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BORGERLIGA AMBITIONER OCH ADLIGA IDEAL

Slott och byggherrar i Sverige kring sekelskiftet 1900

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Abstract

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The dissertation describes and analyses twenty newly built country houses in the period 1870–1920. Half of the houses were built by aristocrats and half by people from the bourgeoisie. A few of the country houses have been the subject of individual studies or are described briefly in general surveys, but the vast majority have remained relatively unknown. My overall aim is to study differences and similarities between the houses built by noble and bourgeois people. In the analysis I have used the famous work by the American economist and philosopher Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* from 1899, finding his concepts of *conspicuous consumption* and *conspicuous leisure* particularly useful. Research on architecture usually places the emphasis on the architects involved, while their patrons have been left in the background. I have instead chosen to focus on the patrons, including both the male and the female party. Among the owners there are several of the most famous noble families in Sweden. Several of the bourgeois mansions were built by people whose companies played an important part in Swedish business. Many of the commissioned architects did not belong to the élite of the day; there is in fact a strikingly large number of less well-known names. The main source material is the existing buildings themselves. In addition, I have used plans and sketches, letters, early photographs, descriptions of buildings, memoirs, estate inventories, fire insurance documents, and county accounts. I have been able to show that the *differences* between the nobility and the bourgeoisie were not particularly striking during the studied period and that there were *great similarities*, as expressed in the material setting. *From a distance* it is scarcely possible to detect any difference between a bourgeois and an aristocratic country house at this time. If one looks more closely at the buildings and studies the ornamentation, both outside and inside, however, the differences between the two groups become clearer.

Keywords: country houses, late 19th century, early 20th century, patrons, bourgeoisie, aristocracy, conspicuous consumption, conspicuous leisure, exterior, layout, furnishing, ornamentation, technical innovations, parks and grounds, sepulchral monuments, donations, philanthropic projects.

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