

Friendship in Representation

The Collaborative Portraits by Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann

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Abstract

Over a quarter-century, the Scandinavian artists Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann painted a series of portraits and interiors in which they commented upon their shared identity as women artists while migrating between the artistic centers of Munich, Paris, and Copenhagen. Drawing from feminist and performance theory, and concentrating on three paintings in which Bauck and Wegmann imagine one another as emerging professional artists by mediated self-representation, the paper discusses the two artists' collaborative practices. The artists' correspondence with their mutual friend and colleague Hildegard Thorell, kept in the archive of *Nordiska Museet* in Stockholm, is presented here for the first time and provides important insights into their artistic companionship. This case study forms part of an ongoing dissertation project on Nordic women painters' self-representations in the late nineteenth century.

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Introduction

[1] This paper explores a series of friendship portraits created by the Scandinavian painters Jeanna Bauck (1840-1926) and Bertha Wegmann (1846-1926). Drawing on performative approaches to portraiture, which highlight the sitter's share in the making of an image, I understand the works as collaborative endeavors in (self-) representation. Through their mediated self-representation, I argue that Bauck and Wegmann developed a shared identity in painting, thereby exploring new ways of visualizing their professional role and challenging late nineteenth-century gender hierarchies. Beyond providing close readings of three selected paintings, this article presents comprehensive, to this day unpublished archival evidence from the estate of their close friend Hildegard Thorell (1850-1930), a fellow artist. The correspondence

between the three colleagues reveals not only new, critical information on the paintings and their creation, but also pays vivid testimony to the sense of community among aspiring women artists in that period.

Role Reversal in the Studio

[2] In the beginning of the movie *The Danish Girl* (2015), the camera enters the Copenhagen workshop of the art nouveau painter Gerda Wegener (1886-1940), played by Alicia Vikander. An unknown and rather stiff gentleman has taken a seat on a small pedestal to have his portrait painted, apparently feeling quite uncomfortable. As he tries to get a glimpse of the canvas on which the artist is working, Wegener observes him closely and picks up on his uneasiness. Rather amused and smoking a cigarette, she ironically comments upon his behavior: "It's hard for a man to be looked at by a woman. Women are used to it of course, but for a man to submit to a woman's gaze It's unsettling."¹ In this initial scene, Gerda Wegener refers to the common rules of the gaze and gender hierarchies in art, as they traditionally play out between a male artist and his female model in the studio space.

[3] This theme of reversed gazes plays a crucial role in an interior painting by the Swedish artist Jeanna Bauck, which probably originated in the 1870s in Munich (Fig. 1). It shows a scene strikingly similar to the above-mentioned filmic encounter. Bauck has depicted her fellow colleague and friend, the Dane Bertha Wegmann painting the portrait of a Bourgeois gentleman sitting in a chair in the artist's studio. Through Bauck's eyes we are observing Wegmann at work. Speaking with Wegener in the film scene, the male sitter has to *submit* to a double female gaze: that of Wegmann studying her model, and that of Bauck observing the sitting. If we include the beholder's gaze coming from outside the picture plane, it adds up to three observers, and the genre scene from a portraitist's studio turns into a comment on women artists' social position and gender hierarchies in nineteenth-century visual culture. The studio eventually unfolds as a space in which subversive acts in representing female artistic agency become possible.

¹ *The Danish Girl*, directed by Tom Hooper, Universal Studios, USA/UK/Germany/Denmark/Belgium, 2015.



1 Jeanna Bauck, *The Danish Artist Bertha Wegmann Painting a Portrait*, 1870s, oil on canvas, 100 x 110 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Public domain)

[4] The painting's unusual subject matter reverses the patriarchal economy of the gaze in an immediate manner.² In her influential article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey employed psychoanalytic theory to argue that classic Hollywood movies inevitably put the spectator in a masculine subject position, while the woman on screen figures as an object of desire for the male gaze.³ Mulvey's argument holds true for the underlying gendered dynamics of vision in the nineteenth century, according to which men were to embody active looking, while women were to be looked at or displayed.⁴ However, as Alexandra K. Wettlaufer recently has claimed in relation to the nineteenth-century French and British contexts,

²Frances Borzello has postulated in her overview account on women artists throughout history that they never have reversed the masculine scheme of gazes and dared to place a man in the studio. While this does not hold true for the case of Jeanna Bauck, the statement nevertheless accentuates the exceptionality of the Swedish artist's composition. Frances Borzello, *Ihre eigene Welt. Frauen in der Kunstgeschichte*, Hildesheim 2000, 152.

³ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", in: *Screen* 16 (1975), no. 3, 6-18. John Berger has claimed that the same applies to the great majority of Western art in general: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. [...] The surveyor of woman herself is male: the surveyed female: Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight." John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London 1972, 47. On the gaze as art historical term see Margaret Olin, "Gaze", in: *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, Chicago 1996, 318-329. Although her text continues to be widely received, Mulvey has been criticized for ignoring the female beholder's position and for lacking a post-colonial or queer perspective. See Bell Hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectator", in: idem, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston 1992, 115-131; Patrik Steorn, "Blickens erotiska fostran", in: *Tidskrift för Genusvetenskap* 4 (2013), 58-62.

*Significant numbers of women artists worked within and against structures of the gaze to claim a (contested) subject position, and the radical image of a female subject representing the world presented an unmistakable challenge to social and aesthetic ideologies with a canny nod to the power of vision.*⁵

Accordingly, in her studio interior Jeanna Bauck subverts patriarchal structures of the gaze and counteracts the objectification of women in painting.

[5] Presumably, contemporary observers would immediately have reacted upon the unusual subject matter of a woman painter. In 1895, Bertha Wegmann attracted attention both in the Danish and Swedish press, when she refused to visit a portrait commissioner for a sitting in his home, even though it was the prime minister J. B. S. Estrup. Instead, she insisted upon executing the portrait in her studio. The Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* accounted for the incident under the unmistakably ironic headline *One Who Estrup Could Not Subdue*, stating that Estrup eventually had to look for another portraitist, as both artist and sitter had refused to give in.⁶

[6] The subversive role reversal in the studio contrasts with the conventional representation of the interior itself. As in many other studio interiors of the time, seemingly without any systemization furniture, objects, requisites, paintings, casts, replicas and the like are arranged in artful disarray. One can detect numerous objects in the two women's shared studio, all of them delicately rendered, ranging from a portfolio containing drawings and prints to a replica of the *Venus de Milo* on the chest of drawers in the back. A parasol emulating Asian style adds that little twist of exoticism that every decent studio was supposed to possess. In front of the window to the right some plants, a wine bottle, a collection of paint brushes and a hand mirror form an old-masterly still life. The interior balances between some sort of gentle bohemianism, humble inwardness and rooted domesticity, which is commonly found in nineteenth-century historicist studio interiors.⁷ On the back wall one can make out the outlines of a portrait head, which I suggest may be *Woman in Black* by Bertha Wegmann from 1872 (Fig. 2).⁸ The composition, consisting of a veiled person dressed in black and represented in profile next to a trapezoid shape, although executed rather sketchily, clearly corresponds to the painting in the Nationalmuseum collection.

⁴ As Sidsel Maria Søndergaard has pointed out, much of Baudelaire's writing about the modern experience revolves around "how people and things make their appearance before others' gazes", with the clear message that "the man is a beholder and the woman is a vision". Sidsel Maria Søndergaard, "Women in Impressionism: An Introduction", in: *Women in Impressionism. From Mythical Feminine to Modern Woman*, exh. cat. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, ed. Sidsel Maria Søndergaard, Milan 2006, 17-18. The importance of the theme of the gaze for feminist intervention shows also in the many paintings in which women artists try to subvert hierarchies of looking such as Mary Cassatt's well-known painting *Opera* from 1877/78. Cf. Tamar Garb, "Gender and Representation", in: *Modernity and Modernism. French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Francis Frascina, New Haven 1993, 219-229, particularly 222-223.

⁵ Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman. Painting and the Novel in France and Britain*, Columbus 2011, 10.

⁶ N.N., "En som Estrup ej kunde betvinga", in: *Aftonbladet*, 1 March 1895.



2 Bertha Wegmann, *Woman in Black*, 1872, oil on canvas, 51 x 42 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Public domain)

A Double(d) Portrait

[7] On another level, the studio interior reflects Bauck's and Wegmann's artistic partnership and collaboration. While Wegmann is painting *inside* the picture, Bauck *outside* simultaneously works on a representation of her friend. Imaging the working situation, Bauck and Wegmann thus share in a double-layered performance of portrayal.⁹ Furthermore, the scene is set in their shared working space, which is filled

⁷ On the historicist interior in Munich see: Brigitte Langer, *Das Münchner Künstleratelier des Historismus*, Dachau 1992. Regarding the cultural importance placed on the interior in Bourgeois society cf. Christoph Asendorf, "The *Interieur*, or Things in the Everyday Life of the Bourgeoisie", in: idem, *Batteries of Life. On the History of Things and Their Perception in Modernity*, California and London 1993, 119-139.

⁸ In the retrospective exhibition of 1926 a painting is listed as "Sørgeklædt dame, portrætstudie, 1872", which is most likely the painting in question. *Bertha Wegmanns Mindeudstilling fra 5. til 25. Oktober 1926 i Charlottenborgs Udstillingsbygning*, exh. cat., Copenhagen 1926, cat. no. 13.

⁹ My reading of the friendship portraits by Bauck and Wegmann follows Harry Berger's performative approach to portraiture and places emphasis on the paintings' collaborative nature. Berger suggests to "reverse the emphasis of the physiognomic story and concentrate on the portrait as an index - an effect and representation - solely of the sitter's and painter's performance in the act of portrayal". Berger's model highlights the theatrical potential of portraiture as a performance in which both artist and sitter contribute in equal parts to the ultimate effect on the observer. This is particularly crucial for my understanding of friendship

with objects owned by the two artists. The combined materiality of these objects thus alludes to Bauck's indirect presence in the studio. The setting of the interior seems dense and rather enclosed, revolving around the concentrated atmosphere of the portrait session. Bauck has depicted Wegmann from behind as she concentrates on her canvas, a rather traditional compositional measure that invites the viewer's identification with the represented. Bauck identifies with and subjectifies her colleague at the same time by highlighting the shared act of portrayal, rather than letting the beholder dwell on the physiognomic features of her friend. Eventually a double portrait reveals itself, in which both painters *visibly* act as artists at the same time: Bauck as the author of the work itself and Wegmann as the painter depicted inside of it. As Marsha Meskimmon has pointed out in relation to self-portraiture, to oscillate between subject- and object-positions has a range of critical implications for women artists:

*[...] self-portraiture is implicated in the complex interweaving of the subject and object roles we play. The author of the self-portrait is both subject and object. For women, this interaction is particularly critical. Woman has been the object of art for centuries, while women have remained marginalized as producers. To act in both roles, simultaneously, is to stage a crucial intervention.*¹⁰

[8] Employing this argument, Jeanna Bauck's studio interior forms a crucial intervention as it represents two women as producers of a shared artwork on different levels, both within and outside the picture plane, while transferring the object role to the male sitter. Imagining that peculiar doubled portrait sitting, the two women artists reproduce one another's gestures: In the painting, Wegmann puts her brush on the canvas, while Bauck consequently does the same when painting Wegmann at work. Interestingly, what we see *on* Wegmann's easel is not the portrait of the gentleman she is working on, but rather the artist's head which is framed by her own canvas. Hence, Bertha Wegmann turns into a portrait head *on* her own painting, which implies that she is partly working on her own representation. Paraphrasing a term coined by art historian Ewa Lajer-Burcharth in relation to the interaction between painter and sitter in early-modern portraiture, the studio interior transforms into Wegmann's own *mediated self-representation* by the hands of her artist friend Jeanna Bauck.¹¹ The clear division between the roles of the painter and the represented blurs in a manner usually only characteristic for self-portraiture. Wegmann imagines herself through Bauck's touch, allowing the colleague to invent her as an artist in the act of painting

portraits, as it allows us to investigate the sitter's share as it relates to the fashioning of selves in painting by "redirecting attention from the style and performance of the painter to the style and performance of the sitter *as* sitter [...] in a particular act of portrayal". Berger's theory of posing makes apparent the performative aspects in the activity that leads to a finished portrait: on the one hand, obviously the painter's act of painting, but on the other, the sitter's act of posing. Thereby, he shifts attention from the *portrait* as the image or material object to *portraiture* as the action of portrayal or depiction. Harry Berger, Jr., "Fictions of the Pose. Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture", in: *Representations* no. 46 (Spring 1994), 87-120: 89 and 94.

¹⁰ Marsha Meskimmon, *The Art of Reflection. Women Artists' Self-Portraiture in the Twentieth Century*, New York 1996, 14.

and on the canvas inside the picture. Eventually, the scenery in the studio turns into a *double(d) portrait* of Bauck and Wegmann, understood as a depiction of their shared professional identity and mutual identification, thereby revealing the two artists' shared authorship.¹²

[9] Although Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann were successful artists in their day – receiving numerous commissions, leading their own drawing schools and exhibiting frequently – interest in their work within Scandinavia has only recently emerged. While increasingly represented in exhibitions, to date neither of them has been the subject of substantial research.¹³ The artists' close friendship over many years resulted in a

¹¹ In a 2001 article Ewa Lajer-Burcharth has tried to grasp the sitter's agency in the "aesthetic production of the self" by analyzing a series of commissioned portraits of the Marquise de Pompadour created by François Boucher. Employing a performative approach to portraiture, she aims at investigating the portrait as an "aesthetic and material effect" of an encounter between painter and sitter, being particularly interested in the "impact a person who commissioned a likeness has on how he or she actually figures in it". Following an earlier argument by Aby Warburg, she considers the patron as an "internal, *pictorial effect*". Lajer-Burcharth introduces *touch* as an "instrument of a quasi-simultaneous self-recognition of two selves coinciding in one form of representation" in a portrait. Lajer-Burcharth attempts to use the case of Pompadour's portrait commissions as "a methodological testing ground for the material analysis of likeness as a form of a female sitter's *mediated* self-representation". When I venture into analyzing Nordic women artists' mutual portraits as collaborative and – in contrast to the case of Pompadour and Boucher – equal or non-hierarchical projects, I employ Lajer-Burcharth's notion of mediated self-representation. I thus read the artist portrait as an arena for Bauck and Wegmann to realize themselves – through one another's touch. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "Pompadour's Touch: Difference in Representation", in: *Representations* no. 73 (Winter 2001), 54-88. I would like to thank Øystein Sjøstad for bringing this article to my attention.

¹² My understanding of identity as "relational" and "flowing among subjects" is informed by Amelia Jones' recent formulation of a "theory of identification in the visual arts". Jones provides a "model for understanding identification as a reciprocal, dynamic, and ongoing process that occurs among viewers, bodies, images, and other visual models of the (re)presentation of subjects". She aims at thinking "beyond binary models of understanding self and other" which have been dominant in Western thought since the Renaissance. Although Jones developed her theory of identification mainly with regards to contemporary performance art, her processual approach to identity and identification can be fruitfully applied onto earlier friendship portraits as well. Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently. A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts*, New York 2012, especially 1-8.

¹³ There does not exist any research on Jeanna Bauck herself, who is only mentioned in the literature on Wegmann. Lise Svanholm has published short texts on Wegmann in conjunction with two exhibitions: Lise Svanholm, "Bertha Wegmann 1847-1926", in: *De drogo till Paris. Nordiska Konstnärinnor på 1880-talet*, exh. cat. Liljevalchs konsthall, ed. Lollo Fogelström and Louise Robbert, Stockholm 1988, 213-218; Lise Svanholm, *Bertha Wegmann på Øregaard*, exh. cat. Øregaard Museum, Hellerup 1998; additionally, an unpublished master's thesis has studied Wegmann's reception history: Charlotte Marie Steffen Linvald, *Receptionsteoretiske og -historiske Overvejelser over Kunstneren Bertha Wegmann*, master's thesis, Institut for Kunst- og Kulturvidenskab, Afdeling for Kunsthistorie og Visuel Kultur, University of Copenhagen, 2009.

number of paintings that revolve around their shared artistic identity, their profession as painters and the studio: Three portraits of Bauck by Wegmann dating from 1881¹⁴, 1885 (previously dated 1887)¹⁵ and 1905¹⁶ are housed in public collections in both Sweden and Denmark. For a painting begun in 1885 and completed as late as 1925, today in private ownership and entitled *Two Friends Drinking Tea in the Artist's Studio* (Fig. 3), Wegmann, as I suggest, has represented Bauck as the guest to the left.¹⁷



3 Bertha Wegmann, *Two Friends Drinking Tea in the Artist's Studio*, 1885-1925, oil on canvas, 133 x 189 cm. Private collection (photograph © Bruun Rasmussen Kunstauktioner)

The same applies to a drawing in the National Gallery of Denmark representing a similar scene of two ladies in dialogue in the studio: the left with curly hair probably is

The Hirschsprung Collection has recently presented two small exhibitions that highlighted Wegmann's body of work: *En gådefuld musiktime. Maleren Anna Petersen* (2009) and *Kvindelige kunstnere i Hirschsprung* (2015). Emilie Boe Bierlich is currently finishing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Copenhagen with the working title *Moderne kvinder. Migration som tilblivelsesomstændighed for kvindelige danske kunstnere ca. 1860-1910*. The thesis includes Bertha Wegmann, but was not yet published, when this article was completed.

¹⁴ Bertha Wegmann, *The Artist Jeanna Bauck*, 1881, oil on canvas, 106 x 85 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

¹⁵ Bertha Wegmann, *Portrait of the Swedish Painter Jeanna Bauck*, 1885, oil on wood, 49.2 x 31.5 cm. Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen.

¹⁶ Bertha Wegmann, *Portrait of the Swedish Painter Jeanna Bauck*, 1905, oil on canvas, 108 x 90.2 cm. ARoS - Århus Kunstmuseum, Århus.

¹⁷ Bertha Wegmann, *Two Friends Drinking Tea in the Artist's Studio*, 1885-1925, oil on canvas, 133 x 189 cm. Private collection; sold in 2005 at Bruun Rasmussen Kunstauktioner, lot no. 1070.

Bauck.¹⁸ The small booklet published on the occasion of Wegmann's retrospective exhibition in Charlottenborg in 1926 lists one more portrait: *Portrait of Janna* [sic] *Bauck in a White Silkdress*, oval, in possession of Ella Hans-Nicolai Hansen, Fredensborg from 1889.¹⁹ Bauck painted Wegmann only once on the above discussed occasion.²⁰ Following these attributions, there are seven friendship portraits and interiors that exist or are known to have existed. The total number could be higher; the scarce literature on the artist friends tends to state around twenty existing portraits without giving any supporting evidence.²¹ Those who have briefly addressed Bauck's and Wegmann's mutual representations in interiors and portraits have tended to reflect upon the works' unique characteristics as "intense depictions" and "penetrating portraits".²² Researchers have highlighted their particular "presence"²³ and "humanism"²⁴, finally reading them, such as Lise Svanholm, as "portraits of two people: the sitter and the artist herself".²⁵ The importance of the artists' friendship and the crucial position of the works that resulted from it have been acknowledged from the start.

¹⁸ Bertha Wegmann, *Afternoon Tea in the Artist's Studio*, undated, pencil drawing, 26.4 x 36.3 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

¹⁹ *Bertha Wegmanns Mindeustilling, fra 5. til 25. Oktober 1926 i Charlottenborgs Udstillingsbygning*, exh. cat., Copenhagen 1926; the copy consulted is kept in Kunstakademiets Bibliotek, Copenhagen, Wegmann, Bertha, S-z, kasse 104:15.

²⁰ Jeanna Bauck, *The Danish Artist Bertha Wegmann Painting a Portrait*, oil on canvas, 106 x 85 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

²¹ Lise Svanholm has repeatedly claimed that Wegmann painted about twenty portraits of Bauck, while naming only the three works in Swedish and Danish public collections (Nationalmuseum, Den Hirschsprungske Samling and Århus Kunstmuseum). This appears to be an estimation by Svanholm which has been repeated in the literature ever since the 1988 exhibition; cf. Lise Svanholm, "Bertha Wegmann 1847-1926", in: *De drogo till Paris. Nordiska Konstnärinnor på 1880-talet*, exh. cat. Liljevalchs konsthall, ed. Lollo Fogelström and Louise Robbert, Stockholm 1988, 213-218: 213. It seems likely that more works exist in private ownership.

²² Eva Pohl, *A Place in the Sun. Female Danish Artists Born between 1850 and 1930*, Copenhagen 2007, 31.

²³ Elisabeth Stengård, "Liljevalchs stora utställning av kvinnliga konstnärers verk", in: *Dagens Nyheter*, 11 October 1988.

²⁴ Svanholm, *Bertha Wegmann på Øregaard*, 7. Cf. Lise Svanholm, "Bertha Wegmann - en af de glemte malere", in: *Jyllands Posten*, 22 July 1988.

²⁵ Svanholm, "Bertha Wegmann 1847-1926", 214. Such readings recur in the literature on Wegmann: "In this likeness Bertha Wegmann expresses some of her own determination." Alessandra Comini, "Die skandinavische Spielart des Impressionismus: Norwegen, Schweden, Dänemark und Finnland", in: *Impressionismus. Eine internationale Kunstbewegung 1860-1920*, ed. Norma Broude, Cologne 2005, 274-313: 277.

Hildegard Thorell's Correspondence

[10] Apart from the existing paintings, little has been known about the artists' relationship beyond Wegmann's brief mentions of Bauck in the letters to her Danish family and acquaintances in the collection of the Royal Library and the Hirschsprung archives in Copenhagen.²⁶ The Swede Jeanna Bauck and the Dane Bertha Wegmann met in Munich in 1871 at the latest. In a letter from December that year Wegmann mentions Bauck for the first time, calling her "a quite talented landscape painter".²⁷ Both artists had arrived in the city in the late 1860s to pursue their artistic careers and to take private lessons from several teachers associated with the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich.²⁸ In autumn 1879 both left for Paris. Whereas Wegmann eventually settled in Copenhagen in 1883, Bauck returned to Germany where she lived throughout the rest of her life. She settled permanently in Munich, but for a short period, in 1896 and 1897, she worked in Berlin as a teacher at a private drawing school for women founded by the *Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen*, where she was Paula Modersohn-Becker's mentor.²⁹

[11] In contrast to the formal letters in the Copenhagen archives, the previously unknown and unpublished correspondence with their mutual friend Hildegard Thorell is private and intimate in character and revolves mostly around their shared professional concerns and artistic practices.³⁰ Wegmann had not only portrayed Thorell in Paris in

²⁶ Bertha Wegmann's letters to the Melchior family 1868-1918, in: Manuscript Collections, Det kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen; Bertha Wegmann's letters, in: Archive, Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen.

²⁷ Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Louise Melchior, 26 December 1871, Manuscript Collections, Det kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

²⁸ Bauck took tuition from the painter of battle scenes Joseph Brandt (1841-1915) and the landscape painters Dietrich Langko (1819-1896) and Karl Ludwig (1839-1901). Wegmann was a pupil at the drawing school of Johanna Unger (1837-1871). Later she studied under Eduard Kurzbauer (1840-1879) and Wilhelm von Lindenschmit (1829-1895).

²⁹ A detailed biographical documentation on Jeanna Bauck can be found in the archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin: Akademie der Künste - Archiv, Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen, 1868, DK BAUC J. 1 and DK BAUC J. 2. Cf. Carola Muysers, "Bauck, Jeanna", in: *Käthe, Paula und der ganze Rest. Künstlerinnenlexikon*, ed. Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen e.V., Berlin 1992, 17. For a biographical account on Wegmann see: Lise Svanholm, "Bertha Wegmann 1847-1926", 213-218. Paula Modersohn-Becker gives a vivid account of Bauck's personality and teaching in her letters to her parents. Letters from Paula Becker to her parents, 5 March 1897 and 5 May 1897, cit. in: Günter Buch and Liselotte von Reinken, eds., *Paula Modersohn-Becker in Briefen und Tagebüchern*, Frankfurt am Main 1979, 117 and 120.

³⁰ Hildegard Thorell studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm between 1876 and 1878, before visiting Paris in the winter of 1879/80 and the spring/summer of 1881, where she took tuition from Wegmann. The documents in *Nordiska Museet* have yet remained unnoticed, which has partially to do with the fact that scholarly interest in Thorell, herself a rather conventional portraitist, has remained limited even during the late 1970s and 1980s, when several of her female contemporaries were rediscovered. Even though she first participated in

1880, but she was also her tutor over many years. The letters, therefore, offer a new lens to understand Wegmann's role as a teacher. The comprehensive documentation in the archive of *Nordiska Museet* in Stockholm comprises 38 letters totaling nearly 200 pages in length written by Bauck and Wegmann, several of which were composed jointly during study periods spent together.³¹ A close reading of these letters allows us to map out the course of their relationship and their manifold collaborative practices as well as to learn about their most intimate views on both life and art. In addition to the letters by Bauck and Wegmann, the collection further includes the extensive correspondence between Hildegard Thorell and her husband Reinhold, comprising 123 letters from her sojourns in Paris in 1879/80 and 1881, in which the colleagues are frequently mentioned. These letters additionally provide an onlooker's view on the artistic partnership between Bauck and Wegmann.³²

[12] Although the correspondence in *Nordiska Museet* considerably extends our knowledge about these artists, it is a source that needs to be studied critically. Just like the portrait, the letter is a genre with specific conventions that evokes certain emotions through formalized expressions. For instance, it is important to be aware of the fact that the friends express longing partly because they actually feel it, but partly because such is a convention in letter writing. The letter is thus both a historical source and a verbal construct.³³ As Regina Nörtemann has pointed out, the letter serves as the direct, every-day communication between the sender and the recipient, but it is also a literary medium for self-expression and representation that possesses a certain degree of fictionality.³⁴ However, *fiction* is not tantamount to *untrue* or even *false*. As the literary theorist Paul John Eakin has remarked in his study on autobiographical writing, "[...] autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation, and [...] the self that is the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure."³⁵ Eakin proposes that both fiction and the process of fiction-making are integral to "[...] the

the *Opponentrörelsen*, Thorell exhibited later mainly with the more conservative *Svenska konstnärernas förening*. Cf. *Hildegard Thorell 1850-1930, Minnesutställning*, exh. cat. Kungliga Akademien för de fria konsterna, Stockholm 1931; Caroline Falkenberg, "Hildegard Thorell", in: *De drogo till Paris. Nordiska Konstnärinnor på 1880-talet*, exh. cat. Liljevalchs konsthall, ed. Lollo Fogelström and Louise Robbert, Stockholm 1988, 107-110. Recently, I published parts of the correspondence between Hildegard Thorell and Asta Nørregaard in a study on the latter's self-portrait *In the studio* (1883). Cf. Carina Rech, "Revisiting Asta Nørregaard in the Studio", in: *Kunst og Kultur* 101 (2018), no. 1-2, 49-67.

³¹ Letters from Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 1881-1920, Hildegard Thorell, E1:8, Brev från konstnärer, Nordiska Museets Arkiv IV, Stockholm [hereinafter abbreviated as: NM archive]. The letters will be presented, analyzed and contextualized in further detail in my doctoral dissertation. Unless otherwise indicated translations in this article are my own.

³² Letters from Hildegard Thorell to Reinhold Thorell, 1879-1912, E1:10, Nordiska Museets Arkiv IV, Stockholm [hereinafter abbreviated as: NM archive]. The letters from Paris in 1879/80 and 1881 alone comprise more than 800 written pages.

truth of any life as it is lived and of any art devoted to the presentation of that life".³⁶ Consequently, whenever we encounter Bauck and Wegmann in words or in paint, we need to be aware of the fictionality and construction of self-representation across varying media.

[13] Thorell met Bauck and Wegmann for the first time in Paris in the late fall of 1879, when all three artists were living in a guest house on Rue de Bruxelles and studying at Madame Trélat de Lavigne's atelier.³⁷ Wegmann's *Study of a Female Model* (Fig. 4) likely dates from this joint period at the private academy.

³³ Bruce Redford, *The Converse of the Pen. Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter*, Chicago 1986, 2-10. The culture of letter writing has been studied extensively in relation to the eighteenth century. On women's epistolary practices in international and Nordic perspective see: Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, Ithaca 2009; Marie Löwendahl, *Min allrabästa och ömmaste vän! Kvinnors brevskrivning under svenskt 1700-tal*, Halmstad 2007. Research on the nineteenth century is comparably scarce. For a discussion of the Scandinavian context in the period under consideration for this article see: Kristina Persson, *Svensk brevkultur på 1800-talet. Språklig och kommunikationsetnografisk analys av en familjebrevväxling*, Uppsala 2005; Eva Helen Ulvros, "Vi lutade hufvuden och hjertan till varann. Om kvinnors kärlek och vänskap på 1800-talet", in: *Finsk Tidskrift* 2004, no. 2-3, 157-168.

³⁴ Regina Nörtemann, "Brieftheoretische Konzepte im 18. Jahrhundert und ihre Genese", in: *Brieftheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts. Texte, Kommentare, Essays*, ed. Angelika Ebrecht, Regina Nörtemann et al., Stuttgart 1990, 211-224: 212.

³⁵ Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography. Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*, Princeton 1985, 3. In philosophical research on identity formation, the concept of autobiography is frequently employed as a metaphor to grasp identity formation as a narrative process. Schechtman, for instance, states that a person creates her/his identity by forming an autobiographical narrative of her/his life. See: Marya Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, Ithaca/ New York 2007, 93. Cf. Marya Schechtman, "Art Imitating Life Imitating Art: Literary Narrative and Autobiographical Narrative", in: *The Philosophy of Autobiography*, ed. Christopher Cowley, Chicago 2015, 22-38.

³⁶ Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography*, 5.

³⁷ Thorell mentions Bauck's arrival in November, while Wegmann followed a few weeks after. Letters from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 23 November 1879 and 9 December 1879, NM archive. All three studied that winter periodically at Trélat's studio under the tuition of Bonnat, Gérôme and Bastien-Lepage.



4 Bertha Wegmann, *Study of a Female Model*, oil on canvas, 66 x 57 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (Public domain)

In December 1879, when Bauck was still awaiting Wegmann's arrival in the French capital, Thorell offers a lively description of the Swedish painter (Fig. 5):

*Jeanna Bauck is amongst the most adorable people I have met in my life. The first impression, i.e. her appearance is not taking – she looks like a student with her short hair but that similarity disappears as soon as you talk to her. She seems exceptionally mild, bright, modest and always with bon courage. She is 39 years old, which I almost could not believe, but she told me today. She is awaiting an intimate friend and even prominent painter from Munich, Miss Wegmann, Danish, who also will be living here. [...] I almost dare to say that Jeanna and I have already become good friends.*³⁸

³⁸ "Jeanna Bauck är en af de älskvärdaste menniskor jag i mitt lif sammanträffat med. Första intrycket d.v.s. hennes apparition är ej intagande - hon ser ut som en student med sitt kort klippta hår men försvinner denna likhet blott man talar vid henne. Hon förefaller ovanligt mild, god förständig, anspråkslös och dessutom alltid vid bon courage. Hennes ålder är 39 år - det skulle jag knappast hafva trott, men sade hon mig det idag. Hon väntar hit en intim vän och dessutom en framstående målarinna från München, en fröken Wegmann, danska, som också kommer att bo här. Måtte hon ej allt för mycket upptaga Jeanna, så att jag ej får rå om henne. Jag vågar nästan säga att Jeanna och jag redan äro goda vänner." Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 7 December 1879, NM archive.



5 Jeanna Bauck, photograph, Fr. Hanfstaengl. Münchner Stadtbibliothek – Monacensia, Munich (photograph © Stadtbibliothek / Monacensia, MKG/ Mapped Bauck)

[14] A few weeks later, after the Dane's arrival, Thorell remarks upon Wegmann's personality and her relationship to Bauck: "Bertha is a sensitive nature, [...] and it would not happen, even just for an hour that Jeanna would separate from her."³⁹ Thorell, upon realizing Wegmann's skill as an artist, decided to take private lessons from her new acquaintance, stating: "she has taken me under her wings."⁴⁰ In return, Thorell posed for her new teacher: "Then after lunch I was to sit myself for Bertha Wegmann for a painting, which she intends to sell. I wish I could afford to buy it [...]. She shall paint me with my generally much admired green hat and new coat, which both together should give a most stylish impression."⁴¹

³⁹ "Bertha är klen utaf sig, [...] och kan det ej hända att Jeanna, om också blott på en timme, skulle skilja sig från henne." Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, undated (a Saturday in January 1879), NM archive.

⁴⁰ "[...] fröken Wegmann, som är högst ovanligt skicklig och som målar synnerligen i mitt tycke." Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 21 December 1879, NM archive. "Jag är synnerligen glad öfver att Bertha Wegmann målar på ateliern, ty lära vi mycket blott af att se på hvad hon gör och dessutom har hon tagit mig under sina vingars skugga. [...] Jag målar ett hufvud för henne här hemma och bryr jag mig därför ej om att vidare gå på ateliern denna vecka, i synnerhet som vi har en dålig modell." Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 25 December 1879, NM archive.



6 Bertha Wegmann, *Hildegard Thorell, the Artist*, 1880, oil on canvas, 27 x 22 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Public domain)

Later, Wegmann gave the portrait to Thorell, who immediately wished to send it home as a gift to her husband.⁴² The friend had only needed one and a half days to finish the likeness, which Thorell later claimed did not quite resemble her after all.⁴³ Wegmann's small-scale portrait of her pupil (Fig. 6) with its tactility in the textiles and softness of the skin presents Thorell as a fashionable lady, like a true *Parisienne*, attentively looking back at the admired tutor.

[15] Under Wegmann's guidance, Thorell completed the portrait of Miss Gay (Fig. 7), a widowed American, who was living with her daughter in the same house as the Scandinavian artists. By comparing the fine tactility of the fur-trimmed coats that

⁴¹ "Sedan efter déjeunern skulle jag sjelf sitta modell för Bertha Wegmann till en tafla, som hon ämnar sälja. Önskar jag hade råd köpa det [...]. Hon skall måla mig i min allmänt beundrade gröna hatt och nya kappa, hvilka båda tillsammans lär göra ett högst styligt intryck. Igår på föreningen anhöll också målaren Josephson att få porträtter mig i naturlig storlek och i nyssnämnda kostym till Salongen, porträttet skulle sedan tillfalla mig, men som detta skulle uppta för mycket af min tid, måste jag ge honom ett nekande svar." Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, undated (on a Sunday morning in early January 1880), NM archive.

⁴² Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 4 and 6 April 1880, NM archive.

⁴³ "Taflan som Bertha målade af mig (på halfannan dag) funderade jag verkl på att copiera, men som jag ej tror att det så synnerligen liknar mig, lånar det knappast mödan. Jag tror ej heller att det längre är möjligt att få tillfälle dertill, ty har hon redan lemnat bort den till basaren för hvilken det var måladt." Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 25 January 1880, NM archive.

frame the sitters' slightly reddened cheeks, one can discern Wegmann's influence on Thorell's development as an artist.



7 Hildegard Thorell, *Portrait of a Lady, "Miss Gay"*, 1880, oil on canvas, 61 x 50 cm. Göteborgs konstmuseum, Gothenburg (© Göteborgs konstmuseum)

Thorell repeatedly uttered her gratitude and admiration for Wegmann in her letters to her husband, stating that her friend had selflessly tutored her and believed in her talent:

You may not understand how much I am indebted to her, but it is essentially her credit, if I have improved my painting. She has put unusually much effort into me. I asked Jeanna for advice, but she explained that B. had made the effort only out of her own interest in me, since she believes that I have talent. [...] You will never see any male artist, who has a more jaunty brushwork, more power, or a more beautiful perception of nature, than what Bertha knows to put into what she paints.⁴⁴

Wegmann's efforts paid off in the late spring of 1880, when Thorell successfully submitted the portrait of Miss Gay to the Salon, where it was – to the artist's great pleasure – hung on eye-level.⁴⁵ The following year it was acquired by the Gothenburg Museum of Art.

⁴⁴ "Du kan kanske ej förstå i hvilken stor skuld jag står till henne, men är det verkligen i vesentligaste grad hennes förtjenst om jag har gått framåt i min målning. Hon har gjort sig ofanligt mycket besvär med mig. Jag har tagit Jeanna till råds, men har hon förklarat att B. [...] helt och hållet af eget intresse för mig då hon anser mig ha talang gjort sig denna möda. [...] Du skall aldrig kunna se en manlig artist som har mer käck penselföring, mera kraft, eller vackrare uppfattning af naturen, än hvad Bertha förstår att inlägga i hvad hon målar." Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 10 April 1880, NM archive.

Rituals of Friendship on Paper and Canvas

[16] After their departure from Paris, Bauck and Wegmann corresponded regularly with their mutual friend Thorell. The three friends even continued to visit one another and worked together on occasion. Indeed, the correspondence not only provides new insights into the women's artistic partnership, but also reveals critical new information regarding Wegmann's portraits of Bauck in the Nationalmuseum and Hirschsprung collections. In their letters to Thorell, both Bauck and Wegmann repeatedly emphasize the importance of their artistic friendship for their development as artists. In the summers of 1881 and 1882, Bauck and Wegmann were living together in Écouen, a village near Paris, which they preferred to the loud and crowded capital.⁴⁶ Here, they could enjoy the countryside and gather sketches, on which they would work back home. They stayed in a hotel and undertook day trips to Paris to visit the annual Salon and to view their own paintings on display.⁴⁷ Back home in Copenhagen in the autumn of 1882, Wegmann immediately longed for a reunion with her friends in Munich in the upcoming winter:

*Yes, such a poor artist's soul is a wondrous thing... soon it goes up, soon it goes down, soon one is in seventh heaven, and soon in purgatory! You can understand how I long for to come to Munich and show my works to Jeanna, and where I will study so much!*⁴⁸

By December the same year, Wegmann had finally returned to Munich and to Bauck, whose opinion on her progress as a painter she was always eager to hear:

*[...] I am bursting to show Jeanna my paintings in order to hear my sentence, as in Copenhagen I do not have a soul on whose opinion I count. Today Jeanna will come to my studio, and then I will know my fate.*⁴⁹

Wegmann highlights the importance of working alongside Bauck and appreciates and relies on the latter's collegial advice. A slightly ironic, humoristic tone runs through many of her letters. Throughout the years, Wegmann frequently emphasized the value of the three painters' joint dialogue on artistic matters:

⁴⁵ Letter from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 30 April 1880, NM archive.

⁴⁶ The contemporary American painter May Alcott Nieriker mentions in her popular guide book for American women artists in 1879 that Écouen had grown popular, because living was cheap and the country pretty. May Alcott Nieriker, *Studying Art Abroad and How to Do It Cheaply*, Boston 1879, 54.

⁴⁷ Letter from Jeanna Bauck to Hildegard Thorell, 11 May 1882, NM archive.

⁴⁸ "Ja, saadan en stakkels konstnersjæl er en forunderlig ting... snart gaaer det op, snart gaaer det ned, snart er man i den syvende Himmel, og snart i skærsilden! Du kan tro jeg længes efter at komme til München og vise Jeanna mine arbeider, og hvor jeg saa skal studere!" Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 5 October 1882, NM archive.

⁴⁹ "[...] og brænder jeg paa at vise Jeanna mine tavler for at høre min dom, thi i Kjöbenhavn har jeg som Du ingen sjæl hvis omdöme jeg stoler paa. Idag kommer Jeanna paa min atelier, og da faaer jeg min skjæbne at høre." Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 26 December 1882, NM archive.

If you had not been so far away, so often I long for to talk to you about our shared great love, about divine art, there is no one that understands this passion quite like you, and experiences it so fervently and burningly. Here, among these merchants, these wholesalers, these practical and material people, I often feel like being in a desert, and there is no one who understands me.⁵⁰



8 Bertha Wegmann, *Madame Anna Seekamp, the Artist's Sister*, 1882, oil on canvas, 109 x 100.5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (Public domain)

[17] Beyond references to the importance of their professional relationship, Wegmann frequently expresses her deep personal affection for her friends. This can be seen, for instance, in 1883 when she wishes to have Bauck's company back home in Copenhagen: "[...] I wish she would like to be here with me – as long as she is not here, too, I feel torn back and forth and have nowhere to gain foothold."⁵¹ The statement indicates that Wegmann personally was unable to truly feel 'complete' without her friend. This strong personal and artistic connection might explain Bauck's

⁵⁰ "Bare du ikke var saa langt borte, jeg længes saa ofte efter at tale med Dig om vor fælles store kjærlighed, om den guddommelige kunst, der er Ingen som Du, der forstaaer denne Lidenskab, og opfatter den saa glødende og brændende. Her blandt disse Kjøbmæn, disse grosserer, disse praktiske materielle Mennesker, föler jeg mig ofte som i en Ørken, og der er Ingen der forstaaer mig." Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 19 December 1883, NM archive.

⁵¹ "[...] jag önskar mig att hon ville vara der med mig – så länge hon ej är der också, känner jag mig dragen fram och tillbaka och har ingenstädes någon fast fot." Letter from Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 19 July 1883, NM archive. Bauck has written this letter according to Wegmann's dictation: "Skrifvit af Jeanna, men dikteradt af Bertha."

recurring appearance and importance in Wegmann's oeuvre. In return, Jeanna Bauck utters her admiration for her Danish friend in her letters to Thorell. With regard to the success of Bertha Wegmann's portrait of her sister Anna Seekamp (Fig. 8), for which the artist received a third-class medal in the Salon of 1882, Bauck states: "I am completely fond of Bertha's portrait of her sister, it is the best I have ever seen in terms of portraiture, and I am so prideful and smug that my friend has done it that I look down my nose at the whole world."⁵²

[18] The idea of an enclosed artistic and emotional community with mutual trust, admiration and shared understanding resonates throughout the correspondence.⁵³ According to Deborah Cherry, women's friendships were structured by particular "codes and rituals", which "included the frequent reciprocation of letters and presents, the dedication of poems and gifts of portrait drawings of the beloved, self-portraits and photographs".⁵⁴ Just as Wegmann feels incomplete without having the friend at her

⁵² "Jag är alldeles förtjust i Bertha's porträtt af sin syster, det är det bästa jag någonsin sett i porträttväg, och jag är så högmodig öfver att min vän gjort det, att jag ser hela verlden öfver axeln." Letter from Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 19 July 1883, NM archive.

⁵³ Working in the emerging field of the history of emotions, medievalist Barbara H. Rosenwein introduced the term "emotional communities", allowing to "uncover systems of feeling", such as "the nature of the affective bonds between people" belonging to a specific social group. Rosenwein defines emotional communities as "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions." In general, she advocates for acknowledging emotion, its sources, governing laws and consequences as a vital part of the social process. When studying Nordic women painters' networking and friendships I employ Rosenwein's term, aiming to uncover the specific nature of their relationship as it constitutes itself in letters and paintings. A detailed discussion of emotional community in relation to Nordic women artists' networking will be conducted in my doctoral dissertation. See Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, New York 2006, 2. Cf. Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History", in: *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), no. 3, 821-845: 842. See even: Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions", in: *Passions in Context. International Journal for the History and Theory of Emotions* 1 (2010), 1-32: 11. In a recent article on Danish Golden Age artist portraits Sine Krogh has first drawn attention to the usefulness of Rosenwein's theory for the study of nineteenth-century artistic networks. Sine Krogh, "Friendship and Portraits in the Age of Romanticism. Reflections on Eight Portraits by C. A. Jensen", in: *Romantik. Journal for the Study of Romanticisms* 4 (2015), no. 1, 27-47.

⁵⁴ Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women. Victorian Women Artists*, London and New York 1993, 51. On epistolary rituals in women's friendships in the nineteenth century see the important and widely received article by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America", in: idem, *Disorderly Conduct. Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, Oxford 1985, 53-76 (first published in: *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 (1975), no. 1, 1-29). In accordance with Smith-Rosenberg, Stacey J. Oliker has pointed out that correspondences can be regarded as "rituals of attachment and sustained lifelong relations of intimacy", see: Stacey J. Oliker, "The Modernization of Friendship: Individualism, Intimacy, and Gender in the Nineteenth Century", in: *Placing Friendship in Context*, eds. Rebecca G. Adams and Graham Allan, Cambridge UK

side, Bauck closely identifies with her colleague's success virtually *underlining* their close bond in her writing. Both develop codes and rituals of mutual identification not only in the medium of the letter, but most importantly in painting by creating one another's portraits. Consequently, the artists perform their friendship both verbally and visually, in words and in actions or poses by continually expressing a sense of mutual identification and belonging. Wegmann's and Bauck's close relationship can probably best be described as a life partnership, which has sometimes also been termed *Boston marriage* in research on women's relationships at the turn of the century.⁵⁵

Performing Companionship, Visualizing Affection – Bertha Wegmann's Portraits of Jeanna Bauck

[19] During their stay in Paris in 1881, Bertha Wegmann created the first known likeness of her friend Jeanna Bauck (Fig. 9). Notably, she chose the portrait as her entry piece into the Paris Salon, for which she gained an honorable mention.⁵⁶ The Salon catalogue gives the following description of the painting:

*Young blonde woman, with tousled hair, seen en face, sitting on a bench in a painter's studio, underneath a grand framed window which allows a view along the rooftops of a city, with a clear and fresh light. She is dressed in black and holds in her lap, hands crossed, an album. To the right, a palette, a towel, brushes.*⁵⁷

1998, 18-42: 28.

⁵⁵ This term describes two women living together, independent of financial support from a man. Some of these relationships were romantic in character, others were not. Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men. Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, New York 1998, 145-230. In her later years, Bertha Wegmann shared a home in Copenhagen with her long-time companion Toni Møller, with whom she shared an intimate friendship, too. From the sources so far at hand it is impossible to trace whether or not Bauck and Wegmann or Møller and Wegmann had sexual relationships.

⁵⁶ Wegmann had failed to prepare a portrait in time for submission the previous year. The first woman that had promised to sit for the portrait had to cancel in the last minute because her father, worried about her reputation, had forbidden it. The second model already had another engagement at Trélat's school, which kept her from working full-time for Wegmann. Thorell accounts in detail the friends' difficulties in finding a sitter. In light of these experiences, Bauck must have felt like a perfect, secure and reliable choice the following year. Letters from Hildegard to Reinhold Thorell, 8 March, 21 March and 6 April 1880, NM archive.

⁵⁷ "Jeune femme blonde, aux cheveux ébouriffés, vue de face, assise sur un banc, dans un atelier de peintre, au-dessous d'un grand châssi qui laisse voir les toits d'une ville, sous une lumière claire et frisante. Elle est vêtue de noir et tient sur ses genoux, entres ses mains croisées, un album. A droite, une palette, un torchon, des pinceaux." *Le livre d'or du Salon de peinture et de sculpture: catalogue descriptive des œuvres récompensées et des principales œuvres hors concours*, ed. Georges Lafenestre, Paris 1882, 44.



9 Bertha Wegmann, *The Artist Jeanna Bauck*, 1881, oil on canvas, 106 x 85 cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Public domain)

Jeanna Bauck is sitting on a table in the studio, palette and brush placed to her left. She is holding a book in her hand, her index finger placed inside to mark a page. Bauck seems to have been interrupted by her friend, now curiously gazing back at Wegmann and the beholder with her mouth slightly open. It seems as if Bauck might be listening to something Wegmann is saying; in the next second she may be about to speak or smile. The severity of the artist's elegant black dress is contrasted by the recalcitrance of her headdress. Her blonde and curly hair seems to shine, almost framing her face like a halo. In Paris, Wegmann's palette lightened up noticeably, and she began to pay more attention to light effects, as seen in the daylight naturally reflecting in the hair of the sitter. Likewise, the landscape sketch in the background that echoes the contemporaneous French impressionistic stylistic concerns, might depict Brittany, where they travelled to study together. It testifies to both artists' interest in *plein air* painting and additionally reveals the portrayed to be a landscape painter and the sketch to be her creation.⁵⁸

[20] In the 1881 portrait, Jeanna Bauck is leaning forward as if wanting to come closer to bridge the spatial divide between herself inside the painting and her friend, the painter Wegmann, outside the picture plane. In the German language, this sentiment is expressed through the term *Zuneigung*, which translates as *affection*. Literally,

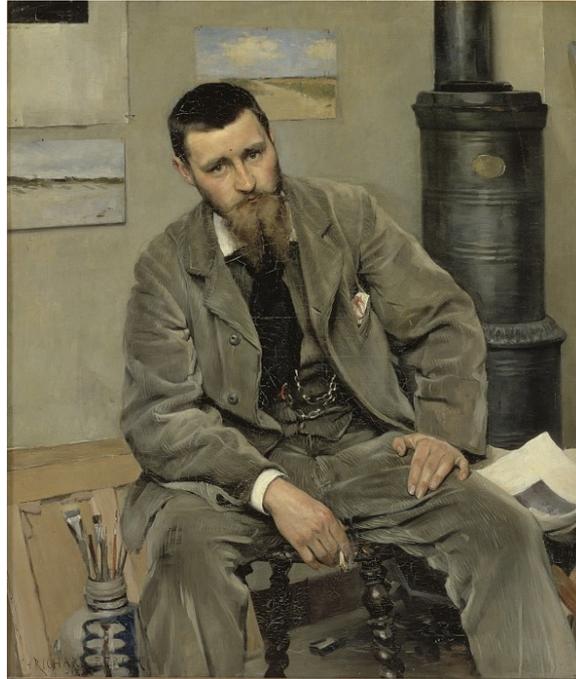
⁵⁸ Bauck's landscapes from Brittany were well received in the press and urged the Swedish critics to count her as a painter in the French school: "Bland damer, som företrädelsetvis torde vara att räkna till fransk skola är Jeanna Bauck den främsta. Hennes stora strandbild från Bretagne äger förtjenst." K. W-g., "Konstutställningskrönikan VIII", in: *Göteborgs Handels och Sjöfartstidning*, 31 July 1881.

however, it also means *to lean towards someone*. Likewise, the act of friendship and affection finds its visual counterpart in Bauck's welcoming pose. This pose is common for artist portraits, figuring as a recurring motif in the private portraits of the time. For instance, the Finnish painter Hilma Westerholm assumes a highly similar posture in a portrait by Elin Danielson-Gambogi of 1888 (Fig. 10), where she holds an apple instead of a book. Male artists, such as Richard Bergh in the portrait of his fellow painter Nils Kreuger (Fig. 11), follow this almost conventional pose as well, which expresses intimacy and affection between painter and sitter inside the artist portrait.⁵⁹



10 Elin Danielson-Gambogi, *Portrait of Hilma Westerholm*, 1888, oil on canvas, 136 x 105 cm. Turku Art Museum, Turku (photograph: Wikimedia Commons)

⁵⁹ Recent scholarship has started to increasingly address the relationship between conventions and emotions in portraiture, thereby calling into question to what extent we can read emotions in a likeness: *Fra den bedste side. Portræt og følsomhed i guldalderen = Keeping Up Appearances. Portraits and Emotions in the Golden Age*, exh. cat. Den Hirschsprungske Samling, eds. Gertrud Oelsner and Anna Schram Vejlby, Copenhagen 2017.



11 Richard Bergh, *Portrait of the Painter Nils Kreuger*, oil on canvas, 120.6 x 102.5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (Public domain)

[21] On several levels Bauck's appearance signals both nearness and presence: it resonates in the gesture, the gaze as well as the facial expression. In this portrait, the sitter immediately relates to the painter and vice versa. Even the room itself adds to the air of intimacy: placed in the corner of the room, Bauck is surrounded by grape leaves as if sitting under a bower. The green leaves are as rampant as her curly hair and make the studio appear as a secret and enclosed hiding place shared only by the two painters. The artist sits cross-legged on a table having just been interrupted from her reading, while taking a short break from her work, the tools still right at hand. This momentary scene, together with Bauck's relaxed and casual pose, makes the portrait appear particularly lively and immediate. According to Eva Pohl, the likeness reveals "energy, willpower and sensuality"⁶⁰, while Anna-Lena Lindberg considers it to be "thematically radical in its rendering of a woman in her newly-won professional role".⁶¹ Both the realism in the portrayal of her friend and the very professionalism by which Bauck performs her role inside the portrait were radical and highly unconventional.

[22] Writing to her husband back home in Stockholm, Hildegard Thorell gives a vivid account of a peculiar episode at the Salon in June 1881:

How much it pleases me to study with Bertha, I love to a high degree what she does. The 24th she is coming in to Paris to receive her Honorable Mention in due solemnity.

⁶⁰ Pohl, *A Place in the Sun*, 31.

⁶¹ Anna Lena Lindberg, "Det möjligas rum. Hanna Hirsch Paulis representation av Venny Soldan", in: *Når kvinder fortæller. Kvindelige malere i Norden 1880-1900*, exh. cat. Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen 2002, 65-82: 68.

The other day when J. and B. were at the Salon a woman approached Jeanna & asked if it was herself who had painted her portrait in such an excellent manner, to which Jeanna replied that it was her friend who had done the same, presenting Bertha to the stranger, who then explained that she was Mme. Cazin married to the eminent painter, adding that "every time my husband and I are here, we admire this portrait." [...] B. has heard from somewhere else that the whole École des Beaux-Arts is in admiration of the portrait.⁶²

In her letters to her husband, Thorell tends to mention the two artist friends in one breath and refers to them as a unitary entity, often using the above foreshortening "J. and B.". The lively episode from the exhibition room testifies to the unusually positive reception of the portrait in the Paris art scene. At the same time, it is interesting to note that Marie Cazin, who was a landscape painter herself and a fellow colleague married to Jean-Charles Cazin, was not only very taken by the portrait, but even mistook it at first for a self-portrait. In light of Wegmann's and Bauck's close artistic union, Cazin's reading of the painting might not have been so mistaken after all, does it not eventually embody a shared rather than a solitary artistic identity in a dialogic encounter between an *artist painter* and *artist sitter*.

[23] The reception of the portrait in Wegmann's home country, where it was exhibited the same winter, differed decisively from the praise expressed by the Parisians. In a letter from December 1881 the artist reflects upon the lack of understanding she faced in Copenhagen: "My studies and Jeanna's portrait simply have no luck here, they look at them dumfounded, and there is no one that comprehends a wee bit of my painting."⁶³ In the following year, she adds:

I despise the Danish with their philistinism, which is characteristic to all their manners and tastes. Will you believe they found Jeanna's portrait to be flighty and wild, this means to say as much as in Swedish "rusket" [unruly], and for the sole reason that she does not sit neatly combed in a chair with her hands tidily in the lap, as in all their other portraits.⁶⁴

First by means of these letters to Thorell we learn about the portrait's immediate reception in Denmark. The statement reflects the difficulties such Paris-trained modernist artists faced upon returning to their Nordic home countries. It further shows

⁶² "Hvad jag gläder mig åt att få studera för Bertha, jag älskar i hög grad hvad hon gör. Den 24 kommer hon in till Paris f. a. högtidligen emottaga sin mention honorable. Häromdagen då J. o B. voro på Salonen kom en dam fram till Jeanna & frågade om det var hon sjelf på ett sådant utmärkt sätt målat sitt porträtt, hvartill Jeanna svarade att det var hennes vän som gjort detsamma presenterande Bertha för den okända, hvilken då förklarade sig vara Mad: Cazin, gift med den framstående målaren, tillade hon att "för hvarje gång min man & jag äro här beundrar vi detta porträtt" [...] Från annat håll har B. hört att hela Ecole des Beaux Arts här vara i beundran af porträttet." Letter from Hildegard Thorell to Reinhold Thorell, 22 June 1881, NM archive.

⁶³ "Mine studier, og Jeannas portrait gjør her slet ingen lykke, de ser paa dem som en ko foran en rødmalet port, og der er ingen der begriper en smule af mit maleri." Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 28 December 1881, NM archive.

how little Bauck's appearance met with the public's expectations about a lady's decent appearance or proper likeness. Interestingly, it is not only Bauck's looks and her untidy hair that arouse criticism, but even her pose – casually sitting cross-legged on a table – was considered inappropriate, apparently being too active and engaged for the Danish beholders. The conservative Nordic audience might have preferred a more idealistic likeness, rather than the relatively naturalistic depiction of a professional woman artist, revealing both her labor and intellectual engagement in the privacy of the studio. A few years later, as if she wanted to silence her critics, Wegmann would present a more respectable and restrained portrait of her friend. However, instead of folding her hands as in all the conventional Danish portraits, Bauck, again, strikes her own rather subversive pose.



12 Bertha Wegmann, *Portrait of the Swedish Painter Jeanna Bauck*, 1885, oil on wood, 49.2 x 31.5 cm, Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen (photograph © Den Hirschsprungske Samling)

⁶⁴ "[...] jeg foragter de Danske med deres Spidsborgerlighed, der er gennemgaaende i hele deres smagsretning. Tænk bare de fandt Jeannas Portrait forflöient, det vil sige saa meget som paa svensk "rusket" og bare derfor fordi hun ikke pænt glat friseret sidder i en stol med Hænderne pænt paa skjødets, som alle deres andre portraiter." Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 8 September 1882, NM archive. Wegmann repeatedly states having her problems with the Danish public. When she had a solo show at the *Kunstforeningen* in Copenhagen in autumn 1886, where she presented the studies she had made during summer, she was unable to sell a single work, since people considered them too radical. Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 27 December 1886, NM archive. In her thesis on Wegmann's reception history, Linvald accounts for the reluctance of Danish museums to buy Wegmann's works and the public notion that her paintings were not Danish enough, which left the artist at times rather isolated. Linvald, *Receptionsteoretiske og -historiske overvejelser over kunstneren Bertha Wegmann*, 60-64. It was not uncommon in the period for works that were successful in Paris to be rejected by the Danish art critics. The same applied for instance to P. S. Krøyers *Italian Village Hatters* from 1880. Cf. Marianne Saabye, *Krøyer. An International Perspective*, Copenhagen and Skagen 2011, 201-202.

[24] According to the catalogue of the 1886 Salon, Wegmann was again represented with a portrait.⁶⁵ Her correspondence with Thorell reveals that the work exhibited was once more a portrait of Jeanna Bauck. By means of the description given in the letter to Thorell, the likeness can be identified as a work in the Hirschsprung collection, previously dated to 1887 (Fig. 12).⁶⁶ Bauck not only provides her friend with a detailed description of the portrait, but she even gives an account of its creation process and what it felt like to eventually see it on display in the Salon in Paris. Bauck explains that the portrait was painted in 1885 in Dresden, during a period when Wegmann was suffering from rheumatism:

In the middle of all this distress she painted nonetheless a most fine and beautiful portrait of me, so remarkable that not only the critics and my humble self, but even the worst of all, she herself, really had to admit that it was good, when we just recently were at the Salon and had been intimidated by all the good there is (good lord, how these people can paint!!!), and suddenly were standing in front of my portrait. The format is very small, the face 14 centimeters, I am sitting in a chair, totally comme il faut, in black with a black capote bonnet and a black glove on the left hand, and with my pince-nez at my lips, the right hand is holding the glove and is lying on my knee, the whole a knee piece – warm light-grey background. It was a feat to paint in a normal room, where the sun was shining in every time there was some sun, and without any of the usual studio comforts.⁶⁷

The letter reveals that the portrait was painted without having access to a studio and in difficult light conditions. However, both artist and sitter were pleased with the result, as they noted upon visiting the exhibition together. Bauck's account of the sitting possesses a lively tone, when she recalls out of her own subject-position how she sat for the painting. By documenting its creation process and her appearance in such an engaging manner Bauck relives the making of the image through the medium

⁶⁵ Société des artistes français, ed., *Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants exposés au Palais des Champs-Élysées*, Paris 1886, 196. Previous research has often stated that Wegmann participated only in the years 1881 and 1882.

⁶⁶ Cf. Jenns Howoldt, "Unter Freunden. Portraits in der Sammlung Hirschsprung", in: *Dänemarks Aufbruch in die Moderne. Die Sammlung Hirschsprung von Eckersberg bis Hammershøi*, exh. cat. Hamburger Kunsthalle, eds. Jenns Howoldt and Hubertus Gaßner, Munich 2013, 45-58: 46.

⁶⁷ "Midt i all denna bedröfvelse målade hon icke dessmindre ett serdeles fint och vackert porträtt av mig, så utmärkt, att icke blott kritici och äfven min obetydighet, utan också den värsta af alla, hon sjelf, då vi nyligen voro på Salongen, och hade blifvit riktigt kräsmagade af allt det goda der är (Herremin Gud, hvad dessa menniskor kan måla!!!) och så på en gång tråde framför mitt porträtt, verkligen måste tillstå att det var bra! Formatet är helt litet, ansigtet 14 centimeter, jag sitter i en stol, helt comme il faut, i svart med svart kapotthatt och svart handske på den venstra handen, som med min pincenez vid läppen, högre handen håller handsken och ligger på mitt knä, det hela är knästycke – varm ljusgrå bakgrund. Men det var ett konststycke att måla i ett vanligt rum, der solen sken in, så ofta det var någon sol, och utan några atelierbeqvämligheter." Letter from Jeanna Bauck to Hildegard Thorell, 25 June 1886, NM archive.

of the letter thereby 'repainting' her own image in words and rendering the portrait visible in front of Thorell's eyes who had been unable to see the original on display.

[25] In the same letter written in the summer of 1886 Bauck continues to elaborate on how they generally admired the works in the Salon and how they enjoyed the French artists' mastery of both color and technique:

*There is such a sum of talent that one could go around here for a year just to study and learn. And it is this real ultra-modern fat technique, wet and juicy and delicious [...] - nothing else than this tastes us, one walks around like a real gourmand and despises everything that is not excellent. [...] So poorly we tend to think of the Frenchmen, but their art is immaculate - and the noblesse in the color, and their superiority in drawing is something daunting to see!*⁶⁸

The artist's lively reports from the exhibition demonstrate once more the annual Salon's eminent importance for Nordic artists throughout the 1880s, while her correspondence, with its colorful and lively tone, adds another woman's voice to the firsthand accounts of the period. Indeed, these intimate letters from the pens of the close artist friends Bauck, Thorell and Wegmann prove to be an important socio-historical source aligning themselves with those by their contemporary Eva Bonnier addressed to the latter's family in Sweden and published by Margareta Gynning in 1997.⁶⁹

[26] In the 1886 Salon piece (Fig. 12), Bauck is not represented in her professional role as a painter but rather as a refined bourgeois lady. In light of the 1881 portrait's (Fig. 9) reception in Denmark, the second likeness can figure as a sequel or a pendant suggesting that professionalism and feminine elegance are not mutually exclusive. Rather, different aspects of Bauck's personality are mediated through Wegmann's portraits; interestingly, both of them put on display in the most important contemporary art exhibition at the time. To say it more bluntly, it is *through* Bauck figuring as her recurring sitter that Wegmann presents herself to the French public and makes herself a reputation as a skillful portraitist.

[27] The manner in which Bauck, in the 1886 portrait, is holding and thereby drawing attention to her glasses clearly shows that we are encountering a woman of letters or an intellectual in middle age. However, the other hand is resting in her lap, as if referencing the comments by the Danish observers. The chair is placed diagonally, establishing a barrier between the artist and the viewer, which further emphasizes the sitter's elegance and respectability. However, a piercing gaze counteracts her aloof

⁶⁸ "Det är en sådan summa af talang så att man kunde gå ett helt år och bara studera och lära. Och det är den der äkta ultramoderna feta våta tekniken, blödt och saftigt och läckert [...] - ingenting annat än det smakar oss, man går omkring som en riktig läckermun och föraktar allt som ej är utmärkt. [...] Så litet vi hålla af Fransmännen, men deras konst är makalös - och den nobless i koloriten och deras öfverlägenhet i teckning är någonting hiskligt att se!" Letter from Jeanna Bauck to Hildegard Thorell, 25 June 1886, NM archive.

⁶⁹ Margareta Gynning, ed., *Pariserbref, Konstnären Eva Bonniers Brev 1883-1889*, Lund 1999. For an analysis and discussion of the letters see also: Margareta Gynning, *Det ambivalenta perspektivet. Eva Bonnier och Hanna Hirsch-Pauli i 1880-talets konstliv*, Stockholm 1999.

posture and rests on the beholder. The sharp look of Bauck's eyes in conjunction with the playful gesture of the hand holding the glasses to her lips turn once more the gaze – a woman artist's active looking at and creation of her world – into the theme of their collaborative paintings. While in the first portrait being depicted with a book, Bauck is now holding an elegant pince-nez, typically worn by men of the upper Bourgeoisie. Both attributes figure not only as visual signs revealing the sitter's strong intellect and refinement, they even serve the painter herself to perform her technical skillfulness in painting. By sitting for her friend, Bauck hence enables Wegmann to show off all her ability as a portraitist, especially when it comes to the rendering of the object's varying materiality as well as the corresponding garments and textualities: the artist's soft, slightly curled lips touch the cold shining metal of the glasses, which in return reflect the daylight entering into the room from the side, the whole paired with the stringy leather of the glove and the dark semi-transparent veil touching the sitter's light skin as well as the large silk ribbon – a plentitude of difficult features created, as we now know, under aggravated circumstances. Additionally, the painting's wood support references the royal collections the two artists were studying together in Dresden at the time. To make Wegmann find back to artistic productivity after a longer illness, the painters copied together after Old Masters in the *Dresdner Gemäldegalerie*.⁷⁰ Eventually, the friend once more turns into a vehicle by means of which the artist can express all her painterly abilities. In the 1886 Salon, Bauck is present for a second and last time through Wegmann's touch, finally turning into the latter's favorite, recurring model, or rather 'co-author'.

[28] Bauck probably allowed Wegmann to work on her likeness freely, giving her the time she needed while providing advice and continually discussing the results with her. It often shows in the correspondence that these private artist portraits were a welcome change from the many commissioned portraits that Wegmann needed to paint in order to make a living throughout the years. Indeed, by the mid-1880s she had made herself a name as a society portraitist receiving numerous commissions from the Copenhagen bourgeoisie and Danish aristocracy. At times she even had difficulties to keep pace with the demand. Jeanna Bauck repeatedly stated in her letters that it "rained commissions" on her friend.⁷¹ However, Wegmann considered working on commission not only tiresome, but even counterproductive for her development as an artist: "Portraits, portraits, and always portraits, it affects both soul

⁷⁰ Wegmann chose Rubens believing that the admired master would have a healing effect on her, while Bauck copied a landscape by contemporary artist Hermann Baisch (1846-1894). Letter from Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 6 January 1885, NM archive.

⁷¹ "Hon har en stor arbetsförmåga och beställningar regnar alltjemt." Letter from Jeanna Bauck to Hildegard Thorell, 12 June 1909, NM archive. Bauck frequently refers to Wegmann's numerous commissions and her productivity in her letters to Thorell: "Bertha [...] har fullt med beställningar och arbetat till och med öfver sina krafter, ty hon håller inte ut med sina nerver, men det går ändå. [...] hon skriver att det köps enormt mycket taflor i Köpenhamn, men naturligtvis bara af danska målare. Man är ju så stockpatriotisk der." Letter from Jeanna Bauck to Hildegard Thorell, 30 December 1915, NM archive.

and art, and I have been fighting with this all winter; lucky are those who do not have to paint for the sake of money!"⁷² Both her own and the friend's corresponding accounts suggest that Wegmann disliked the monotony of painting conventional portraits as well as the constant need to unite likeness with idealization. As early as 1884 Wegmann clarified that she did not intend to work solely as a portraitist: "[...] almost every day I refuse some portrait commission, people are like crazy, and I do not have in mind to solely become a portrait painter."⁷³ A few years later the artist stated that she needed to "wash herself clean" from all the tiresome commissions.⁷⁴ As late as 1920, Bauck notes her friend's workload:

*She was so flooded with all these same portrait commissions, and so tired of all these everlasting eyes and noses and mouths, that so need to resemble, and often are so uninteresting. [...] No, here I prefer my landscapes [...] in which lie feeling and poetry, but how rarely such reside in some everyday-person that wants to be painted!*⁷⁵

[29] These accounts reveal that it must have been very special to paint a close colleague and friend, someone both truly out of the ordinary and so quite like the artist herself. The two companions' intimate relationship, their similar background, shared professional aspirations and collective identity might have prompted and upheld Wegmann's continuous interest in her favorite sitter, since only by representing her fellow colleague she could put her own experience on canvas, too.

Concluding Remarks

[30] This study has mainly focused on three paintings by Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann in the Nationalmuseum and Hirschsprung collections. The close readings of

⁷² "Portrait, portrait og altid portrait, det dræber baade sjæl og kunst, og det har jeg stridt med hele vinteren; jo den er lykkelig der ikke behøver male for pengenes skyld!" Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 9 April 1885, NM archive.

⁷³ "[...] næsten hver Dag frasiger jeg mig en Portraitbestilling, folk er som gale, og jeg har jo ikke isinde at blive udelukkende portraitmalerinde." Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 11 April 1884, NM archive.

⁷⁴ "[...] men saasart det skal vore hans Egendom saa begynder Folk at kritisere, og synes aldrig at man gjør dem smukke nog, saa det er bedst jeg bliver borte fra den Leg. [...] Jeg har ikke begyndt at male noget endnu i vinter, det vil sige jeg maler Studier, bestandig Studier for at vaske mig reen for alt det daarlige der er kommet til at klæbe ved mig af at male portraitter. Jeg har hele Sommeren kun malt Studier, mest Landskabsstudier. Du veed jeg kan ikke komme ud af det med det franske Folk, og er blevet uvenner med alle Modeller saa tilsidst blev der Intet tilbage end den deilige Natur." Letter from Bertha Wegmann to Hildegard Thorell, 12 November 1886, NM archive.

⁷⁵ "[...] hon var så överhopad af de gamla porträttbeställningarna, och så trött på alla dessa eviga ögon och näsor och munnar, som så måste vara lika, och så ofta ointressanta. [...] Nej, då föredrar jag mina landskap [...] deri ligger känsla och poesi, men hur sällan ligger sådant i någon hvardagsmänniska som vill bli målrad!" Letter from Jeanna Bauck to Hildegard Thorell, 23 December 1920, NM archive.

these portraits combined with new archival evidence from the collection of *Nordiska Museet* aimed at mapping out the painter's collaborative partnership. Hildegard Thorell's correspondence has further provided new insights into the artists' friendship as well as first-hand-accounts on Bertha Wegmann's role as a teacher.

[31] By means of recurring mediated self-representations Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann developed a shared artistic identity in painting, taking turns in acts of posing and painting, always finding themselves in close interaction. By mutually posing and by employing the body of the colleague as a vehicle for self-expression, the artist imagines herself through and projects herself onto the friend. Or, to put it the other way around, through the touch of the fellow painter and by posing for her, the artist invents herself on canvas. Through mutual acts of identification, through the body and the pose, through the gaze and finally through the studio space Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann collaboratively stage interventions into the representation of the professional woman painter in the late nineteenth century on a cosmopolitan art scene in-between Munich, Paris, and Copenhagen.

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