

KONSTENS HUS
VID HAVET

TAITEENTALO
MEREN ÄÄRELLÄ

ART HOUSE
BY THE SEA

CHAPPE

—
Gustav Wasas Gata 11
10600 Ekenäs, Finland
—

chappe.fi

Media release

Happy Island – The Önningeby Art Colony exhibition in Chappe 9.5-7.9.2025.

"On Happy Island, a young painter could find his own way and live a carefree life in an artist community where they shared friendship, collegial support, a burning passion for art and a belief in a bright future."
Salla Leponiemi

The exhibition "*Happy Island - The Önningeby Artist Colony*" takes the visitor to Måland, "the most wonderful land for painting in the world", and introduces both the paintings and the everyday life of the late 19th century artist community in Åland. During the summer, more than 60 artworks by Finnish and Swedish artists who were part of the colony will be on display on the second floor of Chappe. The exhibition's audio narratives, compiled from letters and memoirs of female artists who painted in the community, shed light on the colonists' life. The stories are read by actress Lena Labart.

Finland's first artist colony was formed in 1886 in Önningeby, near Mariehamn, in the Åland Islands. Artists were drawn to the area by the opportunity to work in an inspiring company amidst beautiful nature. They captured on canvas the sea, the archipelago, the coastal and village landscapes, as well as the villagers in their everyday life, and went on painting trips to Eckerö, Käringsund and Signilskär, even as far as the Märket lighthouse.

The colony was part of a movement that spread across Europe in the second half of the 19th century, where artists gathered in smaller towns and villages to paint outdoors (*en plein air*). Outdoor painting led to a change in the way of painting: not only did the relationship between light and colour become a key issue, but a new, rapid painting technique had to be adopted in the varying natural light. Pioneering work was done in the Önningeby colony. **J.A.G. Acke** (1859-1924), **Elin Danielson** (1861-1919) and **Victor Westerholm** (1860-1919) became the first artists in Finland who, in exploring snow and winter landscapes, created their paintings from start to finish outdoors during winter.

The colony's women painters were part of the first generation of female artists in Finland, emerging in the 1880s around the same time as the women's movement began to spread. In the art world of the time, women had many glass ceilings to break. In contrast, Önningeby's artistic community was characterized by an appreciative and supportive spirit of comradeship; women were taken as seriously as men as artists. Indeed, the majority of the painters in the colony were women.

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Artists continued to paint in the village until the outbreak of the First World War.

The exhibition "Happy Island - Önningeby Artist Colony" is curated by Pia Hovi, PhD, curator of Chappe, and art historian (MA) Salla Leponiemi, whose biography of Elin Danielson-Gambogi, *Niin kauan kuin tunnen elävänä* ("As Long as I Feel Alive"), was published in 2021 (Gummerus).

The exhibition includes works by the following artists:

J.A.G. Acke, Fredrik Ahlstedt, Nina Ahlstedt, Elin Danielson-Gambogi, Ellen Favorin, Ida Gisiko-Spärck, Amélie Lundahl, Elin Alfild Nordlund, Hanna Rönnerberg, Eva Topelius-Acke, Dora Wahlroos, Anna Wengberg, Victor Westerholm, Edvard Westman.

Artworks have been lent to the exhibition by:

The Önningeby Museum, The Åland Art Museum, Parliament of Åland, Alandia Försäkring Abp, Anders Wiklöf's art collection, Ålands Ömsesidiga Försäkringsbolag, Åbo Akademi University Foundation, Joensuun taidemuseo Onni, Turku Art Museum.

Curator meeting with Salla Leponiemi and Pia Hovi 10 May at 13.00
Salla Leponiemi will be at Chappe 15-17 April; 22-25 April and 8 May.

For more information and contact details

- Visits, photos and other material: Janeta Asplund, Marketing Manager, janeta.asplund@raasepori.fi, 019 289 2514
- Art and artists, Pia Hovi, curator, pia.hovi@raseborg.fi, 019 289 2515

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