

# Innovative weaving

A rug weave, a private commission, had been set up on the loom. The expressed wish was for a more formal design in brown and black, to go with birch furniture. Otherwise, it was up to the artist maker. Lena Flinck had made a proposal: the client jumped at it. And there it is, on her specially constructed loom, being woven in a rölakan technique with the added extra of what Lena calls help threads.

– I like weaving rugs best of all, there is something so solid about it.



## LENA FLINCK

Training: one-year textile course.  
 1995–2001 Employment with Kerstin Jonsdotter and Folke Samuelsson/Jonsa Vävjänst.  
 2004– Self-employed, Tallbacka Väv.

Selected commissions:  
 Sanctuary rug, Roma Church, Gotland, 2,60 x 4,00 m.  
 Sanctuary and altar rugs in Teleborg Church, Växjö 1,10 x 2,10 m and 1,60 x 2,70 m.  
 Sanctuary rug, Bäckseda Church, Vetlanda 2,5 x 3 m.  
 Sanctuary rug, Karlshamn parish 3,35 x 4,70 m.  
 TALLBACKA.SE

FOR MANY YEARS, Lena Flinck worked and continues to collaborate with Kerstin Jonsdotter and Folke Samuelsson, the driving forces who set up and ran Jonsa Vävjänst (Weaving Services). We wrote about them in VM 3/10: the article can be read online, via our website, vavmagasinet.se. Together, they wove up many commissions for churches, public spaces and private homes.

Lena was asked if she would like to come and work with them after doing a weaving course with Kerstin as tutor. Lena had previously worked in a commercial kitchen and taken time out to devote herself to her passion – textiles. So when the question arose about doing some work with weaving, she had no hesitations. Part-time gradually turned into full time. Apart from rugs, they also did funeral palls and decorative fabrics, many of them in damask pick-up.

This job continued up to 2001, when Folke and Kerstin were looking to pass on their business to somebody else. Lena did not feel she could take it on and run it single-handed. A period of unemployment ensued, until one day the phone rang and a familiar voice said;

– If you would like to weave up commissioned work, I can do the designs.

It was Folke Samuelsson.

Folke and Kerstin are well known in both the ecclesiastical sphere as well as to commissioners of public work and Lena's weaving is impeccable. Orders rolled in.

We met up with her at her home, in the weaving studio – Tallbacka Väv. The loom

"The beat is wonderful and even, the same each time, whatever mood I'm in."

Folke built for her fills up the garage space. Its warp beam winds in the opposite direction to normal, making it easier to insert sticks. After seeing Lena's variation, one wonders why all looms aren't constructed this way (see the picture on page 26).

The 120 kg beater is not suspended, but passes back and forth with compressed air assistance. Slotted into the beater is a robust reed, made by Lundin's reed factory. The two shafts also have compressed air assistance: this loom has no pedals.

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Each beam is motor driven, aiding the winding on and tensioning of the warp. Positioned in front of her eyes is a contraption for holding the design. Lena stands on a raised floor with good underlay. Everything has been ergonomically thought through. ➤

top / Sanctuary and altar rugs in Teleborg Church, Växjö.

middle left / Detail of the rug in Teleborg Church.

middle right / Lena Flinck in front of the sketch for the sanctuary rug for Bäckseda Church, Vetlanda.

below / Sanctuary rug, Bäckseda Church, Vetlanda.

below left / detail. right / Painting in the church.



"At Jonsa, we always wove on doubled warp ends, which produces a great quality. If one end breaks, there is always another there. With single warp ends, if one end goes, you have to backtrack, which is a bore."

Apart from the loom itself, Folke worked out many ingenious solutions for various pieces of weaving equipment: a weighted shuttle, a comfortable weaving bench (sliding) that can move sideways, a warping glove which facilitates warping with several strands simultaneously, warp clips, a nifty solution used when cutting ends while warping, small paddles for when many different kinds of weft are used. Some of these devices are shown on page 8.

Folke and Kerstin were also the inventors of the beaming assistant, now produced by

AK:s Snickeri, which operates as its name suggests, so a person can beam solo with the help of weights.

Up on the walls of Lena's studio are sketches for two commissions she did with Kerstin and Folke at Jonsa Vävjtjänst. These were an exquisitely patterned sanctuary rug in blues and reds for Bäckseda parish in Vetlanda and a 3.35 metre wide sanctuary rug for Karlshamn parish. The latter occasioned the building of the loom. The Karlshamn rug design by Folke involved colour changes that required up to 35 different finger skeins in a pick. For this, as for other rugs, colour changes are worked using a special technique with what Lena calls help threads. She showed us how: all the wefts are laid in the same direction. At each colour change, the wool weft wraps round a help thread of cotton rug warp, which lies snugly inside the woollen yarn and forms a pretty well invisible, smooth and fine join. The rug is also reversible.

For wide colour fields, she will sometimes use several finger skeins of the same shade, so as to avoid tension build-up in the work.

below left / Rölakan rug, with no interlocking along the slender lines of black.

top / Winding warp to facilitate stick insertion.

middle / Colour changes made with help threads, that produce even and smooth joins.

below right / Colour change with no interlocking.





These wefts are not interlocked, but meet and part in slightly different places, to produce as even a surface as possible. An odd number of finger skeins are always needed for this technique to come out right.

When weaving one unit alone, she does not do any interlocking. It is left open – forming a slit.

Lena always weaves with doubled warp ends, 2 ends to a heddle and dent. The rug on the loom had a cotton warp. Rugs for churches have warps of doubled 8/3 linen warp yarn.

– At Jonsa, we always wove on doubled warp ends, which produces a great quality. If one end breaks, there is always another there. With single warp ends, if one end goes, you have to backtrack, which is a bore.

Mostly she uses weaving yarn from Borgs, 2 strands of rug yarn and 2 strands of rya yarn in each finger skein.

When starting a weave, she packs in 14-15 warp-sticks, which means she does not have to think about inserting any as the cloth first winds on to the cloth beam. The sticks are followed by a few centime-

tres of rag weft, then the hem allowance in single-stranded yarn for a weft-faced section that is hemmed after cutting off.

This is, by and large, the standard quality used for each rug. There might then be technical variations: each rug has its own challenges.

The sanctuary and altar rugs for Teleborg Church in Växjö have diagonals that shift by a half unit, with open slits. That was quite a challenge! Otherwise, colour changes are made with the assistance of help threads.

After cutting down, rugs are tacked down to a piece of chipboard covered with builders' plastic. After spraying the rug, plastic is laid on top overnight, so the moisture is absorbed. The following day, the plastic is removed for the rug to air dry.

Reflecting on her time at Jonsa and all that she took in, it is the technical aspect that stands out for her. The methods she uses make for strong, reversible rugs, which is a major advantage especially for public spaces, where there can be a lot of wear and tear. The design is guided by the setting,

where the rug is going, the colours in the surroundings, whether there is some pattern or form in the space that can be incorporated. This is evident in the sanctuary rug designed by Kerstin Jonsdotter for Bäckseda Church in Vetlanda, which we saw on a later occasion. A flower form, taken from the painted ceiling, reappears in the rug. This work was a combined effort.

– In the mornings, I would stand on one side and Kerstin on the other. After lunch, we swapped sides. The finished rug turned out lovely and even.

RUG WEAVING continues with quiet puffs of compressed air. The beat is strong and precise; arcs of weft pack down. Patterning builds up. A handwoven rug is emerging, a rug that will last in looks and durability for many, many years to come. **A**

Lena Flinck weaving a rölakan on the specially built loom, constructed by Folke Samuelsson.