

Are you pouring it in Swedish style?  
– I asked my friend who was handing me a mug with tea.  
He smiled. Swedish style is not bad or good, it is until three quarters full.  
And, by the way, Swedish style is not about tea, it's about coffee.  
I can't even count the number of the Swedes I interviewed during my internship.  
There were three questions: why do you fill a coffee cup three quarters full,  
why do you wash dishes with  
a brush (not a sponge), and why do you lock upside down.  
Yes-yes, this is exactly what most people do.  
The answers were quite different. Some people tried to explain why they do those  
things (you can fill the rest of the cup with milk, using a brush is more convenient,  
water doesn't get into the lock), some people admitted not knowing the reasons.  
All these remarks could have remained little ideas for a playful book like  
"100 facts about Swedes", had they not indicated one important thing –  
the tradition and its perception.  
No one knows why a tea cup should be three-quarters full or why a lock  
should be locked upside down, but practically everybody does these things.  
It is unconscious repetition that creates the folk tradition. Study of traditions  
was my task during the internship in Sweden. Here is what I did.





House painting, that is painting techniques used by representatives of middle class and peasants to decorate houses, exists both in Sweden and Russia. It is most likely that the Russian tradition was inherited from Swedish because our artifacts were created much later than Scandinavian. In the middle of the 19th century, when industrial boom started in Sweden and their lifestyle started to change, our peasants just began to move from huts heated by stoves without chimneys to white houses suitable for painting. My task was to study the Swedish painting in museums and in books, discuss it with researchers and reflect on possible interaction between our countries in the field of traditional folk painting.

Since I have my own museum in a painted house and by a twist of fate I am a museum worker, I absorbed all the features of the Swedish museology, such as materials understanding, exposition building, text creating, working with complex themes, dealing with guests and local people, souvenir products.

Our trip started in Disa's country house, as is often the case, where we found paintings of 1934 - huge rosettes on the ceiling, a paddled-wheel steamer and a heart - images met in the Scandinavian folk art and almost not adopted by Russian craftsmen.

While the weather was relatively warm, I went to the North, in Lulea and Skelleftea, where I managed to work in museums, libraries and repositories and meet the researchers Robert Pohjanen and Kristina Friberg. There I first saw what I constantly met later on throughout my trip in many Swedish museums. These are folk art expositions on quite small areas and big funds with guided tours. The items are in good condition, according to Russian standards, most of them have registration numbers and cards. The main feature of the Swedish painting is its existence in the higher social stratum than in Russia, however, it seems that the comparison of population stratum of our countries should still be made. The items are 100-250 years older than those in our country. In the museums there are plenty of typically Scandinavian longcase clocks - items never met in the Russian tradition (although clocks were something we always loved and depicted, for example, on chests along with another luxury item - samovar).







Many Swedish museums function as cultural centers, presenting both permanent and temporary expositions, as well as platforms for events, lectures, work with children. This is practiced in Russia too, but our museums are still reluctant to organize some third-party activities, they are still behind the mysterious veil. The Swedes are already able to ask questions about exhibits and themes, rather than act as teachers. The Swedes reveal hidden stories (the Vasa Museum in Stockholm is wonderful in this regard, it tells us literally everything), keep the museum life open and simply work for visitors, not for themselves.

And, of course, there are wonderful souvenir shops, where hand-made things cost much more than in Russia, and indispensable cafes with indispensable coffee.

In the museum in the town of Umea I visited the exhibition of Querring Sapmi project – about minority in minority. Needless to say, such exhibition would be most likely impossible in Russia and here it represents best practices, it travels (some time later, I met familiar pink stubs in Jokkmokk). The modern way to convey the theme through storytelling seems to be the most appropriate model for such complex stories. It is important there are no +18 marks!

After the Northern part, which I will get back to a bit later, I broke my way to the central Sweden, in the region of Helsingland. I was able to visit long-awaited estates belonging to the UNESCO list. First of all, I was amazed to learn that it was local communities and farm owners who filed the documents to the World Heritage fund. This indicates high level of understanding the value of heritage, which Russian farmers are yet so far to reach.

Helsingland paintings are of great scientific interest and have some parallels with Russian paintings. I managed to collect materials on their artistic and cultural value, on the way estates match the landscape and on their roles in the traditional land use and economic processes in the life of rural Swedes. Some estates were turned into museums, others, like Kristofers, for example, are residential. This influences the cost of attendance (in the latter it was 500 kronas), frequency of visits, and some additional services, like holidays and tourist accommodation. In general, Swedish estates from the UNESCO list are unique examples of preserved living environment, which is now cared and



promoted by reasonable measures. It is important that the life of estates is controlled and, perhaps, (as later revealed in a conversation with specialists), estate owners should attend training seminars. However, this experience was useful for me not only from a scientific point of view, but also from a management perspective – I have already started to use the best practices in the Lion House museum. Needless to say, thanks to the foundation I was able to buy all the literature on the estates as well as some souvenir products.

I attended a remarkable exhibition devoted to the above-mentioned estates in the museum of the town of Gavleborg. This exhibition was dedicated to adding the estates to the UNESCO list and it was a kind of a reporting presentation. This relatively small exhibition presented all the estates on the list with the help of posters, the owners' histories, household items and a feature film about young men describing their experience of visiting these farms. The exhibition was not translated into English, and the museum worker and exhibition specialist Ann Nilssen helped me read the information. We agreed on the possibility to hold an exhibition dedicated to the Lion House in this museum.



“Do everything possible – everything impossible will be done by God,” one proverb says. Indeed, thanks to the scholarship I was able to visit museums, make new acquaintances with researchers, spend whole days reading books, go to festivals (Jazz- Fest in Umea in October, 2013 was really memorable). This small town was another point on the map, where I was sent by my colleagues from Gavle (some gave contact details of others – just like in Russian fairy tales). In the museum I met Anders Assis who was an ‘addict’ of folk painting. We talked for hours and discussed only one small part of topics we were interested in, and we agreed that I would visit them for training and help prepare an exhibition of the so-called cloud painting, popular in the district.



I had to spend December in Stockholm and Linkoping, where I worked with literature mostly, and I managed to celebrate the New Year with my family.

After the holiday, I happened to spend a total of a month in the museum Ljusdal. The director Owe Norberg kindly provided me with accommodation, his house is situated in Delsbo – town, famous for its painted complex and being a





kind of a symbol of the Swedish painting for me.

So, together with the museum team we started preparing the exhibition. In fact, I saw the whole cycle of organizing an exhibition in Sweden.

They tried to involve me in all kinds of work – from pallets dyeing and calligraphic works to participation in trips to neighboring villages for painted objects. It is absolutely natural for a village family to have a painted closet of the 1780s and a chest of 1750s. Anders attributed the objects in summer, he told the owners of their value, gave a paper from the museum and invited them to the opening. We seemed to have visited all social strata of the Swedish society – from an elderly woman, living in a small flat in Jarvso, who wanted to give the museum a chest together with its contents (textiles and etc.) to a family of wealthy antique dealers near Soderhamn, who had a house with walls lined with smoothers dated back to 1650 and 1690 and other rarities.

Anders and Owe's delicacy and mastership and their love for painting made us best friends, and we never ran out of jokes. Laughter reached its heights on the night of 2 February, just before the exhibition opening. We worked half a night sticking genealogical trees of wood painting craftsmen on the wall. There were hundreds of names, not everything went smoothly, and we gave free rein to our semi-conscious state. Poor Swedes living a hundred or two hundred years ago! We tried to find them a new match, made new life stories up and laughed heartily. Those antics had a huge meaning to us, it is said, you can do whatever you want together with others, but nothing unites more than a common madness. It seemed to me that we had become a real family. The opening went well.

In the course of volunteering at the museum I managed to make a coloring book based on the images of the furniture on the exhibition – it is now sold at the museum (it costs 20 kronas). The collection curator Lyuba Marchuk, an immigrant from Belarus, showed me how they kept objects in funds, described the procurement of equipment, the principle of selecting things brought by people, told me about materials used for packaging, and more.



Right after the exhibition opening in Ljusdal, I had the privilege to visit the famous festival of Sami culture in Jokkmokk. I had never had a chance to be on the Arctic Circle before, especially in winter, but my love for the North and the company of the foundation scholarship holder Anna Varfolomeeva made the trip not only useful, but pleasant. The Sami and their sympathizers gathered in small Jokkmokk for the 409th time. There were different activities conducted on many sites – from selling products made by craftsmen to public discussion of the pressing issues, such as development of mineral resources in places of historic settlement of the Sami. I got a chance to see, why this tiny northern town is visited by thousands of people in winter, and how to make it interesting, tasty, comfortable and cozy (and also how to “make” tourists leave as much money as they can). For example, a helicopter trip over the Sami taiga was totally a new experience for me. As in other places, I gathered plenty of printed materials telling tourists about local opportunities to use them later in my work in Russia. It is also interesting that at the festival I met with the familiar craftsmen from the Arkhangelsk region – they were teaching master classes on Russian crafts.

Then, museum workers in the towns of Falun and Leksand waited for me to come. Having received some knowledge in Ljusdal, I could easily distinguish Helsingland painting from Dalarna painting. There I also found people in love with painting, I studied collection and displays in the museums. It was important for me to see how people work with heritage in places where painting is a part of local identity. Compared to the Russians, people in Sweden not only appreciate the local culture, but they can also easily crack jokes over it, - that’s what they did in Dalarna museet. They had a wonderful Dalecarlian horse exposition, which includes its different varieties – from classical to postmodern – for example, a horse cut to pieces and packed in the box, just like packaged meat in shops. This is where we find both a deep acceptance of traditions and their transformation in modern life, which is not like it was 200 years ago. Such perception will spread in Russia not soon, and I am glad that my ideas are similar to those of advanced countries. And, course, souvenirs based on the traditional art!





In March, I returned to Ljusdal for ten days to present a report "Blue and red. The first attempt of comparative analysis of house painting in Sweden and Russia." I presented it twice in one day – first, I read it for my colleagues, who deal with painting, and in the evening – for the general public (there were about 40 people). Among the invited experts there was, for example, the worker of Gavleborg museet Ingela Brostrom, the grandest house painting specialist. We discussed some problems of the study of painting and agreed to cooperate closely. During my first visit, together with Owe Norberg we decided to hold an international conference dedicated to house painting, so we discussed it with the colleagues. Looking ahead, I can say the foundation we applied to (Nordisk kulturfond) didn't accept our application, however, we are going to apply again, the deadline is September, 1. It is going to be a conference where Russian and Scandinavian researchers will participate, and it will be held in the territory of Halsignland.



In addition, Owe translated all the texts of the Lion House characters and dubbed the eagle, and now he is working on recording voices of the other characters – our common friends from Ljusdal and neighboring places will do it. Thus, we are now creating a Swedish version of the travelling exhibition "The Virtual Lion House," which we already agreed on with Bollnas museet and its worker Melanie Platzgummer.



So, during my internship I was able to visit a total of 55 museums, I wrote down names of more than a hundred museum workers, art historians, farm owners, and craftsmen in my notebook. The results of the trip can be divided to personal and scientific social. On a personal level, it was definitely a useful life experience outside infinitely beloved, but so weird Russian world. Over a distance one can see what our problems are like and how to work with them. Thanks to, most likely, my personal qualities I felt completely at home in Sweden, and, fortunately, there were no problems with coming back to the Russian environment. And it is very, very important for me that I got a rest from a truly roughly looking design in Russia.

In scientific terms, I collected a really huge amount of materials on painting, I got crucial personal visual experience from dealing with memorials, I defined questions to be answered (for example, we need to get information on women's moving from the Central Sweden to Russia for earnings). We hope that the Danish foundation will support our idea to organize an international conference on painting. The Lion House exhibition should be open in Bollnas in November. The ideas received in Sweden from its every corner are being realized in my museum. None of this would have happened without the Sverker Astrom Foundation and its belief in its scholarship holders.

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**Julie Terekhova** heter en ung rysk kollega som är i Sverige på ett stipendium under vintern. Efter ett kort besök i december frågade hon om hon kunde arbeta som volontär på museet under utställningsbygget, vilket vi tackade ja till.

Förutom att hon har deltagit i själva utställningsarbetet, varit med och burit möbler och bearbetat fotografier, så producerade hon även en målarbok där man kan färglägga "sitt eget" Järvsöskåp.

Hemma i Ryssland arbetar Julie på en ideell stiftelse, Open-collections, där hon ansvarar för samlingarna ([www.open-collection.com](http://www.open-collection.com)). Dessutom driver hon det egna projektet ([www.lion-house.ru](http://www.lion-house.ru)). Det är ett hus som hon räddade undan totalt förfall för några år sedan. Huset har ca 80

kvm vägg- och takmålningar, som är utförda i början av 1900-talet. En vägg domineras av ett lejon – därav namnet på huset. Besök webbplatserna!

