

COLNAGHI

PRESS RELEASE

MOVING STILLNESS:

NORDIC PAINTING & DRAWING FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Colnaghi London— June 15, 2026 – July 31, 2026

Colnaghi London presents an upcoming exhibition devoted to Nordic art from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Shaped by both local traditions and exposure to modern movements abroad, the works trace a shift from naturalist depiction toward more subjective and atmospheric modes of representation, reflecting an evolving dialogue between observation and expression.

This upcoming exhibition explores a period of transformation in Nordic painting spanning the mid-nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth.

During this period, many Nordic artists travelled to and studied abroad in Paris, where they encountered emerging languages of modern art. These experiences informed a broader cultural shift associated with National Romanticism, where the influence of Symbolism and Impressionism presented Nordic artists with new tools to expand the boundaries of naturalist painting and to reconsider how their national identity could be expressed.

Where earlier Nordic art often emphasised the faithful depiction of landscape and the sublime character of nature, this generation increasingly filtered their surroundings through personal perception and cultural atmosphere. The exhibition traces this development, through oscillations between mimetic depiction and a more subjective approach to form, light, and tone. Positioned as an amalgamation of Naturalism and early Modernism, the artworks reveal a fluid tension between observation and interpretation. The result is a mode of expression characterised by a compelling push and pull between tradition and artistic experimentation.

Artists on view such as Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Hugo Simberg exemplify this synthesis, integrating mythic and symbolic content into distinctly Nordic settings, while Olof Johan Grafström exemplifies a more mimetic approach to capturing the sublime natural milieu of the far reaches of Northern Europe. Gallen-Kallela's *View North of Kalela*, (1923), painted shortly before his family's move to America, shows possibly the artist's last major engagement with capturing the serene nature surrounding his studio. The work is bathed in lush warm expressionist colours – the setting autumnal sun's rays ephemerally held by the trees in the foreground. Gallen-Kallela creates a skilful contrast between the thick brushstrokes of the body of water and the sky, separated by an evergreen forested horizon-line, and the delicately rendered thin branches and sparse pine needles clinging onto the warmth and light of the rapidly decreasing evenings.

The Model Warming Up is an extraordinary painting by the Finnish Symbolist master featuring a snapshot of a model taking a warming break between sitting for portraits. She is

naked mid-bow over a minuscule stove as if paying obeisance to the heat, a heap of black clothes temptingly in reach. The coldness of the room is palpable; her marble-coloured skin is highlighted by hues of blue on her legs and a feeble reddish tinge on her hands – divulging the Sisyphean task of the heater. The painting features a quadrant of negative space painted in rich earthy colours—imbuing the scene with a complex geometrical depth which suggests a deliberately devised scene off-frame. As such, the present painting gives the viewer an insight into the spontaneous and natural beauty of daily life in the house of the painter.

These two highlighted works exemplify the breadth and nuance of Nordic painting at a moment of profound artistic and cultural reorientation. The dialogue between artistic expression and mimesis in Colnaghi's upcoming exhibition will enable the viewer to find both acute similarities and differences between the artists' approaches surrounding the turn of the century.

Exhibition Information

Title: *Moving Stillness: Nordic Painting & Drawing from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Early Modern Period*

Dates: June 15, 2026 – July 31, 2026

Location: Colnaghi, 26 Bury Street, London SW1Y 6AL, United Kingdom

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 10am–6pm

Enquiries: press@colnaghi.com

Website: <https://www.colnaghi.com/>



Hugo Simberg, *The Model Warming Up*, Oil on canvas, 69 x 44 cm.



Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *View of Lake Ruovesi*, 1923, Oil on canvas, 69 x 54.5 cm.



Olof Jonas Grafström (1855–1933), Sami in the Kvikkjokk Valley. Oil on canvas, 179 × 105 cm.



Gottfried Kallstenius (1861–1943), Plum Twigs, 1895. Oil on canvas laid on board, 56.5 × 42.5 cm.