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First Catalogue Raisonné Project of Akseli Gallen-Kallela Unveiled
Historic Digital Publication by Nordic Art Intelligence Enables Unprecedented Access
to Seminal Artist's Work



Akseli Gallen-Kallela: The Defense of the Sampo, 1896. Turku Art Museum. Photograph: Turku Art Museum / Vesa Aaltonen

(Berlin, Germany — February 16, 2024) Navigating.art is thrilled to announce the launch of the [Akseli Gallen-Kallela catalogue raisonné project](#), developed under the Nordic Art Intelligence foundation and based on research conducted by Aivi Gallen-Kallela-Sirén during a period of 40 years and in partnership with Irene Riihimäki since 2018. This publication marks the first digital catalogue raisonné project for a Finnish artist and a significant moment in the scholarship of one of Finland's most influential artists.

“As one of Finland’s most well-known artists, Akseli Gallen-Kallela is a self-evident choice to start catalogue raisonné projects in Finland,” said Heikki Hanka, chair of the Board of Nordic Art Intelligence. “Everything connected to his activities is of immense public interest. Therefore, it is most important that our knowledge of his concrete paintings is reliably based on updated research.”

“We are very proud that the Akseli Gallen-Kallela catalogue raisonné project is one of the first digital catalogue raisonné projects to focus on a Nordic artist,” said Irene Riihimäki, the project’s researcher. “The 300 paintings by the artist are now much more accessible to a far broader public, enabling both national and international audiences to gain more information and insights about Gallen-Kallela’s paintings.”

Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865–1931) is one of Finland’s great fin-de siècle artists. Often referred to as the “national artist” of Finland, Gallen-Kallela’s prolific, multidisciplinary artistic practice had a profound influence on the development of the national identity of modern Finland. He is especially remembered for his illustrations and paintings of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*.

“Our goal is to make accessible all the beloved paintings by the artist and the information that we have gathered about them, besides this we hope that the audience can find new favorites from him,” said Riihimäki. “This publication presents many paintings that are not often included in exhibitions or publications - I am sure that the users will discover many previously “unseen” works by him.”

During his fifty-year career, Gallen-Kallela produced a rich and diverse oeuvre that ranged from painting and graphic arts to textiles and furniture. The artist mastered several artistic methods and materials throughout his career. Starting with Realism and Naturalism, the artist later produced paintings that move through Symbolism, National Romanticism, and Expressionism. The artist’s source of inspiration was the myths, people and nature of his homeland, but he was also a cosmopolitan artist who stayed long periods abroad and traveled across the globe. He participated actively in major exhibitions in Europe and the US, the highlights being the Exposition Universelle 1900 and the Venice Biennale in 1914.

“The information that has been gathered about the exhibitions can provide new insights to the understanding of the artist’s international career. From the exhibition history it can be clearly seen

how actively and systematically through-out his career he participated in major exhibitions across Europe and the US.” Said Riihimäki.

The [Akseli Gallen-Kallela catalogue raisonné project](#) aims to represent the artist’s work completed across five decades and three continents. It currently includes the 300 paintings residing in public collections with basic cataloguing details about the paintings, such as title, dimensions, technique, date of execution, signatures, and images and related information including provenance, exhibition history, bibliography. The project aims to catalogue all his known paintings and will release new information as it becomes available.

This progressive approach to cataloging is made easier by the decision to forego a traditional printed book for a digital publication. Using a digital platform allows the project to continually release information to a global audience as it is gathered and vetted rather than waiting through long publishing cycles.

“The project is an impressive piece of research, significantly advancing our understanding of Gallen-Kallela’s legacy,” said Dr. Nicolai Bohn, managing director of Navigating.art. “The digital catalogue is a user-friendly marvel, making information retrieval a breeze. We’re thrilled Nordic Art Intelligence is taking advantage of its flexibility and accessibility.”

About Nordic Arts Intelligence

[Nordic Art Intelligence](#) (NAI) is a nonprofit foundation based in Helsinki, aiming to promote prominent visual artists in the Nordic region and further knowledge of their work through catalogue raisonné research and online publications.

About Navigating.art

[Navigating.art](#) supports the creation and publication of digital catalogues raisonnés through its comprehensive platform as part of its efforts to ensure that future generations have increased access to our shared cultural history. After becoming a nonprofit organization, Navigating.art joined the Hasso Plattner Foundation’s philanthropic initiatives under Art & Culture in 2024.

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