-on-canvas view of St. Paul, 1917

focus of Syd Fossum's *The Meeting* (page 82–83), portraying a gathering of poverty-stricken men and women considering their plight during the Great Depression.

Alexander Grinager, on the other hand, liked to discover and then pose his subjects, as in *Boys Bathing* (page 82–83). Peter Teigen painted people he found beautiful, largely for the sake of beauty. *Young Man in a Kimono* (page 83) is a typical example.

Portraiture is as common among Minnesota painters of Norwegian background as among other artists. This genre is not always a painter's favorite, but people will pay to have their image made. Boeckmann earned much of his income from portraiture. Theodore Sohner, a second-generation Norwegian American, and the first-generation August Klagstad, father of Arnold, were among the state's most prominent portrait painters in the early twentieth century.

While Scandinavians are sometimes thought of as pragmatic people oriented toward social concerns, the purely aesthetic is a strong element in their painting. Many Norwegian American artists made their living as decorators, and a formal, if not actually decorative,

quality shows in much of their work. Nowhere is this more evident than in the paintings of short-lived Olaf Aalbu Sr. (page 82), whose late pieces introduced strong rhythmic lines and paint applied in pronounced patches, often of bright colors.

For some artists, the fascination with form led to total abstraction. John Anderson, who in 1956 did the 48-foot-long mural now at Brookdale Shopping Center, was inclined toward abstraction from the beginning, and Einar Dahl (page 84), who was largely self-taught, was already moving toward abstraction in the late 1930s.

WHILE NORWEGIAN IMMIGRANT and ethnic artists made no single, strong statement in the art of Minnesota, they were very much a part of its fabric. When Kay V. Spangler of the Minnesota Historical Society compiled information on art exhibitions held in series in the state from 1900 to 1970 and the local artists participating in them, she found 108 Johnsons—eight more than all of the Bakers, Joneses, Millers, and Smiths combined. There is no denying a Scandinavian presence in Minnesota art. □

NOTES

1. Information from files on these organizations and Olaf Aalbu, Einar Dahl, Syd Fossum, and Arnold Klagstad in Special Collections, Minneapolis Public Library.

2. Carl G. O. Hansen, *My Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: privately published, 1956), 92, 177; *Bulletin of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts* 3 (Mar. 1914):35, and 5 (May 1914): 50.

3. Sybil Farmer, "Scandinavian Art Exhibit Series of Odin Club Opened," *Minneapolis Journal*, Apr. 27, 1924, woman's sec. 2, p. 5; catalog, copy in Special Collections, Minneapolis Public Library.

4. *Norse-American Centennial Art Exhibition, Minnesota State Fairgrounds, June 6-7-8-9, 1925*, copy in Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul.

The painting on p. 74–75 is courtesy Vesterheim, Decorah, IA ; all other article illustrations, including the poster on p. 76, are from MHS collections.



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