

Antiques

Eve M. Kahn

Ornamented Oak Of a Master Craftsman

A forgotten collection of oak furniture by the Swedish-born carver Karl von Rydingsvard goes on view Sunday at the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia, returning this craftsman to the public eye a century after he briefly rose to fame.

Carrie Hogan, the museum's senior curator, borrowed the antiques from descendants of a friend of the von Rydingsvard family. She has tracked down his other works from the early 1900s, including roomfuls of furniture carved for American industrialists. He rarely signed his chairs, chests, tables and panels, which he decorated with vines, fruit, medieval knights, Gothic pointed arches, Celtic knots and Norse monsters.

Ms. Hogan also uncovered biographical details that von Rydingsvard apparently tried to hide when he was alive. Although his parents technically belonged to the nobility, they

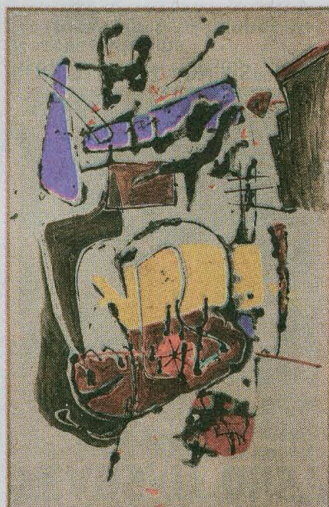
inherited no land or fortune. Born in 1863, he grew up in a hamlet on the west coast of Sweden, where his family farmed, tended the grounds of a cemetery and ran a country store. As a teenager, von Rydingsvard (pronounced REE-dings-vehrd) made his way to Stockholm and then New York and Boston, working at furniture factories. By the 1890s he had brought most of his relatives to the United States and married Anna Davis, a linguist and historian from Boston who was a descendant of Magna Carta signers and 17th-century New England settlers.

He apparently exaggerated the loftiness of his inherited titles. His wife erroneously called herself Baroness von Rydingsvard. After her mistake was exposed in the press, she sued for divorce, but von Rydingsvard weathered the scandal. "He must have been incredibly charismatic," Ms. Hogan said.

He set up schools for female carvers in Manhattan and Brunswick, Me., and taught at institutions including Columbia University, the Rhode Island School of Design and the school at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. By the 1930s, he had largely retired to Maine with his second wife, Ida, also a woodcarver.

He died in 1941 as a result of injuries from a fire. The fate of his business records is unknown, but his wares remain in some of the Tudor and Elizabethan buildings that he helped furnish, including the Hermitage Museum & Gardens in Norfolk, Va. The antiques on view at the Swedish museum in Philadelphia are ornamented here and there with his family's coat of arms.

Detail of a dining room chair carved by the Swedish-born craftsman Karl von Rydingsvard.



FALKENSTEIN FOUNDATION, MICHAEL ROSENFELD GALLERY LLC, NEW YORK

Right, Claire Falkenstein around 1955 with one of her sculptures. Above, her "Barcelona No. 2," a gouache on paper from 1949.

The show was originally a collaboration with Robert Edwards, an expert on Arts and Crafts design in Swarthmore, Pa., but he died in 2014, and carvings from his estate have been dispersed; his chests and stools by von Rydingsvard have sold for up to a few thousand dollars each. (Mr. Edwards's papers are at the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library in Wilmington, Del.)

Ms. Hogan said she hoped that more von Rydingsvard artifacts would surface. "We want to keep this conversation going," she said.

Recalling a Polymath

The abstract artist Claire Falkenstein, who died in 1997 at 89, filled her Southern California home and assorted storage units with her paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures and jewelry.



FALKENSTEIN FOUNDATION

Experts have only recently finished inventorying her estate, and the Falkenstein Foundation, which inherited the contents, has begun lending and donating works for museum and gallery exhibitions.

On April 17, a retrospective, "Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture," opens at the Pasadena Museum of California Art. The artworks are made from materials as diverse as bamboo stalks, copper tubes, glass shards and a shopping cart; the show's

catalog also documents the artist's designs for gates, fountains, stained-glass windows and other architectural elements, some of which have been destroyed.

Jay Belloli, the show's curator and vice president of the Falkenstein Foundation, said that each of the artist's metal artworks includes hundreds of meticulous welds, although "they look like they just happened" on the fly.

Ms. Falkenstein's sculptures are on view at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice and at the Hauser Wirth & Schimmel gallery in Los Angeles, and have been exhibited this year at the American University Museum in Washington and the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York, which represents the estate. (Proceeds from the gallery sales will finance curatorial work at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.)

Halley K. Harrisburg, director of the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, said that treasures in the inventory are still being unearthed, and that research is underway

on how Ms. Falkenstein fashioned and displayed her pieces. "No one iconic image summarizes her work," Ms. Harrisburg said.

A Tapestry Unfurls

In the early 1900s American philanthropists vied for Renaissance tapestries, seeking to add touches of aristocratic taste to new museum galleries. After decades of neglect, such textiles are being retrieved from storage, refurbished and put on display, in some cases alongside texts analyzing the tastes of their past owners.

On April 23, the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts will exhibit a "Last Judgment" tapestry stitched in Brussels around 1500. At more than 26 feet long, the work depicts Christ surrounded by the blessed and the damned. It was installed in the 1930s in the museum's two-story Renaissance Court, where it remained until 1990. It had previously belonged to Manhattan dealers including French & Company, which supplied works for the Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers, and George Joseph Demotte, known for his legal skirmishes with various rivals, including Joseph Duveen.

The tapestry has been cleaned, reinforced and restored at the Royal Manufacturers De Wit in Mechelen, Belgium. Rita Albertson, the Worcester Art Museum's chief conservator, said that the borders had been trimmed over the years but that the faces of the figures had fortunately not undergone unsightly repairs. They retain their beseeching, compassionate, enraptured and terrified expressions. "They have the full range of emotion intact," she said.

Related tapestries and fragments are in a range of collections; the Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a few, and one was sold for \$78,000 in 2007 at Sotheby's in New York. The Met has organized exhibitions of restored European tapestries, as have the National Gallery of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Frick Collection in New York, the Frick Pittsburgh, the Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Rochester, the Staten Island Museum, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.



AMERICAN SWEDISH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Crossword

Edited by Will Shortz

PUZZLE BY PETER GORDON

ACROSS

1 Sister brand of Scope

6 Like blackjack hands with an ace counted as 11

10 Feature of a

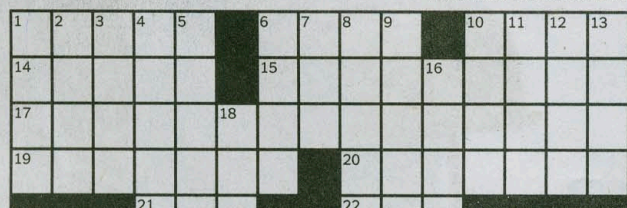
45 Make less flat

46 You might put stock in it

47 Gloaming, to a sonneteer

48 2 letters

50 Pennsylvania



JEOPARDY!

CLUE OF THE DAY

ASIAN CITIES

OF ASIA'S 10 MOST
POPULOUS URBAN
AREAS, THIS CITY ON