

# Bolette & Marie





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# Introduction

Text: Cecilie Øien, Director Preus Museum

Preus Museum is Norway's National Museum of Photography. The museum has an internationally renowned collection that includes photography, books and a technical collection demonstrating the development from the camera obscura in the 18th century to today's digital cameras. New acquisitions embrace photojournalism, documentary, art and objects that expand the collection along the lines of diversity, sustainability and added other themes that were lacking when the museum was established in 1995.

The 440 glass negatives and other materials from Berg & Høeg is an example of the richness of the museum's collections. In the 1970s, some of the negatives from their estate came up for auction and were purchased by collector Leif Preus. Among the boxes containing glass negatives of landscapes and reproductions of artworks, two boxes marked *Private* were found. The Norwegian State later bought his large collection of among other things Norwegian and international photography to establish the museum as we know it today. In 2022 another box of negatives from Berg and Høeg turned up unintentionally in a newly acquired collection the museum was registering.

Preus Museum exhibited the pictures of Berg & Høeg for the first time in 1996. Since then, an increasing number of people have been

fascinated and delighted by these images. These photographs have been used in many exhibitions over the years, so why continue showing them? Our mission as a museum is to persistently make our collections relevant to new audiences and changing times. We are preoccupied with explaining the history of photography through collections of photographs, life and times of photographers, and not least through technology and equipment.

The reading of Bolette and Marie's biographies and life together belongs within the context of women's and queer history, as well as local and national history. Moreover, through their careers in photography, publishing, and politics they were very much part of broader, international developments.

The role of museums today is not only to repeat what is already known. Rather, we would like to engage audiences through participation and activating collections in innovative ways.

As our work continues to reveal more photographs and archivalia to contextualise the collection of Berg & Høeg, we would like to give an international audience a broader context to understanding these images. This catalogue is a comprehensive companion to the photographs that the museum presents online and in exhibitions.

*Interior of Berg & Høeg's photographic studio with their dog Tuss, around 1898.*

# Bolette and Marie: Daughters of Their Time

Text: Kristin Aasbø, Collections Manager Preus Museum

Sparks must have been flying when the photographers Marie Høeg and Bolette Berg met in the early 1890s. The two became kindred spirits who would stand by each other through thick and thin for the next fifty years, sharing struggles and victories in the name of women's liberation, as well as running successful businesses focusing on photography and art. They were different in temperament - Marie outgoing and fearless, Bolette discreet and artistic - together an unbeatable duo who, through their partnership, showcased female entrepreneurship and solidarity with marginalised groups.

Bolette and Marie can be said to represent the emergence of modernity in Norway, with liberation projects in many areas. Industrialisation was in full swing, and steam engines made it easier and more efficient to travel, both on land and sea. The photographic medium freed art from naturalistic representation, and science shed light on questions that had previously been answered by the church. It was a time when truths and established authorities were questioned, workers embraced socialist ideas for a more just working life and established power structures were challenged.

Importantly, it was a time of female awakening, women desired liberation from fathers, husbands, and childbirth, and sought the opportunity to acquire knowledge on par with men. Particularly within the bourgeoisie, women were relegated to an existence where fathers and husbands had control over their lives. Marriage was considered an economic alliance, but along with the romantic currents of the time followed a demand that love should also have significance in life. Camilla Collett's novel *Amtmandens døtre* ("The

District Governor Daughters") from 1854-55 precisely addressed the tragic aspect of loveless alliances and became a symbol of women's struggle for independent opportunities. Collett's significance for Bolette and Marie is confirmed by the fact that her portrait was displayed in their shared home, alongside other prominent free thinkers such as Ibsen, and Bjørnson, as well as pictures of their own family. In Marie Høeg's year of birth, 1866, all widows, divorced and unmarried women over 21 could obtain a trade license, granting them the right to engage in trade and crafts on equal terms with men, while it was not until 1894 that this right extended to married women as well.

Against this background, we can conclude that Bolette and Marie were two women who, both through political activism and their business practices, demonstrated that women CAN. They ran a photography studio and later an art publishing house. Marie formed associations that addressed women's political issues and participated in the public debate both from the podium and in newspapers. Both women worked to combat tuberculosis and promote peace, as well as advocating for women's paid participation in society. They were part of the first major wave of advocates for gender equality in Norway during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century. Some of these women are featured in school textbooks, such as Aasta Hansteen, Fredrikke Marie Qvam, Gina Krog, and Katti Anker Møller. Several other women in this liberation struggle are only known to those who are particularly interested in this side part of history.

Among these more peripheral women, we also find Marie Høeg and Bolette Berg, alt-



Marie Karoline Ludvikke Høeg with unknown cat, about 1893.

though Berg & Høgh Kunstforlag is known among postcard collectors, and their work *Norske Kvinder* ("Norwegian Women"), published in 1914, is still considered a reference work. The Horten Social Discussion Society, founded by Marie in 1896, was one of the first discussion societies for women established in Norway, and the only one that still exists to this day. However, it is the approximately 60 negatives in boxes labeled *Private* left behind by the two women that have given Bolette and Marie a new, seemingly eternal life. These images, taken while the two were in their twenties and working as photographers, depict their playful antics in front of the camera with friends and siblings. Over the past decade, they have brought Berg & Høeg international fame. Freedom-seeking individuals love these lively motifs; they have become symbols of liberation projects of all kinds, whether it be the fight for women's rights, homosexual love, or non-binary identity affiliations.

### Marie

Marie Karoline Ludvikke Høeg was born on April 15, 1866, in Langesund, a small coastal town south of Oslo. Her father was a fisherman and freighter, while her mother took care of the household. Marie had two older brothers, Peter and Ludvig, and a younger brother named Karl. Growing up by the sea was fitting for an open and curious mind; the impressions from everyone who passed through the harbour laid the foundation for a longing for the wider world. In available sources, Marie is described as having a strong personality. Being the only girl with three brothers, she could easily have imagined that she would have the same opportunities in life as boys. Furthermore, there were free-thinking individuals in Marie's vicinity during her

upbringing – the author Karen Sundt lived in the town, known as Norway's first female newspaper editor. She wrote about gender equality and belonged to the radical left. Additionally, the Skougaard family lived in Marie's neighbourhood. A famous opera singer of the time, Lorentz Severin Skougaard, with the artist's name *Severini*, lived in a fairly open homosexual relationship with his friend Alfred Corning Clark when he visited his hometown every summer. Although Karen Sundt left the town in the 1870s, and Severini died in 1885, Marie likely expanded her horizons through her acquaintance with them.

The photographer in Langesund, Ludvig Bodnar, came from Hungary and was a typical representative of the early photographers who travelled from place to place for work, often across borders. We do not know much about his history, but he is said to have stayed in Helsingborg, Sweden before he came to Norway. He opened a studio in Langesund and later in the neighbouring town of Brevik, just across the fjord, in the 1870s. At the time, he was married to a Norwegian woman and had a stepdaughter who was a couple of years younger than Marie. Perhaps Marie became friends with her and frequented their home? Photography was something new and exciting at the time, which likely would have fascinated Marie. It is easy to imagine her excitement at seeing lifelike images gradually emerge in the developing solution. The 1885 census shows that the 19-year-old Marie lived with her two older brothers in Brevik. She is listed as a shop assistant, most likely in Bodnar's studio. *Fotografistinde*, the term for female photographers at the time, was an acceptable profession for respectable young ladies, making it a good fit for Marie, given her middle-class background.



Marie and Vera Morin, Finland about 1888.

### The Time in Finland

Bodnar was still a wandering soul. We can find notes in newspapers referring to beautiful landscape photographs by him on the island of Åland, Finland, in the latter part of the 1880s. In the summer of 1888, the newspaper *Åbo Tidning* reports that photographer Bodnar arrived in Åbo on the boat *Torneå*. On the passenger list, we also find a certain Ms. Høeg, presumably Marie. Later that autumn, she advertised her photographic services in Ekenäs, a small town with approximately 2000 inhabitants located in the Swedish-speaking part of southwest Finland. One possible reason for Marie establishing herself in Ekenäs could be her friendship with Vera Morin. There exists a photographic negative showing Marie and Vera together, where they appear to be very close friends. Vera Morin came from Åland, and we can imagine Marie getting to know her there that summer. Vera was a final-year student at the Ekenäs Seminar for Female Teachers, and the environment there facilitated many friendships among young women. The women's rights movement was growing strongly in Finland at the time, and several teachers at the seminar were advocates for women's suffrage. Everything indicates that this was an environment that suited the freedom-loving Marie very well. Additionally, the town was a good place to start a photography business since there were no other photographers there at the time, a fact that Vera likely knew.

In the newspaper *Vestra Nyland*, there are several advertisements placed by Marie to promote her photographic services. In addition to the classic portrait photographs of the time, she also took many landscape

pictures. For present-day Ekenäs, these are valuable images as they represent the first photographic depictions of the town and its surroundings. In addition to the studio in Ekenäs, Marie also opened another studio in Hanko, a popular seaside resort for the Finnish bourgeoisie of that era. There were thirty kilometres between the two towns, and the journey had to be made by horse and carriage, likely taking an entire day. Marie stayed in Hanko during the summers of 1893 and 1894.

It is believed that it was there, in Southern Finland, that Marie and Bolette met, probably sometime in the early 1890s. In July 1892, Marie Høeg advertised in the newspaper that she was running photography courses for amateurs. Did Bolette come to Finland to be taught by Marie? In July 1892, there is a small notice in the daily newspaper *Dagbladet* that states that Miss Bolette Berg had received a grant of 200 Norwegian Kroner to become a photographer. Did perhaps the two meet elsewhere since Marie also advertised that she was going to further her education abroad? Or could the two have known each other from before? We have yet to find sources that confirm any of these speculations.

In several of Marie's landscape photographs from her time in Finland, there is a woman discreetly placed in the motif. This was a quite typical formal choice of the time where the human figure served as a kind of scale to the landscape. Upon closer study, we see that the woman is Bolette - can we interpret this as a small declaration of love?

There exists a glass negative showing a house, with the inscription on the envelope

Marie with her mother  
Nielsine and her younger  
brother Karl, about 1895.







*View of Ekenäs, about 1894. Bolette Berg in the rowboat in the middle of the picture.*





*Bolette Kathinka Theresia Berg with the dog Tuss, about 1895.*

stating: *Berg & Høeg's first photo studio in Finland*. In this picture, we also see a female figure which most likely is Bolette.

Regardless of where and how the two met, from that point, they were Berg & Høeg. Marie changed the spelling of her name several times, from Hoëgh to Høeg to Høgh, in line with the modernisation of Norwegian spelling. The Berg name is consistently placed first in all business contexts. From then on, the two names will forever be linked together, in equilibrium.

### **Bolette**

Bolette Kathinka Theresia Berg was born in 1872 as the youngest of six sisters. Originally, there were two more children in the family, but they died as infants only a month apart, probably from tuberculosis. When Bolette was born, her father Johan Henrik Berg was a resident chaplain in Nannestad, a small place north of the capital Kristiania, which later became Oslo. He died in 1876 when Bolette was only four years old. Most likely, her mother and the children had to quickly move from the rectory. Bolette's mother Elisabeth Christine, née Lie, came from a wealthy family in Hadeland.

With six daughters to support, she was granted an annual allowance from the Parliament earmarked for widows of clergymen, that was valid until the youngest child turned 18. The 1885 census shows that the mother and all her daughters lived in Kristiania, and Bolette grew up as a city girl in an environment dominated by strong women. Three of Bolette's sisters, Petra, Johanne, and Ingeborg, trained as teachers, which was a very respectable profession for women of good families. Her oldest sister Anna managed the household

and took care of their mother, while Gina was a seamstress. Only one of the six, Johanne, chose to marry, and she continued to work as a teacher even after having children. These independent, strong women were role models for little sister Bolette, who also chose to live life her way, despite a more reserved nature. She was interested in art and literature, and at the age of 20, she decided to become a photographer, a rather different direction than the other five siblings had chosen.

### **Bolette and Marie – The Horten Era**

In May 1895, Bolette and Marie opened a studio in Horten, a lively naval town about 100 kilometres south of Oslo. Why did they leave Finland, and why did they choose Horten?

We do not know for certain, however, the competition between photographers had become hard in Ekenäs, where photographer Frankel had started his business in the summer of 1894. In August that year, he purchased all of Marie's photographic equipment. Marie also sold her photo studio in Hanko to Lisa Moberg. In a newspaper notice, Marie bid farewell and recommended her successor Moberg, who also took over all her photographic negatives, both from Ekenäs and Hanko.

Both Marie and Bolette appear to have been family-oriented. Deciding to move is a life-changing event and the choice of where to settle down will often be based on where one has family, friends, and contacts. Horten was conveniently located roughly midway between Langesund and Kristiania where their relatives lived, and steamboats were running in both directions. At this time, two of Bolette's sisters worked in Larvik and Sandefjord, two other coastal towns south of Horten. In Lar-

*Bolette and her five sisters, about 1895. In the back, from left: Johanne, Bolette, Anna and Georgina. In front, from left Ingeborg and Petra.*

vik, Petra Berg lived in the same household as the teacher Trine Ulriksen. The latter came from Holmestrand, Horten's neighbouring town, where the photographer Louise Wold had just established her photographic studio. Wold is said to have received her photographic training in Larvik before opening a studio in Horten. When she moved her business to Holmestrand, it was precisely her studio that Berg & Høeg took over in Horten. There had probably been some communication between them in this matter, although we have not been able to confirm this.

When Berg & Høeg's Photographic Studio was established in Torvgata 9 in May 1895, there was only one other photographer in the lively, yet conservative coastal town. Horten at the time had a population of around 8,000 and was considerably larger than Ekenäs where Marie had lived for six years. The town accommodated a large shipbuilding yard with almost 1000 workers, and the headquarters for the Norwegian Navy was situated here as well as the Naval Military College. The steady flux of recruits constituted a part of the photographers' customer base.

Marie became a prominent figure in Horten. She had a passionate commitment to the ongoing women's liberation movement. In Horten, she founded several associations, the first as early as March 1896. It was called Horten Selskabelige Diskussionsforæning, (Horten Social Discussion Society) and was a meeting place for women. Here, they could practice speaking in public and express their opinions on various contemporary topics behind closed doors. Marie was the association's first leader, and it was here that she and Bolette forged strong friendships with other independent women from the town. The most important political issue for Marie was universal suffrage. Landskvinnestemeforeningen (The National Women's suffrage Association), was founded in 1898 and Marie immediately established a Horten branch, which she led for many years. Such branches were eventually formed all over the country as a counterbalance to the centralised control that many women's associations had been characterised by until then.

Furthermore, Marie was a member of the Horten branch of Norske kvinners sanitetsforening (NKS)(The Norwegian Women's Public Health Association), a nationwide organisation that was established by Norsk kvinnesaksforening (The Norwegian Association for Women's Rights). Particularly, this association's work in hygiene appealed to Marie.

She and Bolette were deeply affected by the ravages of tuberculosis in the population, and Marie argued that NKS should make the fight against this contagious disease their new, important cause. Impatiently waiting for the main organisation's decision on whether to make this fight their future cause, Marie founded the Horten Tuberkuloseforening (Horten Tuberculosis Association) in 1903.

Bolette also participated in association activities but in a far more withdrawn manner. She did not give speeches or write in the newspaper; it was not her style. However, she is mentioned in connection with events, and we find that she wrote lyrical poems that were reproduced in *Kvindsjå* ("Woman's Gaze"), the Discussion Society's membership magazine.

Marie is described as a whirlwind. She was active and controversial, smoked cigarettes, wore her hair short and did not wear a hat. It was said that she turned the sleepy small-town upside down with all her ideas. There were probably some who did not find her charming, especially some men who were afraid of losing control over their wives and daughters. There were also murmurs internally in the associations. Marie may have acted too strongly, may have been too stubborn, may have had too many ideas, and some were irritated by her energy and impatience. In the archives of some of the organisations she participated in, we can read about heated discussions where Marie was central, and we find hints that her leadership style was provocative to some. We also know that Bolette defended her; this is especially evident in a sweet little poem she wrote about how few there are who are brave enough to venture into the storm and stand tall, no matter how hard the wind blows, and that whoever dares to take on this task must be respected for their courage.

During the nearly ten years that Berg & Høeg Photographic Studio operated in Horten, they offered their customers standard photographic portraits in cartes de visite and cabinet sizes, as well as enlargements. When the doors closed, they sometimes would use the studio themselves and take playful pictures, mostly of Marie, but also of siblings and friends. The resulting glass plates are among the ones that were found in the boxes marked *Private* many years later. Bolette and Marie also travelled around the local area and photographed landscape views. Some of these landscape images were later produced as postcards, a product that was becoming increasingly popular at the time and was to





Interior of Bolette and Marie's private home, with the dog Tuss, about 1894.





become an important element in their future business.

### **Bolette and Marie - Berg & Høgh Art-Publishing House**

Bolette and Marie's time in Horten, where they took many of the photographs included in this catalogue, was coming to an end. Several of their close friends from the Discussion Society and elsewhere had moved to the capital Kristiania. Four of Bolette's sisters already lived there as well as Marie's brother Peter. If the two wished to advance professionally, the time was right for moving to the capital; Bolette was 31 years old, Marie 37.

In November 1903, they bid farewell to Horten. The studio was taken over by photographer Lind, and a grand farewell party was held in the Discussion Society, where they were both carried on golden chairs as a token of appreciation for all they had done for women's advancement in the town.

Bolette and Marie moved into the house where several of Bolette's sisters lived, and immediately started Berg & Høgh Art-Publishing House in Kirkegaden 11. Their speciality would be printed artworks and postcards, the latter still growing in popularity all over the country. They had already had a small production of postcards in Horten and realised that this was an expanding industry with good opportunities for success. They signed contracts with contemporary illustrators and artists for seasonal greeting cards in addition to selling typical postcards of landscapes they had photographed themselves.

We can follow the activity of their publishing house in newspaper columns from that time. Already in May 1904, they advertised that Berg & Høgh Art-Publishing House was the sole agent for The Art Society in London, and they offered all types of prospect postcards, including wholesale. In 1907, the company was converted into a limited company under the name Berg & Høgh Art-Publishing House. Marie had by then modernised the spelling of her surname, yet again. It was clear they succeeded with their business idea as they soon had to move to larger premises; first to Stortingsgaden 6b, and then to Rådhusgaten 11 where they occupied the entire third floor.

Marie continued to be active in the women's movement and she became the leader of the Oslo branch of the earlier-mentioned Landskvinnestemeforeningen (National Women's Suffrage Association). She stayed as leader

until 1913 when the battle for universal suffrage was won. She continued writing opinion pieces on different women's causes after this, as well as matters related to publishing. Marie Høgh was never afraid to speak her mind.

Berg & Høgh Art Publishing House also released children's books and art books, and most notably, they published the two-volume work *Norske Kvinder* ("Norwegian Women") in 1914, with journalist and activist Fredrikke Mørck as editor. The occasion was the centenary celebration of the 1814 Constitution, and the goal was to illustrate how women had entered most areas of professional and public life, with universal suffrage achieved in 1913 as the ultimate victory. To mark the fact that in 1925, it had been 100 years since the first emigration from Norway to America, a third supplementary volume was published, especially dedicated to Norwegian-American women. The three volumes altogether consisted of nearly 1000 pages and were a formidable undertaking for the publishing house, both financially and in terms of work. *Norske Kvinder* remains a reference work on the position of women in the early 20th century, thus fulfilling the ambitions of the publishers and the editor.

Bolette Berg and Marie Høgh were industrious businesswomen. They showcased their products at exhibitions, published books in the two Norwegian official languages, Nynorsk and Bokmål. Also, the two were creative in their marketing, as when they established a subscription service for their publications of graphic art. In an interview, Bolette lamented the lack of interest in good, Norwegian art and saw it as the task of their publishing house to change this. During the forty years that their company existed, the two publishers actively contributed to a qualitative dissemination of Norwegian art and artists.

In the 1920s, Bolette and Marie bought a farm north of Oslo, in the area where Bolette's mother came from. Always enterprising, they built a modern house on the land and planted a big garden, and they even started to breed rabbits. Towards the end of their lives, they alternated between living there and in Oslo, and it was on the farm that Bolette suddenly died in 1944. Marie spent her last years in Oslo and died in 1949, almost 83 years old.

After spending fifty years together, the two were separated by death. Bolette rests with her parents and sisters, while Marie's grave is unknown.

# The photographic studio

It became clear, early on, that one of the most cherished uses of the photographic medium was the portrayal of people. Being able to own a picture of oneself or loved ones has always been of great importance to people. When Bolette and Marie set up their studio in Horten in 1895, people went to the photographer to have their picture taken, as very few owned a camera of their own.

In the studio, one could have close-up portraits, full-length pictures, and group photos, like school classes or groups of families. Due to the lack of electric lighting, the studios were equipped with large glass windows to let in natural light. These were often placed

in the ceiling, as we see in the interior images from Berg & Høeg's photographic studio.

It was fashionable to place those being photographed against backdrops showing different environments, like a forest or a fantastic, castle-like interior. Various props could be placed in the scene, such as a wooden fence or a classical bust, depending on the chosen background. Some photographers also offered costumes and props to be worn. An example of this, was the use of fur anoraks and skiing gear against a backdrop of snow-capped mountains, inspired by the great admiration at the time for the polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen.



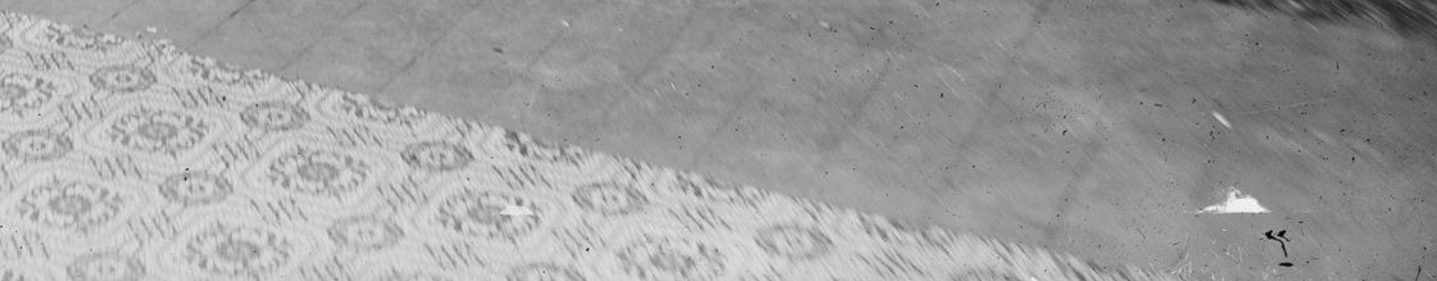




















# Private pictures

During the decade when Bolette and Marie worked as photographers in Horten, they sometimes indulged in playfulness in the photographic studio, using backdrops, various outfits and props. Marie is particularly prominent in the photos. She presents herself in humorous poses, dresses up as an androgynous youngster and poses as a mysterious forest faun or a mischievous character with a cap and cigarette.

In other pictures, Marie performs antics in light, pyjama-like outfit, or we find her sitting like a yogi with a cigarette in her mouth. Is it her own ideas she is presenting, or is it Bolette behind the camera that is instructing her? Various identities are also explored in some of these images. Both Bolette and Marie are

depicted in men's clothing with moustaches, whilst Marie's brother Karl is photographed in women's clothing, both alone and with Marie dressed as a man. When Bolette's sisters and friends came to visit, they were staged as a tableau vivant showing a group of wine-drinking card-players. This can be seen as a personal interpretation of a motif often used in art.

It was certainly not uncommon for photographers of that era to take private pictures. Nevertheless, there is something about these specific images that resonates with our time. They appear immediate and modern, as the two women explore themes that many people today can relate to.







































# Berg & Høgh

## Art-Publishing House

When Bolette and Marie established their art publishing house in 1903, there were not many publishers in Norway specialising in high-quality reproductions of art. Those that existed were run by men, and for much of the forty years that the company existed, the two were the only women in the industry. Postcard production was important for the company, both produced from their own landscape photographs and specially illustrated seasonal cards by well-known Norwegian illustrators. Berg & Høgh Art-Publishing House had a special focus on publishing reproductions of paintings by famous Norwegian artists. Paintings in the National Gallery were reproduced, as were those included in the yearly Høstutstillingen ("Autumn Exhibition" supported by the Government).

The two were concerned with female representation and had an agreement with the Malerinneforbundet (Association of Women Painters) to publish reproductions of their artworks. The publishing house also had agencies for art publishers in London, enabling them to distribute highly regarded foreign art to a Norwegian audience. As already mentioned, the company published some books, including the major work *Norske Kvinder* ("Norwegian Women") in three volumes. As businesswomen, they were concerned with important issues for the industry, such as customs duties on import of paper and other necessary equipment for production, and Marie served as vice-chairman of Kunstforleggerforeningen (The Art-Publishers' Association) for many years.





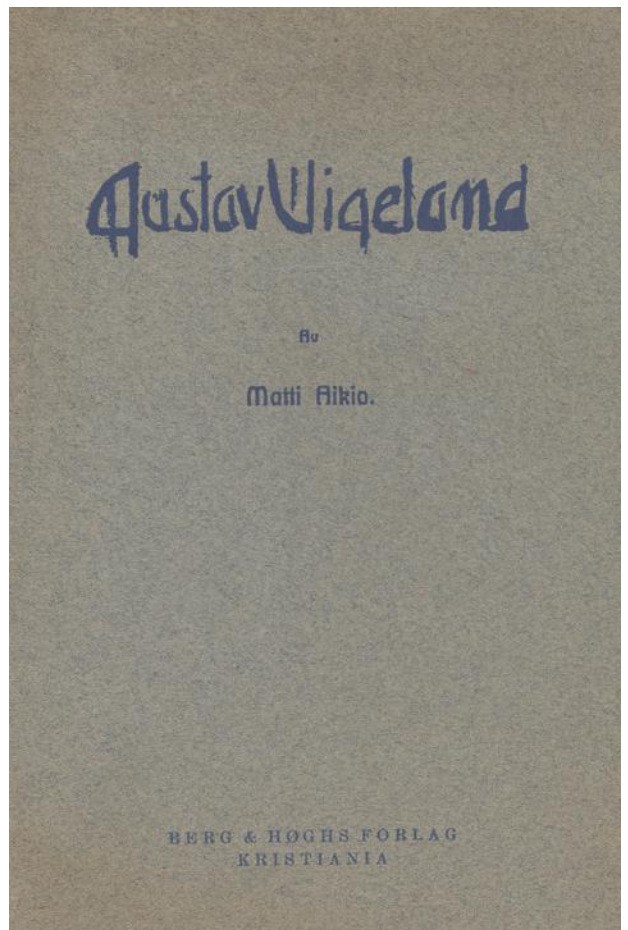












Examples of books published by Berg & Høgh Art-Publishing House.

27

# Edvard MUNCH

Av  
Arnulf Øverland.

BERG & HØGHS FORLAG  
KRISTIANIA

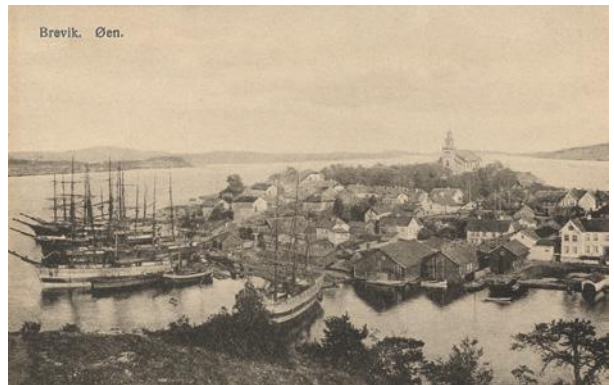
# NORSKE KVINDER

1914 = 1924

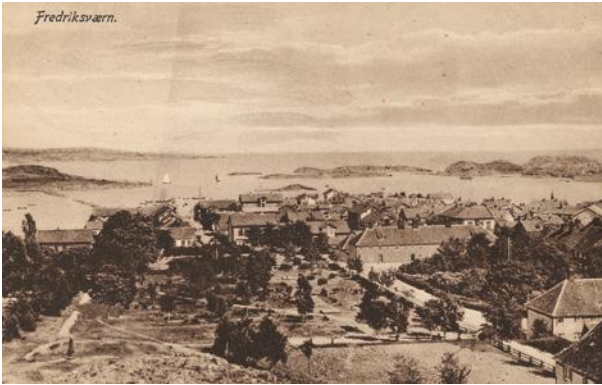


BERG & HØGHS FORLAG ½

OSLO



Examples of postcards produced by Berg & Høgh Art-Publishing House.













Enret. Burg & Høeg. Horten.











# Afterword

TEXT: CECILIE ØIEN, DIRECTOR PREUS MUSEUM

Known as Berg & Høeg in their professional and public life, Bolette and Marie were also partners in love. Let us take a closer look at the photograph on the front cover. Two female photographers, two cameras, a studio, their friends, relatives, and pets. In this photograph Bolette is behind the camera, while Marie is in front of the camera with her equipment getting ready to immortalise Bolette's sister Ingeborg and a friend on glass plates.

This was their portrait studio in Horten, Norway, where they lived from 1895 to 1903 and where the photographs that today attract attention, were taken. The playfulness and genderbending seen in these photos are evocative and have a contemporary feel. Maybe because there is a closeness and intimacy in these photographs that is often lacking in the more formal, serious looking studio-portraits of that time. The photographs reflect a time in their life when they had recently become lovers and when they were still in a phase of establishing themselves as professionals and as life partners.

The studio space changed character from public to private throughout the day. After work hours, the studio seems to have been a safe space for living the way they wanted and needed. Within the four walls of the studio-turned-home, it was possible to play and explore sides of life that was contrary-minded to the conservative ideology of the small naval town of Horten. Bolette and Marie took part in networks of women supporting and protecting each other, and where they had role models and friends who lived in same-sex relationships.

The differentiation between public and private spaces, and the prospect of being

visible and invisible, were not only important distinctions in how they lived. It was also because they were truly different as people. Marie was very visible as a political figure, while Bolette often seemed invisible behind the camera and behind the scenes in Marie's public life.

Yet, to quote visual anthropologist and documentary filmmaker David MacDougall (1998: 202): "Implicit in a camera-style is a theory of knowledge". The photographer always imprints a technical knowledge, a style and a practice in their work. In the work of Bolette and Marie that belong to their private lives, we get a glimpse of two photographers that seemed to want more from photography than the technology and the mindset of the time could offer. What the world wanted was cartes de visite, landscape photography, art reproductions and postcards. As businesswomen, they understood how to satisfy their customers. Bolette and Marie wanted to change the situation of women, and most probably also wanted acceptance as queer.

The work we do with this collection at Preus Museum is a work-in-progress. This catalogue is neither meant to be an exhaustive biography of the two, nor give an elaborate description on how we situate them within the history of photography, women's rights or queer history. It is an attempt to give more detail to their lives and times to an international audience, and to contextualise the collection. As we continue to do research into their lives, we will apply various perspectives and frameworks to understand the different phases of their lives, so we can present a well-documented and research-based narrative about Bolette and Marie when we renew our permanent exhibition in 2025-26.







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