

WEAVING SALON 2021

WOVEN WORK FILLED THE ART GALLERY IN HALMSTAD. A WEAVING SALON. MADE BY PRACTITIONERS FAR AND WIDE. WITH A FOCUS ON NARRATIVE, USAGE AND THE NEED TO WEAVE.

During the autumn of 2021 a Weaving Salon was held at Halmstads konsthall. A national call had brought in an abundance of contributions from the whole of Sweden and a jury finally selected 29 works for the show.

Juried salons are an established phenomenon in the art world, but this is the first time, as far as I know, that a Weaving salon took place at an art institution. One might ask why? As an art historian working with gender issues, I can guess the answer. Weaving and the sphere of textiles generally have throughout the 20th century played a subordinate and marginalized role in art history. As always, there are a few, brilliant exceptions – internationally, for example, the Bauhaus movement active in the 1920s and early 1930s promoted textiles as a significant discipline and in Sweden it was, amongst others, the pioneering modernist Sigrid Hjertén who devoted herself to textiles, at least early on in her career. But the winds of change keep blowing: slowly but surely more and more women are winning back their place in art history. Nevertheless, huge parts

of established art history still revolve around men who paints.

Textiles have traditionally been a female domain, not held in the same high regard as other forms of art. The strong connection to crafts and the home has also, historically, distanced the field of textiles from art and public exhibition spaces for art.

Today, the situation is in many ways rather different. Applied art has since the latter half of the 20th century developed, becoming increasingly inclusive and so bringing different disciplines closer to each other. In the last few decades, boundaries have become even more blurred and today many contemporary artists use textiles as their starting point. There is such a deep well to draw from in terms of tradition, heritage, technique and expression. Since where precisely is the boundary between what is considered handcraft, art-craft or art? Sometimes boundaries, with their associated demarcations such as fences or in the worst case trenches, imply security and identity. Yet more often, however, they do the opposite thereby creating regimentation and limited

standards about right and wrong, good and bad.

What happens if we stop questioning boundaries and, instead, usher in a new, neutral space where coexistence and respect for differences prevail? A room where there is respect for craft practice, precision, heritage and tradition, as well as for the more conceptual or process oriented forms of textile art? Where other approaches to the notion of quality are welcome. Where profession and expertise have their place, but alongside the love for weaving shared avidly by so many people.

Creativity is central to this room, with imagination, pride and joy. Also in this room, although I know that a growing number of men do weaving, there is an unparalleled assemblage of expressions of female power. Power that encompasses an inestimable, collective memory bank built up by our female ancestors who spun and wove our women's history. Do not forget them. Cherish their legacy and carry it on – not just here but in other spaces as well. Living in this room too is the awareness of sustainability, vital for our existence, combi-

ned with a depth of knowledge and insight into circularity and recycling.

The Weaving Salon at Halmstads konsthall came over as a space of this kind. The jury had selected works that in all their differences embraced as many dimensions and perspectives of weave as could possibly be shown in the art gallery's 160 square meters. A multitude of techniques were represented – plain weave, twill, bound rosepath, daldräll, tapestry, taqueté ... terms that are familiar to many, but completely new and unknown to maybe the vast majority drawn through curiosity to a weaving exhibition in an art gallery. There was space for people's memories and personal experience to flow between and around the works in the show: rarely have I encountered so many stories from visitors to an exhibition gallery. Stories about stiff fingers no longer able to weave, about the loom that had to be left behind in the move to an apartment and a woman's sorrow about the inherited handwoven sheets her children did not want. But also many, many stories about community in the weaving

Top picture from the left, *The way you left will always stay*, plain weave in birch bark by Victoria Cleverby, Jacquard weave by Malinn Daengtakote Petersen, *Solar Eclipse* and *Sun* by Eva-Britt Rosenqvist. Below from the left *Put your heels on* by Zafire Vrba Woodski, *Late Winter rag rug*, *Ugglarp Beach 2020* by Harriet Axelsson, *Trendy Tulips*, Gustaf Helsing, Karolina Peterson, head of art, in conversation with Li Garpenblad about Elin Claesson's bound rosepath weaves, *How I look* and *What I Do*.



workshops, about the lifestyle fostered by weave and the joy of being creative. The Weaving Salon held great breadth alongside richness of expression in the exhibition space, without markers or boundaries. At best, the diversity challenges what weaving is, can be and should be. A picture, a garment, a sculpture, a rug, a story? Weaving exists everywhere.

In our history, in the present, on us, around us, in our homes and public spaces. So why not then have a place in art salons?

The Weaving Salon 2 September - 7 November.
A digital presentation of the Salon: vav2022.se

Halmstads konsthall and the Swedish Weaving Council express their warm thanks to everybody who sent in contributions for the show.

Digital tour of the Weaving Salon at vav2022.se, Halmstad

Karolina Peterson is head of art, department of culture, Halmstad Municipality

THE JURY PANEL CONSISTED OF:

Mårten Castenfors, director of Liljevalchs Konsthall, **Petter Helsing**, artist, **Helena Hertov**, design curator at Rian Designmuseum, **Tina Ignell**, the Swedish Weaving Council, **Erika Danker** exhibitions curator at Halmstads konsthall.