

## Worshipping the Sun Once Again:

### How Ida Thoresen's Artistic Work Came to America

During the early years of the Museum's history, visitors would be greeted by an ethereal white statue located at the top of the stairs in the alcove of what once was the Rare Book Room. The statue, made of Italian marble, raises its hands to the sky, staring off into the distance at some sort of magnificent sight. The object of the statue's fascination is the sun, giving the statue its appropriate name, *Soldyrkaren*, or Sun Worshipper. According to Museum records, the statue officially came into the collection in 1938 when Miss Elisabet Barnekow donated it after corresponding with museum founder Amandus Johnson. Though she was a sculptor herself, Elisabet Barnekow was not the artist behind *Soldyrkaren*. Rather, Barnekow inherited the statue after the artist's death.

Between the Museum's founding in 1926 and the 300th anniversary of the New Sweden Colony in 1938, Amandus Johnson had been preparing exhibitions and museum galleries. Johnson wanted to feature artists from both the United States and Sweden who could either lend or donate pieces to the Museum since the collection was in its infancy. Two artists that Johnson was considering were Elisabet Barnekow and Ida Thoresen.

Ida Thoresen was born in 1863 to a Norwegian father and an English mother. She spent her youth visiting relatives, going to the theater, and learning to model from sculptor Edvard Brambeck. She formed a friendship with Elisabet Barnekow and the two became inseparable. Between 1895

and 1900, the two studied at the Académie Julien in Paris where they learned to sketch, eventually setting up their own studio. They traveled all around Europe staying at alpine heath resorts or their families' homes. Both women came from wealth and Ida's father left her a sizable inheritance after he died in 1878. It is said that Ida was able to create almost 100 sculptures a week, including many that were life-size. *Soldyrkaren* was one of her most exhibited sculptures and was shown in several European salons along with *Livsglädjen* (The Joy of Life), her female equivalent to the Sun Worshipper.

Though *Soldyrkaren* was sent to the Museum, it was never intended to be displayed in one of Johnson's exhibitions. Rather, Thoresen entrusted Johnson to sell the piece for her through one of his art collector contacts who regularly found objects for the Museum's collection. Johnson agreed that if he could sell the statue, it would be displayed in the museum for a short time before moving on to a more permanent home. According to Johnson, he made several attempts at selling the statue, but it remained in the Museum's storage for years. The 1930s brought difficulties for many around the world — from economic depression to the threat of war. Ida Thoresen was no exception. She wrote numerous letters to Amandus Johnson asking if he found any interest in her beloved statue. Often, her letters were dismissed by Johnson who felt he had too much to do as both Director and Curator of the Museum. In the mid-1930s, a glimmer of hope appeared when Thoresen learned

*Soldyrkaren displayed in the alcove at ASHM, 1940s.*

*continued on page 2*

## Note from the Director

We are approaching what is arguably the most tradition-laden season of the year for Americans. It is easy to think that holiday traditions have been around for all time, when in most cases they emerged in the late 1800s. Sometimes we even lose track of how our personal family celebrations shift and change. It doesn't take very many years before it becomes something "we have always done."

Celebrating St. Lucia is one of those traditions. It is hard to believe that this tradition is relatively new to me, as someone who grew up in a Swedish-American family. I don't even remember hearing of St. Lucia celebrations until I was in high school. As far as I know, my immigrant ancestors didn't mark St. Lucia Day, or at least they didn't after they immigrated to America. It wasn't until my family moved "out east" that we experienced Lucia celebrations at churches. And then, a few short years ago, my children started participating in the ASHM Lucia program every year, and now it is the celebration that really marks the start of the Christmas season for us. Even my mother-in-law knows all the songs now!

As someone who used to be very resistant to change, I hated when people would say to me "The only constant is change." But I have come to embrace this adage more and more. Change can be unsettling. But it can also produce things that become dearly loved parts of our lives. It helps to keep an open mind as we see changes coming down the road. Who knows? In ten years, what was frighteningly new might seem as beloved as our favorite Christmas traditions.

*Tracey Beck*

Tracey Beck

### Worshipping the Sun continued from front cover

her statue would be bought by a Mr. Beadix in Chicago, one of Amandus Johnson's collector friends, but the agreement, though signed, was never realized. Thoresen's letters became increasingly frantic. She needed the money to pay off a loan she had in Sweden. From 1930 to 1935, Thoresen wrote Amandus Johnson fervent letters asking about her statue, relaying to him her financial troubles, and sometimes begging him for good news. At one point, she purchased insurance, hoping that if something happened to it while in America, she would receive some sort of compensation. However, the statue remained unsold and sat in storage literally wrapped in insurance paperwork.

By 1937, Ida's letters to Johnson dwindled. One letter exists from Johnson claiming he sold the statue, but it remained in storage and no money was sent to Thoresen. In October of that year, Ida Thoresen passed away, unable to sell her statue or see it sit prominently in a museum setting. It was understood from their life-long companionship that Elisabet Barnekow was Ida Thoresen's partner. She inherited Thoresen's estate, which, at least to Ida, included her *Soldyrkaren* statue. Around 1938, Barnekow donated the statue to the Museum.

Perhaps Elisabet was settling Ida Thoresen's affairs and wishes, or maybe she was donating a statue that caused such anguish for Ida, who never saw the fruits of her labor after creating *Soldyrkaren*. Amandus Johnson promptly sent Barnekow a note of thanks on behalf of the Museum and included a picture of the statue sitting prominently at the top of the steps in the museum's Grand Hall.

For years, the Museum has sought to find a different place to display one of Thoresen's greatest works. There was some discussion about placing the statue outside around the museum, but these talks stalled and the piece was placed back into storage where it remains today. Thanks to a grant from SWEA New Jersey and individual donors, the Museum has plans to have the sculpture cleaned by a conservator and then moved from storage to its new location outside in the east arcade. After restoration, the statue will be on permanent view for visitors to enjoy and most importantly to learn about the life and work of sculptor Ida Thoresen.



Soldyrkaren is currently in ASHM storage awaiting conservation.



Soldyrkaren is carved around the base of the life-sized statue.



# New Holiday Traditions

Make the holiday season magical this year with new events this December!

The American Swedish Historical Museum is thrilled to partner with the Fairmount Park Conservancy to bring Swedish holiday traditions to Lemon Hill Mansion. After undergoing an extensive three-year renovation led by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, the Fairmount Park Conservancy is excited to welcome the public back to Lemon Hill Mansion in East Fairmount Park with one of the most beloved traditions — decorating for the holidays! The theme for this year's holiday festivities at Lemon Hill Mansion is "Winter Around the World," featuring the seasonal traditions of several international cultures. Lemon Hill Mansion will honor Philadelphia's diversity and celebrate its re-opening by literally inviting the world through its doors! ASHM will showcase St. Lucia Day and other Swedish holiday traditions. Come experience how people in Sweden and around the world celebrate the winter season with beautiful holiday decorations and an array of exciting activities. Check the Fairmount Park Conservancy's website for activity dates and pricing.

Take a virtual trip to the Gamla Stan *Julmarknad*! Explore the famous Stockholm *Julmarknad*, or Christmas Market, from your own home! If you can't make it to Sweden for Christmas this year, you can still experience the sights as former ASHM Marketing Assistant Izabell Eriksson Andrén provides a live walking tour of the market while Assistant Director Lauren Burnham shares the history and tradition of Christmas markets. See the lights of the season and reminisce about past holidays in Sweden, or be inspired to plan a future holiday trip! This half-hour program will be held via Zoom on Tuesday, December 19th at 12 p.m. \$5 for members and \$10 for nonmembers.

Marvel at the magical lights of the season at Tinseltown! This year Tinseltown will be held in FDR Park between ASHM and the Boat House. Visitors will be wowed by large-scale light displays, an ice-skating rink and ice trail through the event, an ice slide, photos with Santa & Gritty, and a vendor and food market. Tickets can be purchased through their the Tinseltown website. Use coupon code *Museum20* to receive 20% off!

Let ASHM help to make the holiday season special for you as you make wonderful memories with friends and loved ones. Be sure to stop by the museum or visit [www.shop.americanswedihs.org](http://www.shop.americanswedihs.org) for all your Scandinavian gifts. *God Jul!*



Lemon Hill Mansion



Gamla San Market, image courtesy of Ulf Lundin Imagebank Sweden



Tinseltown Ice Trail



# Upcoming Events and Registration Info

There is always something going on at the American Swedish Historical Museum. See below for scheduled events. Please check with the Museum to confirm dates and other details. Refunds will not be granted for cancellations after the registration deadline. To register for events by phone call (215) 389-1776. Online registration is available through each event listing on the website.



## Toddler Time 10:30 – 11:30 am

On the third Tuesday of each month, ASHM offers programming to introduce Swedish culture through art, science, and literature in

uniquely fun and creative ways to children ages 2 to 5 years old.

Tuesday, November 21 – Fall Fest!

Tuesday, December 19 – Christmas Tomte

Tuesday, January 16 – Keeping Warm in Winter

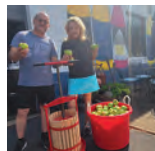
Tuesday, February 20 – Color Exploration



## Virtual Lunchtime Lecture: Karin Bergöö Larsson: Textile Designer Between Art Nouveau and Modernism Wednesday, November 15 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Join us for a fascinating Virtual

Lunchtime Lecture with author Eva Sundström for an in-depth look at the life and art of Karin Larsson. This program will be held via Zoom. \$5 for members and \$10 for nonmembers.



## Nordic Night & Cider Tasting at Liquid Alchemy Thursday, November 16 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Come out with your friends to try the special limited-edition cider collaboration

between Liquid Alchemy and the American Swedish Historical Museum, Rambo's Revival – New Sweden Apple & Lingonberry Hard Cider! Made with apples from our heritage breed Rambo Apple trees, this cider combines historical tradition with a modern Scandinavian lingonberry twist. Learn more about the Swedish origins of Delaware and test your knowledge of Scandinavian history and pop culture trivia to win great prizes! This event will be held at Liquid Alchemy Beverage, 28 Brookside Dr, Wilmington, DE 19804.



## Julbord Friday, December 1 5:00 pm

Start off the Christmas season by indulging in a Swedish holiday smörgåsbord prepared by Jeffrey A. Miller Catering.

Join us for a delicious spread of all your favorites, including the Christmas ham, herring, meatballs, salads, and bread. A selection of ASHM Christmas Market vendors will be open from 5-7 pm, so you can shop while you enjoy a drink and some hors d'oeuvres before dinner. \$90 for members, \$100 for nonmembers, \$45 for children 4-12. Space is limited and the deadline to register is November 20th.



## Lucia & Christmas Market Saturday and Sunday, December 2 & 3 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Don't miss this unique magical holiday experience! The outdoor Christmas Market

includes your favorite holiday deli items, Christmas decorations and gifts, and SWEA bakery treats. The Swedish Christmas Café will be selling holiday foods and sweets for your enjoyment. daily Lucia processions at 11:30 am and 2:00 pm and live holiday music throughout the day by folk duo Last Chance. **Admission Saturday: \$5 for non-members, free for members and children under 12. Sunday: Free for all visitors. You can pre-purchase tickets online or pay at the door. The ASHM Auxiliary is also accepting Deli pre-orders, and the form can be found on the events page of the website.**



## Virtual Tour of the Gamla Stan Christmas Market Tuesday, December 19 12:00 – 12:30 pm

Explore the famous old city Gamla Stan *Julmarknad* or Christmas Market from your

own home! If you can't make it to Sweden for Christmas this year, you can still experience the sights as former ASHM Marketing Assistant Izabell Eriksson Andrén provides a live walking tour of the market. This program will be held via Zoom. \$5 for members and \$10 for nonmembers.



## Virtual Lunchtime Lecture: Karl von Rydingsvärd: Baron of the Arts and Crafts Thursday, January 18 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Join us for a virtual Lunchtime Lecture by the ASHM curator

Chidstopher Malone about woodworker Karl von Rydingsvärd. Von Rydingsvärd was a Swedish immigrant whose passion for woodcarving made him influential within the Arts and Crafts movement of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. His story is one of Swedish nobility and American success. This talk will chronicle the life of Karl von Rydingsvärd from his time teaching women how to carve and build furniture using the Swedish *slöjd* educational method, to his most prolific period of furniture-making when he worked between his studio in Manhattan and his home and summer school in Brunswick, Maine. Von Rydingsvärd was integral to the spread of the Arts and Crafts movement in America through the students he taught, the work they produced, and his own work that still resonates with us today. This program will be held via Zoom. \$5 for members and \$10 for nonmembers.

## Genealogy Meeting Saturday, January 27 1:30 pm

Gather with fellow ASHM members and explore the branches of your Swedish ancestry. Genealogy Club is a benefit of ASHM membership. Not a member, no problem! Just add a membership on the event registration and you will receive a link for the meeting and your new membership packet in the mail.

## To Register For Events

call 215-389-1776, or visit online at [www.americanswedish.org/events](http://www.americanswedish.org/events)



## Pea Soup and Punch Supper: Ärtsoppa och Punsch Saturday, January 27 6:00 pm

Warm up on a chilly winter's night with a bowl of Swedish yellow pea soup and *punsch*.

Dinner is served with sharp cheese, bread, and dessert. Tickets are \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members. Pre-registration is required by January 24th.



## Semlor and a Movie Saturday, February 10 11:00 am

Treat yourself to a rich *semla*, a cream and almond paste-filled Swedish pastry, along with a cup of hot coffee and a

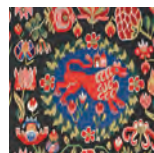
Swedish film. *Semlor* are often eaten before the start of lent, the Swedish version of "Fat Tuesday." Event tickets are \$13 in advance and \$15 at the door. Ticket price includes one *semla*, additional *semlor* are \$6 each. Walk-ins are welcome, or pre-register by phone or online by February 8th.



## extrABBAganza! ABBA Dance Party Saturday, March 9 7:00 – 10:00 pm

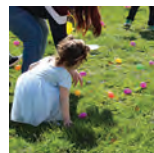
Break out your bell bottoms and platform shoes! What better place to celebrate the

iconic music of ABBA than the American Swedish Historical Museum. DJ Drake will spin the classics as everyone lets out their inner Dancing Queen. Highlights of the evening will include a dancing and costume contest along with a live performance! Tickets include Swedish-inspired bites, and there will be a cash bar. \$30 members, \$35 non-members. 70's attire is encouraged but not necessary.



## Exhibition Preview: Swedish Folk Weavings for Marriage, Carriage, and Home 1750-1840 Thursday, March 14th 5:00 – 8:00 pm

This exhibition features rare, historical, and artful carriage cushions, chair cushions, and bed covers woven by or for women for their dowries or households. Dating between 1766 and 1834, these textiles reflect the influence of trade and depict everything from exotic birds to Roman mosaics. The exhibition preview is free to the public with light refreshments served. Please RSVP online.



## Easter Family Day Sunday, March 24 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Introduce your little ones to Swedish Easter traditions. Children can make Swedish Easter crafts, dress up as

Swedish Easter witches, enjoy face painting, and take part in an egg hunt. Free for members and children 2 years and under, \$10 for non-members. Pay at the door.



# Images from Recent Events

Photographs by ASHM Staff



▲ ASHM Members at the Annual Meeting



▲ ASHM Staff picking apples for Rambo's Revival: New Sweden Apple and Lingonberry Cider



▲ Guests at the Crayfish Party



▲ Anna-Lena Bromberg and friends lead a Swedish sing-along at the Crayfish Party



▲ Guests at this year's indoor SmörgåsBeer



▲ Family and friends of Ginny Swedberg listen to Executive Director Tracey Beck's dedication of the new piano in the Grand Hall



# Contributions

## Do you want to make a contribution?

There are several easy ways to support us. Visit our web page <http://www.americanswedish.org/support/donate> or call **215-389-1776** for more information.

### New Members

July 1 – September 30, 2023

#### Patron

Dee Kaplan

#### Friend

Karen Patterson

#### Household

Sean McCreery  
John Pollack  
Brandon Prasse  
Julie Shriver  
Robert Stauble  
Tom Thunberg

#### Individual

Lenox Dare Butcher  
Valerie Cain  
Sunil Chopade  
Jenniah Herb  
Colleen Johnson  
Tomoko Kanamaru  
David Manzollilo  
Shannon O'Brien  
Susan Ryszka  
Donna St. Louis

#### Senior/Student

Constance Carter  
Hulda Engels  
Serafina Kennedy  
Beth Loven  
Ann-Charlotte Mahoney  
Monica McDowell  
Christen Sanderson  
Deanne Smith-Johns  
Kay Tornborg  
Liv Walberg

### In Memoriam

The ASHM community lost some very special members in the last few months. We send our condolences to their friends and family.

Len Gustafsson  
Gunilla Zafiroglu

### Annual Giving and Contributions

July 1 – September 30, 2023

#### Serafimer

Anonymous  
ASHM Auxiliary  
Swedberg Family,  
*In Memory of Virginia Swedberg*

#### Vasa

Julie Johnson  
A. Monica Kruse  
George & Elizabeth McFarland Foundation  
Erik and Nicole Muther  
Robert Teweles,  
*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

#### Gold

Anonymous  
John & Kristina O'Doherty,  
*In Memory of Virginia Swedberg*  
Ellen P. Morris

#### Silver

Ulf Aakerblom  
Ted Davis  
Nils G. Herdelin Jr.  
Norman Marcus  
John & Kristina O'Doherty,  
*In Memory of Virginia Swedberg*

#### Bronze

Anonymous  
Linda & Ken Alexy,  
*In Memory of Virginia Swedberg*  
Ingrid Cagan  
Roni Christensen  
James Hill  
Lissa Hussian,  
*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*  
Sharon Ng,  
*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*  
Timothy Nurvala  
Jere & Birgitta Paddack,  
*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*  
Birgitta Sellin  
Kendall Smith,  
*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*  
Robert Wong,  
*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

#### Friend

Anonymous  
Lars Ahlman

Linda & Ken Alexy,

*In Memory of Virginia Swedberg*

Tracey Beck,

*In Honor of James Roebuck*

Ingrid Cagan

Roni Christensen

Susan Durand

Jorgen Flood

Palumbo Family Fund

Janet Harriger

Robert & Faith Hedin

James Hill

Sylvia Holteen

Alice Hurwitz

Lissa Hussian,

*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

Gunilla Knutson,

*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

Tricia Lee,

*In Memory of Nancy P. Nelson*

Marlin R. Mattson

Karen McKillip

Sharon Ng,

*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

Timothy Nurvala

Donna E. O'Connell

Jere & Birgitta Paddack,

*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

Carolyn Peterson

Kerstin Radel

Christian Roden & Norman Lawrence

Joseph Rogers

Birgitta Sellin

Hillary Shade

Kendall Smith,

*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

Robert Wong,

*In Memory of Len Gustafsson*

## Your One-Stop ASHM Online Shop!

We have exciting news! You can now combine all your ASHM purchases and donations in one place – the ASHM Portal! This fall the American Swedish Historical Museum launched our online retail website. Through [shop.americanswedish.org](http://shop.americanswedish.org), you can join or renew a membership, give a donation, purchase tickets to visit the museum or attend an event, and best of all...you can shop at our online store for a variety of gift shop merchandise. Your account portal lets you view all your ASHM transactions. You can check your portal to see when your membership expires, what gift shop items you purchased, and access your upcoming event tickets. You can also access your donation records for tax time in case you misplace your original acknowledgment.

Creating your Account Login is as easy as 1, 2, 3! **Step 1**, visit [shop.americanswedish.org](http://shop.americanswedish.org) and select "Login" in the upper right corner. **Step 2**, select "Create Account" by entering your email address. You will be prompted to enter your membership number and Zip code, if you don't have your membership number no worries, just select "I Don't Have it". **Step 3**, fill out the form to create and save your password. It does help to have your email linked to your existing membership so if you don't have an email address on file with us, just give us a call and we can add it right away. Once your login is created you're all set! Visit the portal anytime to shop and purchase tickets to our amazing events throughout the year. If you need assistance at any time, we are just a phone call away, 215-389-1776! We look forward to serving you online.



### Among the benefits of membership are:

- free admission to the Museum and library
- use of the ASHM Swedish Film Library borrowing system
- guest passes
- subscription to the newsletter
- 10% discount in the Museum Store
- discounts on admission to most events, workshops and Swedish language classes

For more information,  
please call **215-389-1776**.

### Please print all information as you wish it to appear on the membership mailings.

Return this form to:  
American Swedish Historical Museum  
Attn: Membership  
1900 Pattison Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19145-5901

✂ Please detach here and return.

## Gift Membership Form

### Gift Recipient

Name(s) _____		
Address _____		
City _____	State _____	Zip _____
Telephone _____		Email _____

o \$35: Senior/Student	o \$75: Organizational	o \$500: Patron
o \$50: Individual	o \$125: Friend	o \$1,000: Key Contributor
o \$65: Household	o \$250: Sustaining	o \$2,500: Life

Make check payable to ASHM or Charge my: VISA | MasterCard | Discover

Account # _____		
Exp Date _____	Sec. Code _____	Zip _____

From: \_\_\_\_\_

Message: \_\_\_\_\_

*The official registration and financial information of ASHM may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

*Your membership contribution to the American Swedish Historical Museum is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

## ASHM Receives a New Piano!

The friends and family of Ginny Swedberg donated funds to buy the museum a new piano in her memory. Ginny loved music. She was a member of the Swedish Museum Singers, led the Lucia sing-a-long for decades, and supported every concert at the museum. We are happy to announce that the piano arrived in August and a large group of Ginny's family members and friends were able to attend the dedication on September 10th. We are grateful to have this beautiful instrument to accompany all of our future musical performances.



*The family of Ginny Swedberg with the new piano at the dedication.*

## Holiday Season at the ASHM Gift Shop

It's that time of the year again, and we are so excited to feature gift ideas inspired by our exhibition, *Karin Larsson: Let the Hand Be Seen!* Check out model furniture from the Larsson house, including a flower shelf designed by Karin and crescent tables from Lilla Hytt'näs. Pick up handicraft kits, including one featuring Midsummer Dance – one of Karin's embroidered canvases.

Other new arrivals include an assortment of party chimes, new Scandinavian cook books, dish cloths, and embroidered stuffed Dala Horses – perfect for little ones! The Moomins are also celebrating a major revival. These contemporary editions of the classic tales, in which Moomintroll goes on adventures with his friends and family in the winter, are a joy for all Moomin fans, as well as those just discovering this extraordinary world. Come pick up a copy of *Moomin and the Winter Snow* and *Moomin and the Ice Festival!*

Order select items on our new website, [www.shop.americanswedish.org](http://www.shop.americanswedish.org), in time for the holidays!

