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| **Gerda og Einar Wegener fortæller om Paris**  Kunstnerparret Gerda og Einar Wegener er kommen hertil fra Paris. I næste Uge aabner de en Fællesudstilling af Malerier i Ole Haslunds Hus, hvor vor Medarbejder i Gaar traf dem og bad dem fortælle om Paris, som den er i dag:  <billedtekster>  Gerda Wegener, som hun ser ud.  Gerda Wegener, som hun selv synes hun ser ud.  Gennem Sale med smukke, gamle Møbler, ad vildsomme Trapper, gennem labyrintiske Gange føres jeg til et lille lunt, godt gemt Kontor i Ole Haslunds gamle hus på Østergade. Dybt nedsænket i en Lænestol og svøbt i Pelsværk trods Kakkelovnens tropiske Varme sidder G e r d a W e g e n e r, Pariserinden, der trods fjorten Aars Udlændighed og Berømmelse stadig er vor Landsmandinde. Hun sidder og delikaterer sig med fire Stykker godt belagt, dansk Smørrebrød oven paa Rejsens Strabadser, mens hendes Mand og Kollega, E i n a r W e g e n e r, staar på Hovedet i Reproduktioner af deres mest beundrede Billeder.  **Den danske Nordpol**  – Er det Dem, er har bragt Solskin og Tøvejr med Sydfra? spørger jeg.  – Ja, det er det sikkert, ler Fru Wegener mellem to små Mundfulde Bøf med Løg. – Men sikken en hjemkomst for øvrigt! Vi kom ad Søvejen til Esbjerg og havde haft det dejlig varmt paa Havet, saa at komme til Esbjerg var som at komme til Nordpolen gennem gyngende Isflager. Men nu er vi her altsaa.  – Og befinder Dem forhaabentlig godt?  – Ja, det vil sige: foreløbig føler vi os en Smule fattige. Det er ikke morsomt at veksle sine Penge og skulle give næsten fire Francs for en Krone.  – Det lyder da nyt og yndigt i hjemlige Ører – indskyder jeg opmuntrende. – Hvad kan De sige om Deres Udstilling?  – Kom og se den! ler Fru Wegener diplomatisk. Den har Vernissage paa Tirsdag kl. 1, og paa Onsdag aabnes den for Offentligheden.  Einar Wegener, der aabenbart vil skaffe sin frue Madro, rækker en smukt udstyret Bog frem imod mig.  **Vikingesagaer paa Fransk**  – Hér skal De se noget morsomt, siger han. “la livre des Vikings Apres les anciennes Sagas.” Det er simpelthen de gamle Vikingesagaer, som jeg paa Opfordring af det kendte store Piazzi’s Forlag har omplantet paa Fransk. Det er tilmed blevet en stor Sukces. Det er kun en Maaned siden, den udkom, og som De vil se af dette Eksemplar, er den allerede kommet i otte oplag.  Mens jeg beundrer den smukke Bog, der – selvfølgelig – er forsynet med gratiøse Vignetter af Gerda Wegener, gør Fruen en lille Pavse i Maaltidet for at nippe til en Cigaret –  – Det, jeg er mest glad for at møde igen herhjemme, siger hun næsten med et Suk, er Rugbrød, Spegesild og Snaps. Jeg synes i Øjeblikket, at de tre Ting rummer Danmark for mig!  – Men Paris? spørger jeg. – Nu undgaar De ikke det Spørgsmaal, som De vil høre tyve Gange hver Dag: Hvordan er Paris efter Krigen?  Fru Wegener spidser eftertænksomt sin lille røde Mund –  – Nu er den yndig! forsikrer hun.  – Nu er den blevet sig selv igen. Man taler overhovedet ikke om Krigen dernede.  – Er det berømte parisiske Natteliv blomstret op igen?  **Udenlandsk “Pariserstemning”.**  – Det er det sikkert! ler fruen. – Jeg hører nu ikke selv til Natkafémenneskene. Jeg har f.Eks. ikke været paa Montmartre i …… jeg ved ikke hvor mange Aar. Der kommer for øvrigt Pariserne aldrig selv, og slet ikke de parisiske Kunstnere. Det er deres udenlandske Kolleger, der sidder dér og laver deres egen lille private “Pariserstemning” blandt Turister og andre, der tror, at dette er P a r is!  – Er Bohèmelivet da paa Retur?  – Ja, i gammeldags Forstand. Helt oppe paa Monmartres Top, paa “Butte Montmartre” gøres der ganske vist et Forsøg paa at koge Bohèmelivet op. Der findes en kunstnersammenslutning, der kalder sig “Republique de Montmartre”, der har deres Præsident og vælger deres “Montmartres dronning”. Men det er lidt kunstigt. Umiddelbarheden er gaaet af det.  – Skyldes det svigtende Livsglæde?  – Nej! falder Einar Wegener helt forarget ind. – De skulde opleve en Karnevalsmaaned i Paris! Den har vi desværre netop maattet rejse fra i Aar. Jeg elsker at gå på Karneval, mens det keder min Kone. Jeg husker engang, jeg var klædt ud som ung Pige. Jeg maa have illuderet fortræffeligt – i hvert Fald oplevede jeg til min Forbløffelse at blive gjort heftigt Kur til af ingen ringere end en engelsk Biskop! – Nej, Livsglæde mangler Paris sandelig ikke.  – Røget Aal er yndigt! kommer det som en lille indskudt Bemærkning fra Gerda Wegener, der har genoptaget Maaltidet. Og igen forstyrrer jeg hendes Madro –  **Kubismens Endeligt.**  De moderne Kunstretninger, de der ender paa -isme, dominerer de stadig Udstillingerne?  – Nej, siger Fruen. De er saa godt som forsvundet. Paa sidste “Salon d’Automne” var der næsten slet ingen, og paa “Independence” var det udelukkende Russerne og Svenskerne, der var Kubister. De sled endnu Frankrigs aflagte Tøj. Men for øvrigt har Kubismen jo gjort sin gode Virkning. Den var – hvis jeg maa udtrykke mig drastisk – det uartige Ord, der tiltrænges midt i al Pænheden. Jeg og min Mand var gode venner af Kubisternes Fører G u i l l a u m e A p o l l i n a i r e. Han fandt oprindelig paa Kubismen som en Spøg. Men da den slog an, og da han saa de alvorlige Spor, den satte i Kunsten, saa tog han den ogsaa selv alvorligt og gik i Spidsen for den. Han fik for øvrigt en tragisk Skæbne: han døde af Krigen. Han havde faaet en Granatsplint i Hovedet, blev opereret og fik saa L a G r i p p e, som Franskmændene kalder den spanske Syge.  – Er De stolt a at have faaet et Billede paa Luxembourg-Museet?  – Ja, det kan jeg ikke nægte! siger Fru Wegener beskedent. Men hendes Mand falder ind for at bøde paa Beskedenheden –  **Den femte danske Kunstner paa Luxembourg.**  – Det har hun ogsaa Grund til, oplyser han. Foruden min kone findes der kun Billeder af *fire* andre danske Kunstnere, nemlig: Krøyer, Julius Paulsen, Achen og Ilsted. Det Billede, Staten købte til Ophængning, var for øvrigt slet ikke det, man oprindelig vilde have haft. Men da det andet,  <s. 6>  som var større allerede v a r solgt paa Udstillingen, tog de det mindre ……  – …… som var bedre! supplerer Fruen. Det hænger nu ved siden af Krøyer og ovenover Zorn, og det er morsomt at sammenligne de tre forskellige Malemaader.  – De er vist meget flittig, forlyder det heroppe?  Fru Wegener sukker blot og ryster opgivende paa Hovedet. Igen maa hendes Mand supplere –  – Det er man simpelthen nødt til i Paris, forklarer han. Publikum f o r l a n g e r, at man er repræsenteret paa saa og saa mange Udstillinger. Denne Rejse er ligefrem en Ferie til at trække Vejret i. Forrige Aar udstillede min Kone paa otte Udstillinger, hvoraf den ene var hendes egen. I alt 70 Billeder – der dog selvfølgelig ikke alle var malet det Aar.  **Det rige Frankrig.**  – Er Franskmændene fattige efter Krigen? spørger jeg Einar Wegener for at unde hans Frue et lille Pusterum med en Cigaret, hun lige har tændt.  – Nej, forsikrer han livligt. – Der er tværtimod mange Penge mellem Folk. Det er ganske uretfærdigt og misvisende, at Francen er saa langt nede. Alene til at genopbygge Nordfrankrig er der foreløbig skaffet 80 milliarder. Det ville man ikke kunne gøre blandt en fattig Befolkning. Blot som agerbrugende Land er Frankrigs Rigdomme uudtømmelige. Og den Dag, da de ikke længer vil betale Kul fra England, har de deres Vandfald og Floder til Erstatning. Der er f.Eks. et Projekt om at lade Rhone producere Elektricitet til hele Frankrig. Tænk saa ogsaa paa. at det har Havet aabent til tre Sider og derved de rigeste Muligheder for Skibsfart. Før Krigen var Landet imidlertid saa rigt, at det slet ikke udnyttede disse Muligheder. Ja, selv Landbruget behøvede de ikke at modernisere. Den Dag i dag kan man, ved Siden af moderne Landbrugsmaskiner, se Bønder, der gaar og skærer deres Korn af paa gammeldags Vis med Segl.  **Det flittige Frankrig.**  Dertil kommer, at den franske Befolkning er umaadelig flittig. Paris er f.Eks. slet ikke den Natcafé-By, Folk tror. Det er Turisterne, de giver den det Præg. Men den jævne Middelstand a r b e j d e r. En ung Snedkersvend er stolt, naar han fortæller, at hans Far og hans Bedstefar var Snedkere. Der er gammel og solid Tradition i Haandværket. Dets Udøvere føler sig som en Mellemting mellem Haandværker og Kunstner. Derfor er der intet, der hedder Klassehad, i den Forstand som det findes andre Steder.  – Hænger det sammen med det franske Gemyt?  – Ja, Franskmændene er dejlige Mennesker. Ingen steder kan man som Kunstner træffe større Elskværdighed, hjælpsomhed og Kollegialitet. De har et udmærket Princip dernede: at man skal hjælpe hinanden paa alle tænkelige Maader.  – Ja, indfletter fru Wegener, der har bekræftet sin Mands Begejstring med smaa Nik og indskudte Bemærkninger. – Og det skyldes netop nævnte Princip, at vi slog os ned i Paris. Da vi i sin Tid rejste Sydpaa, gjaldt vort Pas til Spanien. Men vi besluttede at gøre et fjorten Dages Ophold i Paris. Og nu har de fjorten Dage varet i fjorten Aar!  – Hvor længe bliver De herhjemme?  – En Maaned. – Vi har end ikke Tid til at blive og hilse paa det danske Foraar. Til Gengæld glæder jeg mig til det parisiske. Det er om muligt endnu dejligere!  **Frankrig og Danmark.**  – Hvad mener man i Frankrig om Danmark?  – Man tror stadigvæk, at der gaar Isbjørne rundt i Gaderne. Men alligevel er vore lille Land ikke ganske ukendt af Franskmændene. De elsker H. C. Andersen – hvis Eventyr min Mand for øvrigt nu skal oversætte til Piazzi’s Forlag som en samlet Udgave, hvilket hidtil aldrig har foreligget. Nogle af Billedhuggerne kender ogsaa Thorvaldsen. Georg Brandes kender de og beundrer. Og Rudolph Tegner ……  – Og saa hører man dem for øvrigt tale kyndigt og beundrende om det danske Landbrugs høje Standard, indskyder Einar Wegener. Og ligeledes om vore udmærkede Hospitaler, der er kendt som Mønsterhospitaler.  – Og først og fremmest, slutter Gerda Wegener og ser forskræmt paa Uret, er de Franskmænd, der har besøgt Danmark, alle som én rørte og begejstrede over dansk Gæstfrihed. Jeg har truffet en Alpejæger, der var paa Graadens Rand af glade Minder, da han hørte, at jeg var dansk. Han havde Lommerfulde af Prospektkort fra København! – Tror du, vi naar Toget til Hellerup, Einar? Ja, undskyld, men vi skal nemlig til Middag hos gode Venner ……!  Thorkil Barfod. | ***Kobenhavn*, 8 March 1924**  **Gerda and Einar Wegener Talk about Paris**  The artist couple Gerda and Einar Wegener have come here from Paris. Next week they will open a joint exhibition of paintings in Ole Haslund’s Hus, where our reporter met them yesterday and asked them to talk about Paris, as it is today:  <captions>  Gerda Wegener as she looks.  Gerda Wegener as she thinks she looks.  Through rooms with beautiful old furniture, by winding staircases, through labyrinthine corridors, I am led to a small, cosy well-hidden office in Ole Haslund’s old house in Østergade. Deeply submerged in an easy chair and wrapped in fur despite the tropical heat of the stove G e r d a W e g e n e r sits, the Parisiennewho in spite of fourteen years of exile and fame is still our fellow countrywoman. She is treating herself to four *smørrebrød* after the hardships of the journey, while her husband and colleague, E i n a r W e g e n e r, is up to his neck in reproductions of their most admired pictures.  **The Danish North Pole**  “Is it you who has brought sunshine and thaw with you from the south?” I ask.  “Yes, it probably is,” Mrs. Wegener laughs between two little mouthfuls of steak and onion. “By the way, what a homecoming it was! We came by sea to Esbjerg and had been nice and warm at sea, so coming to Esbjerg was like coming to the North Pole through floating ice floes. But now we are here.”  “And hopefully finding yourself well?”  “Yes, that is: so far we are feeling a bit poor. It is not amusing to change your money and have to pay almost four Francs for a *krone*.”  “That sounds new and lovely to local ears,” I add encouragingly. “What can you say about your exhibition?”  “Come and see it!” Mrs. Wegener laughs diplomatically. “There is a private view on Tuesday at 1 pm and on Wednesday it will be open to the public.”  Einar Wegener, who apparently wants to secure his wife peace during her meal, holds out a beautifully got up book towards me.  **Viking Sagas in French**  “Let me show you something interesting, he says. ‘La livre des Vikings Apres les anciennes Sagas.’ It is simply the old Viking sagas that I have transplanted into French on request by the well-known large publishing house Piazzi. It has even become a great success. It is only a month since it was published and as you will see from this copy, it has already appeared in eight impressions.”  While I admire the beautiful book, which is, of course, equipped with graceful vignettes by Gerda Wegener, madam makes a pause in her meal to light a cigarette:  “What I am most happy to meet again in this country,” she says almost with a sigh, “is rye bread, salt herring, and aquavit. At the moment, I think that these three things contain Denmark to me!”  “But Paris?” I ask. “Now you will not avoid the question that you will hear twenty times every day: How is Paris after the war?”  Mrs. Wegener thoughtfully purses her little red mouth:  “Now it is lovely!” she asserts.  “Now it has become itself again. Nobody speaks of the war down there.”  “Is the famous Parisian nightlife flourishing again?”  **Foreign “Parisian atmosphere”**  “I am sure it is!” madam laughs. I am not a late-night café person myself, however. I have for instance not been at Montmartre in …… I do not know how many years. Incidentally, the Parisians never go there, let alone the Parisian artists. It is their foreign colleagues who sit there and make their own ‘Parisian atmosphere’ among tourists and others who think that this is P a r i s!”  “But is the bohemian life style on the decline?”  “Yes, in the old-fashioned sense. Right at the top of Montmartre, at ‘Butte Montmartre,’ an attempt is admittedly made to revive the bohemian life. There is an association of artists who call themselves ‘Republique de Montmartre’ who have their president and choose their ‘Queen of Montmartre.’ But it is a bit artificial. The spontaneity has worn off.”  “Is that due to failing joie de vivre?”  “No!” Einar Wegener joins in quite outraged. “You should experience a carnival month in Paris! Unfortunately, we just had to leave it this year. I love going to the carnival, but it bores my wife. I remember once I was dressed up as a young girl. I must have created an excellent illusion – at least to my astonishment I was vehemently courted by no less a person than an English arch bishop! – No, Paris is certainly not lacking in joie de vivre.”  “Smoked eel is lovely!” It comes as a little interposed remark from Gerda Wegener who has resumed her meal. And again I disturb her peace:  **The Death of Cubism**  “The modern schools of art, those ending in –ism, do they still dominate the exhibitions?”  “No,” madam says. “They are as good as gone. At the latest ‘Salon d’Automne’ there were hardly any and at ‘Independence’ it was exclusively the Russians and the Swedes who were Cubists. They were still wearing France’s discarded clothes. But apart from this, Cubism has had its good effect. It was – if I may express myself drastically – the dirty word needed in the middle of all the niceness. I and my husband were good friends of the leader of the Cubists G u i l l a u m e A p o l l i n a i r e. He originally invented Cubism as a joke. But as it became popular and as he saw the serious traces it left in art, he also took it seriously himself and led it. Apart from this he had a tragic fate: he died in the war. He was hit in the head by a shell splinter, was operated on, and then had L a G r i p p e as the French call the Spanish flu.”  “Are you proud of having a picture at the Luxembourg Museum?”  “Yes, I cannot deny that!” Mrs. Wegener says modestly. But her husband joins in to remedy the modesty:  **The Fifth Danish Artist at Luxembourg**  “She has cause to be so,” he informs us. “Besides my wife there are only pictures by *four* other Danish artists, namely: Krøyer, Julius Paulsen, Achen og Ilsted. Incidentally, the picture that the state bought for display was not at all the one they originally wanted. But as the other one,  <p. 6>  which was bigger, already h a d been sold at the exhibition, they took the smaller one ……”  “…… which was better!” madam adds. “It now hangs next to Krøyer and above Zorn, and it is interesting to compare the three different styles of painting.”  “I believe you are very busy, it is said up here?”  Mrs. Wegener just sighs and shakes her head resignedly. Again her husband has to add something:  “In Paris you simply have to,” he explains. “The public d e m a n d s that you are represented at so and so many exhibitions. This journey is actually a holiday to take a respite. Last year my wife exhibited at eight exhibitions of which one was her own. 70 pictures in total – that of course had not all been painted that year though.”  **The Rich France**  “Are the French poor after the war?” I ask Einar Wegener to give his wife a little breathing room with a cigarette she has just lit.  “No,” he asserts animatedly. “On the contrary people have a great deal of money. It is quite unfair and misleading that the Franc is so low. To rebuild Northern France alone 80 billion have been raised. That would not have been possible among a poor population. As an agricultural nation alone the riches of France are inexhaustible. And the day they no longer want to pay for coal from England, they have their water falls and rivers as compensation. There is for instance a project about letting the waters of the Rhone produce electricity for the whole of France. Also consider that it has the open sea on three sides and thus plenty of opportunity for navigation. Before the war the country was so rich, however, that it did not make use of these possibilities at all. Yes, even the farming industry did not have to modernise. Even today, you can see peasants cutting their corn with a sickle in the old-fashioned way next to modern agricultural machines.  **The Industrious France**  “In addition to this the French population is tremendously hard-working. Paris is for example not the late-night café city that people think. It is the tourists who give it that quality. But the ordinary middleclass w o r k. A young joiner’s assistant is proud when he tells you that his father and grandfather were joiners. There is an old and strong tradition within the crafts. Its practitioners feel like a cross between a craftsman and an artist. For that reason, there is no such thing as class hatred in the sense that it exists elsewhere.”  “Does that have to do with the French character?”  “Yes, the French are lovely people. Nowhere will you meet greater kindness, helpfulness and collegiate spirit as an artist. They have an excellent principle down there: that you must help each other in all possible ways.”  “Yes,” Mrs. Wegener, who has confirmed her husband’s enthusiasm with little nods and inserted remarks, puts in. “And it is because of the principle just mentioned that we settled down in Paris. When we travelled south some time ago, our passports were valid for Spain. But we decided to stop in Paris for two weeks. And now the fourteen days have turned into fourteen years!”  “For how long will you stay in this country?”  “A month. We do not even have the time to stay and greet the Danish spring. On the other hand, I look forward to the Parisian one. It is even lovelier if possible!”  **France and Denmark**  “What do they think about Denmark in France?”  “They still think that Polar bears walk around in the streets. Yet our little country is not entirely unknown to the French. They love Hans Christian Andersen – whose fairy tales, by the way, my husband is going to translate for Piazzi’s publishing house as a collected edition, which has never been available until now. Some of the sculptors also know Thorvaldsen. Georg Brandes they know and admire. And Rudolph Tegner ……”[[1]](#endnote-1)  “And besides one hears them speak knowledgeably and admiringly about the high standard of Danish agriculture,” Einar Wegener adds. “And also about our excellent hospitals that are known as model hospitals.”  “And above all,” Gerda Wegener ends and looks anxiously at the clock, “those Frenchmen who have visited Denmark are one and all moved and enthusiastic about Danish hospitality. I have met a mountain hunter who was on the verge of tears from happy memories when he heard that I was Danish. He had pockets full of picture postcards from Copenhagen! Do you think we will catch the train to Hellerup, Einar? Yes, please excuse us, but we are going to dinner with good friends ……!”  Thorkil Barfod.[[2]](#endnote-2)  Translated from the Danish by Marianne Ølholm |

1. 1 Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844) was a Danish sculptor of international fame. Born in Copenhagen, he studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Art, where the Wegeners were also students. He finished his education in Rome and spent much of his life in Italy. A museum dedicated to his works is located near the parliament building Christiansborg in Copenhagen. Literary critic Georg Brandes (1842-1927) is best known as the spokesman for the “modern breakthrough” movement in Scandinavian literature, of which Henrik Ibsen was a proponent. Brandes formulated the principles of what was termed “new realism.” With his brother he also founded the newspaper *Politiken*, which published articles on Lili Elbe and her obituary. *Politiken* is still publishing today. Rudolph Tegner (1873-1950) was a modernist Danish sculptor of the Symbolist movement. A museum dedicated to his works is located north of Copenhagen on Zealand’s north coast. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. 2 Thorkil Barfod (1889-1947) was a Danish poet, novelist and author of children’s literature. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)