Werner von Hausen and Emile Bernard

Exploring the Fragmentary Sources of von Hausen's Antimodernism

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Werner von Hausen met Emile Bernard in Cairo in 1895, in Laren (Netherlands) in 1906, and again in Paris in 1906–1908. Evidence of these encounters is found in portraits, press articles and in the artists' correspondence. These scattered fragments contain hitherto unknown biographical elements and make it possible to reconstruct a major influence on the artistic production and thought of the Finnish painter. Werner von Hausen thus turns out to be a protagonist of Antimodernism in Finland, a classical painter and author of memoirs, reviews and a manifesto defending a vision of art that did not conform to the expectations of his time.

Keywords: *Werner von Hausen, Emile Bernard, Ivan Aguéli, Sara de Swart, Armand Point, La Rénovation Esthétique, Antimodernism, arrière-garde, hieratic art, Old Masters, Anthroposophy, Classicism*

Image 1. Emile Bernard, *Portrait of Nenni von Hausen*, [1906]. Oil painting on canvas, 45,5 cm x 38,5 cm. Private collection. Image: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis, all rights reserved.

Now that several years of research are coming to an end, and the exhibition devoted to the Finnish artist Werner von Hausen (1870–1951) at Villa Gyllenberg in Helsinki is being prepared, I realise how much my first visit in 2014 to Villa Reire, the artist's residence in Kauniainen, informed my subsequent discoveries.[1] On that first visit, a portrait of the artist's wife caught my attention, enhanced by a dedication in French: "A Madame Werner von Hausen, E. Bernard".

At the time, Werner von Hausen's biography was incomplete, due to the fact that he had been sidelined first by critics and then by art historians. A certain embarrassment permeated his contemporaries, and his name had been gradually erased from the biographies of artists he had worked with or defended. The prevailing discourse on modern art could not incorporate a painter who had refused any compromise with modernity and who was, both in terms of his subjects and his style, eminently classical and detached from the modern world.

In her doctoral thesis on Finnish Symbolism (1966), Salme Sarajas-Korte had placed Werner von Hausen at the heart of a Nordic circle of Symbolist artists. In a chapter devoted to the art-

1 When I visited Villa Reire, I was preparing the essay: Laura Gutman, "... an air still more reminiscent of an exhausted Christ than usual: On Olof Sager-Nelson's portrait of the sculptor Fix-Masseau, 1895," in *Anywhere Out of the World: Olof Sager-Nelson and His Contemporaries*, ed. Johan Sjöstöm (Göteborg: Göteborgs konstmuseum, 2016), 85–93.

ist's presence in Paris and Egypt in 1893–1895, she revealed his friendship with the Swedish painter Ivan Aguéli, as well as his fascination for Allan Kardec and spiritualism.[2] Werner von Hausen's place on the fringes of the Symbolist movement was now accepted, and his 1902 painting *Street of Tombs in Pompeii* (Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki), misidentified as a view of the Via Appia in Rome, was exhibited in the Symbolist context thanks to its highly sensitive and funereal atmosphere. The rest of von Hausen's oeuvre, which spanned another fifty years, remained largely unknown.

A completely different aspect of Werner von Hausen's biography was revealed by Leena Pietilä-Castrén, in studies shedding light on the artist's role as a collector and copyist of classical antiquities.[3] The conceptual gap between his copies after classical works and the Symbolism of his early production created a certain perplexity.

In her research into the role of copies commissioned by the Finnish Art Society, Susanna Pettersson mentioned the copies made in Italy by Werner von Hausen. She recalled that young artists travelling abroad were invited to copy paintings by Old Masters to serve as models for art education in Finland. She noted that "The true beneficiaries were the artists who had the opportunity to study the originals carefully, copy and paint every brush stroke".[4] The importance of these classical models in von Hausen's intellectual formation had not yet been fully analysed.

Moreover, the landscapes he painted while abroad, and the absence of subjects with national resonance in Finland, did not meet the expectations of the critics of the time, who were committed to the construction of a Finnish national identity.[5] The critical apparatus was lacking, excluding Werner von Hausen from Finnish art history.

The portrait of von Hausen's wife, by Emile Bernard, was the first fragment that allowed me to explore new avenues of research on the Finnish artist. This isolated piece of Bernard's work that was preserved in Finland appeared to me as a vestige of the two artists' encounter, which I had to investigate further. Together with other elements scattered in the artists' archives, this fragment came to contribute to my understanding of their artistic approach.

2 Salme Sarajas-Korte, *Suomen varhaissymbolismi ja sen lähteet: Tutkielma Suomen maalaustaiteesta 1891–1895* (Helsinki: Otava, 1966), 106–111.

3 Leena Pietilä-Castrén, "Werner von Hausen: Antiikin ja Italian inspiroima kuvataiteilija", teoksessa *Klassinen tapaus: dos. Eero Jarva 60 vuotta*, toim. V.-P. Herva & J. Ikäheimo (Oulu: Oulun yliopisto, 2006), 181–195; Leena Pietilä-Castrén, *The Graeco-Roman Terracotta Figurines of Finland and their Collectors* (Helsinki: Foundation of the Finnish Institute at Athens, 2007), 62–65; Leena Pietilä-Castrén, "Suomalaisista antiikkikokoelmista: Keräilijät ja heidän esineensä", *Utile dulci: Antiikin kulttuurin opetuksesta ja harrastuksesta*, toim. Ilkka Kuivalainen, Leena Pietilä-Castrén & Hanne Selkokari (Helsinki: Taidehistorian seura, 2018), 177–211.

4 Susanna Pettersson, "The Art Museum as Author of Art History: The Formation of a National Art Collection in Finland and the Case of Copies", *FNG Research,* 2/2015. https://research.fng.fi/2015/09/25/peer-reviewed-articles-the-art-museum-as-author-of-art-history-the-formation-of-a-national-art-collection-in-finland-and-the-case-of-copies/ Werner von Hausen's copies were also shown in the exhibition *Inspiration – Contemporary Art and Classics*, The Finnish National Gallery, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki 18.6–20.9.2020 (curated by Susanna Pettersson and James Putnam).

5 See Marja Lahelma, "Rappiosta renessanssiin: Nostalgia Suomen taiteen kultakausimyytin rakentumisessa," *Historiallinen aikakauskirja*, 121:2 (2023), 113–125.

New keys to interpretation were provided by the renewed interest in Emile Bernard in the 2010s.[6] The few references to Werner von Hausen in the publications relating to Bernard gave credence to the existence of a link with Emile Bernard.[7] Bernard had previously been distinguished for his role in the development of Cloisonnism alongside Paul Gauguin, and for the virulent dispute over recognition that had subsequently pitted them against each other. More adept at mobilising critics, Gauguin alone had been acclaimed for the pictorial innovation that gave rise to modern painting. The research of Fred Leeman and Neil McWilliam, however, focused on the next, largely ignored stage of Bernard's career. They emphasised his abrupt turn against modernism and the development of a theoretical corpus and aesthetics based on a return to the Old Masters.[8] Their writings were part of a more general reflection on Antimodernism, an intellectual and artistic movement from the first half of the 20th century that positioned itself in the *arrière-gardes*. Its protagonists sought to stifle the modern movement to which they had contributed in their youth. Consciously reactionary, they scorned anything new as a harbinger of cataclysm, preferring to take refuge in a heroic past.[9]

This intellectual movement had arisen in France in opposition to the secular and anti-clerical Republican policy. The separation of Churches and State in 1905, which severed the age-old link between the French Church and the Vatican, had been experienced as a heartbreak by French Catholics. Seen as a consequence of the French Revolution, it led to a rejection of the positivism that had emerged from the Enlightenment, and to a certain extent to a nostalgic support for the monarchy. In the eyes of these right-wing intellectuals, modernity was the focus of all evil, and Antimodernism, which had been an undercurrent in the Symbolist movement, gained momentum. Although indifferent to political and religious developments in France, Werner von Hausen was exposed to these French reactionary ideas in their artistic application.

Other protagonists of this French intellectual movement were also known in Finland, such as Paul Fort, the celebrated "Prince of Poets" in his Symbolist youth, and then Editor of the small journal *Vers et Prose*.[10] The Symbolist heritage was gradually tinged with Catholicism, following in the footsteps of the writers Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly and Joris-Karl Huysmans. The mention of Paul Fort, although it cannot be developed here, is of interest to us insofar as his sister, Andrée Fort, was Emile Bernard's lover. The more general influence and effects of antimod-

6 See Fred Leeman, *Emile Bernard (1868–1941)* (Paris: Wildenstein Institute Publications / Citadelles & Mazenod, 2013); Neil McWilliam, *Emile Bernard: Les lettres d'un artiste 1884–1941* (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2012); and the exhibitions *Emile Bernard – Au-delà de Pont-Aven,* Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris, 27.1.–14.4.2012 (curated by Neil McWilliam with assistance from Laura Karp-Lugo); *Emile Bernard (1868–1941),* Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, 16.9.2014–5.1.2015 (curated by Fred Leeman and Rodolphe Rapetti); *Emile Bernard: On the Pulse of Modernity*, Bremen Kunsthalle, 7.2.–31.5.2015.

7 McWilliam, *Les lettres d'un artiste,* 159, 165, 166, 170, 240, 315.

8 McWilliam, *Les lettres d'un artiste*; Leeman, *Emile Bernard*. This was also evident in the exhibitions at Musée de l'Orangerie, 2014, and Bremen Kunsthalle, 2015.

9 Antoine Compagnon, *Les Antimodernes de Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2005); William Marx, *Les Arrière-Gardes au XXe siècle: L'autre face de la modernité esthétique* (Paris: PUF, 2008).

10 Paul Fort's letters to Werner von Hausen's close Finnish friends concerning their membership of Vers et Prose are held in the Åbo Akademi Library: Fort, Paul. Paul Fort to Felix Nylund, Paris, 3.2.1912. A letter; Paul Fort to Axel Haartman, Paris, 10.6.914. A letter. Turku: Åbo Akademi Library. For a personal account of his thought, see Paul Fort, *Mes Mémoires, toute la vie d'un poète 1872–1943* (Paris: Flammarion, 1944).

ern thinking in Finland remains to be studied, but the fragments collected here are intended to lay down a few milestones in this research.

The restitution of this intellectual framework offered new criteria for the analysis of Werner von Hausen's work. The study of the Finnish artist's archives would allow me to establish a chronology of his encounters with Emile Bernard and to document them, in order to establish the impact of the French artist and theoretician's thinking on him and his work. The meetings between the two artists indeed formed the theoretical basis of von Hausen's artistic thinking. By adopting an antimodern path, von Hausen isolated himself in the Finnish art scene, causing lasting misunderstanding.

I propose to analyse here the three meetings that have been identified: in 1895 in Cairo, in 1906 in Laren in the Netherlands, and the same year in Paris. The fragments gathered here enrich our knowledge of each of the artists and our perception of their exchanges. The variants of their position against modernity are thus exposed over a significant period, straddling the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, and clarifying the transition from Symbolism to the antimodern movement.[11]

Cairo, 1895

Werner von Hausen's stay in Cairo, from December 1894 to June 1895, was a break from the tormented year he had just spent in Paris, which he would later refer to as his "*Sturm und Drang*" period.[12] The time spent in Paris and Cairo revolved around the Swedish painter Ivan Aguéli, whom he met in Paris in April 1894.[13] Aguéli claimed to be a pupil of Emile Bernard, having received some artistic advice from him in Paris. The six months that Aguéli spent in prison because of his anarchist views brought him closer to von Hausen, who was allowed to write to him and visit him, thanks to his good command of French.[14] After his acquittal at the famous Procès des Trente [Trial of the Thirty], the Swedish artist decided to join Emile Bernard in Egypt.[15] Attracted by Aguéli in Cairo, von Hausen in turn met Emile Bernard. This meeting is documented in von Hausen's memoirs,[16] as well as in the chronicle published in the *Encyclopédie illustrée* from February to March 1895 by Ivan Aguéli's friend, the Symbolist poet Marie Huot, who had come to join them in Cairo. It emerges from Huot's "Letters from Egypt" that Emile Bernard, Ivan Aguéli and Werner von Hausen, whom she refers to as her three musketeers, worked in close proximity to each other in the Arab quarter of Darb el Genaineh, in the heart of Old Cairo.[17]

> I'm beginning to know the way to Darb el Genaieh, where my three musketeers live. I go to see them in the mornings from 8 to 10, before it gets too hot. Werner lives in the same house as Bernard and Ivan in the ruined dungeon

11 See Rodolphe Rapetti, "Emile Bernard au XXe siècle: la peinture polémique," dans *Emile Bernard 1868–1941* (Paris: Musée d'Orsay / Flammarion, 2014), 31.

12 Werner von Hausen, "Minnen från samvaron med Gustaf Ageli i Paris och Cairo 1894–1895", *Ord och Bild*, vol. 35 (1926): 605–615.

13 Hausen, Werner von. Werner von Hausen to his mother, 16.4.1894, Paris, Rue de Médicis 11. A letter. Finnish National Gallery, Salme-Sarajas-Korte Archives.

14 Aguéli, Ivan. Ivan Aguéli to Werner von Hausen, mercredi [April 1894]. A letter. Aguélimuseet, Digitalt Arkiv, read 7.4.2022, http://arkiv.aguelimuseet.se/share.php?post=1296

15 Denis Andro, "Politique et ésotérisme à la Belle Epoque autour du peintre Ivan Aguéli", 2009, read 15.12.2014, https://pdfslide.tips/documents/15-anarchisme-et-esoterisme-denis-andro-2009.html?page=1; 'Es-Sirr. Engagement libertaire, peinture, et 'Tradition' ésotérique autour d'Ivan Aguéli" (24.9.2012), author's private collection.

16 von Hausen, "Minnen från samvaron."

17 Marie Huot, "Lettres d'Egypte", *L'Encyclopédie illustrée: Revue hebdomadaire universelle des sciences, des arts et de l'industrie*, no 277 (10.2.1895), no 278 (17.2.1895), no 279 (24.2.1895), no 280 (7.3.1895), no 282 (24.3.1895).

> opposite, whose beams criss-cross above the alleyway (Darb) with those of the other two friends' room. Oh, the Middle Ages, thank goodness it is over! Ivan's cats (he has three of them!!!) correspond from one roof to the other, by this aerial route; they go to maraud at Werner's as soon as his heels are out of the door.[18]

The artists' presence in Egypt was part of a desire to break with Europe, which they felt had treated them badly.[19] There are echoes of Gauguin's desire to escape from the modern world by travelling far away, something of which they were well-aware. Their view of Egypt, far from being devoid of colonial prejudices, was guided by a conception of a pre-modern East, preserved from the progress of industry thanks to its geographical distance from the Western world.[20] The aim of these artists was to rediscover an ancestral Egypt that had endured through time.

In his study of Ivan Aguéli in relation to traditionalism, Mark Sedgwick recalls the concept of perennialism. He defines it as a belief in a *vérité première* [primal truth], which would have irrigated all knowledge since the origin of the world.[21] This primal truth would have been transmitted secretly and uninterruptedly from generation to generation, as Theosophy asserted at the end of the 19th century.[22] Egypt occupied a special place in this belief, considered to be the home *par excellence* of all religions, from the time of the Pharaohs and the Hebrews, to the transmission of the Bible to the Christians and Islam.[23] For the three artists the adoption of a rudimentary life in the heart of the Arab quarter was a way of stripping themselves of Western culture in order to approach this primal truth.

The time spent by Werner von Hausen with Emile Bernard, revealed in Marie Huot's "Letters from Egypt" but also in the French artist's correspondence, contributed to the young Finnish painter's pictorial and theoretical education.

> Hausen is leaving these days. He will pass on my advice to Jerusalem and go to Samos for a month or two, then he will go back to Constantinople and finally to his country after this magical journey which I would like so much to make again. [- -] Hausen has been very kind all the time of this illness, he used to do our errands and keep me company. He made me a cupboard to put my dishes in, and he works with me on painting. He starts to say that I taught him a lot, that I opened the way for him. The truth is that he has made immense progress and that he has worked very seriously.[24]

In Emile Bernard's narrative discourse, Samos constituted an emblematic point of reference. The mural paintings he made there in 1893 for the monastery of the French Missionaries of Lyon in Vathy (today destroyed and known only through black and white photographs) were an essential milestone in Bernard's development.[25]

Bernard explains this in his article "Ce que c'est que l'art mystique" (What is Mystical Art, 1895) published in *Le Mercure de France* at the time of Werner von Hausen's stay in Cairo. His discourse remains eminently Symbolist, evoking Plato and

18 Marie Huot, "Lettres d'Egypte, Le Caire, 21.2.1895", no 280 (17.2.1895).

19 McWilliam, *Au-delà de Pont-Aven*, 5; von Hausen, "Minnen från samvaron", 610.

20 See Lynda Jessup, ed. *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

21 Mark Sedgwick, A*gainst the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21–24.

22 Edouard Schuré, *Les Grands Initiés: Esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions* (Paris: Perrin, 1889).

23 Christine Peltre, *L'Atelier du voyage: Les peintres en Orient au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Le Promeneur, Gallimard, 1995).

24 Emile Bernard's letter to his mother, May–June 1895, cited in McWilliam, *Les lettres d'un artiste*, 391–392.

25 Leeman, *Emile Bernard*, 220–223.

stating that "visible things are the figure of invisible things."[26] Bernard quotes extensively from the mystical writings of the Christian theologian and Neoplatonic philosopher Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (late fifth to early sixth century) in order to establish the principle of a primary unity, which only symbols would allow to penetrate in a veiled way. The evolution of Bernard's thought is essentially manifested in the place he gives to "hieratic art". His discovery of Byzantine and Coptic art, which he appreciated in the same way as Gothic art, enabled him to develop a new aesthetic, derived from the Cloisonnism developed in France. This hieratic style, characteristically decorative and flat, seemed to him to be similar to archaic art and suitable for representing and engaging in a spiritual ascent, even if it was often criticised as stiff and dry.[27]

Werner von Hausen's reaction to this aesthetic and theoretical influence is known from his letter to Emile Bernard from Samos, where he had travelled to see Bernard's wall paintings. Bernard had referred to von Hausen's letter in his correspondence with his mother, in which he expressed the satisfaction of a *maieutician*, referring to Socrates' method of discussion called *maieutics*, to describe his efforts of awakening the consciousness of his young Finnish disciple: "Hausen is in Samos near Father Bressol. He wrote me a letter which I will keep because he reveals himself as 'awake.'"[28]

In his letter to Bernard, von Hausen writes that he understands the French artist's intentions. He sees how the search for a hieratic style is in keeping with the religious purpose of the paintings:

Image 2. Emile Bernard, *Portrait of Werner von Hausen*, 1895. Oil painting laid down on board, 42 x 35 cm. Private collection. Image: Brunn Rasmussen Auctioneers, part of the Bonhams Network, Copenhagen, all rights reserved.

> Friend! Oh, I congratulate you with all my heart on the work you have here with the French! For me it is very pure and very high art. It's so beautiful that at first I stood there nailed and could only repeat stupidly oh, how beautiful, oh, how beautiful. And I predict that once it is discovered it will be praised highly and sincerely, that everyone will admire it and that even the ignorant bourgeois will be drawn to find it pure, beautiful, and high art.[29]

26 Emile Bernard, "Ce que c'est que l'art mystique," *Le Mercure de France* (January 1895), 28–39.

27 Bernard, "Ce que c'est," 29.

28 Emile Bernard's letter to his mother, July 1895, cited in McWilliam, *Les lettres d'un artiste*, 407.

29 Hausen, Werner von. *Werner von Hausen to Emile Bernard, 7.6.1895, Samos*. A letter. Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Bibliothèque centrale des musées nationaux, Ms 374/5/1, 214.

Touched by the beauty of the motifs and their rendering, von Hausen was transported to the sacred significance of the paintings. However, he had his doubts, considering that this ensemble "can only be the work of a Catholic", which is why he could admire it but could not love it.[30] It is important to emphasise the distance that the Finnish artist puts between himself and Catholicism, which remains alien to him without preventing him from appreciating his mentor's artistic qualities. This distinction testifies to his ability to purge an artistic lesson of its religious and political context, and to carry out a selective cultural transfer, adapted to his own ambitions.

Emile Bernard's portrait of Werner von Hausen in Cairo, from 1895, exudes a serenity far removed from the anxiety present in the portrait painted in Paris the previous year by his Swedish friend Olof Sager-Nelson (Olof Sager-Nelson, *Portrait of Werner von Hausen*, c. 1893, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm). The path of Antimodernism that Bernard traced for the young painter nevertheless charged Werner von Hausen with a heavy mission.

> An artist's existence now seems nothing more than a terrible struggle, in which he is not sure he can triumph over these things without despairing. So don't get your hopes up and work just for the sake of producing.[31]

This initial lesson was to be deepened in the following years through new encounters.

Laren, June 1906

Emile Bernard was a mutual acquaintance of Werner von Hausen and Sara de Swart, the Dutch sculptor whom von Hausen met with his wife Nenni in Italy in February 1901, at the same time as her companion, the painter Emilie van Kerckhoff.[32] De Swart had encountered Bernard earlier in Paris through Jo Bonger, the Dutch widow of Theo Van Gogh.[33]

In a letter to her Finnish friend at the turn of 1901–1902, de Swart gives news of Bernard, brought back to Holland by the French artist Odilon Redon. De Swart mentions in her letter the arrival in Paris of Emile Bernard from Cairo in 1901, along with his new-born child, the success of his exhibition (in Ambroise Vollard's gallery) and plans for collaboration with the Parisian press.[34]

It was at the invitation of Sara de Swart that Werner von Hausen and Emile Bernard met again at her villa De Hoeve (The Farm), in Laren, in the summer of 1906.[35] Delighted with the welcome and commissions he received, Emile Bernard informed his lover Andrée Fort that he enjoyed many excursions and painted portraits in gratitude for his stay.[36] Among the group portraits mentioned is a diptych he painted together with Werner von Hausen. On the left-hand panel, Emile Bernard is surrounded by Nenni von Hausen and her daughters Mana and Synnöve, while Werner von Hausen is depicted on the right-hand panel with Sara de Swart and Emilie van Kerckhoff. It is highly probable that

30 *Werner von Hausen to Emile Bernard, 7.6.1895, Samos.*

31 Emile Bernard's letter to his mother, May–June 1895, cited in McWilliam, *Les lettres d'un artiste*, 392.

32 Hausen, Nenni von. Nenni von Hausen to her father, 5.2.1901, Villa Auria, Girgenti. A letter. Werner von Hausen Archives, private collection.

33 Jaap Versteegh, *Fatale kunst: Leven en werk van Sara de Swart* (1861–1951) (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2016).

34 de Swart, Sara. *Sara de Swart to Werner von Hausen, around Christmas 1902 (Christmas 1901–New Year 1902), De Hoeve, Laren*. A letter. Werner von Hausen Archives, private collection. She confuses *La Revue Blanche*, which no longer existed, with *Le Mercure de France*, which published articles by Bernard.

35 Bernard, Emile, announcing his arrival in Amsterdam on 25.6.1906. *Emile Bernard to Sara de Swart, Emilie van Kerckhoff, Werner and Nenni von Hausen, 16.6.1906.* Postcard. Werner von Hausen Archives, private collection.

36 Emile Bernard's letter to Andrée Fort, 29.6.1906, Laren, cited in McWilliam, *Les lettres d'un artiste*, 720.

Image 3. Photograph of a lost painting by Emile Bernard and Werner von Hausen, *Group portrait* (left: Emile Bernard with Nenni, Synnöve and Mana von Hausen; right: Werner von Hausen, Emilie Van Kerckhoff and Sara de Swart), 1906. Image: Matias Uusikylä, all rights reserved.

the portrait of Nenni by Emile Bernard (Image 1), which was the starting point for my research, was also painted on this occasion.

This renewed contact was followed by further meetings in Paris in the following months.

Paris 1906–1908

At the end of the summer of 1906, Werner von Hausen moved to Paris with his family and remained there until the summer of 1908. His and Nenni's presence in November 1906 at the mass arranged by Emile Bernard in memory of Paul Cézanne testifies to the continuation of their exchange. Bernard was grateful that they came, because only twelve people had responded to his invitation.

> Finally, this Cézanne mass took place this morning at Notre-Dame de Lorette. Out of a hundred invitations, 12 people came. Here is the list: Maurice Denis, Louis Libaude, my father, Edmond Bailly, Louis Thomas, Henri Gadou, Emile Schuffenecker, de Vroye, Mlle Bouvant, Mitzi Burger, Mia Ellen, von Hausen, his wife and myself.[37]

Werner von Hausen's interaction with the Parisian art scene is known only in a fragmentary way. Was he present at the Friday gatherings organised by Emile Bernard in his studio at 12, rue Cortot, in Montmartre?[38] The mention of Armand Point, whom von Hausen refers to as "a famous artist and art historian" in a letter to the Finnish art historian J. J. Tikkanen, suggests his introduction into Bernard's circle.[39] Point

37 Emile Bernard's letter to Andrée Fort, [27.11] 1906, Montmartre, cited in McWilliam, *Les lettres d'un artiste,* 711.

38 Leeman, *Emile Bernard*, 387–388.

39 Hausen, Werner von. *Werner von Hausen to J. J. Tikkanen, 9.11.1906, Paris*. A letter. National Library of Finland, J. J. Tikkanen Archives.

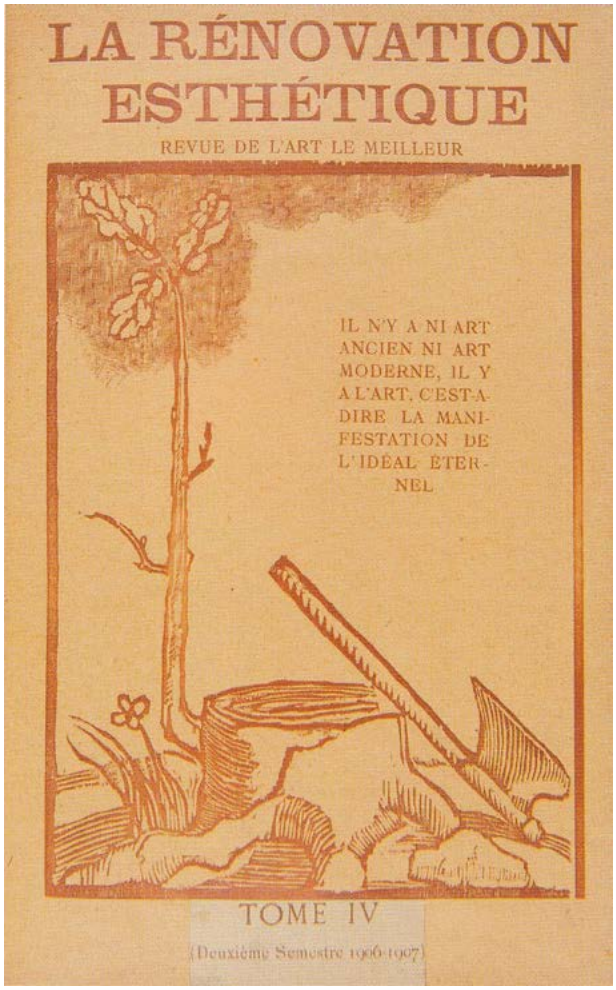

Image 4. Cover of the journal *La Rénovation Esthétique*, Vol. IV, 1906–1907, Private collection. Image: Laura Gutman, all rights reserved.

was indeed a regular contributor to *La Rénovation Esthétique,* the journal published in Paris by Bernard since 1905. The poet Charles Grolleau, a friend from von Hausen's first Parisian sojourn of 1893–1894, also occasionally published his Christian poetry in *La Rénovation Esthétique* between 1905 and 1909.[40]

La Rénovation Esthétique was the melting pot of an antimodernist group, concerned with regenerating a society considered deleterious. As Antoine Compagnon and William Marx have pointed out, antimodernist intellectuals in fact proposed another kind of modernity, based here on respect for the Old Masters and the Catholic tradition.[41]

In 1906, the antimodern discourse was in formation and offered an alternative to the avant-garde. Nostalgia for a bygone era, expressed in Cairo by a search for authenticity in a society perceived as ancestral, was now crystallising in new references. Emile Bernard was then engaged in a reappropriation of the artistic heritage he had helped to establish, and which had escaped him. He fought many battles and tried to reclaim his place alongside Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne, which he considered usurped by Paul Gauguin, Maurice Denis, the Fauves and the Cubists. He could not accept the free expression of the artists he had worked with, and advocated a return to the Old Masters instead. He declared in 1899: "My goal is now this: renovation of modern art through ancient art. Return to tradition through science and to nature through art."[42]

Werner von Hausen and Classicism

The influence of antimodern thinking on Werner von Hausen is manifest and explains some of his positions. His association with Emile Bernard and *La Rénovation Esthétique* played a major role in the development of his thought. In order to distance themselves from the Symbolist movement of their youth, perceived as Nordic, dark and Gothic, the antimodern intellectuals conceptualised a French Mediterranean identity which they referred to as "latin".[43]

40 von Hausen, "Minnen från samvaron," 606.

41 Antoine Compagnon, *Les Cinq Paradoxes de la modernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1990); Marx, *Les Arrière-Gardes,* 6.

42 McNeill, *Au-delà de Pont-Aven*, 8.

43 See for instance Sarah Al-Matary, "Des rayons et des ombres: Latinité, littérature et réaction en France (1880–1940)", *Cahiers de la Méditerranée,* 95 (2017), read 5.5.2019. http://journals.openedition.org/cdlm/8812

Image 5. Werner von Hausen, *Pompeii*, 1926. Oil painting on cardboard, 51 x 64 cm. Private collection. Image: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis, all rights reserved.

The Finnish artist was attentive to the classical aesthetic developed as a result and drew from it a stylistic interpretation of his own. He infused a sense of eternity into his depictions of ancient ruins (image 5), rocky landscapes, but also into the stillness of his Nordic landscapes (image 6). It is quite remarkable that his oeuvre does not include many animated scenes, but mostly landscapes devoid of any human presence, as well as numerous still-lifes, and somewhat impassive portraits. With their soothing tones of blues and greens, their balanced and symmetrical composition, his works exude classicism.

In his *Souvenirs de Paul Cézanne*, published shortly after the mass held in his honour, Emile Bernard had concluded with a quotation from the painter that Werner von Hausen could have made his own: "We must become classics again through nature". Bernard pointed out that "classic here means in relation to tradition" and suggested that artists should draw their classicism from nature, rather than resort to studio recipes.[44] The contemplation of nature in search of a classical balance permeates Werner von Hausen's painting.

It may seem paradoxical that such an aspiration to classical eternity was the subject of a heated debate. It seemed to be particularly at odds with modernity. The polemical nature of Emile Bernard's art criticism encouraged Werner von Hausen to defend his artistic opinions in the Finnish press.[45] The Finnish painter took up his pen on several occasions and, like Bernard, he fought battles against critics and the art market regarding a production that did not fit in with the prevailing view on art.[46]

44 Emile Bernard, "Souvenirs de Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites," *Le Mercure de France* (1.10.1907), 385–404, (15.10.1907), 606–627.

45 See Mary Anne Stevens, "Bernard as a Critic," in *Emile Bernard 1868–1941: A Pioneer of Modern Art* (Zwolle: Waanders Verlag, 1990), 68–91; Rapetti, "Emile Bernard au XXe siècle".

46 Werner von Hausen, "Konstnärer och kritiker," *Hufvudstadtsbladet*, 14.5.1912; Werner von Hausen: "Bedömandet av konst" *Hufvudstadtsbladet* 17.11.1923.

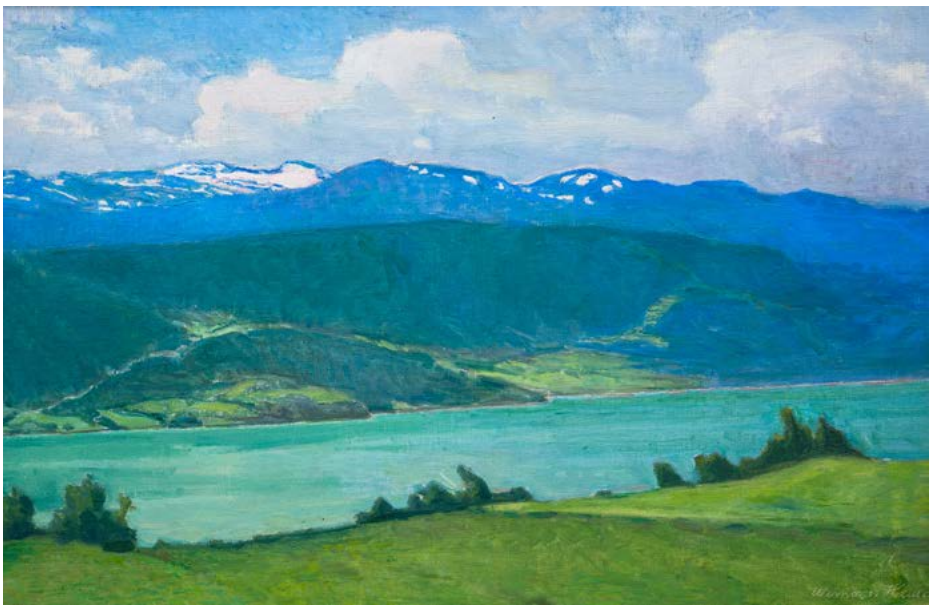

Image 6. Werner von Hausen, *Norwegian landscape, Vågådalen*, 1947. Oil painting, 47 x 72,5 cm. Private collection. Image: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis, all rights reserved.

His distrust of critics came to the fore in 1912, when he caused controversy in the newspaper *Hufvudstadtsbladet* by defending the artist Tyko Sallinen, whose latest paintings had provoked a veritable media lynching.[47] The virulent quarrel that ensued in the press, attacking the Expressionist movement and its leader, is part of the historiography of the modern movement in Finland. Werner von Hausen's initial intervention, mentioned in 1948 by the writer Tito Colliander in his biography of Tyko Sallinen, has been systematically ignored ever since.[48] A retrospective view of this "first battle" of Expressionism in Finland indeed struggles to explain the role played by an artist who deliberately distanced himself from the modern movements.

Paradoxically, von Hausen's position was not about modernism, but about the incomprehension of the art critics and the absence of a place for art that did not fit their criteria. What von Hausen was underlining was the independence of his own approach, which he refused to subject to external judgement. His criticism focused on the power of the press to make or break reputations and to label artists, thereby depriving them of their freedom. The critic retorted that this was the freedom of the press,[49] opening a media battle.[50]

Werner von Hausen repeated this position in 1923, questioning the impartiality of "those who live off the work of artists".[51] His off-centre position on the Finnish art scene was thus deliberate, although not sparing him the disappointment of a lack of recognition.

In his 1923 article, which may be considered a manifesto, Werner von Hausen castigates the avant-gardes both for their dominant position and for their volatility. "The lifespan of 'modern' art is barely ten years; after that it is obsolete," he notes.[52] This critique of modernism, which

47 von Hausen, "Bedömandet av konst".

48 Tito Colliander, *Sallinen* (Helsingfors: Söderströms, 1948), 229. The fact that Werner von Hausen and Tito Colliander lived close to each other in Grankulla may have helped to keep the memory alive.

49 Publius [A. M. Tollet], "Herr Werner von Hausen", *Hufvudstadtsbladet* 14.5.1912.

50 Rakel Kallio, "Taiteen henkisyyttä tavoittamassa: Ekspressionismin tulkintaa suomalaisessa 1910-luvun taidekrittiikissä," teoksessa *Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia 12*, toim. Marja Terttu Knapas & Marjo-Riitta Simpanen (Helsinki: Taidehistorian seura, 1991).

51 von Hausen, "Bedömandet av konst."

52 von Hausen, "Bedömandet av konst."

has its foundations in Emile Bernard's thinking, is accompanied by an attempt to balance realism and abstraction. The terminology that von Hausen uses borrows from Anthroposophy to note "an oscillation between the two extremes of Ahrimanic materialism and Luciferian spiritualism".[53] His aversion to a transitory modernity and his aspiration to an art detached from the contingencies of its time echo the motto of *La Rénovation Esthétique*, inscribed on each of the magazine's covers [Image 4]: "There is neither ancient nor modern art, there is art, i.e. the manifestation of the eternal ideal." Werner von Hausen expresses a similar idea when he states: "In summary, I would like to emphasise the proposition that a work of art has value in its own right, irrespective of the extent to which it can be attributed to a certain known art form, irrespective of whether it is 'modern' or not."[54]

Werner von Hausen's encounters with Emile Bernard reveal only fragments of his biography and of a career that spanned some fifty years. These few disparate elements, documented in various archives and thanks to the inventory of his collection, nevertheless shed light on the intellectual and artistic evolution that was theirs, and that of a fringe of the Symbolist generation who turned to Antimodernism in the first part of the twentieth century.

For Emile Bernard, Ivan Aguéli and Werner von Hausen, Egypt had signified a desire to break away from the modern Western world, and Aguéli had continued his quest in 1899 on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka).[55] Nevertheless, under the influence of the racial theories infesting reactionary circles, primitivism eventually lost its appeal, now rejected, and soon designated as degenerate. Like the antimodern intellectuals who held up an imagined Latin culture as a model, Bernard and von Hausen shifted their nostalgia to the sources of Western culture. Bernard followed the path laid out by the Old Masters, while the Finnish painter, captivated by the remains of antiquity, drew balance and fulfilment from this classical inspiration, which permeated his mode of artistic expression right through to his Nordic landscapes. The analysis of his contacts with Emile Bernard proved to be a valuable guide in the interpretation of von Hausen's pictorial work and of his unique place as a protagonist of Antimodernism in Finland.

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53 von Hausen, "Bedömandet av konst."

54 von Hausen, "Bedömandet av konst."

55 Ivan Aguéli regularly chronicled his trip to Ceylon in *L'Encyclopédie illustrée: Revue hebdomadaire universelle des sciences, des arts et de l'industrie,* no 406–417 (10.2.1899–15.8.1899).

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