

Modern Swedish Design

Three Founding Texts



The Museum of Modern Art

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**By Uno Åhrén, Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn,
Ellen Key, Sven Markelius, Gregor Paulsson,
and Eskil Sundahl**

Edited and with introductions by
Lucy Creagh, Helena Kåberg,
and Barbara Miller Lane

Essay by Kenneth Frampton

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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Preface

The history of architecture and design encompasses far more than bricks and mortar, drawings and models, and beautiful objects. Alongside this expressive material production are the allied rich histories of ideas and theories articulated in the writings of critics, art historians, artists, and architects. Indeed, for those concerned with the history and theory of architecture and design, it is impossible to divorce objects from the intellectual and social contexts from which they emerged. Every era since at least the Florentine Renaissance, when Leon Battista Alberti published his observations on art and architecture, has produced remarkable discourses. One thinks of Abbot Marc-Antoine Laugier's "Essay on Architecture" from the mid-eighteenth century; the forceful and moralizing prose of John Ruskin, which profoundly shaped the British Arts and Crafts movement in the nineteenth century; and, spanning the twentieth century, the widely disseminated works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Robert Venturi (whose *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was published by this museum), and Rem Koolhaas, each of whom defined some of the key debates of their times. These writings communicate well beyond their time and place of origin, in no small part for having been printed in books; publication bestows both longevity and the potential for far-reaching influence, attracting not only the professional but anyone interested in the arts and society.

This volume is part of a series presented by The Museum of Modern Art's International Program that is intended to give English-speaking readers access to fundamental art-historical texts written in other languages. *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts* presents the first English translations of seminal texts that informed and responded to the devel-

opment of modern Swedish design. The Swedish design movement has exercised a wide influence on modern architecture and interior furnishings internationally since the early twentieth century, yet the intellectual background from which it emerged has remained less well known. *Modern Swedish Design* promises to make the modern movement in Sweden—from artist Carl Larsson's influential renderings of his cottage, with its simple bright interiors, to IKEA, the phenomenally successful international home products retailer founded in 1943—more fully appreciated.

This publication encapsulates the movement's essential arguments, which developed over several decades from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, a period that parallels the beginnings of modernism. The earliest text is by the noted philosopher and critic Ellen Key, who argues in "Beauty in the Home," an essay published in 1899, for the transformation of the domestic environment as a means to social reform. Key's writings were an inspiration to the influential art historian Gregor Paulsson, whose *Better Things for Everyday Life* appeared in 1919. The third text is *acceptera*, a book-length manifesto written in 1931 by Paulsson and a group of leading young modern architects, most notably Gunnar Asplund and Sven Markelius, who set forth progressive ideals of modern design for the noble goal of social well-being.

These authors, effective advocates for progressive social and artistic reform, shared a belief in the transformative power of a well-designed environment. Their essays are characterized by a fervent conviction that when the aesthetic realm is attuned to contemporary realities, an environment will be a catalyst for necessary

social, cultural, and economic improvement. They also engage in the principal concerns of their time: the reader will recognize in these texts some of the central debates of the modern movement—regarding the relationship between art and industry, beauty and technology, and the individual and society, for example. Interestingly, the authors' ideas about taste, design, production, and the role of the domestic environment, the latter of which was a central concern, are set against a backdrop of ambitious exhibitions. While the exhibitions are not the focus of this volume, they were conceived with similar intent—to demonstrate, educate, and persuade.

Modern Swedish Design offers insights not only into Swedish history, but also into how the intellectual and critical discourse of that country relates to significant debates that took place simultaneously in Scandinavia, England, the Continent, and the United States. The Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929 and presented its first architecture exhibition in 1932, just one year after *acceptera* was published. That landmark exhibition, *Modern Architecture—International Exhibition*, organized by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, included a recently constructed building by Eskil Sundahl and one by Markelius and Uno Åhrén (see p. 129; figs. 4 and 5), thereby representing three of the six authors of *acceptera*. Ever since, the institution has been committed to educating people about the art of our time as reflected in its collection, exhibitions, and publications, whose reach includes

the modern movement that unfolded in Scandinavia.

The Museum is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Lucy Creagh, Helena Kåberg, and Barbara Miller Lane—three scholars who provide insightful introductions and annotations to the primary texts. The editors' astute commentaries provide the historical contexts in which Key, Paulsson, and the other authors of *acceptera* developed their influential ideas. Their introductions also convey the lasting relevance of the primary texts, a discussion that is developed further in Kenneth Frampton's essay. Frampton describes how the ideas put forth in these writings—which were not overly radical nor utopian—infused Scandinavia in the 1930s and mid-century in such a way that the modern experiment became not only possible, but a pervasive if arguably fleeting way of life in Scandinavia and beyond. In all, this publication provides an opportunity to reassess the history of modern Swedish architecture and design and its attendant writing and to pursue a deeper understanding of the polemics surrounding the social and aesthetic changes that so forcefully characterize the modern movement. With the International Program's commitment to support such scholarly activities, it is with great pleasure that we bring these founding texts and their engaged analysis to the English-speaking reader.

—Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director
for Curatorial Affairs,
The Museum of Modern Art

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We are grateful to the family of Gregor Paulsson for permission to translate and publish *Vackrare vardagsvara*, and to the families of Uno Åhrén, Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Gregor Paulsson, and Eskil Sundahl for their permission to translate and publish *acceptera*.

David Jones skillfully translated the Paulsson and *acceptera* texts, and Anne-Charlotte Harvey not only provided a superb translation of Ellen Key's "Beauty in the Home," but also offered unstinting help on other translation issues. Her translation is dedicated to her father, Eric Hanes (1911–2004), "whose life and works embodied Key's aesthetic with grace and clarity, and who would have approved of making her ideas more widely known in this world."

Many friends and colleagues have offered advice, critical readings, or support in obtaining funding or rare documents. Our thanks for their invaluable aid to Nicholas Adams, Ronny Ambjörnsson, Michael Asgaard Andersen, Fredric Bedoire, Kimberley Elman Zarecor, Eva Eriksson, Michelle Facos, Katja Grillner,

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Anders Åman kindly permitted us to quote from the list of notes on the illustrations to *acceptera* published in the facsimile edition of 1980. Other colleagues have helped us track down and identify elusive images in *acceptera*: David Cast, Jeffrey Cohen, Robert Jonathan Esau, Paul Groth, Sabine Hartmann of the Bauhaus Archiv, Maria Ihrsén, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, Bo Legelius, Andrew Saint, Michael Sanz, and Henrik Widmark. For their kind help in locating manuscripts, archival material, rare books, and other illustrative material, we are grateful to Jonas Malmdal, Arkitekturmuseet; Ulrika Sundberg, Nordiska museets bildförmedling; Eva Karlsson, Nationalmuseum; Anita Christiansen; and the Archives at Svensk Form, all in Stockholm; and the Bryn Mawr College Library in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

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—Lucy Creagh, Sydney
Helena Kåberg, Uppsala
Barbara Miller Lane, Bryn Mawr



General Introduction

Lucy Creagh, Helena Kåberg, and
Barbara Miller Lane

This volume presents three founding texts of Swedish modernism from the early twentieth century, translated and annotated in English for the first time. These writings, by pioneer reformers Ellen Key, Gregor Paulsson, and his five fellow authors of *acceptera*—Uno Åhrén, Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, and Eskil Sundahl—played central roles in the development of modern thought on architecture, design, and society in twentieth-century Sweden. While the authors' ideas and visions share many similarities with those of the French, German, American, and British founders of modern movements, they are also distinct from those of reformers abroad. Many of the differences resulted from the specific economic and political contexts in which Swedish modernism developed.

“Only when there is nothing ugly available for sale, when beautiful things are as inexpensive as ugly ones now are, can beauty for everyone be fully realized,” wrote Ellen Key in “Beauty in the Home” at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, each of these texts presents beauty as an elevated expression of purpose, and each promotes a reformed version of industrialization as a means to bring about a new era in which “better things for everyday life,” as Paulsson’s title put it some twenty years later, would be available for all. Manufacturers, artists, architects, and craftspeople would unite to produce “a new visage” for “our new age,” as the *acceptera* authors proclaimed a decade hence. Each of these texts sought design reform in every area of life, from the simplest household objects to the dwelling to the cityscape. Each also mounted powerful campaigns against buildings and manufactured products that were imitative of historical styles. For Key and Paulsson, contemporary industry was at fault in producing false and useless imitations; for the authors of *acceptera*, historical styles had become an obstruction to beauty.

Each text, however, has a different emphasis, which was of course shaped by the times in which it was written. Key’s “Beauty in the Home” (1899) stresses that the beautification of the home can be achieved by turning to the simplest of models—some derived from early Swedish architecture, some from craft traditions, some from the potential of machine production, and some from nature itself. The essay was directed to the individual reader, to women and workers, and sought to educate them in redesigning the home. Further, Key argues for “utility” in the home, proposing that “each man-made thing must . . . serve its purpose with simplicity and ease,” and

“the only thing worth striving for is harmony between the useful and beautiful.” In his *Better Things for Everyday Life* (1919), Paulsson also wrote about purpose (“truth . . . means fitness for the purpose”), but to a greater extent than Key he emphasized the essential role of machine production in bringing about new forms, specifically through standardization and the creation of types by artists and craftspeople. His book was intended for manufacturers as well as for designers and artists. He also championed strong alliances between designers and industry. *Acceptera* (1931) was a response to the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930; a manifesto of Swedish modernism presented in a bold marriage of written and graphic form, it emphasizes architecture and city planning, subjects that Key and Paulsson also considered, though in texts not included here. Having grown partially out of earlier articles in specialist journals, *acceptera* was nevertheless addressed to a wide popular audience. The *acceptera* authors were more explicitly egalitarian and socialist, though these leanings are present in Key and the earlier Paulsson text, too.

While initially addressed to different audiences, all three texts were works of persuasion, intended to play a widespread and significant role in the re-education of popular taste. And all were effective: over time, regardless of initial intent, they came to be known to a broad audience. Each author promulgated his or her ideas not only through the publications translated here (each issued in a relatively inexpensive soft-cover edition) but also through public lectures, articles in newspapers and magazines, and popular exhibitions. Key helped put together two exhibitions on the design and furnishing of small apartments in 1899; Paulsson was involved in Svenska Slöjdföreningen (The Swedish arts and crafts society) when it sponsored the 1917 Home Exhibition, which was devoted to the design and furnishing of minimal dwellings. Thirteen years later he organized the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930 in collaboration with the other *acceptera* authors and with the sponsorship of Svenska Slöjdföreningen. These exhibitions engaged large audiences for their time (the 1930 exhibition was of course the best known) and prompted extensive newspaper coverage. In one way or another, the ideas of these design reformers reached a great many people.

While popular, each of the texts translated here is strikingly erudite. In addition to the Scandinavian languages, the authors appear to have read German, English, and French fluently; philosophical and literary allusions to works in English, German, and Swedish abound; technical and economic arguments are cited from American, French, British, and German sources. At the same time, the writing is strongly contextual: contemporary Swedish and other Scandinavian authors are referred to by allusion to their arguments or reputations, occasionally without much further identification. Like other Swedish intellectuals of their times, the design reformers included here were very well educated, closely familiar with those who shared their expertise or interests but also in touch with business and political leaders, and simultaneously convinced of their ability to address people from all spheres of society.

The ideas expressed in these texts are essential to any study of modern twentieth-century society and the birth and development of modern architecture, design, and city planning. Throughout the world today, the products inspired by modern Swedish design principles are well known and admired for their attention to utility and everyday beauty. This is partly because these authors were influential not only in Sweden but also internationally: during the troubled first half of the twentieth century, many looked to Sweden as a social and political model as well as a beacon for socially engaged modern architecture and design. This interest was particularly pronounced in Britain and the United States from the 1920s onward, where Sweden was often singled out as providing the Anglo-Saxon world with a more palatable, less extreme vision of modernism than that of Germany or France. Many of the writers included here

lectured and wrote in German and English and presented their ideas at international symposia; some were members of international organizations that promoted modernism, such as CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) and the design team for the postwar United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Notwithstanding such international cross-pollination, Swedish modernism arose in a specific Swedish context. Unlike the developers of modern design in Germany, Great Britain, or the United States, Swedish proponents of modern design ideals were able to cultivate their principles in a climate of relative calm—Sweden experienced neither political revolution nor the full impact of the world wars that shockingly transformed other societies in the early twentieth century. Some of the differences between the development of modernism in Sweden and elsewhere can be accounted for by this comparatively placid history, but other factors—economic, political, and intellectual, as well as the long-term persistence of crafts traditions in Sweden—were equally formative.

Sweden in the late nineteenth century was marked by a sudden convergence of events that in other countries took place more gradually and separately. Large-scale industrialization occurred here only in the 1880s and 1890s, “late” in comparison especially to Britain, but also to the United States and Germany. In Sweden, however, industrialization built on a long tradition of manufacturing that has often been termed “proto-industrial.” Iron and steel, wood products, and some textile making depended on small mills and “works,” while other crafts products were often made at home or in the village. Such production was widely dispersed among many small urban and rural centers. This proto-industrial structure eased the transition to full industrialism, making it perhaps less jarring, and permitted the long-term survival of “crafts” traditions into the modern period, and into modern design.

Because full industrialization came late to Sweden, it coincided with the so-called Second Industrial Revolution, a phase in which older sources of power like steam and coal were rapidly supplemented by electricity and the internal combustion engine, while railroad networks improved distribution. Hence, the brutal economic and social dislocations typical of industrialization everywhere—urbanization, the growth of a large and impoverished working class, the crisis in housing conditions for the poor, class violence—were, while acute and catalytic for the emerging modern reform movement, shorter lived and less severe in Sweden. This is not to suggest, however, that Sweden was immune to struggle. In fact each of the texts translated here was written during periods of great social and economic crisis and at least partly in response to a troubled labor market and severe housing shortages.

Not long before the pace of industrialization began to accelerate, political reforms gave power to broad segments of both the urban and rural populations. At the same time, powerful workers' organizations began to form. The version of socialism that developed in Sweden in the 1880s and gained increasing political power beginning in the 1920s was so-called revisionist (i.e., non-Marxian) socialism—a non-revolutionary and democratic socialism that blends demands for social justice with a desire to respond to individual needs, wants, and rights. After the Second World War, modern architecture and design received the patronage of the new welfare state. In the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, under the leadership of Social Democrats or social democratic coalition governments, the government introduced large new housing and “new towns” programs that built on the teachings of prewar reformers.

Of course the new design programs also diverged from the specific mandates of the writer-reformers included in this volume, for instance replacing the severe simplicities of *acceperata* with more natural materials and more playful forms. And how could this divergence be otherwise? What these authors promoted was essentially a

design philosophy, applicable at any given point in history, the essence of which is to analyze and take advantage of *current* conditions to fulfill the needs of all in the *current* society. Living, as we do today, in a different society with different technologies, many of the specifics of these authors' proposals are inapt for us. Their overall approach, however—which we might call “design for the times”—is not only of design-historical importance, but inspirational for our times as well.

In asserting the significance of these Swedish design writings and making them available to an English-speaking readership, our hope is to stimulate awareness and new scholarship. The editors came to this project with this shared intent but from different backgrounds: Creagh is an Australian architect and architectural historian whose research focuses on Swedish theory and practice in the mid-twentieth century; Kåberg, a Swedish art historian and museum curator with a special interest in international perspectives on Swedish architecture and design; Lane, an American historian concerned with the links between German and Scandinavian architecture. We have found each of our perspectives to be absolutely essential to our interpretation of the texts. Separated by continents but joined together by the pleasures of electronic mail, we have collaborated closely on every aspect of the manuscript.

Our initial interest in this project arose through our efforts to include the history of Swedish modernism in teaching English-speaking students. These efforts were constantly frustrated by the absence of translations from the Swedish. Our first concern, therefore, has been to make these texts available to teachers and students who do not read Swedish, but who want to understand the role of Swedish architecture and design in the general and international development of modernism. To this end, we have included in our annotations and bibliography as many relevant English titles as possible, as well as works in languages that are more accessible than Swedish to English readers. A second goal has been to stimulate new scholarship on the history of Swedish architecture and design—on both its specifically Swedish development and its international relationships. We hope that this volume will interest a general audience, but also that it will encourage a more international approach among scholars, perhaps also prompting additional translations from the Swedish.

Two further notes for the close reader—first, on translation. The qualities of the original texts—their erudition, allusiveness, their mixture of high philosophy and cheerful wit, their frequent references to economic, social, and political events and personalities well known at the time—present some problems to the English translator, and to the modern reader. In our introductory essays to each text, we have provided a great deal of interpretation, and in the notes to the translations we have endeavored to supply as many as possible of the less obvious references to philosophical, literary, political, and economic texts, events, and people. Working with our translators, we have tried to render early twentieth-century Swedish prose into contemporary language, while at the same time retaining the flavor of the originals and the differences in tone among them. And finally, a note on the design of this volume: Ellen Key's *Skönhet för alla* (Beauty for all), in which “Beauty in the Home” was first published, was part of the popular Verdandis småskrifter (Verdandi booklets) series and shared its layout and design with the other volumes in that series. Its cover, partially designed by Key's friend the painter Carl Larsson, has been reproduced in this volume. In the original publications of *Better Things for Everyday Life* and *acceptera*, illustrative material added a crucial visual dimension to the written arguments. These two books were works of design in their own right. In order to retain the strong visual dimension and design qualities of the original publications, The Museum of Modern Art has here reproduced their design and typeface qualities and their illustrations in full, in arrangements that are as close as possible to the original.

The Untimely Timeliness of Swedish Modernism

Kenneth Frampton

While we cannot make anything without waste, this is distinguishable
from an ideology of waste. —Tomás Maldonado¹

The paradoxical timeliness of this anthology, which touches on the evolution of Swedish material culture from the late nineteenth century through 1931, acquires its current pertinence from the persuasive way in which these essays successively expound on the beneficial impact of environmental design on the overall quality of everyday life. Indeed, the origin of today's sustainable approach to the mediation and furnishing of the built environment may be said to date back to the last half of the nineteenth century, when the bourgeois ideal of a total, all-encompassing artwork came to be given a broader, more inclusive social dimension. The three texts assembled here comprise Ellen Key's "Beauty in the Home" (1899), Gregor Paulsson's *Better Things for Everyday Life* (1919), and the manifesto *acceptera* (1931), written by the designers of the didactic Stockholm Exhibition, which had been realized in the previous year.

Key's feminist manifesto is dedicated to rendering the home as the cradle of a new egalitarian culture, and thus may be readily compared to the writings of the American domestic reformers Harriet Beecher Stowe and Christine Fredericks. Key's position, however, was not only progressively liberative and in favor of industrial production but also nostalgic to a degree for the values of an agrarian, preindustrial life, as in her advocacy of simple, handcrafted furniture and textiles. Key had a profound influence on the art historian Gregor Paulsson, whose essay picks up the theme of environmental reform where Key leaves off, greatly widening the scope of its reformist agenda. Paulsson adopts Key's Socratic mode of arguing, for after recognizing that tastes differ, he would go on to question not only why one person should want magnificence and another simplicity but also what specific kinds of magnificence and simplicity would apply in each instance. A similar didactic line would seem to obtain in his contribution to *acceptera*, collectively written with Gunnar Asplund, the lead architect of the Stockholm Exhibition, and four other architects who had participated in its design. In effect, this exhibition had succeeded in humanizing the radical constructivist syntax of the Soviet avant-garde, transforming its language into a modern set piece that was as generously open and popular in its general atmosphere

as it was functional in its tectonic detail. *Acceptera* advanced the same ethos at a theoretical level while responding to those who still found its functional manner cold and severe. This exercise in total design, ranging from tableware to the micro-urban environment, was brilliantly characterized by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, whose appraisal, dating from May 1930, captured the way in which the exhibition bestowed upon its functionalist language an accessibly warm and ludic humanism. He wrote: "The deliberate social message that the Stockholm Exhibition is intended to convey is expressed in the architectural language of pure spontaneous joy. There is a festive elegance, but also a childlike lack of inhibition about it all. . . . This is not a composition of glass, stone, and steel, as a visitor who despises functionalism might imagine; it is a composition of houses, flags, flowers, fireworks, happy people, and clean tablecloths."²

Aalto's characterization finds its counterpart in the Danish architect Jørn Utzon's 1989 recollection of being taken to the exhibition at the age of twelve, whereupon his family began redoing the family home. As he recalled, "The concept was space and light. All the heavy impractical furniture was moved and simple things were brought in. We developed new eating habits; healthy, green, and lean. We began to exercise, get fresh air, cultivate light and the direct way of doing things. . . . I believe at this time we learned to see and this quite naturally was of great importance. The empty, dead, museumlike feeling about architecture disappeared and it became a living reality."³

A less intimate reaction to the significance of the exhibition was registered by the British critic P. Morton Shand when, in the August 1930 issue of the *Architectural Review*, he wrote of the way in which the exhibition could be seen as an apotheosis of the Swedish Arts and Crafts movement, which had long exercised an influence on the British scene:

The Gothenburg Exhibition of 1923 revealed Sweden to an astonished world, not merely as an "artistic" nation, but as almost the only one that really counted as far as design and craftsmanship were concerned. . . . The perfectly edited Swedish pavilion at the Paris Exposition des arts décoratifs of 1925 confirmed this suddenly acquired reputation. . . . And now, just when the boom in "Swedish grace" is at its very zenith, Sweden calmly proceeds to jettison this halcyon godsend. . . . In the Stockholm Exhibition this process of spiritual renunciation—the act of craftsmen nerving themselves to take the first hesitant and half-dismayed steps toward an unexpected apotheosis—can actually be seen at work. . . . For the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition has at least taught us that the future of the machine as an integral organ of modern culture is assured; and its technical perfection as an art-form is only a matter of time.⁴

The section of *acceptera* dealing with modern furnishings was devoted not only to achieving the delicate transition between craftwork and machine production but also to distinguishing between meeting the everyday necessities of modern life and the human desire for luxury as an end in itself. It is highly probable that Paulsson was the author of this section, and in concluding that "every form of production that has no counterpart in our needs must come to an end," he anticipates, as it were, the ecological anxieties of our age.⁵ At the same time he went on to recapitulate the profoundly democratic aims of the *acceptera* circle, to the effect that: "We are looking for forms that are suitable and natural for our age, we are looking for a close link with the fine arts and with the finest gifts of nature, we want to give people the better homes they need, which will leave them with some energy to cultivate their intellectual gifts."⁶ Further evidence of the Swedish penchant for establishing a balance between

nature and culture may be found in Paulsson's 1931 essay "White Industry," published, once again, in the *Architectural Review*.⁷ For Paulsson, the putative "whiteness" of Swedish industry stemmed from its dependence on hydroelectric power rather than coal.

While environmental culture on both sides of the Atlantic was influenced in various ways by Stockholm 1930—one thinks of the exhibitions staged in Chicago (1933), Paris (1937), and New York (1939)—England was particularly susceptible to Swedish modernism throughout the 1920s and '30s, and Sweden would continue to exert an influence on the British scene during and after the Second World War. This much is evident from the mutual Anglo-Swedish adoption of the so-called New Empiricism in 1948, following Asplund's shift toward an organic brick-faced aesthetic with his state Bacteriological Laboratories of 1937.⁸ Irrespective of this retrenchment to a more traditional tectonic language, the 1951 Festival of Britain was a reiteration of Stockholm 1930 at a smaller scale, consciously combining in the name of social accessibility the constructivist syntax of the Dome of Discovery and the Skylon with the festive tropes of flags, fountains, canopies, and flowers, interspersed with one café terrace after another. It is surely no accident that the Festival of Britain, which celebrated the rise to power of the Labor Party in 1950, should echo in its rhetoric the triumph of the Swedish Welfare State, as this was anticipated by the Stockholm Exhibition.

If the decade that followed the First World War and the 1917 October Revolution was when the "unfinished modern project" first acquired its avant-gardist character, Stockholm 1930 was the moment when this cultural rupture was rendered as a socially accessible synthesis, one which by 1944 had been developed into the Swedish Welfare State by such committed intellectuals as Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, figures with whom Paulsson would have had much in common.

It is a far cry from this maturation of Swedish social democracy in 1944, or even its state in 1974, to the last two decades of our globalized market economy, where capital flows around the world at ever-increasing speed, perennially focused on the maximization of profit in the shortest possible time. This whirlwind has effectively deprived the fields of environmental planning and design of a comprehensive social and civic vision. As a result we have not only passed the tipping point of climate change but have also, despite our techno-scientific, digital, and informatic prowess, become incapable of evolving a residential land settlement pattern and way of life that in terms of basic resources, land use, and public transport makes any kind of ecological or economic sense. The texts in this volume testify to a point in the evolution of the modern project, to which, in all likelihood, we shall eventually have to return.

Notes

1. A sharp aphoristic comment made in conversation with the author in the late 1960s.

2. Alvar Aalto, "The Stockholm Exhibition 1930," in Göran Schildt, ed., *Alvar Aalto in His Own Words* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998), p. 72.

3. Richard Weston, *Utzon* (Hellerup, Denmark: Edition Blondal, 2002), p. 16. From an interview with Henrik Sten Møller, "Jørn Utzon on Architecture," *Living Architecture* 8 (1989): p. 172.

4. P. Morton Shand, "Stockholm, 1930," *Architectural Review*, August 1930, pp. 67, 69, 70, 72.

5. *Acceptera*, in the present volume, p. 257.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

7. Gregor Paulsson, "White Industry," *Architectural Review*, March 1931, pp. 78–84.

8. See Eric de Maré, "The New Empiricism: Antecedents and Origins of Sweden's Latest Style," *Architectural Review*, January 1948, pp. 9–11.



1. Hanna Hirsch Pauli. Untitled (Ellen Key). 1903. Pastel on paper, 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 30 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (61.5 x 77 cm).
Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm

An Introduction to Ellen Key's “Beauty in the Home”

Barbara Miller Lane

Ellen Key (1849–1926; fig.1), Swedish philosopher, socialist, feminist, pacifist, pedagogue, and design theorist, was one of the most influential intellectuals of her time. She was famous not only throughout the Scandinavian countries, but in continental Europe and the United States as well. More than forty books and hundreds of essays and journal articles flowed from her pen. Most of these works grew out of the many hundreds of lectures she gave: in the Scandinavian countries, in France, Italy, Finland, and most extensively in Germany. Her major publications were translated not only into English but into almost all European languages before the First World War.¹ By 1900 she was able to make a living (though a frugal one) from her books and lecture tours.² A great many of Key's works dealt with aesthetics—with the importance of the love of beauty in all realms of life.³ In an early essay (“Beauty,” 1897–98) she speaks of a “religion of beauty” and calls for “a visionary prophet . . . to preach fanatically . . . the laws of beauty and the evangelism of the personality.”⁴ The “prophet,” of course, was Key herself. She foretells a new era, a “Third Empire” of reason, social justice, creativity, peace, and beauty.⁵ She predicts that when a new art has conquered industry, “making everyday life festive and beautiful, for rich and poor,” the beauty of the home will spread outward to society, to architecture and city planning. Then, “under . . . modern social conditions, beautiful cities, monuments, and buildings [will] be created.”⁶

In “Beauty in the Home,” translated here into English for the first time, Key asserts that the new aesthetic sensibility must begin in the domestic setting.⁷ The beautiful, she writes, is that which is practical, useful, informed by its purpose, and expressive of the soul of its user or creator. All people, she adds, need to create beautiful surroundings for themselves, and this creation begins in the home. If beauty exists in the home, Key writes, lives will be transformed, and so, ultimately, will every aspect of society. The new aesthetic would not be restricted to the wealthy, or to artists and connoisseurs. Ordinary people—farmers and workers—would achieve it more easily in fact because their taste had not been corrupted by fashion and because they possessed fewer *things*. Every worker, Key once wrote, is a potential artist.⁸

Key also believed that every woman is a potential artist. The new taste and the new aesthetic would be created principally by women, partly because of their devotion to utility—"that whatever is useful is worthy of respect, all women realize"—but also in their role as nurturers and artists of the home, "of which [the woman] is the soul."⁹ The mother, in particular, is the fountainhead of change, Key believed, as both the artist of the home and the educator of the children within it. By educating a new generation, mothers would found a new era, beginning with "the century of the child" (the title of Key's most famous book, published in 1900).¹⁰ Outside the home, Key said, women also had a special role to play: they were the source of nurturing, caring, and indeed passion, within society. Their tasks were those of "motherliness," which she saw as the fostering of creative individuality and the reeducation of taste among all walks of life.¹¹

In addition to writing on design and on art education, Key was an outstanding liberal and an early proponent of women's political rights.¹² A committed yet idiosyncratic socialist, she insisted that social justice be combined with personal self-expression and creativity.¹³ There was a strain of anarchism in her thought too, stemming partly from her powerful commitment to individualism, and partly from her rebellious and contentious nature.¹⁴ She was a leading pacifist before, during, and after the First World War. She condemned Christianity, saying that it and asceticism were the enemies of beauty, art, and culture. She developed a personal religion, prophetic of modern existentialism, in which holiness is immanent in nature, in ordinary people, and in everyday life.¹⁵

Many of the origins of Key's ideas lie in her childhood and youth. As a girl growing up at the family estate in Sundsholm, she learned to care deeply for the condition of the poorer farmers; she taught their children and involved herself in the "folk high school" movement.¹⁶ Key loved the Swedish countryside, with its age-old handcraft and folk traditions (fig. 2). She also admired traditional rural buildings, especially the typical red-painted farmsteads of the provinces and the simple rustic classicism of her own home and others like it (figs. 3 and 4).¹⁷ As a teenager, she began to gather artifacts for historian and ethnographer Artur Hazelius (1833–1901), who was collecting and re-creating early buildings, furniture, and fabrics; these collections ultimately became the world-famous museum at Skansen (fig. 5).¹⁸ Later, in "Beauty in the Home," Key came to see the traditional architecture and crafts of rural Sweden as potential models for a new kind of design.

The love of painting that informs all Key's writings also began at an early date. In 1873, on the way to the Vienna World's Fair with her father, she visited the most important art museums of Europe (in Berlin, Dresden, Florence, Paris, London, Kassel, and Vienna). She repeatedly revisited these museums, as well as those of Copenhagen, Rome, and Munich. Like the German museum director Alfred Lichtwark (1852–1914), whom she came to admire, she believed that looking at works of artistic genius offered unique educational benefits for children and untutored people.¹⁹ Key took this idea further, though, arguing in her publications and speeches that even reproductions of good paintings were better for the viewer than ugly originals.

Educated almost entirely at home, Key early on formed a lifelong habit of voracious reading and self-education. In addition to her admiration for English women novelists, and for the greatest works of German Romanticism, she was deeply influenced by the writings of Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, and Auguste Comte. Thus her early philosophical stance can be characterized as strongly rationalist and positivist, yet based on a fundamental attachment to a rural way of life, and with an undercurrent of Romantic beliefs.

When around 1875 she moved to Stockholm and began to act as informal secretary to her father, Emil Key (1822–1892), a landowner and member of the newly



2. Cushion. Skåne, early nineteenth century. Wool embroidery on handwoven cloth, 22 1/4 x 19" (56.5 x 48.5 cm). Nordiska museet, Stockholm

3. Key's childhood home in Sundsholm, Småland. Eighteenth century. Photograph: collection Ellen Keys Strand, Ödeshög

4. Farm laborer's cottage, Södermanland, now in the Skansen outdoor museum, Stockholm. Early nineteenth century. Skansen, Stockholm

5. Mora Cottage, Mora, Dalarna, now in the Skansen outdoor museum, Stockholm. Eighteenth century. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm

reformed Swedish Parliament, she was especially eager to work with him on liberal issues such as education and the political rights of women and farmers.²⁰ She became a forceful proponent of political reforms and acquainted herself with Stockholm's leading liberal politicians and intellectuals. In the 1880s she drew progressively closer to avant-garde artists and literary figures: to the painters among The Opponents and the writers of the Young Sweden movement. Both groups rebelled against traditional taste and espoused Naturalism; for the artists, this meant plein air painting and a new appreciation of the northern landscape; for the writers, often, a concern with women and the working classes.²¹

In 1883 Key's family suffered financial reverses, the family estate was lost, and she was forced to support herself in Stockholm.²² While teaching at the new Stockholms arbetareinstitut (Stockholm workers' institute, founded in 1880), she began to lean toward socialism. Sweden's industrialization began in the last decades of the nineteenth century—late, as compared to England, France, Germany, and the United States. Stockholm especially experienced large-scale population growth, absorbing a rapidly increasing number of new immigrants, without much new building. The living conditions of Stockholm's poor toward the end of the century were considerably worse than in most of the rest of Europe. Working-class families with as many as eight children often crowded into a single room.²³ The poorest people lived in the decaying wooden structures of Stockholm's outer periphery.

In this context, Key transferred her early concern for Sweden's rural poor to the working classes of Swedish cities. Inspired by reformist ideas not unlike those of Jane Addams, Key formed an association called Tolfterna (The twelves) that brought middle-class professional women together with working-class women to help them improve their way of living.²⁴ In 1885 she cofounded Nya Idun (New Idun), an organization for women artists and intellectuals that she led until 1900.²⁵ During the same years, she befriended leading Social Democrats. In 1889 Key forcefully (and famously) defended socialist leaders who had been imprisoned by the Swedish government for atheist writings, among them August Palm (1849–1922) and Hjalmar Branting (1860–1925), founders and first leaders of the nascent Social Democratic Party. After the formal establishment of the party in 1889, she appeared with Branting at party meetings, where she spoke about working conditions for women. An admirer and disciple was Gustaf Steffen (1864–1929), prominent Swedish political economist and social democratic representative to the Riksdagen, often seen as one of the progenitors of the Swedish "middle way" in politics and social policy.²⁶

Key's lectures at the Workers' Institute were open to the public; soon she also began to lecture at workers' unions and clubs in Stockholm, and to student groups at Swedish and Finnish universities. Her lectures gained her great fame: she was, by all accounts, a bewitching speaker. Her talks—vivid, extemporaneous, presented with a modest (almost shy) demeanor and in a low voice—commanded attention from huge audiences of artists, architects, philosophers, literary figures, politicians, students, and workers.²⁷ By the early 1890s, Key was a central figure in Stockholm's intellectual life. She wrote regularly for radical periodicals, lectured widely, and began to publish her lectures and articles as books. She had already read and appreciated Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and would promote Nietzsche's ideas among Stockholm's intellectuals. She and her intimates gathered together at her apartment on Valhallavägen or at the home of artist Hanna Pauli (1864–1940) for weekly conversations about socialism, pacifism, education, philosophy, religion, and art (fig. 6).²⁸ Often discussed among Key's artist and literary friends were the writings of the eighteenth-century aesthetic philosopher Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745–1800). She and her circle subscribed to Ehrensvärd's belief that Swedish artists and architects had a special mission to achieve an almost primitive



6. Hanna Hirsch Pauli. *Vänner* (Friends). 1900–07. Oil on canvas, 6' 8 ³/₈" x 8' 6 ³/₈" (204 x 260 cm). Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

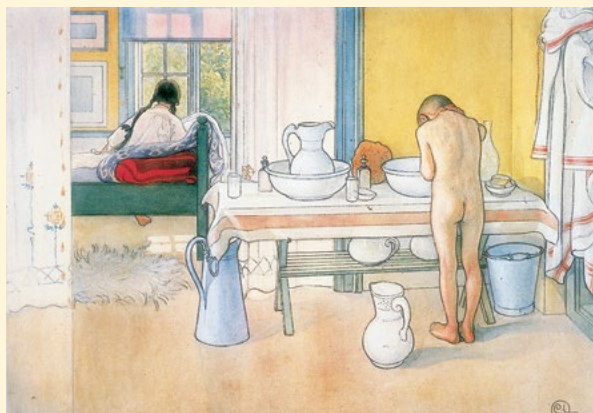
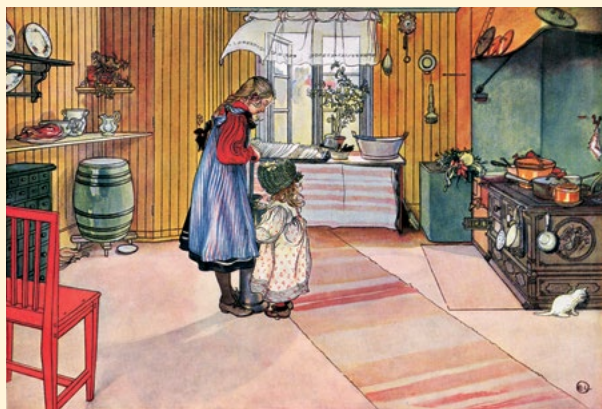
simplicity.²⁹ They also shared Key's view that Sweden must begin to play a leading role in educating continental Europe and the rest of the world in a new aesthetic.³⁰

Key and her friends were in touch with the Swedish crafts revival and reform movements of the time, and they were aware of the English Arts and Crafts movement. They knew and admired the revival of Swedish crafts promoted by Föreningen Handarbetets Vänner (The association of friends of textile art) and attended Erik Folcker's lectures on English wallpapers sponsored by Svenska Slöjdföreningen (The Swedish arts and crafts society) in 1892.³¹ They read the English art periodical *The Studio* as soon as it began publication in 1893. (Key probably read William Morris and John Ruskin at about this time.³²) And they went to the new Swedish exhibitions, most notably the major Stockholm Exhibition of May 1897, where watercolors of "the home" by the painter Carl Larsson (1853–1919) were displayed. Key reviewed the Stockholm Exhibition, highlighting the paintings of her close friend. Larsson published these paintings in an enormously successful series of books beginning in 1899; it is from the first of this series, *Ett hem* (A Home), which Key quotes in "Beauty in the Home."³³

In his paintings and books, Larsson depicted an ideal home, furnished with colorful, simple, and somewhat rustic-looking pieces designed by him and his wife, Karin, and decorated with textiles created by Karin, who was inspired by traditional crafts. Larsson peopled the dwelling with an idealized version of his own family (Karin and their eight children), leading an idealized life, plain and unpretentious, close to the soil and to local traditions. In Larsson's home, children worked and played, the family put on theatricals, light flooded in. Perpetual sunlight seemed to illuminate the life of the home, and strong colors predominated (figs. 7, 8, and 9). Key's own emphases on color and light are very similar to Larsson's, and, as she writes in "Beauty in the Home," she strongly approved of his depiction of family life.

Acting on her commitment to workers' education, Key joined with artists Gerda Bergh (1864–1919) and Richard Bergh (1858–1919) and art historian Carl G. Laurin (1868–1940) to organize furnishing and decoration exhibits at the Workers' Institute in the spring and fall of 1899, calling them the "Blue Room" and the "Green Room."³⁴ The "Blue Room" attempted to show a typical Swedish interior made tasteful by simplifying its contents and decorations. Plain white curtains, straw mats on the floor, tableware by designer Alf Wallander (1862–1914), and reproductions of works by artists (including Albrecht Dürer, Jean-François Millet, and Larsson) combined to display a "simple and purposeful form."³⁵ The "Green Room," intended as the model for a more humble worker's dwelling, was papered with an English wallpaper "in a pattern of small poppies" against a "background of yellow, green, and red tones" (figs. 10, 11, and 12).³⁶ The furniture, designed by architect Carl Westman (1866–1936), was stained green in a "mixture of Swedish country and modern English styles"; the pattern of the wood was permitted to show through the stain. The sideboard was bright red, like much of the furniture in the Larsson home. As in the "Blue Room," vases of flowers, bookcases, and art reproductions enhanced the interior. The exhibition showed, Key said, that the best effects could be achieved "with inexpensive materials and little effort;" by employing harmonious colors and simple, practical furniture.³⁷

About five thousand people visited the "Green Room" exhibition, and this success encouraged Key to expand the short essay published in 1897 into the much longer work translated here. In 1899 she collected the expanded essay and three earlier short writings on related subjects into *Skönhet för alla* (Beauty for all). Verdandi,



7. Carl Larsson. *Köket* (The kitchen). 1898. Watercolor on paper. Seen here as published in Larsson, *Ett hem* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1899)

8. Carl Larsson. *Namnsdag på härbret* (Name day in the storehouse). 1898. Watercolor on paper. Seen here as published in Larsson, *Ett hem* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1899)

9. Carl Larsson. *Sommarmorgon* (Summer morning). 1908. Watercolor on paper. Seen here as published in Larsson, *Åt solsidan* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1910)



10. Couch, table, and stove in the “Green Room” at Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm, September 1899. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm

11. Sideboard in the “Green Room” at Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm, September 1899. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm

12. Bed, window, washstand, and closet in the “Green Room” at Stockholms arbetareinstitut, Stockholm, September 1899. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm



an influential radical students' organization based at Uppsala University, published the book, with a cover by Larsson.³⁸ The essays in *Beauty for All* differ greatly in tone and subject matter. “Vardagsskönhhet” (The beauty of everyday life) (first published in *Julbloss*, 1891) speaks of the importance for the individual soul of sensing a connection to nature and creative work in art, music, and literature. “Festvanor” (Domestic celebrations) (*Idun*, 1896) argues that domestic festivals (Christmas, New Year’s, May Day, birthdays, name days, and other traditional household gatherings) awaken the understanding of each new generation to continuities, providing a kind of religious appreciation of everyday life. In “Skymningsbrasan” (Twilight fire) (*Idun*, 1895, written in 1870) Key writes of the experience of light and the role of the hearth in the dwelling.³⁹ The tone of these three essays, as of many of her other works, is often ecstatic, mystical, and prophetic.

“Beauty in the Home” is much more down-to-earth. Full of specific advice, it is a do-it-yourself manual for people of humble means, people seeking to establish some kind of judgment in the face of bad taste in home decoration. In the Swedish home of 1899, Key believed, “the most garishly cheap German taste” prevailed: ugly, ostentatious, crowded, dark, and gloomy.⁴⁰ Manufacturers instead should be guided by artists and craftsmen who would impart “beautiful form and appropriate decor to all things, from the simplest and smallest . . . to the largest.”⁴¹ We are told to avoid dark colors in upholstery and wall coverings, to mistrust pictures on the walls, to despise artificial flowers, doilies, knickknacks, imitative styles, any appearance of ostentation—or, indeed, of wealth. The home and its furnishings must be close to nature, made as far as possible of natural materials, not from industrial products at least insofar as these imitate



13. Yngve Rasmussen. Strand, Key's home on Lake Vättern. 1910. Ellen Keys Strand, Ödeshög



14. Key's bedroom in Strand. Ellen Keys Strand, Ödeshög

something that they are not. We must not use certain kinds of varnish, but choose others that are lighter and more natural looking. Light colors are always good, but strong, bright, and cheerful ones must complement them. There is a discussion of the ideal number of guests to seat at dinner and finally a list of good buildings and paintings the reader should know about, in order to improve her taste.

Underlying these sometimes amusing and sometimes distracting instructions is a central vision that stresses simplicity, naturalness, and the path to a new kind of self-expression for each individual in society. Out of this vision will come a new way of life for each, and ultimately for all. References to light occur over and over again, not only as advice in decorating, but also as metaphors of enlightenment and transformation. To achieve the moral and social progress that will begin in the home, to move on to the century of the child and the millennial empire of justice and beauty, we must "let the sunshine come flooding in!"⁴²

The editors have chosen to translate "Beauty in the Home" as it was published in its 1913 edition, the final version during Key's lifetime and the one most widely read. The essay did not change very much between 1899 and 1913: the major change was the addition, in 1904, of a long passage praising the home of Carl and Karin Larsson.⁴³ The list of organizations, buildings, paintings, and sculptures of which Key approved was also added to and emended in each new edition, but the text as a whole was never rewritten after 1904.⁴⁴ Thus "Beauty in the Home" is very much a product of the turn of the century, and of Key's life before she became a peripatetic traveler and an internationally famous author.

That there was never after 1904 a revised edition of *Beauty for All* nor a new edition after 1913 during Key's lifetime probably has to do not only with Key's busy schedule in her fifties and sixties, but also with her preoccupation with her house at Strand, on Lake Vättern, built according to her specifications by her architect and brother-in-law, Yngve Rasmussen, in 1910.⁴⁵ Key occupied Strand almost continuously from December 1910 on. Here she put some of her ideas about design into practice (figs. 13 and 14). There were strong colors on the walls, simple mats and runners on the floors, a mixture of relatively plain-looking (but by no means rurally inspired) furniture, and reproductions of Symbolist paintings on the walls. (Her favorite was Arnold

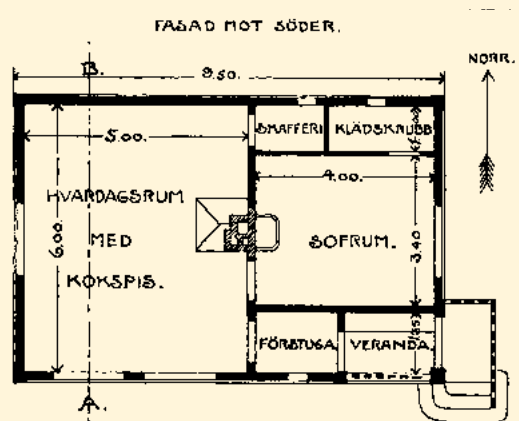
Böcklin's *Island of the Dead*)⁴⁶ The exterior bore a certain resemblance to Sundsholm, her childhood home.⁴⁷ In keeping with Key's wishes, Strand was used as a vacation place for working-class women after her death.⁴⁸

From about 1900 to 1909, Key's lectures outside of Sweden magnified her fame. At this time too she began an enormous correspondence with foreign intellectuals, a correspondence she carried on until the end of her life.⁴⁹ She also started to attract disciples from abroad, of whom perhaps the most well known to scholars are the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, Austrian novelist and librettist Stefan Zweig, Lou Andreas-Salomé (German journalist, companion to Nietzsche and Rilke), and Mamah Bouton Borthwick and her lover Frank Lloyd Wright. Borthwick was one of Key's earliest visitors at Strand; she translated four of Key's works into English (from German), and she and Wright arranged for their publication in the United States.⁵⁰

Ellen Key had a genius for gathering up the most progressive ideas of her contemporaries—artists, crafts enthusiasts, designers, writers, politicians, labor leaders, reformers of all types—and welding them together through the force of her own intellectual passions into novel and persuasive arguments. Within Sweden, she was powerfully influential for a time. Among the younger generation of architects, housing planners, and design theorists, Carl Westman, Ragnar Östberg, and Gregor Paulsson owed her a great deal (figs. 15 and 16).⁵¹ In the longer term, her insistence that individualism and socialism must be joined together probably played some part in the evolution of Swedish social thought; certainly this idea provided a foundation for the social conscience so prevalent in later Swedish design and architecture.⁵² Her significance for twentieth-century educational theories has often been noted. Her ideas about feminism are still significant, and still hotly debated. The further dimensions of her importance are difficult to measure. Scholars have only recently begun to scale the veritable mountain of material—her own letters, speeches, essays, journal and newspaper articles, and books, as well as comparable publications and manuscripts from her admirers and detractors—involved in studying her work. Thus there is much in Key's life and thought that remains obscure. Still it is clear that Key's belief that the home, the dwelling, could be the source of creative change in both the arts and in society had a decisive and long-lasting impact on Swedish design theory, applied arts, and architecture.



15. Carl Westman and Elin Anderssen. Pressens Villa, Saltsjöbaden. 1901–02. Main hall. Photograph: collection Nordiska museet, Stockholm



16. Ragnar Östberg. Proposal for workers' housing. 1905. Plan as published in Östberg, *Ett hem, dess byggnad och inredning*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter no. 131 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1906)

Notes

1. Translated into all European languages except Italian, Hungarian, Croatian, and Bulgarian; also into Yiddish.
2. For general works in English on Key, her context, and her relation to later design theorists, see especially Clarence Burton Sheffield, Jr., "Social Needs and Aesthetic Demands: Ellen Key, Gregor Paulsson, and Swedish Design, 1899–1939" in *The Brilliance of Swedish Glass 1918–1939: An Alliance of Art and Industry*, eds. Derek E. Ostergard and Nina Stritzler-Levine (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 34–51; and Kerstin Wickman, "Homes," in *20th Century Architecture: Sweden*, eds. Claes Caldenby, Jöran Lindvall, and Wilfried Wang (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1998), pp. 198–225. Still useful on a number of issues is Ronald De Angelis, "Ellen Key: A Biography of the Swedish Social Reformer" (dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1978).
3. See, for example, Key, *Folkbildningsarbetet: Särskildt med hänsyn till skönhetsinnets odling* (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri, 1906); and Thorbjörn Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten* (Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag, 2002).
4. "Skönhet," *Tankebilder*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1898), pp. 130–31. Key dated this essay 1897–98. Translated in its entirety in German as "Schönheit," in *Die Wenigen und die Vielen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1900), pp. 283–307.
5. According to Key her concept of a "Third Empire" came from Henrik Ibsen's 1873 play *Emperor and Galilean: A World-historic Drama*. See *The Torpedo under the Ark: "Ibsen and Women"*, trans. Mamah Bouton Borthwick (Chicago: Seymour, 1912), p. 28; and *The Century of the Child* (New York: Putnam, 1909), in which she relates the idea to the millenarian teachings of medieval mystic Joachim of Flora, p. 315, and to Nietzsche's idea of the age of the superman, pp. 105, 121.
6. "Skönhet," pp. 140, 146.
7. "Skönhet i hemmen," in *Skönhet för alla*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter no. 77 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1913); facsimile edition (Stockholm: Rekolid, 1997), pp. 3–37. *Skönhet för alla* (Beauty for all) was first published in 1899, and in five further editions (another in 1899, an expanded version in 1904, again in 1908 and 1913, and finally in 1939, thirteen years after Key's death). By the start of the First World War it had sold twenty thousand copies in Sweden, a significant number in a country of about five million people. *Skönhet för alla* was never translated as a whole, but a version of "Skönhet i hemmen" appeared in German newspapers in 1910; see Reinhard Dräbing, *Der Traum vom "Jahrhundert des Kindes"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 516. An early, extremely short version of "Skönhet i hemmen" appeared in the magazine *Idun* in 1897 as part of a series on "the modern home." See Key, "Skönhet i hemmen: Små utläggningar af Ehrensvärds text," *Idun: praktisk veckotidning för kvinnan och hemmet*, julnummer (Christmas issue, 1897): p. 4.
8. See Ronny Ambjörnsson, ed., *Ellen Key: Hemmets århundrade* (Stockholm: Aldus, 1976), p. 54.
9. Key, in the present volume, p. 36.
10. *Barnets århundrade* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1900); translated into English as *The Century of the Child*, 1909. On Key's educational ideals, a useful English source is Thorbjörn Lengborn, "Ellen Key," *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, vol. XXIII, no. 3/4 (1993): pp. 825–37. See also Lengborn, *En studie i Ellen Keys pedagogiska tänkande främst med utgångspunkt från 'Barnets århundrade'* (Stockholm: Ljungberg, 1977).
11. Ronny Ambjörnsson, *Samhällsmodern: Ellen Keys kvinnouppfattning till och med 1896* (Göteborg: Göteborg Universitet, 1974). See also Ambjörnsson, "Family Ideas in Sweden and the Tradition of Ellen Key" in *Traditional Thought and Ideological Change: Sweden and Japan in the Age of Industrialism*, eds. S. Cho and N. Runeby (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1988), pp. 49–56; and Ambjörnsson, "En skön ny värld—Om Ellen Keys visioner och en senare tids verkligheten," *Fataburen* (1991): pp. 260–78. Ambjörnsson is preparing a definitive biography of Key.
12. Key was one of the first Swedish women to call for female suffrage. She also consistently argued that women must and should have additional rights in society, a position that in the 1890s led her into conflict with the emerging Swedish suffragist movement. She scandalized many feminists of her time (and others ever since) by arguing (in *Missbrukad kvinnokraft*, 1896) that women, being biologically different from men, should remain at home in nurturing roles. This publication has been much misunderstood: it was an overstatement of her views, almost certainly intended to provoke controversy and also to protect working women and children from exploitation. Key never wavered from a commitment to women's political and economic rights; she simply wanted to add to them. She modified her statements on careers for women in *The Century of the Child* and her 1909 *Kvinnorörelsen*, published in English as *The Woman Movement*, trans. Mamah Bouton Borthwick (New York: Putnam, 1912), and certainly her own public life was not restricted by concerns for home and family. Key's personal life has been troublesome to those who have tried to understand her feminism: she carried on a long and ill-fated affair with Urban von Fellitzin, Norwegian landowner and intellectual, from 1875 to 1890, but she never married, bore children, or otherwise conformed to traditional women's roles. In *Om kärlek: Litteratur, sexualitet och politik hos Ellen Key* (Stockholm: Symposium, 2002), Claudia Lindén has argued persuasively against trying to understand Key's philosophy in terms of her personal life. On the same point, see Sabine Andresen and Meike Sophia Baader, *Wege aus dem Jahrhundert des Kindes: Tradition und Utopie bei Ellen Key* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1998), pp. 85–89.
13. *Individualism och socialism: Några tankar om de få och de många*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter, no. 55 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1895).
14. Key carried on a lively correspondence with Prince Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), a leading Russian anarchist, from 1900 on, and arranged to meet him during one of her European lecture tours (Ellen Key Archive, Manuscripts Division, Royal Library, National Library of Sweden, Stockholm; and De Angelis, p. 228). Key's library at Strand includes six of his books (in German, English, and Swedish); four contain inscriptions or dedications to Key.
15. Ambjörnsson, *Samhällsmodern*, p. 28.
16. A movement to promote schools for farmers that began in the 1860s in Denmark and spread to all the Scandinavian countries. Key founded a school of this type for women in her home district. See De Angelis; and Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

17. Key grew up in an eighteenth-century manor house in Sundsholm, in the south-eastern province of Småland (near Kalmar).
18. For Key's description of the Mora Cottage and Skansen, see Key, in the present volume, pp. 38–39. On Skansen, see Lane, *National Romanticism*, p. 40. On Key's work for Hazelius, see Louise Nyström-Hamilton, *Ellen Key: Her Life and Her Work* (New York: Putnam, 1913), p. 57.
19. For Key's views on the proper role of art in education, see especially her *Folkbildningsarbetet* (Uppsala: K. W. Appelberg, 1906), which contains many references to Lichtwark. On Key and Lichtwark, see Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 91–98.
20. In 1866 the Swedish Parliament democratized to some extent: a bicameral legislature replaced the four-part parliament of "estates" and the electorate was broadened. Emil Key, one of the founders of the large Lantmannapartiet (Ruralist party), represented his district in the lower house from 1867 to 1883. In 1869 Key and her parents moved to Stockholm during the winters. In 1875 the rest of the family moved back to Sundsholm for most of the year, while Ellen Key remained with her father as his housekeeper and secretary.
21. The Opponents (Ernst Josephson, Richard Bergh, Nils Kreuger, Karl Nordström, Anders Zorn, Carl Larsson, Georg Pauli, and other young artists and students) seceded from the Royal Academy in 1886 and founded the new and ultimately very successful Konstnärsförbundet (Artists federation). The Young Sweden movement, including Gustaf af Geijerstam, Victoria Benedictsson, and (for a time) August Strindberg, called for an emphasis on current social and political issues in literature and drama.
22. At the Stockholm Workers' Institute from 1883 to 1903, Key taught the history of Swedish civilization, with an emphasis on the history of literature and art. She also taught at Anna Whitlock's progressive new elementary school from about 1880 to 1899. During the same period she gathered together the daughters of Stockholm's intellectual elite for informal tutorials that later grew into large classes on literature and art. See Nyström-Hamilton, *Ellen Key*, p. 70; and Ambjörnsson, *Samhällsmodern*, p. 26.
23. Wickman, "Homes," p. 203.
24. See Gerd Örtegren, *Ellen Key och Tolfterna* (Väderstad: Ellen Key-sällskapet, 1982); and Svante Hedin, "Bildning och solidaritet: Ellen Key och Tolfterna," in *Ny syn på Ellen Key*, ed. Siv Hackzell (Stockholm: Bembo Bok, 2000), pp. 52–79.
25. Hedin, "Bildning," pp. 64–67. Idun was the Norse goddess of eternal youth; the name was adopted by the women's magazine for which Key often wrote, and by the Idun society for men; Nya Idun was founded as a rival to the latter.
26. Another friend was Anton Nyström (1842–1931), founder of the Workers' Institute and early social democratic leader. Nyström was married to Key's friend and disciple Louise Nyström-Hamilton, her earliest biographer. For her defense of Palm, Branting, and others, see *Några tankar om huru reaktioner uppstå jämte samt om yttrande- och tryckfrihet* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1889); and De Angelis, p. 152. On Gustaf Steffen, see Benny Carlson, "Wagner's Swedish Students: Precursors of the Middle Way?" *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 437–59. See also *acceptera*, in this volume, p. 337 and n. 65. Key was also close to Georg von Vollmar (1850–1922), Bavarian aristocrat, chairman of the Socialist Party in Bavaria, journalist, member of the German parliament (1881–87, 1890–1918), and to his wife, the former Julia Kjellberg. Through the Vollmars, whom she often visited in Bavaria, she became acquainted with the ideas and politics of "revisionist" (non-revolutionary) socialism in Germany.
27. "When she enters a lecture room there is something of the priestess about her, and by the time she has reached her place on the platform, such absolute silence reigns that one would think oneself alone. . . . Her first words are uttered so low that one hears them with a slight effort, but the silence in the room sharpens the hearing, and without raising her voice, her words reach the farthest corners." Nyström-Hamilton, *Ellen Key*, p. 83.
28. This was the Juntan group, which included the painters Georg and Hanna Pauli, Eva Bonnier, and Richard and Gerda Bergh. Also often present were publisher Karl Otto Bonnier and his wife (Eva Bonnier's parents). Bonnier was the publisher of the Verdandi booklets and of Carl Larsson's books; he came to be Key's principal publisher.
29. Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 110–11; and Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 35–38.
30. "Skönhet," pp. 133–35, 140–41. Key argues that "the northern countries" (Norrland) will be the purveyor of English and Belgian arts and crafts ideas to Germany and elsewhere. But she also says that many people in these northern countries have had the same ideas "without reading Ruskin." In these northern countries, she believes, people have a special awareness of nature—of light, stillness, and solitude—and a special aptitude for bringing the experience of nature to everyone.
31. Föreningen Handarbetets Vänner, founded in 1874 by Sophie Adlersparre; Svenska Slöjdföreningen, founded in 1845. Key also knew, and mentioned in the 1899 text of "Skönhet i hemmen," the influential Austrian art historian Jacob von Falke, director of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, whose Swedish lectures and publications promoted a notion of "the home as a work of art." See especially Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, "Hemmet som konstverk. Heminredning i teori och praktik på 1870- och 80-talen," *Fataburen* 1 (1984): pp. 129–48; and Ingeborg Glambek, "Jacob Falke og Justus Brinkmann: representanter for to stadier av den kunstindustrielle bevegelse," *Om kunst-industry, Årbok for kunstindustri-museene i Norge* (Trondheim, 1991), pp. 31–45. Erik Folcker was an officer in the Svenska Slöjdföreningen and proprietor of the shop Sub Rosa, which sold products of the English Arts and Crafts movement.
32. According to Lengborn, Key's first acquaintance with Ruskin's work dates to 1894 and with Morris's, probably to 1895; *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 39–40. Key mentions both in *Individualism och socialism* (1895), and Ruskin makes frequent appearances in "Skönhet," 1897–98. A reference to Morris appears in the 1899 edition of "Beauty in the Home," but not in the 1897 version. She returns to Morris in "Folket och konsten," *Varia. Illustrerad månadstidskrift* vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1900): pp. 34–44. (My thanks to Eva Eriksson for obtaining this rare article for me.) As so often in her publications, Key reissued this text at a later date, after changing it substantially; see *Folkbildningsarbetet*, pp. 77–90, 139–45.

33. See Key, in the present volume, pp. 41–42 Key and Larsson had been friends since the mid-1880s. Larsson, *Ett hem: 24 målningar* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1899); revised with the addition of one further image in 1904; further editions in 1910, 1912, 1913, and 1920. On Key and Larsson, see Wickman, “Homes”; Michael Snodin and Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, eds., *Carl and Karin Larsson: Creators of the Swedish Style* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997); and Lane, *National Romanticism*.

34. Lengborn, *Ellen Key och skönheten*, pp. 69–75; Lengborn, *Ellen Key—Richard Bergh* (Linköping: Ellen Key-Sällskapets årsskrift, 1997); Wickman, “Homes”; and Key, “Folket och konsten,” *Varia*. Carl G. Laurin was one of the founders of Föreningen för skolors prydnad med konstverk (The association for the decoration of schools with works of art), which Key mentions in her essay in the present volume, n. 29. He was also the brother of prominent art collector Thorsten Laurin and a partner in the publishing firm P. A. Norstedt & Sons.

35. Key, “Folket och konsten,” *Varia*, pp. 40–41.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Verdandi was a Norse goddess. The Verdandi student organization was founded at Uppsala in 1882 as a political opposition group, liberal and increasingly tending toward socialism. It also favored temperance, pacifism, and efforts to retain closeness to nature. It sponsored lectures and arranged debates. See Facos, *Nationalism*, p. 13. The “Verdandi booklets” series, begun in 1888 and published by Bonnier, came to offer progressive intellectuals an important forum. In the early twentieth century, the series included, in addition to studies of the working classes and of a multitude of philosophical issues, important books on the artists Carl Larsson, Anders Zorn, and Bruno Liljefors, together with Ragnar Östberg’s *Ett hem* (see n. 51 below).

39. Windows must admit light, especially in the northern countries, and, she says, only those countries that have a tradition of the hearth really have a tie to a notion of home or homeland. It was this conception of “home,” reaching beyond the dwelling to include local traditions and homeland, that so appealed to Rilke, who corresponded with Key about “homelessness.” See Lane, *National Romanticism*, pp. 132, 352, n. 169; and Facos, *Nationalism*, pp. 62–63. Key

does not differentiate here among the “northern” countries.

40. Key, in the present volume, p. 34.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*, p. 43. The same phrase occurs in all editions. Key’s preoccupation with light was shared by Swedish artists of the 1890s. Since the publication of Kirk Varnedoe’s *Northern Light: Nordic Art at the Turn of the Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988) art historians have paid increasing attention to the treatment of light in Scandinavian painting and to its influence on the development of modern painting elsewhere. As yet, there has been no comparable study of the role of light and sunshine in the development of modern architecture and interior design.

43. Key, in the present volume, p. 42. A short passage on the Larsson home appears in the 1899 edition.

44. The 1904 edition includes a new mention of Axel Lindegren. Minor variations over time included changing references to authorities she approved of and changing bits of advice about decoration. The list of buildings and works of art she liked includes Boberg, Östberg, and Wahlman by name in 1908, but omits the names in 1913. A line-by-line comparison of the five editions and the first publication of 1897 would show a good deal about Key’s intellectual development, but is beyond the scope of our publication.

45. Rasmussen’s work was not very well known in Sweden; perhaps she chose him because of the family connection and for financial reasons. He designed a number of railroad stations, in which Key was interested. See her essay, in the present volume, p. 34.

46. There were many other paintings, drawings, and reproductions at Strand. Reproductions of Renaissance masters vied for space with Larsson prints and original oils by Prince Eugen, Hanna Pauli, and Richard Bergh. Another of Key’s favorite images was “Prayer to Light” (*Lichtgebet*, 1905) by the contemporary German artist Fidus, who was prominent in the German “Life Reform” movement; see Lane, *National Romanticism*, pp. 140–42.

47. It also resembled Heinrich Vogeler’s Barkenhoff house at the Worpswede art colony in Germany; Key knew of this house through Rilke, who sent her his book on

Worpswede in 1903. She also kept in her workroom at Strand a picture of the Barkenhoff, with a note describing it as Rilke’s house.

48. Strand was made a national monument in 1992; today it offers short-term accommodations to female scholars. Nearby is the Ellen Key institutet (www.eki.nu), which organizes exhibitions, publishes works on Key, and in 2006 issued a modernized and popularized Swedish version of *Skönhet för alla*. I am grateful to Helena Käberg and Hedda Jansson, curator at Ellen Key’s Strand, for much of my information on the contents and history of Key’s home.

49. A few examples from the vast collection of letters to Key preserved in the Ellen Key Archive, Manuscripts Division, Royal Library, National Library of Sweden, Stockholm: Rainer Maria Rilke, Prince Peter Kropotkin, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, Mamah Bouton Borthwick, Stefan Zweig, Georg Brandes, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Edmund William Gosse, Romain Rolland, Frank Lloyd Wright, Knut Hamsun, Juhani Aho, Isadora Duncan, Maurice Maeterlinck, Yrjö Hirn, Franziska Mann, Upton Sinclair, Bertha von Suttner, and Emile Verhaeren.

50. Borthwick signed the guestbook at Strand (which had opened for visitors at the end of December 1910) on June 9, 1911. (Our thanks to Hedda Jansson, curator at Ellen Key’s Strand, for providing us with photocopies of the first pages of the guestbook.) Borthwick’s translations of Key’s works (from the German) included *The Morality of Woman and Other Essays* (Chicago: Seymour, 1911); *The Torpedo under the Ark: “Ibsen and Women”* (Chicago: Seymour, 1912); *Love and Ethics* (Chicago: Seymour, 1912); and *The Woman Movement* (New York: Putnam, 1912). *Love and Ethics* bore Frank Lloyd Wright’s name as co-translator. The details of Borthwick’s and Wright’s contacts with Key remain unclear. They are explored in two excellent articles: Lena Johannesson, “Ellen Key, Mamah Bouton Borthwick and Frank Lloyd Wright: Notes on the Historiography of Non-existing History,” *Nova: Nordic Journal of Women’s Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1995): pp. 126–36; and Alice T. Friedman, “Frank Lloyd Wright and Feminism: Mamah Borthwick Cheney’s letters to Ellen Key,” *JSAH*, vol. 61:2 (June 2002): pp. 140–51. Unfortunately the documentation accessible at the time of their research led both Johannesson and Friedman to date Borthwick’s visit to Strand as June 9, 1910, and their

further deductions about dates of contact, based on the series of undated letters from Borthwick to Key in the Ellen Key Archive, Swedish Royal Library Manuscript Division, are colored to a certain extent by this misunderstanding. Friedman still believes, however, that internal evidence in these letters suggests a first personal contact between Borthwick and Key in the spring of 1910 (letter to the author, August 19, 2007). In any case, Borthwick's and Wright's later letters to Key from the United States display deep admiration and attachment. As a token of gratitude, at some point between 1912 and 1914 Wright sent Key a Hiroshige print, which now hangs in the upper hall at Strand (Johannesson).

51. Westman's work on the "Green Room" was significant for his future interior design. Westman and Östberg were active in the movement to help workers build their own small homes in new suburban settlements outside Stockholm; Key praised their work in the essays collected in *Folkbildningsarbetet*, pp. 188–89; Östberg acknowledged her influence in his *Ett hem, dess byggnad och inredning*, Studentföreningen Verdandis småskrifter no. 131 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1905). On Key's influence on Paulsson, see Kåberg, Introduction, p. 61. On the movement for "owner-occupied

homes" see especially Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, *Villabebyggelse i Sverige 1900–1925: Inflytande från utlandet, idéer, överkligande* (Lund: Nordiska museets handlingar, 1971); Lane, *National Romanticism*, pp. 120–22; and *acceptera*, in the present volume, n. 51.

52. On the role of individualism in Swedish Social Democracy, see Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh, *Är svensken människa? Gemenskap och oberoende i det moderna Sverige* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 2006).

STUDENTFÖRENINGEN

VERDANDIS
SMÅSKRIFTER.

77.

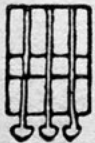


SKÖNHET FÖR ALLA

AV

ELLEN KEY

FEMTE UPPLAGAN



STOCKHOLM



ALBERT BONNIER



e.l.

Beauty in the Home

Ellen Key

Some comments on Ehrensvärd's text¹

I.

According to Ehrensvärd, *it is man's needs that set him in motion.*² After he has satisfied his needs for food and for protection against the elements—the latter through clothing and shelter—his thoughts soon turn to satisfying his *needs for joy*, those which in one way or another are awakened through his sense of beauty. Even primitive man seeks to express his sense of beauty. Every human being possesses some form of longing for beauty, although so far in most people it manifests itself only in a taste for finery with which to surround themselves or wear. But finery—especially the finery of today—is often the exact opposite of beauty. These days finery is factory made, usually of some imitation material seeking to mimic something precious. This circumstance goes against the first prerequisite of beauty, namely that it contain no ostentation or empty show. *Ostentation may come close to the thing itself, may give a dazzling illusion of it, but it is not the thing—Beauty—itself. It settles for dishonest expression, which substitutes for its own emptiness either ingratiating redundancy or a certain exaggeration.*

But, you may wonder, how can one tell whether something is empty show or genuine, ugly or beautiful? Ehrensvärd replies: *You discern the beautiful to the same degree that you yourself are well formed and well brought up.* And the very point of your upbringing should be *to find the fundamental law* for the thing in question. For once you have found this law, you easily develop your *faculty for choosing what is beautiful*, in other words, your taste.

Taste is the keen sense of nature's finest, most secret truths. And if we observe nature, we find one of its finest truths to be this: pure nature works in

simple ways. Superior taste is therefore *the one that chooses what is perfect, namely fresh, unspoilt nature*. Thus one finds *Beauty, which is Perfection*.

When we apply these tenets to our homes, the first rule will be that for each thing we acquire we should always ask ourselves: Does it obey the *fundamental law*? And this law is that each thing must serve the purpose for which it was made! On a chair one ought to be able to sit comfortably, at a table one ought to be able to work or eat easily, in a bed one ought to be able to rest well. The uncomfortable chair, the rickety table, and the narrow bed are thus intrinsically ugly. On the other hand, it does not necessarily follow that the comfortable chair, the sturdy table, and the wide bed are beautiful. Be it ever so useful, each man-made thing must, like each beautiful thing in nature, serve its purpose with simplicity and ease, with delicacy and expressivity, or it will not have achieved beauty. Thus though utility is a prerequisite for beauty, beauty does not guarantee utility. A home must of course be arranged very differently depending on whether it is located in the north or the south, in town or in the country, and whether it is a winter residence or just a summer house. It must above all be different to the extent that it reflects the needs of the people who will live in that home. The greatest mistake with most buildings is that they do not express real needs or real purpose. This is the primary reason for their ugliness and lack of style, but also the reason why some useful new materials or techniques—for example, sheet metal roofing—have not yet been refined in either color or form by a sense of beauty. The old, plain, red-painted farmhouses have a certain style. But the new communities cropping up around railroad stations, in which a quantity of badly built, light-colored wooden houses are clustered around the station itself, are abhorrently ugly.³ All it would take is beautiful station buildings along a railroad line for their beauty to gradually influence the other buildings springing up around them.

In the countryside one often builds and furnishes one's own home; in the city, on the other hand, one is dependent on building contractors. And among them the dominant taste in the years from 1870 to 1900 has been the most garishly cheap German taste, dictating not only exteriors but also interiors. Dark wallpapers with pointless ornamentation, ceilings painted in loud colors and decorated with plaster moldings, and gaudy, multicolored tiled stoves with mirrors and knickknacks have become the rule. The only way to introduce more taste into city apartments would be for everyone to begin demanding that the rooms be decked out not with this ugly and pointless finery but instead simplified in line with a wholesome and refined taste. And the only way for everyone to really be able to acquire beautiful things inexpensively would be for manufacturers—particularly makers of furniture, wallpaper, textiles, glassware, china, and hardware—to connect with the practitioners of the applied arts so that the latter could impart beautiful form and appropriate decor to all things, from the simplest and smallest object, for example a matchbox, to the

largest. Only when there is nothing ugly available for sale, when beautiful things are as inexpensive as ugly ones are now, can beauty for everyone be fully realized. Until recently, swarthy upholstery and curtain materials, dark wallpapers with pointless patterns, furniture with glued-on excrescences, and unwieldy household utensils were often less expensive than objects of beauty and style, and articles created for the home by artists benefited only the rich.

The following discussion will concern only what can be done already now, under present conditions, in ordinary Swedish homes—homes with, say, one single room or at the most three or four—to avoid what is ugly and with easy, inexpensive means create a beautiful environment.

In all instances, personal taste must of course be the primary deciding factor. Nothing could be more unwise than to remodel my home according to any presumed “rules for beauty,” if by so doing I had to sacrifice those things already part of my surroundings that I have found comfortable and serviceable, or things that are precious to me as mementos from my childhood home or people dear to me. What will be proposed here is not meant to condemn furniture or decorative items that custom or affection have endowed with special value. It merely offers advice for furnishing the *new* home, the new things purchased, and the new decorative items selected. As emphasized above, in the country you often have the opportunity to build and outfit your own home. In the city, on the other hand, you usually have to accept an apartment as laid out and equipped by the landlord, though sometimes you may be consulted in matters of ceilings, wallpapers, and paint. When it comes to furniture and decorative items you can of course always to some extent make your home express your personal taste. But unfortunately most people’s taste is undeveloped. And that is why they satisfy their thirst for beauty—paradoxical though this may sound—in an ugly way.

Still others do it in a dreary way, for example, when they simply imitate what is beautiful in other people’s homes. A room does not have a soul until someone’s soul is revealed in it, until it shows us what that someone remembers and loves, and how this person lives and works every day. If a grandmother’s room resembled that of her granddaughter, the painter; if the latter’s room in turn resembled that of her father, the engineer; then these would lack style. For they would lack truth; they would give a false picture of the spirit of the personality, which ought to be expressed in the respective rooms. In each case there would be no *truthful raison d’être for it all*, and it is only in this way that a room acquires style, personality, and—in the presence of good taste—even beauty. One must, however, take care not to judge people too quickly on the basis of their home, for they are not always free to shape it according to their own wishes. A good example in this context is the Queen of Romania, the author Carmen Sylva.⁴ She describes her “ideal home” thus:

“There would be no salon but rather a music room and a very big library. What would be the point of a salon without music or books? It would simply be the most boring place in the house, the ‘best room,’ from which all sense of true home would be banished.⁵

The rooms must not have too many pieces of furniture; the walls should be painted with oil-based paints; and the furniture should have the same colors as the walls. I would welcome a quantity of loose covers, which can be washed. I do not want any beds in the house. In their place I want divans. My bedroom would be green so that one had the impression of resting in a green arbor. My cabinet would be blue, and both floor and curtains would have the same fresh blue color as the furniture. In my boudoir all should be snow-white in color, with furniture in a clean, simple style.

In every room of the house there should be a desk and books. Books are the foremost ornament of a house. All the members of the family must feel that their home is always able to keep them entertained, and to this feeling books contribute most of all. People do not realize how much true education is imparted nearly without conscious effort in a home with good books!”⁶

We do know, though, that however much she may be Queen, Carmen Sylva has not been able to fully realize her ideal! And many are, like her, bound by circumstance. But the ideal, toward which all people under all circumstances ought to strive, is to have their personality reflected in their own home.

II.

That whatever is useful is worthy of respect, all women realize; that whatever is beautiful is worthy of being loved, many realize; but that the only thing worth striving for is harmony between the useful and the beautiful—how many realize that? And even the few who really do understand this rarely have a clear idea of how such harmony may be achieved. Even more rare is a firm commitment to the creation of beauty in their own surroundings, a commitment undeniably still very much needed in order to overcome existing practical obstacles.

Unfortunately even the aesthetically aware woman very often sees striving for beauty merely as a pleasurable pursuit and not as a duty. Beauty is considered a superfluity which some can afford, others not. But it is undeniable that every person who has a sense of beauty can achieve a certain harmony between the useful and the beautiful, as long as the beautiful is not confused with luxury—the latter often an obstacle to true beauty. Beauty can be achieved by simple means and without great expense. By striving for beauty at the same time as observing the need for utility, the woman not only satisfies a legitimate desire in her own nature but also exerts a profound influence on the other members in the home of which she is the soul. The children’s senses are educated and refined through the beautiful impressions they

receive; the adults experience a peace and a joy that cannot fail to make them more agreeable and often nobler; and the woman herself is made happier through that joy of creativity always accompanying the practice of an art.

A great step forward in taste has been taken in Sweden in the last thirty years. The movement begun by Mrs. Sofi [*sic*] Adlersparre has broadened and taken hold.⁷ Even the countryside has been strongly influenced by the new direction in taste. Nowadays few people commit the major lapses of taste of times past, like inviting us to recline against or tread on horses, lions, and birds embroidered on cushions and stools; to wander around with Turk's heads on our slippers or step into pastoral scenes on our carpets. We no longer have to see floral still lifes on our carpetbags, landscapes on our fire screens, ruins on our desk pads, or any of Thorvaldsen's bas reliefs stitched in pearls on the decorative edging of a corner shelf!⁸ People no longer make clock stands out of slippers, or pen-wipers out of flowers! In other words, people have learned not to use as decorations items whose appearance has nothing whatsoever to do with the purpose in question, indeed, in which the particular decorative elaboration often even makes the object awkward to use. People have also begun to realize that knitted and crocheted objects are rarely beautiful, and above all that it is abhorrent to give our rooms the appearance of drying attics by filling them with dead white blotches in the form of dust covers, tablecloths, and antimacassars, the latter—since they are crocheted—also catching on everything, thereby doubly abhorrent. Less and less do you see those treasures made of hair, cork, wax, pearls, feathers, seashells, pine cones, and the like, materials whose nature and fragility made them into dust traps as useless as they were ugly! Unfortunately there is now another aberration, namely the desire to make “use” of anything and everything—from cake boxes to matchboxes, from old hats to bottles—to fashion “decorative” items from trash, while believing you are beautifying your home! A woman would benefit and gladden the world more if she slept away the hours she spends on this dreadful foolishness—not to mention how much better she would use them by taking a walk or reading a book! And the same is true for nine-tenths of all the little items of plush, wool, and cross-stitch worked in silk or gold thread, as well as most of the little wooden and leather objects that people now paint, cut out, press, or decorate with pokerwork. These objects may, it is true, turn out to be more beautiful than the old knickknacks, but they are not one iota more useful. Thus even these objects can only complicate our homes and fill them to overflowing but not beautify them, since they lack the *raison d'être* of both the true work of art and the true utilitarian tool.

But, as mentioned above, on the whole there has been an improvement. First came the discovery of vast treasures of beautiful decorative motifs and techniques in old peasant weavings, carvings, and fine needlework. With time the impressions these treasures made resulted in the present, advanced Swedish textile crafts.

Even in the countryside one can now see truly artistic examples of these crafts. Unfortunately, in many craft schools—as well as in schools and workshops offering needlecraft and woodworking lessons—a quantity of objects are produced that are as ugly as they are useless.⁹ And even when this is not the case, the products of artistic textile crafts still rarely blend with the rest of a home's furnishings but instead often stick out against their generally tasteless surroundings. Most women do not yet understand how to treat a room—or an outfit—as a whole, where nothing should exist that is beautiful only by itself, but where colors and shapes should work well together; where the main thing should be emphasized and all secondary things, however beautiful, be subordinate; where all separate entities ought to work together harmoniously; where one should understand how to achieve an effect, one time by filling a void, another time by not filling it.

Among Ehrensvärd's words of wisdom: *In the North, pomp is used in situations where needs could be satisfied just as well without it.* The truth of this is borne out in public as well as private life. In the North, one seldom understands that true beauty exists only in that which is without ostentation, that which *is fashioned in accord with its purpose, thus satisfactorily lending itself to fill the true needs of man's unspoilt nature.* This is one of the reasons why—as discussed above—useless luxury gives an unpleasant feeling of vague unease: the aesthetic faculty takes *true pleasure only in moderation and restraint.* The works of art amassed in rooms filled from a love of ostentation have no way of being appreciated since they lack a dignified setting. And the objects intended to be useful are so needlessly complicated that they do not reveal the reason for their existence, thus becoming ugly while the simplest things are able to bear out the truth of Ehrensvärd's words:

*It is unbelievable how beautiful a thing becomes when you discern its true purpose.*¹⁰

It is bad taste to imagine that the useful becomes beautiful by concealing its purpose behind decoration. But no household implement can be beautiful which does not convince you, first, of its usefulness, and second, of a neatness that is in full agreement with its intended use. Thus the cottages at Skansen give impressions of beauty and style, since every implement there has received a fitting and restrained decorative treatment.¹¹ These everyday objects satisfy both the demand for utility and the *need for joy*, for they are connected to one another and to their common folk origin—in other words, they possess style and are thus, in their own category, beautiful. One can, for example, hardly find a simpler interior than that of Morastugan [Mora cottage], with its built-in bed, bench, table and shelf, its hanging bar on the ceiling, its simply ornamented wooden and pottery vessels, its show towels and wrought-iron candlesticks.¹² All fitting for their purpose, durable, and tasteful; nothing unnecessary and nothing wasted. The cottage gives a unified impression, since people here have satisfied their real needs in accordance with their own

preferences, and these preferences have always been honest and beautiful.

Our times have of course brought many new needs and many new means to satisfy them. It would therefore be as tasteless as it would be foolish to imitate the old cottages at Skansen. But from them one can learn with what simple means beauty can be achieved. One can, by the way, learn this anywhere in the countryside, where the ugly city goods of our times have not yet been introduced. Every sensitive soul appreciates the mood of a room and is captivated by its charm when it is a faithful expression of a certain human being or a certain era or a certain class of society, of real needs and true spirit. How at ease one feels in a room where simple, light-polished furniture of elm or birch shows the beautiful wood grain itself, and where upholstery and curtain material signals joy with its red and white checks, as does the cow-hair rug in a couple of clear colors! All of them seem to say: "No empty show or falsehood tolerated here!" And how cozy and beautiful is an old parlor in a country parsonage, where the furnishings are pearl gray, the floor shines blinding white, and beautiful rag rugs create pathways on the floor; where white homemade curtains let in the sun on well-tended flowerpots, where there is a simple, handwoven tablecloth on the table and an old blue-and-white tiled stove in the corner—a parlor where no one cares to use the dreary white dust covers on chairs and sofas, allowing them to appear in all their handwoven glory! Likewise the simple peasant cottage with its homemade, red-painted furniture—bed sofa, drop-leaf table, chest, and chairs—and big grandfather clock ticking in the corner; the floor strewn with chopped juniper, and the whitewashed hearth with its big fire in winter and oak leaves in summer!

It is the whole, the agreement between the parts, which above all makes these rooms beautiful. Moreover, they seem so honest, clean, and sound. There are no dust traps, no cheap ornaments, no imitations, nothing false or dishonest. They are the complete opposite of the ugly rooms one now finds in hundreds of thousands of homes in our country, rooms in which you see a dusty Turkish divan covered in a motley upholstery fabric; a thin, flimsy, big-flowered, store-bought cloth on the table; curtains of ugly yellow-gray burlap printed in blue, red, and brown, with stiff, sharp pleats and rough fringe; where the chairs—with uncomfortable, curved, loop-shaped backrests and padded, lumpy seats—are made of imitation mahogany; the table of imitation walnut with silly curved feet, and the chest of drawers of imitation oak; where a gaudy lamp of bright-yellow bronze hangs from the ceiling; where chromolithographs of oil paintings in gilded frames and round, painted terracotta medallions with figures adorn the walls; where a red, plush photograph album and a sky-blue glass platter for visiting cards share the tabletop, and a couple of painted china vases with artificial flowers "decorate" the chest of drawers!

It is all these things, factory-cheap, dishonest, garish, disparate, that make most homes of our times so lacking in style.

The falsehood of the notion that beauty in the home is only gained through wealth can be seen in, among other things, the many homes crammed with meaningless luxury items and art objects, where no deep-seated thirst for beauty or personal taste has selected the objects or given them the space they require to have an impact; where the most unrelated things are brought together and arranged—by the upholsterer! In such rooms—full of drapes, fireplace cushions, screens and mats, painted china and pokerwork, statuettes and paintings—the lover of beauty is seized by a passionate longing for the direct opposite, the unity and simplicity of an old-fashioned country room with straight-backed furniture lining the walls, white, sheer nettle-cloth curtains, and empty walls! But he knows that such rooms are seldom found these days, that even in the most remote provinces he is destined to encounter the pointless in the form of Makart bouquets, Japanese fans, painted plates, pressed bronze or brass ornaments, pink or blue vases, and the like.¹³ Add to this that the worktable is often too small or so situated that the light falls from the right instead of from the left; that the lamp is too high or too low; that the beds are too narrow; that the curtains shut out the daylight—in other words, that all this ugliness prevents both easy work and rejuvenating rest. Work is thus in the long run hampered through indifference to what is essential and in the short run increased through the amassing of things that must be kept clean and keep getting in the way! Someone has said—speaking of another country—that “those who have money have no taste and those who have taste have no money.”¹⁴

[But of Sweden at the end of the nineteenth century, it can be said that good taste shunned wealth and poverty in equal measure and thus was made utterly homeless. Most women who inherited an old-fashioned home did not even have enough good taste either to leave it intact or to rearrange it to meet modern demands without completely destroying its uniqueness. All of these now disfigured rooms could still have looked pleasing if these women had kept only the furniture that was really needed; if they had hung a few woodcuts or fine photographs on the walls and arranged a few branches in a simple yellow-brown or green-brown pottery bowl—the kind you can get for a pittance at the market; if all bric-a-brac had been thrown out and replaced with nothing but flowers in plain glass vases on the chest of drawers; if a few books had been placed on the table; if the colors of the room had been harmonized instead of screaming at each other; and if all the ugly hand-stitched needlework items had been exchanged for simple, homemade tablecloths, rugs, and curtains.

An American authoress relates how she once came to a log cabin out West and, upon entering the room, was immediately seized by the feeling, as unexpected as it was pleasant, that she was in a home arranged by a woman of taste.¹⁵ The walls were plain logs, the tables were made of unpainted wood, the seats of packing crates. But these were covered with nankeen of a warm yellow-brown color, with a

straight trim of blue ribbon, as were the curtains and tablecloth. A light straw mat lay on the floor; a vase of wildflowers and a few books were the only decorative items. But with these simple means, the room—far from the richer opportunities of civilization—nevertheless gave an impression of culture and harmony.

A young artist couple, who could not afford to order even the simplest furniture, made all the furniture for their drawing room and dining room themselves from packing crates—a solution that is of course not recommended as particularly practical, merely mentioned as an example of how one can manage when necessary. The dining table and the wife's sewing table were made of a larger and a smaller overturned packing crate with their bottoms intact but the sides sawed so that only four legs remained. Another crate became a serving table or "buffet," simply by being turned upside down. Wall shelves were obtained by keeping the bottom and one short side or long side of a couple of smaller boxes and cutting out the sides, leaving only a distinctive edge. Low stools were created out of square packing boxes, on which the lower parts of the sides touching the floor were cut out in the shape of semi-circles. All of this was then painted red or white, with decorative flowers here and there; table and "buffet" were covered with handwoven, white, fringed cloths, and old pottery and wooden bowls were put on the wall shelves. Two other packing crates were placed at right angles to each other in a corner, and peasant weavings and bench pads were spread on them, so that the most inviting little corner sofa was created. Through a few weeks' labor of their own this young couple thus created a homey, comfortable room with style, which cost them in öre what others pay in kronor, often without achieving the same pleasing effect.¹⁶

[]These days we have seen a revival of appliqué, with which a beautiful effect can be achieved with relatively little effort—if combined with tastefully chosen colors and patterns—in borders on tablecloths and draperies, on cushions and such. There are even simpler techniques for similar purposes. But as quality materials are costly, and time should not be wasted on inferior ones, such needlework items are never inexpensive. Handwoven curtains and tablecloths in simple patterns and beautiful color combinations will, in most cases, prove the most durable as well as the least expensive.

If one wants to see a home that makes the coziest and most personal impression, one should preferably visit Carl Larsson's home up at Sundborn in Dalarna—that is, study it in the four sets of color plates he has published about his home.¹⁷ In the introduction to the first set, *Ett hem* [A home], he himself writes:

"Ours are difficult times for an artistically inclined person to live in. Either you find the application of the practical mind's lackluster motto 'no nonsense' or the luxury-lover's tasteless, machine-made glittering trash.

The factory, the army barracks, the hospital, the school, and the country estate—all are equally insufferably regimented and straight-lined, inside and out.

The farmer, too, does his best to achieve the same tedium, although, thanks to its red paint, his farmhouse nevertheless possesses what city folk with a nostalgic sigh call 'country charm.' And then we have the opposite of regimented, straight institutional lines: the ridiculously draped curtains above doors, in corners, and behind pictures in the home of the man of some social standing, his étagères and easels and stands for displaying cheap bazaar trinkets, as well as artificial flowers with ribbons, dust, and germs. Goodness, what lamps! And, dear me, what shades! And plush and cretonne! In the midst of this garish trash and brilliant misery sit 'lord' and 'lady' with a self-satisfied smirk, because they have to the utmost degree fulfilled the demands made by modernity upon the leaders of society.

'I'm just as good as they are,' figures the Swedish farmer.

From the furniture factory there's an 'invention sofa' of pine, stained to look like mahogany;¹⁸ a chest of drawers with dreadful nickel hardware; a walnut commode; a rocking chair (in black and gold); and, in the middle of the floor, a round and rickety parody of an extension table, spread with a mud-colored floral tablecloth ('printed patterns'); and on top of this a kerosene lamp, much cheaper but just as hideous as the one found in the home of the just-mentioned gentry."¹⁹

Then Carl Larsson proceeds to tell how his own home was created: by inspired whim, in festive moments, through joyful efforts. And so it became a home, such as is created only by happy human beings and, in turn, is destined to create happy human beings! It is clear, for example, that the furniture in his home is only of the simplest kind: wooden beds, wooden chairs, and wooden tables. In one room they are painted green; then the ceiling in that room is also painted green; the walls are whitewashed with simple ornamentation of yellow, red, and green. In another room the walls are completely white and all of the furniture white. Only a touch of red here and there enlivens the whiteness: around the room runs a narrow, red-painted bookshelf supported by pillarlike, closely spaced brackets, and in each space between these red brackets there is a piece of paper of deep-blue color. By these means the most pleasing decorative effect is achieved and everyone who wakes in this room must be filled with joy! Even the very simplest of rooms, with nothing more than natural wooden walls, with green- or red-painted furniture or a little green or red stripe here and there, exudes sheer hominess, airy freshness, and joy of color. The arrangements mentioned here are so simple that anyone can create a similar impression with similar means, that is, anyone with an aesthetically keen eye and a practiced hand, for without these the result will of course not be beautiful.

An example of simple, tasteful interior decoration can be found in some new villas on the outskirts of Stockholm as well as in some of Stockholm's reading rooms. At the reading room in Kungsholmen, the inner room has walls of intense yellow, the outer one has walls painted with blue-green oil-based paint, and both rooms are furnished with simple, brown-stained pieces and yellow and white curtains. In

Katarina, the walls are gray-green and the furniture is varnished yellow; in Maria, on the other hand, the walls are yellow-white, the wainscoting and shelves blue-green, and the chairs red. In each place there are some works of art, whether originals, photogravures, or colored prints.

For the person whose taste is unsure and still developing, it is advisable to retain the natural form and color of the material itself as much as possible. The requirements for beautiful furniture are: utilitarian form, which firmly stresses the piece's purpose and is free from all ludicrous embellishments; and sound raw material, which in the case of precious woods ought to be kept in its natural distinctive state, but which in the case of ordinary wood ought to be heightened by color. Even an unpainted or stained chair is more beautiful than a curved and polished one of imitation material. But the chair glazed all red or all green or pearl white is more beautiful than the unpainted chair. On the other hand, the black-painted chair seat sometimes found in farmers' homes is not beautiful, for black seems cheerless, and moreover, a black seat gives the impression of a dark void instead of a safe place to sit.

Someone with good taste can achieve a very beautiful effect with straightforward, strong, clear, well-composed color combinations, for example, yellow and blue, green and red, red and deep blue. Also, certain—though far from all—nuances of yellow or green or red or blue together with white or in yet other combinations make a pleasing color scheme on walls as well as in upholstery materials and curtains. As is well known, when white sunlight passes through a prism you get a so-called spectrum of the colors red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. White light is produced by combining red and blue-green, or orange and cyan blue, or yellow and indigo, or green-yellow and violet. Those colors which, when combined, produce white light, are called complementary colors, and by pairing such complementary colors a beautiful color effect is most easily achieved.

For those who do not themselves possess unerring taste the best advice is to avoid twisted and convoluted shapes or gaudy, boldly variegated, and loud colors and instead choose simple forms and single color schemes.

A certain way to make even the poorest attic room more beautiful is this: if those who live there are inclined toward books and flowers, a shelf with nicely cared-for books, a few well-tended plants, and a couple of good woodcuts and prints immediately gives an impression of comfort and refinement, be the furniture ever so plain and worn! If in addition they are fortunate enough to have a room facing the sun and let the sunshine come flooding in, then such a room can be more beautiful than many a rich person's magnificent chambers.

For those who themselves have the opportunity to decorate their own little apartment or room, in town or in the country, I would like to emphasize some helpful pointers.

There is hardly anything more tasteful than the Norwegian practice of making walls and ceilings of wood, which is either only lightly stained, allowing it to retain its natural color, or painted in some compatible tones. For example, in Norway you can see a pale-blue wall with red tulips as a running border at the top, a red wall with green and white lilies at the top, and so on. On the other hand, if you want wallpaper, you must—just as you guard against illness or debt—guard against the standard dark wallpapers with pointless ornamentation in the form of red-brown or black-green or brown-gray indistinct splotches, sometimes even “beautified” by embossing in gold. Such wallpaper alone—especially in a land like Sweden, with its long, dark winters—can make you almost sick with melancholy. Above all, truly important for your health is a light, calm wallpaper in some mild color in your bedroom. It is harmful to your nerves as well as your eyes to be repeatedly exposed to the ugly, the messy, and the pointless! It has been scientifically proven that calm, warm, cheerful colors not only increase the vital energy of healthy people, they also have a calming influence on nervous dispositions. Moreover, ugly wallpaper mercilessly kills all that is hung on it or placed against it!

Nowadays one can quite inexpensively obtain the beautiful, light-colored, cheerful English wallpapers with their stylized plant and animal motifs, but one ought to watch out for their big-flowered, tasteless imitations. The former are suitable in rooms where there are few things on the walls. For works of art, however, these wallpapers rarely provide a very good background. Such a background is best provided by a wallpaper whose pattern deviates only minutely from the ground, or, best of all, by a wall painted in one solid color. Monochrome wallpaper can now be found at little cost, namely so-called unprinted paper in golden brown, olive green, yellow, or other colors. In the past, people living in the countryside made their own plain-colored wallpapers by limewashing cardboard or heavy paper—pale red or pale blue or green. And painting on the wall itself, especially with oil-based paints, of course holds up best. For schools and other public spaces the colors gray-green or gray-blue, blue-green or yellow-green have the most calming effect in the long run and still give that delight in color that eye and mind crave in a winter land. In homes, on the other hand, the chalk-based limewash is preferable as it is less shiny and hard than oil-based paint. In Danish, German, French, and Italian country homes, as well as some English artists’ homes, you find old-fashioned whitewashed walls or walls of some light color, and what is placed against these walls does, as a rule, show to advantage.

In monumental buildings—castles, museums, churches, assembly halls, and the like—wall and ceiling paintings are appropriate. But not in our homes, in rooms where people live. In our homes, all wallpapers and wall paintings that imitate buildings or landscapes are in poor taste. The purpose of the walls of our rooms is to enclose us, not to make us believe we are out in the open air. And it is just as tasteless to have the walls filled with figures. These become unceremoniously

amputated by whatever is placed against them; they give a busy impression and provide a poor background for anything hung on them. Even if the wall paintings in and of themselves are excellent, a room thus decorated is therefore lacking in taste as a room to live in. For we do not wish to live *in* works of art, but in rooms we decorate with works of art! It is only on a gobelin tapestry with muted colors that human figures do not unduly clamor for attention.²⁰ And in a nursery—where figures entertain the children and where there are usually few pieces of furniture to compete with these figures—a figured wallpaper will do very well.

But the most beautiful wall in a room for living is always that wall which is no more than a simply decorated surface, which never seeks to hide its role of wall in a closed room, the wall which, according to Morris's rule, ought to "have color without colors" and which should get its division, its "rhythm," from the furniture placed against it.²¹ This is the main requirement for the wall to be a good background for everything you wish to place against or hang on it.

The woodwork in the room—paneling, doors, and windows—is always tasteful if it is only lightly stained and allowed to keep its natural color. If you wish to paint it, you ought to choose the complementary color of the wall color or a darker or lighter nuance of the wall. Against blue, for example, yellow and yellow-brown tones are always beautiful; yellow-white and deep red go well together, as do white and green. Also beautiful is a green wall with red-painted woodwork, and the reverse, green-gray or green with red walls. The muddy yellow-gray or brown-gray, which is now so often used on woodwork, is in most cases objectionable. If the wallpaper is light and floral, the white-painted woodwork will as a rule look most beautiful if the sharp white is softened by a tone harmonizing with the wallpaper's dominant note. Simply matching this dominant note with the woodwork is probably the best assurance of success, unless you have a very sure color sense guiding your choice of complementary combinations.

Using progressively lighter colors as you move up the wall from floor to ceiling is more beautiful than the opposite, for the color scale lightening upward makes the room appear lighter and more cheerful. A beautiful border running along the top of the wall up against the ceiling—or at least a wide band marking the margin between wall and ceiling—gives the wall a finished look and conveys the transition to the ceiling well. If the rooms are not very high, the border should be narrow, or the rooms will appear lower. A border with stylized plant or animal motifs looks good at the top of a monochrome wall. The ceilings ought to be light-colored, light in feeling, and plain, or, if decorated, graced with only a few stylized, faintly discernible decorations. Although the greatest masters did ceiling paintings, such paintings are ultimately lacking in taste. If the paintings are masterpieces you are pained by not being able to see them fully and effortlessly. And to have animals and people above your head in the room where you live dispels all quiet ease and

comfort! Ceiling moldings of plaster are often pointless. Most beautiful in a simple home is a moderately decorated or completely plain wooden ceiling and—barring that—an absolutely plain ceiling in a white tone slightly softened toward the color of the room.

Most newer city rooms are marred by garishly colored tiled stoves. Such stoves should preferably be light-colored in light rooms and dark in darker rooms. Now solid-colored, dark-green tiled stoves of an older model are again being made. And next to an open hearth a big tiled stove is the one item providing the most warmth and hominess. In a room with fine, subdued colors, however, a white tiled stove seems hard and cold. If a room has mostly subtle tones, the white tiles of the stove can be painted in some color blending with the tone of the entire room, but the paint must then be burned on at just the right temperature, or it will flake and give off fumes.

If the room is generally light-colored, the floor can also be white. In that case, you must as a rule use runners. For this purpose traditional “rag rugs” are the strongest and potentially also the most beautiful alternative, if the rags are dyed in two harmonizing colors and used to create a pattern. But in rooms with darker furniture and walls, white-colored floors seem hard and cold. It is true that the impact can be softened with small rugs. But a better solution is to varnish the floors. This is best done with new or relaid floors.²² With old floors, cracks must be filled in order for the floors to be whole and neat. In such cases, solid-colored linoleum flooring—deep green, deep red, and so on—is therefore preferable. Linoleum floors, like varnished floors, can be washed each day. But linoleum flooring imitating stone mosaic looks cold and hard and is as dreary as stucco imitating marble, paper imitating gilt leather, and furniture with glued-on ornaments imitating solid carved wood! If one needs a simple word capturing the essence of good taste, one should use the word *honesty*. This word does not say it all, but it says at least half. Unfortunately a word of foreign origin, *rejäl*, is often used instead.²³ But the meaning is the same; whether used about a person or a thing, what is *real* is honestly what it appears to be; it does not deal in curlicues or roundabouts, evasions or contortions, either in action or behavior, people or things!

If you need woven rugs for the sake of warmth, these should never be nailed down—this is one of the most unhealthy practices of the past. They should be laid loose, or, if necessary, simply hooked by means of sewn-on rings onto big-headed tacks so that they can be easily slipped off to be beaten. Rugs should always be muted in color, preferably in the room’s predominant hue or a complementary color. If plain, single-colored rugs seem to get soiled too easily or give a monotonous impression, one should in any event choose no bolder pattern than a small floral. The foremost examples of good taste in rugs are Oriental rugs, whose somewhat indistinct geometric patterns produce a meltingly rich color effect but include no human figures. Obviously

it is just as unpleasant to be forced to tread on landscapes, people, and animals as it is to see them above your head. The floor, like the ceiling, must appear quite restful, and neither should in any respect draw attention to itself.

The same is true of upholstery fabrics. Plain fabrics, or striped or checked ones in two colors, or else very fine floral patterns, are the only upholstery fabrics one does not tire of, the only ones against which beautiful needlework and people appear to true advantage; just as the latter also “show” best—as artists put it—against a calm, monochrome wall.

The most difficult choice faces those who are inclined toward the beautiful but do not have the means to satisfy this inclination, that is, cannot afford to acquire reasonably tasteful furniture. Older tasteful and comfortable furniture is expensive. Older tasteless furniture, from the 1840s to the 1870s, with its silly curved shapes and its pointless, often added carvings, is sometimes comfortable but hideously ugly. Wholly modern, comparatively inexpensive furniture—the iron bed, the invention sofa, the washstand, the dining table—is comfortable, but often just as ugly. Especially loathsome is that invention sofa known as a Turkish divan, a dust trap in daytime, a mean bed at night; the ugliest lump imaginable—especially with the standard coverlet of poor, dark-patterned upholstery material—blighting a room!

But with a little thought, a little effort, you can nevertheless have quite beautiful furniture at a reasonable cost. Most homes have a couple of spare mattresses and pillows for guests. If you make a simple structure of wood as wide and high as you need, nail some jute webbing to the top and then place your surplus mattresses and pillows on it, spread it with a cover of baize, friezecloth, or handwoven cloth, and place it all with one side along a wall against which you pile some pillows—there you have a simple “divan,” comfortable to sit on, delicious to rest on in the daytime, and at night instantly transformed into a bed for a family member or guest. Four legs supporting a bed frame or a mattress on a frame can replace the wooden structure. If the divan is intended as a permanent bed, a fixed support should be attached for the pillow. An open table—on which there are a *big* washbasin and matching jug—is the best and most hygienic washstand. If you have only one room, a curtain of washable fabric or a modesty screen, covered with the upholstery material of the room, combines neatness with utility.

If you buy simple, deep wicker armchairs in a soft gray-yellow tone, and sew a few cushions for them of a tasteful cretonne—or even better, a beautiful handwoven fabric—you have a couple of comfortable as well as fairly beautiful easy chairs.

If instead of the usual expensive dining tables with extension leaves—introduced to replace the round tables with their obstructive legs—you order a simple square table with sturdy legs, and do not weigh it down with a lot of things, then you have a table around which your family can comfortably gather and work, and which can easily be cleared for meals if you have a living and dining room in one.

But even with a separate dining room, you should never have a dining table seating more than twelve. For in order to promote really rich, valuable dinner conversation, the old rule of Lucullus holds true: at table one should not number fewer than the graces, that is, three, nor more than the muses, that is, nine. At the most, you may add the number of graces to the number of muses and thus seat twelve. But to exceed the number thirteen is unfortunate—not for the sake of superstition but for the sake of good company!

As far as the rest of the furniture is concerned, you can of course acquire truly beautiful furniture for a very low price when you furnish your first home if you are able to follow the example of a young female artist who—with a traditional spindle-back sofa and a spindle-back chair as points of departure—composed a complete, tasteful set of furniture, which she had a country carpenter make, then painted it herself and made cushions for it out of peasant weavings.

The best armchair is the one from the seventeenth century with the straight, wide, moderately high armrests and the square backrest, padded and upholstered like the seat. The model is very simple and easy to copy in inexpensive materials. This armchair is perfect, since in a beautiful, real, and lasting way it serves the purpose of a chair, in which one wants to be comfortably supported while working and which is easily moveable yet not rickety.

Another excellent model of a simple chair has a backrest consisting of an evenly wide (circa fifteen cm.), semicircular bentwood piece, attached by vertical slats to a wide and somewhat hollowed-out seat: this is the only chair that is completely comfortable and beautiful without a padded seat or cushion.

As a model for a sofa there is none better than the type often seen—painted pearl gray—in old homes. It consists of a wide, deep seat of slats and webbing, resting on four or six legs, with a backrest of slats. On the seat lies a loose, long pad and along the back there are matching long cushions. This is the only simple sofa that is beautiful and provides a good place to rest; you can sit and sleep on it with equal ease. In addition, you can keep the pad and cushions well beaten and—if they are covered with strong, washable fabric—very clean. A bookshelf with only two shelves, the color and length of the sofa, may be hung above the sofa in an arrangement both useful and beautiful.

The person without means is not running the same risk as the wealthy person, who, when he wishes to arrange his home tastefully, often gives it the appearance of an exhibition of industrial art, with rooms in Renaissance and Rococo, Gustavian and Empire styles.²⁴ Or else, as mentioned above, he fills his rooms to overflowing with furniture and decorative items. In such homes you get the impression that the people are there to serve the furniture and the rooms, not the reverse. Even such “tasteful” rooms lack true taste to the keener aesthetic eye. For, as has already been stressed, rooms must not appear as if they exist for their own sake. They

should be an expression of the personal needs and taste of their inhabitants, their memories and feelings, their history. Grandmother's Gustavian bureau can very well be placed among newer furniture, if only its noble simplicity is not disturbed by modern knickknacks displayed on it. Grandfather's heavy armchair need not at all be banished to the attic, only pushed into a corner where it is not in the way or, better still, where it invites you to rest and contemplate a beautiful vista or picture. The small eighteenth-century taborets may be combined to advantage with modern furniture, as long as they are not upholstered in a fabric of a completely different style but in something with a small floral pattern or light-colored stripes. White-painted furniture mixes well with mahogany or walnut furniture; one should, on the other hand, avoid all imitation wood. A screen is useful in the bedroom but is often only in the way in the parlor. In the family's living room a large, sturdy table—preferably square and with only one leg at each corner—should afford space for all the various activities around it. It is not necessary for each bust to have its own pedestal, but it is of the utmost importance that no bust be placed on any object wrapped in plush, since the soft fabric gives an impression of no weight-bearing capability. This and a thousand other such things are what a woman learns when, in choosing each item, she asks herself whether it possesses style. In other words, whether the item not only serves its purpose, but also expresses this purpose clearly and perfectly by harmonizing purpose, form, and decoration. Why is a lamp on a plain, columnlike foot—preferably one that can be lowered and raised—more beautiful than one with excrescences? Partly because the former is easier to keep clean and is more easily moved, but also because the light source itself—the most important part of the lamp—should be held up by a support that neither clamors for attention nor obscures other objects. Why, for example, is the longer and slender-necked wine bottle more beautiful than the short and thick-necked one? Primarily because it is easier to pour from. Why is a plate beautiful when its rim is decorated with finely stylized flowers but on the other hand ugly when it features a *dalkulla*, a woman from Dalarna in folk costume, in the center? Because it is ridiculous to eat on a *dalkulla*! Why is the flower vase of plain, colored glass more beautiful than the one painted with flowers? Because the painted flowers confound the purpose of the flower vase, which is only to set off unassumingly—but not compete with—the live flowers. And the same holds true for painted fruit on fruit plates. Both painted fruits and flowers seem dead next to their living models. On the other hand, a fruit plate is beautifully enhanced by a floral border along the edge. All china dinnerware should preferably be decorated only on the rim or, at the most, enlivened by some discreet motif in the middle. Highly twisted glasses or overly ornate glasses of cut crystal are on one hand too fragile, on the other too heavy, to be truly beautiful. The plainer the shape of a glass, the more beautiful as a rule; the goblet shape probably remains the most beautiful.

Why do artificial flowers and colored grasses fail to please? Because they deceptively imitate that *bliss of vibrant life* that the flower itself communicates in real life.²⁵ Even if it is no more than a twig of autumn-red leaves, an asparagus stalk with berries, or a thistle put in a vase in wintertime, these are still more beautiful than artificial flowers. Why is the Japanese manner of arranging flowers—according to the flowers' own way of growing and using only one kind—in most cases more beautiful than any other manner? Because it gives an impression of that *bliss of vibrant life*, an impression that the flower is still growing. Why is it tasteless to hang beautiful plates on a wall but tasteful to display the same plates on the wall shelves in a dining room? Because in the latter case they not only decorate, they are also ready to serve their purpose. Why is a tablecloth covered with needlework less appealing than a plain tablecloth with only a border? Because the purpose of the cloth—to protect the table—should not conceal the table's purpose, which is to bear things. And the purpose of the table is seen more clearly through the surface of the smooth cloth than through a cloth filled with embroidered ornament, the lines of which moreover are interrupted by objects placed on the table. The same is true about mats under lamp feet or pedestals. Why is a light, airy drapery around a window more beautiful than a heavy and dark one? Because the latter is contrary to the principle of a window, which is to let in light. And in order to respect this principle and be able to dim, let in, and even temporarily shut out light or sound, curtains or drapes should not be fixed in place but run easily, on curtain rings or through wide hems threaded on round rods, whether more expensive ones of wood or less expensive ones of metal. The curtains can then be drawn and pulled like vertical shades when there is no roller blind, or if such a blind, when down, would give a forbidding impression. By means of a pleated straight valance at the top such a rod as well as a roller blind can be concealed. The straight lines of the curtains not only frame the window beautifully but also strengthen the impression of light given by the window. Curtains and drapes should also comply with the rule of small patterns; if they are striped, the stripes should be fairly narrow and vertical rather than horizontal. Draperies of one color with borders are the most beautiful. Large patterns or big florals are unsuitable, since their patterns are confused when they are disrupted by the unavoidable folds; moreover, big patterns look busy. Permanently attached drapes and weavings are pointless, unless they are intended to provide a background or frame of sorts.

If we continue our questions, we may, for example, wonder why a mirror goes well on a wall between two windows but not facing them? "Because one can see oneself better in the mirror in the first case," all women reply at once. Why is the white tablecloth the most beautiful? Because only the white tablecloth gives that dazzling impression of cleanliness, which is an important part of the pleasure of dining. It is, however, in good taste to enliven the white with colored borders in

clear suitable colors or with a table runner and, above all, with flowers! Low bowls with flowers, as well as flowers placed on the tablecloth and a platter of fruit, are the most beautiful table decorations. All table centerpieces with rocks, palm trees, ostriches, deer, and such are ludicrous, for these things have no business on a table, and all tall table decorations—even those made of flowers—are also unsuitable since they screen the dinner guests from one another.

A thousand other such questions a woman learns to answer herself, insofar as she obtains or gives herself that education of eye and thought which results in discerning taste. The more this taste is exercised, the finer will be the choices made, the surer the judgment, and the greater the eagerness to combine the useful with the beautiful within the home, thus making her family happy by creating outer as well as inner harmony.

Architect A[xel] Lindegren has maintained that natural feeling or instinct nevertheless remains the essential requirement when it comes to aesthetic sensibility and that any attempt to draw up rules for good taste and true beauty must be undertaken with great care.²⁶ For everything that stirs our imagination, piques our curiosity, and appeals to our heart is beautiful to us. Above all, we should not believe that beauty is a joy reserved for the few. No, each and every one of us can pay homage to beauty through the care taken in our deportment, speech, person, and dress. In this way, a life filled with beauty is not the exceptional lot of artists and art connoisseurs. These days we are becoming more and more consciously aware of nature, and if we continue in this direction, good taste will eventually be nature's own: *clear and simple expression in every respect*. Nothing will be puffed up to appear to be what it is not, but neither will anything be diminished through lack of aesthetic responsibility. People have lost their feeling for measured moderation and simple, natural dignity in their own behavior and clothes, as well as their eye for form and color, rest and motion, in everything surrounding them. Those who possess such an eye dictate the taste ruling their era, a taste that is called "modern." No one can stay completely untouched by fashion, and—as soon as "modern" means in good taste and with artistic style—it is even fortunate if as many as possible "follow fashion; for then they achieve through mimicry that taste which only a few possess naturally."²⁷

This summary gives a few main points for "the aesthetic of everyday life." While striving to live by this aesthetic, the more active and creative a woman can be when it comes to ways of making life pleasant, beautiful, and tasteful, the better. Especially the revived craft of weaving in the home using homespun and natural, dyed-wool yarn is a superb way for a woman to make her own clothes and decorate her home with a personal touch. In her own community, each woman should also work against the discounting or giving away of old tasteful furniture, wooden vessels, pewter tankards, pottery plates, and such, which have a much

greater sentimental and decorative value in their original milieu than they would in a collector's possession. In addition, it would be a blessing if women would gradually lose their taste for the small, useless, hideous objects with which our homes are now overflowing. For the simple homes discussed here, the most treasured beauty is that which is achieved with the least expense and the least possible loss of time. If only this main rule is followed, personal taste can then express itself in many different ways, the more the better. It is the habit of *blindly* following fashion that has put a stamp of uniformity and tastelessness on today's homes. True taste is that which understands how to create an appealing overall impression out of the most disparate elements and with the most different means. True taste, in the final analysis, is the refined taste that knows moderation and unity are the conditions for beauty as much in the home as in other areas of artistic creativity.

During the sixteen years that have passed since this little pamphlet was first published, the clarion calls to a more refined taste have been manifold, and an increasing number of professional craftsmen have labored in the service of that taste. It will therefore be increasingly easy for people to make their home beautiful, and already there are more and more people who are indeed doing so. They are greatly helped by Svensk Hemslöjd [The society for Swedish home-crafts], where one can find all sorts of items for the home—weavings, furniture, pottery, wrought-iron work—often inexpensive, almost always beautiful, and always handcrafted in Sweden.²⁸

Of great importance would be more taste and joyous use of color in the decoration and furnishing of schoolrooms, especially in the countryside. City children have other ways of developing their sense of beauty, but in the countryside it is of primary importance to use the school as a place to exhibit and demonstrate beautiful arrangements and objects of true art. These works of art should not be selected primarily for historical or religious reasons but on aesthetic grounds, and artists, not teachers, must make the selection. Above all, art must not be allowed to become a new subject of painful rote learning for the unfortunate children. It should simply surround them so that they, without effort and quite naturally, receive impressions of beautiful buildings, noble female and male beauty, and the ways in which great art portrays human beings and landscapes.²⁹ The fact that education and beauty now are closer to each other will surely contribute more than anything else to develop the children's desire to have some works of art—originals or at least reproductions—in their own homes as adults. And quality reproductions can now be had for a few kronor. Even people with very limited means could now afford to gladden their eyes and those of their guests with one or two quality reproductions of works of art if in their hospitality they took Ehrensvärd's tenet to heart:

*If people in the North were not so strongly enticed by food, they would instead be able to gladden one another with the noble and lasting fruits of higher pleasures.*³⁰

If one has succeeded in obtaining some artistic reproductions, one must display them by carefully selecting both the placement and the background. For copperplate engravings, woodcuts, and photographs, plain dark frames and a fairly light wallpaper are appropriate; for example, blue-gray is an excellent background color for copperplate. For oil paintings, very simple gold frames or inexpensive, plain wooden frames are often preferable. Most oil paintings or colored lithographs look best against a deep red or—better yet—gray-green wall. Fine yellow, blue-gray, or white walls can also set off certain paintings well. Reproductions of sculptures—white, black, terracotta, or bronze—look good against the same backgrounds as oil paintings, with the exception that terracotta does not show to advantage against a red background, which conversely admirably sets off objects of green bronze.

It is, however, rare indeed that someone without means has the opportunity to acquire a good oil painting. He therefore preferably ought to stay with quality reproductions. But he must guard against the oleograph.³¹ Why is the oleograph ugly while the well-taken photograph is beautiful? Because the latter modestly and honestly gives a truthful, though pale, idea of the work of art, while the oleograph in a cheap way strives to imitate it. If an oleograph is of high quality, then it is also expensive. On the other hand, there are now fine color prints resembling water colors, sometimes even included as supplements to some Christmas publications; there are excellent photogravures, woodcuts, and photographs at a low cost; indeed, even some copperplate engravings and etchings are inexpensive in relation to their artistic value. When selecting such art objects I must of course choose what I myself find beautiful, not what I know others find beautiful! For it is my own eyes, not the eyes of my friends, which I should please. Moreover, it is only by truly loving an art object that I possess it, not by buying it. The rich person, his walls full of paintings acquired because it is prestigious to own paintings, is much poorer than the laborer, who on Sundays visits the paintings he has learned to love in the museum, or in his own home every day enjoys one single really beautiful reproduction of a major work of art. Personal taste is best developed by seeing beautiful art around you and learning to appreciate it. Unfortunately, people who live in rural areas do not have much opportunity to develop their taste in this way. A beautiful cathedral, an old castle, the odd statue, one or two new houses—not counting Visby, the university cities, and Göteborg, that is all there is to see in ten or so of our provincial towns in the way of buildings and visual arts!³² In the rest of them there is almost nothing. As far as paintings are concerned, there is even less in the countryside. Stockholm has a couple of splendid old buildings, the royal palace and Riddarhuset [House of nobility], and a few recently erected public buildings. Among the city's temples of worship we may delight in the Jewish synagogue, the cupola of Katarina kyrka [Katarina church], and a few church spires. There are a few preserved older palaces and some more recent ones, which can give an idea of beautiful architectural style.

Of statues there are, for example, *Gustaf III* and *Karl XIV Johan*, *Olaus Petri* and *Axel Oxenstierna*, *Fosterbröderna* [The foster brothers], *Farfadern* [The grandfather], and *Snöklockan* [The snow bell], which make an artistic impression in public open spaces, in addition to some of the sculptures by Christian Eriksson, [Carl] Milles, and [Carl] Eld [*sic*, Eldh], which now adorn public buildings, open areas, and parks.³³ There are the several collections of applied arts at the Nationalmuseum [National museum of fine arts], Skansen, and Nordiska museet [Nordic museum],³⁴ in which one can get to know both simpler and more precious objects of applied art as well as various period styles. There are the departments of painting and sculpture at the Nationalmuseum and the magnificent Thielska gallerie [Thiel gallery] at Djurgården.³⁵ In certain elementary and secondary schools, as well as in public and private high schools, there are murals by prominent modern Swedish artists, for example, in the Norra latinläroverket [North Latin school], the elementary schools on Valhallavägen and Norrtullsgatan, and others.³⁶ They are also found in the new central post office building on Vasagatan, the national bank, and in the new Dramatiska Teater [Royal dramatic theater].³⁷ But it takes time and guidance to really learn to discern beauty in all this.

Through assiduous visits to museums and through an open eye for everything encountered, in the streets and squares, beautiful or ugly, Stockholmers learn easily enough to discover why one building pleases more than the buildings surrounding it: for example, Petersénska huset [Petersen house] at Munkbron or Hallwylska palatset [Hallwyl palace] at Berzelii Park or some other rich private residences; the electricity building at Regeringsgatan;³⁸ Nordiska museet; the new central post office building; or the country houses on Djurgården or in Stockholm's environs, built by older or younger architects. They learn why a banqueting hall like Höganloft [The high loft] at Skansen *immediately* puts us in a festive mood—while in most other such facilities we first have to overcome our irritation at its tastelessness before we can enjoy ourselves.³⁹ They learn why one statue gives an impression of life, another one of death, and therefore leaves us quite cold. Or why one painting gives us increased joy with each viewing, while we tire of another, the subject of which perhaps at first appealed to us so that we initially preferred it to other, actually more rewarding paintings.

The condition for finding beauty is to seek it; the condition for learning to understand it is to love it! Then we will with each passing day penetrate ever more deeply into its soul, learn to find what constitutes true beauty, and thus also understand that it is possible to set our personal stamp on our own single, small, poor room, such that whoever enters there shall feel that its walls enclose a person whose life has been made happier by the ability to enjoy and choose that which is beautiful.

In the countryside it is sometimes the manor and the church, but most of all nature itself, that support and develop the sense of beauty. There flowers

and greenery offer the best possible decoration for homes; there it is the varying pictures of the seasons that people must learn to appreciate and love. From the twinkling light of spring above the still bare earth to the gray sky of autumn, against which the trees are so delicately or strongly silhouetted; from the hoarfrost-covered white birches of winter to the varicolored splendor of the summer meadow, the one with eyes to see will find ever new pictures to enjoy. And although in the country people have less opportunity than in town to acquire beautiful objects for the home inexpensively, on the other hand they have more time and means to decorate their homes with beautiful handcrafted items—weavings, carvings, and fine needlework. In other words, neither town nor country lacks opportunity when it comes to beauty. Beauty can everywhere exert its ennobling influence, if only people begin to open their eyes and hearts to all things beautiful. But above all they first have to learn to realize that the beautiful in life is not at all an extravagance; that you work better, feel better, become friendlier and more joyful if you surround yourself in your home with beautiful shapes and colors. If you understand how to seek out the beautiful in art and nature, then you soon realize from your own experience that beauty gives you comfort and lifts your spirits even in the midst of the heaviest drudgery.

No art, no luxury can render truly pleasing that wealthy home which lacks a deeply felt sense of beauty as well as joy in beauty. Efforts to replace them with ostentation are futile. These suggestions—about the means with which beauty can also be created in the simplest home—are therefore best concluded with Ehrensvärd's golden words:

*Things increasingly lose their beauty as they become more complex and less useful to man's unspoilt nature.*⁴⁰

Translated from the Swedish by Anne-Charlotte Harvey.

Notes

"Skönhet i hemmen" ("Beauty in the Home") was initially published in 1897 in an extremely shorter form in the magazine *Idun*. Key reworked and expanded it for various editions of her collected essays, *Skönhet för alla* (Beauty for All) (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1899). This translation is from the fifth edition, published in 1913.

1. Key noted here: "Ehrensvärd's text, whether directly quoted or paraphrased, is given in italics." This convention has been preserved by the editors of this volume. (Key made just three notes to her essay; they are quoted and incorporated into the editors' annotations.) Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745–1800) was a count, naval officer, art theorist, artist, and architect. Key in fact draws on two of his texts, both first published in 1786 by Kungliga tryckeriet: *De fria konsternas filosofi* (The philosophy of the fine arts) (Stockholm: Sigma, 1974); and *Resa til Italien, 1780, 1781, 1782* (Journey to Italy, 1780, 1781, 1782) (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Rediviva, 1978). In each, Ehrensvärd considers the relationship between cultural differences and artistic expression. Key owned a copy of Ehrensvärd's collected writings, which can still be found in the library at her lake-side home, Strand. Page references for direct quotations from the facsimile editions of these two texts are noted. While acknowledging Ehrensvärd as a source of inspiration, Key expands well beyond the substance of Ehrensvärd's writings in this essay.

2. Ehrensvärd, *De fria konsternas filosofi*, p. 68.

3. In the late 1800s many small communities sprang up around junctions or stops (Sw. *stationssamhälle*) on Sweden's rapidly expanding railroads.

4. Elisabeth af Wied (1843–1916), queen of Romania, writing under the pen name Carmen Sylva, was a prolific author of poetry, novels, essays, and maxims often published in Swedish magazines.

5. Sw. *det fina rummet*: lit. "fine room," the "best room" reserved for special occasions and receiving visitors. See also Paulsson, in the present volume, n. 5.

6. The editors attempted to determine the source of this quote, without success.

7. Sophie Adlersparre (1823–1895) was the founder in 1874 of Föreningen Handarbetets Vänner (The association of friends of textile art).

8. Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844) was a Danish sculptor famous for his neoclassical bas reliefs and sculpture. His art inspired both handcrafted and industrially produced objects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

9. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century many craft schools were established throughout Sweden to counteract a gradual disappearance of traditional craft skills and a flow of inferior quality goods from abroad, as well as to train farmers to make products that would supplement their incomes.

10. Ehrensvärd, *Resa til Italien*, p. 20.

11. Skansen, one of the world's oldest open-air museums, was founded by Artur Hazelius (1833–1901) in Stockholm in 1890 to preserve and exhibit folk culture from all parts of Sweden.

12. Morastugan, an eighteenth-century log house from Mora, Dalarna, was the first building moved to Skansen in 1891. The hanging "crown pole," with its decoratively carved ends, served many functions, from hanging clothes and food to demarcating areas of the room. A show towel is a purely decorative, long towel, often embroidered, hung over ordinary kitchen or hand towels. See Lane, Introduction, fig. 5

13. Makart bouquets were a popular late nineteenth-century parlor and atelier decoration of dried flowers, straw, and palm branches, named after the Austrian painter Hans Makart (1840–1884). Here and elsewhere Key shows her awareness of Alfred Lichtwark's *Makartbouquet und Blumenstrauß* (Leipzig: Hesse & Becker, 1892), a widely read and reprinted fable that compares the dry, dusty, and contrived "Makart bouquet" to the "old art," and the vase of fresh flowers, reflecting nature, to the "new art."

14. Key did not indicate her source for this quote; the editors' attempts to identify its author were unsuccessful.

15. The editors have attempted to determine the identity of this "American authoress" without success.

16. In other words, which cost them one hundredth of what others pay.

17. Carl Larsson (1854–1919), leading painter and book illustrator, was a close friend of Key. The four volumes referred to are *Ett hem* (A home) (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1899; enlarged edition 1904); *Larssons* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1902); *Spadarfvet, mitt lilla landtbruk* (Spadarfvet: my little farm) (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1906); and *Åt solsidan* (On the sunny side) (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1910).

18. The invention sofa (Sw. *inventionssoffa*) was a high-backed sofa bed popular in Sweden and often a showpiece in country homes at the end of the nineteenth century. Distinguished by a mechanism that allowed both its arms and seat to be maneuvered to form a single bed, it was usually manufactured in dark wood with plush, patterned upholstery.

19. Larsson, *Ett hem* (1904), p. 3.

20. Key uses the term *gobelin* to refer not to French Gobelin tapestries specifically but to large pictorial tapestries in general.

21. It is unclear to which of William Morris's axioms Key is referring. She may be paraphrasing an article by Erik Folcker (1858–1926), who in addressing the characteristics of contemporary English wallpapers refers to Morris's "slogan" that "a room should give the impression of color, not colors." See Folcker, "Engelska papperstapeter," *Meddelanden från Svenska Slöjdföreningen* (1892): p. 90.

22. In unnumbered notes at the end of the 1913 volume in which this essay appeared, Key directed readers to this point in her essay and wrote: "The varnished floors . . . are easily prepared as follows. At the paint store, buy boiled linseed oil, a stiff brush, and a can of matte varnish. Give the floors two to three thin coats of linseed oil and allow to dry well between coats. Repeat this exact process with the varnish. All this should be done preferably in the summertime when things dry most rapidly. In this way the floors of one very large room or a couple of smaller rooms can be given a beautiful yellow-brown tone for only five to six kronor. In addition, there is no need for the unhealthy scrubbing of floors—they need only be wet mopped. Unfortunately this varnish is not especially durable. If you want the floors to look fresh and neat they must be touched up every three years wherever exposed to constant wear."

23. Sw. *rejäl*: from French, *réel*; or real.

24. Gustavian, or Swedish neoclassical style, developed during the reign of King Gustav III (1771–1792).

25. Ehrensvärd, *De fria konsternas filosofi*, p. 19.

26. Axel Lindegren (1860–1933), architect, artist, and writer, frequently published essays on aesthetics, some of which are collected in *Konsten och samhället: vardagslivets estetik med flera uppsatser* (Stockholm: Lagerström, 1913).

27. Key did not indicate the source of this quote, nor of the phrase “the aesthetic of everyday life” that follows. The editors have been unable to determine a precise source in Lindegren, whose book cited in n. 26 above includes the phrase, as Key added these phrases to the 1904 edition of her essay, and it is unclear whether the architect’s title essay was published by 1904.

28. Svensk Hemslöjd was founded in 1899 by reformer Lilli Zickerman (1858–1949) with the aim of preserving and promoting traditional Swedish handicrafts; elsewhere in this volume “hemslöjd” is translated as “home-crafts.” See Barbro Klein, “The Moral Content of Tradition: Homecraft, Ethnology, and Swedish Life in the Twentieth Century,” *Western Folklore*, vol. 59, no. 2 (Spring 2000): pp. 171–95.

29. In notes at the end of the 1913 edition, Key directed readers to this point in her essay and wrote: “The above-mentioned closer relations between art and the school system is made possible by the Föreningen för skolors prydnade, which has its board

in Stockholm. Membership is ten kronor per year and entitles members to take turns sharing in the association’s distribution of works of art.” Föreningen för skolors prydnade med konstverk (The association for the decoration of schools with works of art) was founded in 1897 by Carl G. Laurin (1868–1940), and renamed Konsten i skolan (Art in schools) in 1903.

30. Ehrensvärd, *Resa til Italien*, p. 63.

31. Oleographs are chromolithographs printed on canvas in imitation of an oil painting.

32. The university cities Key refers to are Uppsala, Lund, and Stockholm—the only cities in Sweden with universities when this essay was written.

33. *Gustaf III* (1808), by Johan Tobias Sergel; *Karl XIV Johan* (1854), by Bengt Erland Fogelberg; *Olaus Petri* (1897), by Theodor Lundberg; *Axel Oxenstierna* (1890), by Johan Börjesson; *Fosterbröderna* (1888), by Theodor Lundberg; *Farfadern* (1886) and *Snöklockan* (1881), by Per Hasselberg.

34. Nationalmuseum, by Friedrich August Stüler, 1846–66, murals by Carl Larsson, 1896. Nordiska museet, by I. G. Clason, 1889–1907, founded in 1880 by Artur Hazelius for the collection, preservation, and exhibition of historic material culture from the Nordic countries, primarily Sweden.

35. Thielska galleriet, by Ferdinand Boberg, 1904–05, permanent exhibition of the Nordic turn-of-the-century art collection

of financier Ernest Thiel (1859–1947), housed in his Djurgården residence.

36. Norra latinläroverket, by Helgo Zettervall, 1876, site of important mural series by Carl Larsson, Prince Eugen, and Bruno Liljefors, ca. 1898–1901. Engelbrektskolan, by Ernst Haegglund and Konrad Elméus, 1899–1900, murals by Nils Kreuger, 1904. Key is probably also thinking of the Östra Real (Eastern senior high school), by Ragnar Östberg, 1906–11, with murals by Prince Eugen, Georg Pauli, and Axel Törneman.

37. Centralposten, by Ferdinand Boberg, 1898–1904, mural by Carl Wilhelmsson, 1907. Riksbanken (Bank of Sweden), by Aron Johansson, 1892–1905, murals by Georg Pauli, 1906. Kungliga Dramatiska teatern, by F. Lilljekvist, 1901–08, murals by artists including Julius Kronberg, Carl Larsson, and Georg Pauli, all executed in 1908.

38. Petersénska huset, built in 1647 and notable for its well-preserved double portals and sandstone ornamentation. Hallwylska palatset, by I. G. Clason, 1893–98, Spanish-inspired private palace built for Count Hallwyl to display works by contemporary artists. Brunkebergsverket, by Ferdinand Boberg, 1892, Stockholm’s first electricity works.

39. Höganloft restaurant, by Norwegian Karl Güettler, 1904–05, a great hall in revival “Viking” style.

40. Ehrensvärd, *De fria konsternas filosofi*, p. 14.