ABSTRACT

TRANSGRESSING THE BORDERS OF TEXTILE ART OR SWEDISH ARTISTS AS CRAFTSMEN?

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Swedish textile art is often described as highly successful and as part of an appreciated tradition. But there are some interesting points to be made from looking at the subject as an Art Historian with a gender- and genre-perspective. First of all the textile material is closely linked to notions of femininity. The textile material is also persistently placed within the craft sphere. Secondly, the textile art scene also consists mainly of women artists. The connection with traditional craft seems to exclude them from the innovative – mainly male – modernist art scene.

In my PhD thesis I study these subjects in relation to the arts- and crafts organisation “Svensk Hemslöjd” during the 20th Century. The local handicraft societies in Sweden may be seen as being part of modern movement in the Swedish society as a whole but is hardly a part of any modernist art movement.

Is there a difference between the framing of the modernist artist compared to his or her postmodernist counterpart? In this presentation I focus on the image and representation of the textile artist during the last part of the 20th century. The study is based an analyses of the magazine Hemslöjden and related artists. I will address questions as: What has the postmodern implosion of genre hierarchies meant to the possibilities of artistic expression? Are textile materials and techniques used as part of a feminist practice?