

Kari Greve

## The Norwegian Printmaker Nikolai Astrup and his Papers

Nikolai Astrup (1880-1927) is one of the most well-known and beloved artists in Norway. Astrup and the 19 years older Edvard Munch were both pioneer Norwegian woodcut artists.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, Nikolai Astrup's art has been presented outside of Norway through exhibitions in Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, Emden Kunsthalle, Germany, The Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts and Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde, Stockholm. Astrup was inspired by Japanese woodcuts and the emerging European woodcut artists such as Felix Vallotton and Paul Gauguin, which he saw during his short period of studies in Paris in 1901-1902. A trained painter, he was self-taught as a printmaker and developed his own, very distinctive style, which will be described in more detail in the lecture. He never used a printing press but used his hands and different rubbing techniques to force the printing ink on to the paper. Astrup was very particular about the papers he wanted for his prints and had clear preferences. His favourite was Japanese kozo paper. However, as he lived in Jølster, a beautiful, but very remote part of Norway, it was not always easy to procure the paper he preferred, and during the first world war the import possibilities were even more limited. Astrup was a prolific letter writer, and his letters give us a rare insight into his artistic practice, his choice of materials as well as his frustration with papers that did not fulfil his requirements.

The contribution will aim to make the audience acquainted with a rare artist, his originality as a print maker and his struggle to achieve his artistic goals despite many practical difficulties.

**Keywords:** Woodcut prints, Norwegian 20th century artist, paper for woodcuts

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<sup>1</sup> Greve, Kari, Øystein Loge and Oda Wildhagen Gjessing: *Nikolai Astrup. Woodcuts*. Oslo 2010