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ABSTRACT

Werner, Helena, 2006. *Kvinnliga arkitekter. Om byggpionjärer och debatterna kring kvinnlig yrkesutövning i Sverige. (Women Architects. On Building Pioneers and the Swedish Debates on Women in Professional Practice)*. With an English Summary. Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture nr 23, 330 pages, ill., Göteborg. ISBN 91-7346-571-2. ISSN 0348-4114.

The dissertation examines Sweden's earliest women architects and female pioneers in building with focus on education, professional practice, social acceptance and private life. The study primarily concentrates on architects in building and secondly on women designers, architectural contractors and builders. The purpose of using gender as a selection criterion for the thesis is that gender constituted a legal exclusion instrument for women's opportunity to train as architects up to 1921 at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, the Swedish capital. The investigation follows the time interval 1897-1936 for year of admission. The analyse try to outline the women architects' biographies and to examine their experience of education and working life, all this against a background of feministic theory as well as of architectural, social and educational history. The author will weigh these women's individual experience of education and of exercising a profession against men's statements in words and images about women's admission to education and work. By this method structures in the educational system and in the architect profession are discovered and made clear. Another aim of the thesis is to account for the debate about women architects in contemporary magazines and other mass media. To describe the epoch when the architect's profession was incorporated in trade registers and vocational guidance for women was established is a purpose as well. The importance of contests for the women architects is outlined. Possible essentialistic divisions of the concepts of male and female and the normative characteristics which, were attributed to each gender category respectively are investigated as well. The study accordingly comprises the women's careers and career opportunities and the women architects are emphasised as creative subjects and individuals in architectural history. The investigation brings out several projects of the portraited architects for a more extensive description with the intent of emphasising them as creations and for an in-depth understanding of the intentions of the works. The study presents a short account of architect associations for women, networks and the profession's development concerning women in later years. The thesis does not strive to attempt to see any particularly feminine characteristics in the buildings but aim to comment on building types and idioms of the studied women architects. The empirical sources have been made up of archive material, interviews and written information from the women architects and their relatives, information from magazines about architecture, magazines for women and student magazines, drawings and the erected buildings. The parents of most of these women architects' were professionally active in the domains of art or technology and encouraged their daughters to become architects. On the whole the educational climate of the 1920's appears to be the most favourable while the 1930's and 1940's gave evidence of the most explicit resistance against women architects. The female architect students were often subjected to stereotype depictions in the student magazines such as the seductress, the mascot, the maiden of iron, the mother, the luxury student, the sinner, the angel and the girl. The majority of the women architects discussed in this study designed housing, buildings for different types of care and schools and less often public and monumental buildings. The type of building projects that the women chose seem to have had a low artistic, technological and economic value according to the architects' rates of the time. The use of form and shape among the women architects in the investigation stand out as a combination of individual preferences and influences of contemporary trends. There is thus no base for an aesthetically motivated essentialistic interpretation of their use of form and shape.

Keywords: Women architects, architecture, building pioneers, architect contractors, women builders, architectural training, the profession of architect, biography, feminism, social history, architectural contests, societies for women architects, architectural magazines, magazines for women, student magazines, gender stereotypes.

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