

BIRGITTASKOLORNA

*Modeateljéer och sömnadsskolor
mellan tradition och förnyelse*

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the study is to examine, compare and analyse the Birgitta Schools. These were two fashion studios and dressmaking schools in Stockholm directed by Emy Fick (1876-1959) and Elisabeth Glantzberg (1873-1951). Together, they started and ran the Birgitta School from 1910 until 1914. However, a rift caused them to divide the business in two but keeping similar names and structure of their schools. From 1914 until the middle of the 1930s, Fick ran the Saint Birgitta School and Glantzberg was head of the Birgitta School. The analyses are made through various visual artefacts such as trademarks, photographs and clothes, as well as through surveys of the persons connected with the Schools. The aim is to bring forth what happened inside the walls of the Schools, but it is also to examine how the works related to the contemporary discourse in which femininity as well as fashion, modernism and modernity were negotiated.

With a base in a gender theoretic perspective, the results have primarily been reached through the tools of cultural sociology. The ideas of Pierre Bourdieu are of particular interest; not least, the concepts of capital, habitus and social fields have been fruitful. A complement to these theories is the cultural sociological views of Howard Becker; here, a broader scope for individuals to act and a more inclusive perspective are provided. Judith Butler's performativity theory has also been useful since she argues that identity and gender are 'made' through the acts of people. In this making of gender, the clothes we wear are significant. The body that is in focus in this study is thus *the social body*; this body consists of the physical body along with clothes and the person's symbolic capital and habitus, and the interplay of constructed social and symbolic forces.

The study shows that Emy Fick held conservative values; her views were close to the norm, a complementary and essentialist view of men and women predominant in Swedish society in the beginning of the twentieth century. In this respect, Fick and the Saint Birgitta School is considered to be orthodox, defending the doxa. In Yvonne Hirdman's terms, Saint Birgitta School *made* women who acted *according to* this norm. In the study of Glantzberg's several examples are found that the Birgitta School instead appeared to have been a room of challenge, to which a range of open-minded, radical, independent and educated women were connected. The women who were associated with the Birgitta School tended to act *against* conventional norms in society. Glantzberg also commissioned the modernist artists Siri Derkert and Valle Rosenberg to create fashion collections. The Birgitta School and Elisabeth Glantzberg is thereby considered as heterodox, since contemporary views were challenged and questioned.

Nonetheless, both Birgitta Schools expressed modernity – although in different degrees. Together, the Saint Birgitta School and the Birgitta School illustrate the 'whirlpool' of modernity – in which different attitudes to, and experiences of modern life existed side by side.

KEYWORDS

Birgittaskolan, Sankta Birgittaskolan, Emy Fick, Elisabeth Glantzberg, Siri Derkert, Valle Rosenberg, Bourdieu, Becker, fashion, clothes, fashion and art, modernism, modernity, fashion studios, dressmaking schools, the Swedish Suffragette movement.