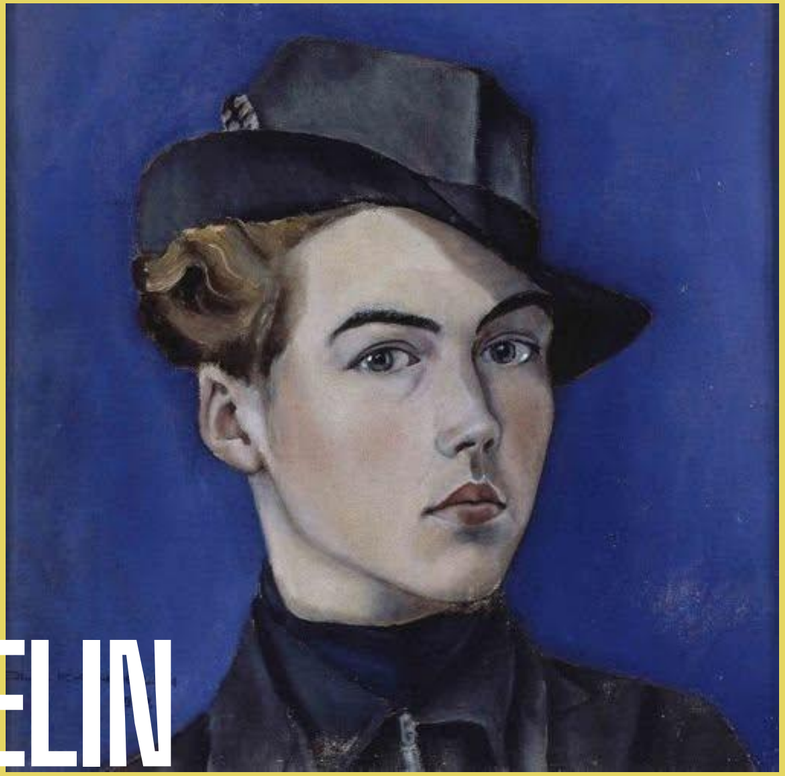









OLE KANDELIN



INTRODUCTION

Ole Kandelin (1920–1947)



Two Apostles, 1943, , oil on cardboard, 50 × 35 cm

Born in Porvoo on 22 November 1920, Ole Kandelin was among the most radical innovators of Finnish modern painting. In a career curtailed by tuberculosis at the age of 26, he moved rapidly from dreamlike Surrealist imagery and Cubist construction toward lyrical abstraction and a fully nonfigurative pictorial language.

His practice developed against the background of a Finnish art world still cautiously absorbing European avant-garde movements. Working with extraordinary urgency, he sought a modern vocabulary based on colour, rhythm, spatial relationships and autonomous form rather than the depiction of recognisable subjects.

Kandelin's importance lies not simply in the novelty of his abstract paintings but in the speed and conviction with which he pursued artistic experimentation. His final works helped prepare the ground for the broader acceptance of nonfigurative art in post-war Finland.



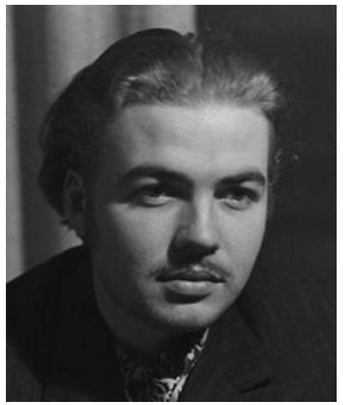
"FLOATING FORMS AND WHITE TRIANGLES",
1946, Oil on cardboard 23 x 50 cm

Kandelin began drawing and painting at a young age and pursued art while living with increasingly serious illness. After moving to Helsinki in 1937, he worked as a commercial artist and attended the Free Art School. Military service was interrupted by tuberculosis in 1941; he subsequently resumed his artistic studies and developed a remarkably independent approach.

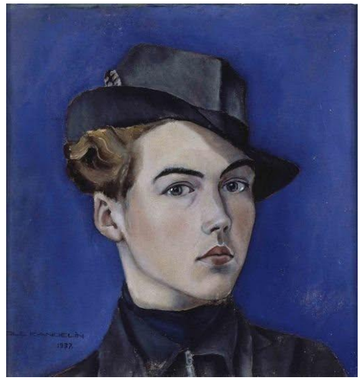
His Swedish sojourn in 1945–46 was decisive. Exposure to French modernist art, the artist Sigurd Nyberg, and a more international cultural environment encouraged him to abandon figuration more decisively. Works from 1946 emphasize dynamic configurations of shape and colour, with titles such as Fuga, Composition, Construction and Abstraction.

The 1948 memorial exhibition at Helsinki Kunsthalle devoted an entire room to his nonfigurative paintings. This presentation became a significant reference point for the younger generation of Finnish artists who would embrace abstraction in the 1950s.

BIOGRAPHY



Ole Kandelin (1920–1947). Portrait photograph, image reproduced via Artvee (artvee.com).



Ole Kandelin, Self-portrait, 1937

1 1920 - 1937 - Early Life
Born in Porvoo, the son of goldsmith Einar Kandelin and Helmi Järvinen. Drew and painted from childhood; moved to Helsinki in 1937.

2 1938 - 1941 — Training
Studied at the Free Art School (1938–39); worked as a commercial artist. Diagnosed with tuberculosis during military service in 1941.

3 1942 - 1944 — Emerging Artist
Returned to the Free Art School (1942–43); participated in group exhibitions and held his first solo show at Strindberg's art salon, Helsinki, in 1944.

4 1945 – 1946 —Swedish Period
Treated at Hessleby sanatorium, Sweden; then painted in Gothenburg, Uppsala and Stockholm. Developed a wholly nonfigurative language.

5 1946 - 1947 — International Breakthrough
Solo exhibition at Louis Hahne's art salon in Stockholm, reported as a breakthrough; too ill to attend its January 1947 reception.

6 1947– 1948 — Death and Legacy
Died in Helsinki on 23 January 1947. Helsinki Kunsthalle's 1948 memorial exhibition highlighted his abstract paintings.

International Exhibitions & Visibility

Kandelin began exhibiting in group exhibitions from 1942, at a moment when Finnish modernism was still negotiating the relationship between representation and experiment. His early work attracted attention for its unusual, Surrealist-inflected imagery, even as his interests were shifting toward more abstract composition.

His first solo exhibition took place at Strindberg's art salon in Helsinki in 1944. It marked his emergence as an independent painter and introduced his rapidly developing pictorial language to a wider Finnish audience.

During his stay in Sweden in 1945–46, Kandelin continued to paint at a prolific pace. A solo exhibition at Louis Hahne's art salon in Stockholm followed in 1946. Contemporary accounts describe his Stockholm reception in early 1947 as an artistic breakthrough, although his illness prevented him from travelling to the exhibition.



Shakinpelaajat, 1942, oil on board, 66 x 41 cm



Onnittelijat, 1943, oil on board, 100 x 75 cm

International Exhibitions & Visibility

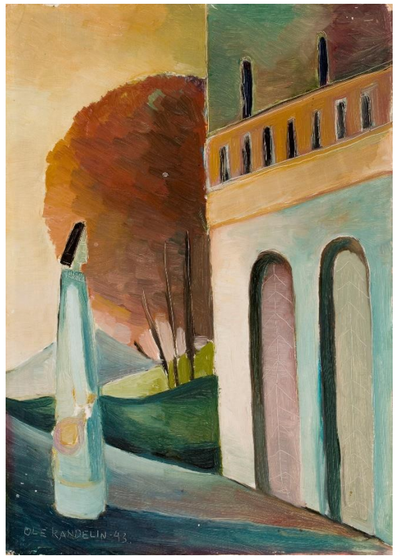
Kandelin's posthumous memorial exhibition at Helsinki Kunsthalle in 1948 was a crucial moment in the reception of his work. The display distinguished his earlier Surrealist and Symbolist pictures from his nonfigurative paintings, devoting an entire room to the latter. It helped articulate abstraction as a new possibility for Finnish art.

A major retrospective was presented at the Amos Anderson Art Museum in Helsinki from 25 February to 9 April 1978, accompanied by a substantial exhibition catalogue. His artistic development was reassessed again in the exhibition Ole Kandelin 1920–1947 at EMMA – Espoo Museum of Modern Art, from 10 August 2008 to 11 January 2009, bringing together approximately 120 paintings, drawings, sketches, watercolours and photographs.

Later presentations, including Ateneum's Fokus Gallery: Modern Identity (2020), demonstrate continuing institutional interest in Kandelin's place within Finnish modernism.



Time Line, 1943, private collection © Ari Karttunen / EMMA



At a Palace Gate, 1943, oil on cardboard , 35,5 × 25,5 cm

EVOLUTION OF ARTISTIC STYLE AND THEMES

Early period (1930s–1942): Surrealist beginnings

Kandelin's earliest paintings included theatrical landscapes, angelic figures and dreamlike subjects. His engagement with Surrealism was highly individual: rather than reproducing established European models, he developed strange, often emotionally charged scenes with a deliberately artificial sense of space.

Early experiments with form also show his interest in the possibilities of modern composition. During his training at the Free Art School he encountered multiple artistic approaches and became increasingly concerned with how colour, line and shape might create meaning independently of a narrative subject.

This phase established the imaginative freedom that remained essential even after he abandoned recognizable imagery. His later abstraction can be understood as a transformation of Surrealist invention rather than a complete rejection of it.



Brondalla, 1939, oil painting, 123 x 80 cm



Abstract Composition, 1938, oil on canvas, 57 x 45 cm

EVOLUTION OF ARTISTIC STYLE AND THEMES

Middle period (1943–1944): Cubism and constructed imagery

By 1943–44 Kandelin was exploring more structured compositions, moving between Surrealist symbolism and Cubist fragmentation. Figures and objects were simplified, flattened and reorganized into bold pictorial arrangements, while colour became increasingly expressive.

Works such as The Rope-Dancer (1944) and Mary and the Infant Jesus (1944) demonstrate the tension between recognizable motifs and an emerging concern with autonomous formal relationships. Their subjects remain legible, yet the picture surface becomes an arena for experimentation with rhythm, silhouette and spatial ambiguity.

This period is essential to understanding the later breakthrough: abstraction did not appear suddenly, but emerged through a systematic loosening of the relationship between image and subject.



The Rope-Dancer , 1944, oil on board, 70 × 50 cm



Mary and the Infant Jesus, 1944, oil on board, 51 × 35 cm

EVOLUTION OF ARTISTIC STYLE AND THEMES

Late period (1945–1946): Lyrical to concrete abstraction

The years 1945–46 saw Kandelin's decisive turn toward nonfigurative painting. His time in Sweden brought him into contact with a broader range of modernist influences, including the work of Jean Arp, Wassily Kandinsky and Joan Miró. Organic shapes, suspended forms, intersecting planes and carefully balanced colour relationships replaced conventional subject matter.

The final paintings increasingly relied on the formal resources of art itself: compositional rhythm, chromatic harmony and the movement of shapes across the surface. Titles such as Fuga, Meeting, Construction, Concretion and Abstraction signal his growing commitment to pictorial autonomy.

In these late works Kandelin approached Concrete art while retaining a lyrical sense of motion. His contribution was unusually precocious: he achieved a consistently nonfigurative language before abstraction became widely established in Finland.



Composition, 1946, oil on cardboard, 69 × 50,5 cm



Composition, 1946, oil on cardboard, 35,5 × 50,5 cm

Ole Kandelin — Sawing Painting II (1942)

Art Historical Context

Sawing Painting II (1942) represents a significant example of Ole Kandelin's experimentation with Cubism, reflecting the psychological impact of his struggle with tuberculosis. Following his diagnosis in 1941, Kandelin experienced recurring nightmares in which his body was subjected to violent surgical procedures, imagery that informed the painting's fragmented figures and unsettling composition. Through overlapping geometric planes, distorted human forms, and dramatic spatial relationships, the work transforms personal suffering into a powerful exploration of physical vulnerability and psychological anxiety. Created before his transition toward nonfigurative abstraction, the painting illustrates Kandelin's early engagement with European modernism and the development of his distinctive artistic language.

Auction Result

Sold at Hagelstam & Co. in Helsinki on November 17, 2016, for a reported EUR 33,000 (approximately USD 35,100, according to the LiveArt listing). The painting's substantial scale and its connection to Kandelin's early Cubist period make it a noteworthy example of his auction market. The result reflects collector interest in works documenting the artist's formative experimentation before his breakthrough into abstraction.

NOTABLE AUCTION RESULTS



Sawing Painting II (1942), oil on canvas, 104 × 155 cm

MARKET & COLLECTING



Composition, 1946, oil on panel
39,5 × 29,5 cm

HOW COLLECTORS VIEW VIEW OLE KANDELIN'S WORKS

Characteristics Valued by Collectors

Kandelin's appeal lies in his position at a pivotal moment in Finnish modernism and the unusual stylistic range of a very short career. His Surrealist and Cubist-inflected works offer distinctive figurative imagery, while the 1945–46 paintings document a rare early commitment to complete abstraction.

Position in the Nordic Modernist Market

Market interest in Ole Kandelin reflects growing recognition of his contribution to Finnish modernism, particularly his exploration of Surrealism and his later transition toward abstraction. His early works reveal a distinctive Surrealist sensibility, combining dreamlike imagery, distorted human figures, and psychologically charged compositions that reflect his personal experiences and engagement with European avant-garde movements. Notable auction results include Sawing Painting II (1942), which sold at Hagelstam & Co. in Helsinki on November 17, 2016, for a reported EUR 33,000 (approximately USD 35,100), and Floating Forms and White Triangles (1946), which achieved EUR 15,000 at Bukowskis in 2013. These results demonstrate collector interest in both his psychologically expressive Surrealist works and his later abstract compositions.

Appeal and Legacy

Kandelin’s significance is grounded in his unusually rapid movement across the principal modernist idioms of the 1940s. He absorbed Surrealism, experimented with Cubist construction and developed an autonomous abstract language at a moment when nonfigurative art was still marginal in Finland.

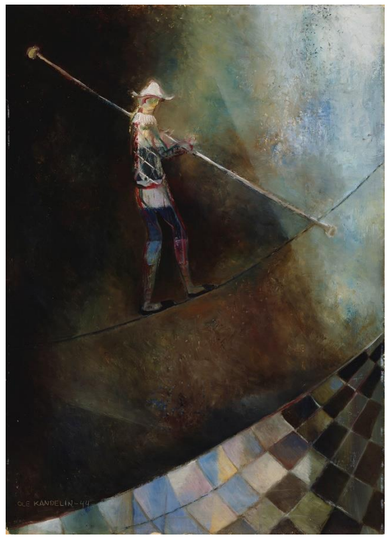
His work is best understood in dialogue with European modernism without reducing it to a derivative practice. The organic poetry associated with Arp, Kandinsky and Miró informed his experiments, yet the urgency and concentration of his final works were distinctive.

The 1948 Helsinki Kunsthalle memorial exhibition, the 1978 Amos Anderson retrospective and EMMA's 2008–09 survey each helped consolidate his place in Finnish art history. His career is both a story of artistic experimentation and a reminder of how much could be achieved in a remarkably brief period.

MUSEUM AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

SELECTED DOCUMENTED WORKS · FINNISH NATIONAL GALLERY / ATENEUM

The Finnish National Gallery provides object-level records for over 22 works by Kandelin. The examples below are selected holdings, not an exhaustive inventory. Museum attribution and reproduction rights should be checked against the original catalogue record.



The Rope-Dancer

1944 · Oil on board · 70 × 50 cm

Ateneum / Finnish National Gallery



Mary and the Infant Jesus

1944 · Oil on board · 51 × 35 cm

Ateneum / Finnish National Gallery



Orphan

1943 · Oil on cardboard · 35 × 50.5 cm

Ateneum / Finnish National Gallery

MUSEUM AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

COLLECTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE BIOGRAPHICAL LEXICON

FINLAND

Ole Kandelin's works are represented in the Ateneum Art Museum (Finnish National Gallery), Amos Anderson Art Museum, Bäcksbacka Collection (Helsinki City), and Didrichsen Art Museum. The Ateneum and Helsinki Art Museum have also featured his work in exhibitions, reflecting his continued recognition within Finnish modern art.

The work Yksin (Alone) is associated with the Albert de la Chapelle collection at the Museum of Western Uusimaa in the Finnish Wikipedia entry

Kandelin's works are documented in the Turku Art Museum, Sara Hildén Art Museum (Tampere), Museum of Modern Art (Tampere), Porvoo Museum, Museum of Central Finland (Jyväskylä), and art museums in Hämeenlinna and Imatra.

SWEDEN — STOCKHOLM

Moderna Museet is identified among the institutions holding Kandelin's work. Prince Eugen's Waldemarsudde presented Sigrid Schauman, Ole Kandelin in 1978, demonstrating his recognition beyond Finland.

SELECTED SOURCES AND IMAGE CREDITS

Bibliography · institutional records · auction documentation

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Modern + Contemporary F166, lot 421, April 2013; official results list EUR 15,000 hammer.

Hagelstam & Co. / LiveArt.

Sawing Painting II (1942), sale of 17 Nov 2016; EUR 33,000 reported in secondary listing.

ArtFacts.

Ole Kandelin exhibition index, including Waldemarsudde (1978), EMMA (2008) and Free 90 (2025).

Artvee.

Ole Kandelin artist page: source of reproduced black-and-white portrait photograph.

IMAGE CREDITS · PAGES 001–005

Page-by-page register · artwork / photograph · attribution and source status

001 **Cover montage**

Selection of Kandelin works reproduced elsewhere in this dossier, including early figurative and late abstract compositions.

002 **Two Apostles (1943)**

Oil on cardboard, 50 × 35 cm. Artwork image supplied in original presentation.

003 **Floating Forms and White Triangles (1946)**

Oil on cardboard, 23 × 50 cm. Work documented in Bukowskis Helsinki F166, lot 421 (2013).

004 **Ole Kandelin portrait photograph**

Black-and-white portrait reproduced via Artvee; photographer and date unidentified.

004 **Self-portrait (1937)**

Painted self-portrait reproduced on the biography page.

005 **Shakinpelaajat (1942)**

Oil on board, 66 × 41 cm. Artwork reproduced beside exhibition narrative.

IMAGE CREDITS · PAGES 005–008

Page-by-page register · artwork / photograph · attribution and source status

005 **Onnittelijat (1943)**

Oil on board, 100 × 75 cm. Artwork reproduced beside exhibition narrative.

006 **Time Line (1943)**

Private collection. Reproduced with the attribution © Ari Karttunen / EMMA.

006 **At a Palace Gate (1943)**

Oil on cardboard, 35.5 × 25.5 cm. Artwork reproduced on exhibitions page.

007 **Brondalla (1939)**

Oil painting, 123 × 80 cm. Reproduced as early Surrealist-period example.

007 **Abstract Composition (1938)**

Oil on canvas, 57 × 45 cm. Reproduced as early formal experimentation.

008 **The Rope-Dancer (1944)**

Oil on board, 70 × 50 cm. Also reproduced on p. 012 as an Ateneum / Finnish National Gallery holding.

IMAGE CREDITS · PAGES 008–012

Page-by-page register · artwork / photograph · attribution and source status

008 **Mary and the Infant Jesus (1944)**

Oil on board, 51 × 35 cm. Repeated on p. 012 as an Ateneum / Finnish National Gallery holding.

009 **Composition (1946), 69 × 50.5 cm**

Oil on cardboard, vertical colour composition.

009 **Composition (1946), 35.5 × 50.5 cm**

Oil on cardboard, predominantly blue-and-green horizontal composition.

010 **Sawing Painting II (1942)**

Oil on canvas, 104 × 155 cm. Sale attributed to Hagelstam & Co., Helsinki, 17 Nov 2016.

011 **Composition (1946), 39.5 × 29.5 cm**

Oil on panel. Featured on Market & Collecting page.

012 **Three Ateneum works**

The Rope-Dancer (1944); Mary and the Infant Jesus (1944); Orphan (1943).

IMAGE CREDITS · PAGES 012–019

Closing credit register · presentation and institutional documentation

012 **Orphan (1943)**

Oil on cardboard, 35 × 50.5 cm. Ateneum / Finnish National Gallery attribution in supplied presentation.

013 **Institutional holdings register**

No artwork reproduction on this page. List of Finnish and Swedish institutional collections.

019 **Wanderers (1943)**

Oil on canvas, 120.5 × 76 cm. Artwork image on original yellow closing page.

— **Exhibition history documentation**

EMMA (2008–09); Waldemarsudde (1978); Helsinki Art Museum (2025), as listed in museum/ArtFacts records.

— **Reproduction and rights statement**

Artworks are attributed to Ole Kandelin (1920–1947). Image sources vary across the supplied presentation.



Wanderers, 1943, oil on canvas,
120.5 x 76 cm