

Free Art? Higher Education in the Fine Arts in Sweden at Konsthögskolan Valand, Konstfackskolan and Kungliga Konsthögskolan 1960-1995

Fine Art Colleges - a free zone in the system of higher education

The following is a short abridgement of the main empirical findings and results from the book *Fri Konst? Bildkonstnärlig utbildning vid Konsthögskolan Valand, Konstfackskolan och Kungl. Konsthögskolan 1960-1995* (Makadam förlag, Göteborg, 2010) concentrating on the relationship between the three studied schools and the surrounding field of higher education, as well as the changes of status and internal relations between the schools from 1960 to 1995.

Swedish fine art college education is, since the major reform of higher education in 1977, part of the government-funded system of higher education. However, the three oldest art colleges in Sweden, Kungliga Konsthögskolan, founded in 1735, Konstfack in Stockholm, founded in 1844, and the Valand School of Fine Arts in Gothenburg, founded in 1865, have long and prominent histories.

As in many other European countries, the Academy of Fine Art governed the most prestigious school, Kungliga Konsthögskolan in Stockholm. Throughout the centuries, this was the leading school in terms of the number of students, the reputation of the professors, as well as funding. In 1977, the reform made the three schools formal equals, but the Valand School of Fine Arts and the painting department at Konstfackskolan still lacked both the resources and the prestige to compete. The old hierarchy was not challenged until the 1990s. At this time, financing and governance of higher education was reformed, and the postmodern shift in contemporary art made possible strategic and competitive reorientations of fine art programmes towards the growing interest in art theory and philosophy. At this time, due to regional policy, the competition was also felt more strongly. Umeå Konsthögskola in the north of Sweden was established in 1987, and in the south, Konsthögskolan i Malmö in 1995. Both schools were established as parts of Umeå and Lund universities, and especially Konsthögskolan i Malmö took advantage of this institutional setting. Here the importance of theory and critical reflection was emphasized from the start.

Although there is a noticeable shift from a more libertarian educational practice, with few or no mandatory theoretical elements, to a postmodern, theory-influenced, and more structured education in the early and mid-1990s in Sweden, this shift did not change the commonly shared and fundamental assumption on the necessary individual orientation of the education. This is still the essence of fine arts college education in Sweden today, something that the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education pointed out in their evaluation of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in fine arts in 2006/2007. The fine art programmes have since 1977 had the designation "Free Art", and it can be read not only as a description, but also as an ideal and a decree. The individual freedom of the student at the school can be seen as an imperative, it is a framework or structure. The edict that the student plans his/her studies independently and that each student follows an individual study plan implicates that the school must provide guidance and facilities in a certain way. No one can tell the student what to do, or how to learn. The student is thus always primarily an artist, and the education has always been choreographed by the field of artistic production surrounding

the school. This proximity to the professional field is everything to the schools, and a fact that is recurrently stated in this book.

The schools are thus part of a European tradition of a libertarian and individual fine art education of the artist, which stems from a (in the 60s reformed) studio-based art academic legacy that today is found in many prominent (and old) art colleges. Comparing descriptions of the education offered at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (1754) in Copenhagen, the Städelschule in Frankfurt (1817) or Kungliga Konsthögskolan in Stockholm (1735), not much seems to differ.¹ This is not to say that they are identical, or that all art colleges work the same way. In fact, several can be found that deviate from the above-mentioned schools in their stance and objectives. Representatives of Konsthögskolan i Malmö or the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, for example, would strongly object to the comparison. Some fine art colleges have nearly no organized curriculum, others have more structured courses, many have collaborations with universities and joint courses, others have no academic contacts, etc. Yet, these differences aside, they all agree on the fundamental and shared common assumption that the fine art student must develop individually, and that curriculum cannot foster art. What is therefore always stressed is the importance of the individual's own choices. In speech, writing, documents, practices in the fine art colleges, a logic is reflected that suggests that this "freedom" can be seen as a discursive practice, dependent on the field of artistic production. This practice is operational as an educational structure (of the rooms and the what, the when and the where of the individual practices, in the relations between subject positions, and the communication between them), as a hierarchical structure of artistic values (between materials and genres, different modes of conceptual or aesthetic expressions, theoretical practices and working processes) and certain expected actions and attitudes of subjects. The discursive regime is thus manifest in different ways: it shapes social subjects, rooms and routines.

When the Swedish reform of higher education was planned in the late 70s, the art colleges had to struggle to get this special character of their education acknowledged. The reform was an administrative and bureaucratic endeavour, and the officials and politicians initially gave no signals of being aware of the radical differences between all the heterogeneous professional educations that were now to be integrated. The educations for artists, journalists, librarians and nurses were many of the professionally oriented and practice-based colleges that were affected by the reform, and who protested loudly against what they saw as a square-minded reform, poorly adjusted to their special needs.

It was the art colleges that best succeeded in convincing of their specificity. The historically strong connection to the field of fine art was in these processes the safeguard for the (relative) autonomy of the schools. Representatives of the artistic field and the art colleges emphasised the individual organization of the studies and that the unusual admission and examination procedures characterising these programmes warranted special attention. When the protests and the fierce resistance from the colleges alerted Swedish politicians to these arguments in 1977, the politicians yielded and retreated. The effects of the 1977 reform were thus noticeable in the daily life at the fine art colleges only as a new administrative framework, with more bureaucracy and formalities, but with no practical impact on the education as such.

¹ Compare Mikkel Bogh "Borderlands: The Art School Between the Academy and Higher Education" in *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School* ed. Brad Buckley and John Conomos, Halifax Nova Scotia 2009, *Kunstlehren/Teaching Art* ed. Heike Belzer and Daniel Birnbaum, Frankfurt 2007 and the descriptions of the Bachelor and Master programmes at Kungliga Konsthögskolan in Stockholm.

The formal BAs and MAs established were, and still are essentially individualized and practice-based.

Konsthögskolan Valand

Due to the heavy resistance to the reform in 1977, all art colleges in Stockholm remained independent unities, although formally parts of the system. In Gothenburg, the situation turned out differently, but that was not so much the result of political or bureaucratic influences, but of strategic interests among the representatives of the colleges for music and design and crafts, who saw a welcome opportunity to strengthen their positions. The representatives at the Valand School of Fine Arts were more suspicious of the idea of being integrated into a university, but were also tempted by the idea of becoming a part of a resourceful organization.

The Valand School of Fine Arts was by tradition associated with libertarian ideas of fine art education stemming from the late nineteenth century; several radical artists had held teaching positions at the school. This historically preserved self-image said that radicalism was a characteristic feature of the school and it could be expected that the insistence of artistic freedom and the rebellious attitude against authorities at the school could create a clash with the bureaucratic ambitions of the reform in 1977. Yet this was never the case.

Although all teachers and students at the school were profoundly suspicious towards the uniform administrative regulations that the reform implicated, the hope was that the governmental takeover would substantially improve the economy and the resources. Valand was a poor school, kept on a lean budget by the local municipality in Gothenburg, in spite of the fact that it recruited students from other parts of the country. The takeover by governmental agencies had been discussed for a long time, and by the 70s, the situation had become more than frustrating and the takeover was considered long overdue. The fact that the school was poor was not a matter of opinion; the calculations of the budget of the school by the National Board of Universities and Colleges showed that the school had only 70% of the funding of Kungliga Konsthögskolan. It was high time for a change. The school had a good reputation and was considered an equal in terms of quality, and everybody agreed on the fact that this should be reflected in the budget.

At Valand, many wanted the school (although under governmental governance) to stay independent, but this never became an issue. The school was small, it housed no more than 60 students in total, and was poorly equipped in terms of staff, administration as well as workshops. It was considered in need of a resourceful framework. A reassuring fact was also that the rector and the board of Gothenburg University were positive to the incorporation of the art educations. The plan was to integrate the college of music, performing art, fine art and design. The art colleges also remained individual departments for the first few years after the reform, with an independent budget – an important fact that seemed to guarantee continued autonomy.

When one studies the effects of this reform on Valand, one immediately sees that the education, as such, never was influenced by the change of framework. The individual study was at the centre of the school, in this respect nothing changed. The teachers and professors supervision was still seen as a form of guidance, or counselling, and remained optional, as everything else. The student was free to choose where and when to work, and how. The workshops and the teachers were resources to use, as were the courses offered in different

techniques and art historical lectures. However, it was up to the student to decide and take responsibility for the creative outcome of these choices.

It is clear that many students in the first year felt the burden of the lack of a framework. The artistic development, the drive forward, was each student's own responsibility. The education at the school was in many ways just the sum of a series of separate and individual projects whose success, as well as setbacks, was dependent on the individual's ability to defend, or not, the chances, resources and challenges that the school offered. Yet there does not seem to have been any real criticism against this system. The students seem to have accepted it as a part of the challenges of becoming an artist. As we shall see, the situation was no different in Stockholm.

That everybody agreed on the fact that Valand needed economic compensation for the many years on a small budget seemed to the representatives of the school a sure sign that indicated a reinforced budget. However, although everybody agreed on this, the problem was that Gothenburg University and the government could never decide who was to pick up the check for the costs. This left Valand in economic backwater, and when the departmental structure in the early 80s, due to reforms of the administrative system, was merged in to a cooperative structure, and the separate budgets into a common pot of money, the autonomy of Valand was severely restricted. Now representatives from other departments had a say in Valand's affairs. It was not for the school to decide what was to be in priority or not. Each department had its own interests to safeguard, and competition was fierce. This resulted in disagreements between Valand and the other colleges/departments, as well as the board of the Faculty, which continued throughout the 80s and 90s, and Valand's economy never got substantially better. In the mid-90s, even the Dean of the Faculty admitted that Valand never received the economic compensation it needed. More than 15 years after the reform, Valand still lagged behind the Stockholm schools.

The story could end there, but a closer look at the disagreements between Valand, the other departments and the board of the Faculty at Gothenburg University shows a more complex pattern. Of course, the economic factors and the narrowed autonomy were vital, but there was more to the conflict than that.

By the time of the reform in 1977, many representatives for the colleges of music and musicology in Gothenburg agreed that there was time for a change in the traditional schooling in the music colleges. There was a need, as they saw it, for an education that promoted the democratization of culture and the arts (an issue also in tune with the social democratic cultural policy). Commercial interests in the arts, as well as elitism, were considered problems that needed to be dealt with. The educations for musicians and music teachers were thus discussed as strategic instruments in developing representatives that could change traditional ideals and values. In this, integration of music education within the universities was a welcome opportunity to develop a new orientation for the education. In an environment that offered multidisciplinary contacts, both with the other arts and with the sciences, new ways of thinking could develop, which would benefit a new orientation in Swedish music life.

The idea of close contacts between the arts and the sciences as a positive potential was not in line with the independent tradition at Valand. On the contrary. At the school, the autonomy of fine art and the artist was constantly insisted upon, and the frustration deepened when Valand was forced into a budget structure that in many ways set the school under economic guardianship. For those who welcomed contacts between different departments, and new

perspectives, the economic cooperation was perhaps a lesser problem, but at Valand, this was perceived as a violation. The frustrating economic and administrative straightjacket was one thing, but it was ideologically repulsive to those who regarded fine art education as a liberal individual process to face arguments for mandatory multidisciplinary contacts. This was to argue for a limitation of that necessary freedom of the artist, and was unthinkable. All collaborations must be built on the freedom of choice.

Thus, it was not only economic issues that led to clashes, but also this fundamental difference in opinion on what an artistic education can be, how it should be structured, and in what context it should develop. In the mid-90s, the Dean at the Faculty saw a strong potential for Valand to develop in accordance with British art schools, such as Goldsmith College of Fine Arts or the Slade School of Fine Arts, where fine arts educations, according to the Dean, had developed new and different directions due to the contact with a surrounding university. The Dean also saw this as an instrument in the new situation with the fiercer competition with the new fine art colleges in Umeå and Malmö. Yet at Valand, there was no response to this idea. The traditional ideals of fine art education were upheld. At Valand, there was no interest in redirections; the main object was instead to develop economic muscles large enough to be able to compete with the old school of the Art academy.

The years around 1980/90 was a time when the conditions for higher education began to change significantly. In 1993, there was a new reform of higher education that marked a significant increase in autonomy for individual universities and colleges. The words "quality" and "freedom" were veritable keywords in the reform, indicating that a university is best able to manage their own affairs, hence the talk about freedom, but also introduced management through monitoring and evaluation, hence the talk about quality. This meant higher requirements on the schools, since they were now expected to deliver quality reports and self-evaluations. The Swedish universities and colleges were thus introduced to the evaluation culture that has now become routine.

For Valand, these changes did not make much difference. The college was embedded in the university structure, and whether or not Gothenburg University got more autonomy did not change things at the departmental level. However, for the independent schools in Stockholm, the reform made much more impact, and Konstfackskolan had an early involvement in this process of change. There it worked, in many respects, as a welcome tool for a school in the process of staking out a new direction.

Konstfackskolan

Before the reform in 1977, Konstfack had an unclear status, to say the least. Formally, it was a "fackskola" – a secondary school with a vocational orientation, and an alternative in-between more general education and a vocational training. In reality, however, the students accepted were much older, and more experienced. The school was attractive; it had, together with the School of Design and Crafts in Gothenburg, a reputation of being the leading Swedish school in Craft and Design. Thus the applicants were many, and the chosen few an elite.

The school housed many different educational specializations that each was a separate department. A student could specialize in textile, ceramics, graphical design, metalwork, or furniture/interior decoration. There were also two specializations within fine art: sculpture and decorative painting. However, these fine art educations were not "free" in the sense of the

education offered at the Kungliga Konsthögskolan or Valand. Instead, the decorative, or applied, uses of fine art were in focus. The education at the two departments was therefore structured and contained large portions of curricula, the decorative/applied orientation necessitated scheduled practice-based technical training.

These fine art departments were also not considered to have the same rank as the other departments. To many students, they just functioned as a preparatory education to Kungliga Konsthögskolan. Unlike their student colleagues at the design and craft departments, the school was to them just a stop on the way to higher education.

Konstfackskolan thus housed departments with different statuses, and it seemed clear to everybody, both to the board of the school, as well as politicians and administrators, that the official transformation of the school into a formal higher education in 1977 should implicate a refinement. The closing of the fine art departments was considered a logical step in the transformation of the school into a design and crafts college.

However, the idea to shut down the fine art departments met strong opposition. This opposition was due partly to the general resistance to the reform among the Stockholm art colleges, but also to an old idea of the school as a unification of art and design, and that the school would lose a vital part if the fine art departments were lost. Surprisingly, the politicians eventually decided in favour of the opponents, but the solution presented was not responsive to the protests. Instead, it was founded on ideals underpinning the new social democratic cultural policy presented a couple of years earlier. The minister of education argued that what was needed was a fine art education that could serve the democratic ambition to differ culture in society. To the minister it seemed logical that the fine art departments could serve this purpose – the decorative/applied orientation was already there, and even more logical, the departments had already shifted their orientation towards such ideals. The raised political consciousness that was a result of the student revolts in 1968 and a critical attitude towards what was considered bourgeoisie values in fine art consumption had resulted in many projects and undertakings at the department in tune with this new attitude. Decorations in elite milieus were avoided in favour of projects in nurseries, hospitals and homes for the elderly.

When the reform was implemented in Stockholm in 1978 (the delay was a result of the many protests and the strong resistance among the art colleges), the programme in painting was given the title “Bild och miljö” (roughly “Visual environmental design”). It was supposed to represent a radically different education than the “fri konst” (free art) programmes at Kungliga Konsthögskolan and Valand. The description of the curriculum stretched over 17 pages, and stated that attendance of at least 80% was necessary to receive a degree. The students studied, among many things, perspective, art history, colour theory, anatomy, mural techniques, graphics, screen, and different drawing techniques. There was also time for individual work, and the opportunities for working more freely increased each year.

However, the Bild och Miljö programme was soon undermined by the changing climate in the surrounding art world. In the early 1980s, the ideological and political basis for the programme’s applied direction was erased. The art world saw a boom in sales of portative art and Fine Art became an investment object. Young students in the art colleges could sell their work for large sums, long before their degree exhibitions. At the Bild och Miljö programme the reluctance to work with applied art increased. It was clear for everyone to see that the programme would lead to a dead end for any artistic career. Saleable objects was the motto of the day.

This led to a situation where almost no one in the department approved of the curriculum, neither the students nor their teachers. The curriculum studies were also associated with a vocational and preparatory level of education, and most students accepted to the school continued to aim for “free art” studies. The result was that most students were discontent with the mandatory studies and continued to apply for admission to Kungliga Konsthögskolan. This led to painful conflicts and frustrations, not only within the department and in the relation to the rector and the board, but also in relation to other departments at the school where the fine art students’ protests against curriculum studies were met with suspicion.

What eventually changed this situation was a combination of changes in attitude, inventive thinking, new rules and regulations in the government of higher education, a more pronounced and more strongly felt competition among the art colleges, and most important of all, the postmodern shift in contemporary art.

The changes in the government of higher education in the reform of 1993 had several purposes. The new conservative majority saw the independence of universities and colleges as vital, and all schools and institutions in higher education were given autonomy to decide for themselves over both budget and content. As was earlier noted, however, the demand for follow-ups, quality reports and evaluations increased. Pressure from administrative and economic feedback thus replaced the direct political involvement. This change, although demanding in some ways, offered at Konstfackskolan welcome opportunities for new initiatives.

At the same time, as the ideas underpinning these political changes were developed, the postmodern shift in contemporary art in the late 80s was given full impact at the fine art colleges. The interest for art theory and French philosophy led students to demand more seminars and introductions to the new ideas. The traditional division of the departments in terms of material or genres (painting, graphics, sculpture) was put in question, and students became more and more interested in alternative materials and exhibition spaces, or even fully abandoned the idea of art as objects and started to work with conceptual or process-based practices.

These changes and new management at several of the departments at Konstfack resulted in new approaches. The department of Bild och Miljö changed its name to Måleri (Painting) and the new professors more fiercely started to argue for the programme to change into a “free art” programme. The 1993 reform in higher education gave a welcome opportunity to realize this change. Simultaneously the representatives of the photography department started thinking in new ways, in response to the postmodern practice and theory in contemporary photography, and started to argue for a more structured and theoretical education.

New ideas of collaboration between departments also emerged in the mid-90s. The pressure from the external competition between the national art colleges, due to the newly started schools in Umeå and Malmö, was expected to increase. It was obvious that each individual department was too small to be able to compete efficiently, and the need for reinforcement was commonly felt. In 1997, the new department for “Free art” was established and joined the departments of photography, sculpture, painting and textile. What is noticeable here is the strategic reorientation, originally initiated at the photography department. The new ideas of a more structured and theoretical education were developed in a framework of fine art, producing a two-part argument. It was argued that although the student must act as a free

agent to create the best opportunities for development of his or her creative abilities, certain fundamentals must be obtained. Total freedom was renegotiated into a conditioned freedom of choice. The school offered a range of voluntary courses, projects and seminars from which the student must choose up to 50% of his or her study-time. Not in order to smother the student's creativity, but, according to the argument, to enhance it. What was implied was a different view of the artist's professional role. Mastery of critical reflection, verbal and written language and art theoretical issues now seemed to be much-needed competencies for a successful career in contemporary art. The idea of a structure was not in conflict with the idea of the free, original and independent artist. This remained the foundation, but it was obvious that handling the contemporary art scene demanded control over more complex instruments and new intellectual skills, and to be able to master this the student needed robust and organized guidance.

Kunliga Konsthögskolan

Historically, the agenda for a new free and individual fine art education in Sweden was set in the reform of the statutes of Kunliga Konsthögskolan in 1938. The process had started 50 years earlier with the uproar of the so-called Opponents, young students who in the 1880s opposed the (in their eyes) bureaucratic and conservative Academy and its lack of response to the new tendencies in contemporary French painting much admired by young artists. The next generations, also they attuned to the French avant-garde scene, studied in Paris, many of them at the *Académie Matisse* and succeeded what the elder generation strived for: a complete reform of the education of the Academy. Their progressive, modernistic ideal of the free education of the artist (heavily influenced by their studies in Paris) became influential and established as a doxa, and still dominated all the fine arts educations by the time of the Swedish reform of higher education in 1977.

The education governed by the Academy of Fine art in Stockholm seems to have been one of the first schools in Europe to reorient the education towards the contemporary art scene in the first half of the twentieth century. The reform of the statutes in 1938 also seems to have been much more radical and much more open to the changes within the surrounding artistic climate than the contemporary academies in Europe.² Founded on the ideal of an education in tune with the contemporary scene, the school also stayed alert to the artistic developments and continuously recruited their professors from the ranks of the leading Swedish artists (during the twentieth century also almost exclusively all male, reflecting the gendered choreography of the artistic field). The education thus stayed flexible and mirrored the development in the surrounding field of artistic production. A good example is the reactions to the critical debate in the Swedish art world in the 1960s (stemming from the challenge from pop and happenings). This debate gave immediate response at Kunliga Konsthögskolan.

The profound renegotiation of the concept of art and work at this time challenged the methods of artistic education. Traditional working methods and materials that, for a long time, had been considered natural elements of the artistic education (drawing, anatomy, model studies) were now perceived by many students as being irrelevant. Yet what alternative education was going to replace it? Moreover, what education could there be for those students wanting to work with found objects, happenings and chance as their lodestar? What place could the study

² In the last chapter in Nikolaus Pevsner in *Academies of Art* Cambridge 1940 contemporary academies in Germany, Britain, Italy and France are discussed, and nowhere is seen a radical agenda like the one at the Stockholm Academy.

of anatomy and models be given in an education that observed the new tendencies? On what foundation could the relation between teacher and student be built, if the student did not want to work with model studies and form/colour?

It is important to note that the challenge was felt by art programmes internationally. This is clear from a letter, written in October 1962 from the UNESCO organisation Association Internationale des Arts Plastiques (AIAP), addressed to art schools worldwide. In Sweden, it was handled by Lennart Rodhe, professor at the Royal College of Fine Arts in Stockholm. The letter stated that it was prompted by the wish to conduct “a critical enquiry of the teaching methods of fine art education in different countries”, and the investigation was motivated by a debate beginning to flourish in art schools around the world. The “traditional art school education” had come to face increasing criticism, and at AIAP they were in agreement that there was still “too much of the old routine”. However, they also felt that there had developed “a tendency towards modern ‘tricks’ or shortcuts” which had led to the circumvention of “absolutely necessary education”, and that many young artists had “gone astray”. Thus it was time to evaluate and reassess the foundation of the fine art education.

At Kungliga Konsthögskolan in Stockholm, some of Sweden’s most established painters and sculptors were working as professors. They all held life rooms, and the students were also studying anatomy and perspective drawing throughout the decade. By the early 60s, however, many students had started to question this order. When the letter containing the enquiry reached Lennart Rodhe in October 1962, the debate was running high within the school. At the meeting of the teachers’ council in November 1962, it was announced that an upcoming general debate would be held, since there had been recurring complaints and criticism throughout the past year from students and teachers alike. The discontent was manifested by a heterogeneous multitude of voices, interested in different changes, but where there was still a uniform basis for the criticism: the open and experimental aesthetic situation in the contemporary art demanded a change of the education at the school. The result of these protests was that traditional methods, such as the study of the nude, were reduced and that new workshops were established where students could experiment with new materials, such as plastic or film. Seminars on contemporary art and theory were also offered as a result of the complaints.

What was even more important was that critical voices had asked for more varied contacts between students and professors. At their admission to the school, students were enrolled to the teaching of a specific professor, and the studios thus often had had a gate-keeping function. Now students asked for a more flexible system, and in the late 60s the enrolment to specific professors/studios were abolished. The individual and free education at the school thus became even freer, it was now up to each individual student to choose supervising contacts, to register for seminars or courses, to experiment and find new creative initiatives. From the 70s and onwards, the metaphor “research” also became more and more frequent in descriptions of this education. The challenges of dealing with the unforeseen, the lonely work, the necessary curiosity and the need for creative imagination seemed to representatives of the school to unite the researcher and the artist. What was not commented on, however, and remained implicit in these heroic descriptions was the enormous challenges that this free education raised to the students.

Few people criticized the school, though, internally or externally. There are almost no traces of criticism or debate in documents left in the archive or in articles in the press. Yet the scarce critique that was forwarded paid special attention to the exposed situation of the students, and

made explicit the disadvantage with the big responsibility that was laid upon each individual: what was presupposed was that students have the confidence and capacity to deal with difficulties and doubts, or at least have the strength to seek for help. And that, the critics pointed out, was not always the case. The problem also had a gender perspective. Even though the amount of female students had increased, and the number of students was gender equal in the 1980s, there was until 1983 no female professor at the school. A few professors acknowledged that socially generated gender differences (shy girls/ bold boys) could influence the student's chances to complete the education successfully, but there was no joint action taken against the problem. Little change was thus seen in the education between the late 60s and the early 90s, and the school and its education remained, as we have seen, a role model for both Valand and students at the painting department at the Konstfack.

However, in the mid-90s, things changed rapidly. As has been discussed earlier, the changes in the government of higher education offered new challenges. What was seen as a welcome opportunity for reforms at the Konstfack, was at Kungliga Konsthögskolan considered a threat. These political changes and new demands for follow-ups and quality reports also made new and bureaucratic routines necessary, and required a more formal handling of the annual reports. The criticism towards the new order was strongly felt among the professors.

At the same time, the intellectual turn in the postmodern shift in contemporary art in the late 80s and the increasing interest for art theory and French philosophy led students also at Kungliga Konsthögskolan to demand more theoretical seminars. The response from the school was to offer theoretical seminars, but, unlike those at Konstfack, within an intact framework of a wholly free education, the incorporation of the postmodern intellectual property did not challenge the old routine. In the mid-90s, when several of the other rivalling Swedish art colleges established competitive alternatives directed towards the growing interest in art theory and philosophy, doubts were heard. The school was also criticized for offering an "anti-intellectual" education, and the absence of structured courses was associated with an outdated modernist tradition. Kungliga Konsthögskolan was no longer a role model and in the middle of the 1990s, the old hierarchy was challenged.

The new study plan in 1996 was written in direct response to this situation. The text marked a significant influence from those who advocated a more structured education. A comparison with other study plans and programmes back to the 1960s suggests that the school's students had never before been imposed with so much curriculum. Not only technically oriented and introductory courses were made obligatory, but also model studies, the study tour and presentations of students' own work in various forms, as well as art theory, art history and a professional orientation course. In addition, the text opened up to the possibility of a written examination of theoretical courses. The pressure on the school made adjustments necessary, but the result was obviously a compromise. To make model studies mandatory was not in line with the developments of the contemporary art scene. It can be seen as a sign of struggles within an old school trying to come to grips with a new art and new demands, but still reluctant to abandon traditional values.

Academization or formalization?

When looking at the 35-year period from 1960 to 1995, relatively few changes can be identified in Swedish higher fine art education. What is noticeable instead is the continuity of the free educational model and the striking autonomy of the programmes. The 1977 reform made little impact, and not even when the social democratic government directly interfered in 1978 to establish a new kind of applied fine art education at Konstfack, could new ideas be established. What primarily ruled were norms and values established within the surrounding field of artistic production. The free educational model was also continuously renegotiated and updated, and adjusted according to changes within the field of fine art. We have seen that the changes in contemporary art in the 60s led to necessary adjustments and that the postmodern shift motivated more theoretical courses, structure and intellectual components (such as essay-writing and oral presentations), but the fundamentally individual and free orientation of the education remained. The schooling of the artist continued to be understood within the frame of studio practice. The theoretical component introduced in the 90s remained an addition to what was essentially practice-based artistic work.

However, the reform of the governance of higher education in 1993 introduced new administrative routines and a new pressure on the old fine art colleges in Stockholm that forced the boards and the rectors to give much more detailed accounts of the operation of the schools. In this sense, the independent Stockholm fine art colleges now had to adjust to formal and general routines that Valand, being a part of the university, had been exposed to for a long time. In the 90s, we can thus see an effect of formalization of the art colleges, and an introduction of a new way of thinking in the governance of the schools that was adapted to the academic system. In this sense, the reform of 1993 had much more impact than the reform of 1977.

Yet, in strictly educational issues, the autonomy was still upheld, and the intellectual turn in the fine art colleges in the mid 1990s cannot be explained as being a result of pressure from an idiosyncratic academic system. Instead, we can identify it as an effect of a willing accommodation towards the postmodern shift in the art world, a shift that opened up the possibility of launching attractive alternatives to what seemed to be outdated and old-fashioned modernistic ideals. Nevertheless, the intellectualization of the art world generated the intellectualization of the education, and this meant that the influence of academics, such as art critics or philosophers, increased. Many undoubtedly perceived this as an academization, but it is important to note that this was an effect of the increased interest in theory within contemporary art.