



kor och kar



# SERIOUS PLAY

IMAGES ARE WOVEN INTO INGER ÅBERG'S ART IN THE COLORS OF PLANTS AND IN HANDSPUN YARNS: COWS GRAZING AMONG WATER TUBS IN A MEADOW, IMAGINATIVE FLYING ANIMALS AND SERIOUS COMMENTARY ON CURRENT SOCIETAL ISSUES. LOVELY STORIES ARE CONTAINED WITHIN HER SINGULAR EMBROIDERIES.

We stand in the Åberg Museum in Bålsta, north of Stockholm, joined by Inger Åberg's husband, the museum owner, artist, movie star, and national icon Lasse Åberg. The exhibition is an homage to Inger's artistic practice and tells the story of the context for her artist practice. Near the ceiling, above our heads, a number of children's drawings float like fluttering laundry in a Disney movie. Children's drawings were the inspiration and starting point for Inger Åberg's tapestries and embroideries.

– She was, or both of us actually, very fascinated by the directness found in the drawings of a child.

Inger Åberg studied at the sloyd school in Jämtland, followed by textile art at Konstfack 1963–67. They met at Konstfack, Lasse was studying to become a graphic designer. After that, they were a couple for sixty years.

– At first we thought we would enter the established art world, Inger wove white weavings and I exhibited at art galleries with other established artists ... but no, that wasn't us. We went our own way. The way where we could develop our own opinions about what's important. Like spreading joy. Throughout our entire art careers we've worked hard to get people to crack a grin. To smile.

Inger's tapestries began with five moving boxes of children's drawings that had been entered into a stamp design contest. Lasse was on the jury.

– When we were done and the boxes were to be removed it was suggested that they should be thrown out. No, I thought, that's impossible. I took them home and they became the beginning of Inger's interpretations in weaving and embroidery. Our son Max is also a talented drawer, a number of his drawings have been transformed into yarn and thread.

Inger had her studio at the house in Bålsta, close to the Åberg Museum, as well as at their summer house on Gotland, and often in the garden.

– Inger loved to be outside. Moving a loom into nature isn't so easy, so she worked on embroidery there. And she was tremendously diligent. She was always working.

Her weavings and embroideries are often described as "naïve art". Naïvism and naïve art emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century in reaction to traditional academic painting. The term refers to an educated artist who is inspired by children's and untrained folk artists' naïve art. Inger Åberg created contemporary folk art. Her world of images is a mix of her own commentary on the present day and children's exploration of the world. Pablo Picasso is quoted as saying: "It took me four years to paint like Rafael, but a lifetime to paint like a child."

With that perspective, play becomes serious.

The weavings are powerful, in their colorway and materiality. The compositions build on repetitions of the same motif, but in different positions and with different expressions and colors. The motifs were taken from the children's drawings and were transferred with contours directly on the warp, where stories then grew spontaneously while weaving, thread by thread. The motifs often float, fly, or rest on a background with a soft structure; like brush strokes with a rich oil paint, the hand-spun yarns create shadow effects and structure. The precisely-drawn motifs have contours in contrasting colors.

The embroideries are proficiently and tenderly rendered, with collages of images, stitches, and surfaces. They are often sewn on old linen, such as a napkin or a bit of a damask tablecloth from a flea market, creating a connection to textile history,



LASSE ÅBERG

## Inger Åberg

1945–2024

Education:

Jämstlöjds slöjdskola.

Konstfack 1963–67.

Selected Exhibitions:

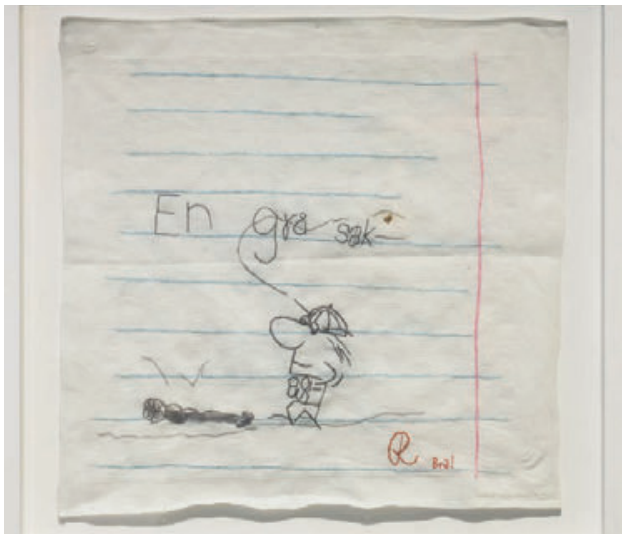
Stockholm, Göteborg, München, Cham (Switzerland), Inslingen (Germany) and New York.

Selected Collections:

Public Art Agency  
Several County Councils,  
Malmö Museum,  
Göteborgs konserthus.

Books: Inger Åberg and Olle Nettle, *Ickegörandet vore ju alldeles hopplost*, (Nondoing Would Be Completely Hopeless), in Swedish, Atlantis förlag.

Inger and Lasse Åberg, *Åbergs ABS*, in Swedish, Rabén Sjögren.



making use of materials made by previous textile creators and giving it new life. Many of the motifs are clearly recognizable from my own childhood. Like Max's drawing on a page in a composition book, which his teacher has marked "GOOD!". Here in a finely-stitched interpretation by Inger Åberg. She saw the little things in the large, and the big ideas in the small.

Another embroidery is a wink at Lasse and his work on a number of films as in the role of Stig-Helmer, a character who was afraid of flying and overly cautious but still brave. She embroidered his line, "I'm not afraid, I can fly" with innumerable flying vessels.

*Did you talk much about your different artistic practices?*

– We were there for each other and sure, we set each other off with wordplay and

associations. She ended up in my shadow, when I was famous from the TV screen and on the film screen, he notes. We had the same goals. To communicate humanity and give people a reason to work their smile muscles.

There is a dynamic between title, motif, and story in Inger Åberg's art. The compositions, with their repetition and brimming, colorful surfaces, are clearly reminiscent of pop art. In her tapestry *Stimulanspaket* (Stimulance Package) she comments with a sharp and playful directness on well-known political strategies; *Harrys lördagspåse* (Harry's Saturday Bag) is a humorous wink at many people's Saturday pleasure: playing the horses; and a weaving filled with chips (one is reminded of Warhol's repetition of the soup can, row after row) is right up the alley of people's daily life, a little party. It's human and warm. I smile.







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DET VAR EN GÅNG