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A natural selection? The recruitment of professors at the Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm and the Swedish artistic field of production in the 1980s

Prestigious appointments

The recruitment of professors at the Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm (Kungl. Konsthögskolan, KKH) has, in the second half of the twentieth century, rested solely on artistic grounds, and on the holder being attributed artistic prominence by assessment panels comprised of equally merited experts. A professor of fine arts was thus, during this period, not recruited for his or her educational expertise, but on the basis of professional success. Nor was there a curriculum or any skills the holder was expected to convey; the education at the academy's school was non-structured and independent. Each professor ran a model studio in which the first- and second-year students worked, and the teaching assignment consisted of visiting the studio three times a week and occasional supervision to the older students.¹ The professor recruited by the school was no drawing master, but an individual with strong artistry, who would stimulate and nurture the students' development of their own artistic dispositions.² The post of professor was thus a symbolic recognition of the holder's competitiveness and artistic ability, and something more attractive than merely a post from which to make a living³. It was also a position that had been almost exclusively held by men: out of 49 full professors appointed to the fine arts programs at KKH between 1945 and 2000, 44 were men. Female teachers have thus not only been rare in the history of higher fine arts education in Sweden; they were also a very late addition and their debut was slow.⁴ KKH – until 1977 the only fine arts education with university status in the country – hired in 1984, the year before it celebrated its 250th anniversary, its first regular female professor, Marie Louise De Geer Bergenstråhle.⁵

¹ On the educational practice at the Royal College of Art during the postwar period, see: Marta Edling *Fri Konst? Bildkonstnärlig utbildning vid Konstfackskolan, Valands konsthögskola och Kungl. Konsthögskolan 1960-1995*, Stockholm 2010.

² On the charismatic supervisory relationship, see Edling, Marta & Börjesson, Mikael, "Om frihet, begåvning och karismatiskt lärande inom den högre bildkonstnärliga utbildningen" p. 66-83 in *Praktiske grunde. Tidskrift for kultur- og samfundsvidenskab*, nr 1 2008, p.75-77, <http://www.hexis.dk/praktiskegrunde-01-2008.pdf>

³ Several of the valorization processes in the field of artistic production in Sweden since 1945 have been thoroughly investigated. Results from the multidisciplinary research project *The Art of Success in Art. Social Origin, Gender, Education, and Career 1945-2007* (ASA) show that a teaching position at the Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm has been a very significant qualification among Swedish visual artists from 1945 until today. The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council 2006-2008, dnr. 2005-2823. Results will be published in the forthcoming anthology *Konstens omvända ekonomi. Tillgångar inom utbildningar och fält 1938-2008* red. Mikael Börjesson, Martin Gustavsson och Marta Edling, Stockholm 2011.

⁴ After the turn of the century in 2000 the representation of women has increased due to the pressure from policy reforms within higher education.

⁵ *Katalog Kungl. Konsthögskolan Stockholm 1945-2000*. The five women appointed to regular, fine arts-oriented professorships at the school during the twentieth century were Marie Louise Ekman (De Geer Bergenstråhle) 1984. Ann Edholm 1991, Stina Ekman 1991, Marie Rantanen 1996 and Annette Senneby 1997.

Since it was in the 1980s that a woman obtained a full professorship in Sweden for the first time, the decade seems attractive to study based on the question of what happened when the single-sex recruitment pattern was broken. The study of the appointment processes also gives us a welcome opportunity take a closer look at one of the career opportunities of women artists and their share of the kinds of selective and legitimizing nominations that prestigious appointments indicate. Uncovering the mechanisms of the valorization processes and demonstrating their importance for later consecration also needs to produce some answers to *how* these processes perform this gendered selection; stipends are awarded, professors appointed, museums make purchases with reference only to aesthetic qualities and talent. Such aesthetic distinctions and seemingly neutral choices must thus be investigated in order to show how presumably unbiased selections of “quality” and “excellence” produce gendered effects in the contemporary art field

In this article I will have a closer look at all 10 full art professors who were appointed between 1980 and 1990. A comparison will also be made with the appointment of an adjunct professor in 1983. I will initially draw a short general picture of the applicants’ gender and qualifications. I will also draw a picture of three of the appointment procedures, and analyze arguments and discussions as they are reflected in the minutes and letters. Finally, I will use perspectives from art history, gender theory and cultural sociology to discuss how the appointments can be put in relation to the balance of power between different kinds of careers in the contemporary art world. I will highlight the hidden gender logic that the assessment of qualifications and recruitment followed, and discuss the issue of how the male dominance was maintained by seemingly gender-neutral considerations for the applicants’ artistic direction and the needs that the school argued would be filled by the recruitment. The source material for this study is mainly taken from the documentation kept in the Royal University College of Fine Arts archives, as well as articles in contemporary journals.

Let us first have a closer look at the applicants. Throughout the decade, a total of 117 people applied for 10 advertised positions.⁶ 21 of the applications were women, and it is clear that the title of professor attracted qualified candidates. Out of the 117 applicants, 88 reported having a longer education from Swedish or foreign higher fine arts training, i.e. about three out of four applicants. It is also clear that they were not only well educated artists, but many of them also had solid careers behind them. Just under half of the applicants, 55 of them, reported having had five or more individual exhibitions.⁷ Many of them had had their work purchased by county museums, and about a quarter of the applicants stated that they were represented at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm.

A general comparison of the scale of the 117 applicants’ important achievements in the database of 14,500 Swedish artists 1945-2007, set up in the research project *The Art of Success in Art. Social Origin, Gender, Education, and Career 1945-2007*, shows that the selection of candidates follows an expected pattern – the appointed ones have the most

⁶Complete application documents (CVs, certificates, documentation of works) are rarely found in the archives. Most common is that the school’s own compilations of resumes have been kept. However, the compilations appear to be reliable. In the cases I have been able to compare, I have not found any significant deviations. Information from the database collected by the ASA-project has provided complementary information, see more about this below.

⁷ Here we can also imagine that there are a number of unrecorded cases. It is obvious that successful artists relied on their reputation to a higher degree and did not present their qualifications in as much detail as artists who were not as far into their careers. Less experienced applicants also tend not to separate individual and group exhibitions to avoid exposing their lack of more prestigious individual exhibitions.

qualifications, followed by the ones who had been deemed qualified, and finally the rest. A direct example is that there is a significant difference when it comes to the ones deemed qualified and their representation at the Museum of Modern Art. This group comprises 40 artists, of which eight are women. The ones deemed qualified or recommended have a statistically significant higher degree of this achievement than the other applicants.⁸

"The artist who, better than any other candidate, can bring important impetus and resources to the College of Fine Arts"

However, the statistics do not reveal what ultimately decided between the candidates in the group deemed qualified. Here we must turn to the archive and the documents. Most telling are the archived protests. Several of the appointments led to controversy and conflict, and debates and polemics during appointment proceedings can sometimes be very revealing. The protests and objections that were stored in the archives from the appointments came mostly from the candidates, and the common starting point in these letters is, not unexpectedly, that the experts in the assessment panel have made a doubtful or incorrect assessment in that they have not sufficiently considered every candidate's expertise.

There are also several claims that the recommended candidates had been unfairly rewarded on the basis of being favored due to their connection to the school and its representatives. Criticism is aimed at "the experts who are all 'baked into' the Royal University College of Fine Arts" and who "bypass far too many qualified candidates", and that they "have chosen a favorite without a proper review of all the applicants and thereby neglected their obligations".⁹ Suspicions are voiced that "a kind of 'inner circle' dominates and pretty much decides who even gets to set their foot nowadays at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm /.../'the wall' is impenetrable". Another applicant also describes what is perceived as one of the methods for this selection: the obtaining of temporary appointments at the school.

Whoever /.../has had the opportunity to substitute at the Royal University College of Fine Arts has obviously since been acquainted with teachers and students, which can also be seen in the reactions from the college and in the unit board minutes. When teachers, students and the unit board are voting for candidates, it is easy to understand that they will recommend the person they already know.¹⁰

Objections of this nature can be expected to come up in most appointment proceedings, but in this case the statements correspond to an established state of affairs: a connection between the school and several of the recommended candidates is a fact. A clear difference in reported qualifications between the 40 candidates deemed qualified and the other 77 candidates emerges when one considers the teaching experience from KKH that they have stated in their resumes. Out of the 40 nominees, 16 report having had some sort of teaching assignment at the school, either as substitutes or regular teachers. Amongst the other 77 candidates, only eight report such qualifications.

This state of affairs becomes even clearer when taking into account that eight out of ten appointed professors had also substituted at the school, either before or during the ongoing

⁸ For information on the research project *The Art of Success in Art* (ASA) see note 3.

⁹ Skrivelse 17:1 and 17:2 "Till utbildningsdepartementet" Dnr 502.27.84 serie F1:43 KKHA.

¹⁰ Skrivelse 28 "Uppsala den 23.4.85" and skrivelse 30:1 "Till utbildningsdepartementet" Dnr 502.162.85 serie Ö3:1 KKHA. Original in Swedish, author's translation.

appointment. And the substitutions indicate that the holder was well known. The documents in the archive reveal that the serving professors always suggested their replacements, and that the students were often deeply involved in these matters. But there were other connections that reveal close relationships, as well. The assessment panels included, at the time of eight out of the ten appointments, a serving teacher or professor at the school – or someone who had previously held such a post there. The students also always invited artists to apply, in addition to ranking the applicants. The deep connection to the school among the experts, the selected candidates and the appointed – both as teachers and students – was thus an indisputable fact. Anyone who reads the letters from the appointment proceedings in the 1980s may also repeatedly note that the connection to the school is taken for granted, and emphasized, when appointing the recommended candidate. Several assessment panel reviews bring up the fact that the recommended candidate has substituted at the school¹¹; others refer to the body of students' wishes¹².

One can also note, however, that it is also always argued, explicitly or implicitly, that the selected candidate is the one representing a quality that is needed, or can benefit the school.¹³ This candidate's skill is always praised, of course, but they are often keen to also highlight other applicants. In these cases it is usually pointed out, however, that the recommended candidate possesses something special that, better than anyone else, can "bring" something to the school. This was also something that the school repeatedly emphasized in their letters to the government when motivating their choice of candidate. It was not just a general qualitative assessment; it was also a matter of what qualities the school was in need of. Many applicants could be artistically talented, but the deciding factor was how the qualities matched the needs. An example from a document from 1981 provides an illustrative picture of the argument:

Only one person can be appointed to the vacant position. This obviously does not mean that every other applicant has been deemed unqualified. When the board of the Royal University College of Fine Arts makes a decision in appointing a teacher, they often have a choice between several equally qualified candidates. The decision then lies in assessing which one of these individually good artists best represents the current needs of the school, and the manner in which this candidate best complements the existing team of teachers.¹⁴

This position rested on a well-established tradition and had been codified already in 1938 when the school's regulations were reformed. Ever since the reform of higher education in 1977, when all higher artistic training was integrated into higher education, it was formally the

¹¹ Skrivelse 13 "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" Dnr 502.27.84 serie F1:43, "[Sakkunnigutlåtande II]" Dnr 502.124.84 serie F1:44, Skrivelse 25 "[Sakkunnigutlåtande]" Dnr 502.162.85 serie Ö3:1, Skrivelse 6 "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" Dnr 502.180.87 serie F1:75, Skrivelse 26 "Utlåtande" Dnr 502.170.88 serie F1:86, Skrivelse 7 "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" Dnr 502.147.90 serie Ö3:1. KKHA.

¹² Cf. skrivelse 32 "Inför professorsvalet på skulpturskolan" and skrivelse 34 "Till konsthögskolans enhetsstyrelse" Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. Cf. skrivelse 7 "Till enhetsstyrelsen" and "Sakkunnigyttrande 1984-04-03" Dnr 502.21.83 serie Ö3:1. Skrivelse 13 "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" and skrivelse 16 "Utdrag ur Enhetsstyrelsens protokoll den 24 maj 1984" Dnr 502.27.84 serie F1:43, Skrivelse 23 dnr 502.170.88 serie F1:86. KKHA.

¹³ Skrivelse 70:1 "Till utbildningsdepartementet" Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10, Skrivelse 9:4 dnr 502.316.80 serie F1:10, unnumbered letter "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" dnr 502.27.84 serie F1:43, [Sakkunnigutlåtande II] "[Till] Enhetsstyrelsen" dnr 502.124.84 serie F1:44, skrivelse 6 "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" dnr 502.180.87 serie F1:75, skrivelse 16 "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" dnr 502.170.88 serie F1:86, skrivelse 13 dnr 502.108.90 F1:105, skrivelse 7 "De sakkunnigas utlåtande" dnr 502.147.90 serie Ö3:1. KKHA.

¹⁴ Skrivelse 70:1 "Till utbildningsdepartementet" Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA. Original in Swedish, author's translation.

Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance that regulated the school's activities, but it is clear that in such important matters as the appointment of professors, they followed this older, and characteristic, tradition. The basis for recruitment in this old tradition was 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" that could offer varied supervising contacts. The professors were thus required to represent different artistic interests and to work in different disciplines within the art world. The basis for personal contact was that students were free to choose the supervisor who best represented their own interests.¹⁵ The routine of the professors recommending their substitutes, or selecting experts to the assessment panels who were familiar with the current situation at the school, was thus the logic consequence of the perseverance of this tradition.

This recruitment practice was also respected by the government, which, as a rule, did not question the school's artistic quality assessment or selection criteria. In general, even after the reform of higher education in 1977, the government maintained a very respectful attitude to the school. It is also no wonder that the artistic autonomy was successfully upheld. The school's history and high artistic status, and its leading position in Sweden, made it well equipped to assert its distinction.¹⁶

"A 'defeat' for Swedish sculpture"? Appointment of the professorship in sculpture in 1980
The professorship in sculpture was advertised in March 1980. As many as 8 women and 20 men applied. Among them were artists with well-established careers. In the expert review in November, six of the candidates were deemed qualified to be professors. On paper, the conditions for a solid recruitment thus appeared to be good.

However, a letter of protest signed by two sculpture students from May of that year already indicated that there was room for other interpretations. The letter protested the appointment on the basis that the "recruitment base" was "poor". The objection was not based on the argument that the applicants were artists of little worth, but that there was not enough of the artistic vitality among the applicants that was needed to renew the department. The problem was, according to the students, that "no leading artist of real importance is seeking the position as professor". Another problem was, according to the students, that the system with permanent positions had caused stagnation. Consequently, what was needed now was "a richer and wider use of impetus and force", i.e. "an expanded guest teacher system"¹⁷

There are no more preserved complaints in the letters or minutes in the archives, but the critical attitude cannot have been an isolated phenomenon. A sign that it was taken seriously is that the assessment panel review in this case referred to and, albeit indirectly, supported the critical assessment. The panel of the three experts found six of the applicants "artistically interesting", qualitatively equal and qualified to be professors, but they would not recommend any of them. There was no one that they "commonly" considered "clear-cut for the position", and no further motivation was provided. Two of the experts (one a previous professor at the school, and the other a serving professor, as well as vice president) instead referred to the idea of inviting guest teachers, and suggested that a remaining option was to invite an artist to

¹⁵ Edling 2010, pp. 162-166.

¹⁶ Edling 2010, pp. 153-235.

¹⁷ Skrivelse 32 "Inför professorsvalet på skulpturskolan" Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA.

apply for the position. They even had someone in mind: the Norwegian artist Bård Breivik.¹⁸ The proposal was well received by the school's board, teachers and students, and the vice president notified the other candidates at the turn of the year 1980/81 that Breivik had been "granted the opportunity to submit his application".¹⁹

It is not surprising, considering the tradition and values that have been cherished in the recruitments for more than 40 years, that the school would respond to the assessment panels' arguments. The sculpture students' change of opinion in the matter was revealing. In October 1980, soon before the experts' review was received, a majority had recommended the Swedish woman sculptor Gun Maria Pettersson for the position.²⁰ But the experts' proposal to suggest Breivik for the position split the group. In a vote in January 1981, less than half were in favor of her. She received nine votes, and the invited Breivik got eight.²¹ A record from the school board shows that the management and teachers, upon collecting further statements, also agreed with the experts' diagnosis: 13 out of 15 members voted in favor of recommending Breivik for the position.²²

It also turned out that Breivik's references, although not as extensive, included some important qualifications which played a crucial role in the decision. His work together with colleagues in Bergen, Norway had led to the creation of Vestlandets kunstakademi and the development of an art college in the city where he, between 1973 and 1978, had been in charge of the sculpture department. This education was deliberately designed as an alternative to a traditional academic training revolving around model studies. Breivik was more interested in 'low' materials and traditional crafting techniques, and problematized "formalism burdened by tradition". It was explicit in the teaching that students should be encouraged to be able to create "independent solutions regardless of the traditional views in Norwegian sculpture". He appeared unequivocally as an innovator of Norwegian sculpture and Norwegian sculpture training.²³

This revealed what ultimately spoke in Breivik's favor, in relation to the other recommended candidates, especially Gun Maria Pettersson: he did not have the burden of being a representative of a well established modernist, but by many at the time perceived as stagnant, tradition.

The issue of gender was never raised in the twists and turns of this appointment. To an outsider with historical distance, it appears that the polarization in the case between the emphasis on (an avant-garde) renewing artistic vitality and the polemical rejection of a traditional formal-aesthetic, modernist tradition made it impossible to make the gender aspect a main issue, since the respective candidates were, so to speak, of the wrong gender. Gun Maria Pettersson's expertise was considered to belong to the alleged modernist backwaters that representatives of the sculpture department's students had warned about in their letter of protest.

¹⁸ Skrivelse 34 "Till Konsthögskolans enhetsstyrelse" Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA.

¹⁹ Skrivelse 44 [Brev], Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA.

²⁰ Skrivelse 33 "Utdrag ur enhetsstyrelsens protokoll 1 oktober 1980", Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA.

²¹ Skrivelse 50 "Röstresultat", Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA.. Two of the other recommended candidates each received one vote, on top of which there was one blank vote.

²² Skrivelse 53 "Utdrag ur enhetsstyrelsens protokoll 27 januari 1981, Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA.

²³ Skrivelse 64:4 "Uttalelse om Bård Breivik", skrivelse 64:5 "Redogörelse for syn på kunst og pedagogikk", skrivelse 65 "Bård Breivik redogörelse", Dnr 502.135.80 serie F1:10. KKHA.

"The Royal University College of Fine Arts has got its first female professor

Some years later, however, an opportunity opened up for an appointment in which traditional values could be asserted. This resulted in Gun Maria Petterson being appointed a visiting professor at half-time for three years on March 1, 1983.

This appointment was the result of the government granting the school a one three-year visiting professorship. Such a position meant that the position did not have to be advertised, but the school had to produce two expert reports on the person they wanted to appoint. The students were also invited to suggest names.²⁴

As expected, the polarity between avant-garde and tradition as described above is echoed in the proposals and reports in the case, and the differences of opinion resulted in the students and teachers being in disagreement. The student body had suggested Gun Maria Petterson, while the newly appointed professor Bård Breivik and his colleagues preferred the Norwegian artist Björn Nörsgaard.²⁵ Gender was not an issue this time either; the distinction between the candidates was made only in terms of artistic domicile in either "experimental expression" (Nörsgaard) or "model studies and modeling" (Petterson).²⁶

The issue of gender surfaces only as an agreement between the expectation of a teacher who wanted to work "in close contact with the students" (as one of the experts' expressed it) and comments about Gun Maria Petterson's person. She is portrayed as "quiet" and seriously committed to her students as a supervisor, but nowhere, except in the art educator and museum curator Carlo Derkert's expert report, is any specific comment made about her being a woman, and that she as such might be needed. According to Derkert, a female professor would be able to "assert her experiences in a completely male-dominated art college /.../ [since] no government institution in this country was – in this respect – as conservative as the Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm".²⁷

In all other documents, it is rather through the associations of the depiction of her character that one can imagine that her gender was highlighted, and that what was described was something that might be missing at the school. Carlo Derkert stressed that her students at the Gerlesborg School of Fine Art had appreciated "her ability to 'care'"; the other expert wrote that she was "demonstrably deeply committed to the students' problems"; in statements from previous service at the Royal University College of Fine Arts 1972-74, then-president Sven Ljungberg wrote that she "took an interest in the students' work with sincerity and knowledge" and that he had noted "the interest she had in everyone, their personality and conditions".²⁸ Petterson was thus already known as a committed supervisor at the school, and a possible interpretation is that this quality was associated with her gender. It is a fact that no man, in any document in any of the ten studied appointment cases, was said to be particularly good at 'caring' about the students.

²⁴ Skrivelse 2, 3:1 och 4 Dnr 504.66.82 serie F1:26 KKHA.

²⁵ Skrivelse 8 "[Elevomröstning] och skrivelse 10 "[Läromröstning]" Dnr 504.66.82 serie F1:26 KKHA..

²⁶ Skrivelse 11 "Grundunderlag för Björn Nörsgaards kandidatur" och skrivelse 13 "Till enhetsstyrelsen", Dnr 504.66.82 serie F1:26 KKHA.

²⁷ Skrivelse 9 Carlo Derkert "Utlåtande" Dnr 504.66.82 serie F1:26 KKHA..

²⁸ Skrivelse 9 "Utlåtande" 17 februari 1981, "Utlåtande" 8 februari 1981, "Betyg" Dnr 504.66.82 serie F1:26 KKHA.

The hypothesis that it was precisely such a quality that was needed can be established in light of the fact that the school around this time was clearly characterized by a masculine culture and a tough attitude among some of the male students, something which not only challenged their fellow students but also the professors. This was not just a matter of the ideal being to paint “manly” and to avoid things that were “classified as female, feminist or ‘girly’” but also to take a punch, in a literal sense. Fighting was something to be counted on, and one of the serving professors at this time said in retrospect that it was good to be big and strong if you were a professor, since things could get rough sometimes.²⁹

That Petterson’s gender was a factor taken into account is also reflected in the communiqué that the school’s president sent out when the appointment was a fact, and the headline summarized the news: “The Royal University College of Fine Arts has got its first female professor”. It was only in the subsequent text that the careful reader could note that the headline was a kind interpretation of reality; the first female professor had been given a three-year stipend at half-time. The first woman to take up a regular full-time professorship would have to wait another two years.

“An inspiring force that can benefit the school”. Appointment of the professorship in painting in 1984

When the professorship in painting was advertised in 1984 the male painter Kjell Strandqvist was the artist specifically highlighted by the experts as a “good painter”, but one can sense some reservations in seemingly positive assessments of his “genuine knowledge” and his “combination of ‘classic’ schooling and reorientation”. Perhaps this suggests that Strandqvist was certainly a “good painter”, but that something more than traditional skills was needed. The experts also noted in their review that none of the candidates fully met the “ideal requirements” they had established. Consequently, they had decided to consider which candidate could “bring some new experiences to the school”, and so the choice fell upon the female artist Marie Louise De Geer Bergensträhle. The argument was two-fold; it was partly her “diverse and independent artistic activities” that motivated the choice, and partly that she was a woman. Women were “underrepresented” as teachers, the experts stated, and the students had expressed strong support for her. The review admitted that “her range as a painter” was “narrow”, even if the production was large, but still argued that she could be “a force of inspiration” that could “benefit” the school.³⁰

It was thus not necessary for the Royal College of Fine Arts to have a professor of painting who possessed a wide technical range and an extensive knowledge of craftsmanship in the art of painting. The point was rather that a professor of painting should have an individuality and originality that could infuse dynamics and life into the education. Being a skillful painter was a quality which, on its own, had long ceased to be a qualification for a leading position in the field of art, the same way that formal-aesthetic skill in a sculptor was being phased out as a cutting-edge expertise. Those recruited were meant to be in dialogue with their contemporaries; there was no room for an education out of step with the times. In this case, the candidate’s gender also coincided happily with a recognized innovative artistry, something

²⁹On the masculine culture at the school, see Barbro Andersson “In som ett lejon, ut som ett svin. Intervjuer med före detta elever vid Konsthögskolan i Stockholm på 1980-talet” pp. 54-65 in *Praktiske grunde. Tidsskrift for kultur- og samfundsvidenskab*, nr 1 2008 <http://www.hexis.dk/praktiskegrunde-01-2008.pdf>, p. 58-59, and Edling 2010 annotation 338.

³⁰Skrivelse 13 “De sakkunnigas utlåtande” Dnr 502.27.84 serie F1:43 KKHA.

which also helped to highlight the “male dominance”. She represented a leading artistry; she was willful, “personal and powerful”; she could be an “inspirational force” and contribute “new experiences”. This time around, the candidate with the best combination of characteristics that could “bring” something to the school was a woman.

The professor as a male character

The question that comes to mind is why this ideal of the “inspiring force” had the effect that, until 1984, the recruited full professors were exclusively men. We can see that there were women artists who had taken leading positions in the Swedish field of art at the time, women who had been credited with uniqueness and originality and showed every sign of recognition that was necessary for an art college professor to have.³¹

However, an overview of the field shows that there were, relatively speaking, not that many female artists with the ‘right’ baggage of the ‘right’ amount, who met the requirements to apply for the professorships. Throughout the decade, as pointed out earlier, a total of only 21 women applied, and not many of them had strong qualifications. Many of the more qualified did not apply for the positions. Only a few women who were elected as members of the Academy of Fine Arts were among the applicants and experts during this period. Hence, this confirms the often repeated claim that qualified women did not apply for the professorships.

One factor which might help us understand this “agoraphobia”³² is the practiced recruitment agenda: the school recruited those who could “bring” something to the school. The individual path, the combined qualifications and the attractiveness of the name were not only measured meritocratically, but also tried against a criterion that was far more difficult to evaluate: was this the person the school was looking for, or not? The candidates identified as possessing this attribute during the studied period were, 9 times out of 10, men. What those appointed had in common was that they, 8 times out of 10, already knew that they represented such attractive expertise. They already had, either before or during the appointment process, been appointed to temporary positions at the school. It is important to note that this practice was known and transparent. We need to consider the students’ practice of inviting applicants, of voting and ranking the candidates; we need to consider that the professors recommended their substitutes; we need to consider that one or more of the experts in the assessment panel was always taken from an inner circle. All of this was known and the gate keeping routines were explicit.³³

³¹ A list of women appointed as members of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in the 1970s and 1980s includes names that clearly had enough qualifications for a professorship: Ingegärd Möller became a member in 1967, Kajsa Melanton in 1974, Hertha Hillfon in 1971, Barbro Bäckström in 1972, Lenke Rothman in 1976, Lena Cronqvist in 1977, Birgit Broms in 1982, Birgitta Liljebladh in 1982, Kajsa Mattas in 1989, Stina Ekman in 1990. In addition, there were several female artists whose names were well known in Sweden, for example: Kristina Elander, Beth Laurin, Margareta Renberg, Channa Bankier, Anna Sjödahl, Gittan Jönsson, Annmari Olsson.

³² On women’s voluntary exclusion in terms of “agoraphobia”, see Pierre Bourdieu *Masculine Domination* Cambridge 2001 [1998] p. 39.

³³ For studies of gendered gate keeping processes in the recruitment of professors in other areas of higher education, see Marieke van den Brink *Behind the scenes of science. Gender practices in the recruitment and selection of professors in the Netherlands* Diss. Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen 2009 and Amsterdam Pallas Publications 2010. There is also an interesting parallel here with the appointment of bishops in Sweden in the 20th century. Similar to the recruitment of professors, an important component of recruitment is that the candidate is not only willing to seek the position, but that he (bishops have been a male-dominated elite) is also perceived to be particularly suited for it. The candidate is seen, by himself and others, as “called” or “sent”, see Ulrika Lagerlöf Nilsson *Med lust och bävan. Vägen till biskopsstolen inom Svenska kyrkan under 1900-talet* Diss. Göteborg Göteborgs universitet 2010.

In order to understand what was at stake, given these circumstances, for each individual in the decision to apply for a position, Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" may be of help. This concept sums up the social shaping of individuals in the form of embodied dispositions, resources and capabilities, and the ensuing readiness to meet an expected habitus associated with a certain social position. Hence, an applicant did not only need qualifications with breadth and depth, but also a reputation and a network that familiarized him or her with the school, but also the motivation to apply, given by the appropriate habitus, balanced against these expectations.

Consequently, it may be important to consider how significant the sense of connection was to the applicants, as well as the consequent internal expectation that the person seeking the position should "fit in". And a corresponding internal resistance among those who doubted their own resources and attractiveness, even if there was no formal obstacle. An application was in fact an assertion of potential attractiveness, and one can imagine that those who did not feel that they could back this up would rather abstain than expose themselves to the shame of not being good enough, even if they were formally resourceful.³⁴

Considering the applicants' need of an appropriate habitus, another likely factor to have played a role in the decision to apply is what the professor's role entailed in terms of norms and expectations. As shown in this account, there was an expectation that each professor should contribute with their specific "temperament", their character, and thereby stimulate and vitalize the operation. The role associated with the professorship had a symbolic link to fertilization and vitalization and was thus a post with a number of accompanying masculine projections. It is, therefore, interesting to note that qualities which contravened the role of inseminator and inspirer were particularly emphasized in the characterization of Gun Maria Petterson, who was described as receptive, attentive and involved with the students and their work. We previously indicated that the recurring assessments of her teaching activity may have been a manifestation of an unreflected, but by several people perceived, flaw in the professors' professional role, the vital (virile) precluded the concern for, and patience with, the students. However, one can imagine that there was no room to add this as a requirement, as something that could "bring" something to the school, for it was wholly contrary to what was imposed on the role as inspirer and innovator. Instead, the opportunity arose to let model studies, and the emphasis on its importance, become the space in which a woman could be accommodated without being mentioned. This was not a regular post but a "visiting" post, an assistant, complementary, compensatory function designed to temporarily alleviate a shortage which, though officially unrecognized, made itself felt at the school. Conversely, one can imagine that, in the appointment of Marie Louise De Geer Bergenstråhle, it was possible to draw attention to her female gender – and its underrepresentation at the school – because recommending her and her distinctive qualities could be done in 'male' terms.

The Swedish field of visual art in the 1980s

If we bring the recruitment of art professors in the 1980s into the more general issue of gender and reproduction of elites in Swedish society, we can note that it, similar to industry

³⁴ On shame as self censorship, see Bourdieu 2001 [1998] p. p. 38-39.

recruitment, was characterized by a great deal of cooptation.³⁵ In contrast to the recruitment of political elites, which is governed by representative principles, and administration, where "meritocratic ambitions" are more evident, the assessment panels and decision-makers at the Royal University College of Fine Arts, much like industry executives, had great opportunity to exert collegial influence. It is thus crucial to also consider the homosociality, the "brotherhood logic", that is part of such processes.³⁶ The fact that everyone was recruited for their unique and distinctive artistry did not undermine the homosocially consistent result. On the contrary, the aesthetically/artistically based differences between professors were perceived as necessary for making the professorial staff into a tight unit. This unity was created by what the professors had in common; they represented, to themselves and to others, unique and original artistries. It was in identifying this characteristic, and its anticipated complementary effect among the professorial staff, that homosocial reflections appear to have had a major impact. In the recruitment and recommendation of unique characteristics that were supposed to fill the school's need of a diverse and revitalized staff, a "brotherhood logic" was thus in effect.

Consequently, it is evident that the different conditions for applying to professorships depended not only on individual background, time of establishment as an artist and career choices according to divisions between different artistic genres, but also on the challenge from homosocially defined gate keeping procedures. There were only a limited number of individuals with the adequate habituation, the right network and connections to the school, and enough resources of the right kind to apply.

It is, therefore, in this context, important to consider the general picture of how the positions in the Swedish art world were distributed and the art field where the qualification to the teaching positions took place, as well as the power relations that determined this field. For example, we need to consider the seemingly neutral aesthetic difference between positions such as "painter" and "sculptor" on the one hand, and "textile artist" and "ceramist" on the other, as well as the relationship between these positions in a field of cultural production.

According to Bourdieu, a field of cultural production has two axes. First, the axis which organizes the field horizontally and separates between the "pure production", i.e. in this context, the fine arts (true art) in the left parts of the field, valued and appreciated mainly by other artists, critics, connoisseurs and collectors. Here we find art that is (relatively) autonomous from interests (political, economic, practical use) and is produced for its own sake. In the opposite right parts of the field, we find the lower-valued applied or decorative arts that are more subject to the economic conditions of the sales market, as well as art with a political agenda.

Here we also need to consider that this hierarchy according to the horizontal axis can in turn be seen as a "naturalized instantiation" of gender as a norm. The naturalization occurs through a "distance" between the norm and the professional positions; they do not show any intrinsic

³⁵ On industry recruitment processes, see Anita Göransson "Näringslivseliten" pp. 325-346 in *Maktens kön. Kvinnor och män i den svenska makteliten på 2000-talet* ed. Anita Göransson Nora Nya Doxa 2006. On the artistic career's traditionally male attribute in Western art history, see, e.g. Whitney Chadwick *Women, Art and Society* London Thames and Hudson 1991 (1990) pp. 7-36.

³⁶ On different principles in recruitment to society's elites and the significance of homosocial identification, see: Anita Göransson "Makteliter och kön" pp. 11-48 in *Maktens kön. Kvinnor och män i den svenska makteliten på 2000-talet* ed. Anita Göransson Nora Nya Doxa 2006, pp. 29-34.

connection to gender. It is rather in the relationship between them that the unequal distribution of symbolic assets is determined: it is only when we look at the different positions that the practices represent – their status, the separated institutions and sites of education, their chief representatives, and the successful individuals and their social background – that the norm appears.³⁷

In the field of cultural production, there is also a second, vertical axis which describes the artistic generations' relation to each other. Here, the young (with avant-garde pretensions in the autonomous parts) in the lower part of the field are put up against those who are further into their careers and have won recognition and more advanced positions in the upper part of the field.³⁸

If we consider both the horizontal and the vertical hierarchical structure in the light of intersectional theory and the idea of "intersectional power relations", i.e. that we as social beings are determined socially in relation to a number of "axes of power", e.g. gender, race, class, age, geographical location, etc., we can see that the field theory's description of the power relations also reflects other social differences, such as gender, age, or the difference between center and periphery.³⁹

If we apply these structures to the Swedish art field we can see that there were several different kinds of careers that did not lead to an application. In the aftermath of the 1970s, there was in Sweden still talk of a (political) "women's art" in the beginning of the decade. A distinction was thus made between "true" art and the art that had a feminist agenda.⁴⁰ The male professors at the tradition-bound school had shown no interest in the latter kind of art, and female students would later state that this was something they avoided getting into.⁴¹ A career in this area was not an advantage in an application for a professorship, and, conversely, such a position was not attractive to these politically active artists.⁴² Nor was it a given that a successful career outside the capital city of Stockholm would generate qualifications and

³⁷ Judith Butler *Undoing Gender* London and New York Routledge 2004 p.41-42 and p.48. A man can be a textile artist. But the gender power structure becomes visible when we see that the students and teachers at the textile education programs in Sweden throughout history have been exclusively women, just like the majority of the practitioners, and that Sweden's first professor in the field was a man. Cf. Annelie Holmberg *Hantverksskicklighet och kreativitet. Kontinuitet och förändring i en lokal textillärarutbildning 1955-2001* Diss. Konstvetenskapliga institutionen Uppsala universitet 2009. The solid male dominance in the high-status fine arts education (and its governing body) in the 20th century thus makes it just as "gender-intelligible" that women had no influence at KKH for most of the century, as the first textile professor in the country being a man. The weak standing of textile art and women in the field can also be related to the fact that it took until the 1980s before the first textile professor and the first female fine art professor were appointed.

³⁸ A text which summarizes the theory on these power relations in artistic fields is Pierre Bourdieu "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed" in Pierre Bourdieu *The field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge 1993. In Bourdieu's research on the field of art, *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* Cambridge 1996 [1992] is the most comprehensive and fundamental study. On "pure" production, see Bordieu 1996 [1992] pp. 142 171, 257.

³⁹ On the concept of intersectionality, see Nina Lykke "Intersektionalitet – ett användbart begrepp för genusforskningen" in *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* nr 1 2003.

⁴⁰ Yvonne Eriksson "Den visualiserade kvinnligheten ur ett feministiskt perspektiv. Ett 1970-talsprojekt" pp.48-77 in *Från modernism till samtidskonst. Svenska kvinnliga konstnärer*. Lund Signum 2003.

⁴¹ Andersson 2008 s. 58 och Eva Hallin och Annika Öhrner "Konst kön och kunskap – om den konstnärliga praktiken" pp. 42-53 in *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* nr 1 1992, s. 51. Cf. Raymonde Moulin *L'artiste, l'institution et le marché* Flammarion Paris 2009 (1992) pp. 279-289. Moulin notes that French women artists active in the French art world in the 1980s have testified in interviews about strategic efforts to avoid artistic choices associated with their gender. They wanted to paint in a "virile" manner, "like men", see Moulin 2009 pp. 282-285.

⁴² See e.g. the introduction of the artists in the exhibition catalog by Jan Brunius: "Förord" p. 1 in *Verkligheten sätter spår. 7 textilkonstnärer visar bilder på Röhsska museet 12.10-9.11* Röhsska museet Göteborg 1975, p. 1

contacts beneficial to an application. We have seen that connections with the school were an important factor, and a career in a smaller local city such as Gothenburg was a career at a far geographical distance from KKH and the nations' capital, Stockholm. A career in the decorative arts was likewise not a pathway leading to a professorship at the school. A background at a design college, or a professional career in textiles, also indicated a similar lack of social resources.

One can thus see that several of the social axes of power had their center of gravity in the field's northwestern part, and that this is where the recruitment of professors to the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts' old school can be placed. That was where one would find the people with the most valued qualifications and training, the necessary social contacts, and the male gender was overrepresented, both among the selected ones and the ones who selected them.

To the extent that the appointment became an arena for the battles of the art world, we can also see that the contracting parties were found in the left part of the field – the part in which the struggle between innovators and keepers of tradition took place. A good example is the professorship in sculpture in 1980: here, as we have seen, the representative of the young avant-garde (Breivik had good connections in the capital's art world) came out the winner, since the appointment happened to coincide with a perceived crisis in Swedish sculpture. The younger generation's interests turned out to benefit from the fear that the appointment – should a representative of a modernist tradition be selected – would not only have a conservative but perhaps even stagnant effect on the education. This caused a shift in the power balance between the generations.

It is thus important to consider that a merely art historical and aesthetic assessment of artistic qualities and different artists will not reveal why artists outside the capital, female feminist textile artists, women members of the Academy of Fine Arts or representatives of the young avant-garde did not apply, or if they did, why they (with the exception of Breivik) were not considered. Representatives of such positions may have been, aesthetically speaking, of equal artistic quality as the nine men and one woman who became professors.⁴³ What is hidden in this assessment, however, are the social differences and different habituation, and the hierarchies that separated them.

⁴³ Compare Brinck, Ingar, Eriksson, Yvonne & Göthlund, Anette, *Från modernism till samtidskonst: svenska kvinnliga konstnärer*, Signum, Lund, 2003.