Abstract

Från kungligt galleri till nationellt museum.
Aktörer, praktik och argument i svensk konstmuseal diskurs ca 1814–1845

From royal art gallery to national museum:
Actors, Practices and Arguments within Swedish Art Museum Discourse ca 1814–1845

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Ph.D. dissertation at Göteborg University, Sweden, 2009
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Swedish, with an English summary
ISBN: 9789178447671

When the Nationalmuseum opened its gates in 1866 to the public, it was the end of a process which had lasted more than fifty years. The building itself had taken more than twenty years of arguments and struggle to erect, and the debate on whether the nation needed a national museum of art had started already in the 1810s. That process – the debate on why a national art gallery was needed, who were involved and how they went through with it – is the subject of this dissertation.

Central to the study is a group of about thirty interested individuals who between the 1810s and 1845 tried to raise the question of a national art museum in the press, the parliament and at court. The actors were loosely connected to each other by personal friendship and mutual experiences of travel, of artistry and of service at court and as army officers. Most notable were Lieutenant-Colonel and Superintendent of the Board of Public Works and Buildings Gustaf Anckarsvärd, the architect and secretary of Kungl. Akademin för de fria konsterna Axel Nyström and the publicist and Chamberlain Baron Fredrik Boije af Gennäs.

To reach their goal of the formation of a national art museum, the actors employed a multitude of strategies, ranging from writing articles in the press to creating temporary exhibitions of art as well as smaller museums where possible. The decision about a national museum had to be taken in parliament though. In 1828 the first parliamentary bill concerning the formation of a national museum were presented, but not until 1845 a decision were made in favor of a museum.

The arguments seen in the debates can be divided into three categories: arguments which focuses on bildning (formation or general education) – a concept of thought based on the German philosophical concept of bildung; arguments based on the manifestation of the nation as part of western civilization towards foreign visitors as well as inwards towards the swedish citizens; and arguments based on the economic usefulness of an art museum where an art museum were thought to have a positive influence on the arts and crafts industry.

Keywords: Nationalmuseum, Kongl. Museum, art museums, 19 century, Sweden, Gustaf Anckarsvärd, Axel Nyström, Fredrik Boije, formation, manifestation, National Portrait Gallery, Uppsala university art museum, Stockholm art association