



White gives out calm

Approaching Långhed, you can see the old "Macken" (petrol station) from a distance. You know you're there then. This is now Elin Westlund's shop, where she sells her own artefacts; luscious wristbands, beautiful cushions, soft blankets and rugs.

IT WAS WHEN WE visited Elin that we saw several stunning white weaves, which is why Elin had to be in our white issue. Another time we can focus on one of her other designs, she is active in many different places.

Elin's interest in weaving began in senior secondary school. Sätergläntan in Insjön, Dalarna, followed, giving her access to a lot of skills-based knowledge.

– I got so much there, including an understanding of how to test things and let go. You don't actually need to know exactly what something is going to become before embarking on a cloth. And you can make mistakes!

After the year at Sätergläntan, she was faced with a choice between textile teacher training, HV (School of the Association of Friends of Textile Art) or the Technical School of Weaving in Borås. It was the latter.

– It was a hugely wonderful thing, being able to weave at college level. Maybe that was the deciding factor.

Straight after that training, she and others from the course set up *Arafos Vävphantverk* (Handwovens).

– I think it was good we threw ourselves straight into professional weaving practice, said Elin. Else we might not have dared.

Initially, they shared part of the premises occupied by *Kasthall*. Today, members are dispersed around the country, enjoying the benefits of networking.

– I was quite simply longing to get back home to Hälsingland. And a weave tutor post came up at Västerberg Folk High School.

Right now she is a guest tutor at HV School in Stockholm.

In Elin's studio we saw some of her samples from several finished and some future projects.

– This doublecloth quality was used for four panels hanging at the Commune in Edsbyn, she said.

Microfilm of old Commune payrolls,

above from the left / Linen lampshades inspired by baggy tights from childhood. Doublecloth with microfilm woven in. And some rag inlay.

below from the left / Doublecloth, one layer linen, the other wool. After wet-finishing, the wool layer draws in. This textile is at Gävle Hospital.

Doublecloth in linen with photo negatives woven in. **above** / Woven by Elin at the Old Petrol Station, Långhed.

had been woven in with the fine threads. That commission came from a visitor to *Macken*, where she had a textile out on display with strips of negatives woven in. Elin was given access to the Commune archive, anything with confidential information was cut away and the remainder became weft.

PREFERRED MATERIALS are wool and linen, combined as well. A white doublecloth she made has one layer in wool, the other in linen. When wet-finished, the wool layer drew in and the linen lifted, forming a relief check. Accented by a little white button sewed on with red thread.

– The eye should not be able to take in everything at once, only when coming up close do you discover the small details.

– I like working with minimal colour, black and white. White can look very good in public settings. It is neutral and more enduring. It gives out calm.

The doublecloth panels are in Gävle Hospital. That commission came about following a project called *Weaves for Public Spaces*, organized by the art consultant in the county and handicraft consultant, Eva Carlborg. Five weavers took part.

DOUBLECLOTH is a favourite technique of mine, she said. You can produce some lovely effects with the interplay of two faces in different materials, like in that white textile of linen and wool. By fulling the same cloth a little longer, you could cut away the wool layer to expose a more see-through check. If you are combining black and white in the cloth, you could arrange the warp to produce two self-coloured surfaces, without mixing the shades.

– A lot happens while weaving, or after. I'm not always clear about what I'm going to be doing when I start but try to be daring in my sampling and testing.

Right now Elin is involved in several projects to do with making souvenirs.

The white linen lampshades were made for a shop in Bollnäs. They are inspired by the baggy tights of childhood. The folds were set with woodglue.

She and 9 other practitioners who work in a range of materials are exploring possibilities for making Hälsinge souvenirs, for more widespread distribution. A sample weave is on the loom. So far, she

is at the experimental stage. Her idea is for a pot, with a plain outside and a surprising inside.

– Collaborating is important. It helps push you, when you work alone, and sparks off discussions about price setting, marketing and thinking about what you are doing.

– You can't get away with thinking that handwoven alone is enough. Not many people buy for that reason these days, what you make must have some appeal. I can't say that my woven work is better than machine woven products. But I can exert some influence over the work from start to finish and make it the way I want. That's where I think the strength of a handwoven product lies.

And then set the price?

– Yes and the hardest things to price are those you can see in *Macken*, the things anyone and everyone might buy.

– Commissions for interiors often come with a budget for the sketchwork, production, assembly and mounting of the textile piece. But who pays for the time it takes to do a really nice finish on a rag rug? The maker does it, quite simply, so the object is the best it can be. **A**



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Education

Sätergläntan, 1993-94,
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