



IVAR AROSENIUS
1878 - 1909

Front cover: The Artist (Konstnär'n), cat no 11
Inside cover: The Mill (Kvarnen), cat no 16



IVAR AROSENIUS
Gothenburg 1878 – 1909 Älvängen



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Clase Fine Art

Since founding Clase Fine Art in 2005, Andrés Clase has become known for his eclectic taste in paintings and drawings ranging from the 16th to the 21st centuries. Given his Swedish heritage, Andrés has a natural interest in Nordic artists. Having travelled extensively, he also maintains a deep interest in European artists of many nationalities. Together with his wife, Francesca Fiumano, he is a co-director of Fiumano Clase, which represents contemporary artists.

This is the third in a series of monographic exhibitions held within the space of twelve months. As Andrés says “Ivar Arosenius is an artist who is naturally very close to my heart. At a very early age I was introduced to the little book *Kattresan*, which Ivar Arosenius wrote and illustrated for his daughter Ewa (Lillan). It was first published in 1909 and many times subsequently, most recently in 2013. Arosenius’s wonderfully playful, yet serious, work has always fascinated me. It is almost twenty years ago that I had the great pleasure of acquiring my first work by this serious jester.”

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I must thank, as always, my wife Francesca for her support, and for listening to me talking for years about Ivar Arosenius. Christina Cadogan has also been closely involved in the project. Isabella Nilsson in Stockholm has been invaluable in introducing me to a number of experts in the field. Carl-Johan Olsson and Anders Svensson at Nationalmuseum in Stockholm have provided kind assistance, as has Eva Nygårds at Gothenburg Museum of Art. Carl Otto Werkelid has for many years also encouraged my work on this project. Mats Malm, whom I met much more recently, has kindly provided a wealth of detail previously unknown to me. I must thank him especially for his valuable contribution to the cataloguing of *Wedding, Paris* (cat no 9).

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I would also like to thank Joanna Persman for our many conversations and for writing the essay at the beginning of this catalogue (original text in Swedish on pp 62-64), catalogue notes 1, 8, 11, 18 and 20, as well as the transcript of the letter (cat no 32) and the chronology at the end. Any errors and omissions in the translations of these texts can only be blamed on myself.

Andrés Clase

Measurements given in this catalogue are always of the full sheet of paper; height followed by width. For more detailed measurements, including mount and frame, contact the gallery.

Ivar Arosenius – A serious jester

“Only the fool and the amateur soul wait for inspiration to start working. For the true artist, inspiration comes during work just as appetite comes whilst eating. First and only through diligent and uninterrupted drawing and painting does one learn to see. It is only when one sees that inspiration comes.”

Ivar Arosenius, annotation in a sketchbook from the year 1900

Only 11,043 days. Ivar Arosenius's life was short. However, his oeuvre became an important chapter in Swedish art history. He was born 8th October, 1878, and passed away from a ruptured blood vessel caused by a throat infection in the night of 1st and 2nd January 1909. Congenital haemophilia, which at that time meant a constant threat to life, was a shadow that shaped his life, and it was variously reflected in his creative work.

Arosenius grew up in a bourgeois household in Gothenburg. Artistic studies at the Valand Art School in Gothenburg and occasional courses at the Academy of Fine Arts and the Artists' Association School in Stockholm never quashed his artistic temperament. In his works, there are traces of his youthful bohemian life, summer idylls in the Swedish countryside, infatuations, disappointments, and finally, of his short family life, where the joy of his daughter *Lillan* outshone everything else.

During his brief but intense artistic career, Arosenius experimented with various techniques. He drew with pencil, used ink, painted with tempera and oil, and created countless watercolours, many of which he habitually destroyed as soon as he made them. The distinctive aspect of Arosenius's frenetic creativity lay in how he dissolved the boundaries between dream and reality. He moved between extremes, from light to dark, from the backyards of Gothenburg to the fantasy of Arcadia, from the decadence of nightlife and urban clamour to family life in the countryside. His images pulse with humour and a lust for life, while at the same time trembling with existential anxiety.

Arosenius created a series of self-portraits and portraits of companions such as the portrait of the artist and musician David Lundahl from 1901, (cat no 12). Apart from portraits, he mostly worked with personae and rarely with actual individuals. The same characters reappear: Bacchus and Venus, Noah and the Ark, Susanna and the Elders, Saint George and the Dragon... Arosenius borrowed motifs from the Bible, ancient myths, and folklore to interpret in his own idiosyncratic way. Stylised environs served as backgrounds to his enchanting fairy-tale narratives.

When his images are at their most euphoric, they take the form of a riotous procession, where everyone participates in the same performance – life. In accordance with the wild aesthetics of the carnival, Arosenius tears down walls and assumes that art is a temporary form of existence. Therefore, his procession consists of serious comedians who have morphed into the roles assigned to them. In a bacchic atmosphere, they quaff life with a voracity only possible when each day could be the last. Lustful old men and little nymphs, Madonnas and harlots, greedy city officials and the bigoted faithful – they are all equal jesters in this democratic system of laughter that mocks everyone and loves each and everyone.

Many artists of Arosenius's generation sought impressions and experiences abroad. Apart from a few stays in Paris and Munich in 1904 and 1905, Arosenius himself was primarily confined to the Gothenburg region and, during his study years, also to Stockholm. Here, he frequently visited the artist's residence in Neglinge, just north of Stockholm, that the generous banker and art patron Ernest Thiel had established for impoverished talent. In 1905, Thiel purchased some works directly from Arosenius, they are still in *Thielska Galleriet*. Arosenius is also represented in leading Swedish museums such as Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, Norrköping Art Museum and Gothenburg Museum of Art, where some of his work is permanently exhibited in the "Arosenius room". His works are also in the collections of the National Museum of Norway and the National Gallery of Denmark.

Romanticised notions arise around artistic talents, often exaggerated, and especially around those who die young. Time fuses facts and anecdotes. However, as another great Swedish artist, Hilding Linnqvist, pointed out, to be a bohemian is often to make a virtue of necessity and only pleasant if you have money; Arosenius had none. In many ways, he did embody the typical bohemian, and the drunken haze is part of bohemian life. Today we know better, but during the early 1900s, alcohol consumption was considered to be effective against haemophilia. Arosenius was more or less recommended intoxication as a health cure. This motif runs through his artistic career as a life-affirming incantation against death. It is evident in the self-mocking drawing "Sorrow" (1902), where he explains also in the text that the bottle is empty, while he himself is drunk (cat no 10).

In the self-portraits we meet a young man who repeatedly stages himself. Sick and weak, intoxicated and eccentric! In the pictures, his fluttering scarves, worn hats, and long coats are the attributes of a flâneur, and a contemptuous gesture towards the bourgeoisie. In reality, these accessories were needed to protect his frail body from the sickness that through even the slightest bleeding could lead to death.

His feeble health was one of the inevitable parameters for Arosenius' geographical life map. However, his imagination did not care at all about any external boundaries. He often set out from what was around him but fundamentally reinterpreted it. He was inspired by Carl Michael Bellman and Gustaf Fröding, by Heinrich Heine, Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Oscar Wilde, and Bernard Shaw. Stories from *One Thousand and One Nights* and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales appear in the background as sources of inspiration in many of his works. But Arosenius was also interested in the philosophy of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Kierkegaard.

Arosenius is sometimes portrayed as a single-minded outsider. However, his artistic development did not occur on a cultural periphery or in complete isolation. He belonged to the artistic generation active during the breakthrough of Swedish Modernism. He himself turned away from naturalistic art. Neither was he interested in Impressionism. Instead, he was drawn to the symbolic and playful. He borrowed winding black contour lines and stylized details from the decorative Jugendstil. He was even more fascinated by the colouristic effect in early Renaissance art and amongst the Pre-Raphaelites.

In the autumn of 1901, an artistic clique was formed in Gothenburg. The leading triumvirate of this brotherhood was Arosenius and his Danish-Swedish artist-friends Ole Kruse and Gerhard Henning. The circle also included the actress Ester Sahlin, the writer Nils Döven Selander, the journalist John Hertz, the artist Birger Palme, the musician David Lundahl and others. Their characters reappear in many of Arosenius's works. These comradely portraits combine the expressiveness of painting with caricature's outspoken exaggeration.

The highest judge of taste and preacher of this brotherhood was Ole Kruse, who raved about Persian miniatures, religious symbols, and folk art. Following in the footsteps of John Ruskin, William Morris, and the Arts and Crafts Movement, the group celebrated folk art and the importance of craftsmanship. The influence of the serious Kruse was significant for Arosenius's technique but clashed with his sense of dark humour and his search for freedom. He favoured semi-fluid watercolour paint mixed with opaque white, reminiscent of tempera in its effects. Several of his works are gouaches, which, despite layers of opaque white, retain the freshness of watercolour.

One of the important phases in Arosenius's artistic development occurred during the summer of 1902. He was a guest at the parental home of his friend, the future architect Ernst Spolén, near Torsby in Värmland. Distanced from his colleagues, he experimented on his own. The days were filled with observations of the forest landscape, folk traditions, and the rustic architecture. However, precise observations never led him to realistic depictions. Arosenius collected impressions in real life but created from his imagination. Using a high horizon line, with land, sea, and mountains that meet on the same picture plane, he created a *terra incognita* which paradoxically appears as a familiar place. At times one can recognise something characteristic of Gothenburg or Bohuslän. But fundamentally, the environments he presents are idealised constructs – a mini-universe where winding rivers, paths, rocky outcrops, fairy-tale castles, and church towers ornament nature in a synthesised creative idiom. The Apollonian restraint in the background is often juxtaposed with a Dionysian frenzy in the foreground.

Arosenius liked to work with entire series of images, where elements of art and folklore mixed. *Ben Oni's Dream*, *The Caliph's Golden Bird* and *The Basket* are examples of pictorial narratives where he combined the robust with the lyrical, the subversive with the virginal, using sparkling colours.

He tried to work diligently even during severe bouts of sickness. His pace was feverish: he did not have to take long at all to get from the first to the last brushstroke on a picture-surface. However, the process from idea to realization was complex. The fact that the final work was created astoundingly quickly depended on him making relentless retakes of the same motif.

In 1903, Arosenius met Thomas Thodor Heine, who was one of the foremost German illustrators in the pioneering satirical weekly magazine *Simplicissimus*. Arosenius had previously attempted, with varying results, to establish himself in the Swedish humorous press but never quite succeeded. In his images, both small and large, he often directed the sharp edge of satire towards, amongst others, the priesthood (cat no 25) and the self-deluded bourgeois society's hypocrisy.

Arosenius also had lofty ambitions as a painter. However, contemporary critique often condemned his works as too illustrative. In a venomous review after the 1905 exhibition at *Konstnärshuset* in Stockholm, the well-known and feared art critic Georg Nordensvan wrote that Arosenius's talent needed cultivation. Arosenius responded in the satirical magazine *Strix*. He drew a bleeding horse, whose wings were cut off by a farmhand on the orders of a lofty gentleman dressed in a top hat and tailcoat, below the title "A Cultivated Pegasus". Everyone understood who the image was aimed at.

The last years of Arosenius' life were spent in Älvängen – a small community outside Gothenburg. For a short time, family dreams were realised here, which he depicted in tenderly idealized portraits of his wife Eva and daughter Lillan. He glorified motherhood in a way that evokes old icon painting and the classic motif of the Madonna and Child as in *Mother and Child* of 1906 (cat no 6). Again, Arosenius shows here his sensitivity to fine, soft, and painterly drawing. In several works depicting his daughter, such as *Eva and the tree of toys* (1907) (cat no 8), he retains the child's perspective and plays with the proportions in the shaping of the surrounding milieu.

Many of Arosenius's works are remarkably small in size without losing anything in their brilliance or expressiveness. However, shortly before his death, he told his friend Spolén that he was done with small sizes and wanted to move to larger formats. However, it was already too late for a new stylistic endeavour: Arosenius was whisked away at the early age of thirty.

Arosenius's art is a marvellous blend of fantasy and sharp humour, innocence, and decadence. At times he is brilliant. Occasionally he is slapdash. His creative idiom was a mixture of deliberate and intuitive strategies: virtuosity lay in refraining from complicated effects. The entire broad spectrum of emotions are embedded in his shimmering colours and winding lines. From anger and anxiety, to happiness and tenderness, as experienced at some point by every strongly beating heart.

|

An illustration of Robinson Crusoe, 1896

Signed *_IA_* and dated *** 96 lower right

Inscribed *Han såg sig omgifven af en krets infödingar.* below the image

Graphite and rubbing on paper

8.5 × 14 cm

3 ¾ × 5 ½ in

Provenance

Possibly Erik Arosenius, Ivar's brother, who certified the drawing on 30th March 1931 (on the old backboard);

Kar de Mumma (Erik Harald Zetterström - Swedish writer and actor);

By whom gifted to "Esther och Harry" in 1937 (according to a note by Kar de Mumma on the old backboard);

Then possibly by descent until 2005;

Little Bukowski's sale, Stockholm, Sweden, circa 2005

His congenital haemophilia meant that Ivar Arosenius was robbed of one of childhood's greatest privileges - fearlessness in the face of death. From his youngest years, he was obliged to remain calm and still, to avoid contracting wounds and bleeding fatally. This enforced physical passivity also meant that he could get extremely angry with his illness.

Arosenius read everything that he could get hold of: fairytales, history books, poetry. He also began to draw and paint from an early age. Many of these pictures from his childhood depict fights and battles. The present drawing is an example of adventures that were out of reach for him. At the National Museum in Stockholm there are some small cut-out paper figures that Arosenius created in parallel with his early drawings.

Arosenius frequently dates his works incorrectly and this is likely to be one such case, where the work would have been made earlier than the dating of "96" indicates.



HAN SÅG SIG OMGIFVEN AF EN KRETS INFÖDINGAR.

actual size

2

Study of a woman in profile, 1898

Signed and dated *AI 98* centre right

Graphite and charcoal on paper

15 × 11 cm

5 ⁷/₈ × 4 ³/₈ in (oval)



The smallest woman (Det minsta fruntimret), 1907

Signed and dated .1A07. lower left

Indian ink on paper

15.3 × 16.1 cm

6 × 6 ⅜ in

Inscribed verso by the artist:

"Det minsta fruntimret:

Nu är han ute och super igen det svinet. I stället för att vara hemma och uppfylla sina äktenskapliga plikter!"

"Now he is out drinking again, that pig. Instead of staying at home to fulfill his marital obligations!"



Study for *A tale of love in six tableaux (En Kärlekssaga i sex tablån)*, 1906-7

Graphite on paper
15 x 22 cm (image size)
5 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius (Lillan), at least until 1928

Literature

Asplund, 1928, p 230, illustration no 148

This fine preparatory drawing relates very closely to the six finished Indian ink and gouache drawings of 1907, currently in a private collection. They are titled: 1 "*Längtan*" (Lust), 2 "*En glad överraskning*" (A happy surprise), 3 "*Ljufva stunder*" (Delightful times), 4 "*Efter avslutadt värf*" (Duty finished), 5 "*Slut*" (The end) and 6 "*Epilog*" (Epilogue).

The suite of drawings relate to several other series by Arosenius where he explores the fantastical adventures of a prince in armour. In *A tale of love in six tableaux* we are introduced to seven princesses sitting in a meadow, longing for love. They are happily surprised by the arrival of the prince on his horse.

Our drawing is a more explicit study for the third tableau *Ljufva stunder* (Delightful times). There is little doubt of what the princesses are up to with the prince.

In the fourth tableau, the princesses are again dressed and help the exhausted prince back on his horse. In the fifth tableau the prince has departed and the princesses leave the meadow. Finally, in the *Epilog*, the princesses have returned, each with their baby.



5

Eva's clogs (Lillans träskor), 1908

Signed and dated *IA08* lower left

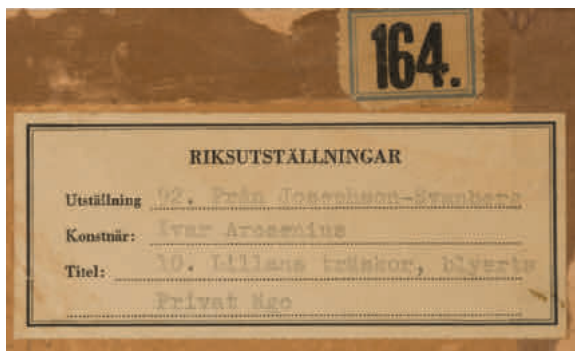
Graphite on paper

8.5 × 8 cm

3 ⅜ × 3 ⅛ in

Exhibitions

Riksställningar; utställning 92, "Josephson-Svanberg", cat no 10



6

Mother and Child (Mor och Barn), 1906

Titled signed and dated *Morloch/Barn* // *IA 06.* upper left

Watercolour on paper

11 × 7 cm (at longest and widest points)

4 ⅜ × 2 ¾ in

Provenance

In the collection of Ragnar Hamberg, Gothenburg;

Probably T. Wetterstrand;

Most likely Bukowski Auktioner AB, Stockholm, Sale 379, "Vårauktionen", April 19-22 1967, lot 269 (Mor och barn);

Hans Erik Börjeson Collection;

His sale, Bukowskis Important Spring Sale, Stockholm, 2018, Lot 300;

Acquired at the above sale by a private collector

Exhibitions

Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (The Royal Academy of Arts), Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius. Minnesutställning", 1926, cat no 258;

Galleri Färg och Form, Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius (1878-1909)", May 1944, cat no 111 (as watercolours 1906: "Konstnärens maka och barn tillhör dir: Ragnar Hamberg")

Literature

Konst i Svenska hem, band II, vol 6, 1942, listed p 300 under collection 463: "Direktör Ragnar Hamberg, Majviken, Göteborg"

5.



6.



Eva with red hairband (Lillan med rött hårband), 1908

Signed and dated .IA 08. centre left

Watercolour and Indian ink

Tondo

12 × 12 cm

4 ¾ × 4 ¾ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius (Lillan);

Acquired from the above by Ernst Bauer-Albrechtson;

Thence by descent until 2020

Exhibitions

Probably Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (The Royal Academy of Arts), Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius. Minnesutställning", 1926;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius Minnesutställning", 1958-59, cat no 296

Literature

Rudström, Lennart, Livets Knapp, Stockholm; Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1970, illustrated p 9





actual size

Eva and the tree of toys (Lillan under leksaksträdet), 1907

Signed and dated IA / 07 lower right

Tempera on canvas

41 × 61 cm

16 ½ × 24 in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius-Dich by whom gifted to;

Axel Adler;

By descent to Acke Adler;

By descent to Lena Adler Bidegård

Exhibitions

Kungl. Akademiens för de fria konsterna (The Royal Academy of Arts), Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius. Minnesutställning", 1926, cat no 26;

Ateneum, Helsinki, Finland, "Ivar Arosenius 1878 – 1909", 1926, cat no 23;

Kunstforeningen, Oslo, Norway, 1927, cat no 23;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius. Minnesutställning", 1927, cat no 23;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius Minnesutställning", 1958-59, cat no 150;

Borås Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius", 1988-89;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, Sweden, "Amateur/Eldsjäl", 2000;

Borås Museum of Art, "Lillan och I.A.", 2009;

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius", 2010

Literature

Axel Romdal, "Ivar Arosenius", Gothenburg, 1944, no 24;

Weibul et al., "Arosenius", Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 1978, illustration p 151;

Fredlund, 2009, p 202, cat no 39

Ivar Arosenius life was changed when his daughter Eva, affectionally called Lillan, was born. The girl follows him everywhere and, whilst drawing, he follows her. The child became a recurring motif in many of his works. She is depicted while she sleeps, plays, eats, or is on journeys inside the home and out in the garden. In several of these works Arosenius retains the child's perspective and plays with proportions.

The images have an idealistic, naive effect, and are an exquisite mixture of real situations and fantasies. When Arosenius created his fairy tales, Lillan was herself in the images. That is also how *Kattresan* came about - a classic of Swedish children's literature.



Wedding, Paris (Bröllop), 1905

Signed and dated IA/-05 lower right

Watercolour and gouache on paper

21 × 15 cm

8 ¼ × 5 ⅞ in

Provenance

Mr A. Wahlin at least until 1928;

Bukowskis Classic Swedish Art sale, Stockholm, October 2017;

Where acquired by a private collector

Exhibitions

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius Minnesutställning", 1958-59, cat no 97

Literature

Asplund, 1928, p 83, illustration no 36;

Ernst Spólen et al., Ivar Arosenius, Ole Kruse, Gerard Henning Minnesbilder, Gothenburg: Rundqvists Boktryckeri, 1956, p 85;

Malm, 2022, p 106, illustrated p 107

Painted in Paris, this is one of many examples where Ivar Arosenius subtly includes himself: a classic device used to bring the viewer into the picture.

The artist stands in the foreground with his typically shapeless hat. Directly to his right he has signed and dated the cobblestones, emphasising the blurred lines between the picture and reality.

In front of us Arosenius depicts a scene of apparent stark social contrasts. The brightly clad newlyweds with their abundant flowers are flanked by Parisians in the narrow and bleak streets of Paris, far from any boulevards. *Wedding in Paris* is one of the finest examples of Arosenius's commentary on life and its ebbs and flows.



Sorrow (Sorg), 1902

Signed *I. Arosenius* upper left, titled "SORG" upper right and dated *ANNO 1902* lower left
Indian ink and watercolour on paper

11.4 × 14.2 cm

4 ½ × 5 ⅝ in

Provenance

Probably a gift from the artist to Gunnar and Signe Bohman (see cat nos 26 & 27);
Thence by descent to the previous owners until June 2023

The artist's inscription "*HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE*" translates as "Evil unto him that thinks evil of it". The motto features on the Arms of the Order of the Garter, which was founded by Edward III of England in 1348.

Arosenius no doubt thought this was a fitting motto for the prescription of alcoholic beverages as a medicine for his haemophilia.



actual size

The Artist (*Konstnär'n*), 1904

Titled "*Konstnär'n*", signed and dated I.A./-04- lower right

Graphite and watercolour on paper

26.5 x 26.5 cm

10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ in

The winged Pegasus often flies in and out of Arosenius's images. The artist delights in mocking this iconic figure that usually symbolises, in many different ways, poetry and fantasy. Sometimes it is a protagonist, sometimes it is a bystander somewhere in the background.

In Arosenius's 1905 painting *Kvarnen*, a voluptuous Venus drifts away on a Pegasus. In the most important watercolour of 1906, *Livet och dess tross (Life and its drag rope)*, the newlyweds' carriage is drawn by a Pegasus. It suddenly veers from the staked-out path towards a romantic landscape. In the series of images *Ben Onis dröm*, the daring lover makes off with the queen on a winged horse. With ferocious speed, they flee to the island of eternal happiness where the horse is left to graze in the grass. A rickety Pegasus, akin to Don Quixote's skinny Rosinante, is found in the humorous self-portrait in the 1904 watercolour *Värdshuset*. These and other examples clearly indicate how attached Arosenius was to the symbolically loaded figure of Pegasus.

The present watercolour *Konstnär'n (The Artist)* is one of these variations on the theme of Pegasus and also a caricature of a successful, boastful artist. He rides amongst clouds that may well be dream-bubbles. With his eyes closed, cigarette falling out of his mouth and a nonchalant pose, he is aiming sky high in every sense of the word.

The smiling Pegasus, in fine fettle with its wings spread wide, gallops towards the heavenly realms. Meanwhile its droppings are transformed into gold.

This watercolour, with its diagonal, dynamic composition, the clear colours and the black contour line, is another example of Ivar Arosenius's characteristic way of working. He conveys a visual humour and can easily transmit an ironic multi-layered tale that remains open to diverse interpretations.



Portrait of David Lundahl, 1901

Signed and dated *1A/01* lower left
Graphite and watercolour on paper
21.5 × 19.5 cm
8 ½ × 7 ⅝ in

Literature

Sandström, 1959, pp 76-7, illustrated p 77

David Lundahl was a Swedish musician and painter. After travelling to Paris in 1897 he contracted pulmonary tuberculosis and was only able to return to Sweden in 1900 after a long period of convalescence.

Arosenius and Lundahl became very good friends and the image of the pale musician reappears throughout Arosenius's oeuvre.



13

The girl at the water's edge (Flickan i vattenbrynet), 1904

Signed and dated *IA/04*, inside a cartouche, upper left

Watercolour and gouache on paper

21.5 × 20.8 cm

8 ½ × 8 ¼ in

Provenance

Åmells Gallery, Stockholm, circa 2000;

Where acquired by the present collector



Venus and Diogenes, 1908

Each titled *Venus och Diogenes* lower left, and signed and dated *I.A./08* lower right

Watercolour on paper (4)

Each 9 × 14.3 cm (image size)

Each 3 ½ × 5 ⅝ in (image size)

Provenance

Eva Arosenius (Lillan);

Acquired from the above by Ernst Bauer-Albrechtson;

Thence by descent until sold at;

Stockholms Auktionsverk, December 2004, Lot 2036;

Where acquired by a private European collector

Exhibitions

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius Minnesutställning", 1958-59, cat no 224, 1-4

Literature

Asplund, 1928, p 236 & plate 45, cat no 576;

Sandström, 1959, pp 217-18;

Malm, 2022, illustrations pp 138-9



Venus och Diogenes is the final set of images where Ivar Arosenius used his idiosyncratic style and humour to create his own versions of classic tales. *Ben Onis dröm* at Nationalmuseum in Stockholm and *Leda och svanen* at the Gothenburg Museum of Art are the most notable other examples.

First we are presented with Diogenes lying in his barrel, sceptically observing Venus. She tries to tempt him with an apple and her curves. Empty beer-bottles are strewn around his abode. In the second sequence, Diogenes crawls out from his barrel. Venus awaits his advance with an assumed air of modesty.

In the third image we are shown that Diogenes has taken the apple and ignored her. Venus is apparently in a state of shock. Finally, the philosopher has lain down to rest. the butterflies that surrounded Venus almost like a halo seem to have departed, and she walks away dejected.

The landscape in the background is, as so often in his last years, taken from the landscape around Arosenius's home at Älvängen.







Venus ante Diogenem. 4.

JA
08

And yes, it was pretty good (Och si, det var allt ganska godt), 1903

Signed .IA. lower left, dated .03. lower right

Titled *OCH SI, DET VAR ALLT GANSKA GODT.* at the top of the image

Further titled and signed verso

Watercolour and gouache on paper

20.8 × 14.3 cm

8 ¼ × 5 ½ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius;

By inheritance to the previous owners until 2020

Exhibitions

Gothenburg Museum of Art, Sweden, "Ivar Arosenius. Minnesutställning", 1926, cat no 98;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, Sweden, "Ivar Arosenius Minnesutställning", 1958-59, cat no 35;

Akvarellmuseet, Tjörn, Sweden, "Arosenius" 2005;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius", 2009;

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius"

2010

Literature

Sandström, 1959, ill p. 96;

Weibull et al., "Arosenius", Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 1978, illustration p 62;

Fredlund, 2009, p 84-6, illustration p 85

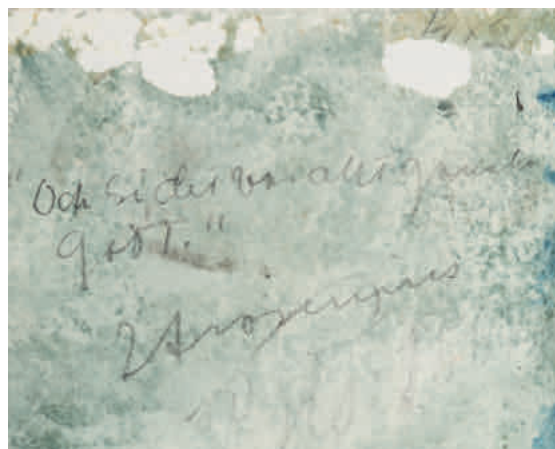
In this watercolour Arosenius depicts the Garden of Eden as an island where the tree of knowledge grows. Birds sit in the crown of the tree, which covers the entire island. The domesticated animals wander around peacefully in pairs below. A farmer-like Adam walks behind a voluptuous but not idealised Eve. Stylised fish swim around the island.

Above the island, on a throne, is seated God the Father, smiling softly with a distinctly red nose. Behind him the sun appears like a halo, and he is surrounded by trombone-blowing cherubs (see also cat no 25).

The manner in which the title at the top has been written, and the distinctive red and blue hues, relate closely to colours often used regionally both in churches and domestic decorative paintings at the time. It is not impossible that Arosenius was also inspired by the painting 'Neptune and Amphitrite' by Frans Francken the Younger, which is in the Gothenburg Museum of Art. The fish in the sea and the butterfly-like wings of the cherubs are strongly reminiscent of Francken's work.



Fig. 1
'Neptune and Amphitrite' by Frans Francken the Younger.
Image courtesy of Gothenburg Museum of Art



verso



The Mill (Kvarnen), 1906

Signed and dated *IA 06* lower right

Oil and tempera on canvas

89 × 125 cm

35 × 49 ¼ in

Provenance

Commissioned from the artist by Ragnar and Elsa Hamberg;

Thence by descent in the family

Exhibitions

Gallery Färg och Form, Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius (1878-1909)", May 1944;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius, the collection of Ragnar and Elsa Hamberg", 1949;

Borås Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius", 1988-89;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius", 2009;

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius", 2010

Literature

Asplund, 1928, pp 188-189, illustration no 23 (as *Kvarnen*);

Sandström 1959, pp 133-134, 144, 169 & 261;

Fredlund, 2009, p 200, cat no 19 (as *Bacchi Kvarn*)

The Mill depicts a queue of downtrodden characters making their way into a summer pavilion. They emerge on the other side reborn: youthful, joyous, and inebriated.

The landscape, wildlife and flowers are all bright and positive on the right-hand side, while what has been left behind is dull, grey and dying. As so often, Arosenius hints at the supposed healing powers of the consumption of alcohol, which he had been told was a scientific fact.

When Arosenius first presented the painting to Mr. Ragnar Hamberg and his wife Elsa, she disliked the long tongues hanging out of the miserable creatures queueing to enter the pavilion. The artist obliged and altered the painting, but on close inspection the pentimenti are clearly visible. The artist's strong lines are impossible to eradicate.



A Princess (*Princessan*), 1904

Signed and dated .IA./04. lower right

Watercolour and gouache on paper laid on board

32 x 23 cm

12 5/8 x 9 in

Provenance

The collection of Gösta Renck, Norrköping, Sweden;

Svensk-Franska Konstgalleriet, Stockholm, "Konstauktion", 2-4 December 1936, lot 10 (illustrated full page in the catalogue, plate I);

Acquired at the above sale by O. Stern;

Private Swedish collection

Ivar Arosenius arrived in Paris for the first time in January 1904. He befriended a number of Scandinavian artists who were active in Paris at this time. An artist he knew from Gothenburg, Axel Törneman, had recently arrived from Munich. The two friends both fell in love with the Norwegian singer Gudrun Höyer-Ellefsen. Whilst Törneman won Höyer-Ellefsen's heart, she felt motherly affection for Arosenius and often cared for him during his periods of illness in Paris.

Most importantly for Arosenius, Höyer-Ellefsen became the model for his depictions of princesses. *Princessan hos trollet* (in Gothenburg Museum of Art), also painted in 1904, is perhaps Arosenius's most direct portrayal of her. *The girl at the water's edge* (cat no 13) is probably based on her figure and she lives on in *Princessan*.

The princess is sitting on a donkey. This is probably Madame Hecqueart's animal in Coudeville, (cat no 28). A watercolour of the artist himself on the same donkey is documented.



Portrait of Gudrun Höyer-Ellefsen by Axel Törneman circa 1910-15



The Giant (Jätten), 1907

Signed and dated .I.A 07. lower right

Oil on canvas

64 x 102 cm

24 ¾ x 40 ½ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius-Dich;

By descent to Eva Arosenius (Lillan);

By descent to Astrid Constantine-Torstensson, Gothenburg;

Private collection, United Kingdom

Exhibitions

Lund University Art Museum, "Ivar Arosenius, Sigge Bergström, Gerhard Henning", 1908, cat no 111;

Valand School of Art, Gothenburg, "Ivar Arosenius, Gerhard Henning, Sigge Bergström", 1908;

Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (The Royal Academy of Arts), Stockholm,

"Minnesutställningen öfver konstnären Ivar Arosenius", 10 April - 16 May 1909, cat no 19

Literature

Fredlund, 2009, p 203, cat no 50 (titled *Jätten med sjumilastövlarna och prinsessan*, with incorrect measurements)

Arosenius often reinterpreted motifs derived from folk tales. Trolls, devils, fauns and giants take on an allegorical function in his oeuvre. Arosenius is not tied down to any specific mythology but moves freely between different tales to create his own. His fantasies are given latitude to be acted out. In the present painting the Giant's position is emphasised through perspective. In his seven-league boots he takes giant steps across the landscape. On a hill beneath him sits a terrified princess in a red dress. The image is composed according to the anti-heroic tradition, meaning that the figures are placed in a tangible and accessible milieu. The viewer looks into the picture plane slightly from above.

Colour palettes are often influenced by light conditions. Arosenius preferred to work at night, and this is often tied to his ideas about the role of memory and imagination in creativity. However, the scant lighting could also have had a direct impact on his treatment of colour: How does one portray sunshine inside a dark studio? Arosenius almost never depicts landscapes in full daylight.



19

Susanna and the Elders (Susanna och gubbarne), 1907

Titled "*Susanna och gubbarne*" at the top of the image,

Signed and dated *IA 07* lower left

Watercolour on paper

5 × 5.5 cm

2 × 2 ¼ in



actual size

Susanna and the Elders (Susanna och gubbarna), 1907

Signed and dated .IA.07. lower right

Tempera on canvas

64 × 100 cm

25 ¼ × 39 ⅜ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius-Dich;

By descent to Eva Arosenius (Lillan);

Acquired from the above by Johan Ramberg (co-founder of Vinge lawfirm), Gothenburg;

Acquired from the above by a private collector;

Thence by descent

Exhibitions

Lund University Art Museum, "Ivar Arosenius, Sigge Bergström, Gerhard Henning", 1908, cat no 121;

Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (The Royal Academy of Arts), Stockholm,

"Minnesutställningen öfver konstnären Ivar Arosenius", 10 April - 16 May 1909, cat no 21;

The Baltic Exhibition, Malmö, 1914, cat no 1852;

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius", 1958-59, cat no 324;

Borås Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius", 1988-89

Literature

Asplund, 1928, p 167 and plate no 17;

Ernst Spolén et al, 1956, "Minnesbilder", illustration in colour p 111;

Sandström, 1959, p 181-182 (illustration), 210 & 274, no 125;

Fredlund, 2009, p 203, cat no 48

In this painting, Ivar Arosenius interprets a well known motif from the Old Testament. The chaste and beautiful Susanna, married to Joakim, is pursued by two old judges. When she rejects their unwanted advances, in revenge they accuse her of adultery. The innocent Susanna is sentenced to death by stoning, but the young prophet Daniel reveals the Elders' lies and their attempted rape. Susanna regains her freedom and honour.

This morality tale provoked great interest amongst artists throughout the ages. The subject was painted by, among others, Jacopo Tintoretto, Artemisia Gentileschi and Peter Paul Rubens, whose version from 1614 could have been studied by Arosenius at the *Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm.

Arosenius's version of this fundamentally serious subject is wryly playful. Jokes and laughter are his way of expressing antipathy towards the formal manner. Even though his Susanna evades the Elders' advances, she seems mildly amused rather than frightened. Her naked, almost burly, full-figured body is contained within continuous contour lines.

The men are dressed in Orientalist costumes that Arosenius could have borrowed from any number of fairytale illustrations. The meadow in the foreground is covered with stylised flowers, and recalls the pattern of a Tabriz carpet.

The painting is an example of how Arosenius would use classic motifs in order to freely rearrange environments, interpretative frameworks and conventions in his own tales. Arosenius returned to the subject of Susanna and the Elders in different versions in his drawings and watercolours. In the small watercolour (cat no 19) with the same title as the present work, Susanna seems able to deal with her tormentors by herself.







The Emperor of Honolulu (Honolulu Kejsare), 1908

Titled "*Honolulu Kejsare*" lower left, signed and dated -1A08- lower right

Watercolour on paper

18.5 × 17.5 cm

7 ¼ × 6 ⅞ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius, at least until 1928

Literature

Asplund, 1928, p 161, cat no 586

"His Highness of Honolulu

Emperor of Honolulu he sits on his throne,
 Women with little palm-leafs, they cool his person,
 And well-fed missionaries that swam out like rafts
 Are served to his majesty from a big cauldron,
 And wine from many a pretty bottle he merrily swallows down,
 And in a greasy state of well-being he looks upon life
 [...]"

Verse, in Swedish, found in the manuscript *Vällingklockan* by Ivar Arosenius, reproduced in Asplund, 1928, pp 161-2



"Hawaii"

-1907-

22

Beer hall (Ölkafféet), 1900

Signed and dated *l.a.* 1900 lower left
Watercolour and ink on paper (recto)
Graphite drawing (verso)
15.5 x 18.5 cm
6 1/8 x 7 1/4 in



verso



Orchestra (Orkester, Slottsskogen), 1903

Signed and dated .IA/03., inside a heart-shape, lower left
 Watercolour and gouache on paper
 30 × 17 cm
 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius, at least until 1928;
 Bukowski Auktioner AB, Stockholm, Sale 379, "Vårauktionen", April 19-22 1967, lot 259;
 Hans Erik Börjeson Collection;
 His sale, Bukowskis Important Spring Sale, Stockholm, 2018, lot 306;
 Where acquired by the present collector

Exhibitions

Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (The Royal Academy of Arts), Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius. Minnesutställning", 1926, cat no 105;
 Galleri Färg och Form, Stockholm, "Ivar Arosenius (1878-1909)", May 1944, cat no 24

Literature

Asplund, 1928, p 138 and ill Plate 1, cat no 105

In this watercolour Arosenius offers up another example of his humorous interpretation of real or quasi-real events. The red nosed Master Sergeant plays his flugelhorn to the audience of a solitary beer-bottle. It is probably the day after the concert.

Slottsskogen park in Gothenburg still hosts concerts to this day.



24

Sermon (Predikan), 1901

Signed and dated *IA 01*, lower left

Watercolour on paper

29 × 17.5 cm

11 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ in



Portrait of Inga Berentz as Flageolet, 1908

Signed .A. lower left

Charcoal, gouache and graphite on paper

20.5 x 12 cm

8 1/8 x 4 3/4 in

Inga Sofie Berentz (1878 - 1962) was an exact contemporary of Ivar Arosenius. She was an actress and operetta singer who starred in the 1908 short film "*Dance from Surcouf*" as Flageolet.

It is not known if Arosenius was present at the filming, or if he made the portrait after having seen the finished work.



Ester Sahlin and Gunnar Bohman

Signed and dated IA -97 upper left

Graphite on paper

9 × 9.5 cm

3 ½ × 3 ¾ in

Ester Sahlin (1881 - 1959) was an actress who started her career in Gothenburg. During the years 1901-1903, she and Ivar Arosenius had an intermittent but passionate relationship. Arosenius frequently depicted Sahlin during these years.

Gunnar Bohman (1882 - 1963) was also an actor who started out in Gothenburg, later becoming a composer and musician. He was for some years part of Arosenius's circle of friends. *Sorg* (cat no 10) was most probably a gift from Arosenius to Bohman.

The dating of the drawing is questionable as it would make Sahlin and Bohman sixteen and fifteen years old respectively.



27

Ester Sahlin and Gunnar Bohman onstage

Signed IA lower right

Graphite, charcoal and gouache on paper

11 × 13.5 cm

4 3/8 × 5 1/4 in



actual size

Madame Hecquard, 1904

Signed and dated -1A04, lower left
Watercolour on paper
13.5 × 17.5 cm
5 ¼ × 6 ⅞ in

Provenance

Agne Rundqvist, Gothenburg

Exhibitions

Gothenburg Museum of Art, "Ivar Arosenius Minnesutställning", 1958-59, cat no 76

Description

In the summer of 1904, Ivar Arosenius and Axel Törneman left Paris for a little fishing village, Coudeville, in Normandy. They checked into the simple inn *Soleil levant*. Gudrun Höyer-Ellefsen joined them there two weeks later.

They stayed until sometime in August, and Arosenius made a number of works documenting their time there and depicting the innkeeper, Madame Hecquard.

Here she is herding the poor animals with a whip; she is said to have been quite mean, only caring for her donkey, perhaps the very same donkey appears in *A Princess* (see cat no 17).



For loyal service (För trogen tjänst), 1907

Titled "För trogen tjänst." lower left, signed and dated .JA./07 lower right
Watercolour and gouache on paper

8.5 × 8 cm

3 3/8 × 3 1/8 in



actual size

Portrait of a lady with a hat and boa (Porträtt av en dam med hatt och boa), 1902

Signed and dated *IA.02.* lower centre

Graphite and watercolour on paper

11.5 × 9.5 cm

4 ½ × 3 ¾ in

Provenance

Bukowskis sale, Stockholm, 18 November 1968, lot 221

Bukowskis sale, Stockholm, 27 April 1984, lot 274



actual size

31

Old Age (*Ålderdom*), 1907

Signed .IA07. lower left

Inscribed with the title *Ålderdom* verso

Graphite and grisaille on paper

9 × 13.5 cm

3 ½ × 5 ¼ in

Provenance

Eva Arosenius, at least until 1928

Literature

Asplund, 1928, "Fig. 70. [...] Kat. nr 544.", p 145



actual size

Undated letter from Ivar Arosenius to Edward Wilhelm Waller (1870 - 1921), January 1906

Signed *Många hälsningar/ från/ vännen/ Iva r*, on the last page

Graphite on wove paper

An eight-page letter with illustrations

One double sheet

20 × 26.5cm

7 ⁷/₈ × 10 ³/₈ in

Two single sheets

20 × 12.5cm

7 ⁷/₈ × 4 ⁷/₈ in

Provenance

Hilda Hansson (1888-1974), who was Edward Waller's partner in Paris;

Returned with Hilda Hansson to Sweden sometime after 1921;

Thence by descent through the family

Literature

Sandström, 1959, in part transcribed, pp 119-120

Ivar Arosenius and Edward Waller befriended each other in Paris and remained in contact after Arosenius's return to Sweden. Waller was a sculptor who is most famed for his bust of Arosenius, in the Gothenburg Museum of Art.

The dating of this letter to January 1906, is based on Arosenius's statement that he will get married in a month's time.

Below are excerpts from the letter. A full transcript is available.

“Käre vän!

Jag skall gifta mig om en månad med en Kvinna som heter Adler (från Göteborg) och bosätta mig i – Kolmorden !!!!!!!!!!!!! Ester har jag ej sett än. hm! Skåll! Jaså Ellefsen bor på Boul. Odessa. Jojo! Hur mår Kroghs, hälsa Reller från mej och Fru Krogh och gubben Krogh. Hälsa Eide (äro ni vänner igen). Hvad fan var det hans bok hette, han lofvade sända mej den, men jag fick den aldrig.” [...]

p1

[...]“Carl Larssons sup-leant (vits) i Inköpsnämnden som du maaske (vits på mån-sken vits på medikamenten för den tar man in i sked) sett i Le Svanska [Svenska Dagbladet]. Hur mår monsieur Leon (hofmästarn). Hälsa ´n från mej.” [...]

p2

[...]“Här i Stan finnes godt med stjärtgökar, men jag har motstått alla inbjudningar

”om kärlek viskade röfven! Jag har fortfarande långt hår, men skägget är väck, och jag har en opalring, och en guldring och svart sidenhalsduk och, en ametystnål!”

p3

[...]“sluttede jeg, at min Bøn var opfyldt, og fandt, at Guderne visste at udtrykke sig med Smag: Thi det havde jo dog været upassende, alvorlig at svare: det er dig indrømmet.

(Sören Kierkegaard)

— Är ovän med Kruse och sänder honom på Julaften en parodi på hans skådespel till "Julklapp" — "[...]

p5

"Har såldt en del målningar till Thiel (ingen vits, dem är för bra) för ett par månader sen. Dom är nu på hans ny öppnade Museum. Fru Thiel (Thiels f. d. hushållerska) har sagt om mina grejor att hon "beundrar och afskyr" min Konst." [...]


p7

"Om du kommer hit, vore jag dej synnerligen tacksam om du ville gå upp och "dikta om" hans utseende ett slag. [...]

Ja hej sålänge, Hälsa din fru så Mycket
många hälsningar från vännen Ivar"

p8

Om tre veckor för jag till Hon-
Konging och hälsar på Pabuse
och så ska jag besöka
den "Stupa på landet" där
i närheten, sen för jag
till Göteborg och hälsar
Komman och sen för vi
till "Stupa"
"Hälsar på jag satta till
jag med till jag stupa till
här och till och till
Vilja jag jag jag jag jag jag jag jag jag jag
till för och för stupa till"
Oso.
Här i Stain finnes godt and
Stjartgöka, men jag har mot-
stätt alla inbjudningar!
"Om kärlek viskade rösten!
jag har förtfarande
längt till, men stupa
är vikt, och jag har
en galning, och en guldring och en
Siden vilt duk och, en ametysten



Ivar Arosenius – en allvarlig skojare

Endast narren och dilettsjälen gå och vänta på inspiration för att komma i arbete. För den verkliga konstnären kommer inspirationen under arbetet liksom aptiten kommer medan man äter. Först och endast genom ett flitigt och oafbrutet tecknande och målande lär man sig att se. Det är först när man ser som inspirationen kommer.

Ivar Arosenius, anteckning i en skissbok från år 1900

Endast 11 043 dagar: Ivar Arosenius liv var kort. Hans konst blev dock ett viktigt kapitel i svensk konsthistoria. Han föddes den 8 oktober 1878 och avled av ett brutet blodkärl i samband med en halsinfektion på natten mellan den 1 och den 2 januari 1909. Den medfödda blödarsjukan, som på den tiden innebar ett konstant livshot, var en skugga som präglade hans liv och som på olika sätt avspeglades i hans skapande.

Arosenius växte upp i ett borgerligt hem i Göteborg. Konstnärliga studier vid Valand konstskola i Göteborg och enstaka kurser vid Konstakademien respektive Konstnärsförbundets skola i Stockholm kuvade aldrig hans konstnärliga temperament. I hans verk finns spår av ungdomens bohemliv, sommaridyller på den svenska landsbygden, förälskelser, besvikelser och till slut av det korta familjelivet, där lyckan över dottern Lillan överglänste allt annat.

Under sin korta men intensiva konstnärsbana prövade Arosenius olika tekniker. Han tecknade med blyerts, använde tusch, målade med tempera och olja och skapade otaliga akvareller, som han också förstörde på löpande band. Det mest karaktäristiska för Arosenius frenetiska skapande var hur han löste upp gränsen mellan dröm och verklighet. Han rörde sig mellan ytterligheter: Från ljus till dunkel. Från Göteborgs bakgårdar till fantasins Arkadien. Från krogslivsdekadens och storstadsspleen till familjelivet på landet. Hans bilder vibrerar av livslust och humor, medan de samtidigt skakar av dödsångest.

Arosenius skapade en hel rad självporträtt och kamratporträtt (till exempel porträttet av konstnären och musikern *David Lundahl*, 1901). Men utöver porträtten arbetade han oftast med karaktärer och sällan med individer. Samma rollfigurer återkommer: Bacchus och Venus, Noak och arken, Susanna och gubbarna, Sankt Göran med draken ... Arosenius lånade motiv från bibeln, gamla myter och folksagor för att tolka dem på sitt egensinniga sätt. Stilerade miljöer fungerar som fonder för hans sagoskimrande berättelser.

När bilderna är som mest euforiska tar de form som att karnevaliskt upptåg, där alla deltar i samma konststycke – livet. Enligt karnevalens sjövlida estetik river Arosenius murar och förutsätter att konsten är en tillfällig form av existensen. Hans folktåg består därför av seriösa komedianter, som har vuxit samman med den roll som tilldelats dem. I en karnevalisk stämning insuper de livet med en sådan glupskhet som bara är möjlig när varje dag kan vara den sista. Lystna gubbar och små nymfer, madonnor och skökor, giriga stadspampar och bigotta kyrkotjänare – de är jämbördiga narrar i detta skrattekulturens demokratiska bildsystem som driver med alla och älskar var och en.

Många konstnärer i Arosenius generation sökte intryck och erfarenheter utomlands. Utöver några sejourer i Paris och i München 1904–1905 var han själv huvudsakligen bunden till Göteborgstrakten och under studietiden även till Stockholm. Här besökte han flitigt konstnärshemmet i Neglinge som den frikostige bankiren och konstmecenaten Ernest Thiel hade grundat för medellösa begåvningar. 1905 köpte Thiel direkt från Arosenius några verk, som fortfarande finns i museets samling. Arosenius är också representerad vid de främsta svenska museerna, som Nationalmuseum i Stockholm, Norrköpings konstmuseum och Göteborgs konstmuseum, där han permanent visas i det så kallade Aroseniusrummet.

Kring konstnärliga begåvningar, särskilt de som dör unga, uppstår ofta överdrivna, svärmiska föreställningar. Tiden stöper samman fakta och anekdoter. Men att vara bohem, påpekade en annan stor svensk konstnär Hilding Linnqvist, är ofta att göra en dygd av nödvändigheten och endast angenämt om man har pengar. Arosenius hade inga. På många sätt förkroppsligade han också den typiska bohemen. Ruset hör bohemlivet till. Idag vet vi bättre, men under det tidiga 1900-talet ansågs alkoholkonsumtionen att ha en god effekt mot blödersjukan. Arosenius fick berusningen mer eller mindre rekommenderad som en hälsokur. Motivet löper igenom hans konstnärskap som en livsbejakande besvärjelse mot döden. Det finns bland annat i den självvironiska teckningen *Sorg* (1902), där han även i texten förklarar att flaskan är tom, medan han själv är full.

I självporträtten möter vi också en ung man som gång på gång iscensätter sig själv. Sjuk och svag, berusad och excentrisk! På bilderna är hans fladdrande halsdukar, slitna hattar och långa rockar flanörens attribut och en föraktfull gest mot borgerskapet. I verkligheten behövdes dessa attiraljer för att skydda den klena kroppen mot sjukligheten som genom minsta blödning kunde leda till döden.

Det bräckliga hälsotillståndet var en av de ofrånkomliga parametrarna för Arosenius geografiska livskarta. Hans fantasi brydde sig däremot inte alls om några yttre gränser. Ofta utgick han från det som fanns i hans närhet, men omtolkade det fundamentalt. Han inspirerades av Carl Michael Bellman och Gustaf Fröding, av Heinrich Heine, Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Oscar Wilde och Bernard Shaw. Berättelser ur *Tusen och en natt* och H.C. Andersens sagor skymtar i bakgrunden som förlagor i många av hans verk. Men Arosenius var också intresserad av Nietzsches, Schopenhauers och Kierkegaards filosofi.

Arosenius framställs ibland som egensinnig outsider. Hans konstnärskap utvecklades dock varken i en kulturell periferi eller i en fullständig isolering. Han tillhörde den konstnärsgeneration som i Sverige verkade under det moderna genombrottet. Själv vände han sig bort från den naturalistiska konsten. Han var inte heller intresserad av impressionismen. Han drogs istället till det symboliska och lekfulla. Den slingrande svarta konturlinjen och stiliserade detaljer lånade han från den dekorativa jugendstilen. Men ännu mer fascinerades han av den koloristiska verkan i ungrenässansens konst och hos preraphaeliterna.

På hösten 1901 bildades ett konstnärskotteri i Göteborg. Brödraskapets ledande triumvirat var Arosenius och hans dansk-svenska konstnärskamrater Ole Kruse och Gerhard Henning. I kretsen ingick också skådespelerskan Ester Sahlin, författaren Nils Döven Selander, journalisten John Hertz, konstnären Birger Palme, musikern David Lundahl och några andra. Deras gestalter återkommer i många av Arosenius verk. Dessa kamratporträtt kombinerar måleriets uttrycksfullhet med karikatyrens talande överdrift.

Brödraskapets högsta smakdomare och predikant var Ole Kruse, som vurmade för persiska miniatyrer, religiösa symboler och folkkonst. I John Ruskins, William Morris och Arts and Crafts-rörelsens fotspår hyllade kottieriet allmogekonst och hantverkets betydelse.

Inflytandet från den allvarstygde Kruse var betydelsefullt för Arosenius teknik men kolliderade med hans sinne för svart humor och frihetssökande. Han valde gärna halvflytande akvarellfärg som blandades upp med täckvitt och som i effekter påminde om temperan. Flera av hans verk är gouacher, som trots lager av täckvitt behåller akvarellens fräschör.

En av de viktiga faserna i Arosenius konstnärliga utveckling inträffade under sommaren 1902. Han var gäst i sin kamrats, den blivande arkitekten Ernst Spolén, föräldrahem nära Torsby i Värmland. På avstånd till sina kollegor experimenterade han på egen hand. Dagarna fylldes med iakttagelser av skogslandskap, folkliga traditioner och den rustiska arkitekturen. Men noggranna observationer ledde honom aldrig till verklighetstroga skildringar. Arosenius samlade på intryck i verkligheten, men skapade ur fantasin. Med hög horisontlinje, land, hav och berg som möttes på samma bildyta, skapade han *terra incognita*, som paradoxalt nog framstår som en välbekant plats. Ibland känner man igen något karaktäristiskt från Göteborg eller från Bohuslän. Men i grunden är de miljöer han målar en idealkonstruktion – ett miniuniversum, där slingrande floder, stigar, berghällar, sagoslott och kyrktorn ornamentar naturen i ett syntetiserande formspråk. Den apolliniska återhållsamheten i bakgrunden ställs ofta mot en dionysisk yra i förgrunden.

Arosenius arbetade gärna i hela bildsviter, där konstsagans och folksagans element blandades. *Ben Onis dröm*, *Kalifens guldfågel* och *Korgen* är exempel på bildberättelser där han med gnistrande färger sammanförde det robusta med det lyriska, det subversiva med det oskuldsfulla.

Även under kraftiga sjukdomsanfall försökte han jobba ihärdigt. Tempot var febrilt. Från första till sista penseldraget på en och samma bildyta behövde inte gå lång tid alls. Processen från idé till förverkligande var dock komplex. Att det slutgiltiga verket skapades förbluffande snabbt förutsatte att han gjorde ihärdiga omtagningar av samma motiv.

1903 mötte Arosenius Thomas Thodor Heine, som var en av de främsta tyska tecknarna i den mönsterbildande satiriska veckotidningen *Simplicissimus*. Han hade tidigare försökt med varierande resultat att etablera sig i den svenska skämtpressen men aldrig riktigt lyckades. I sina bilder, både små och stora, riktade han ofta satirens vassa udd mot bland annat prästerskapet och det förljugna småborgerliga samhällets hyckleri.

Arosenius hade också höga ambitioner som målare. Men den samtida kritiken dömde ofta ut hans verk som alltför illustrativa. I en ettrig recension efter utställningen på Konstnärshuset i Stockholm 1905 skrev den kände och fruktade konstkritikern Georg Nordensvan att Arosenius talang behövde kultiveras. Arosenius svarade i den satiriska tidskriften *Strix*. Under rubriken "En kultiverad Pegas" tecknade han en blödande häst som fick sina vingar bortklippta av en dräng på beställning av en högdragen herre, iklädd cylinderhatt och frack. Alla förstod vem bilden syftade på.

De sista åren av sitt liv tillbringade Arosenius i Älvängen – ett litet samhälle utanför Göteborg. Under en kort tid förverkligades här familjedrömmar, som han skildrade i ömsint idealiserande porträtt av hustrun Eva och dottern Lillan. Som i *Mor och barn* (1906) glorifierar han moderskapet på ett sätt som för tankarna till det gamla ikonmåleriet och det klassiska motivet med Madonna med barnet. Här visas också Arosenius känslighet för fin, mjuk och målerisk teckning. I flera verk med dottern, som *Lillan under leksaksträdet* (1907), behåller han barnets perspektiv och leker med proportionerna i gestaltningar av den omgivande miljön.

Många av Arosenius verk är anmärkningsvärt små till formatet utan att förlora något i sin lyskraft eller uttrycksfullhet. Strax före sin död berättade han dock för vännen Spolén att han var färdig med de små måtten och ville gå upp i format. Det var dock redan för sent för en ny stilsträvan. Arosenius rycktes bort endast 30 år gammal.

Arosenius konst är en vidunderlig blandning av fantasi och kvick humor, oskuld och dekadens. Ibland är han lysande. Det händer att han slarvar. Hans formspråk var en blandning av medvetna och intuitiva strategier. Virtuositet låg i att avstå från komplicerade effekter. I hans skimrande färger och slingrande linjer finns hela det breda känsloregistret, från vrede och ångest till lycka och ömsinhet, som varje starkt bultande hjärta någon gång har upplevt.

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Chronology

- 1878 Ivar Axel Henrik Arosenius was born in Gothenburg on 8th October.
- 1897 In the autumn Arosenius began studying at the *Slöjdföreningen* school in Gothenburg. He entered the Valand School of Art at the same time. As of 1st October, Carl Wilhelmson became his head teacher at Valand.
- 1898 Arosenius made his debut as a newspaper illustrator in *Den Röda Fjädern* in July. In the autumn he commenced studies at the *Konstakademien* in Stockholm. In November, when a space became free, Arosenius switched to the *Konstnärsförbundet* and Richard Bergh became his teacher.
- 1901 Arosenius returned to Gothenburg early in the spring. He continued his studies under Carl Wilhelmson. In the autumn he contributed two pictures, illustrating Johan Hertz's reporting from Gothenburg, to *Svenska Dagbladet*.
- 1902 Henrik Alfred Arosenius, Ivar's father, died on 14th January.
Ivar Arosenius exhibited in the Valand School of Art student exhibition in May.
During the summer Ivar Arosenius travelled to Värmland as a guest of his good friend Ernst Spolén, the future architect who was also to become his brother in law. Together they explored the countryside and made a few excursions to Norway.
Arosenius exhibited at the Gothenburg Society of Art "Autumn Exhibition" from November to December.
- 1903 Ole Kruse and Arosenius opened a joint exhibition in a temporary space on 31st January. Whilst sales were few the art critics were positive.
Arosenius contributed to the tabloids *Där ha' vi ägget* and *Klatsch*.
During the spring he showed at the Society of Artists exhibition in Gothenburg.
Arosenius departed for Germany in October, visiting Berlin and Munich.
- 1904 Sometime in January he arrived in Paris. Arosenius remained in France throughout the year (see cat nos 9, 17 & 28). He sent works home in the winter to be shown in the Gothenburg Society of Art "Christmas Exhibition".
- 1905 *Salon des Indépendants* opened in Paris on 24th March: Arosenius exhibited 86 watercolours, of which eight were portraits.
He was back in Gothenburg no later than 3rd April: Arosenius met up with his old friends and through Gerard Henning he befriended Ida (Eva) Adler, who was to become his wife.
At some point during the spring, Arosenius travelled to Stockholm where he stayed with his mother. During the summer he reencountered Eva Adler in Stockholm. Their burgeoning love intensified in the autumn when Eva Adler commenced her studies at the *Konstnärsförbundet*.
Arosenius exhibited, to mixed reviews, together with Oskar Bergman, Gerhard Henning and Arvid Jacobsson at the *Konstnärshuset* in Stockholm in October.
- 1906 Ivar Arosenius and Eva Adler were married at the Adler country seat, *Sämsholm*, on 25th February. A short honeymoon was spent there, and in March they moved to Åby where they lived in a flat.
On 4th July their only child was born: on 5th August she was baptised Eva Benedicta Elisabeth (Lillan).
Arosenius exhibited nine works in the *Salon d'Automne* in Paris throughout October and November.
- 1907 While a little house in Älvängen was being prepared for them, the family moved to Gothenburg sometime around Christmas.

Arosenius exhibited at the Society of Swedish Artists spring exhibition and received praise and attention in the press for *Lycksaligheternas ö*.

Hasse Zetterström published a special issue of *Söndags Nisse*, 1907/16, on 21st April with drawings and text by Arosenius.

Arosenius exhibited, together with a group of other Swedish artists, at the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung*, April-May.

1908

In the spring Arosenius exhibited at the University of Lund and at Valand School of Art, Gothenburg, showing several larger paintings (see cat nos 18 & 20).

In the autumn, he again exhibited works at the *Salon d'Automne*, Paris, including the large tempera painting *Venus*, and the series *Ben Onis dröm*.

In November a group exhibition opened at Valand in which Arosenius exhibited 125 works. The exhibition was his artistic breakthrough, universally lauded by the country's leading critics.

1909

Ivar Arosenius died at his home in Älvängen, from a burst bloodvessel, during the night of 2nd January.

En "Stupa på landet" där
i närheten, sen för in
till Göteborg och hälsade
Komman och sen för vi
Till "Stupa".

"Hälsade på sater, vilka
gick med trädgårdsträsk till
hållan där till en bestän
Vid på uppå landet grafon
Att för och förstrukt
Osv.

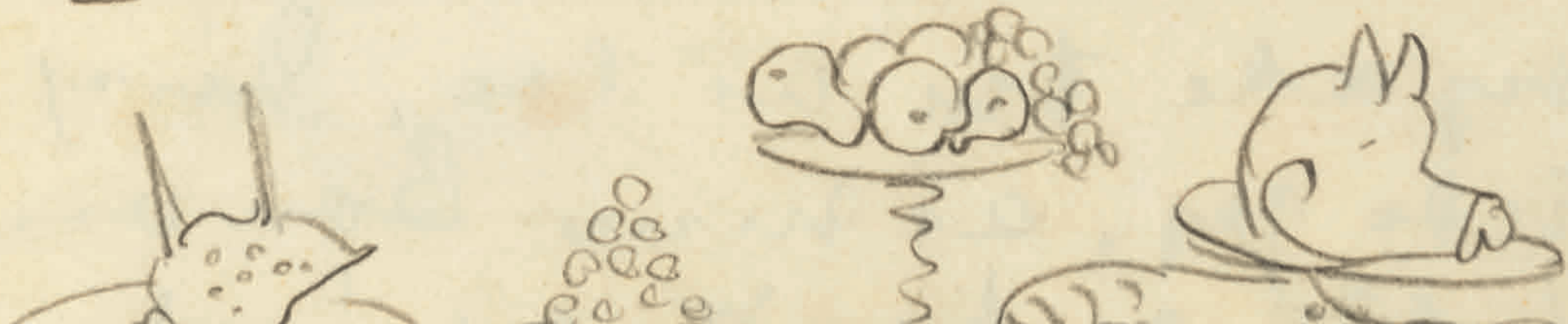
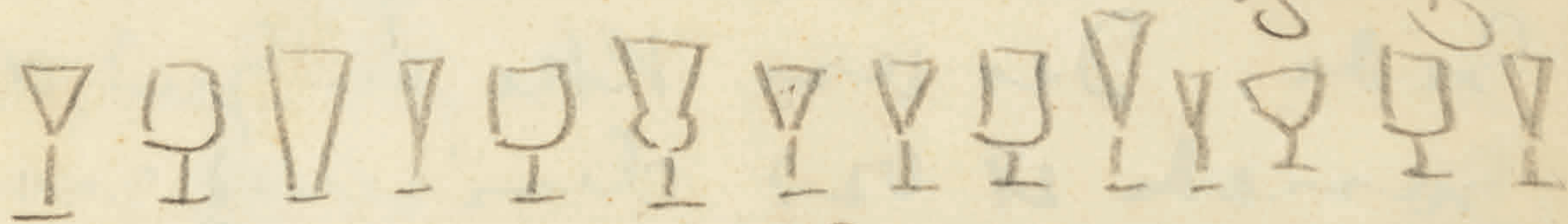
Här i stämman finnes godt om
stjartgöka, men på hos mot-
stätt alla inbjudningar!

"Om kärlek viskade röven!"



på hos portständer
långt här, men skäpper
är vacker, och på hos

en spalning, och en guldring och sent



m.



Ivar Arosenius is sometimes portrayed as a single-minded outsider. However, his artistic development did not occur on a cultural periphery or in complete isolation. He belonged to the artistic generation active during the breakthrough of Swedish Modernism. He himself turned away from naturalistic art.

He borrowed winding black contour lines and stylized details from the decorative Jugendstil. He was even more fascinated by the colouristic effect in early Renaissance art and amongst the Pre-Raphaelites.



Above: Self Portrait, 1902, Image courtesy of Gothenburg Museum of Art

Inside back cover: Letter to Waller (details), cat no 32

Back cover: Eva with red hairband (Lillan med rött hårband), cat no 7

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