

Sharing letters and art as digital cultural heritage, co-operation and basic research

Albert Edelfelts brev



edelfelt.fi

Memory of the World

In 2017 letter collections of the Finnish artist Albert Edelfelt (1854–1905) were adopted as a Cultural Heritage in the National Register of Unesco's Memory of the World. *Albert Edelfelts brev* is a web publication developed at the Society of Swedish Literature in

Finland (SLS). In co-operation with the Finnish National Gallery, we publish letters of Albert Edelfelt combined with pictures of his artworks. The co-operation between institutions and basic research of the material has enabled a unique reconstruction of Edelfelt's artistry and his time, freely available to researchers and other users.

- The website *Albert Edelfelts brev* launched in September 2014.
- Our intention is to publish all the letters Albert Edelfelt wrote to his mother Alexandra (1833–1901). The collection consists of 1.310 letters, in the care of SLS.
- To our disposal we also have close to 7.000 pictures of Edelfelts paintings and sketches in the care of the Finnish National Gallery.

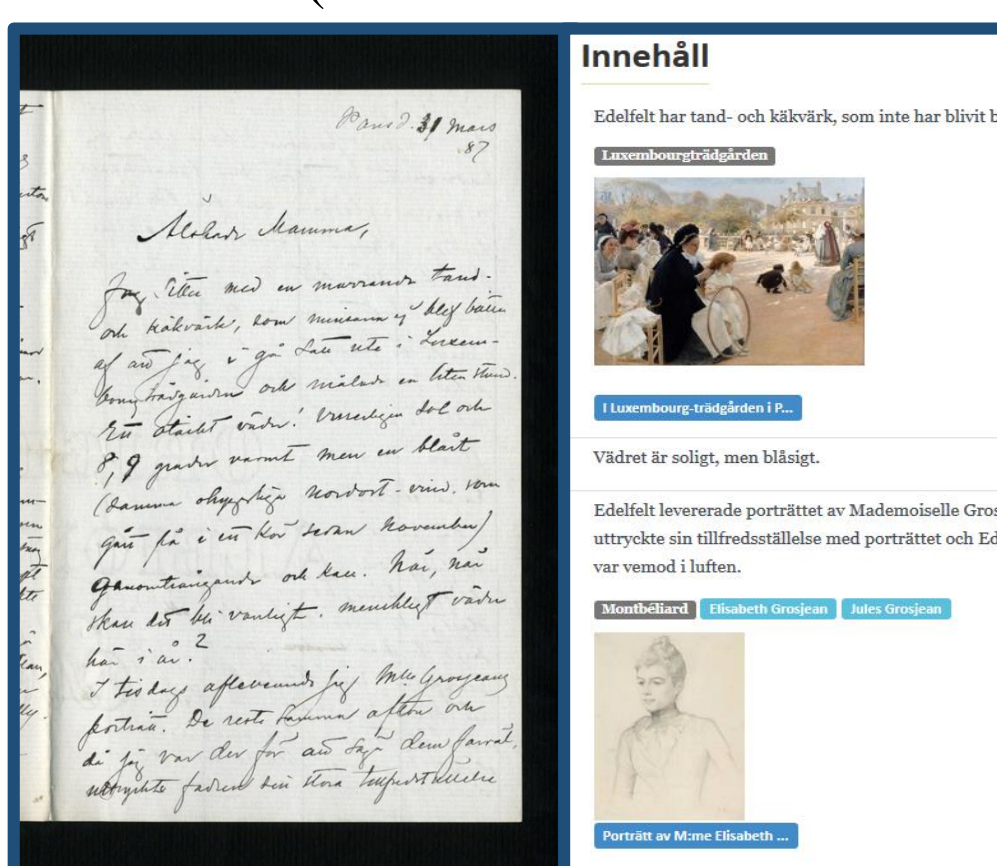
Searchability

The editors do basic research in identifying artworks, persons, locations and subjects. This makes it easier for the user to navigate the material. Each letter, artwork and person has a page of its own. Even locations and subjects are listed and searchable.

Letters

Each letter has a permanent web resource identifier (URN:NBN). [Brev](#) Permanent id URN:NBN:fi:sls-3308-1403107529700

We tag **subjects** using reference words from ALLÅRS (common thesaurus in Swedish).

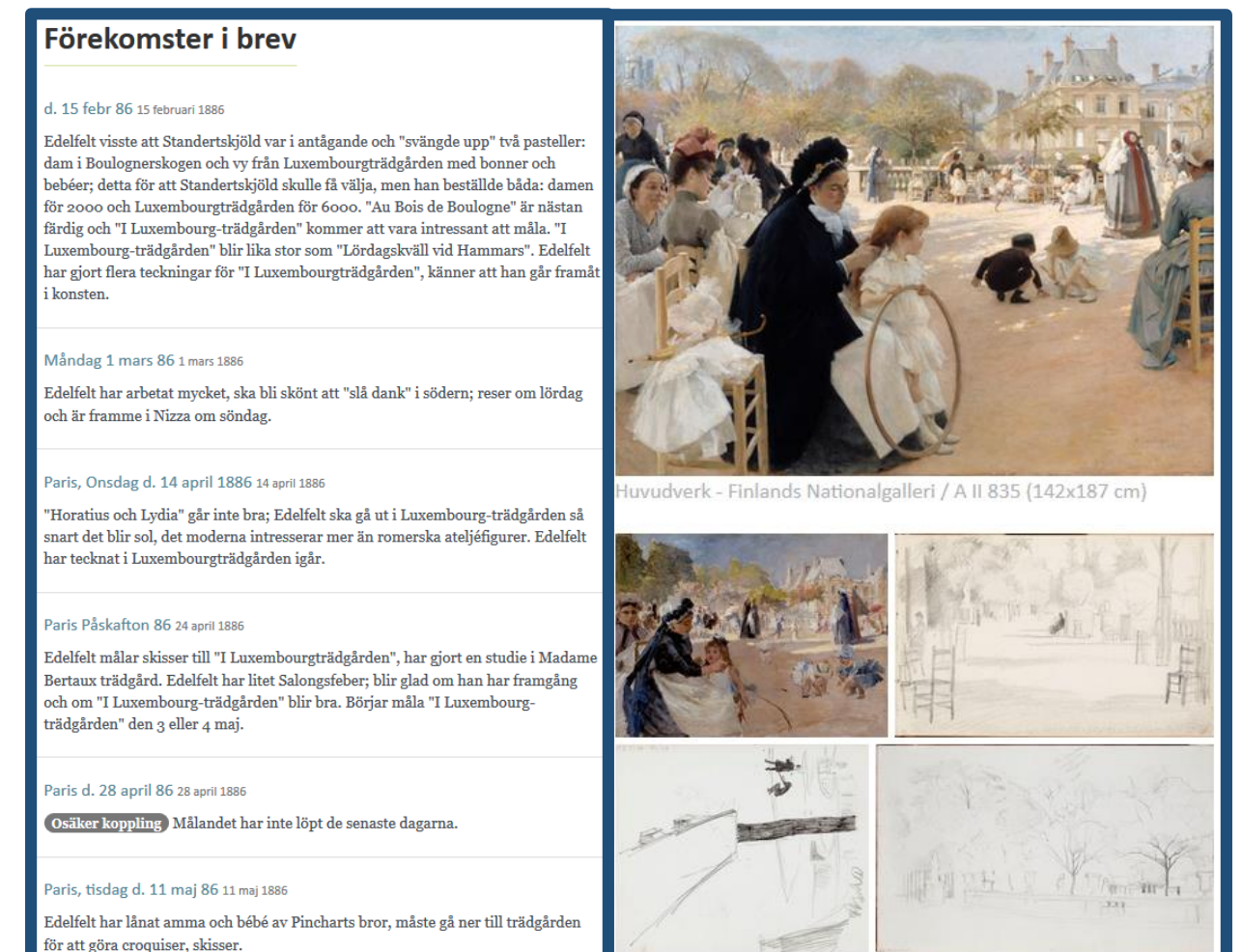


The letters are available as facsimile pictures of the hand-written page. We write abstracts of the content, divide them into separate "events" and tag all mentioned:

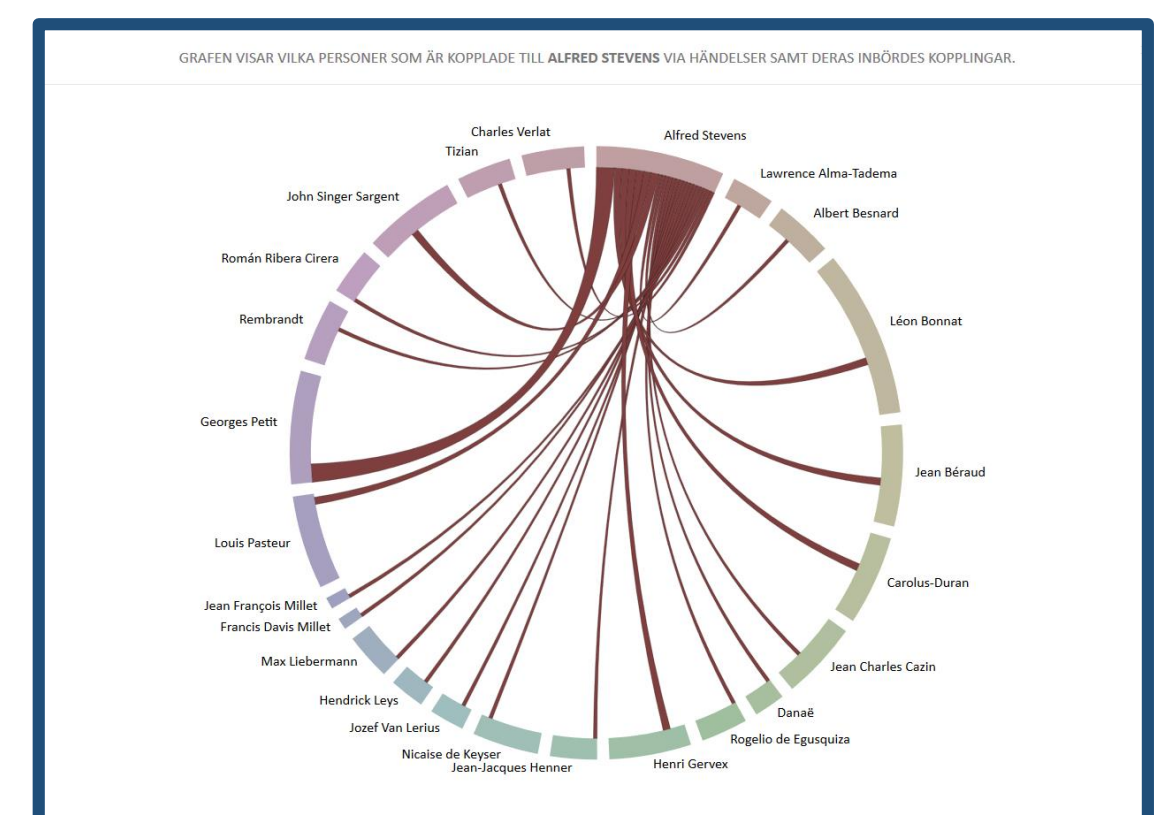
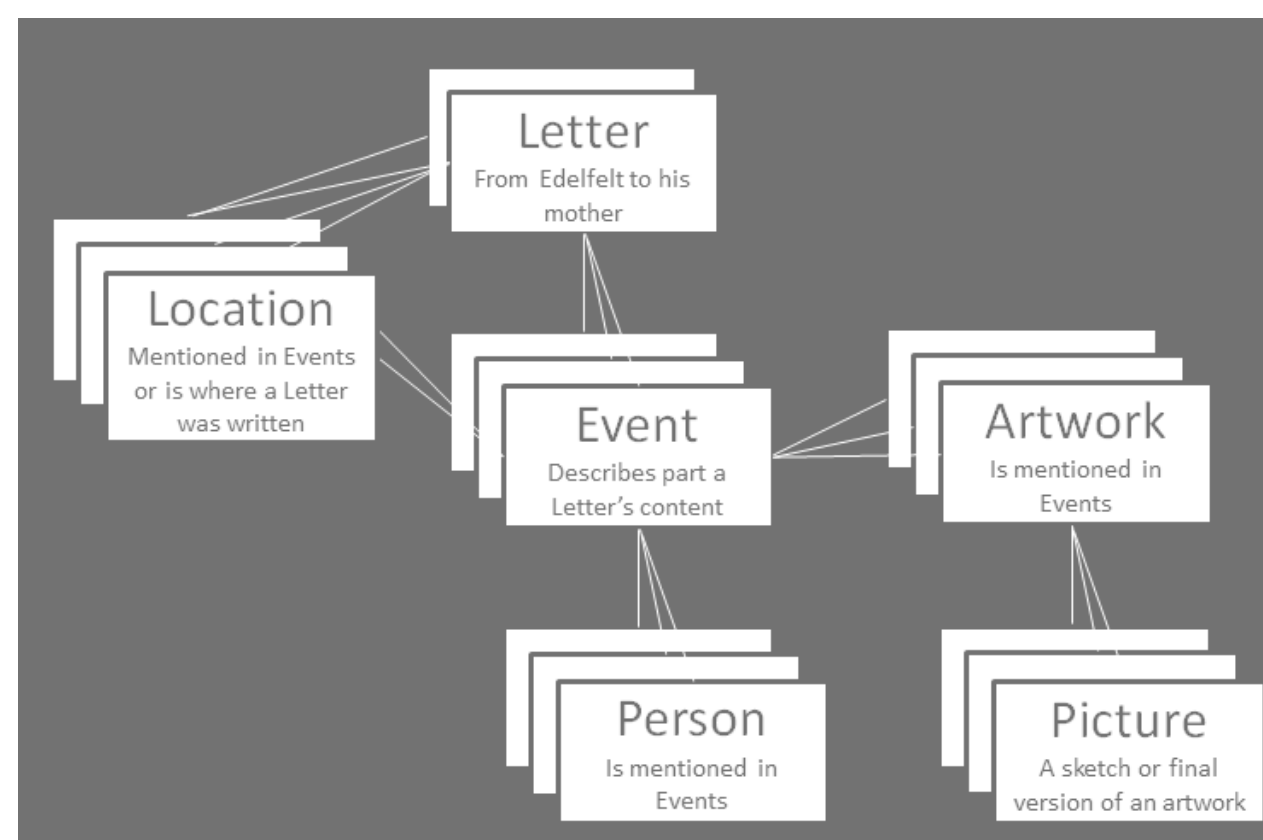
- artworks
- persons
- locations

Artworks

On an artwork-page users find a picture and earlier sketches of the artwork. All the events from the letter abstracts, tagged to the specific artwork, are listed in chronological order.



Three challenges for the web publication *Albert Edelfelts brev*:
 How to combine 1) a tradition of scholarly text-based digital humanity, 2) with digital representation of a cultural heritage, and 3) make it a relevant source for users. Here is how we have done it, and how we further plan to develop the website.



PRESENT
 The current system had the initial challenge of how to make a handwritten text searchable. This results in abstracts, divided into "events", to which we tag metadata. The tagged events make it possible to collect all the relevant information the letters contain about a person, artwork or a location into one place. They also make it possible to demonstrate a person's social network with a graph. By giving each artwork a separate page, we can combine all relevant information from the letters with pictures of the artwork and its earlier sketches.

FUTURE
 The development of transcription programs for handwritten texts, makes it probable that we include fulltext searchable transcriptions of the letters.
 We would like to find a common practice for user rights; if possible, that all the material would have the same license. We intend to invite other institutions with artworks of Edelfelt to co-operate, and thus make a complete as possible site with the artworks of Edelfelt.
 We plan to offer the metadata and some of the source material in Finnish and, hopefully, English translations.