

Notes on the Painter Eilert Adelsten Normann (1848 - 1918) – landscape and interest in landscapes.

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Visiting Lviv in October 2011 I had the very interesting experience of visiting the Lviv Gallery. In the collection of the gallery it was displayed a picture of the Norwegian painter Eliert Adelsten Normann. The painting was rather typical of his style a fjord landscape from a western Norwegian landscape.



The picture in the art collection in Lviv is most likely from Hardanger where Kaiser Wilhelm used to stay in the summer (see the images included). The painting has a very typical motive and is well representative of the art of the artist. The artist often adapted his landscape and scenery, which means that the picture in the Lviv collections is not necessarily an identifiable place. However it looks like a typical landscape from the Hardanger fjord area and most likely he was inspired by the Nærøy fjord in Aurland in western Norway. The art historian Anne Aaserud shares the Nærøyfjord as a possible geographical placement, however the landscape seem constructed as “fjord landscape” and is not necessarily a certain location.

As far as known there exists no certain history for the painting. However, the painter was popular in Germany and Central Europe and frequently purchased by collectors, galleries as well as different public and private institutions. The fjords of Norway were a popular motive and travelling to them was “high fashion”.


We can question why this kind of landscape so vastly different from Ukraine, Poland, Germany, Austria-Hungary and what is today the Czech Republic fascinated and created such an interest in just those countries ?

- Perhaps the difference from other European landscapes created the interest?
- Perhaps the mirror like fjords with little or no human activity created the interest?
- Perhaps it is simply beautiful regardless of cultural background that created the interest?
- Perhaps it just became fashion because the German Kaiser happened to travel there and liked the landscape?



Eilert Adelsteen Normann as a young man.



 Eilert Adelsteen Normann
At the end of his life.



Adelsteen Normann: From Raftsundet.

Eilert Adelsten Normann (1848 - 1918) was the most acknowledged and internationally known Norwegian painter of his time. He was educated in Düsseldorf, however he mostly worked in Berlin as one of the favorite painter of Kaiser Wilhelm II. He is far more represented in German museums than in Norwegian. His paintings are represented in many galleries among them Bergen in Norway, Budapest in Hungary, Cincinnati in USA, Cologne and Dresden in Germany, Leeds and Liverpool in England, in Stockholm in Sweden and Lviv in Ukraine. In his birthplace it is a dedicated gallery with 30 of his paintings. Most of his paintings show Norwegian fjord landscapes. He is credited with making Norwegian fjords a popular tourist destination. However, such a credit merely reflects that the European upper class of his time frequently traveled to the fjords and demanded paintings of the scenery from a number of different painters.

Eilert Adelsteen Normann was born in 1848 in Bodin in northern Norway. He studied in Düsseldorf with the Estonian painter Eugen Dücker from 1869 – 1872. Art historians characterize his style as "Düsseldorf" technique. From 1883 he settled in Berlin, but lived in Balestrand in western Norway in the summers. His "dragon style" house was bought in 1891 and built (like many Norwegian houses) from a pre-fabricated kit. The house stayed with his heirs until 1934. He exhibited in a number of places among them the prestigious Salon de Paris from as early as 1882. His paintings earned a 'Mention Honorable' in 1884 and he was awarded a bronze medal in 1889

Eilert Adelsten Norman was the artist who invited Edvard Munch to Berlin, where he painted his famous painting "The Scream". Thus, he was among the artist at least closely connected to one of the most famous artists of his time. However, compared to Munch, he himself was painting in a rather traditional style of landscape painting and to the taste of the market of his time.

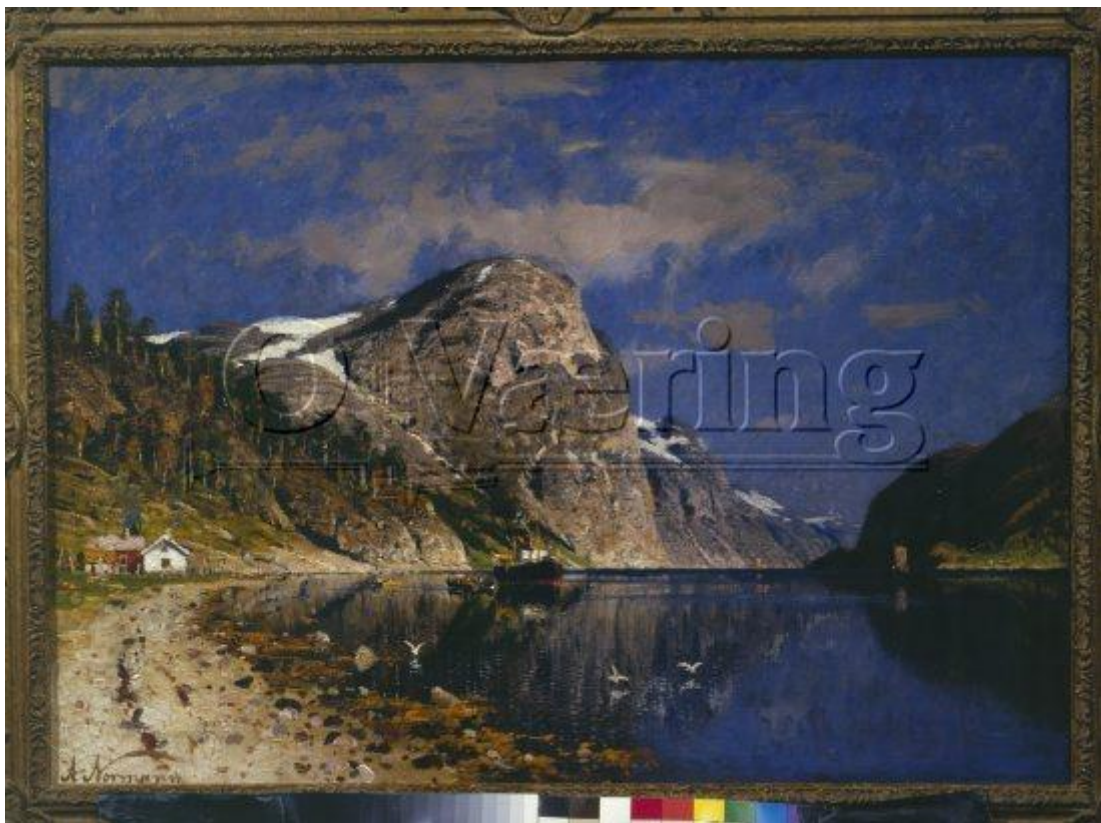
In the early 1890s, he was based in Berlin where he was doing good business selling his paintings to hotel owners. Eilert Adelsteen Normann had seen Munch's work when he had been exhibiting in Christiania (the capitol of Norway later to be renamed Kristiania and then Oslo). Normann wrote to Munch asking if he would exhibit his work in Berlin. Munch was so overcome that he packed up his exhibition on 20 October 1892 and went to Berlin where

Normann true to his word befriended him. Munch's work was placed in an exhibition which caused such a stir that the painters in Berlin split into two groups.

Even if the artist Adelsten Norman mostly is thought of as a traditional “bread and butter” painter in the "Düsseldorf" there are a number of paintings in completely different style. His style reflects and the large number of paintings of fjords and fjord landscapes reflects the market of his time. However, both his initiative of inviting Edvard Munch to Berlin and a number of paintings he exhibited in the Salon in Paris illustrate that he himself pursued other styles and was well aware of the contemporary development of art.

The artist died in Oslo, at the time called Kristiania, in 1918 from the Spanish Flu. A fate he shared with millions of others.

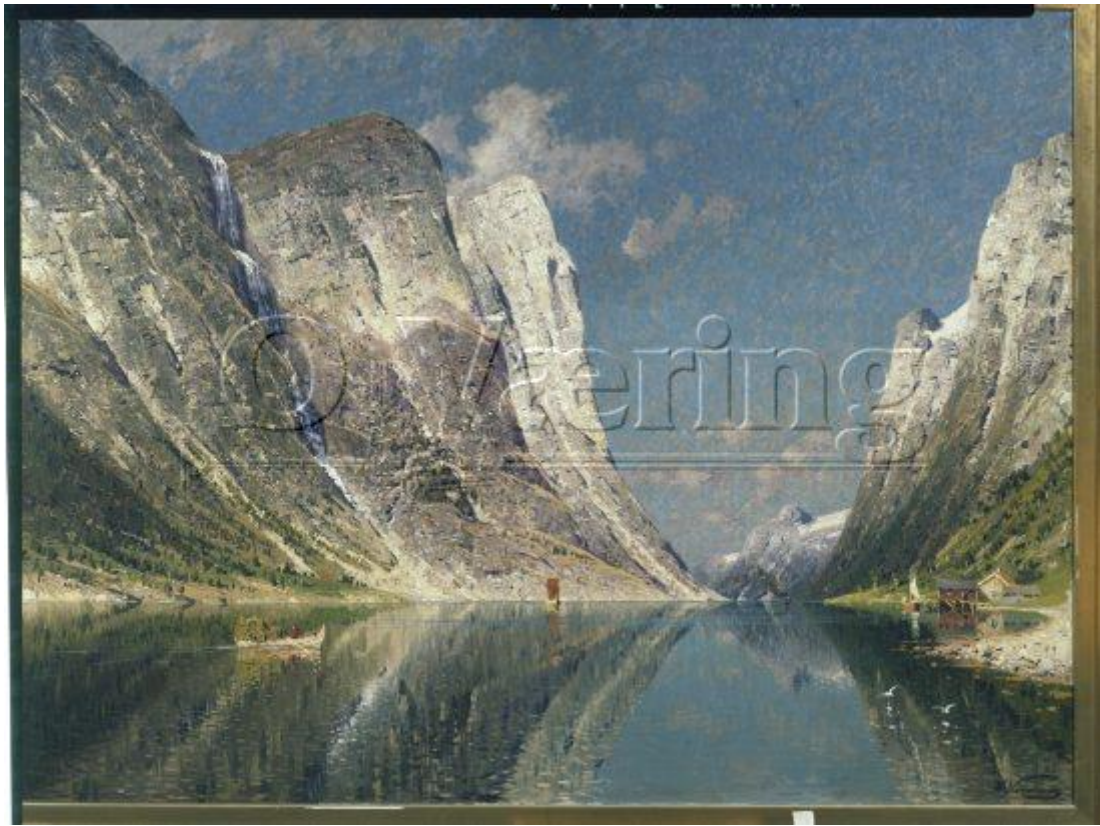
Adelsten Norman is well represented in both in private collections, museums and galleries. There are often a number of pictures on the market and the artist remains very popular.



The picture “Fjordboat in Hardanger” exist in the commercial photo collection of O. Væring.



The picture "Fjordlandscape with steamship" exist in the commercial photo collection of O. Væring.



The painting “Fjordlandskap with boats” exist in the commercial photo collection of O. Væring.



☞
«Fjordlandskap med båt» (Fjord landscape with boat)

☞
Eilert Adelsteen Normann





«Fiskevær i Nord-Norge» (1880) (Fishing Community in Northern Norway)



«Dampskip» (Steamship)



Berlin - Keiserens fødselsdag (Berlin the birthday of the Kaiser)



Høststudie (fall landscape)

Compared to other painters of landscape Adelsten Norman painted in a rather traditional style. The Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863 -1944) painted in very much his own style , like this painting called "Moonlight" from 1895 (Gunnarsson,2006: 183)



The British Norwegian painter Thomas Fearnly (1802 – 1842) belongs to a much earlier period of painting and this picture of Balestrand, the very place Eilert Adelsten Norman lived in the summers is in a completely different style, even if the mountains and fjord is the same (Gunnarsson, 2006:75).



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