

Ieva Kalnača

LATVIAN ARTISTS AND FLÂNEURISM IN EUROPE IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: THE EXAMPLE OF GUSTAVS ŠKILTERS AND JĀZEPS GROSVALDS

INTRODUCTION

The study looks at two Latvian artists who can be associated in different ways with the notion of flâneurism at the beginning of the 20th century – Gustavs Šķilters (1874–1954) and Jāzepps Grosvalds (1891–1920). The two artists, in parallel with the visual heritage they created, have also left written testimonies of their experiences and observations while staying in various European metropolises, among which Paris is to be distinguished. Gustavs Šķilters resided there for nearly five years but Jāzepps Grosvalds for a slightly shorter time, due to compulsory military service in the Tsar’s army in Vilkaviškis during his Paris period. Thus it is interesting to examine these artists’ first-hand experiences based on both their written sources and visual art testimonies that successfully allow us to track their journeys and habits in large modern cities. Both Gustavs Šķilters and Jāzepps Grosvalds can be linked to the notion of flâneurism for a number of reasons that will be discussed more widely in the course of the

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12697/BJAH.2025.28.05>

Translated by Andris Mellakauls.

The article was supported by the Latvian Council of Science within the “Walking Through Time: Flânerie and Modernity in Latvian Interwar Culture project”, No. lzp-2022/1-0505.

See more: <https://lzp.gov.lv/programmas/fundamentalo-un-lietisko-petijumu-projekti-programma-flpp/> [accessed 15/01/2025].

article. Until now, in Latvian culture and art history the visual and written heritage left by the two artists has not been viewed in the context of flâneurism, so it is particularly important to look at the observations they made on a daily basis in the great cities of Europe.

Flâneur is a French term for someone who strolls, wanders or saunters around town, as if without any particular purpose, but carefully experiences, observes and savours its modern and changing realities.¹ Though dating back to previous centuries, the term gained popularity in the 19th century as a mark of a particular literary type and is attributable directly to French culture and the streets of Paris. The French writer Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) is regarded as giving us one of the first and most important portrayals of the flâneur. His flâneur is a special kind of personality who appears in the 19th century urban landscape that has developed with the rise of capitalism.² Balzac's flâneur was associated with extensive knowledge of the city – he may not have a command of Greek or Latin, might not understand mathematics, but he had to know every street, every shop in Paris. He needs to know who the best tailor, best hatter, banker, magician and doctor are.³ However, the most widely known creator of this portrait of a city observer and valuer is the French poet, essayist and art critic Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), who, in the essay “The Painter of Modern Life” (*Le Peintre de la vie Moderne*), published in 1863, described the flâneur as an artist and/or poet of the new world and city; an aesthete who tirelessly “wears out the pavement”, observes and captures these kaleidoscopic manifestations of modern life. Baudelaire said of the flâneur that “the crowd is his element as the air is that of birds and water of fishes”, that his profession is “to blend in with the crowd, with modern diversity”⁴, and that one of the flâneur's main features is his ability to be far

1 Bruce Mazlish, “The Flâneur: from Spectator to Representation”, *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 43–45.

2 Elisabeth Gerwin, “Power in the City: Balzac's Flâneur in la fille aux yeux d'or”, *Institutions and Power in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture*, ed. by David Evans, Kate Griffiths (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 1; Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, “The Flâneur on and off the Streets of Paris”, *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 29.

3 Parkhurst Ferguson, “The Flâneur on and off the Streets of Paris”, 31.

4 Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 399; Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995).

from home but still feel a belonging to anywhere, to watch the world and what's happening, to be at the centre of everything, but yet to go unnoticed. The flâneur is a character who observes, reflects on, is part of, but at the same time feels alienated from this modern reality.

German philosopher and essayist Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), for his part, was the one who, in the 20th century, based on Baudelaire's poetry and describing the flâneur as a “detective of street life”⁵, made him an object of academic interest as a symbolic figure of the modern, urban world and its experience, which caught the interest of researchers, artists and writers as an object of exploration and portrayal. Benjamin's flâneur took shape in the historical context of the 19th century, a time when society was experiencing widespread economic and social change. At this point, consumer culture was gradually beginning to develop, the transport system was thriving, and cafés, theatres, etc., and new, unprecedented places such as department stores, were also appearing, which also determined the formation of new types of members of society.⁶

During the 19th century, people's daily habits were also changing, especially those related to the city experience and peoples' relationships with it. In earlier times, those who lived and worked in the countryside only went to the city on special business, which was done as quickly as possible in order to rush back to work. The everyday lives of most people living in the city were also subordinate to work and practical needs. There was no such concept as free time that could be spent wandering the streets in a carefree fashion, observing and analysing the city. With the industrial revolution, the modernisation of society and the development of a broader intelligentsia this situation began to change: life in the city became increasingly diverse, new social ties and relationships between members of society and the modern environment emerged. One could say that new individuals emerged with different perceptions of space and time, with other than pragmatic interests in the reality of those around them. Initially, these ‘modern people’, who had the

5 Rob Shields, “Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes of a Flânerie”, *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 61–63; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 416–455.

6 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

opportunity and desire to devote their time not only to work but also to the opposite, for example long, leisurely walks on the streets of the city, mainly formed in the great nations. Gradually, new opportunities also opened up to representatives of small nations, including Latvia. Latvians too, due to academic success or family prosperity, had the opportunity to reach European metropolises.

FLÂNEURISM AND THE VISUAL ARTS

Although the flâneur is better known and studied as the native of the modern city, as described in literary works, this does not prevent us from viewing the representation of flâneurs in visual art too, as well as searching for and analysing artists who not only depicted flâneurs, but should themselves be seen as such, inferring this from both analysis of artworks and the written heritage left behind (where available). The flâneur can be both a theme of interest to the artist, a phenomenon of modern life whose portrayal in the urban setting offers significant insight into the various dimensions of modernity, and also as the essence of the artist who defines the range of themes in his art, making it possible to understand art's connection to the modern metropolis.

The art of the time of Impressionism is most directly linked to the world of flâneurs. The artists of the time, Edouard Manet (1832–1883), Claude Monet (1840–1926), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) and Gustave Caillebotte (1848–1894) being the best known, loved to depict Parisian boulevards, parks, cafés full of people. They showed the city's everyday life, its pace, which you can capture only specific moments of but in which the flâneur is always present. By analysing how artists have depicted the urban environment and the flâneur within it, we can get an idea of the social and cultural changes of modernist times and the evolution of the relationship between the individual and the city. Studying artworks from the perspective of the flâneur allows us to judge how people of a given time and place experienced, felt, and interpreted urban reality. Of course, the landscape of the modern city and the individuals in it, with their quest for identity in the general crowd, continued to be in the artist's sights later too, not just during the period of Impressionism, as is the case with postimpressionist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), expressionist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938) and many others.

At least some of the artists for whom the flâneur was an object of interest, a theme of their creative work, are also considered flâneurs themselves. One of the most obvious is the aforementioned Edouard Manet, who was a well-dressed, elegant city watcher who roamed Paris, drawing inspiration and motifs from its streets, parks and nightlife.⁷ He reveals the new reality he has observed in his artworks, thus becoming a visual reflector of modernity and the changes that accompany it as well as a valuer of these. Similarly, Edgar Degas (1834–1917) is the embodiment of the flâneur, wandering the city streets, watching people in theatres and cafés and at horse races, portraying specific, brief moments from that experience – like short notes on the experience.

LATVIAN ARTISTS AND FLÂNEURISM

Processes that took place elsewhere in Europe are also connected with the Latvia of today and with Latvian artists. In general, this period is the second half of the 19th century, which led up to the advent and development of the Latvian national school of art. During this time, the fact that painting, graphics and sculpture became professions came mainly because education became more accessible to those who did not come from the city or affluent families. Various art movements could already be studied in Riga, but the most achievable place to obtain higher art education was St Petersburg, notably the St Petersburg Academy of Art and the Stieglitz Central School of Technical Drawing. Top students could receive foreign scholarships to complement their skills in Paris, Berlin, Munich, Vienna and other large cities in Western Europe.

GUSTAVS ŠĶILTERS AND HIS MODERN METROPOLITAN EXPERIENCE

One Latvian artist who had the opportunity to study in Paris with a foreign scholarship is the first Latvian professional sculptor and

7 Daren John Pope, "The impact of 'the flâneur' as an influence on the Visual Arts between 1850 and 1920". Essay (Bathurst: Charles Sturt University, [?]), 2, https://www.academia.edu/13454644/The_Flaneur_Artist [accessed 15/01/2025]; Jennie Taylor, "In Focus: the flâneur", *National Gallery of Ireland*, <https://www.nationalgallery.ie/explore-and-learn/focus-flaneur> [accessed 15/01/2025].

watercolourist Gustavs Šķilters. He was born in 1874 to a blacksmith's family, educated at the Limbaži grammar school, studied professional art from 1893–1899 at Stieglitz Central School of Technical Drawing, which he graduated from cum laude and thus obtained a foreign scholarship with the opportunity to choose where to study. It was clear to Šķilters that he wanted to go straight to Paris. The artist lived and studied in the city from 1900 to the end of 1904, initially attending the Academy of Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) becoming a follower of Rodin – a Latvian Rodinist. He went on to attending the *École des Beaux-Arts* as a free listener for nearly five years, where he mastered art history and aesthetics and participated in plastic anatomy classes and seminars. In parallel, Šķilters was taught decorative sculpture by sculptor Gustave Germain (1843–1909), during which time he also had the opportunity to tour various regions of France as well as Spain, Morocco, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and elsewhere. Both on a daily basis and during his travels, Gustavs Šķilters had the habit of walking a lot to get to know the environment as best he could and capture it in watercolour paintings. In Paris, Šķilters had an international circle of friends made up of Greek, Spanish, French, Latvian and Russian artists with whom he spent everyday life, but he also liked wandering on his own. It is important to mention that the artist was also keen on literature, writing stories, poems, descriptions of his travels, extensive postcards, publishing articles about art and his observations of daily life.

Turning to Gustavs Šķilters and flâneurism, it must be said that although he did not directly describe his own strolling in one of Europe's modern cities, he nevertheless wrote several articles (some of which he also published) about Paris, the city where he lived for five years. Here he encountered a whole new, never before seen type of city, because life in Riga at the beginning of the 20th century was not comparable to life in Paris. He was fascinated by this crowded, dynamic metropolis, then the centre of European art. Gustavs Šķilters' writings allow us to infer much about his daily habits and interests as well as about his studies. The notes and descriptions are visually revealing and are complemented by Šķilters' collection of watercolours in which we see parks, bridges, waterfront areas with ships, railway stations with smoky train carriages, couples walking around the city, the outskirts of the city and also the popular Versailles of many artists and writers.

The article "Parīze" ("Paris"), later also published in an edition of *Ilustrēts Žurnāls* (*Illustrated Magazine*),⁸ describes the city in such a subtle and nuanced way, its fascination, its various residents and their habits, that it is perfectly safe to say that such a view originated from long walks, detailed observations and careful analysis. Introducing the reader to this metropolis of art and its most attractive places, Šķilters writes⁹:

Paris has been much dreamed of. Much has been sung about it, described, and painted. She still attracts and captivates restless, avidly romantic hearts today ... The splendour of Paris is its trees. All the roads, boulevards and streets are planted. The grounds of the Tuileries Garden and the Champs-Élysée, the Luxembourg, Monceau and Botanic gardens are excellent parks, maintained in style, rich in monuments, fountains, sculptural figures and flowers – many, many flowers ... there is no free corner, or outskirts, where a flirtatious little garden has not been planted...

Šķilter's observed and sumptuously described park wealth is also seen in his Paris watercolours, such as "Luxembourg Garden in Paris" (1902), "Autumn in Luxembourg Garden" (1902) and others. You can feel the sculptor and watercolourist leisurely wandering the streets, enjoying the charm, beauty and mystery of the city. Continuing his literary walk around other areas of Paris, Šķilters notes:

Further out, the character of the city changes. After the mournfully dreamy ancient and old parts of the city on the banks of the Seine, come the feverishly exited Bourse and the Central Market, or "halles"; then the big boulevards. On the other bank, the University of Sorbonne, the Panthéon and the Observatory, with their carefree and colourful Latina Quarter block on Montparnasse. Beyond the great boulevards, the martyrs' mount "Montmartre" rises on the right bank of the Seine.

The places mentioned here already characterise the reality of the modern city – the stock exchange with its money deals, shopping

8 Gustavs Šķilters, "Parīze", *Ilustrēts Žurnāls*, No. 31 (01/08/1924).

9 The original style of writing in texts by Gustavs Šķilters and Jāzeps Grosvalds has been retained.

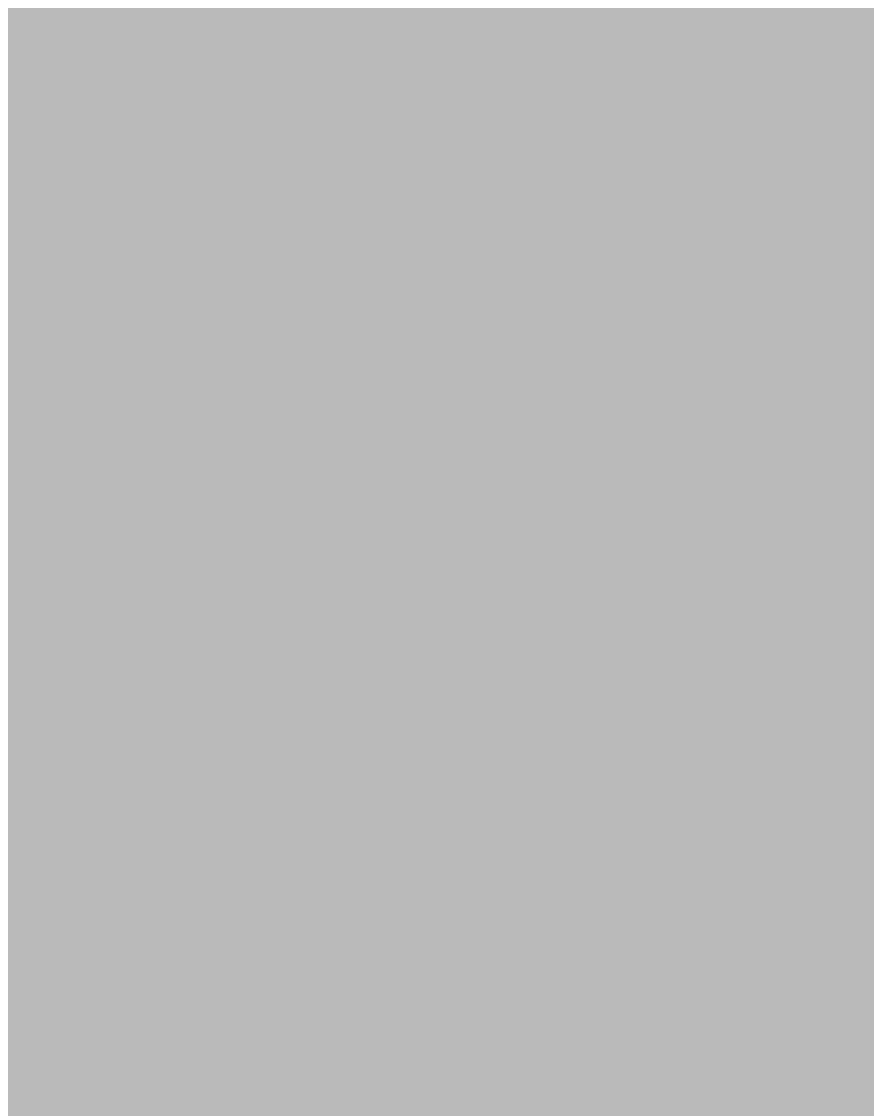


FIG. 1. GUSTAVS ŠĶILTERS. *AUTUMN IN LUXEMBOURG GARDEN*. 1902. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER. 26.7 × 20.7 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (ŠĶMM/A-426).

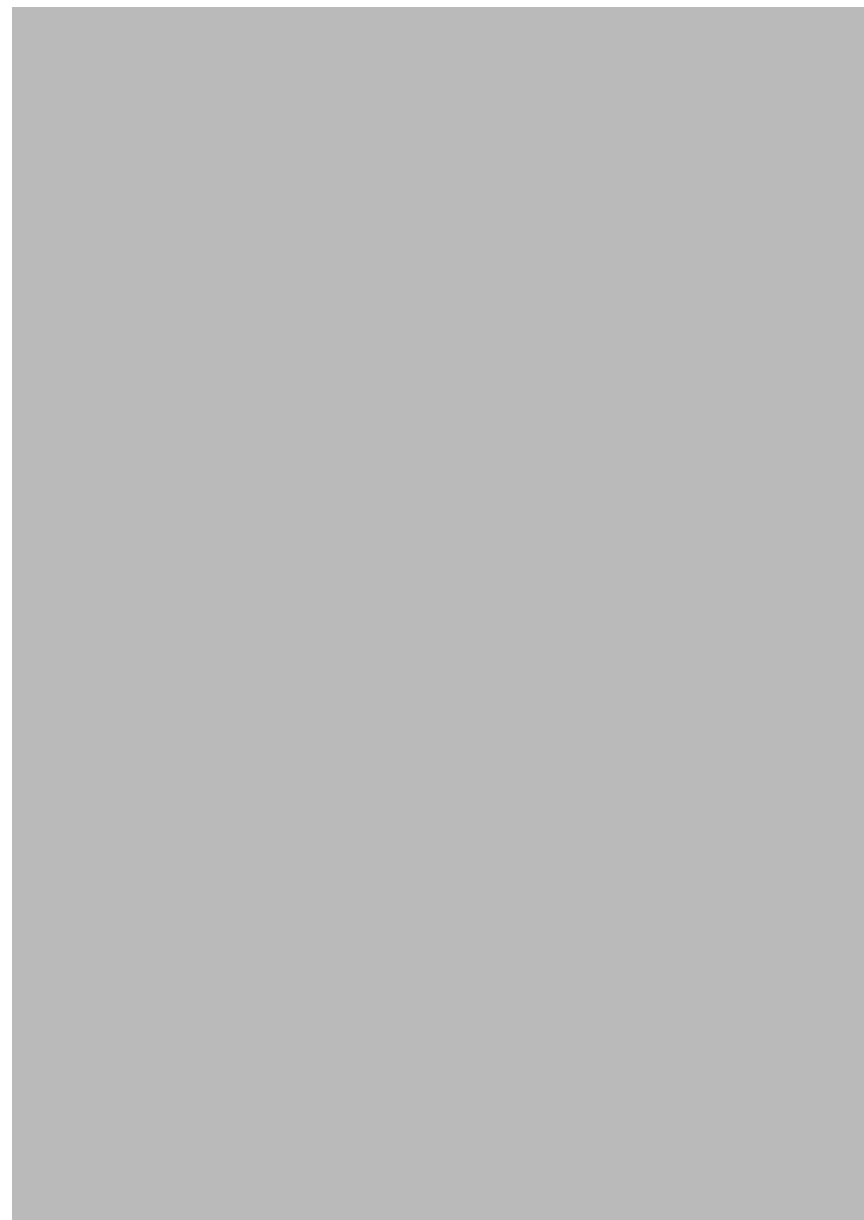


FIG. 2. GUSTAVS ŠĶILTERS. *TRAIN STATION*. 1901–1904. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER. 33.8 × 23.5 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (ŠĶMM/A-407).

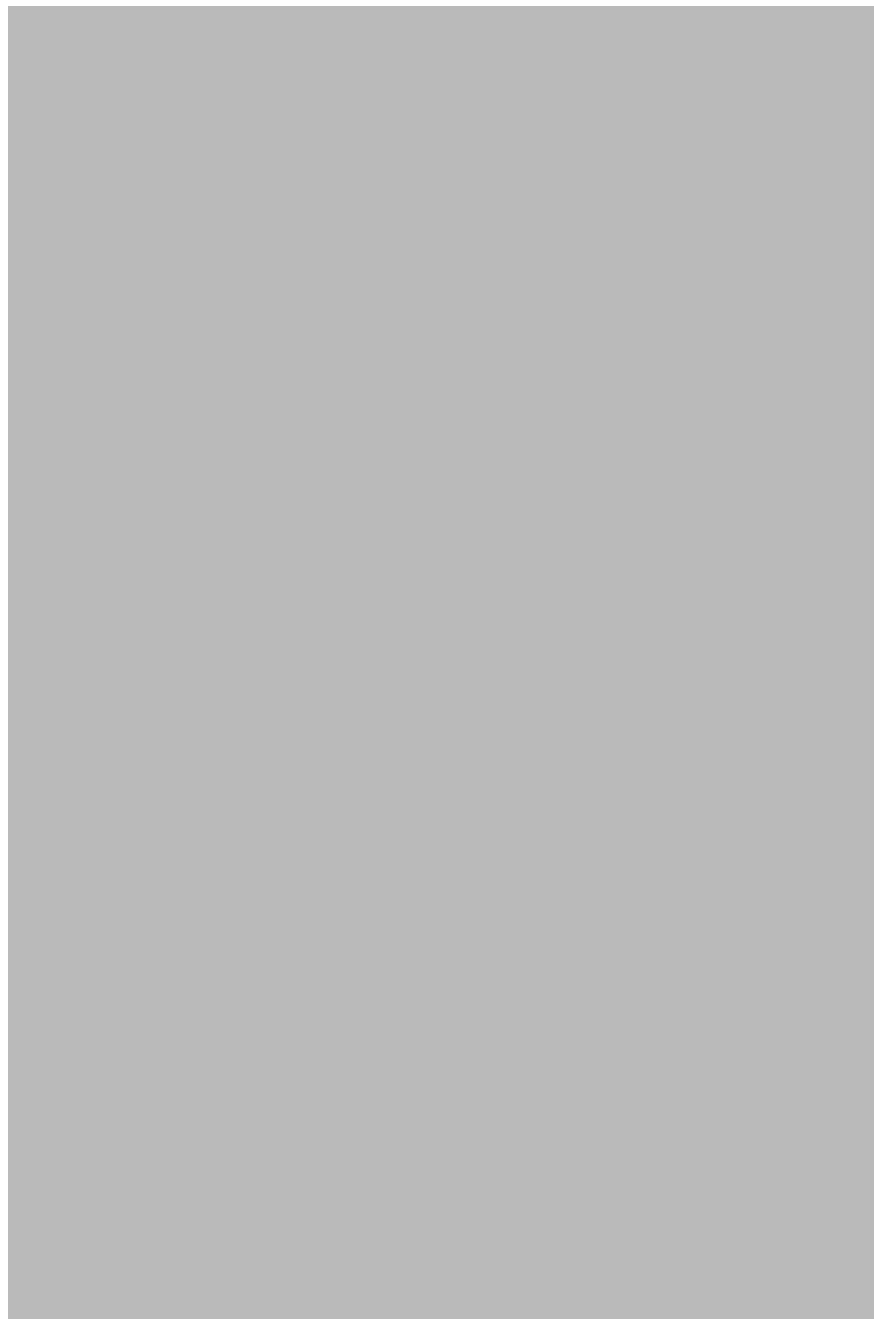


FIG. 3. GUSTAVS ŠKĪLTERS. ALEXANDER III BRIDGE IN PARIS. 1902. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER. 19.5 × 12 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (ŠKMM/A-317).

venues, wide streets, transport developments directly characterised by the watercolour “Train Station” (1901–1904) – a dark train with its windows shining in the lights of the carriage, a crowd of people on the platform, the smoke of the train surrounding everything, and an apparent fog.

Particularly significant in the context of the article is the fact that Šķilters not only describes what has attracted his attention in the character and everyday reality of the city, but also uses the term ‘flâneur’, testifying that it was familiar to him. In the article we read:

Paris has created a special type of people, the so-called ‘flâneurs’. They go and wander through the streets of Paris, enjoying her various, eternally never tiresome delights. They are sometimes seen with a fishing rod on the banks of the Seine. Other times they feed sparrows and doves, in the Tuileries Garden they watch children playing in Luxembourg park, artists paint favourite places, or rummage for hours among boxes of old books on the bank of the Seine. In the evening they walk solemnly as if in church, along the Champs-Élysées to the Boulogne ForeSt

These sights can be seen in Šķilters’ watercolours “Alexander III Bridge in Paris” (1902), with a depiction of the Seine and the bridge, and “Foggy Morning on the Embankment” (1904), with cargo boats and plumes of smoke visible in the haze. As can be seen, Šķilters has quite accurately observed and described the lifestyle of flâneurs, their favourite activities and places in the city, as well as everything that is done while wandering along the streets, through parks and beside riverbanks, all done seemingly without any specific goal but certainly not aimlessly or pointlessly. The artist has also realised that not all flâneurs are the same – they can come from different social groups, have different material opportunities, and don’t always have to wander the city alone:

Often these Paris lovers are vagrants, poets, outcasts and eccentrics, but there are also those who have their own horses and cars. They also gladly take a Parisian beauty for a drive. Ribbons, veils, and bunches of flowers flutter, eyes twinkle, and pink lips smile as they drive past to the Bois de Boulogne to enjoy the delights of nature. It is late at



FIG. 4. GUSTAVS ŠKILTERS. RECREATION. 1903. WATERCOLOUR AND PENCIL ON PAPER. 22 × 28 CM. ZUZĀNS COLLECTION. PHOTO: JĀNIS PIPARS.

night when the last walkers return from the forest. Then the Parisian nightlife is in full swing.

In this context, the watercolour “Meeting in the Evening” (1904), as well as the charcoal drawing “In the Wind (Two Women)” (1904), are noteworthy. Šķilters’ memorial collection also contains photographs that testify to his own trips to various Parisian parks; for example, a photograph from 1900, in which he is seen together with another Latvian sculptor Teodors Zaļkalns (1876–1972) and another friend in Fontainebleau park, fashionably dressed posing at the foot of a cliff. Šķilters has come to know not only the central and/or most famous parts of the city, but also the outskirts, as shown in his works “Suburb in Paris” (1903), “Laundry in Paris” (1902), “Recreation” (1903) and others depicting small single and two storey houses, the local inhabitants, the ubiquitous lampposts and even electricity cables,

suggesting the presence of more modern means there too: the early 20th century was a time when the electrification of Paris accelerated, more power stations were being built and the distribution network expanded. Electric lighting was available not only in public buildings and the homes of the most prosperous people, but much more widely.

Gustavs Šķilters, of course, became familiar with metropolitan life, not only during the day but also during the dark hours, describing its aura emotively as that of a modern, contemporary city, spectacularly illuminated but at the same time distinctly romantic:

Paris shines and sparkles like a large bonfire. Thousands of electric bulbs like wreaths of fire are hung around Paris. When they go out, then the moon and stars and a soft blue sky – the wonderful sky of France. Paris is indescribably lovely at night. Only the dreams that Paris awakens are more beautiful than Paris: dreams, longings and – memories!

Gustavs Šķilters not only described Paris and its inhabitants in general, but also focused on the contemplation of artistic life in more detail. Thus, for example, in another article published after the end of his time in Paris, but written during that period, he gave an insight into how models are engaged for sketching and painting. He says:

Every Monday in certain places in Montparnasse around the ‘free academies’ or in Montmartre, especially in the Place Pigalle, there are pure model markets. Hundreds of models gather there – old and young, men, women and children. They wait for artists to hire them. Those who don’t find work in this way go from studio to studio, knock and offer themselves, undress and show off.¹⁰

Reading this, one can imagine how the sculptor wandered around these places, observed these habits and all manner of people, taking notes. There are many sculptures in his own legacy too, a significant number of which were produced in Rodin’s studio, but also elsewhere, depicting human figures in all kinds of poses, as well as paintings of nudes. Šķilters has contemplated art exhibitions in Paris in a detailed and nuanced way, describing the progress, efforts and hopes

10 Gustavs Šķilters, “Parīzes mākslas izstādes”, *Zalktis*, No. 3 (01/07/1907).

of artists – all that can be observed on the city's streets, parks and cafés. Šķilters says:

Now there are four major art exhibitions in Paris every year, or Salons, as they are called here. As soon as the summer begins and the Salons are closed, artists start thinking about the works to be exhibited next year.... In the autumn, that's when the real work begins. Then artists converge on Paris again, and painters and draftsmen can be found on every street corner. Their favourite places are the banks of the Seine and the Luxembourg Gardens. There, at any moment and at any time, you can find dozens of artists working. Even on the streets, in cafés and restaurants, no one is safe from their pencil.¹¹

Here we can see once again Šķilters' watercolours of the banks of the Seine, Luxembourg Gardens, as well as the "Garden of Versailles" (1904) filled with a wide variety of people. These gardens were also a favourite place for Parisians to walk and spend their free time as well as a source of inspiration for artists.

Šķilters describes not only how artists "take over" all of the city's most interesting places, but also how their thoughts are exchanged, which often takes place in the public space and is thus available for flâneur observation:

When the spring sun begins to warm and sweetly warm, and the russet buds bloom on the trees on the boulevards, then the whole part of the city is already excited. Colleagues and friends gather and go from one to another, give advice, criticize, judge... Sometimes even on the street and in cafés, there is a lively debate about art.

When the opening of the exhibitions is very close, another view can be seen on the streets again, of which Šķilters manages to conjure up the completely lively scene before his eyes, seemingly from the middle of this crowd but at the same time seeing everything from the side-lines without getting directly involved, although the sculptor himself has also participated in the Salon exhibitions¹²:

11 Šķilters, "Parīzes mākslas izstādes".

12 See also: Richard Wrigley, "Unreliable Witness: The Flâneur as Artist and Spectator of Art in Nineteenth-century Paris", *Oxford Art Journal*, 39 (2016).



FIG. 5. GUSTAVS ŠĶILTERS. GARDEN OF VERSAILLES. 1904. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER. 22 × 28 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (ŠĶMM/A-150).

Artists bring their creations in droves. Some bring huge groups of marble or bronze sculptures, monuments, or fountains in heavy goods carts, with five or six horses in a row, while others bring their works in a coach or their own proud automobile, or have them brought by others. But the vast majority of poor artists have their paintings under their arms or ask their friends for help, and then, each holding his own corner, drag the works to the exhibition. Some even rent small handcarts and, having loaded them, push them themselves using their own elbow grease to the 'Grande Palais'. Throughout the day, artists are seen bustling around the large palace like ants. With their large traditional hats, long hair, fluttering cravats and baggy velvet trousers, these artists look like characters from the previous century...¹³

13 Šķilters, "Parīzes mākslas izstādes".



FIG. 6. GUSTAVS ŠKILTERS (TOGETHER WITH XAVIER GOSÉ, DEMETRIOS GALANIS AND NIKOLAOS DRAGOUMIS). POSTCARD TO HIS FRIEND OLEGUER JUNYENT WITH A VIEW OF PARIS. 18/07/1902. OLEGUER JUNYENT STUDIO, BARCELONA.

Since Gustavs Šķilters had spent almost five years in Paris, his view, although not quite that of a native Parisian, a man who gets to know his own city better and better, nevertheless developed over a long period during which the metropolis was his residence and the city he walked every day. Šķilters, with the talent of an observer and writer, described the very different dimensions of the urban environment, the different types of people, including flâneurs, as a phenomenon of specific age and place. Living in this metropolis of art, he tirelessly familiarised himself with the urban environment of the time, analysing in the romanticised characteristic of the age the representative side of the city and its secrets. He was also a part of this metropolis himself, but both from what he wrote and from what he depicted in his watercolour paintings, it seems that Šķilters did not identify with the flâneurs, but distanced himself from them as they became the object of his interest.

As mentioned at the outset, Šķilters toured many European countries as well as North Africa, but the watercolours and descriptions that have survived from these trips do not talk about visits to large cities, rather about small towns, villages and natural

attractions, and therefore are not so relevant in the context of flâneurism. Of all the places in the cards sent to friends, Šķilters preferred boulevards full of people, including vagrants, cars on the streets next to horse-drawn carriages, the most architecturally impressive buildings and sights.

JĀZEPS GROSVALDS – A FLÂNEUR FROM HIS TEENAGE YEARS

If Gustavs Šķilters turned to literary practice at certain moments and developed his notes as completed texts, thought out to the smallest detail, then Jāzepe Grosvalds documented his life and reflections very regularly and exhaustively, but more in the form of notes. This can be read in his diaries, which he wrote almost every day for more than ten years, as well as in letters to family and friends. Jāzepe Grosvalds' writings are mainly brief, specific, notes based on his impressions of a specific moment, revealing much about the young artist's everyday life, things that particularly attracted his interest, aroused his emotions or simply seemed worth mentioning during his visits to various European cities, each of which differed in its own way from his native Riga.

The life experience of the founder of Latvian classical modernism, Jāzepe Grosvalds, was formed differently to that of Gustavs Šķilters and the majority of Latvian artists. Grosvalds was born in 1891 into the family of a wealthy lawyer and head of the Riga Latvian Society, Frīdrihs Grosvalds (1850–1924), so his opportunities to obtain a good education and to get to know the most important European cities were much wider. After graduating from the Riga City Gymnasium, Jāzepe Grosvalds went first to Munich, where he lived from 1909–1910, and later to Paris, where he stayed from 1910 to 1914, travelling a lot and in the same period of his life performing compulsory military service in the Tsarist army. Grosvalds' stay in Paris began more than five years after Šķilters had left, although some of their acquaintances and friends were the same and the city retained the status of an art metropolis.

Jāzepe Grosvalds corresponded to the then popular image of a dandy – a handsome young man who attached great importance to his personality, outward appearance, sophisticated style of dress



FIG. 7. JĀZEPS GROSVALDS IN PARIS. 1911. PHOTOGRAPH. 8.1 × 5.6 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-2226).

and various hobbies. At the same time, he was a very sensitive, emotionally unstable, inquisitive and knowledgeable young man searching for his own path. Grosvalds knew about the so-called first dandy Beau Brummell (1778–1840), was interested in the archetypal modern dandy, Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and the image of Dorian Gray he created. Having read a lot in general, Grosvalds consciously tried to create the identity of an elegant, inquisitive, free-thinking young man. A watercolour from 1906, when Grosvalds was only fifteen years old, “Bookshelf”, shows a fragment of his bookcase, on which a sheet with a portrait of Oscar Wilde is hung above the books, emphasising the aforementioned passion. As art historian Eduards Kļaviņš writes:

Jāzeps wanted to become not only a painter or a sophisticated illustrator, but an ‘artist of life’, who masterfully copes with all its problems, in fact actively creates life as a series of interesting, exciting experiences, events, and pleasures, following the heroes of the works of romantics and aesthetes of the turn of the century.¹⁴

When describing flâneurs, they are sometimes seemingly contrasted with dandies, the main argument being that the dandy likes to see for himself, as well as to be noticed, not be lost in the crowd, while the flâneur prefers to remain unnoticed, preferring to observe rather than be observed. The dandy focuses on his personal style and character, while the flâneur focuses on experiencing and observing urban reality; the former is interested in his own aesthetic self-expression, while the latter is motivated by the desire to explore deeply and analyse the city. Undoubtedly, these two types of people have much in common: elegance and style, which manifest themselves as care for the smallest details of clothing, as well as behaviour and the appreciation of beauty. Unifying elements are walking and exploring the city, and direct participation in its life. The characters of the flâneur and the dandy share intellectuality, the search for hedonistic pleasures, and curiosity, although these are experienced by each from a different perspective. The dandy enjoys the moment and the city from his particular position, without thinking of mingling with those who are not like himself, while the flâneur walks through

14 Eduards Kļaviņš, *Džo. Jāzeps Grosvalda dzīve un māksla* (Rīga: Neputns, 2006), 41.

the city, absorbing all it has to offer, without worrying about when, how, or why.¹⁵

In some cases, one individual can embody both the dandy and the flâneur – these seemingly different, but also close, personality types are based on the desire to wander, observe and evaluate. The artist Jāzepe Grosvalds is considered an excellent example of this fusion. Although at first glance he more closely corresponds to the image of the dandy, on delving into what Grosvalds wrote, experienced and depicted in sketches and works of art, he can undeniably also be considered a flâneur. Jāzepe Grosvalds' written material, as well as his sketchbooks, drawings, and even watercolour paintings, show he had the nature of an exceptionally subtle observer and connoisseur of cities. In this sense, he can be considered a Balzac type of flâneur¹⁶, distinguished by a character that reveals the most diverse secrets of the city and is rich in knowledge about it. He enjoyed long walks around the city, often without any specific goal, simply enjoying the atmosphere, the lively events on the streets and in cafés and parks. This was not at all in contradiction to loving society and its wide variety of entertainments such as cinema, theatre, opera, dancing and other activities, which his available financial means allowed him to enjoy. Jāzepe Grosvalds felt equally good both unnoticed, in the position of observer, and when noticed and discussed by others. His mood was fluctuating and heterogeneous, from great excitement to a noticeably depressive state (which quickly passed).

Given the fact that Grosvalds wrote his diary on a very regular basis from 1908 – i.e. the age of sixteen – it is possible to follow him relentlessly watching the world around him and learning from the environment he was in at a particular moment, and to see his fascination with various characters, styles and human habits. Grosvalds did not use the terms 'flâner' or 'flâneur', although the German word 'bummeln' (Eng. 'to walk') regularly appears in his vocabulary, both in texts written in German and in his own Latvianised version as 'bummelēt', 'bumelēt', 'pabummelēt', and also 'brummelēt' (possibly related to the dandy Brummel). The meaning of this word in Grosvalds' texts is similar to the French term 'flâneur'.

15 Robert Gottlieb, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960); Kenneth L. Gordon, *The Dandy: A History of the Dandy in the 19th Century* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997).

16 Parkhurst Ferguson, "The *Flâneur* on and off the Streets of Paris", 31–32.



FIG. 8. JĀZEPE GROSVALDS. WALK. 1909. WATERCOLOUR AND GOUACHE ON PAPER. 25.2 × 18.5 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-672).

Grosvalds uses phrases such as 'bum around', while words like 'wander', 'stroll', 'promenade', 'observation', 'wishless' are used, all of which are associated with the image of the flâneur and the flâneur's desire to walk the streets with no specific goal or task.

Jāzepe Grosvalds' diaries contain a large number of entries in which he talks about his walks, describing where he went, society, the feelings that have taken him over, the people he has observed and so on. The article will look at examples from different years and cities where Grosvalds' 'bummelled', linking them to the visual legacy that reveals his urban experience. In the case of Grosvalds, apart from Paris, St Petersburg, Munich, Berlin, London, Madrid and other large European cities also play an important role.

Briefly outlining Grosvalds' strolling as a teenager, we can see both his walks around his own city, Riga, and his regular family trips to St Petersburg, a city he knew well. For example, on 1 January 1908, the sixteen-year-old Jāzepe Grosvalds describes in his diary how he spent the first day of the year in St Petersburg, having a good rest and then wandering around the city without any aim, taking advantage of what it had to offer:

I slept a long time again in the morning. Otherwise, there's nothing special about the day. I went for a walk in the evening. I got into a 'box' and drove to the Alexander Garden. I went once around a little roundabout, then got on the tram to.... I ate two 's kapustoi' (Rus. 'with cabbage'). Then home with the horse tram.¹⁷

In April of the next year, Grosvalds talks about spring meandering alone in Riga while he was still studying at the Riga City Gymnasium: "... I didn't have friends then and was looking for companions for long walks, which I really enjoyed: I usually took a tram somewhere outside the centre and went for a walk alone around Sarkandaugava, by the Alexander Gate, in the Moscow suburb or rode on a Hagensberg steamer."¹⁸ These entries reveal Jāzepe Grosvalds' liking for wandering on his own, getting to know the city in more detail, which was intertwined with studying human types that was only

¹⁷ Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 01/01/1908. Latvian National Museum of Art, Jāzepe Grosvalds's Memorial Collection [henceforth JGM], JGM-1098, 6.

¹⁸ Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 04/1909. JGM-1099, 44.

to intensify in the following years, as he faced ever new challenges. The observations of his adolescence are revealed in the numerous caricature-like drawings from that time, in which he aptly depicts various members of society, including himself (for example, the ink drawings "Victims of Greed" (1907), "Our Culture Bearers" (1907), "Caricatured Self-Portrait" (1908), watercolour and gouache paintings as "Walk" (1909) and others).

In general, the local environment and society, everyday life in Riga and life in the summers in Jūrmala seemed too narrow and uninteresting to Grosvalds. He would have liked to have gone to the art metropolis of Paris immediately after graduating from school, but the family had decided that he should first go to Munich, where his older brother was already studying. When he arrived in new places and encountered the great metropolises of Europe, the style of Grosvalds' notes changed. They were still brief, momentary notes, but the perspective was more detailed and has expanded. He was surprised by the modern metropolis – for him it was something unexpected and unfamiliar. Arriving in Berlin on the way to Munich, the future artist wrote in his diary:

Then lights appeared, tall houses, streets, railway stations and finally Friedrichstrasse station.... Then we drove to the hotel (Excelsior), and I was completely bedazzled by the speed of the car and the crowds of people on the streets – at any moment I expected to crash into a lamppost or people, I only got used to that later.... Then we drove to Friedrichstrasse, walked through the hustle and bustle, ate in the Kaiser's Cellar, where everything was plentiful, drank coffee at Bauer's and strolled along Unter den Linden. Everything was full of chic ladies, elegant men, extravagant Americans, lots of cars, lights, etc., that I didn't understand yet, like someone possessed.¹⁹

Upon arriving, Grosvalds was surprised, even shocked, by the city's dynamic character, new technologies like the car, the ubiquitous electric lights, modern buildings, and crowds of people. It was unlike anything he had ever experienced before. He felt that it was a place of innovation and rapid change, a city full of unrest and all kinds of activity, including social change.

¹⁹ Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 03/10/1909. JGM-1100, 66.

Jāzepe Grosvalds returned to describing Berlin later, having stayed in the city more than once, each time getting to know and experience something new – the breath of the metropolis was very present, it never ceased to surprise him even after living in Paris for a long time:

After a good dinner, we went for a walk along the beautiful streets behind Potsdamerplatz.... A very strong impression of the metropolitan area, especially at Roland, where cars speed along shining streets from all directions: on the street, no person, no horse, just these big insects with flickering eyes, driven by some unknown force turning around the monument, and then shooting off again into the distance – the automation of the big city. I write this time in such detail about Berlin because I got a more powerful and greater impression this time. I really learned to respect its real big city character and the peculiar beauty and delicacy of its old parts.²⁰

Later in the diary, Grosvalds notes leisurely walks around Berlin, for example writing that “we bummed around Tanenzienstr”.²¹ In Berlin Grosvalds feels a kind of alienation: this city seems automatic to him, very urbanised, as if not human; it excites him, but at the same time it also scares him. As for visual art, from this period and from the experience of German metropolises, there are no works that reflect what he observed, only a few sketches of fashion outfits in letters to his brother. Grosvalds was always interested in fashion and liked to analyse the style of dress in different cities in order to follow the latest fashions.

In 1910, when Jāzepe Grosvalds lived and studied in Munich, he travelled to Venice, where, spending more than a month, he had a lot of time for walks, sitting in cafés and all kinds of entertainment. Grosvalds describes the beautiful and unusual city from various perspectives in his diary. Here he emphasised wandering the city's streets and squares, always looking for new places and impressions (“great mood and lovely walks”²², “in the afternoon with Marcel, we went for a walk through unfamiliar neighbourhoods along

20 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 25/10/1912. JGM-1107, 3–4.

21 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 27/08/1913. JGM-1108, 27.

22 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 29/04/1910. JGM-1102, 22.



FIG. 9. JĀZEPE GROSVALDS. VENICE. WATERFRONT OF SAN MARCO BAY 1910. OIL ON CARDBOARD. 31.5 × 37.5 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (GL-5893).

S. Sebastiano to Papadopoli garden”²³, “otherwise bumming around all day among crowds of people”²⁴, “I strolled along lesser-known and dirty streets to the Ghetto Vecchio, with American-like eight-storey buildings and old Shylocks”²⁵) that were complemented by nocturnal songs on the streets, visits to theatres, churches and museums, marvelling at St Mark's Cathedral, visiting the islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello, sketching and watercolour painting in various parts of the city, visually capturing his observations. His Venice travel sketches, watercolours and small format oil paintings (for example “Venice: The Grand Canal”, “Venice: Waterfront of San

23 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 21/04/1910. JGM-1102, 16.

24 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 24/04/1910. JGM-1102, 19.

25 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 11/04/1910. JGM-01102, 6.

Marco Bay", "Venice: Rosso Bridge" and others, all 1910) point to his talent as a skilled and attentive observer who saw the essential details. Of course as Grosvalds did not live in Venice it was a different kind of urban wandering experience, but there was enough time to get to know the city well and also to sense the fact that Venice, however, was not among the great metropolises of Europe.

JĀZEPS GROSVALDS' PARIS WALKS

In the autumn of 1910, Jāzepe Grosvalds finally arrived in the long-awaited centre of European art and modern life in Paris. He had already experienced much before and the Western world was not at all foreign to him, but Paris completely exceeded his expectations. Everything about it fascinated him – the bustling life, the wide streets, the interesting types of people, the wide range of theatres, operas, and cinemas, the city and suburban parks. At times, Grosvalds wanted to be part of the bustling crowd and wider society, but at other times it was better to get to know this city, its rhythm and its inhabitants better, alone or in a very small company. Grosvalds slowly got to know various districts of the city "... in the afternoon, having got lost on the metro, I ended up at the Arc de Triomphe – climbed up and got a great view of the rose-tinted Sacré Cour".²⁶ He spent time on long walks in all weathers – "the first big *Bummel* in fur."²⁷ While Grosvalds has not described other flâneurs directly, he has drawn attention to observers of life who capture the quotidian: "Sunday, 5. in the afternoon, children and young ladies are bustling in the Luxembourg, boats in full sail afloat on the basin and kindly old gentlemen sitting in chairs by the roadside watching everything."²⁸ Grosvalds left behind few cityscapes, most of which are dedicated to cafés, bars, theatres and other places of entertainment. Noteworthy is a city view with a bridge over the Seine, "View of Paris with the New Bridge" (1910–1914), which shows an impressive bridge (Pont Neuf), noble buildings on the embankment and fluttering flags. There is also a small drawing, "On the Bridge" (1910–1914), which is particularly interesting because it shows three women standing by the

26 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 10/11/1910. JGM-1103, 3.

27 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 21/11/1910. JGM-1103, 5.

28 Jāzepe Grosvalds' diary, 05/03/1911. JGM-1103, 22.



FIG. 10. JĀZEPE GROSVALDS. VIEW OF PARIS WITH THE NEW BRIDGE. 1910–1914. WATERCOLOUR AND GOUACHE ON PAPER. 18.4 × 24.2 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-545).



FIG. 11. JĀZEPE GROSVALDS. ON THE BRIDGE. 1910–1914. PENCIL ON PAPER. 27 × 18.1 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-659).

railings of the bridge, looking into the distance where the smoking chimneys of several factories can be seen, as well as the Eiffel Tower. In this drawing, Grosvalds – consciously or subconsciously – depicts the development of industry, as well as progress in construction, because the Eiffel Tower is built of wrought iron, which is a strong but relatively light material that allowed the creation of such a tall, slender structure which became a symbol of modernity, revealing the engineering achievements of the time.

As mentioned above, Grosvalds used various synonyms to refer to flâneurism, which was particularly present in his Paris life: “I strolled along the *Champs-Élysées* in the dark groves and found peace in observation and wishlessness, after having been tormented for some time by the usual adventure fever, which is the desire to be in every person and feel their feelings, to experience their adventures.”²⁹ In another case, he briefly notes, “in the evening, bummed around with Puriņš around Montparnasse and the Quartier Latin.”³⁰ In addition, upon arriving in Paris towards the end of the First World War, after a break of a couple of years as a much more adult and mature personality, Grosvalds’ desire to wander the streets of the city had not diminished:

*I looked up the old Quartier Vavin..., walked down the wonderful Luxembourg, which was even more beautiful than I thought – flowers, large palm trees in boxes; and then, above all, all manner of things in the distance, the Pantheon for example. Much has changed on the Boulmiche. Rue de la Harpe – still exists. Funny, when I was in the Rue Vavin, I went into an old bookshop where there was a brother and sister. And everything in the world is repeating itself; again, the same confusion and insecurity I had at 21, as if 5 years hadn’t gone by... How little a person changes.*³¹

Grosvalds’ desire to wander was assuaged by visits to cafés and bars, which are not lacking in Paris and which appear widely in the works of the Paris period – these are the fixations of specific moments and types of people in sketches, drawings, watercolours

29 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 13/04/1914. JGM-1110, 45.

30 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 15/04/1914. JGM-1110, 46.

31 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 3/10/1917. JGM-1117, 36–37.



FIG. 12. JĀZEPS GROSVALDS. CAFÉ CHEZ RIGOLLETS IN PARIS. 1912. WATERCOLOUR AND INK ON PAPER. 24.7 × 20 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-546).

and paintings. Here we see finely dressed people with glasses of champagne or cups of tea and waiters (“A Parisian Café” [1910–1914], “At Rumpelmeier’s” [1912], “Café Chez Rigollets in Paris” [1912], “Ladies at the Table” [1912–1913], “Ladies in a Restaurant” [1913–1914]). On other occasions he would depict much simpler people (“Paris



FIG. 13. JĀZEPS GROSVALDS. *MONTMARTRE*. 1910. TEMPERA ON PAPER. 35.2 × 31 CM. COLLECTION OF ANDRIS KĻAVIŅŠ.

Street Café" [1910–1914]) and women alone ("Paris Suburbs" [1914], "Parisians at Night" [1913–1914]), revealing different social strata of society. Noteworthy is the work "Montmartre" (1910), in which Grosvalds depicted a crowd consisting of a wide variety of people who had come to this centre of Parisian nightlife. Grosvalds observes a relentless interest in fashion, describing and portraying the various details, highlighting here a number of self-produced magazines,



FIG. 14. JĀZEPS GROSVALDS. *WOMAN, MAN AND A CAR*. 1910–1914. WATERCOLOUR AND PENCIL ON PAPER. 21.6 × 30 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-571).

such as *Parīzes Pastiljons* (Pastiljons of Paris, 1913), where the "What to Wear" section describes fashion trends ranging from suits, shoes and hats to shawls and head scarves, accompanying everything with relevant illustrations and repeatedly presenting Jāzeps Grosvalds as a combination of dandy and flâneur. In the same magazine we can also read one of the rare descriptions of cars, making it clear that in terms of number of cars and rapid urbanisation in general, Paris was lagging behind Berlin, retaining its older romanticism and calmer spirit: "While a roaring stream of cars moves slowly down the middle of the street, occasionally stopped by the policeman's white cane, and on the left side people in a hurry runs from Vendome square, on the right side a motley and carefree cosmopolitan crowd walks slowly, almost solemnly." Cars also appear in Grosvalds' art, but not as something aggressive or uncontrollable, rather as a peaceful testimony to modern life ("Woman, Man and a Car", "On the Streets of Paris" and others, 1910–1914).



FIG. 15. JĀZEPS GROSVALDS, HIS SISTER AND XAVIER GOSÉ IN PARIS. 1913. PHOTOGRAPH. 6 × 7.7 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-2230).

Living in Paris, Jāzepe Grosvalds, both alone and with acquaintances, routinely drove out of town, much as his predecessor Gustavs Šķilters had done, to enjoy a slightly different, more relaxed environment walking, reading, drinking tea and people-watching at the same time. A favourite destination for short trips was Versailles, “in the morning by myself to Versailles, where I didn’t go into museums, but walked around parks where there was still some greenery”³², “a pleasant and peaceful day, walked without a coat in the warm sun, read, and just lazed around.... I walked along long quiet streets that resemble Aix-en-Provence and Venice, without water.”³³ Another favourite of the artist was the *Bois de Boulogne*, in which, despite the large masses of people, one could have a great time, watching the dynamic everyday, sketching, drawing inspiration for new subjects:

32 Jāzepe Grosvalds’ diary, 13/11/1910. JGM-1103, 4.

33 Jāzepe Grosvalds’ diary, 05/02/1913. JGM-1107, 27.

*In the afternoon we went to the Bois: everything quite green, full of terrible dust and populo [people], riding, walking and driving along all the roads. We went to Pre Catelan and sat there with tea and lovely music, among indescribable hats and heads, for about two hours. Then slowly back home, in a delicate evening light through the green dream and along the petit lac [little lake], where boats rocked around each other and children with pretty little hats and white legs stand at the edges.*³⁴

JĀZEPE GROSVALDS IN OTHER LARGE EUROPEAN CITIES

Another European city that Grosvalds visited quite often and which he got to know well by wandering its streets was London. This city surprised and inspired him, it had a different atmosphere, which he immediately perceived with his aesthetic sensitivity:

*With the Underground to Knights Bridge, from where we wanted to go to Hyde Park, but we got lost and walked a bit along Philimore Str. or something like that – paradisiacal small single-family houses, with white windows and pretty gardens. I had rarely experienced such impressions as in these first days in London.... I had thought I would find a grey and gloomy working city – and now such a proud, big, river, huge houses, gardens, sun – everything was different from what one could have imagined.*³⁵

A couple of years later, he described walks around other places in London and the impressions he gained there, including the ranges of colours observed:

*The second day was Sunday – we only got to eat after a long search. We walked along the Thames and gardens to Hyde Park: the vast granite quays with their sharp blue shapes across the river, the huge hotels along the edge, the excellent Buckingham and Waterloo Terrace perspectives, the Hyde Park style and the little Gainsborough princesses on huge hunters, the horse-guards on full parade at White Hall, black brick houses with clean white windows and columns.*³⁶

34 Jāzepe Grosvalds’ diary, 15/04/1911. JGM-1103, 34.

35 Jāzepe Grosvalds’ diary, 08/05/1911. JGM-1103, 42–43.

36 Jāzepe Grosvalds’ diary, 04/01/1914. JGM-1110, 16.



FIG. 16. JĀZEPS GROSVALDS. *PRAGUE*. 1914. GOUACHE AND PENCIL ON PAPER. 31.2 × 24.2 CM. LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART (JGM-498).

As in Paris, in London, Grosvalds found himself again in the final stages of the First World War and, while walking around the city in November 1917, entrusted his diary with new observations: “In the morning to the British Museum, which has been closed for a long time. Then to Westminster – service with beautiful music inside St Margaret’s. In the afternoon I strolled along the foggy Thames and on the fantastic Tower Bridge with great elevators and dark red

ambari.”³⁷ One might think that these remarks could be attributed to any tourist in the city, but Grosvalds’ natural interest in detail, in subtle observation and understanding, also led him to get to know London much more deeply, to understand its character, its similarities and differences from other modern European cities. Interestingly, London at this time was more than three times the size of Berlin and Paris in terms of population, but here Grosvalds is not talking about rapid urbanisation, raging cars, bright lights everywhere and other features of other metropolises.

Grosvalds had also visited other European capitals and important cities – Madrid, Brussels, Prague, Geneva and others –, but these were brief trips, only for a couple of days, so walking around these cities cannot be seen in a purely flâneurist context, which speaks of many long strolls around the same city, becoming familiar with it to the tiniest detail. This does not detract from the fact that Grosvalds’ descriptions of visits to these places are brilliant, exhaustive, and that he called these walks “sauntering”, “bummeling” and so on, emphasising their leisurely, non-purpose-conscious nature, allowing himself, with a calm spirit and even in limiting weather, to explore and experience these places, to understand the unique nature of each. After ending up in the Spanish capital Madrid, for example, Grosvalds writes: “I went alone to Salón Madrid and then walked along the small streets exploring. I found something great: Chocolatería (!) Paraíso, Calle Etchegaray, where five costumed women sit on the stage and dance real, authentic dances, especially one of them in a man’s costume.”³⁸ A couple of days later the walking impressions continue:

*In the evening I wandered the streets, did what I had to, and observed strange scenes. For example, not far from here, on a street corner, three concierge families were sitting. While two very young girls – five or six years old – were dancing real dances, with hand movements and swaying hips, like courtesans, the older ones were clapping and singing a familiar dance tune.*³⁹

37 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 11/11/1917. JGM-1118, 8–9.

38 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 10/09/1913. JGM-1109, 11.

39 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 12/09/1913. JGM-1109, 13.

About Lausanne he mentions “bummeling in the evening”;⁴⁰ similarly, in Geneva, he noted that they “was a little hungover. Museum closed, bumming around. Rain”⁴¹, Grosvalds described the visit to Lunel as follows: “Bumbled around the small town, typical south, white and yellow houses, acacia avenues, dust and a massively strong mistral.”⁴² Walking around Arles he observed a splendid market and its surrounding scene:

*In the morning there was a big market on the Boulevard des Lices: little old wives in Arles costume selling olives, figs and pomegranates from huge pots. An old man, with a fantastic oriental turban, uses small ‘tongs’ to puts sweets and bon-bons into bags. On sale were fine light blue trousers and the most peculiar hats.... In the afternoon, tables – a large number – are put out on the Place du Forum because it’s market day and there are many people. Once again, on every corner you see, now in larger numbers, familiar groups of old men, walking sticks in hand, talking politics – reminiscent of the Romans in the forum.*⁴³

CHANGE OF HABITS INFLUENCED BY HISTORICAL EVENTS

A significant and even decisive turning point in the life and personal development of Jāzeps Grosvalds was the beginning of the First World War, which completely changed his everyday life – if until then he had the opportunity to improve, live without financial and other problems, get an education in the metropolises of Western Europe and enjoy everything they had to offer, then the change in the political situation interrupted this and introduced a new stage in the artist’s path. Between 1914 and the end of his short life in early 1920, only a few entries mentioning “bummeling” can be found in the diary – in complete contrast to the previous carefree years. Jāzeps Grosvalds himself becomes a Latvian rifleman, participates in hostilities and performs administrative duties, but in 1918 ends up in the British army on a reconnaissance trip through Persia. Life has changed

40 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 3/08/1911. JGM-1103, 68.

41 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 21/08/1911. JGM-1103, 79.

42 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 01/10/1911. JGM-1104, 32.

43 Jāzeps Grosvalds’ diary, 30/09/1911. JGM-1104, 30–31.

drastically, although artistically these are very productive years that lead to maturity and the most significant series in the development of his art – Refugees, Riflemen and the East. As a person, Grosvalds has changed and no longer really fits the image of either the flâneur or dandy. Gustavs Šķilters, on the other hand, returned from Paris in 1905 and lived and worked as a teacher in St Petersburg. In 1923 he returned to his homeland, where he continued both his artistic practice (largely following the principles he had learned in Paris), his teaching work, and writing reviews of art exhibitions. His connection with flâneurism can be attributed to the years he lived in Paris, when he had the opportunity to observe this phenomenon in the place where it had originated and when he had the opportunity to pursue a more carefree lifestyle.

CONCLUSIONS

The written and visual heritage left by both artists allows them to be associated with the concept of flâneurism, as both were drawn to long, leisurely walks through cities, observing the surrounding modern life and the relationships between the individual and the city, analysing and recording what they saw, evaluating society and commenting on social phenomena. The attitude of Gustavs Šķilters and Jāzeps Grosvalds towards the modern city, their ways of expression and the vocabulary they used are different. In his texts Šķilters tends to romanticise what he observes, conjuring up living scenes before the reader’s eyes. His personality is similar to Baudelaire’s flâneur, dreamily wandering around the city and enjoying it, which is not surprising because Šķilters wrote poetry in parallel with his practice as a sculptor and watercolourist. However, Šķilters seeks to distance himself from the image of the flâneur. For him it is an interesting object of observation, a characteristic Parisian phenomenon inseparable from the city, although he does not feel the city as his soulmate. Šķilters’ watercolours from the Paris period tend to depict the splendour of parks, the peace of the embankment and people at rest, although these pictures also include the urban reality that characterises the character of the city at the very beginning of the 20th century – a dynamic train, plumes of smoke, cargo boats.

Jāzeps Grosvalds, on the other hand, genuinely embodies the image of the flâneur, despite his dandyism, which manifested itself

most vividly in the early years. In his utterances he is more laconic, his remarks are the fixations of a moment's reflection, more direct and written with greater lightness. This is partly due to the fact that they are notes to himself (although very informative and display broad knowledge) in a diary or in letters or articles not intended for publication. His character, however, was much more dynamic and rapid, more fluid. He adapted more quickly to a new reality, shaped his relationship with the environment where he ended up, tirelessly getting to know and analysing it. Grosvalds is more of a Walter Benjamin-type flâneur, striving in both his notes and his art to offer insights into the essence of modernity, into the experience of the urban environment, not as a passive observer but as an active participant and interpreter of the urban landscape. In Grosvalds' art, which gradually develops and leads him to the title of the founder of Latvian modernism, becoming one of its most significant representatives, there is much more frequent use of images of people in the urban environment. He also relies on his ability to perceive the most essential in every situation he experiences.

Gustavs Šķilters' and Jāzeps Grosvalds' time in Paris is separated by a very short period of time – five years. In essence they roam the same places, drink coffee or wine in the same cafés, watch the same people, even one of their closest friends during their Paris period is the same person, the Spanish artist Xavier Gosé (1876–1915). Regardless of this, the experience, perception, sense of modernity and depiction of both are completely different – both in their art and textual legacies. Gustavs Šķilters and Jāzeps Grosvalds fit into the general picture of observers and describers of modern cities of the early 20th century and can be analysed in the context of flâneurism, which was the main goal of this article. Since this is the first study to analyse Latvian artists from this perspective, its research should undoubtedly be continued, including not only the two artists considered here, but also other artists and their visual and literary legacies.

IEVA KALNAČA: LATVIAN ARTISTS AND FLÂNEURISM IN EUROPE IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: THE EXAMPLE OF GUSTAVS ŠĶILTERS AND JĀZEPS GROSVALDS

KEYWORDS: FLÂNEURISM; EUROPEAN METROPOLISES; GUSTAVS ŠĶILTERS; JĀZEPS GROSVALDS; MODERNISM

SUMMARY

The article focuses on two Latvian artists who can be associated in different ways with the notion of flâneurism at the beginning of the 20th century – Gustavs Šķilters and Jāzeps Grosvalds. The two artists, in parallel with the visual heritage they created, also left written testimonies of their experiences while staying in various European metropolises, among which Paris was of a special importance, as both resided there for a considerable amount of time. It is important to examine these artists' first-hand experiences based on written sources as well as visual art testimonies that allow us to track their journeys and habits in large modern cities. Latvian culture and art history have not so far examined the visual and written heritage left by the two artists in the context of flâneurism, so it is particularly important to look at their observations of the great cities of Europe. The written and visual heritage left by both artists allows us to associate them with the concept of flâneurism, as both were drawn to long, leisurely walks through cities, observing the surrounding modern life and the relationships between the individual and the city, analysing and recording them, evaluating society and commenting on social phenomena. The attitude of Gustavs Šķilters and Jāzeps Grosvalds towards the modern city, the way of expression and the vocabulary they used are different. In his texts Šķilters tends to romanticise what is observed, conjuring up living scenes before the reader's eyes. He also seeks to distance himself from the image of the flâneur; for him the flâneur is an interesting object of observation, a characteristic, inseparable phenomenon of Paris. Jāzeps Grosvalds, on the other hand, genuinely embodies the image of the flâneur, despite his dandyism, which manifested itself most vividly in the early years. In Grosvalds' art, which gradually develops and leads him to the title of the founder of Latvian modernism, becoming one of its most significant representatives, there is much more frequent use of the images of people in the urban environment, and he proves

his ability to perceive the essential in every situation he experiences. Gustavs Šķilters and Jāzeps Grosvalds fit into the general pattern of observers and describers of modern cities in the early 20th century and can be analysed in the context of flâneurism, which is the main goal of this article. Since this is the first study to deal with Latvian artists from this perspective, its research should undoubtedly be continued, including not only the two artists considered here, but also other artists and their visual and literary legacies.

CV

Ieva Kalnača (Mg. Artis) is an art historian working at the Latvian National Museum of Art as the Head of the Project Management Department, and at the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art at the University of Latvia as an assistant manager in the “Walking Through Time: Flânerie and Modernity in Latvian Interwar Culture” project. One of her primary fields of interest is connected to the Latvian artists of the first decades of the 20th century, especially the founder of Latvian modernism, Jāzeps Grosvalds, with whose oeuvre she has worked both in curating exhibitions (*Spanish Charm: Latvian and Spanish Artists’ Contacts in Paris and Travels to Spain in the Early 20th Century* [2024, LNMA], the artist’s retrospective, titled *I Am Now Committed to Living for Art* [2023–2024, LNMA], etc.) and participating in scholarly conferences and publishing articles. Her research interests are also related to Orientalism in the visual arts and Islamic art and architecture, especially the influence of that style and its neo-style on Latvian and Baltic architecture and interior design.