

Sjølingstad, Haghed, Blanca, Gnesta

Lina Sofia Lundin and Franz Petter Schmidt

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The whirlwind that was the globalization of the late 20th century only left scattered traces of the Nordic textile industry behind. Knowledge and traditions with roots dating back hundreds of years have been dispensed within a short period of time, and it is often small-scale, non-commercial forces that relentlessly continue to bear these material and immaterial cultural heritages.

In the exhibition *Sjølingstad, Haghed, Blanca, Gnesta* we present works by artists Lina Sofia Lundin and Franz Petter Schmidt. Both of them have looked closer upon a few places where textile traditions once were strong.

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In Sjølingstad wool mill, Schmidt starts the loom that hasn't been in use since 1948 to recreate a wool fabric he found in a test book. The meeting with Sjølingstad and the sudden feeling of belonging affects the artist deeply. He stays here for two years, and then returns regularly. The site forms the backbone of his artistic practice, and the project *Weaving Fabrics for Suits* becomes his artistic research work as a PhD student at the National Academy for Art in Oslo.

In the exhibition, test books are placed on a shelf, next to the woven and dyed fabrics. The very first weave falls down from a roll mounted on the wall – if you go close you can see the traces of the loom, and the small knots knocked when the warp broke. Methodically, the artist worked himself closer to the quality of the textile samples. Small adjustments in the selection of materials, the handling of the loom and adjustments in the dye recipe, lead him all closer. Eventually, the fabric is sewn up into a classic dark blue men's suit.

The work involves an exploration of the place, Norwegian textile industry history as well as identity issues. Next to the fabrics are photographs from the factory and its surroundings. In a few texts on the wall are the artist's own notes on the work in place, the meeting with the people there and their knowledge.

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Lina Sofia Lundin's work is based on the small village of Haghed in Dalarna, where she also lives. Here she deepens her knowledge of linen preparation, just like her older relatives, devoted to following the textile production chain in its whole. She grows flax on her farm, and prepares it by learning from people in the village and the local weaving cabin's flax group.

In the exhibition, the flax is presented right in the middle of an experiment. Here the retting of the flax, which is purposed to get rid of the woody parts so that the fiber will easier come off, is combined with an investigative dyeing process. The baths shine red, yellow, black and blue – it's madder, indigo, iron scrap and acorns that dye the straws. During the exhibition, the baths swim over and dye the linen fabric placed under the glass cylinders. After two weeks the retting is finished and the water is replaced. It's sort of a slow kind of painting, an abstract expressionism where new positions, the capillary power of the water and the randomness constantly change the image that grows.

In one video we can follow the work with the flax in Haghed, in another one we see the artist's work in Blanca outside Murcia, Spain. Also here she takes on local textile traditions, but this time it is the esparto grass that has traditionally been used for making carpets. Along with some of the works of one of the last factories in the depopulated region of Blanca, she tests to dye with pomegranate and iron residues inspired by a recipe from 1807. The diary notes from the site are collected in a small book next to the video.

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Both Lina Sofia Lundin and Franz Petter Schmidt's areas of interest may appear characteristic of a society that is increasingly interested in the production conditions of the objects that surround us daily. But maybe the question isn't only about how we choose what we consume in a production society that does not seem to break the beat, but how we can all make ourselves – with our bodies and minds – knowledge bearers who continue to carry on these meetings, methods and materials.

Caroline Malmström, curator