



# Nikolai Astrup

Norwegian Identity in an International Perspective

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Portrait of Nikolai Astrup, painted by Henrik Lund, 1900.

Photo: Oslo City museum

Nikolai Astrup is one of Norway's most beloved artists. His paintings and his graphic arts, representing the mighty nature of Jølster with mountains, grey rocks and luxuriant vegetation, modest small holdings and commonplace people is something which we still strongly associate with our country.

Astrup was a true artist of his native soil; - and yet he possessed a distinct international orientation. After several years of studies abroad, he returned home to Jølster where he settled down for good. What could have been the cultural back cloth and the artistic challenge explaining his strong roots to his home and origin? Why do we consider his art works being of such a typically national character? And is it of significance for us today that his art is being interpreted as distinctly Norwegian? On the whole; how do we regard Astrup in 2005?

To shed some light on this, three of Norway's leading art museums; viz. Haugar Vestfold Art Museum, Drammen Museum and Bergen Art Museum have joined forces in arranging the exhibition "Nikolai Astrup – Roots and Identity". This exhibition will be touring the most important regional museums in Norway during 2005 and 2006, showing about 100 of Astrup's most significant works.

"There is a young painter, Nikolai Astrup is his name, who at present; - at Blomqvist, is exhibiting several of his works deserving the greatest attention. It is the strange and breathtaking nature he gives us - in a new and unconventional way. Astrup views it with the cheerful unbiased eyes of a child of nature. And the picture, the image has taken shape in his imagination, such as its true nature really is; - without words, without explanations".

(Review in "Posten" 19th April, 1905 in connection with Astrup's debut exhibition. Other reviews were equally enthusiastic).

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## Paintings



**Birthday party in the garden**



**Bonfire**



**A clear night in June**



**Kari - motive from Sunde**



**Foxgloves**



**Daybreak in March**



**Walking to the old mill**



**The great bonfire**



**The millstream**



**Walking to the mill -  
and a country courtyard  
in Jølster**



**Bird on a rock**



**Rhubarb**



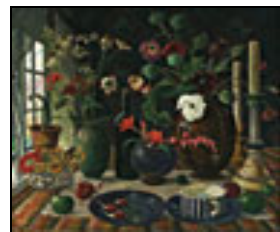
**A night in June - and  
an old country  
courtyard in Western  
Norway**



**A spring night in the  
garden**



**Still life, sketch**



**Still life**

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## NIKOLAI ASTRUP – a Biography

- 1880 Nikolai Astrup was born at Bremanger in Nordfjord. His parents were the clergyman Christian Astrup and Petra Astrup, née Mørch Lodtz.
- 1883 The family moves to Ålhus in Jølster where his father had been appointed vicar.
- 1895 Entered Kathedralskolen (The Cathedral School) in Trondhjem.
- 1897 Graduated from Kathedralskolen, the classical side, in Trondhjem. Returns home to Jølster; tutor for his siblings. Begins drawing and painting by himself; pictures from the vicarage, banners and ornamental patterns.
- 1899 In the autumn Astrup entered The Drawing School in Kristiania. Nude studies and etching experiments under Johan Nordhagen's tuition. Enters Harriet Backer's private art school in Kristiania. Nude and head studies; also as oil paintings. During his holidays Astrup visits his home in Jølster to paint local motives.
- 1901 Astrup's exhibitor debut at Kristiania Art Society's spring exhibition with "Autumn Rain in the Mountain Parish" painted in 1900. The motive is the outhouses at Jølster vicarage. This painting is now in the National Gallery in Oslo. Graduates from H. Backer's art school. In November he receives a travel grant from Schou's Scholarship and sets forth on a study tour. Visits art collections in Luebeck, Hamburg, Dresden, Berlin and Muenich. Arrives at Paris towards Christmas and becomes an apprentice at the Academie Colarossi where Christian Krogh becomes his tutor. Takes interest in Henri Rousseau, Maurice Denis, Paul Gauguin and Hokusai.
- 1902 Returns home with the intention to settle down in Jølster for good. The testimonial from Christian Krogh says: "I believe of him, that he will become the one who most strongly will contribute to the due recognition of Norwegian art both at home and abroad". Most of the time up to 1911 Astrup resides at Jølster vicarage.
- 1904 Astrup's first wood engravings; "Small Self-portrait" and "Waterfall and Glacier".
- 1905 In May Astrup held his first separate exhibition at Blomqvist's Art Shop in Kristiania. A truly convincing success; enthusiastic reviews. "Old Storehouse in Jølster" purchased by the National Gallery at the recommendation of Eilif Peterssen. At Werenskiold's recommendation, Astrup was commissioned to illustrate Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's Bondefortellinger (Country tales) published by Gyldendals Forlag in Copenhagen. He makes numerous pen drawings over the period 1905-1907, but then abandons both the commission and the drawing technique.
- 1906 Invited by Werenskiold to participate in "Group I" at "Norwegian Art Exhibition" at Charlottenborg in Copenhagen.
- 1907 Got married to Engel Sunde. She moves in with him at the vicarage.

- 1908 Travels to London in January, financed by Henrichsen's Legacy. Makes his own studies and observations in various art galleries. Particularly fascinated by Constable. Returns home at the end of April and opens his second separate exhibition at Bergen Art Society. Enthusiastic reviews and several sales; among others to Rasmus Meyer's art collection.
- 1911 His third and last separate exhibition; - at The Artists' Association in Kristiania in January. Enthusiastic reviews.  
In February Astrup travels to Berlin financed by Houen's Legacy. During his home journey in the spring, he paints motives from Astrup Gård in Schleswig where his ancestors came from.  
The birth of Astrup's first child; his daughter Kari.
- 1912 The family - and their maid - move to their new house at Myklebust.
- 1914 Leaves Myklebust owing to controversies with the landowner. Moves to Sandalstrand, but continues to use the studio at Myklebust, 3 kilometres away from Sandalstrand.
- 1916 Travels to Copenhagen and Stockholm together with Moritz Kaland and Nils Krantz. Pays prince Eugen a visit.
- 1919 Being awarded a travel grant from Conrad Mohr, but the journey has to be postponed due to illness and other reasons.
- 1922 Travels together with his wife Engel to Algerie via Germany and Italy.
- 1923 Returning home via Paris in the spring.
- 1928 Dies from pneumonia on 21st January, 47 years old. Astrup suffered from tuberculosis and asthma through most of his life.
- 1964 Jølster municipality purchased Astruptunet for 270 000 kroner to create a permanent museum for Nikolai Astrup's life and work.

[Til toppen](#)

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## List of art exhibitions where Nikolai Astrup has been represented. (\* ) = Separate exhibitions

- 1901 Kristiania Art Society's "Spring Exhibition"
- 1905 Blomqvist Art Shop, Kristiania (\*)
- 1906 "The Norwegian Art Exhibition" at Charlottenborg in Copenhagen
- 1908 Bergen Art Society, Bergen (\*)
- 1911 The Artists' Association, Kristiania (\*)
- 1911 "The Norwegian Exhibition" in Helsingfors
- 1912 Künstlerbund Hagen, Vienna
- 1914 "Centenary Exhibition 1814-1914", Kristiania
- 1915 "The Norwegian Art Exhibition" at Charlottenborg, Copenhagen
- 1926 "The Exhibition of Western Norway", Bergen
- 1928 Bergen Art Society's "Commemoration Exhibition", Bergen and Oslo (\*)
- 1937 "Artici Grafici Norvegese", Rome
- 1940 "Nine Painters from the Turn of the Century", Oslo Art Society
- 1940 "From J. C. Dahl to Nikolai Astrup", the Artists' Association, Oslo
- 1946 "Norwegian Art", the National Association of the Fine Arts, Sweden
- 1949 "Norwegian Painting through Hundred Years", the Hague and Brussels
- 1951 "Forty Years Ago", the Artists' Association, Oslo
- 1953 "Norwegian Colour-graphic", Oslo Art Society
- 1955 "Arte Nordica Contemporanea", Rome
- 1955 The House of Artists; Oslo (\*)
- 1956 The Nordic Art Association, the Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm (\*)
- 1965 The Art Society of Copenhagen
- 1971 The Artists' Association, Oslo (\*)
- 1971 The National Gallery, Oslo (wood engravings) (\*)
- 1980 Bergen Art Society, Bergen/The House of Artists, Oslo/Trondhjem Art Society, Trondheim: "Anniversary Exhibition" (\*)
- 1984 Gallery KB, Oslo (wood engravings) (\*)

- 1986 The Astrup Country Courtyard, Jølster (\*)
- 1987 Blaafarveværket (old cobalt ore glass works), Modum (\*)
- 1990 Liljevalch's Hall of Fine Arts, Stockholm: "People, Music and Dance in Nordic Art"
- 1991 Bergen Picture Gallery: "Deformation"
- 1994 Henie Onstad Art Museum, Bærum (\*)
- 1994/1995 Rogaland Art Museum, Stavanger (\*)
- 1995 Lillehammer Art Museum, Lillehammer (\*)
- 1995 Bergen Picture Gallery, Bergen (\*)
- 1995 The Astrup Country Courtyard & the Eikaas Gallery, Jølster (\*)
- 1996 Haugar Vestfold Art Museum, Tønsberg (\*)
- 1998 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne: "Landscape as Cosmos of the Soul. Nordic Symbolist Painting up to Munch"
- 1999 Lillehammer Art Museum: "100 Years – 100 Landscapes"

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## Itinerary 2005 and 2006 for the touring exhibition

### "Nikolai Astrup - Belonging and Identity"

#### 2005:

Haugar Vestfold Kunstmuseum	from	15 <sup>th</sup> January	to	27 <sup>th</sup> February	inclusive
Drammen Museum	from	10 <sup>th</sup> March	to	1 <sup>st</sup> May	inclusive
Bergen Kunstmuseum	from	20 <sup>th</sup> May	to	14 <sup>th</sup> August	inclusive
Rogaland Kunstmuseum	from	28 <sup>th</sup> August	to	13 <sup>th</sup> October	inclusive

#### 2006:

Trondheim Kunstmuseum	from	6 <sup>th</sup> November	to	8 <sup>th</sup> January	inclusive
Sørlandets Kunstmuseum	from	11 <sup>th</sup> February	to	26 <sup>th</sup> March	inclusive
Sogn og Fjordande Kunstmuseum	from	15 <sup>th</sup> June	to	15 <sup>th</sup> August	inclusive
Lillehammer Kunstmuseum	from	1 <sup>st</sup> September	to	1 <sup>st</sup> November	inclusive



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## Links to the museums hosting the touring exhibition

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[Drammens Museum](#)

[Haugar Vestfold Kunstmuseum](#)

[Lillehammer Kunstmuseum](#)

[Rogaland Kunstmuseum](#)

[Sogn og Fjordane Kunstmuseum](#)

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## Links, related to Nikolai Astrup

[Astrup tunet](#)

[Hundrearsmarkeringen 2005](#)

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## Literature about Nikolai Astrup

" Norske malere, Nikolai Astrup ", Inger Alver Gløersen  
1954

" Nikolai Astrups grafikk ", Jan Askeland  
1956

" Profiler i norsk grafikk - Nikolai Astrup m. fl. ", Jan Askeland  
1958

" A survey of Norwegian Painters ", Jan Askeland  
1963

" Gartneren under regnbuen ", Øystein Loge  
1986, ISBN: 82-09-10357-1

" Astrup – Kinck og Jølster ", Anders O. Klakegg  
1987, ISBN: 82-90186-53-3

" Deformasjon ", Øystein Loge  
1991, ISBN: 82-09-10653-8

" Blomsten, Berget, St. Hansnatten ", Øystein Loge  
1994, ISBN: 88 978 41 9

" Munch, Astrup, Eikaas, Nesch ", Redaktør Runar Kristiansen  
1998, ISBN: 82-91882-01-0

" Vi ser på kunst, Nikolai Astrup ", Marit Lande  
1999, ISBN: 82-91991-06-4

" Reisebrev fra Nikolai Astrup ", Damms Antikvariat A/S  
2003, ISBN: 82-90438-09-5

"Nikolai Astrup, Tilhørighet og identitet", Labyrinth Press  
2005, ISBN: 82-7393-147-1



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## Wood engravings



Home from work



The goat that went to Heaven



The Fisherman



Large sheaves of corn



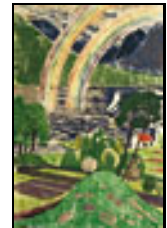
Moon in May, winter version



Salome



Spring night and old sallowman



Large rainbow



June night



Christmas Eve at Sandalstrand



Weather promising a good crop at Sandalstrand



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## Drawings



Portrait of the artist  
with pipe



Sheaves of corn, pastel



Menu - 9 July 1922,  
water-colour



Girls head



The doll's house



The Svanøy Bay



Illustration in novel  
of Bj.Bjørnson



Illustration in novel  
of Bj.Bjørnson



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