

Short introduction to Bengt Svensson's "Nääs Model Series 1902 manufactured by children"

Bengt Svensson has worked for forty years as a sloyd teacher and, furthermore, he was active as instructor for sloyd teacher students since 1980. He taught sloyd practise, sloyd methodology and pedagogy at the Department for Aesthetic Art (Sloyd, Handicraft and Design) at Linköping University, Sweden.

When studying at summer courses at Nääs in the late 1950's, Bengt Svensson got into contact with sloyd theories of Otto Salomon. For the rest of his life he became absorbed in Swedish educational sloyd, its methodology and history.

From his own home district near Borås, some fifty kilometres away northeast of Nääs, he heard of Sven Alfred Kjellgren (1864-1937), an elementary school teacher who studied at Nääs sloyd teacher training school for six weeks in 1898. After that Alfred taught educational sloyd according to the Nääs-system in his own school. His pupils made the objects of the 1902 model series which took them just four lessons per week in grade 5 to 7.

Bengt Svensson met some of Kjellgren's former pupils, who have saved their sloyd models over the last 50-60 years. He photographed these models, searched and found more models in other homes – and in the end he got a complete 40-models-series, the very one of the year 1902.

When interviewing the former pupils of Kjellgren, Bengt Svensson found out that Kjellgren had taught sloyd very close to Salomon's ideas and methods. The interviews and the quality of the models convinced Bengt Svensson that the outcome of Kjellgren's sloyd instruction was surprisingly good. The former pupils told him of their great appreciation and high esteem of their sloyd work at school.

The contents of the CD

The file Bilder/Pictures shows objects/models made by Kjellgren's pupils.

The file Bildspel/Multi-picture-presentation shows the pictures rolling/changing in the order of the 1902 model series.

The Text gives information in Swedish about the educational sloyd system, enabling the reader to comment the pictures.

Models from the 1902 series made by pupils

		Picture nr
1 Penselskaft	Brush handle	001
2 Pennskaft	Pen holder	002
3 Paketpinne	Parcel pin	006
4 Blomsterpinne	Round flower stick	004-5
5 Blomkrukskäpp	Rectangular flower stick	“
6 Nyckeletikett	Key label	006
7 Nyckelhängare	Key hanger	007
8 Vedbärarkäppar	Wood-holder sticks	008-9
9 Bollträ	(Baseball) Bat	”
10 Smörspade	Butter spade	010
11 Hammarskaft	Hammer handle	011
12 Karottbricka	Deep dish tray	012
13 Skärbräde	Cutting board (Chopping board)	013
14 Blomkruksfot	Flower-pot cross	014
15 Rockhängare	Coat-hanger	015
16 Blomkruksställ	Flower-pot stand	”
17 Klädhängare	Clothes rack	017
18 Halvmetermätt	Half-metre measure	018
19 Pennbricka	Pen tray	018
20 Låda	Box	020a
20 Fågelholk	Nesting box	020b
21 Konsol	Bracket	021a,b
22 Yxskaft	Axe handle	022
23 Skopa	Scoop	023
24 Skoborstställ	Shoe-brush rack	024
25 Stövelknekt	Boot-jack	025a,b
26 Knivlåda	Knife-box	026
27 Brödbräde	Bread-board	027a,b
28 Ritvinklar	Drawing-angles, triangles	028,30,34
29 Slev	Ladle	029
30 Vinkellinjal	T-square	028,30
31 Pennlåda	Pen-box	031

32 Pall	Stool	032
33 Torkhängare	Clothes drier	033
34 Ritbräde	Drawing-board	028,34
35 Bokställ	Stand for books	035
36 Verktygslåda	Box for tools	036a,b
37 Ram	Picture-frames	037
38 Kryddhylla	Spice-rack	038a,b,c
38 Bokhylla	Book-shelves	038d
39 Skåp	Cabinet	039
40 Bord	Small table	040a,b

Extra pictures

Sven Alfred Kjellgren and his pupils

Handbok i snickerislöjd (The Teacher's Handbook of Slöjd)

Nääs modellserie (The Nääs Model Series of 1902 – the book)

Supplementary models for pupils who had made all the 40 models (four pictures)

Otto Salomon and Swedish Educational Sloyd (Nääs-slöjd)

Between 1880 and 1907 some 4.000 Swedish teachers and 1.500 teachers from other countries in Europe and USA attended sloyd courses held by Otto Salomon (1849-1907). Salomon had made Nääs the international centre of an educational way of teaching that is unique in its ways and means; Nääs is at 30 kilometres distance east of Gothenburg in Sweden.

Each course lasted six weeks and four courses were arranged during one year.

Salomon coined the following definition: *Slöjd* is an old Scandinavian word having as its origin with the adjective *slög* that means 'handy'. *Slöjd* means 'craft' or 'manual skill'.

Salomon was intrigued by the idea of making physical work an element in general education. He considered any person who did not have a sound training in general dexterity as only half-educated. We learn most effectively by activity - by doing things with our hands - and this knowledge should be acquired through self-education. Manual labour at school should provide an all-round education to everybody. Man is born with a number of undeveloped latent powers, aptitudes and qualities, that should be nurtured in a comprehensively systematic way. As Salomon pointed out:

“Education consists of the development of the powers and capabilities (psychical and physical) that have been given to man. ... The best educated man is he who has the greatest possible range of these powers (but especially the most essential and important among them) harmoniously developed to their utmost extent.”

About 1885 Salomon created what he called Swedish educational sloyd or *Nääs-Slöjd*. (Nowadays, it is more appropriate to say *skolslöjd* /*schoolcraft*). Most important was *the system* - a number of principles or aims that was not to be changed.

The system of educational handicrafts included the following aims (numbers 1 to 8 are of a formative character, numbers 9 and 10 can be classified as utilitarian):

1. To instil a taste for and an appreciation of work in general.
2. To create a respect for hard, honest, physical labour;
3. To develop independence and self-reliance.
4. To provide training in the habits of order, accuracy, cleanliness and neatness.
5. To train the eye to see accurately and to appreciate the sense of beauty in form.
6. To develop the sense of touch and to give general dexterity to the hands.
7. To inculcate the habits of attention, industry, perseverance and patience.
8. To promote the development of the body's physical powers.
9. To acquire dexterity in the use of tools.
10. To execute precise work and to produce useful products.

The method:

Salomon looked upon a 'method' as a regular and rational process for attaining a certain end. Because educational handicrafts should be a subject voluntarily attended by both, pupils and teachers, it was considered of paramount importance that teachers and pupils would approve the method applied. The pupil should be attracted by the work to be done. He/she must recognize the objects to be made will serve a certain purpose and the pupil should be able to carry out all the working steps to complete the activity, methodically and exactly, of course, each in accordance with his/her own capabilities. Therefore, each person had had to learn the exercises in a progressive order, starting from the easiest stages and then furthering to the more difficult ones, from simple to complex, and from the known to the unknown. Each child must be allowed to work at his/her own specific speed of working progress, proceeding from one activity to another, not being forced to hurry in one's work by others, faster workers or

not being obliged to slow down in his/hers efforts. This means strictly individualized instruction, adjusted to the very pupil's capabilities.

The exercises:

Otto Salomon scrutinized craftwork and examined the production of objects in order to identify the "more or less often recurring typical manners of working the material. A particular way of working the material with a certain aim in view is what in handicrafts is called an exercise." These exercises had been arranged in a distinct graded succession - from the easy to the more difficult exercises. Among the first exercises there were cutting, sawing, filing, planning and drilling. In the middle of the range we find fastening with screws, dovetailing and oblique chiselling. Finally, the exercise series was completed with techniques such as concealed tenoning. In 1902, the number of exercises of a given set of series had been reduced from eighty-seven to sixty-eight altogether.

The child would manufacture a number of useful and serviceable objects, so called models which had been arranged in a fixed series. These objects or models are not be so-called 'knick-knacks' or idle articles of luxury.

In 1894 the number of models had been reduced from fifty to forty in order to reduce the complexity of the whole work to be done. The children were supposed to complete this series of models within three years at school and attending three to four lessons per week.

Working with 'Model Number 1' (a brush handle), the pupil learned to apply the techniques in 'Exercises Numbers 1 and 2' (cutting along the grain and across the grain). Working with 'Model Number 2' (a pen holder), the pupil revised 'Exercises 1 and 2' and learned 'Numbers 3 and 4' (sawing and filing). And so on, until in making the last model - 'Number 40' (a table) - the pupil recapitulated twenty-four different exercises and learned to tackle the three last ones.

Misleadingly many a teachers considered the making of the models in the series was the whole purpose of the job. They taught pupils to handle the tools and to make good and beautiful objects, but 'they didn't see', they overlooked the main purpose of the system: the development of the child's abilities what was far more important than any actual craft skill or surface design. Developing craft skill was a unavoidable and wished side effect of this way of education. The objects the child makes are as useful as those made by the carpenter; but, unlike the work of the carpenter, the value of the child's work does not exist in the objects but in the child that had made them.

Because of this misunderstanding, Salomon started each course at Nääs with telling the participants they could teach in accordance with the system without using a single Nääs model or they could, on the contrary, slavishly follow the model series in their instruction while knowing absolutely nothing about the system. For the same reasons Salomon was anxious to change the model series at frequent intervals.

The exercises, then, form the foundation for the models, and not the models form the exercises. The models are but expressions of the principles, and in themselves are not handicrafts; and we shall do well if we can abstract the models in thought, and regard the series merely as a list of exercises.