avhandlingen anges hela artikelomfång i noternas sidhänvisningar vilket blir vilseledande. Så skall det se ut i litteraturförteckningen men inte i noterna, som skall ange exakt vad som refereras till.

Lena Johannesson

Institutionen för konst- och bildvetenskap
Göteborgs universitet

Box 200

SE-405 30 Göteborg

E-mail: lena.johannesson@arthist.gu.se

© 2008 Lena Johannesson

DOI: 10.1080/00233600701430080

Anne-Marie Ericsson. **M/S Kungsholms inredning. Mästerverk i svensk art deco.** Bokförlaget Signum, Lund 2005. 166 pp, illustrated. Summary in English.

Art Deco is a style that has hitherto gained too little attention in Swedish history of art and design. With her special focus on the 1920s and 1930s Anne-Marie Ericsson, a well-known author and lecturer in the Swedish design world, is the just author for this period. Therefore I opened her *M/S Kungsholms inredning. Mästerverk i svensk art deco* (The Interior of M/S Kungsholm. A masterpiece in Swedish art deco)¹ with great expectations.

As the title implies, the aim of the book is to treat the interior of M/S Kungsholm, the showpiece of the Swedish American Line. This focus is reasonable, in so far as the exterior presented nothing new, according to the author, whereas the interior was enthusiastically received by the New York press as a »fairy tale castle« when she arrived on her maiden voyage in New York in December 1928 (p. 9).

Trying to present a reconstruction of how the ship looked, although almost nothing remains of it today, Anne-Marie Ericsson has taken upon herself a task that is not an easy one. The fate of M/S Kungsholm was unfortunate. After a glorious decade, she transported troops during the Second World War, incredibly enough escaped bombs and torpedoes, became a cruise ship in the Mediterranean and was finally broken up in Bilbao in 1964. By that time, the interior had been almost entirely extinguished and the furniture plundered or sold.

How is the book structured? Ericsson's book is more descriptive than analytical, more object-oriented than contextualizing. Her rich material is well structured, albeit not explicitly presenting a method. By an insistent focus on the visual aspects of the boat the reader understands during the course of moving from one chapter to the next that the author wants to show us what a passenger of that time saw. Ericsson is aware of the difficulties with this approach, herself stating the futility of such a mission in so far as »what is missing is the experience with one's own body: the space of the rooms, the lighting, the cool metal of a door handle« (p. 20). Anne-Marie Ericsson has managed to collect a lot of spread-out archive material: an information film has been used, brochures and sketches, furniture has been found at museums. And as if this were not enough, the author has additionally gleaned sources from contemporary novels and relatives of participating artists. All these scraps and bits have then been organised and placed in their proper position in this huge jigsaw puzzle.

After an introduction summarizing the history of M/S Kungsholm, its construction and destiny, a few short chapters follow that introduce the architect, and the tradition of

ship interiors. A comparison with the sister ship M/S Gripsholm is also given. Albeit built in Hamburg the modern diesel vessel with a gross tonnage of 21,600 register tons proudly represented Swedish enterprise, beauty and innovation. The year before, a show of Swedish craft had toured New York, Chicago and Minneapolis which followed on the success of the grand art deco Paris Exhibition in 1925. The dexterous architect Carl G. Bergsten (1870–1935) had proven skills in interior and exterior architecture, drawing and organization. Bergsten had been responsible for the Swedish pavilion in Paris (1925) as well as the Liljevalchs Konsthall in Stockholm (1917) and had already built various interiors as the director of the department store Nordic Company's (NK) furniture department (1917–1925). Together with numerous skilled craftsmen, artists, workshops and industries and backed up by an office of five, he managed to produce the interior of Kungsholm in one year. The tradition of ship interiors is a genre of its own. Kungsholm differs from the so-called Ritz style of the Titanic, with neo-styles in every room, and was more simple than the film-like fancies of the S/S Normandie and S/S Queen Mary of the 1930s. One thing the ships all had in common, though, was a recurrent ambition to produce home-like surroundings giving a sense of security. The decor always hid the fact that they were mechanical steel machines on a frightening sea, for example by hiding portholes and arranging fireplaces. Kungsholm's sister ship M/S Gripsholm was built at the same time but nonetheless in a more traditionally eclectic style with reminiscences of the newly restored Gripsholm Castle.

The chapter »The first sketches« serves as stepping stone to the doorstep of the ship that Anne-Marie Ericsson will guide us around.

The intriguing heading »Palace with forbidden doors« opens the core chapters with descriptions of the ship's interior.

From the first sketches (Bergsten's monumental colour perspectives accompany the whole book), Ericsson discloses the ship with black-and-white photographs, coloured sketches, drawings and precise descriptions of makings and functions. An art historian, Anne-Marie Ericsson gives interpretations of the iconographic programme. Stairway by stairway, she takes us through entrances, dining halls, music salons, bridge rooms and smoking lounges. The different classes were not supposed to meet, which demanded a lot of the constructors in such a restricted area as a ship. The large majority of the 1574 passengers travelled third class.

Daring and witty with an attitude of modernity, the interior of Kungsholm represented something new. The publicity brochure promised a bold colour scheme: yellow carpets under green armchairs, tables of greenish marble from Kolmården and gilded sofas covered with morocco red. Inspiration from Wiener Werkstätte and Mackintosh-MacDonald is discernible in the geometric styling. Prohibition ruled ashore but the numerous bars on board indicated that other laws ruled at sea, yet another reason for the increasingly popular sea voyages (my personal favourite is the yellow, black and red bar on page 76). One could easily imagine the 1920s flappers in their short hair and tubular silk dresses taking a drink after dancing the charleston, played on the red grand piano in the first-class lounge with Persian-inspired allegories on music and dance, painted on the lid by Jerk Werkmäster.

Sceneries from Greek antique mythology lavishly decorated the expensive areas. Pink goatskin armchairs rested under a vaulted

walnut ceiling with a »pearl-grey shimmering cupola« depicting the starry Northern sky, surrounded by grey walls with a silver meandering ornament and elevator doors in rich wooden intarsia. In the relaxation area a fountain carried by metre-high dolphins of glazed earthenware, with light bulbs as eyes, were flanked by a bronze sculpture depicting sea monsters by the master Anna Petrus. Although the swimming pool was accessible only for first- and second class passengers, the contemporary press stressed the high standard in international comparison of the third-class quarters. The dining hall for one thousand people had white linen and a colour scheme of red woodwork and blue-and-white striped textiles reminiscent of Karin and Carl Larsson's Sundborn. Even here, the chairs were not bolted to the floor. All this was possible thanks to the clean (no black coal fumes) diesel engines that gave a steady journey even in stormy weather.

After the survey of the interior, Ericsson turns to a thorough inventory of the craft of walls, ceilings, floors, textile, furniture, mirrors, skylights and windows, fireplaces of marble and cast iron, lighting, ceramics, glass and textiles. All the furniture was tailor made to fit the tight spaces. High quality, lightness of weight and refined form were the features of Swedish Grace to be found here. Only the best workshops were used: Handarbetets Vänner (Association of Friends of Textile Art), Märta Måås-Fjetterström, Bodafors furniture manufacture and Näfveqvarn's cast iron factory.

The America Line had many shops in the United States and Kungsholm and Gripsholm served as moving show windows for goods made in Sweden. The success of the craft and design of the 1920s and 1930s had its peak at the New York 1939 exhibition. With movie-

stars such as Greta Garbo on the passenger lists the liners got a lot of press for free. In spite of all these advantages, too little profit was produced. What the entrepreneurs did not realize was that the American audience wanted the luxury they had seen in Paris in 1925, not the increasingly functional goods that successively became fashionable in Sweden, where anti-luxury ideology became a monopoly. The political climate changed and to export know-how on mass production and standardization, important functionalist traits that were winning ground in Sweden, was not what the Americans wanted, themselves being the inventors of this. The Swedish entrepreneurs were not quick enough to understand this and consequently golden business opportunities slipped through their fingers.

The last chapter discusses the reception of the boat. Why, the author asks, had Swedish Grace such a success with the American audience? Was it that it dared to be »amusing« or was it perhaps the »unconscious, provincial charm in the approach« that worked so well? Instead of continuing her speculations they are interrupted with a »but there is no study that sheds light on this« – but has she really had no thoughts about this herself?

What is the character of the book? Who is the intended reader? This is not explicitly stated in *M/S Kungsholms inredning* and something the author does not seem to have considered. The layout of the book, the format and the abundant illustrations signals that it is intended for a popular audience. The style of the text, however, seems rather to have the critical colleague within academe in mind. The book would have gained if discussions on what it is possible or not to prove, or if alternative locations for objects had been made into footnotes, whereas more lively

parts could have been given more space in the text. This is because, paradoxically enough, in spite of detailed and colourful material in both images and text, the story does not really take off.

What issues does the author intend to investigate? How does she succeed in her attempts? One explicit ambition is to investigate the »Swedishness« in defining the designs, but instead of following up this thought, Ericsson leaves us there, which is a pity. An object such as this – an ocean liner travelling faraway waters as a representative of Swedish craft abroad – demands an international outlook. Instead we are presented with only one page of art deco in a Swedish context.

The large V & A exhibition (London, 2003), which Ericsson also mentions, broadens the scope of art deco both in time and in space. Stretching from 1910 to 1939, and including a number of »new« geographical places habitually not part of the art deco tradition, the Nordic countries are given a chapter of their own. With the two axes of the Paris 1925 Exhibition and the superfast (three days) French ocean liner Normandie from 1935, the context is there to exploit the Kungsholm theme more. With the Swedish success in Paris and art deco as the style representing as important a changed lifestyle with faster communications including Bakelite® telephones, streamlined cars, airliners, zeppelin airships and ocean liners, transport and travel, this would have offered something for the popular reader. The author is somehow too modest. Why does Ericsson hesitate to share with us all her expertise?

The common knowledge in Swedish design history is that there was almost no art deco here, the Golden Hall of Ragnar Östberg's

City Hall (the dancing hall for the Nobel banquet) being one rare exception. With cooperatively owned shops and collective houses for single parents as an ideal, luxury was not well viewed by the Social-Democrats who started to build the welfare state in the 1930s. At least according to myth. In history writing on the 1920s, a period of rapid transition for rich and poor, it is rather the destiny of the latter into a welfare system which has been focused on. As a consequence, events dedicated to themes applying ideas of social reform pronounced by Ellen Key and Gregor Paulsson have so far achieved much attention in Swedish design history, at the cost of for example the Gothenburg exhibition of 1923, which was devoted more to luxury.

Wittier is the eye-witness description, which Ericsson includes, by the sturdy Jan Myrdal (son of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, both leading theorists within the social democratic party), who from a child's perspective saw people »from the other world« moving on deck while lying in a comfortable first-class couch reading adventure stories. Jan Myrdal grew up to become a famous author himself and was, until recently, a well-known voice on the cultural pages in our newspapers. At the risk of exposing the sad state of our universities, my experience is that it is wishful thinking to expect students to share these horizons, or even knowledge on seemingly basic historical events. Their world is different, which demands a lot of the historian. Anne-Marie Ericsson includes Jan Myrdal but without presenting him further. Here she could have acquainted the reader with just a tiny bit more information.

If we apply the definition of Martin Greif, stressing that »Art Deco should really be »Art Decos« (accent on the plural) and that the

term really embraces at least ten to fifteen mutually exclusive »styles«,² or if we use the concept of art deco in the sense of »fantasy«, »fun« and »popular interwar expressions of modernity in architecture and design of the type that stands somewhere between Modernism and various expressions of classicism current in the period«, as defined by Charlotte and Tim Benton,³ Swedish design of the 1920s and 1930s certainly needs to be re-evaluated. With its international outlook and provincial approach Jennifer Hawkins Opie describes Scandinavian art deco in the V & A exposition already mentioned. In terms of neo-classicism and neo-Greek motifs, Opie partly defines the typical »Swedishness« of art deco, adding »individuality, traditional hand skills, pleasure in materials, luxury and the familiar language of classical human proportion«.⁴ Not mentioning Kungsholm of course, as Ericsson's story was untold in this respect, the ship is in this context a rather typical representative of Scandinavian art deco, more often named »Swedish Grace«.

This period of »New Swedish Renaissance« deserves much more attention. Sadly, not only were there numerous talents that were not given the opportunities they deserved, but the stories of even the successful ones have not yet been sufficiently considered in history writing on Swedish design. Carl Hörvik for example, mentioned by Ericsson in another text, won the Grand Prix in Paris 1925 for a suite of furniture, part of which 60 years later was saved from a garbage container, which says something about the too often alarmingly indifferent attitude to cultural heritage in Sweden.

Anne-Marie Ericsson's *M/S Kungsholms inredning* is a decent piece of research, beautifully packed, and with great potential.

From a methodological point of view, however, the author shows us a patterned carpet, but not how it flies or in which direction, to use a metaphor. But on the whole this is an insignificant detail.

With magnificent illustrations Ericsson takes us along on an eight-day trip across the Atlantic, which in itself is an achievement. She makes something visible that has disappeared and manages thus to save the ship for future generations from falling into oblivion. The empirical detail is carefully treated with a solid archival and well-chosen bibliographic basis. This makes *M/S Kungsholms inredning* indispensable for further studies on art deco.

Concluding with the hope that someone might be able to identify a piece of panel or a colourful carpet of hitherto unknown origin, Anne-Marie Ericsson's work is an important cultural historical deed. By adding a few large brush strokes necessary for the international reader, her thorough and well-written book deserves to be translated into other languages.

Margareta Tillberg

Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte
Boltzmannstrasse 22

DE-14195 Berlin

E-mail: mtillberg@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/mek
a@kth.se

© 2008 Margareta Tillberg

DOI: 10.1080/00233600802015772

Endnotes

1. Unless stated otherwise, all the translations from Swedish to English are by the author, M.T.
2. Martin Greif, »Defining Art Deco«, *Art Deco Society of New York News*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January–February 1982, p. 2, as quoted from *Art Deco 1910–1939*, London, 2003, p. 16.
3. Charlotte and Tim Benton, »Introduction«, *Art Deco 1910–1939*, p. 20.

4. Jennifer Hawkins Opie, »Lovely Neoclassical Byways: Art Deco in Scandinavia«, in *Art Deco 1910–1939*, eds Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton and Ghislaine Wood, V & A Publications, London 2003, p. 213.

Merit Laine and Carolina Brown. **GUSTAF LUNDBERG 1695–1786: En porträttmålare och hans tid (GUSTAF LUNDBERG 1695–1786: An Artist and his Time)**. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 2006.

In Swedish art history, Gustaf Lundberg (1695–1786) is well remembered as a prominent portrait painter and pastellist. He is credited with a central role as the introducer and foremost exponent of the rococo portrait, representing the notion »Swedish rococo«, and has long been considered one of the most influential artists of his time in Sweden. To this day, his frequently reproduced likenesses exert a major influence on our view of the people and culture of eighteenth-century Sweden. In addition, Lundberg takes his place in French art history. Around 1720 he established himself in Paris and thereafter spent almost 40 years as a leading portraitist in the French capital. Upon returning to his native country in 1745 he was already well established, and was shortly after appointed court painter. Nevertheless, a thorough study of Lundberg's life and work has been missing until now. The current book, the result of a government-sponsored research project, and a publication of the Swedish National Museum (Nationalmuseum), is the first monograph on Lundberg since 1902 – a remarkable fact in view of his reputation. It is therefore a welcome contribution to studies of eighteenth-century art, all the more since it deals with much more than the life and work of a single artist. As is made clear by the title of this extensive study, it presents the artist as

reflected by his time, i.e. Lundberg and his paintings as examined against the backdrop of the society in which he operated – both in Sweden and in France. It is a work which broadens the perspective on eighteenth-century art in general and in portraiture in particular, and its importance is perhaps best mirrored by the fact that it was, immediately after it was published, taken into use as course literature in the Department of Art History at the University of Stockholm.

It should initially be said that the authors, Merit Laine and Carolina Brown, are specialists in the area of portraiture and eighteenth-century art, and that they have unmistakably based their present studies on their thorough knowledge of the epoch. Individual details are here spun together so as to form a larger pattern, the authors being like instructive, indiscernible narrators, who, from the first chapter to the last, continually guide the reader deeper and deeper into the contextual background of the works of Lundberg. In the end, the reader is thus enriched by insights regarding the artist and his work, as well as ideological and aesthetic influences, literary trends and also shifts in male and female ideals over the long period in which Lundberg was active.

The material presented is vast, and in order to make it apprehensible to the reader, the authors have very pedagogically divided the book into four chapters. In each part the authors have contributed separate sections. The first chapter contains background material, the second is a biographical section, the third part analyses a selection of Lundberg's portraits and, finally, the fourth part deals with his studio, his pastel technique and the spread of his various portrait types. The last chapter, in addition, includes a section on the frames used for the artist's pastels, written by