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# A Radical Academy of Fine Art?

Power and social dimensions in recruitment to the fine art professorships at the Royal College of Art in Stockholm, Sweden 1938-2000.

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*This article provides evidence about how the “old boys’ network” of the school of the Academy of Fine Art in Stockholm effected gatekeeping procedures when recruiting professors to Sweden’s most prestigious school of fine art over the period 1938-2000.*

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The relationship between art and social power is a challenging topic. Art historians frequently have to deal with art and artistic contexts that are inscribed in structures of dominance related to class, gender, ethnic identity, geographical centre/periphery, etc. It is thus not surprising that compensatory efforts are initiated in order to locate “great” – but neglected or forgotten – artists and to adjust earlier biased narratives. However, such efforts are at risk of concealing the fact that aesthetic distinction in these cases also works as social distinction. If we understand art as being a part of the hierarchies of the social landscape, this means that artistic qualitative measurements are constructed in accordance with “social systems and ideological schemata” (POLLOCK, 1988, pp. 1-2). This indicates that, instead of searching for excluded artists, we should ask questions about how such criteria of excellence and selection are constructed. Any such investigation should, as was pointed out by the American art historian Linda Nochlin, start with investigations into “The *institutional* (...) preconditions for achievement in the arts” (NOCHLIN, 1971, p. 36).

Taking this standpoint, this article will investigate recruitment to the fine art professorships at the Royal College of Art (RCA), the school of the Academy of Fine Art, in Stockholm over the period lasting from 1938

to 2000.<sup>1</sup> The selection of these professors will be studied as indications of the dependence of aesthetic preferences on a socially determined agenda. Theoretical perspectives from sociology, network theory, gender theory and art history will be used. A set of significant traits of the applicants and those appointed will be accounted for, including gender, educational background, acknowledgment by Moderna Museet, attention in Swedish art magazines and elections for membership of the Academy. In order to process such data, the quantitative method will be utilised. While giving the text a somewhat dry character, these data provide clear-cut evidence with regard to what kind of assets were valued in the recruitment process. Identifying patterns of social distinction – i.e. the “social physics” – the statistics reveal what has been naturalised by the arguments belonging to “social phenomenology” i.e. mental representations expressed in the discussions on artistic quality found in the minutes of the board of the school, or the Academy (BOURDIEU, 1992, pp. 135-141).

### **A radical academy of art?**

Recruitment of professors to the elite schools of the fine art academies in the twentieth century is, not surprisingly, often associated with biased selections preserving conservative artistic ideals. A telling example is the school of the French academy, the ENSBA in Paris (VERGER, 1993, pp. 56-57, MOULIN, 1992, pp. 307-313); another one is the school of the Munich academy (KRÄMER, 2007, RUPPERT, 2007, FASTERT, 2007). The Bauhaus school, where “modern” artists were offered professorships (DROSTE, 2007, WERCHMEISTER, 2007, WINGLER, 1977), is often perceived as the only alternative to this model. However, this historical narrative of conservative academism versus anti-academic renewal in European artistic education in fact gets a bit more complicated when considering the Nordic countries. A quick overview of what kind of artists were found qualified for the position as professor at the RCA 1938-2000 immediately gives an indication that these recruitments stayed in close contact with currents in Swedish modernism. There were even young and controversial candidates to be found, at least from the 1960s and onwards, not only as full professors, but also as substitutes during limited periods of time. The informal painter

Torsten Andersson and the unorthodox “conceptual” artist Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd, were up-and-coming and still very young (in their early thirties) when appointed to full professorships in the 1960s. Non-conventional (as compared with the faculty) artists such as Dick Bengtsson or Anna Sjö Dahl, mixing painting, installation art and social critique, or a political rebel such as Lars Hillersberg held temporary positions in the 1970s. The Norwegian sculptor Bård Breivik, who, when appointed in the early 1980s, collaborated with the Swedish artists in the still nascent postmodern art scene, is another example. The same goes for Marie Louise (Ekman) De Geer Bergensträhle, appointed professor in 1984 – an artist unorthodox both in terms of her wide range of genres and materials stretching from easel painting to textile, film, comic strips, etc., and her choice of controversial motifs often related to sex or politics. She was the first woman ever to be appointed, one year before the RCA celebrated its 250th anniversary. Out of 50 artists appointed to full professorships 1938-2000, 45 were men. The choice of Breivik and De Geer Bergensträhle thus indicates a new trend in the 1980s and 1990s; five women artists and three foreign artists were now preferred over Swedish male artists.

The institutional foundation for recruitment of “modern” artists rested upon the reform of the statutes of the school of the Academy in 1938. The new statutes were not a result of a revolution, but of a long and strong opposition to the old academic curricula starting in the late nineteenth century (STADGAR, 1938, EDLING, 2010, pp. 161-193). They stated that the school’s team of professors would, in a representative fashion, mirror the different currents in the contemporary art world. The school was meant to accommodate a variety of “artistic temperaments” and the students were expected to choose the supervisor who best represented their own interests (STADGAR, 1938, § 16 and § 31). The statutes also stated that the professors should not be older than fifty-five by the time they assumed the position, nor would they be able to hold the position for more than ten years (STADGAR, 1938, § 15). The underlying idea was that the education would stay flexible and updated with regard to developments in the surrounding art world. The professor was supposed to temporarily step out of an active career, to guide the young students, but was also to be relieved from this duty after ten years in order to give room to representatives of new artistic currents. The

statutes thus seem to have been written just as a safeguard from the kind of conservative recruitments associated with an outdated academism; no other art school in Sweden had adjusted its organisation in such a radical way in order to respond to contemporary art (EDLING, 2010, pp. 161-193).

However, although the school recruited “modern” artists, we still find a notable artistic and social homogeneity in the faculty over particular periods. One telling example is the dominance of members of the Färg and Form (Colour and Form) group in the 1940s. Of the ten male professors appointed in the 1940s, all but two were part of the same circles of artists featuring expressionist/naivist/intimist painters in the ateliers at Sjövillan at Smedsudden in Stockholm and later of the artist organisation Färg och Form (EKLUND & SLÖÖR, 2007, SÖDERBERGH, 1968, pp. 148, 138). Although many were leading figures (GUSTAVSSON, 2002, p. 367), this accumulation is not representative of the contemporary art scene, in which Surrealism, post-Cubism and concrete art were also acknowledged. The complete lack of women artists up until 1984 and the fact that only four additional women artists were appointed professors in the 1990s is also a notable lacuna. Such patterns of artistic as well as social homogeneity demonstrate that even if this, by tradition, conservative institutional framework could be adapted to a new modernistic norm, there are indications of competition being set aside.

### **The formal procedure of the appointments: homogeneity and its reproduction**

Focusing first on homogeneity, we can see that some answers as to why appointed professors share characteristics are given by a brief consideration of the procedures involved in the recruitment process. Here Nochlin’s focus on “institutional preconditions” gives ample evidence of how biased selections were a product of the regulations. Vacancies for 42 positions were made known by open announcement. The remaining eight positions were filled by candidates who had been offered the positions without any open publication of the vacancy. The statutes allowed for this, given that a ⅔ majority of the educational board of the school was in favour (STADGAR, 1938, § 18). This procedure was, with one exception, used in the 1940s, when

seven candidates were appointed this way.<sup>2</sup> This simple fact immediately seems to shed light on why we find such a concentration of male artists from the same circles during this period. This also demonstrates that the paragraphs in the statutes contained built-in contradictions. The directions regarding artistic variety, implying artistic diversity and hence competition and meritocratic ideals, could be undermined by recruitment procedures allowing for cooptation, i.e. selection not on the basis of merit, but at the selecting party's own discretion. We can thus identify institutional routines characteristic of traditional academic reproduction still intact.

Another piece of evidence for “institutional preconditions” facilitating biased selections lies in the paragraphs in the statutes that allowed for the educational board of the RCA to choose experts among themselves to evaluate candidates (STADGAR, 1938, §19). During the 1940s and most of the 1950s, the board thus selected the panel only among its own members. From the mid-1960s, an additional external member was frequently chosen. However, the panel almost always contained a serving professor, and/or a newly retired professor. Only in ten appointments were the panel experts all externals. Several professors of the school also served several times in such panels; Bror Marklund, Olle Nyman, Lennart Rodhe and P.O. Ultvedt each served three times at different points in time. Of the 118 experts found in the minutes, only 21 were women. The first woman ever to be appointed as an expert was the graphic artist Kerstin Abram Nilsson in 1979 (as an external member), and only one woman ever served as an expert more than once – the artist Charlotte Gyllenhammar, in 1994 and 1998. This preference for male candidates closely connected to the school in the board of experts thus indicates the importance of networks and possible reflections of such close relationships in the selection.

If we study not only the formal side of the recruitment process but also its practice, this presumption becomes evident. Here we find other indications of competition being undermined or set aside. Letting selected favourite artists hold temporary posts at the RCA, prior to the publication of the vacancy, gave them the advantage of merit and acquaintance with the students, as well as a majority of their votes. Out of a total of 40 professors

appointed through public notice, almost half were recruited through such or very similar procedures. The method was most frequent in the 1980s when eight out of ten appointed professors were selected this way.<sup>3</sup> If we add the number of individuals being offered a position, we see that more than half of the professors were recruited due to strategies indicating network logic. The reproduction of the organisations was not secured by way of selection by meritocratic principles, but by granting the selected candidates the position as a “gift”. The advantages were mutual; the candidates gained access to the distribution of benefits, enjoyed the restriction of competition and the network was ensured further loyalties. (HASSELBERG, MÜLLER & STENLÅS, 2009, pp. 18-21). As we can see, the “brotherhood logic” of the academic institution was not broken by the modernistic reform in 1939; the new recruits were selected in old-fashioned ways. The parallel with the recruitment strategies of the financial elite is clear to see and indicates that the professorships did not deviate from other reproductive strategies of the Swedish elites (compare STENLÅS, 1998 and GÖRANSSON, 2006b, pp. 325-346).<sup>4</sup> Such recruitment procedures also follow the logic of cooptation, which gives a secluded character to the process and allows for homosocial reflections (GÖRANSSON, 2006a, pp. 29-34).

### **Hierarchical social dimensions: centre/periphery, gender**

Now, even if these seemingly simple data give us some idea of the conservative recruiting mechanisms at play in periods where male artists from the same circles were chosen, as in the 1940s, and a lead to an explanation of the continued male dominance, they tell us nothing about how exceptions could be made or how unorthodox candidates could be appointed. In order to be able to investigate how the artistic and gendered gatekeeping procedures could be negotiated, we first need to know more about the chosen candidates. In order to be able to characterise what could be considered an unorthodox candidate, we also need to know more about the applicants that were rejected. In addition, we need to know whether there are groups of artists that we do not find among these two groups but who, could have been candidates, or at least applicants, considering the attention given them in the contemporary art scene.

If we first consider the 50 professors appointed in the period from 1938 to 2000, the statistics reveal that the RCA, to a very high degree, selected successful male alumni for these positions. Out of the 45 men, 36 were alumni. Out of the five women appointed during the period, three were alumni.<sup>5</sup> Membership of the Academy of Fine Art in Stockholm was also a significant trait. Only ten professors (among them three foreign artists) were never elected members (KUNGL. AKADEMIEN FÖR DE FRIA KONSTERNA, 2011). As we see, being a “familiar face” was of utmost importance in order to be selected.

Both men and women show signs of being successful artists; all but one woman (of foreign descent) were already represented by major work (not just a drawing or a graphic sheet) at Moderna Museet in Stockholm prior to the announcement.<sup>6</sup> The attention given to the selected candidates in Swedish art/culture magazines confirms the impression of them having solid careers; 46 of them appear in articles giving them special attention as individual artists prior to the appointment.<sup>7</sup> Network contacts were thus not enough – a candidate also needed substantial professional acknowledgment.

In order to put this preference for successful male alumni in perspective, we must consider the wider range of applicants to see if there are significant differences in background between the larger group of the 329 rejected applicants and the 50 appointed ones.<sup>8</sup> Looking through the list of rejected applicants we find many who share some, but not all, characteristics of the successful candidates, i.e. they have similar careers, but fewer resources. An example is the educational backgrounds of the group of rejected applicants – a little more than half of the 329 unsuccessful applicants were previous alumni.<sup>9</sup> There is no other group indicating the existence of a competing educational merit.<sup>10</sup> Another common feature is that as many as 60 % of the unsuccessful applicants were represented at Moderna Museet in Stockholm by the time of their application.<sup>11</sup> Some – but in comparison a very small minority – were given attention in Swedish art magazines.<sup>12</sup> This shows that the careers of many of the rejected applicants did not deviate from the careers of the appointed ones, other than them having fewer resources and having been given far less attention by art critics. However, even more intriguing patterns emerge when the gender factor is considered. Looking for women artists among the group of rejected applicants, we find that the

male dominance was manifest here as well as throughout the period. The number of rejected women applicants corresponds to a little less than a third of the 257 men.<sup>13</sup> The group is unevenly distributed over the period. In the whole group of individual applicants, we do not find any women applying before 1952. In the following years, their début was slow. It is only in the 1990s that a more significant increase in the women's share occurs. Here we find women applicants corresponding to 60 % of the men. This is also the decade when four out of a total of five women professors were appointed.<sup>14</sup> Comparing their share of the appointed candidates and the group of those rejected, we can immediately see that women artists were underrepresented, but also that they refrained from applying. The total lack of women applicants up until 1952 should first and foremost be seen in the light of the gender structure of the rest of Swedish society. The professors of fine art were, just like university professors, considered men of the establishment: they were respected and well paid. Up until the 1970s, few women in Swedish society had held such prestigious positions. At the universities 104 women obtained a doctoral degree between 1870 and 1949, but only one of them became a university professor. Their numbers increased in the following years, but there were still only seven women holding the position in 1966 (WINKVIST, 2003, pp. 96, 115, 123). This reveals that seeking a professorship in fine art was not only an artistic statement; it was also a claim to a position of social and artistic prestige with strong male connotations (EDLING, 2012, p. 333).

However, although women constituted a relatively small share of the group of successful artists, they were given attention in the surrounding artistic professional field in Sweden. Results from the research project entitled *The Art of Success in Art* shows that, among the group of Swedish artists who could claim the most prestigious merits from 1945 to 2007 (e.g. purchases at Moderna Museet, attention from leading art critics, received awards and scholarships, solo exhibitions at major galleries), there was an increase in women's participation: out of a total of 848 individuals in this group, the share of women increased from 12 % to over 35% (EDLING, 2012, p. 335).<sup>15</sup> This points to the fact that many (of the relatively few, but still) successful women artists refrained from applying during the period.<sup>16</sup> They also met

open resistance. Gatekeeping procedures kept women aside when electing members to the Academy of Fine Art, the responsible authority within the RCA. In the period 1890 to 1953, 77 male Swedish fine art artists received membership, but no Swedish women artists (INGELMAN, 1982, p. 122). Vera Nilsson was the first woman to be elected in the twentieth century in 1954, and she was followed by Greta Knutson Tzara in 1958, Siri Derkert in 1960, Ingegärd Möller in 1967 and Hertha Hillfon in 1971 (KUNGL. AKADEMIEN FÖR DE FRIA KONSTERNA, 2011). Few women thus received acknowledgment from this patriarchal organisation, and the pattern among the applicants mirrors these figures. From 1952 until 1969 we find only four women artists with more modest careers applying for professorships at the RCA.<sup>17</sup> The indication that women actively refrained from applying is still visible, and the gatekeeping procedure was thus also upheld by self-censorship. The moderate increase of women applicants during later decades corresponds to the increased share of women among the group of successful artists in Sweden during this period (EDLING, 2012, p. 335, GUSTAVSSON, 2002, pp. 343-344). However, still very few of the more renowned women can be found among the applicants.<sup>18</sup>

Looking at the names of all rejected applicants and comparing them to contemporary artistic life, as it is mirrored in (the earlier mentioned databases on entries in) Swedish art magazines, another interesting pattern emerges – a national division of centre and periphery. There are extremely few of the more renowned artists from Gothenburg among applicants during the period: the only names found in the list of applicants are Tor Bjurström, Nils Nilsson, Edvin Ollers (1942) and Per Lindekrantz (1958 and 1960). Another example of this kind of lacuna is the absence of the different post-Cubist, concrete and Surrealist artists studying and working in Paris from the 1920s to the 1950s, and attending Fernand Léger's Academie Moderne, and/or being part of the circles around Léger in Paris (LÉGER, 1982, BRUNIUS, 1990, p. 36, BOSSON, 1994). Many of these artists were acknowledged, also in Stockholm. An illustrative example is the group of painters called *Halmstadgruppen*, named after the city in the southwest of Sweden. Inspired first by internationally influenced post-Cubism and later by Surrealism, they exhibited in Stockholm at the Academy of Fine

Art in 1936 and 1949, at Liljevalchs konsthall in 1939 and in six regional Swedish museums/major art galleries 1930-40. They were given special attention in the *Konstrevy* periodical in 1936, 1938 and 1939, and several of them participated in several international exhibitions (BOSSON, 2009, pp. 21-31, 68-76, 263, SCHAFFER, 1982, pp. 15, 91-95). However, only one of these painters had attended the RCA, and their careers ran between the regional context in Sweden and Paris, or international exhibitions. Only the alumnus among them, Stellan Mörner, had more recurrent professional commissions in the capital. He was of noble birth and became a member of the Academy in 1950 (BOSSON, 2009, pp. 258-263).<sup>19</sup> No artists in the Halmstad group are on the lists of applicants.

The results from the use of sociological method thus contributes to an understanding of how artistic selections and distinctions can be derived from power relations of social agents and the value ascribed (or not) to their merits and social trajectory. The group of rejected applicants also reflects not only the sociological fact of social homogeneity of male artists, alumni of the RCA with careers based in Stockholm, but also mirrors what from a network theory perspective could be interpreted as acts of self-censorship; many successful artists, men and women, can be assumed to have refrained from applying. Such attitudes could be seen as responses to, and a tacit acknowledgment of, the network logic of collegial alliances and loyalties, and of cooptative recruitment strategies.<sup>20</sup> Again we see striking parallels between these recruitments and the recruitment of other Swedish elites in the same historical period, such as business executives, university professors of history or bishops (LAGERLÖF NILSSON, 2010, GÖRANSSON, 2006b, pp. 325-346, GUNNERIUSSON, 2002).

### **The necessity of artistic heterogeneity: a new gap between generations**

However, the logic of the succession of legitimate inheritors did not necessarily exclude the possibility of artistic renewal, as long as the candidate had the right track record. The 1950s and 1960s provide interesting examples. In the 1950s, the educational board of the RCA and the Academy seemed

to have agreed that radical renewal was due. Referring to the increasing diversity in the surrounding professional art scene, the school sent a request to the Swedish Ministry of Education in 1957, asking for increased funding for two additional professorships, one in painting and one in sculpture. The report explicitly referred to the challenge from the “contemporary context” and the reform of the statutes in 1938.<sup>21</sup>

The report was met with sympathy from the government, and the RCA now recruited its youngest-ever professor in painting, Torsten Andersson. He was a candidate with all legitimate merits, a young yet acknowledged painter in the frontline, and only thirty-five when appointed in 1960.<sup>22</sup> However, this recruitment, signalling renewal, remained an isolated incident. Andersson resigned due to the lack of change. The school now received severe criticism, from both students and critics, for having become artistically stagnant (EDLING, 2010, pp. 171-178). The crisis led to further recruitments of young artists like the previously mentioned Carl Fredrik Reuterswård, thirty-one in 1965, and Ulrik Samuelsson, thirty-five when appointed in 1970. Reuterswård and Samuelsson’s intellectual attitude involved making art not primarily as aesthetic objects, but rather as intellectual projects, often with unorthodox materials and methods (FEUK, 1997, REUTERSWÅRD, 2010). They represented a radical break from the traditions of the older members in the Academy and indicated a severe gap between artistic generations. Like Andersson, they were both alumni and candidates of the “right kind”, but more controversial as artists. They never got majorities big enough to become elected members of the Academy.<sup>23</sup>

The recruitments of Reuterswård and Samuelsson and their controversial status in the eyes of older members of the Academy reflected an increasing variety of the Swedish art scene. From the beginning of the 1970s, the more conventional modernist easel painters, sculptors and graphic artists had to face competition from political artists, artists making installations, intellectual projects or provocative performances, feminist artists and environmental artists (KARLSSON, KIHLLANDER & ÅSTRAND, 1998, KIHLLANDER & ÅSTRAND, 2007, ARVIDSSON & WERNER, 2009, NYSTRÖM, 2005). The rising number of applicants to the positions announced at the RCA in the 1970s

is also an indication of a fiercer climate;<sup>24</sup> another is a strong increase in the number of articles about fine art artists in Swedish magazines from the mid-1960s to the end of the 1970s.<sup>25</sup> However, in spite of this keener competition, as we shall see below, the gatekeeping processes of the old boys' network of the Academy still managed to keep illegitimate candidates at bay. The conflicts surrounding the applications of the artist Björn Lövin in 1977 and 1978 are in this sense very telling. The artist Björn Lövin was the only applicant with an unconventional career (compared to the faculty) who came close to being appointed in the 1970s. Lövin's career is worth considering in more detail, since deviations are not only visible as a lack of "normal" merits (of an artist of fine art), but also as merits of a completely different kind, although leading to prestigious acknowledgement, such as being exhibited at the Moderna Museet. A look at the very short CV that Lövin sent to the Academy in December 1977, along with his application, provides evidence of the fact that Lövin was no traditional fine art artist – he had no formal artistic education. The CV only briefly refers to "private studies of art in Barcelona, Paris, and London" in the period 1957-1960. Another odd feature (as compared with other applicants) was a temporary teaching position at the prestigious Stockholm school for film, TV and radio production, *Dramatiska institutet* 1972-76. Given the highly intellectual components in his artistic work, it is less surprising to note that his CV also lists studies in information science and pedagogy at Uppsala and Stockholm universities in the early 1970s.

The list of merits in the artistic field was just as odd. Starting first with two group exhibitions in the local regions of Dalarna in 1960 and Skåne in 1963, the list continues with solo exhibitions. This part starts with one exhibition at the student cafe at the RCA, Cafe Mejan, in 1970, and then more surprisingly (sociologically), given the former merits, six exhibitions at renowned museums and large art galleries ("konsthallar") in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Luzern, among them two exhibitions in 1971 and 1974 at Moderna Museet in Stockholm. The production of four films, 1972-1977, was also listed. As we see, Lövin was not an autodidact in any ordinary sense, rather an intellectual artist, not orientated towards material craft. By using different genres, materials and techniques, and doing installations and films rather

than making objects, he turned the traditional notion of “exhibiting” art into settings for critical investigations of art, consumer society, etc. (Lövin, 2009). He had collaborated and exhibited with Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd and Ulrik Samuelson, both professors at the RCA, and was well established.<sup>26</sup>

In the appointment process starting in late 1977, the experts Lennart Rodhe (former professor at the RCA, established in the 1950s as painter of moderate abstraction), Sven Ljungberg (graphic artist, frequently given attention in the magazines of the Swedish trade unions, director of RCA) and Torsten Bergmark (artist and Marxist art critic, professor of art history and theory at the RCA) ranked Lövin as one of three top candidates, with no order of preference. In the second appointment process in 1978, the experts Peter Dahl (painter, professor at the RCA, a social radical painting in oil) Sivert Lindblom (sculptor, intellectually orientated, collaborating with Lövin in exhibitions and projects in 1974 and 1977) and C.O. Hultén (Surrealist painter, member of the Cobra group, autodidact yet a member of the Academy in 1980), ranked Lövin number one.<sup>27</sup> As we can see, the support for Lövin was unanimous in spite of these experts’ varied origins in different artistic “habitats”. The solid endorsement of Lövin thus confirms that he was an artist well established in the elite.

Though formally placed under the government, it was the privilege of the Academy to make the final decision on which candidate to recruit. In the first case, where the panel of experts had refrained from ranking the top three candidates, a majority of the educational board of the RCA surprisingly suggested another applicant, Hans Viksten, who was not in the group of ranked artists, and not even pointed out by the experts as being qualified. Several members of the educational board registered a reservation in the minutes.<sup>28</sup> The Academy, which had to make the final decision, raised doubts about the choice, but chose to comply. Viksten was a colleague, a member of the Academy since 1976, in his fifties, and a traditional choice compared to Lövin. He was in every sense an artist rooted in a modernistic paradigm, and he was also a close friend of Åke Pallarp, professor at the school, who also had encouraged Viksten to apply.<sup>29</sup> In the second appointment, in 1978, a majority of the educational board of the RCA voted for the

appointment of the now top-ranked Björn Lövin. However, the “mutiny” of the educational board of the RCA in the former appointment now resulted in what looks like a punishing manoeuvre on the part of the Academy. The sympathy that the members of the Academy felt for the ignored three top candidates in the former appointment was, however, not directed at Lövin, but at a well-known fellow member, painter Alvar Jansson, who was elected member of the Academy four years earlier in 1974 (KUNGL. AKADEMIEN FÖR DE FRIA KONSTERNA, 2011). This time, the Academy chose to ignore the decision of the educational board, as well as the recommendation of the panel of experts, and instead voted for the appointment of the fellow member Alvar Jansson, who in this case was not among the top three. Formal protests to the government from the board of the RCA did not change things, and Alvar Jansson was appointed in 1978.<sup>30</sup>

### **Unorthodox candidates recruited by orthodox procedures**

This resistance to the recruitment of an autodidact doing film and intellectual installation art was, as we have seen, a result of conservative forces actively excluding an unorthodox candidate. The standing of such traditional positions was, however, considerably weakened when, due to the Swedish reform of higher education in the late 1970s, the RCA was separated from the Academy in 1978 and made an independent art college, directly under the Swedish Ministry of Education (EDLING, 2010, pp. 153-211). Subject to the Swedish national regulations regarding higher education, the RCA lost the formal privilege to recruit according to cooptative principles. However, using the informal strategy of recruiting candidates who had held temporary positions prior to the announcement, the recruitments still followed the network logic. However, a closer look reveals that this familiar strategy was now used for different purposes. The strategy of picking candidates was now also used in order to recruit unorthodox candidates. It had now become necessary to adjust to developments in the professional field (EDLING, 2012, pp. 314-315, 327-328).

In 1980, the disagreements between representatives of tradition and renewal were the cause of cooptative strategies being used when Bård Breivik, the

Norwegian sculptor with established alliances in the young Stockholm *avant-garde*, and the odd candidate, was appointed. Breivik stands out as being chosen; the only applicant especially invited to apply, and unanimously praised by the panel of experts, the board and the students. He was a candidate with a track record free of the contagion of conservative Swedish Modernism and seemed to be the perfect remedy for the sculpture department. The rejected Swedish sculptors protested loudly; however, the board of the RCA kept a steady course through the controversy stirred by the formal protests and external critique (EDLING, 2012, pp. 316-321). Looking at the recruitment of Marie Louise De Geer Bergenstråhle in 1984, we can see that she was recruited in very much in the same way; she was also already chosen. She had held a temporary position as professor in 1977, suggested by the professor P.O. Ultvedt, during one of his leaves of absence.<sup>31</sup> As a female artist she was also much longed for, and the appointment of a woman was long overdue (EDLING, 2012, pp. 325-327). These two recruitments are also telling for the rest of the period studied. From now on, during the 1980s and 1990s, more unorthodox candidates were appointed. Four women artists in the 1990s – Stina Ekman (1990), Ann Edholm (1992), Mari Rantanen (1995) and Anette Senneby (1996) – and more non-alumni than ever. Out of a total of eleven non-alumni appointed between 1938 and 2000, as many as eight were appointed in the last twenty years. Three were of foreign descent or held international careers, and several were autodidacts. Although also recruiting male alumni with Stockholm careers, the social heterogeneity of the faculty was now much increased.

In order to understand this shift in priorities, although using the same kind of recruitment strategies, a short demonstration of the inherent conflict between the logic of a network and the doxa of a social field can be helpful (BOURDIEU, 1996, GUNNERIUSSON, 2002, BROADY, 2002): Recruitments following network logic can, if exposed, become a problem for an organisation that also acts in a social field where competition is presumed. A field in this sense is a set of relations and hierarchies between social actors who share core values and compete for resources. Legitimate dominance (i.e. a leading position) is won, according to the set of beliefs and values – the doxa – of the actors of the field, by the quality of one's art and one's devoted

investments, not by illegitimate “gifts” setting competition aside. In order to attain an elite position, acknowledged by the actors of the field, institutions and individuals are presumed to accept competition, and act disinterested and unselfish in the furthering of art according to central values and definitions of concepts of quality. Any act of favouring (due to network logic) must, if used, be theatricalised, i.e. naturalised according to the ideal of the competition of the field, i.e. justified by arguments referring to quality. Viewing the Swedish art scene as such a social field, where the Academy and its school upheld social and artistic prestige and dominating positions, the selections of the members of the Academy or professorships at the RCA (and the rewarding of the prestige, social contacts and economic advantages given the position) could not be exposed as a patronising of equals and colleagues but had to be naturalised as a neutral selection of the most worthy.

To the RCA, this legitimacy was of utmost importance. Selecting and educating (and hence consecrating) young artists for practicable and marketable careers in the Stockholm art scene, its conscientiousness concerning artistic quality in the selection of professors, as well as its willingness to allow for competition, could not be set under suspicion.<sup>32</sup> However, when conservative members of the educational board of the school and the Academy comprehended that core values of art (Modernism) were being threatened in the late 1970s, their ability to set self-interest aside was severely challenged. The ranking of artists such as Lövin mirrored a decreasing interest in the traditional handling of artistic media. The RCA had already recruited artists of this kind, such as Reuterswärd or Samuelson, and as alumni there could be no doubt about their skills and expertise as such. An autodidact like Lövin, on the other hand, was a clear threat to those who saw the practice-based training of the representation of visual form as the core part of art education. With professors like Lövin, the fundamental teaching in the life-room would definitely die. He was an autodidact, and severe doubts could be raised about his ability to teach traditional figuration. There were other candidates at hand, with more familiar track records (and colleagues from the Academy), who seemed to offer more solid know-how. A majority of conservative members of the educational board and the Academy therefore acted according to network logic and eliminated the threat.

The undermining of the symbolic legitimacy of the RCA was then a fact. Restoring this legitimacy required an ability to keep up with the increasing variety in contemporary art. In order to build a trustworthy foundation for the elite position of the RCA, the educational board soon used the formal separation from the Academy in order to create a space that allowed for more varied recruitment. However, no new strategies were needed, since there were tested procedures at hand.

The strategic use of temporary positions went back to the 1950s. The more frequent use in the 1980s can be seen as an indication of an increased need to assess candidates prior to the appointment. Opening up for more “risky” individuals, not familiar with the RCA, could mean a potential threat to the institution. Temporary positions gave candidates time to become acclimatised, demanding self-disciplined adjustment making them “congruent ... and amenable to restructuring”, and introduced them to the students and the faculty in order “to become ‘one of us’”.<sup>33</sup> If they passed the “test”, this cleared the way for eligible recruitments without the board of the school having to take the risk of meddling with the formal procedure. Hence, we could say that the desired artistic heterogeneity created a risk of a social instability (social heterogeneity). This was, however, compensated for by an initiation procedure, or tuning processes, helping candidates adjust to expectations and to moderate unwanted discrepancies. The fact that half of the appointed professors could be labelled unorthodox (i.e. women, non-alumni, foreign artists) does not imply any fundamental shifts in the constitution of the elite – the strategy also facilitated the recruitment of preferred male alumni. The highly selected deviants were an integral part of a very traditional pattern of reproduction.

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## SUMMARY

### A Radical Academy of Fine Art

The article investigates the recruitment to the fine art professorships at the Royal College of Art, the school of the Academy of Fine Art in Stockholm, 1938-2000. Starting out from theoretical perspectives from sociology, network theory, gender theory and art history the selection of the professors are studied as indications of the dependence of aesthetic preferences on a socially determined agenda. In contrast to many schools of the fine art academies in Europe in the twentieth century, the Royal College of Art in Stockholm was reformed in the late 1930s. However, although recruiting many “modern” artists, there is a notable social homogeneity in the faculty: out of 50 artists appointed to full professorships 1938-2000, 45 were men, most of them alumni of the RCA with careers based in Stockholm. The text discusses the hierarchical social dimensions of center/periphery and gender and points to the network logic of collegial alliances and loyalties and of cooptative recruitment strategies. The “brotherhood logic” of the old academic institution was not broken by the modernistic reform in 1939; new recruits were still selected in old-fashioned ways.

## NOTES

- 1 I am very grateful to Kristoffer Arvidsson, Donald Broady, Mikael Börjesson, Alexander Ekelund, Bo G Ekelund, Martin Gustavsson, Maria Görts, Joni Hyvönen, Dan Karlholm, Katarina Wadstein MacLeod, Andreas Melldahl and Annika Öhrner for their valuable comments on the manuscript.
- 2 Of the eight individuals being offered the position, one individual (Ragnar Sandberg) was offered two positions, at two different points in time, so the number of professorships being offered was nine. The total number of individuals appointed amounts to 50, but due to Sandberg being appointed twice, the total number of professorships is 51.
- 3 This or similar routines are found in a total of 18 open announcements. Information on which individuals were chosen for temporary posts is found in the minutes of the educational board of the school and/or in the yearly report of the school in the annual report of the academy, *Meddelanden från Akademien för de fria konsterna*.

- 4 Compare also the situation in Finland; Linnovaara 2008 pp. 65-66.
- 5 The eleven appointed candidates with differing educational tracks comprise three foreign citizens, four autodidacts or individuals with very modest and/or odd schooling, and only four with education from other minor Swedish art schools.
- 6 I have searched for all applicants and appointed candidates in the database of Moderna Museet (TMS) and registered what was purchased from each individual prior to, or in the same year as, the application. I have not considered donations, the focal point here being the symbolic act of consecration. For the same reason I have focused on purchases of “major” works (painting, sculpture, etc.), indicating a well-considered and strategic investment.
- 7 I have searched the databases *ARTbibliographies Modern*, *Svensk konstvetenskaplig bibliografi* and *Artikelsök*, the bibliographic catalogues *Svenskt tidskriftsindex* 1953-1961 and *Svenska tidskriftsartiklar* 1961-1999 and registered fine art artists given special attention, the act of consecration again being a focal point. I have also searched the 1936-1960 volumes of *Konstrevy* and the 1940-1962 volumes of *Paletten*. Professors not given special attention prior to, or the same year as, the appointment, are Asmund Arle (1961), Erland Melanton (1963), Curt Asker (1977) and Ann Edholm (1991).
- 8 Counting all applications sums up to 554 – 439 men and 115 women. This is due to the fact that several individuals applied several times. The total number of individuals applying is 371 (293 men, 78 women). 42 of these were appointed, so the rejected applicants sum up to 329.
- 9 173 rejected applicants were alumni.
- 10 On the importance of the school for a career in Swedish art during the period, see Gustavsson, Börjesson & Edling 2012, pp. 22-23 and Edling 2010, p. 154 footnote 239.
- 11 197 rejected applicants were found in the Moderna Museet database.
- 12 Out of 329 rejected applicants, only 57 were identified in the survey described above in footnote 6.
- 13 A total of 73 women applied.
- 14 In the 1990s a total of 106 individuals applied for 10 announced positions – 67 men and 39 women.
- 15 The research project was led by Martin Gustavsson and Mikael Börjesson, and was funded by the Swedish Research Council 2006-2008. See <http://skeptron.uu.se/proj/konsten/preseng.htm>.
- 16 Interviews with female alumni indicate that women to a significantly lesser degree were integrated in the networks of the professors, see Görts 2010.
- 17 The applicants were Ana Wilhelmson-Lagerman, Eva Rundlöf, Inga Bagge and Rosa Linnala.
- 18 On the 1980s, see Edling 2012, pp. 329-331. During the 1990s, very few of the women attracting contemporary attention were among the applicants: those missing include Eva Löfdahl, Cecilia Edefalk, Charlotte Gyllenhammar, Ingrid Orfali, Katrin Helmersson, Marianne Lindberg de Geer, Annika von Hauswolff, Lotta Antonsson, Carin Ellberg, Annika Karlsson-Rixon, Maria Lindberg, Maria Miesenberger, Ann

- Sofie Sidén, Sophie Tottie and Tuija Lindström. On the art scene in the 1990s, see Sören Engblom *Art in Sweden. Leaving the empty cube* Stockholm 1998.
- 19 On the lack of acknowledgement in spite of the relative success, see letter from Mörner in *Halmstad Berlin Paris. Målarresa genom 20-talet* ed. Viveca Bosson, Halmstad 1984, pp. 294-296. See also the ironic comment on the reception of these painters by the artist Otto G. Carlsund in the article "Tvärsnitt genom nutida konst II. Måleriet" in *Tiden* 1940, pp. 369-370.
  - 20 There are artists with the "right" kind of career who refrained from applying. Torsten Renqvist, Lena Cronqvist and Jan Håfström are examples of this. Considering the acknowledgment given them, and their very successful careers, it is plausible to assume that they could maintain a relative autonomy both artistically and financially.
  - 21 "Konsthögskolan. Undersökning av skolans arbetsförhållanden och förslag till deras förbättring" Kungl. Akademiens för de fria konsterna Protokoll och Handlingar A 1957. Konstakademiens arkiv (KAA).
  - 22 Protokoll och handlingar A 1960. A-protokoll 30 maj 1960. KAA.
  - 23 Reuterswärd was suggested for membership in 1966, 1968, 1969, 1971 and 1972, and Samuelson in 1974, 1975 and 1976. Protokoll B 1966-1976. KAA.
  - 24 Up until 1970 no announcement attracted more than 12 applicants, and most often far less. However, in the 1970s, the number of applicants for half of the 10 announced positions exceeded 15, in two cases even 20.
  - 25 My search in the index *Svenska tidskriftsindex* aimed for articles on Swedish fine art artists, leaving individuals active in decorative arts aside. The increase is visible as an increase in the number of articles on individuals, and an increase in the number of magazines. During 1952-1965, the number of articles on individual artists varied from 6 to 20. In 1966, it increased to 30, and in the last three years of the 1970s, the numbers never went below 45.
  - 26 Not mentioned in the CV is the exhibition, Licht, Objekt, Bewegung, Raum: Schwedische Kunst heute : 16.1.-22.2.1970, Preiss, Gerhard (red.) Kunsthalle Nürnberg am Marienort, Nürnberg, 1970. Here both Reuterswärd and Samuelson participated, and in the exhibition Live Show in 1974 at Moderna Museet he collaborated with Samuelson and the artist Sivert Lindblom (member of the panel of experts in 1978).
  - 27 Kungliga konsthögskolans protokoll 1977/78, Lärarrådets protokoll 21 februari 1978 bilaga L 83 and Lärarrådets protokoll 5 april 1978 bilaga L 103. KAA.
  - 28 Lärarrådets protokoll 24 och 28 april 1978. KAA.
  - 29 On Vikstens art and network see Hans Viksten *Hans Viksten: livsmålaren*, Stockholm, 1994. On the application, see Hans Viksten *Mitt vilda liv* 1992, pp. 281-286.
  - 30 Lärarrådets protokoll 24 och 28 april 1978. KAA. On "illegitimate" improvement of a position of an individual due to network logic, see Guneriusson pp. 43-45 in *Sociala nätverk* 2002.
  - 31 On the temporary position, see Lärarrådets protokoll 21 mars 1977 bil. L92. KAA.
  - 32 Compare Stenlås 1998 pp. 57-58.
  - 33 Cooptation demands a "congruent and docile" habitus, Bourdieu 2008 p. 100.

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