BLAND SJÄLPORTRÄTT OCH PARAFRASER

Om kön och skolans bildundervisning

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofic doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förvar i Hörsal E, Humanisthuset
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The overall purpose of the thesis is to explore the school subject Art as an arena where pupils and Art teachers do gender. The study focuses on how pupils interact and position themselves during Art lessons and in the artworks they create, and also on how their notions of Art are linked to notions of gender. The study was conducted using a range of methods for gathering data, inspired by visual ethnography. A total of 50 Art lessons have been observed. The empirical material consists of observation notes, photographs and sound recordings from the observed lessons, the artworks created by the pupils during those lessons, and also interviews with pupils and Art teachers. Included in the study are more than 70 pupils, 14-16 years old, and two Art teachers, from two different schools. The theoretical perspective is doing gender, meaning that gender is perceived as something that is accomplished through actions and interactions between people and in institutional arenas. The concepts interpretative repertoires and subject positions have been used for analysing the interviews. The pupils’ artworks have been analysed with concepts from visual semiotics.

In both schools, the pupils were asked to describe their identity in pictures during the observed lessons, and in both schools the students positioned themselves in accordance with common notions of gender in their artworks. In one of the schools, girls positioned themselves as feminine using symbols such as hearts, suns and smiley faces, thus portraying a harmless and caring femininity. In the other school, girls presented themselves as preoccupied with their appearance, or as objects for the male gaze, or portrayed longing and anticipation, thus positioning themselves as passive beings. Boys in both schools positioned themselves, to a greater extent, as masculine through their interests in e.g. sports, computers, music or motor vehicles. Many of the pupils chose not to reveal too much about themselves in their pictures and instead presented themselves in an impersonal way, which is interpreted as a form of resistance to the theme, since it was going against the intentions of the assignments. Some girls resisted the teaching or the theme by working very fast to free up time that allowed them to pursue private projects, resisting in a less overt manner, to gain control of their time in the Art classroom. Some boys resisted the theme by using humour and irony in their artworks. Many boys also protested verbally and asked critical questions during instructions.

The study suggests that the legacy of the ideas of the free creative expression persists in Art teaching as well as in the pupils’ notions of what Art is. The notion of Art as a subject for expressing emotions makes the subject appear as feminine to the pupils. The study also points to the importance of a clear framework for the pupils to relate to in their creative work. In the absence of this framework, gender stereotypes are more prevalent in the artworks that are created.

Key words: Art education, gender, femininity, masculinity, visual semiotics, picture analysis, interpretative repertoires, subject positions, resistance, Art lessons, history of Art education