From the Arctic Ocean to Cannes: Women as Film Directors in Finland before 1962

The subject of the study was Finnish women as film directors before 1962. Women's relation to film-making was approached as a negotiation between the director and film production. The analysis focused on questions involving the general events in society and especially in film production, as well as how women got their chances to direct films and what kind of meanings did women give to these opportunities. The study also explored how their personal resources, i.e. economic, cultural and social capitals, influenced their possibilities for attaining their positions in film production.

The research shows that women were already interested and involved in film in many ways during the era of silent film. However, women did not direct before the 1930s and only three women directed a full length feature film. Ten film-makers of short films were found, but only three of them made several short films shown in the theatres. Seven women made 16 millimetre films and only a few 8 millimetre films.

The chance for all three feature film directors to direct came suddenly, during a film production boom, when there was a lack of film directors. Regardless of how they became directors, they used their opportunities actively for different purposes.

Eva-Lisa Viljanen and Brita Wrede represented film-makers of short films in the study. Viljanen negotiated her position by making travel films and depicting business life as a part of the construction project of the Finnish nation. Wrede negotiated her position as a film-maker of refugee films in Sweden and Finland during the Second World War and soon after that. The personal resources of short film-makers, especially economic capitals, influenced their possibilities for beginning film-making. However, the directors of feature films could not attain their positions by means of personal capitals.

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