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Portrait Exchange Between Stockholm and Vienna and the Formation of Gustav III's Round Salon at Gripsholm Castle

Michael Yonan *

One of the more outstanding artistic projects to emerge from Gustavian Sweden is the so-called Round Salon or *Runda Salongen* (sometimes called the White Salon or *Vita Salongen*) at Gripsholm Castle, located about 60 kilometers west of Stockholm. This is, as its name suggests, a round gallery decorated with portraits of eighteenth-century European monarchs (Fig. 1). To this day one of the Crown Palaces of Sweden and home to the Swedish National Portrait Gallery,



Fig. 1. Round Salon (Runda Salongen), Gripsholm Castle, Mariefred, Sweden, begun 1775 (Photo: author).

Gripsholm itself dates from the later Middle Ages and like many European castles has a complicated building history.¹ Much of the current structure dates from the sixteenth century, when Gustav Vasa used it as a royal residence and prison, but it underwent multiple renovations after that, notably under Queen Hedvig Eleonora in the late seventeenth century and again under King Gustav III between 1773 and 1792. Although used as a residence, Gripsholm also has a long history of being a depository for portraits. Hedvig Eleonora had used it in this way and Lovisa Ulrika followed in her stead, which means that long before King Gustav ascended to the Swedish throne, the castle functioned as a *de facto* portrait gallery that anticipated its modern use.² After Gustav's proxy marriage to Sophia Magdalena of Denmark on 1 October 1766, the couple commissioned multiple changes to Gripsholm's interior, outfitting it with a theater at the new queen's behest and redecorating several rooms in a late rococo manner, while also rearranging the portraits housed there and adding new ones, including those seen today in the Round Salon.³

The room is of a specific architectural type that appealed to northern European

monarchs called a *galerie contemporaine*. A similar room had existed at Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen since the 1740s, and a further one would be built in the late 1770s at Chesme, near St Petersburg, at the command of Catherine II of Russia.⁴ Yet the Gripsholm salon is the most important example of this type surviving today, and appears mostly in its original form, which makes it a special, indeed precious historical monument.⁵ While the room is well known, its precise construction history remains imperfectly understood.⁶ It took over twenty years to reach its final form, and during that time, much changed in the Swedish monarchy and in Swedish society generally that shifted the meanings associated with it. New documents unearthed in the National Archives of Sweden allow us to shed light on the room's early history and introduces a crucial player in the room's genesis heretofore not fully acknowledged: Austria. The geographically closer states of Denmark and Russia certainly exerted important influence on the room's design, and France, Sweden's great political ally, likewise is a crucial player in its story. Yet interactions with the imperial court in Vienna clarify early motivations behind decorating the room, provide a more precise narrative of its construction, and shed light on the combination of personal and political roles that monarchical portraits played in late eighteenth-century Europe. The documents also reveal that some portraits in the Round Salon are not the product of portrait exchange typical of early modern European diplomacy but were made entirely in Sweden.

This information comes from the records of two Swedish diplomats. On the Vienna side, we have reports from Nils Barck the Elder (1713–1782), a Swedish nobleman who resided in the Austrian capital and

served as Swedish court chancellor after 1763⁷ (Fig. 2). Barck had married a member of the Dietrichstein family, one of the most powerful central European dynasties and one with significant influence at the imperial court. This gave him privileged access to Empress Maria Theresa and her advisers. On the Stockholm side are reports from Ulrik Scheffer (1716–1799). Scheffer is an important figure in eighteenth-century Swedish history, serving at various moments in his career as a diplomat (including onetime ambassador to Paris), statesman, member of the Swedish privy council (*riksråd*), and as an educator. From 1772 to 1783, at the time of the correspondence in question, he was lieutenant general to the Swedish throne and not long afterward became chancellor of the Royal Academy at Åbo. To art historians he



Fig. 2. Gustaf Lundberg, *Portrait of Nils Barck d. Ä.*, c. 1780. Pastel on paper, 66.5 × 52 cm. (Göteborg: Göteborgs Konstmuseum, GKM 1250).

is best known from a gorgeous portrait by Alexander Roslin, which generated much discussion at the Parisian salon due to its perceived dated style⁸ (Fig. 3). The Scheffer family's ties to the Swedish monarchs ran deep. Ulrik's brother Carl Fredrik had been Gustav III's childhood governor for five years and both brothers had served as advisers to the crown for several decades.⁹ Little of the correspondence in question comes from Ulrik Scheffer directly, except for one crucial text, but his importance to the Round Salon's history shall soon become clear. Barck's letters are reports to Scheffer, and from them we learn how the Swedish court employed portraits as tools of international diplomacy and how this fed into the development of the Round Salon's design.



Fig. 3. Alexander Roslin, *Portrait of Ulrik Scheffer*, 1763. Oil on canvas, 116.5 × 89 cm. (Skokloster Castle, Sweden, 3200_SKO) (Creative Commons Public Domain Mark PDM).

The first report is dated 24 November 1774 and concerns the transport of a painting, and not one, it turns out, with any obvious connection to Gripsholm.¹⁰ This is a portrait of Gustav III painted by the Swedish painter Lorens Pasch the Younger (1733–1805), now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Fig. 4). Barck reports that this painting had arrived in Vienna, but other than naming it, he devotes no attention to its content, or for that matter the circumstances that caused it to be painted. In place of it, he tells in detail how it traveled from Stockholm. Not directly, it turns out, but through two intermediaries that ensured its proper transport across the continent. It was sent first to Benedictus Faxell in Hamburg. Faxell (1711–1787) was the Swedish minister there and he confirmed the portrait's arrival in good condition before sending it forward to one Johann



Fig. 4. Lorens Pasch the Younger, *Portrait of King Gustav III of Sweden*, 1774. Oil on canvas, 135.5 × 114.5 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, G 2758. (Photo: KHM-Museumsverband).

August Greiffenheim in Regensburg. He served as an *envoyé* to the Swedish crown in southern Germany, an important post since Regensburg was the site of the Holy Roman Imperial Diets.¹¹ From Greiffenheim the portrait traveled onward to Vienna, where Barck records receiving it. He adds that he hasn't had instructions from Stockholm on exactly when and how to present the picture at court, and after further consultation with the Austrian ambassador to Stockholm, Anton von Widmann, and fearing a lengthy delay, Barck decides to deliver it himself. In that way, he remarks, the spirit of intention behind the gift is best fulfilled. Notable is that in the margin to one side, in a hand different from the main text, is written the name of Ulrik Scheffer, which indicates the intent to share this letter with him. Another shorter note follows this one and adds that the presentation of the portrait was delayed further due to the Empress's ill health.

The second report dates from two weeks later, 8 December 1774.¹² From it we learn that Barck was able to present the painting to the imperial court, and in addition we learn exactly how this was done to maximize impact. The literature on early modern artistic exchange refers regularly to such moments, as royal gift exchange was a standard form of cementing alliances between political allies.¹³ It is rare, however, to have such a vivid description of a gift presentation as the one Barck provides. He did not present the portrait to the Empress personally, but rather had his domestic assistants bring the portrait to the Hofburg palace, where she resided at that time of year, and place it secretly in her *cabinet* while she was elsewhere. The portrait surprised her when she returned, and she sent her secretary, Bistrick, to Barck to convey the great pleasure it gave

her. Bistrick conveyed more than that, namely 50 ducats given to Barck's staff for their trouble. The following day, at a court gala, Maria Theresa communicated to Barck her gratitude for receiving the gift and tells that she had given the portrait to her court painter so that he could study it.¹⁴ Although not named, this was very likely Joseph Hicckel (1736–1807), *Hofmaler* to the imperial court and much in favor at this moment among them. After Hicckel viewed it, the portrait then was shared with other courtiers, traveling to the households of several foreign ministers, a detail that pleased Barck very much. The reference to a gala allows us to date precisely when the initial presentation of the portrait took place. According to Johann Joseph Khevenhüller-Metsch, court chancellor at the imperial court and keeper of a detailed diary of its daily activities, this gala took place on 6 December 1774, which would mean that the painting arrived in Maria Theresa's cabinet on the previous day, 5 December.¹⁵

The following morning, on 7 December, none other than the court chancellor Prince Anton Wenzel von Kaunitz-Rietberg summoned Barck for an audience. Kaunitz addressed him in the Empress's name, thanking him for the portrait and returning the gesture by giving him an enameled gilt snuffbox containing the Empress's insignia (*chiffre*) framed in diamonds. Such objects were common gifts to ambassadors at the imperial court, a procedure that the Habsburgs had perfected as a means of transmitting dynastic political ideology.¹⁶ This snuffbox may have influenced aspects of the gallery at Gripsholm, as we shall soon see, but for now we need only note that the presentation of Pasch's portrait secured attention for Swedish concerns in Vienna. The portrait

was intended, among other things, to emphasize the legitimacy of the recently ratified Swedish constitution of 1772. In Pasch's portrait, King Gustav's hand rests on this document, physically linking him to its words, and clearly visible next to it is the elaborate tasseled seal used to validate official papers in this period of Swedish history. The constitution is tilted upward to allow viewers to regard its text, which is illegible, but visible are numerous signatures authorizing its terms. One sees these immediately next to the monarch's hand. The seal's prominence is surely no accident: it is there to emphasize the constitution's political legitimacy, which to a foreign power like Austria would be precisely the idea requiring emphasis. Adding to this sense of legitimacy is the rhetorical

gesture of leadership that the monarch uses, which derives from Roman sculpture and was much favored in eighteenth-century imagery to convey status and authority. That Pasch emphasized these aspects of the composition for Maria Theresa is made clear by comparing it to the later version of this image made for Johan Vilhelm Sprengtporten in 1777 and now on display in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.¹⁷ In this version, the constitution is present, but less prominent, and Pasch has changed the monarch's gesture to a less commanding one as well. In this later version he also wears moose-hide gloves (*älghudshandskar*), which have the effect of de-emphasizing his hands (Fig. 5).

This overture to Austria seems not to have been an isolated incident and should be understood in the broader context of finding an appropriate decoration for the Round Salon that expressed the king's political power. Gustav III originally contemplated establishing a gallery in honor of individuals who had assisted him in staging the 1772 revolution. In this plan, the room would have housed 21 portraits of people who supported him, coming from opposite sides of the political spectrum, thereby creating "the impression that national consensus and harmony now prevailed."¹⁸ Such a gallery would have been unusual and possibly unique in European monarchical interior decoration of this era. It was also a highly idealistic proposal, since fulfilling it would have offended anyone who did not overtly support Gustav's political project. Gustav III abandoned plans for this gallery in early 1774 and replaced it with the idea of a *galerie contemporaine*. Once the type of room was decided upon, the Swedish court gifted portraits to several European thrones in the hope of receiving others in return for



Fig. 5. Lorens Pasch the Younger, *Portrait of King Gustav III of Sweden*, 1777. Oil on canvas, 155 × 114 cm. (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, NM 2346) (Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0).

use at Gripsholm. We know that a portrait of the Swedish king had been sent to St Petersburg around the same time that Barck received his in Vienna. In the Russian case, a request to receive a portrait of Catherine went through Alexander Naryshkin, a chamberlain visiting Stockholm that autumn.¹⁹ It would be a long time before this gift was reciprocated, however, as a copy of Alexander Roslin's portrait of the Empress by an unknown Russian artist arrived at Gripsholm only in 1779.²⁰

We learn how and why Sweden may have wanted Vienna's attention from the next document, not a short letter like the previous ones, but something much more elaborate. This is a lengthy record of an audience between Barck and Empress Maria Theresa, dated 3 February 1775 and received in Stockholm a month later, on 4 March.²¹ Barck drafted the original report in the old script or *kurrentstil*, but given its importance, it was transcribed multiple times in its entirety into the more familiar Latin script. Several of these transcriptions survive in the Swedish state archives.²² They record in detail the substance of a conversation between Barck and Maria Theresa that took place shortly after the portrait came to her.

Barck begins this lengthy text by noting that Maria Theresa received the portrait with friendship and esteem toward the Swedish crown. He knows her character from years of observation and therefore can confirm that Pasch's portrait truly delighted her. On the day they met, the Empress was in possession of the portrait and took trouble to position it in her cabinet so that it could be viewed in good light. It probably was placed on a stand of some kind, although Barck does not mention this. This implies that the painting was not intended to be hung

permanently in any specific location, but rather moved around and shared with individuals as needed. Barck then writes that the Empress could not stop commenting on the portrait's *ordonnance* and *colorit*, two terms that he uses in the original French. Both derive from eighteenth-century French art theory. *Ordonnance* refers to the arrangement of a work of art's parts, its composition, while *colorit* refers of course to its palette. Both needed to be judged carefully by an artist and balanced properly within a painting for it to be judged successful. Barck then took time to interpret the painting for the Empress, noting that Gustav's right rested hand on the new Swedish constitution and explaining to her the significance of the curious white band tied around his left arm, which symbolized his sympathy with the revolutionaries that empowered him. The Empress noted these things, but her greatest attention, Barck says, was directed to the figure's face. She insisted that his physiognomy promised much, and that the King had lived up to that promise. We find here a reference to the commonplace eighteenth-century belief that external appearance conveyed essential aspects of one's character, a harmony between mind and body that recurs in early modern theories of human form. Nothing would have been more pleasant, the Empress told Barck, than to meet the king in person, and this was not an impossible wish, as he had visited the courts of France and Prussia while traveling on the mainland in 1771. In lieu of a personal friendship, Maria Theresa said that the portrait would be dearer to her than any other gift, to which Barck replied that this was Gustav's deepest wish and intention, to keep the Swedish king constantly in the Empress's mind.

This is a remarkable passage for several reasons. Despite the many portraits exchanged diplomatically among the courts of early modern Europe, the record of a monarch looking at and commenting upon a specific work of art, one still known today, is quite uncommon. Barck records with precision exactly how and what Maria Theresa looked at, transcribing her words verbatim. This is a moment when a meeting about politics yields art-historical knowledge. Pasch's portrait did not simply function as a stand-in for the absent monarch, although it did that. Maria Theresa appreciated the portrait aesthetically as well as politically, as a work of art *and* as a conveyor of the monarch's presence, combining artistic, emotional, and political reactions into a unified response. From a twentieth-century standpoint, these seem like distinct modes of viewing, but a challenge in understanding eighteenth-century portraiture is recognizing that they overlapped. Barck's record therefore illuminates the complex place of portraits in eighteenth-century monarchical settings: simultaneously aesthetic objects, representations of statehood, and manifestations of the mechanics of power, interacting both with the represented individuals from afar and the portrait's audiences in layered ways. Maria Theresa knew enough art theory to comment on the success of Pasch's picture as a work of art and not just as a visualization of Swedish monarchical authority, but it also was precisely that. Beauty and likeness overlapped with statehood and politics in a way that reveals them as inextricably combined.

We then learn from this document that the portrait generated a conversation between Barck and the Empress, serving as a springboard to deliberation about Sweden through the likeness of its king. Maria Theresa

mentions to Barck that the governmental system of Sweden had not yet fully settled after the revolution and that the Swedish nation needed to open its eyes to the difference between its present and past, and not to judge itself by the views of others. She complimented King Gustav by stating that he would bring Sweden's great potential to fruition. She then recalled tenderly ("*med en art af attendrissement,*" says Barck) that in her youth she sought diligently and industriously to fulfill the obligations of her monarchical role and to ensure her subjects' wellbeing. She recalled developing personal qualities that enabled her to surmount the many obstacles she faced in her reign. She suggests a parallel between herself and the Swedish king that emerges out of the thoughts generated by Pasch's portrait, in a combination of recognition, identification, and projection. This generates a multifaceted interrelationship between the absent monarch, his likeness, the Empress who viewed that likeness, the nobleman who records the encounter, the Swedish diplomats who received it, and finally the king himself who benefits from the knowledge that emerged from the encounter. This passage also suggests that both Barck and the Empress saw a parallel between Gustav's assumption of absolute power in 1772 and Maria Theresa's struggle to claim Habsburg titles after the death of her father, Emperor Charles VI, in 1740. It took until 1745 for her to become Empress, and this happened only after effortful negotiations, war, and the transformation of the Habsburg dynasty into the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. While not exactly comparable to the Swedish situation in the 1770s – in fact, they are notably dissimilar – the portrait became an occasion for Maria Theresa to associate her life with Gustav III's.

Barck then turns away from a strict focus on the portrait to consider political matters. His words reveal how Sweden sought to negotiate its position in complex international relations by calling on the expertise of Habsburg statesmanship. The Swedish crown required this counsel due to the difficulties it had encountered after the bloodless coup of 1772. That event ended the so-called Age of Liberty, or *frihetstiden*, which had decentralized Swedish political power and created a weakened crown and a privy council, divided into two political camps, the Hats and the Caps, which jockeyed for influence matters of state. Its effect on the internal workings of Swedish society have been much analyzed, but from the outside it appeared that this anti-absolutist political structure had weakened Sweden internationally, an impression Maria Theresa clearly shared. Some observers felt that the 1772 revolution would strengthen Sweden's status as a first-rank European power, but this had not yet occurred at the time Pasch's portrait arrived in Vienna. Indeed, the years between 1772 and 1775 were immensely difficult for Sweden as its immediate neighbors – Denmark, Russia, and Prussia – sought to capitalize off its weaknesses. There were concerns that Sweden was on the verge of being invaded, even that there would be a partition of Swedish territories along the lines of the First Partition of Poland, which had taken place in 1771. Were that to happen, Russia would invade Finland, Prussia would claim Swedish Pomerania on the southern Baltic coast, and Denmark access the mainland through Norway. Fears of this culminated in an emergency meeting of the privy council at the royal palace of Ulriksdal, north of Stockholm, on 15 March 1774, at which the Swedish crown prepared for the worst.²³

Preventing this were Russia's military challenges in its southern regions, particularly against the Ottomans, which had strained their finances. Despite this distraction, Denmark and Russia signed an alliance on 12 August 1774 that defined the new Swedish constitution as an act of violence against them.²⁴

Considerable diplomatic finesse was marshaled to ensure that Sweden had allies convinced of its right to exist as a separate, independent state. Among these, of singular importance was France. Louis XV had given money and service to Sweden in the buildup to the 1772 revolution, despite not supporting it officially through state channels, and once the revolution occurred, France viewed the new Swedish constitution as proof of its international influence. The French public celebrated the young Swedish king openly in the streets of Paris.²⁵ But Louis XV had died on 10 May 1774 and Gustav III was concerned that further French largesse would not be forthcoming. This explains why much of the conversation between Barck and Maria Theresa emphasizes France's support for Sweden. At the moment Pasch's portrait arrived in Vienna, France and Austria were new allies, having formed a bond through the *renversement des alliances* of 1756 after centuries of opposition. Barck commented on this, noting that Austria created it despite little history of cooperation between the two nations, and Maria Theresa emphasizes in return that the key to political stability in northern Europe lay not with Austria, but France. Barck recorded her words in the original French they spoke:

J'ai pour le Roi de Suède toute l'amitié possible; Outre ce penchant nous avons tous deux un ami commun avec lequel je suis le plus tendrement liée. Cet ami commun est

le Roi de France: Pour le Moment présent, je ne puis pas vous en dire d'avantage.

Important to note is that the French king mentioned here is Louis XVI, a monarch whom Gustav III barely knew. His coronation would take place the following summer, on 11 June 1775, but at the time of Barck's audience, French support for Sweden was not a sure thing. What emerges from this discussion is the vision of a Sweden-Austria-France partnership against Prussia-Denmark-Russia.²⁶ Maria Theresa remarks on this possibility by noting that Gustav should tread carefully around Frederick II, a figure whom she distrusted ever since he had claimed Austrian territories during the Silesian Wars of the early 1740s. Barck records that the Empress had nothing good to say about Frederick, whom she believed ready to stir up trouble for personal gain. Maria Theresa speculated that Frederick wished to claim Swedish Pomerania for Prussia, much as he had claimed Silesia earlier, and she warned Barck to prevent this at all costs. She flattered King Gustav further, hinting again at the portrait before them, by noting that much of the discomfort between Frederick and him was the result of "personal jealousy over Your Majesty's many gifts and qualities, since, in Frederick's eyes, he alone should possess the exclusive privilege to great and noble governance."²⁷ She refers here to Frederick's chilly reception of his nephew at Sanssouci in 1771, a meeting much reported on, and she no doubt emphasized this to convey her affinity with the Swedish king.

These are simply a few of the comments recorded in this report, much of which illuminates political, not artistic, matters. But we return to concerns of a more art-historical nature when we realize that the intended

reader of Barck's report was not just Gustav III, but also his advisers, and we can surmise from other documents preserved around it that primary among these was Ulrik Scheffer. After the earlier failed revolution of 1756, led by Lovisa Ulrika, which had also sought to reinstate absolutism, Scheffer had written instructions in which he called upon the privy council to take advantage of opportunities to ensure the "reputation, advancement, and (if it be possible) expansion of the Swedish state."²⁸ Scheffer had worked hard to do this during the rough years of alliance building after the 1772 coup.²⁹ Scheffer was familiar with the workings of French politics, having served as ambassador to Paris, and therefore Maria Theresa's comments would have fallen on sympathetic ears.³⁰ Like Gustav, he was widely read in French Enlightenment political philosophy which he sought to blend into the Hat-themed politics that he supported. His influence on Gustav III has been described as a "wise restraining hand" that prevented the impetuous monarch from igniting war in northern Europe.³¹

It is then of greatest interest that a fourth document dated 31 March 1775 appears in Barck's records.³² It is labeled an *apostille*, an addendum, to the previous reports and is signed by Scheffer himself. He states that the King has decided to have copies made of the portraits of Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Joseph II sent to Stockholm, and that these copies will adorn a new salon at Gripsholm Castle, one where portraits of multiple European regents wearing the national royal costume of their nations will be installed. To achieve this, Scheffer has asked Barck to send sketches of the imperial dress worn by the Emperor and Empress, so that they can be copied in Stockholm and used

as models for the new paintings. (For the full text of this document, see the appendix to this essay.)

This is a short note, particularly when compared to Barck's lengthy report from earlier that month. But Scheffer's *apostille* overflows with significance for understanding the Round Salon at Gripsholm and its connection to Swedish diplomacy. Scheffer refers to portraits sent from Vienna to Stockholm. These cannot be linked to any surviving paintings with certainty, since there are no full-length portraits of either Maria Theresa or Joseph known to be in Sweden prior to this moment. But there may be other ways to explain Scheffer's reference to portraits arriving from Vienna. One commonplace way of conveying portrait likeness across great distances in the eighteenth century was the portrait miniature. The snuffbox Barck mentioned receiving from Baron Kaunitz very likely included miniature portrait

likenesses of royal family members, including the Empress and Emperor, as these were standard elements of their design. Such objects have little to do with snuff; rather than being functional in a strict sense, they served as a kind of ambassadorial currency in eighteenth-century Europe, often disassembled and their precious materials sold or



Fig. 6. After Joseph Ducreux, *Portrait of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria*, miniature on parchment, 2.4 × 3.6 cm. (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 2424) (Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0).



Fig. 7. Unknown Swedish artist(s), *Portrait of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria*, 1775. Oil on canvas, 259 × 149 cm. (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 674) (Photo: Hans Thorwid) (Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0).

repurposed. This explains why so many miniatures of Maria Theresa and Joseph can be found in museums across Europe, including the Nationalmuseum, which possesses several of Maria Theresa in particular. A miniature portrait now in the Nationalmuseum makes an interesting comparandum with the portrait in the Round Salon.³³ (Fig. 6). Although it cannot be said with certainty that this specific miniature served as a model for the painting, comparing the faces reveals enough similarity to suggest that the



Fig. 8. Unknown Swedish artist(s), *Portrait of Emperor Joseph II of Austria, 1775*. Oil on canvas, 258 × 150 cm. (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 662) (Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0).

two are based on the same image of her, very likely the portrait by Joseph Ducreux made at the time of his visit to Vienna in 1769 to paint Marie-Antoinette in advance of her marriage (Fig. 7).

Additional details in Scheffer's decree bear out that it was in fact a miniature that served as the basis for the Gripsholm portrait. Maria Theresa had worn widow's clothing permanently after the death of her husband, Emperor Francis I, in 1765, which means that any image of her sent to Stockholm in 1774 or 1775 would have represented her as a widow. This would explain why Scheffer asked for sketches of the costume worn by the Austrian monarchs, since a miniature portrait would not have included much visible, and widow's garments would have lacked the kind of majesty that the Round Salon was intended to transmit. We can then piece together a possible narrative for the Gripsholm portrait's genesis: it transfers Maria Theresa's likeness from a miniature to a full-length representation, and likewise from widow to Queen of Hungary, as she is shown in the gown she wore for the Hungarian coronation of 1741. This was the largest territory that Maria Theresa ruled independently and the gown references her first appearance on the monarchical stage. For the imperial crown, it sufficed for the complementary portrait of Joseph II to represent him as Holy Roman Emperor, wearing the iconic Ottonian *Reichskrone* (Fig. 8).

One may ask at this moment why Scheffer did not simply commission portraits from artists in Vienna and have them shipped north, as this was the procedure used for later portraits in the room. The answer lies on the Vienna end of the relationship. At this moment, the middle 1770s, there was no clear first choice among Austrian artists

who could have fulfilled such a commission. The Empress's preferred portraitist, the Swedish-born Martin van Meytens, had died five years earlier and left no obvious successor. The most prominent Austrian painter of this moment, Anton von Maron, lived in Rome, and while his art was much admired, negotiating a commission from him for presentation in northern Europe would have been a complicated and time-consuming endeavor.³⁴ By having Swedish artists make the paintings for Gripsholm, Scheffer saved money, a not insignificant benefit given the tight state of Swedish finances at this time. It



Fig. 9. Attr. Joseph Hickel, after Anton Raphael Mengs, *Portrait of Grand Duke Peter Leopold of Tuscany, 1775*. Oil on canvas 101 × 75 cm. (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 1077) (Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0).

also meant greater control over exactly how the portraits would look, which may have been desirable as these portraits would be centerpieces of the room. We know from a surviving drawing by Jean-Eric Rehn that from the outset they were to be positioned on either side of a portrait of King Gustav, thereby linking him closely to imperial power.³⁵ Which artists actually made the two Habsburg paintings remains to be discovered, but it is logical that given Lorens Pasch's involvement in the original portrait exchange, he, or artists close to him, would have been charged with this responsibility.³⁶

This brings us to the fifth and final letter of our exchange, one involving a different personage whom we have not yet encountered. This is the Austrian-born Joseph von Preindl, Austrian *charge d'affaires* in Stockholm and an interesting figure in his own right. He was a major presence in the German-speaking Catholic community of Stockholm and had a small chapel in his home in Stadsgården, near Slussen, in which Catholics assembled to worship in this majority Protestant nation. Preindl acted as a liaison between Sweden and Austria for many decades. We find included in Barck's correspondence a notice, written in French and dated 5 May 1775.³⁷ In it, Preindl remarks that the Grand Duke of Tuscany has taken the liberty of sending his portrait to Stockholm for the King of Sweden and would be flattered to receive the King's in return. Preindl notes further that the portrait has cleared customs and is now in his house and asks when and to whom he should deliver it.

The Grand Duke of Tuscany refers to Maria Theresa's son Leopold, who inherited Tuscan duchy from his father and was often referred to by the Italian form of his name, Pietro Leopoldo. At first, this notice may

seem irrelevant to the previous exchanges, but it too bears a relationship to the Round Salon. If it had become known to the Habsburgs that portraits of Maria Theresa and Joseph would adorn a royal space in Sweden, then Leopold may have felt that he rightly belonged there too. The reasons for this lay in the dynastic model of statehood upon which the entire Habsburg monarchical edifice rested. Joseph had married twice, but no children from either marriage survived and therefore he had not produced an heir. The line of succession would pass through Leopold, who used this fact to his advantage politically until becoming Emperor in 1790. He may have felt that any commissions from Stockholm required acknowledgment of his importance in furthering the dynastic line. Although he does not appear at Gripsholm, the portrait he sent survives. It is in the Nationalmuseum and is attributed to a follower of Anton Raphael Mengs (Fig. 9). While it displays a format that Mengs developed found in other images of Leopold, the Stockholm example is most likely by Hickel, the artist with whom Maria Theresa shared Pasch's portrait the previous December. Whether Leopold expected his image to be included at Gripsholm, whether he hoped it would eventually be added to its decoration after his brother's demise, or whether the portrait simply extended the exchange that had occurred over the previous six months, one cannot say. But the timing of its arrival in Stockholm reveals that its existence is related to the broader exchange of pictures this article has examined.

We learn quite a bit from this documentary trail considered in its entirety. It gives precise insights into how monarchical portraits functioned in eighteenth-century Europe, what purposes they were expected to meet, and

how high-ranking people invested them with significance. The documents reveal a quasi-mystical relationship between portraits, sentimentality, and politics. The royal portrait was not intended "just" for decoration, but as a starting point for recollection, deliberation, and contemplation. When Maria Theresa looked at Gustav's portrait, she felt certain things, and Barck's report indicates that her emotional responses could be interpreted as politically significant. If, in the absolutist political system, the monarch was in some sense an embodiment of the state, then the monarch's sensibility and emotions were politically exigent to the state's workings.³⁸ This is why Barck took great pains to include detailed descriptions of how the Empress felt as she looked at Pasch's painting, how she remarked on its artistic qualities, and how those meshed with her understanding of Europe's destiny. The senses involved in looking at a portrait were also the stimuli that created the sensations that directed good governance. Said another way, appreciating art had a perceptual connection to the mental activity involved in governing. This links the political function of portraits to the discourses of sensibility that art-historical scholarship has associated mostly with imagery from other areas of eighteenth-century society.

On a more mundane level, Barck's records allow a more precise chronology for the Round Salon to be confirmed. While it has long been known that the project dates from the 1770s, prior scholarship is rarely more precise than this, and without a clear sense of the room's genesis, the historical context of its construction has likewise remained opaque. Dates proposed for it have ranged as early as 1772 and as late as 1779.³⁹ The *apostille* of 31 March 1775 refers to a *ny*

salon, which suggests that any work on the room was either just beginning or would begin soon and given that most of the room's portraits date from after that time, it is likely that 1775 is the *terminus post quem*. If this is the case, then the immediate justification for its decoration was not to celebrate the royal wedding of 1772, but rather to counteract the existential political crisis that Sweden endured in 1773 and 1774. The room then should be understood less as a statement about Gustav's admiration for his peers and more as a political intervention that sought



Fig. 10. Alexander Roslin, *Portrait of Gustav III of Sweden*, 1777. Oil on canvas, 260 × 152 cm. (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, NMGh 660) (Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0).

to secure his legitimacy in a pantheon of European rulers who deemed him weak and the state he ruled vulnerable. This might also explain why, when it came time to include a portrait of Gustav in the room, Pasch was not asked to paint it. Rather, the commission went to Alexander Roslin, resident in Paris for decades and by far the most internationally significant Swedish painter of this era (Fig. 10). Roslin's renown and connections across the continent – he made portraits for multiple monarchical houses, including the Austrians – would have made him a more appealing example of Swedish cosmopolitanism. One should add that the very format of a *galerie contemporaine*, where each monarch is accorded his or her own separate portrait in a unified arrangement, emphasized spatially the concept of Swedish independence within Europe.

Finally, the correspondence highlights the role of Ulrik Scheffer in bringing the Round Salon into being. Given that much of the correspondence discussed was shared with him, and in the case of the *apostille* written by him, his presence in these documents is substantial enough to consider him a contributor to the room's formation, at least in its early stages. It would have promoted a vision of Sweden's place within the European social order entirely commensurate with his political values and visualized Sweden's participation in a European model of statehood of which the imperial crown, borne by Austria, was the pinnacle. The correspondence analyzed in this essay reveals how much thought went into beginning the decoration of this space and how much was at stake in imagining Sweden as an independent monarchical entity, but mostly importantly, an unquestionably European one.

Notes

- Sixten Strömbom, *Gripsholm*, Stockholm, 1937; Per-Olof Westlund, *Gripsholm under Vasatiden: En byggnadshistorisk undersökning*, Stockholm, 1949. Unfortunately we lack a modern comprehensive analysis of this building's architectural history.
- On Hedvig Eleonora's Hall of State at Gripsholm, the main predecessor to the Round Salon, see Lisa Skogh, *Material Worlds: Queen Hedvig Eleonora as Collector and Patron of the Arts*, Stockholm, 2013, pp. 73–80.
- Magnus Olausson, "From Royal Storehouse to State Portrait Collection – The Period 1715–1822", in *The Swedish National Portrait Gallery: A Nation's Memory over Six Centuries*, Stockholm, 2022, pp. 31–57.
- On the presence of Habsburgs in northern European galleries, see Michael Yonan, "Picturing Empress Maria Theresa in Eighteenth-Century Denmark, Sweden, and Russia", in *Die Repräsentation Maria Theresias: Herrschaft und Bildpolitik im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. Werner Telesko, Sandra Hertel, and Stefanie Linsboth, Vienna, 2020, pp. 415–424.
- The room's ceiling was renovated at some point in its history. Nineteenth-century photos show a decorated ornamental design, possibly of nineteenth-century origin, while the current ceiling is unadorned. August Fahr, *De Svenska Kungliga Lustslotten*, Stockholm, 1899, pp. 468–469.
- Olausson, 2022, pp. 39–47.
- On Barck, see Fritz Arnheim, "Das Urtheil eines schwedischen Diplomaten über den Wiener Hof im Jahre 1756", *Mittheilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, No 10, 1889, pp. 287–284.
- For which see *Alexander Roslin*, Stockholm, 2007, pp. 98–99 and 141.
- R. Nisbet Bain, *Gustavus III and his Contemporaries*, London, 1894, p. 35.
- Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Germanica*, Vol. 455 (1774), letter of Nils Barck dated 24 November 1774.
- Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia: Die Kaiserin in ihrer Zeit*, München, 2017, p. 167.
- Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Germanica*, Vol. 455 (1774), letter of Nils Barck dated 8 December 1774.
- For which see, among many studies, Maureen Cassidy-Geiger, ed., *Fragile Diplomacy: Meissen Porcelain for European Courts, c. 1710–63*, New Haven and London, 2007, pp. 3–23, and for the Habsburgs specifically Ilsebill Barta and Hubert Winkler, "Portraitgeschenke am kaiserlichen Hof", in *Kaiserliche Geschenke*, ed. Eva B. Ottlinger, Linz, 1988, pp. 30–38.
- The granddaughter was Maria Antonia of Parma (1774–1841), born in Italy to Maria Theresa's daughter Maria Amalia. News of her birth on 28 November had reached Vienna immediately before Barck presented the portrait to the Empress.
- Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias: Tagebuch des Fürsten Johann Joseph Khevenhüller-Metsch, kaiserlichen Obersthofmeisters, 1742–1776*, Vol. 8, *Tagebuch des Fürsten Johann Joseph und Nachträge von anderer Hand, 1774–1780*, ed. Maria Breunlich-Pawlik and Hans Wagner, Vienna, 1972, entry for 6 December 1774.
- Lorenz Seelig, *Golddosen des 18. Jahrhunderts aus dem Besitz der Fürsten von Thurn und Taxis*, München, 2007, pp. 25–33; and for Maria Theresa specifically, Michael Yonan, "Portable Dynasties: Imperial Gift-Giving at the Court of Vienna in the Eighteenth Century", *The Court Historian* No 14, 2009, pp. 177–188.
- On this portrait type and its place in Pasch's oeuvre, see Sixten Strömbom, *Porträttmålaren Lorens Pasch d. y.: hans liv och konst*, Stockholm, 1915, pp. 163–165. According to Strömbom a version was also sent to the Gemäldegalerie in Kassel.
- Olausson, 2022, p. 43.
- Olausson, 2022, p. 44.
- Bo Vahlne, "Bland jämlikar den främste: Alexander Roslins porträtt av Gustav III i Runda salongen", in *Porträtt Porträtt*, ed. Ulf G. Johnsson, Stockholm, 1987, p. 64.
- Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Germanica*, Vol. 517 (1775), report by Nils Barck dated 3 February 1775.
- Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Germanica*, Vol. 456 (1775).
- Bain, *Gustavus III*, I, p. 157–8. Gustav III used Ulriksdal as a major residence for the royal court.
- Bain, *Gustavus III*, I, p. 159.
- Michael Roberts, *The Age of Liberty: Sweden, 1719–1772*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 204–205.
- Bain, *Gustavus III*, p. 209. Further evidence of this can be found in the correspondence of Gustav Philip Creutz, Swedish ambassador to Paris, who in 1774 reported to Stockholm multiple times that, in his words, mishandling this moment *pourra changer bien vite toute la politique de l'Europe*. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Gallica*, Vol. 438 (1774), dispatch of Gustav Philip Creutz dated 4 September 1774. A later missive specifically concerns Creutz's fears that Sweden would lose its independence without vigorous international support. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Gallica*, Vol. 438 (1774), dispatch of Gustav Philip Creutz dated 20 November 1774.
- "en personlig *jalousie* öfver Eder Kongl Majt gåfvor och höga egenskaper, som falla Konungen af Preußen så mycket mer i ögonen, som Han torde förmena Sig äga *un privilege exclusif* att allena besittja den stora ock ädla Regerings konsten".
- Quoted in Roberts, *Age of Liberty*, p. 43. See also Elise M. Dermineur, *Gender and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Sweden: Queen Lovisa Ulrika (1720–1782)*, London, 2017, pp. 142–149.

29. Michael Roberts, "Great Britain and the Swedish Revolution, 1772–3", in *Essays in Swedish History*, Minneapolis, 1966, pp. 311–312.
30. Franklin D. Scott, *Sweden: The Nation's History*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1988, p. 267. On Scheffer's activities as ambassador to Paris, see Lars Trulsson, *Ulrik Scheffer som hattpolitiker: Studier i hattregimens politiska och diplomatiska historia*, Lund, 1947. On the problems of conceptualizing the relationship between diplomacy and culture in early modern Sweden, see Heiko Droste, "Diplomacy as a Means of Cultural Transfer in Early Modern Times: The Swedish Evidence", *Scandinavian Journal of History* No 31, 2006, pp. 144–150, with additional bibliography.
31. Scott, *Sweden*, p. 274. On the physiocrats' influence on the Scheffer brothers' ideas about statehood, see Charlotta Wolff, "Le comte Carl Fredrik Scheffer, traducteur des physiocrates français et promoteur de la monarchie renforcée en Suède", *La Révolution française* No 12, 2017, accessed 12 April 2022 (<http://journals.openedition.org/lrf/1757>), and idem., *Noble conceptions of politics in eighteenth-century Sweden (ca. 1740–1790)*, Helsinki, 2008.
32. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Germanica*, Vol. 517 (1775), apostille of Ulrik Scheffer dated 31 March 1775.
33. Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 2424, 1770s. Several other eighteenth-century miniatures of Maria Theresa are in the collection, including a jeweled *boîte-à-portrait* done after Anton Raphael Mengs, NMB 962, and a portrait on ivory by Johann Eusebius Alphen, NMB 835. On this important collection, see Magnus Olausson and Eva-Lena Karlsson, *Miniature Painting in the Nationalmuseum: A World-Class Collection*, Stockholm, 2021.
34. Isabella Schmittmann, *Anton von Maron (1731–1808): Leben und Werk*, München, 2013, pp. 17–36.
35. Olausson, 2022, p. 44.
36. This is true of at least one other image in the room, that of Frederick II. Clearly visible when viewed in raking light is that the figure's head is a smaller portrait inserted into a larger canvas and filled out to create a full-length likeness. It is possible that this smaller image was sent from Germany, but could also have been made after a miniature, as proposed here for the Habsburg portraits.
37. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Germanica*, Vol. 599 (1775), letter of Joseph Preindl dated 5 May 1775.
38. This point echoes points in the extensive literature on early modern portraits. The two fundamental studies are Louis Marin, *Le portrait du roi*, Paris, 1981; Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, New Haven, 1992; and for a recent treatment of the Habsburgs specifically, Werner Telesko, ed., *Die Repräsentation der Habsburg-Lothringen Dynastie in Musik, visuellen Medien, und Architektur*, Vienna, 2017.
39. Hahr, *Kungliga Lustslotten*, p. 471, claims that the room's redecoration took place after 1779.

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Appendix

Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Germanica*, Vol. 517

Text of Ulrik Scheffer's *Apostille*, 31 March 1775

Apostille af dn 31. Mars 1775

Hans Kongl Majst har beslutit att låta härstädes afcopiera de honom tillsände Portraiter af Keysaren och Keysarinnan Drottningen, för att dermed pryda en ny salon på Gripsholm Slått, hvarest portraiter af de flere med

HKM samtida Regenter äfven komma att upsättas, alla uti den i deras länder brukelige köngl. drägt; Och har jag således befallning att anmoda Herr Grefven till att insände ett utkast af den köngl drägt, som Keysaren och Keysarinnan Drottningen bruka, på det den samma wid afcopieradet må kunna tjena till mönster.

Ut in litteris

Ulr. Scheffer

Abstract

This article analyzes the origins of an important artistic commission in eighteenth-century Sweden, the so-called Round Salon (*Runda Salongen*) at Gripsholm Castle, a room decorated with portraits of the reigning monarchs of Europe (a *galerie contemporaine*) commissioned by King Gustav III in the mid 1770s. Based on documents newly uncovered in the National Archives of Sweden, this essay demonstrates that the room emerged out of concerns about Sweden's place in the European political system during the difficult

years after the bloodless revolution of 19 August 1772, which restored absolutism to Sweden. Central to Sweden's negotiation of this era's political landscape was Austria. A portrait by Lorens Pasch the Younger was sent to Empress Maria Theresa in late 1774 to establish support between Stockholm and Vienna. The documentary record reveals how this portrait began a dialogue and exchange between the two nations that sheds light on the Round Salon's early history. It further reveals how monarchical portraits were intended to stimulate feelings of empathy and sentimentality for their recipients, proposes a firmer chronology for the room, and posits the importance of the Swedish statesman Ulrik Scheffer (1716–1799) to its genesis.

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