



Kirstine Packalén

Chenille rugs, rya and rölakan

An article on Kirstine's work would fit in with a whole range of different themes: she has woven a huge amount, for many different purposes. On this occasion, though, it is rugs. Even then, all her little tips and technical solutions could fill a book.



WE MET on several different occasions, including at her show in Aneby 2012, with much of her textile work on display and also at her little farm, tucked away amidst stonewalled enclosures and the soft undulations of Småland, not far from Aneby. One of the buildings houses several looms, the widest of which with its 3.15 m weaving width is in the dining room, surrounded by handwoven and embroidered textiles on the walls, table and floor. The perfect place for receiving commissioners.

– I think they understand so much better what I am talking about if they can actually see the weaving process and that it is indeed done here, by hand.

Some tens of kilometres away in Säby church, near Tranås, is the 12.65 square metre sanctuary rug Kirstine wove at the

Sanctuary rug for Säby church. 2.3 x 5.5 m, Woven by Kirstine Packalén, design Inga-Mi Vannérus-Rydgran

beginning of the 1990s. It is still fresh and vibrant with colour.

Kirstine has made a lot of ecclesiastical textiles, ever since she started weaving, so it followed that she might be asked to weave a sanctuary rug for the church. Designing it, though, was not something she wished to undertake herself.



top left / Wall rya. Knotted pile of plant-dyed yarn. The diagonals were built up by skipping warp ends. Detail.

top right / Chenille rug. 1 pick chenille made of plied woollen yarns + doubled rug wool yarn, 2 picks doubled rug wool yarn.

KIRSTINE PACKALÉN

SELECTED COMMISSIONS

Holavedskapellet, Sommen:
1977 tapestry, 3 x 1.3 m
1987 Christening hanging, 90 x 50 cm
from sketchwork by Erik Persson,
Tranås

Ängarydskapellet:
1982 tapestry
"The big crane journey",
5.6 m and open warp
Rölakan rug 2.60 x 1.60 m

Värnamo Mission Covenant Church:
1983 tapestry 6 x 1.55 m
from a sketch by Curt Andersson

Säby church, near Tranås
At the beginning of the 1990s
Sanctuary rug
2.3 x 5.5 m
Design Inga-Mi Vannérus-Rydgran

Instead, she asked textile artist Inga-Mi Vannérus-Rydgran, who had designed as well as woven many ecclesiastical textiles, including for Jönköping County Handcraft when its studio was active.

Kirstine recounted how they first met at her home, masses of yarn in gorgeous colours all spread out on the floor.

Inga-Mi confidently picked out a range of shades, made a detailed sketch in which the colour combinations were meticulously noted down and Kirstine did the weaving. Inga-Mi would come over approximately every third week to check the result. The clear division between craft practice and design work worked well for Kirstine. She did not feel there was a difference in status between them. Many people have appreciated what she wove and have come and told her so.

With only some tens of centimetres left, Kirstine began having problems with one hand and then had her batten modified to operate with compressed air. The sett in the section woven with compressed air assistance does not look any different from the rest of the rug.

You must have been beating down good and hard?

– Yes, but then this is a really good loom with a lot of power in the batten, she commented quietly.

Each block of the rölakan rug for Säby Church is a colour experience. In places the fields of colour melt into each other. A closer look reveals both dense and open stripes travelling along and across. *This looks like it was fun to weave?*

– It certainly was.

Kirstine is not given to grand gestures. She speaks in a low voice, quite humbly, about her weaving and remarked on several occasions, “Yes, I have woven a lot.”

KIRSTINE WAS BORN in Denmark. She explained that although weaving was very uncommon in Danish homes, she actually had a relative who wove. When Kirstine saw a loom as a child, it awoke something in her: “It looked so very exciting”. Her paternal grandfather had a dovecot with an old loom in it: that too is a strong memory.

Kirstine learnt weaving later in life, when living in Norrbotten. Her husband was a priest and she looked after the home. She became interested in weaving and the opportunity for creative work. That was when she wove her first stole.

And gave it to her husband.

Later, when working as a nurse, she wove when she had the time. Then on retirement, she could devote herself to weaving much more wholeheartedly. Much of what she has woven is to be found in churches in her part of Småland. Her output includes chasubles, stoles, altar cloths and wonderful tapestries.

We went upstairs, where there were more looms. Weavings in diverse techniques lay spread around the floor and on the table. We had a good look at the ones primarily intended for the floor. Beautiful rölakan rugs, with her own designs, a red flossa pile and fine, well beaten rag rugs, recently woven on the loom in the kitchen, for which the batten had also been modified to operate with compressed air.

"You have to be friends with all the threads, otherwise you wouldn't be doing all of this."

Earlier this year, the Association of Handweavers in Jönköping County held an exhibition called *Tied Knots in the Weave* at Jönköping County Museum, with a number of woven contributions from Kirstine.

Being together and having contact with other weavers is very important.

She showed a turquoise rug in corduroy in Jönköping. It contains small blobs of colour in the form of knots. The red and lilac knots are rya knots, tied while weaving the rug. Smart!

(See on p. 54.)

Corduroy is a technique worked with a shuttle, forming floats on a ground. The floats are cut, creating a pile. This is a relatively quick way of producing a rug that looks like a rya, but as Kirstine says, “it uses up a whole lot of yarn”.

We came away with the directions for publishing in the magazine.

ANOTHER RUG was woven with her own chenille. This kind of rug

has two stages to it. First, chenille cloth is woven, then cut into strips once off the loom. These strips become the weft in another weave. Kirstine's chenille gleamed in multifarious colours.

– It is important to use a top quality plied yarn. You then get a superb lustre, she pointed out.

THE LAST WEAVE we looked at was a wall rya. The knotted pile was made of yarn samples from a plant-dyeing course. Kirstine found them in her stash and hit upon the idea of weaving a rya.

– I'm one of many with samples sitting in a drawer, and this was a good idea for using them up.

Knots were worked around two warp ends. An extra refinement was the pedals tied up for extended plain weave so that Kirstine would weave a pattern pick where the weft passes over two and under two ends. She aligned it with the knots, so that the floats cover the knots on the reverse. In addition, the pattern weft fills any gaps alongside the knots.

She has a fine feel for yarn and what it wants to do.

– You have to be friends with all the threads, otherwise you wouldn't be doing all of this. ^

FAVOURITE FINISH

Kirstine attaches great importance to the way a rug is finished. Rölakan rugs are often finished with arrowhead patterned edging: This edge is woven with weft consisting of 4 strands of rug wool yarn. The weft is laid under 5 raised ends and shifts along by one raised end 6 times to the left, then 5 times to the right.

