



REMAINS

LINNÉA SJÖBERG'S PRACTICE INVOLVES REMAINS, RAGS OBTAINED FROM EARLIER WORK IN HER OEUVRE. SHE IS REPRESENTED AT MODERNA MUSEET AND ENJOYS INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS.

HER BLACK LOOM IS NOW IN BERLIN: ON IT SHE IS CURRENTLY WEAVING WITH COLOUR.

LINNÉA SJÖBERG has been living in Berlin for two years. Her studio is in an old industrial area a bit away from the centre. Hung on the wall is her latest weave or "väva" as she prefers to call it: an explanation came later in the course of our conversation. This work has the title *Elvy*. It will be shown at the art fair in Miami and at Company Gallery in New York. You have to have something there that stands out, gets seen, emphasized Linnéa. Two of the three weaves sewn together were made in Sweden; the third was woven there in Berlin. They were created out of rags, video-tape and yarn in a random striped warp. Colour abounds.

– I give myself permission now. Have left black behind. I wear colour and weave with colour. And I'm happy about it – feel good from it. But it took time to get here.

Linnéa Sjöberg has a master's from the Royal Institute of Art – Mejan – in Stockholm. Photography and performance art. She carried on with performance in the years following her art studies and dedicated five years, 24/7, to allowing other identities find a place in her.

The first identity was "business woman". For a year and a half she lived as a career girl dressed in Prada and Hermès – external attributes indicating a certain kind of status. She was treated differently, with respect. Does success lie in the externals?

After that, it was an about-turn to *Salong Flyttkartong* (Cardboard Box Salon), where she was a tattoo artist in a mobile tattooing studio. She did tattoos both on herself and

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others until the Health Service put a stop to the enterprise.

Five years spent as others, a kind of exorcism, five gruelling years.

Now as herself, she described the process that followed. The need to have closure was the start of what has become an important part of her artistic practice, weaving.

– It just came to me, the memory of my mother telling me about the rag rugs grandma wove. How a favourite and worn-out shirt was the very thing needed for a stripe in a rug. That the garments in the stripes held memories, like layers in slate. These are really fine narratives, a kind of archive. I applied it to the business woman. As a kind of closure I wanted to see her come right apart – her clothes and shoes cut up. To then weave them up.

What came out was a series of 11 woven rugs, *The Remains of a Business*. At that time she knew nothing about weaving. It was a friend's mother, Karin Jönsson, who encouraged her. 'Go for it, Linnéa'.

– The first weave was not much to write home about, but it got better and better. I was hooked.

Even the *Salong Flyttkartong* got a weave of its own. A dirty mattress, with traces of plenty of activity on it, was cut into bits and woven up

as *Layers of Shit*. The next art project involving weave was *Four Generations of Darkness*.

A fourteen metre length of matting made from dark textiles left by four generations.

– I was invited to exhibit in Umeå. On the journey back to Norrland I came to the decision that it had to be dark, dark rags, anything else was inconceivable. I always get a knot in my stomach when travelling back home – no doubt like lots of others. But I didn't know what I would find. Just think if all it was was an ICA bag with dark textiles left over from the past.

But up in the attic, which had not been cleared for a number of years thank goodness, she found four generations' worth of dark material. Her mother and father helped cut the rags and even her brother's video-tape got used as weft. The matting was woven during the exhibition on a loom painted totally black. She got help from Katarina Wrethén setting up and dressing the loom.

– Meeting other able weavers is wonderful. It gives me so much. I have every respect for all those clever weaving ladies. So amazing!

That same black loom is now in Berlin. The dark rags have been replaced with bright colours. Her close friend, the sculptor Cajsja von Zeipel, commissioned Linnéa to weave up the rags from clothes she had worn aged eight to her adult years, as a gift to her partner when they got married.

– Wow, that was strong. It really liberated me. I found myself on a whole new track. It was possibly the first time I actually sat still, "Thank God" – I am a truly restless person, she interjected.

Top left *The Remains of a Business*, 2015. Photo: Bohus County Museum.

Top right *Layers of Shit*, 2015. Photo: Belenius Galleri.

Below right *Four Generations of Darkness*, 2016. Photo: Belenius Galleri.



Down at the bottom, in the middle of her latest work, the name ELVY has been inscribed, Linnéa's grandmother's name. Last summer, back in her childhood home, Linnéa did some weaving on the loom her "momma" wove on once upon a time. Grandma never got to see her granddaughter weaving on her loom. Neither had Linnéa's mother heard the sound of the loom since she was a child. It was incredibly powerful, said Linnéa.

–It would be hard for anyone to understand what it feels like to work on your grandmother's loom. Maybe it doesn't come over, but that I simply could sit there can scarcely be put into words, "just being able to be here, it is utterly peaceful". While everything is so transient – it felt damn good.

What do you call your work, textile art, tapestry?

– They are weaves, a "väva", that's absolutely fine.

I sense an affectionate greeting there to her "momma" Elvy.

The letters SHHRWÅ stand strong and bold on the new weave. The word is a translation from Morse code. Linnéa's father is a radio enthusiast. He finds Morse in birdsong,

snowfall, leaves, all around, and translates it. A number of words get analysed and transformed to be sounded, translated into eight languages. All the words have prospective weaves planned.

– Me and my artist friends find ourselves talking about how all artists seem to have a phase that draws them closer to their father, I'm right there now.

On the floor are boxes of video-tapes from German TV Deutsche Welle's technical department. She got permission to use them, as they were about to be scrapped. Their contents are ordinary TV programmes, she said. She likes weaving the tape: it is light light, works well and supplies are plentiful. The tape was incorporated into her *German Wave weaves*.

Video-tape has been used as a material by weaving groups for some time to make bags and runners. In this art context, the narrative and context are different. Yet somehow intertwined. What is functional and what is high-end art? Linnéa Sjöberg's *German Wave III*, 2017, was purchased by Moderna Museet in Stockholm.

Issues to do with status and value are cen-



tral to Linnéa Sjöberg's art practice. From the business woman's expensive clothing brands transformed into a rag weave belonging to another culture, to the opposite: worthless video-tape becoming high art in a conceptual piece.

The common denominator in much of her

Top Linnéa Sjöberg in her Berlin studio.

Below *Elvy*, 2018. 170 x 255 cm.

"Sewing things together creates opportunities for working on a large scale – really large."



work is narrative, the reworking of memory, severe and painful as in *The Remains of a Business*, or loving, as in Cajsja von Zeipel's gift to her partner.

Weaving has made her interested in its foundations, how it works, its history. For a little while last summer she took on a new

role, a Viking woman, so as to investigate weaving on a warp-weighted weaving device. She acted a Viking at Gunnes gård in Upplands Väsby and was invited to Italy for a performance.

– I don't know what she wants yet, she can't do that much. She has learnt to do plant

LINNÉA SJÖBERG

Born in Strömsund 1983. Went to the secondary school with a textile specialism in Sundsvall, felt the need for creative expression.

Konstfack, one year's study 2007–08
Royal Institute of Art 2008–12

Until 18 March 2019, the TV programme showing Linnéa's practice encountering Hannah Ryggen, is available:
www.tv.nu/program/konsthistorier/sasong/2/avsnitt/6

Exhibition:
20 January–24 February, 2019,
Company Gallery, New York
companygallery.us

6–9 december Nada Art Fair i Miami
in cooperation with Company Gallery

linneasjoberg.com
belenius.com

dyeing and weaves a bit, but she definitely needs to learn how to make fire. Right now though she is quite open.

Next summer Linnéa will be working on an Öland sheep farm.

The Viking woman is not a 24 hour performance, like the others: the outfit she sewed is hanging on a hook. The little weaves she made are all around the studio.

A new warp laid out on the table is ready for beaming. As yet she doesn't know what the motif will be. She explained that she "draws" her motifs straight onto the work.

– Earlier on, before Mejan, I was always drawing. But felt that I couldn't develop any further, I needed new challenges. Then when doing *Salong Flyttkartong*, I snuck back into drawing in the form of tattoos and now I'm continuing at the loom, but in another way. Here, I have to find myself on a specific surface and it can certainly be frustrating if it doesn't work out – then a few centimetres feel interminable.

– It is so lovely to have it rolling under the loom. I just want to carry on. There is always a kind of now there. Now!

And there are a lot of NOWS!