

Chapter 27 : “A modern king”

As both king and CEO of Swedish Court Inc., CG has two roles: On the one hand, he is financially responsible for the business, and on the other hand he is a combination of “noble”, “royal” and “civic” national symbol. There are traditional notions that make the roles difficult to reconcile. The noble (boundless) “virtues” include grandiose waste combined with contempt for bourgeois virtues such as chastity and money. The kingly (paternalistic) virtues include consideration for the welfare of his subjects regardless of the consequences for the king himself. In his civic role, Aristotle's four cardinal virtues are included, among them moderation, the most Swedish of virtues. No matter how CG behaves, it squeaks somewhere. This is most clearly seen in the difficulty of portraying him.

In the past, the royalists and the republicans' mutual contempt for bourgeois values could land them in the same position. For example Magnus Rosensparr & Annette Kullenberg were equally keen to keep the monarchy away from the business community.

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You have to distinguish between CG as business leader and CG as “supervisor” of the day-to-day business. As business leader, CG is good. During his time, the Royal Court has developed into a modern workplace with collective agreements, skills development, performance reviews, a computer departments (140 networked computers) and its own website. “The King has formed the work team himself and it is a clear expression of his good leadership that he has managed to make people from so different stations of life work together,” says one of the staff. “When it concerns strategic issues such as the King's role, it becomes much more difficult. Such discussions are not encouraged,” says one of the sub-managers.¹

As a supervisor of the day-to-day business CG is bad however:

The King has a lot of weaknesses as a manager and leader. He can be impulsive, impatient, stubborn and picky with details and he does not like when given patterns are broken. He is poor at feedback. The staff have to guess if they do a good job.

No one has a personal relationship with the king. He keeps his distance and can be experienced as chilly. No one more than the Queen and the children can address him informally with a “you”.

”But it is a necessity. The king would otherwise be eaten alive,” explains one person in his vicinity.

No one is more familiar with the business than the king. The disadvantage, of course, is a lack of innovation. The king is as he is.

After more than 25 years at work, the King is well acquainted with all branches of the Royal Court, better than anybody else. He wants to keep track of most things and can sometimes bury himself in details that should be left to underlings.

¹ Åke Österlund. Här är det jag som är kung. Tidningen Chef, 1999:5, s 34-38.

He has gained his knowledge mainly through all the information he has received over the years. He is considered good at listening, less good at reading. He also has good judgment, says his surroundings.

But the king keeps his distance. No addresses him informally with a “you”. He is always called the king or Your Majesty. He has developed a technique to keep this distance and for many he appears chilly when he may not even greet them.

“The King often has a definite view and you need very strong arguments to change them.”

In addition; As for all authorities, there is respect, but in the king's case of a slightly different kind. He is not treated like other authorities.

All the symbols and traditions inhibit a free discussion.

“But the slow pace means that you do not have to get into conflict,” says a person working at the Court.²

This criticism was commented on by the court as CG being sensitive to his surroundings and good at socializing.³ Perhaps. The long tenures mean that relationships are more important than what you accomplish. The employees compete for the status of being appreciated by CG. It is better to be conscientious than to change anything. 2009 it was the same: “The King rules the court with an iron hand. The staff dares not make any mistakes and fight for the king's appreciation. - He is like an old-fashioned mill owner.”⁴

To openly confront CG is definitely not a good idea. In 1996 he regarded criticism as disloyal: “It has happened that I have been offended when I was deliberately - or unconsciously - misunderstood. It is unfair [to behave like that]. * But the king does not hold a grudge, does he? - (Silence.) * A grudge? - Hrm, that was a very sensitive question. I'm afraid I do hold such. It is very difficult. A bad trait that creates a lot of trouble. I am aware of it. I'm trying get rid of it. * So the king can sulk for ten years straight? - Yes, I sure can! (Big laughter.)”⁵

Come 2006 he wasn't any more compliant: * Does the staff dare to contradict The King? - (Laughter.) » ... contradict? ... I very rarely bulldoze someone.« * ... and what happens if there is a conflict with The King? - »One should probably avoid it.« * Is the King himself afraid of conflicts? - »Yes, I think I am. I think it is unnecessary to push things to their limits.« * Does The King hold a grudge? - »Yes, unfortunately.« * So if someone takes a proper fight with The King, that person can look around for some other employment? - »Yes, I think so. A sad quality that I am aware of.«⁶

CG is notoriously thin-skinned. If you compile the sources it amounts to: He never forgets a friend. Nor does he forget an enemy.

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² Åke Österlund. Här är det jag som är kung. Tidningen Chef, 1999:5, s 34-38.

³ Erik Pettersson. Hovet svarar på kritiken mot kungen som chef. Expressen, 1999-05-21.

⁴ Elisabeth Marmorstein. Kungens ord - deras lag. Aftonbladet, 2009-12-25.

⁵ Christina Ollén. Kungen och Kronan. Expressen, 1996-04-21.

⁶ Henrik Frenkel. Jag som chef. Tidningen Chef, 2007:4, s 40-50.

Gripsholmsföreningen (The Gripsholm Association) is an association which, among other things, pay for honorary portraits of prominent Swedes. In 1983, the association decided to fund a group portrait of CG with family. The earlier works in the genre were Karl XIV Johan's family in 1837 and Gustaf V's family in 1907, widely distributed as oil prints. CG chose the artist himself. He wanted someone who was good at painting children. The Gripsholm Society consulted John-Erik Franzén (1942-), known mainly for his gasoline-smelling portraits of cars and motorcycles, but also for his academic painting and his children's portraits.⁷ A more natural choice might have been Peter Dahl (1934-). It was speculated that Dahl however had made himself impossible through the Sibylla scandal. This consisted of a painting "The Breakthrough of Liberalism in Society", in which Sibylla exposes her sex to a man with a boner. When the painting was exhibited in 1970, the police seized it and the prosecutor wanted it destroyed. But nothing came of it. Dahl later argued that it was in our time to defile royalty and that he had not tolerated Sibylla's pro-German attitude during the war. Dahl seems a bit young to have memories of the war but his parents were Norwegian refugees with a thorn in the side of the Swedish policy of neutrality during the war. He was forgiven in May 1992 = invited to a castle dinner where Silvia during the coffee gave him a personal audience and acted very kindly. Dahl: "I felt like Mack the Knife in the unlikely final of the opera. He is pardoned and receives well wishes from the queen."⁸

Franzén and photographer Håkan Wretlång then spent a day with the royal family. Everyone got to choose what clothes to wear. In the children, Franzén tried to capture their varying degrees of awareness of the situation. Prince Carl Philip brought the car which Franzén thought was a good feature of the painting, modern and Swedish. At home in the studio, he made ten, fifteen small pencil sketches, which he enlarged with carbon on paper to full scale. By starting from a series of photographs, the poses became a bit rigid and the characters two-dimensional, almost like cardboard figures. Long after Franzén claimed that it was intentional: "You never get close to these people. The image of them is very media centred and that is also reflected in my painting, in the flat and emblematic surface, there is a distance."⁹ The debate expressed it as being an economic issue, a class issue and "a failure of nerve". The old masters had their subjects pose while they were painting. Franzén never dared to make this demand. He did not use models. It was probably too expensive. He had no personal knowledge of the Swedish upper class, what little of it there is. On the contrary, he was known for his working class perspective on life. "When the painting was half finished, the royal family came driving in their Saab. They were nice, though it felt strange that they would be so familial."¹⁰ Franzén was unhappy with his painting but had to complete it. "I worked under heavy time pressure, which is not to my liking. And all the attention was hard. I lost 20 kilos."¹¹ From start to finish it took him two years. He met the King and Queen for about 10 hours. Payment was 150 thousand. The depiction of Silvia caused him the most problems: "When I started working with the Queen's face, I noticed that her two facial halves were almost identical. It is something very unusual and is very difficult for an artist to reproduce it in such a way that the impression does not become too beautiful, too flattering and stereotyped. - In fact, the Queen has a kind of ideal beauty that I have not seen in any other woman."¹²

⁷ Ann-Catrine Eriksson. Kungens porträtt. Mellan privat och offentlig. Kulturella perspektiv 2009:2, s 9-14.

⁸ Peter Dahl. Ofullbordade memoarer. 1994.

⁹ Erika Josefsson. Låg kunglig konstprofil i Sverige. Dagens Nyheter, 2010-05-04.

¹⁰ Stryktålige John E Franzén ställer ut sex års arbete. Dagens Industri, 2001-03-16.

¹¹ Stryktålige John E Franzén ställer ut sex års arbete. Dagens Industri, 2001-03-16.

¹² Anna Nyman. Franzén målar kungafamiljen. Året Runt, 1985:33.

The unveiling was at Gripsholm Castle on May 29, 1985. Franzén was there but he was not invited to the reception afterwards. All for the best. He had worked 4-22 for the last one and a half months and did not look well. He and Peter Dahl had lunch at an inn nearby. In September, the painting was displayed at the National Museum, which gave Franzén the opportunity to correct some blemishes. A documentary was made. At the 2010 TV replay, a minor “retrospective” debate erupted:

Franzén's royal family painting was discussed in all circles. The royalists complained that Victoria, the future queen, looked like a brat, that Queen Silvia had an amused, somewhat sarcastic look and a dominant place in the picture while balancing a bit unsteady on an armchair, that the Volvo was a message about the monarchy's connection with Swedish industry, that the king was not placed at the centre of the picture but a little off side, in the background, that the only one shining through is Carl Filip, that the king pretends firing at the queen with his thumb. Then fellow artists (the envious?) started criticizing poor Johan-E for surrendering to the monarchy by painting these royal portraits. Silvia obviously didn't like the picture, especially not how Victoria was portrayed. Besides, she obviously complained about the look of the royal shins, it was too curved I think she meant, wrongly depicted. And if anyone is an expert on the royal shins, it's probably is the Queen.

I like the painting anyway. The blue tones in the picture are incredibly beautiful and hold it together in a kind of harmony together with the dramatic tapestry background which also contributes. Certainly, the people in the composition are posing, one does not get the impression of a family unit. They turn, their eyes move, they seem to be on their way. The male; Prince Carl Philip and the king (and the dog!) look firmly at the spectator, while the three females; Silvia, Victoria and Madeleine are unconcentrated looking here and there, without bothering to maintain eye contact with the viewer of the image. It gives an impression of negligence/disinterest at their part.

But on the other hand, you get the feeling of a snapshot, the family trapped in the midst of it, when it is difficult to get the children to do as you want, to stand and sit as you had intended. Life is like that, not very idyllic even for a royal family. Everyone agreed that little Victoria already radiated authority and she is undoubtedly trying to assert that. Franzén speaks of a boomerang line from the king to Silvia, to Carl-Filip and to Madeleine, and if so, it places Victoria in the middle of the flying boomerang, a position that can be seen as logical given her special mission in the future? To me, the picture is humorous and a playful way to portray the royal family. Perhaps Franzén is joking with the royals in his painting, perhaps not. Is it a subtle caricature? Or was it something he wanted to portray but did not succeed in doing? His wife says that he would rather have done the painting from the beginning once it was finished. But on the other hand, such thoughts are not unusual in the world of art. In the short term the picture alienated him both from his peers and from the public.¹³ [It was not career ending though. He ended up professor.]

From the onlookers you would hear comments that the royal family did not look royal enough but resembled any upper class family. My personal belief is that the portrait extracts them from time and space. There should have been more of traditional attributes, perhaps a side table with photographs of castles and relatives.

¹³ Inga Magnussons blogg. John E Franzén. 2010-06-13.

In 1948-1950 the artist Einar Nerman (1888-1983) (best known for the boy and sun on the match box) painted several versions of CG as a Christmas present to Gustaf V. CG appears as a very romantic and dreamy eyed “mini dandy”. He sat an hour every morning for a week. “He was a little shy at first, but as soon as he heard a story, he thawed.” The following year the Östersund grammar school commissioned a painting by CG from the artist Karl Örbo (1890-1958). CG was obedient this time too. When later portrayed CG screwed around to the point that they had to be completed without him. In 1952, the boy who most resembled CG was awarded 50 kronor. The lucky winner was Jan Hermansson, Vårvidsgatan 12, Gothenburg.¹⁴

CG has since been painted by the Russian Ilya Glazunov “Kreml's court painter” in 1974. He was given a scaled-down copy of the painting, a breast picture with himself in a civil suit with crossed arms that he donated to the seaman's church in Copenhagen. Those who have seen it say he looks “plastic and lifeless”. In 1988 the company Stora ordered a portrait of Reinhold Ljunggren, but it was not very portrait like. CG has also been painted by the American Nelson Shanks in 1991 in a more “fleshy” version, by Bo Larsson in 1991, by Leif Zetterling in 1996 and by Catrine Näsmark in 2004. Shanks & Näsmark also painted Silvia. Shanks was influenced by the Renaissance and depicted CG in an admiral's uniform and Seraphim ribbon. Zetterling's portrait was an everyday image of CG in the archipelago, tanned and with a torpedo boat in the background, a gift from the Swedish parliament and government on his 50th birthday, perhaps a friendly reminder of how they saw him, as a citizen. Näsmark's portrait was an everyday head portrait. On his 60th anniversary, CG received a full academic-style portrait from the government and parliament by Olle Hamngren:

In Olle Hamngren's photo realistic full-scale portrait, based on hundreds of photographs taken in consultation with the king, modernity and criticism is banished. Here the ancestral monarchy in all its power and influence is perpetuated and legitimized – warts and all down to the minutest detail. Although the king appears in a civil suit, he is at the same time loaded with the traditional markers of rulers through the ages. The right arm rests possessively on the mantelpiece. The index finger does point at his estate, but at the emblems of the powers invested in him. He is shown en face. In the golden mirror the royal head is also shown in profile, as on a stamp.

I look for breaches in the wall, for cracks. But Olle Hamngren's monarchy is cleverly crack-free, sensible and balanced with an everyday face inside the attributes of power. Is it a coincidence that the King's pocketed left hand has vanished into thin air? The pocket is empty, with no glimpse of unsuitable swelling. Normalizing power is also a language of power. Olle Hamngren's portrait is not neutral. Making hierarchy invisible perpetuates it. Now the State Department is free to spread reproductions to embassies around the world. In the summer, the portrait is carted off to Gripsholm.¹⁵

For his 65th anniversary, Hamngren painted another portrait in the same style but modelled on Lennart Nilsson's photograph from CG's accession. CG is in an admiral's uniform hung with his Nordic Orders: The Order of the Seraphim, the Order of the Sword, the Order of the North Star, the Order of Vasa and the Grand Commander's Cross of the Order of the Dannebrog of Denmark, that represented the rest.

¹⁴ Vecko Revyn, 1952:18.

¹⁵ Jessica Kempe. Kungens val. Dagens Nyheter, 2006-05-15.

Additional portraits are Erik Oskar Stövling's portrait of the dog Charlie and Zoia Lagerkrans and Fritz Jakobsson's portrait of Silvia. In 1980, CG and Silvia also existed as wax dolls at Woxna bruk's old mansion in Hälsingland. As the spectators entered the room, they slowly rose from the couch using hydraulics while the King's Song was playing. In 1991 they were also present at the wax cabinet of Dr. Harald Skoras in Huskvarna.

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During King Gustaf VI, the court usually hired some well-known portrait photographer from e.g. studios Jaeger or Uggla. As an infant, and very young, CG was photographed by court photographer Benno Movin-Hermes with only half-successful results. He looks "styled" as if he participated in a Shirley Temple film. Movin-Hermes seems to have been more interested in the lighting than in the subject. Sibylla also had CG photographed privately through her footman Engelberth Bengtsson and then he looks completely normal for his age. Slobbers with his food and laughs at it all.

Later CG has also been photographed by Lennart Nilsson (best known for his photo book "A child is born"), by Hans Gedda and by Bruno Ehr's...

... Bruno Ehr's curiously charged image of the current king, Carl XVI Gustaf, ahead of the celebration of Stockholm City's 750th anniversary in 2002. Ehr's went for it. According to the catalogue text, Ehr's had been commissioned to depict a number of "prominent" people living in Stockholm. So the King is just one of a series of local celebrities posing on Bruno Ehr's anniversary pictures - and it shows. He poses in suit and tie, looking uncomfortable, half lying down on a staircase at Skeppsholmen while an elegant swan slides past in the background. That's what makes Ehr's royal picture complex and exciting. That which is not quite right, something strained, tense and tormented in the modelling celebrity's posture that fulfils a similar function as stiletto-heeled shoes in fashion photographs: something that rubs, resists and reserves itself against Bruno Ehr's beautiful aesthetics. The fact that the monarch does not seem completely satisfied with taking direction and having to work a little for the money makes the picture even more attractive to me.¹⁶

The picture would become part of the series Omfamningen, where various prominent Stockholm inhabitants were portrayed with closed eyes, casually basking in the sun. The portrait of the king is taken with large format camera 8x10 inches an early morning at Skeppsholmen.

- I explained in advance what I wanted to do, but I was still very worried that the king would back out at the last second, that he would not want to close his eyes or think that my request was strange. Not only would Carl XVI Gustaf close his eyes on the picture, he would also sit on a rather dirty staircase with the risk of chewing gum stains and other unmentionable on the royal suit. But the king was a conscientious model and had nothing against either closing his eyes or settling down on the stone.

- I brought a broom and a newspaper that the king is sitting on even though it does not show in the picture. It was still decent of him to participate.

¹⁶ Susanne Pagold. Inordnade porträtt och drömladdade stjärnroller. [Recension av "Kungar i svart och vitt".] Fotografisk tidskrift, 2007.

Some believe that Bruno Ehr's relaxed picture of the king is taken in passing, in an unattended moment when the king is sitting down and resting. That is not true, it has been carefully directed. The swan passing by, however, could not be directed - it was pure bonus that it slid by at the right moment. Bruno doesn't think the portrait is his best. But no other portrait has received so much attention.

- Whatever you have to say about the monarchy, it has an appeal.

Carl XVI Gustaf is himself interested in photography and he and Bruno talked about Stockholm photography.

- He was well informed, among other things we talked about the Stockholm photographer Johannes Jaeger.

At detours Bruno has heard that the king himself liked the picture from Skeppsholmen, which also adorned the cover of PHOTO No XX.

- It has also been said to me that Crown Princess Victoria liked the picture and pinned up the cover for PHOTO on the wall in her private apartment. I haven't seen it myself, but heard it from usually well-informed sources as it is usually called.¹⁷ [She also had the photo from Christmas 1949 of CG in Edmund's Guard uniform on the wall.]

When Carl XVI Gustaf turned 50 in 1996, there would be an official portrait in colour. The court called Hans Gedda and asked him to come to the Royal Castle. Hans had photographed the king earlier, for the newspaper Expressen, but now the context was more official. As he worked, dozens of people buzzed around the room. No stylists and hairdressers, but a person responsible for the correct hanging of medals and orders and a collection of press officers with Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg in the lead.

I don't know what they did there, they didn't say much. It was a quiet photo session. The king is quiet and I can also be quite quiet. We understood each other well. I remember that it was very cold in the castle, and neither the king nor I got anything hot to drink, Hans says with a laugh.

The photo session lasted just over an hour. In addition to his portrait in colour, Hans took his own black-and-white pictures. The King is probably used to cold and drafty castles - he does not look the least frozen on the pictures, on the contrary very dignified as on traditional royal portraits. The most unusual feature is the hand resting on a rapier.

- It came about spontaneous after I noticed that the king had nice hands, real pianist hands, says Hans.¹⁸

[Ehrs also took several portraits with CG grimacing in different ways. Over the years, there have been many such photographs. CG has a tendency to monkey around.]

Lennart Nilsson has over the years taken a few thousand official pictures of CG: Baptism, engagement, wedding etc. "He is very cooperative. You notice that he photographs himself. - One detail: I had discussed with him how, in oils and pictures, they portrayed kings before. When we [1973] were to take the picture of him standing with his hand to the desk, something was "amiss". We found out what - the desks used to be higher. So we raised his

¹⁷ Lena Kvist. Kungar i svart och vitt. Tidningen FOTO, 2007.

¹⁸ Lena Kvist. Kungar i svart och vitt. Tidningen FOTO, 2007.

table.”¹⁹ Nilsson could be extraordinarily demanding. He took 2,700 pictures before he was satisfied with the template for CG's stamp engraving in 1974. He also took the first official pictures of CG and Silvia that would hang in all official institutions and embassies around the world: CG in uniform, Silvia in party dress and coronation diadem, both with the Seraphim Order's blue ribbon. The portrait of CG looks oddly lifeless. Silvia was so tanned and made up after the wedding trip that she looked vulgar - an Eva Perón who clawed herself out of the slums. Something must have happened at the time of the photo session. CG later switched photographer to Claes Lewenhaupt.

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The Royal Court is involved in the publication of yearbooks: “Vår kungapar” (1976-1999) and “Vår kungafamilj” (2000-) written by Barbro Scherrer et al and with photographs mainly by Charles Hammarsten; “Det kungliga året” and other titles (1976-) were written by Bobby Andström et al and with photographs mainly by Erhan Güner. Anniversary books are also published. Cecilia Åse has analysed a number of pictures 1973-2000. The conclusion is roughly that the royal family is supposed to embody Sweden:

The monarchy naturalizes established notions of nation, history, gender, heterosexuality and body, while these notions also naturalize the monarchy. This forms a national and heteronormative community. In addition, the emotional and sentimental dimensions of national affinity are reinforced by the fact that identification with members of the royal family appears natural. They are people just like “us”, they get married, have cute children and are teenage parents.²⁰

This is perhaps pushing it to far. The yearbooks are only illustrated chronicles. The King and Queen and then the children are presented attending festivities and during everyday life: on state visits, national tours, summer holidays and so forth. An equivalent product has been produced since 1977 by Swedish Television “The Year with the Royal Family”. The presenters have over the years been Lars Orup, Agneta Bolme Börjefors, Bengt Feldreich, Linda Nyberg, Ingela Agardh, Sven Lindberg and others. It is broadcast during the Christmas holidays and contains interviews with the royal house interspersed with reports on its activities. The program is very popular. The audience is about 3 million. There is no explicit criticism or praise of the monarchy in the programs. This does not mean that they are value-free, however:

We have done a semiotic and symbol-oriented image analysis of the program “The Year with the Royal Family”. ... Our hypothesis was that the royal family retains its power and position precisely because they are portrayed as a little superior, and that they are not quite like the rest of us. Through the way in which SVT chose interview sessions and through the Royal Family's choice of clothing, a favourable image of the Royal Family was maintained, which strengthened our hypothesis. Our conclusion was that it is the press department at the court that sets the agenda for the program. No elements are spontaneous but based on the idea of “exclusivity”, and SVT has complied.²¹

¹⁹ Svenska Dagbladet, 1996-04-27.

²⁰ Cecilia Åse. En nationell njutning: Kropp och kön i kungliga årsböcker. *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, vol 26, 2006:1.

²¹ Karin Ahlberg & Mikael Lind. Ett kungligt PR-vapen eller SVT:s kronjuvel? En semiotisk analys av TVprogrammet ”Året med kungafamiljen”. Stockholms universitet, Institutionen för journalistik, medier och kommunikation. C-uppsats våren 2009.

The rhetoric has become increasingly emotional over time, which is supposed to be a strategy. For example, CG has made much of grieving his father. He has never mentioned anything about grieving his mother, though.

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The extensive exposure of the royal family on coins, stamps, films and pictures is important, regardless of their artistic quality. It establishes the monarchy as a natural feature of our life. A friendly joke on the subject of stamps is Ulla-Carin Grafström's award-winning animated short about the royal family's home life with stamps as faces. Perhaps inspired by the definition of a king according to the saying "King: a highly paid model for a country's stamps". (Unknown origin.) The Royal Family also appears in the cartoon "Real Life Knugahuset" (2004-2009) by Kris Åsard & Andreas Jacobson.