

# LOOK THINK DISCUSS

## Stories of Finnish Art

### SHORT FILMS

#### Materials for schools, teaching resources

The Ateneum has produced thirteen short films about classic paintings in its collection, one film for each artwork. The films show the classics in a new light: the camera explores the painted surface and picks out details that the eye would not otherwise see. In this way even familiar works reveal a lot that is new. Besides the image, the narrator and the rich soundtrack take us on a fascinating journey of the senses into the stories of Finnish art.

The films are directed by **Terhi Amberla**, filmed by Cinematographer and Photographer at the Finnish National Gallery **Hannu Pakarinen**, and scripted by the Ateneum's Special Researcher **Anja Olavinen**. Museum Director **Susanna Pettersson** has been in charge of the production of the films and of selecting the featured works, apart from the Director's choice: Otto Mäkilä's *Tower*.

These materials are intended for use by teachers and other adults working with children and young people. They can be adapted for pupils of various ages and used as a basis for discussion at joint film viewings in other types of small group, for instance, in libraries or with the family. We recommend watching the films before visiting the Museum – that way you can get to know the works in the Ateneum's collection in advance!



# ATENEUM



## Viewing the film and copyright issues

The films can be viewed and screened in schools and other non-commercial settings using the Internet links in these materials and from the Ateneum's website. Downloading the films to your own computer or other platforms is prohibited for copyright reasons.

You can view the films on a monitor connected to a computer or with a video projector and loudspeakers. You can also view it alone on your smartphone and listen on headphones. You can also watch the films at screenings in the Ateneum Hall and in Room No. 6 on the Museum's 2nd floor, which is suitable for small groups.

## Watch the films in advance and choose a film or films suitable for your group.

- Watch the film together on a large monitor or using a video projector. Then discuss the film, for example, by responding to the suggested questions.
- Upper secondary school and adult students: If you want, you can divide the class into groups, each of which views the film on computer or on their own phones with headphones, and then discusses it as a group. Finally, everyone gets together, shares their experiences, and discusses them in response to the suggested questions.
- Experiencing the film requires time and peace and quiet. Please watch until the end of the closing credits. The discussion will only begin once the film has finished. Later, when carrying out the tasks, you can also use freeze-frames and discuss with them on screen in front of you.

# QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

**What did you think of the film?**

**What mood did the film have?**

**What most stayed in your mind from the film?**

**Did the film meet your expectations or did it surprise you? If you were surprised, what was surprising?**

**What was the film's music like?**

**What camera angles, framing or other devices were used in the film?**



## VISUAL ART ON FILM

Visual art is a relatively rare subject for films. Showing artworks is always a challenge for film. Visual-art films are often artists' biographies that use documentary material, for example, photographs, to support and give greater depth to the portrait of the artist.

The focal point of the Ateneum's short films is the artworks. Even if the artists are also referred to in the narrative, the camerawork focuses almost exclusively on the work of art – we see no documentary footage. It is worth paying particular attention to the camerawork. When the camera gets very close to the artwork, it offers a rare opportunity to inspect it – its technique, brushwork, colours and mode of representation – in great detail.

- Focus on examining the film's colours. Is the white white? Is the black black? Or can you see shades in them? The style of the historical period when the work was painted also affects the colours used. Is the green of the forest green? Can a shadow be violet?
- Study the technique used in the painting, which is best seen in the extreme close-ups. Has the paint been applied in thick or thin layers? Carefully traced out or with extravagant strokes?
- Either alone or in small groups find out about the work in the film by searching for it on the [Finnish National Gallery website](#). Click to enlarge the image and explore the details of the work: its technique and dimensions. What other information can you find on the webpage?



## THE STRUCTURE OF FILM

The moving image takes the main role in film, but sound and music play an important part in the narrative.

- Stop and look more carefully at the film's closing credits. Find out what different staff and professionals are needed to make a film.

### Cinematography

The cinematographer is usually the director's most important collaborator. Films use images to tell a story. What we see in those images, how they are framed and their scale, are important for the experience of the whole film. Switching camera angle, framing and focus allows the creation of various atmospheres and meanings. The lighting and post-production determine the colours and shades in the images, and crucially affect the mood. The editing gives the narrative its rhythm.

- Choose a still image from the film. Inspect that image and discuss it:
  1. What can you see in the image? If there is a landscape, what atmosphere does it have? If there are people there, what do they look like? What are they doing? What might they be thinking?
  2. How is the image framed? What is at the centre of the image, and at the edges? Is the image equally sharp all over?
- What narrative rhythm did the film have? Slow or fast? Was the rhythm pleasant or disturbing?
- Watch one film (duration c. 5 min), the first time with the sound switched off. Concentrate on the image and the way of presenting the narrative,

and its details. Then watch the film again with the sound on. How does the addition of a narrator, music and the rest of the sound affect the viewing experience?

### The Story

The completed film is based on a script, which carries the film's story. The main role in the Ate-neum's short films is played by the artworks. There are many stories associated with them, which could go in a number of directions. Films that tell us about artworks occupy the interface between fact and fiction. The final script is always the result of multiple choices. The authors of the works – the artists – are often an intrinsic part of the narrative.

- What story did you see and hear in the film? Was it sad, exciting, funny, comforting, or perhaps boring? Describe the story in your own words and discuss it.
- Did you hear the voice of the artist who painted the work in the film? How?
- Did the artist's life story and/or life situation play a significant role in the film or in the original creation of the work?
- Did the film deal with social questions? How?
- Did the film's story take you on a journey into the past? If so, compare the narrative with current reality. What is different nowadays from then, and are some things still unchanged?
- Did the film's story offer a new viewpoint on art or the making of art?
- Did it provide you with new information? What new information or issue stayed in your mind?

## Sound

Film soundtracks usually consist of speech, music and sound effects. The expressiveness, power and the right rhythm of speech carry the listener along with them into the twists and turns of the story and are key to understanding its content. Music is very important – it creates moods and magnifies the impact of the image. The sound effects enhance the image and the story. For example, wind can sound ominous, while most people find the sound of a fire soothing. Each individual sound effect is made carefully and added to the film afterwards.

- Think about what kind of music gives a film an exciting atmosphere. And what kind generates

a light or humorous mood? Think back to what kind of music there was in the film you watched.

- What different sounds did you hear in the film? How did they affect the experience? You can also watch the film while concentrating specifically on noticing the sound effects.
- Listen to a film, at first entirely without the picture. What impressions does that create? Does the story work solely as a listening experience? Then watch the film normally with the sound on. Did the film correspond to the mental images that came up when you were listening? What surprised you?



## FILM AND FEELINGS

- A film often takes its viewers through various emotional states. First, think about what a feeling is – What kinds of feelings are there? How can you decide what another person is feeling?
- Consider and discuss what was the overall mood of the film you just saw. How would you describe it? Was the film mysterious, funny, ordinary, sad, positive, peaceful, strange or exciting? Or something else? Everyone can have a different opinion about this!
- Discuss what different kinds of feelings you went through during the film. Did you feel joy, enthusiasm and excitement, or perhaps sorrow and empathy? Did anything in the film touch you?

- Further consider the potential of film and artworks, and the roles they play, in dealing with feelings. If you are sad, does seeing a sad or happy film or artwork help?
- Demonstrate to your class the various facial expressions related to the feelings that the film brought out. The others can try to guess what each emotion is.
- Watch the film for a second time after your discussion. What new things did the second viewing experience bring out?



## Finally: **THE FILMS – AND THE WORKS IN THE MUSEUM**

Before you bring your class/group to the Ateneum, watch the film of a work on display in the Museum prior to visiting the Museum.

- Think about what viewing an artwork as seen through a film camera is like compared with seeing the work on the spot in the Museum. Can the camera add something to the experience?
- Then take a look at the actual work in the Museum. You can also book a guided tour of the collection exhibition and stipulate which works in particular you want to see. What was it like seeing the work that you saw in the film? Discuss this in the Museum and/or in school after your Museum visit. What does the Museum have to offer compared with a film about the artwork?

## Task **At the Museum, in school or at home: THE LANDSCAPE OF THE MIND**

Choose an artwork you like in your local museum, school or home. Get in a comfortable position – you can also sit on the floor in the Museum, if there is room. Look at the work in peace and quiet, and let it affect you. “Listen” to the work: What sounds could you hear in it? What music would suit the work? Close your eyes. What images does the work bring to mind? Listen to the work and look at it quietly in your mind with your eyes closed. When you are ready, open your eyes and focus on the work again for a moment.

You can also take the task further and make a video of your chosen work together, and also make the music and the other sounds for it.

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**Sources used for school materials:**

Marjo Kovanen and work group: Film education guide, Koulukino – School Cinema Association 2013

Koulukino study materials: <http://www.koulukino.fi/oppimateriaalit-ja-elokuvat>



**Alexander Lauréus**  
Fire in a Farmhouse  
at Night  
1809



**Eero Järnefelt**  
Burning the  
Brushwood  
(Under the Yoke)  
1893



**Robert Wilhelm Ekman**  
Pentti Lyytinen  
recites poems in a  
cottage in Savo  
1848



**Ellen Thesleff**  
Self-Portrait  
1894-1895



**Werner Holmberg**  
Road in Häme  
(A Hot Summer Day)  
1860



**Akseli Gallen-Kallela**  
Lemminkäinen's  
Mother  
1897



**Erik Johan Löfgren**  
Erik XIV and Karin  
Månsdotter  
1864



**Hugo Simberg**  
Towards the  
Evening  
1913



**Ferdinand von Wright**  
The Fighting  
Capercaillies  
1886



**Magnus Enckell**  
Awakening Faun  
1914



**Albert Edelfelt**  
The Luxembourg  
Gardens  
1887



**Otto Mäkilä**  
Tower  
1950



**Helene Schjerfbeck**  
The Convalescent  
1888