

The Sun Shines Differently Depending on the Weather - Åsa Norman

February 9 - March 17, 2019

Our times are often described as covered in darkness: we are not able to prevent the escalating climate change, the gap grows between those who have and those who do not, and racist and sexist representatives increasingly gain influence. In the work of artist Åsa Norman, our gaze is lifted and directed towards another often-regarded dark historical point, the 13th century. It is a period connected with war, plague and early witch persecution. This was when the Catholic Church formulated the first scriptures on why witches would be burned, something that would be executed for a few centuries ahead in Europe.

In the exhibition *The Sun Shines Differently Depending on the Weather*, the artist plays with a couple of progressive movements and places that were shaped as resistance to the harsh social climate. The exhibition hall's 8x8 meter great wall is covered by a newly produced drapery illustrating a sunrise over water. The light flowing in through the large windows makes the shiny pieces of fabric that is the water glitter. The title of the exhibition and the drapery is a quote from the medieval mystic Mechthild von Magdeburg. She lived in Germany during the 13th century as a Beguine, in a kind of monastic-like community with other women, focused on prayer and social work. In the seven books that make up *The Flowing Light of Divinity*, Mechthild examines how the relationship with God could give strength to go against contemporary power hierarchies to live a different life than expected. In this way she developed an intimate and personal relationship with the divine - a relationship that examined what it is to be human, what the divine is and what love is.

Based on the philosopher Jonna Bornemark's book *Kroppslighetens mystik - En filosofisk läsning av Mechthild från Magdeburg* (2015), Åsa Norman has approached Mechthild's work for several years. In the video work *Mechthild's clothes*, the mystic is placed in our time, as we see a woman performing everyday chores dressed in medieval clothing. Religious symbols, such as the wave, the nail and the hand of God, reappear in several embroideries. Different textile techniques and meetings between materials such as plastic beads, fake skin and camouflage patterns, highlight the relationship between the soft and the hard, between mind and thought, as the body's experience always is central in Mechthild's writings. Knowledge also exists beyond language.

Textile work was a common occupation in the medieval monasteries, and there are reasons to believe that the Beguines inspired Holy Birgitta's work in Vadstena. Her daughter, Katarina of Vadstena, is another medieval figure who influenced the work presented in the exhibition. As a twelve-year-old she was married off to the Norwegian knight Eggard, and lived for a period at Eggardsnäs, located outside Nyköping, not far from Gnesta. After a couple of years, she left the site and the marriage and moved to Rome, where her mother lived and later was sanctified.

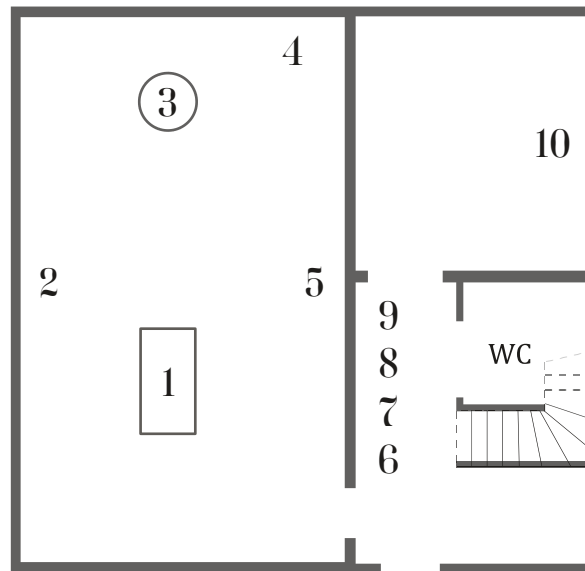
The installation *Eggardsnäs - I was here* is a playful memorial to Katarinas breakup. A large flag with an embroidered postcard from Rome is placed in a pile of textile building blocks. The blocks show images from the ruins of Eggardsnäs, archaeological finds of seeds from crop plants common in Sörmland during this time, and a rat - that is blamed to have spread the plague, the disease that eventually killed Eggard when Katarina had left. Katarina's emancipation project is manifested like a explorer who left a flag behind to claim the new territory.

The installation *Katta and Dilla's journey* is based on the local tale of the two nuns that were out rowing on the lake Klämmingen. When the storm struck and they ended up in the water, they promised God to build each church and christen Sörmland, if only they would survive. After washing up on land safely, they erected one church in each bay, Kattnäs and Dillnäs kyrka. In the exhibition a couple of stock boats are lined up on a podium, next to them two colorful sea creatures are swimming. On the sails of one of the boats, the nuns' embroidered names are repeated: Katta Dilla Katta Dilla Katta Dilla...

Åsa Norman explore and fantasize about a couple of women's strategies to create space to be able to work and live free from men's control, in a different time than ours. By tilting the blinds and throwing light on other stories than those that are said to represent a certain time, her work show us the possibility to create spaces of resistance and action. During her residency stay at Art Lab Gnesta, the artist met with local experts and visited the county museum to dig further in the local histories. The work stems from an interest in history writing: how we look at history also depends on where we stand today - just as the exhibition's title suggests.

Caroline Malmström, curator

Art Lab Gnesta



1. Katta and Dilla's journey (2019)

Installation 50 x 100 x 100 cm
Silk Clay, viscose, plexiglas and viscose thread.

2. The Sun Shines Differently Depending on the Weather (2019)

Drapery with applications 8 x 8 meter
Cotton, polyester, viscose and silk.

3. Eggardsnäs, I was here (2019)

Installation 80 x 200 cm
Digital printing on viscose, broderi. Linne, silk and cotton. Round rod in Pinewood.

4a. Erotik i staden (2019)

Pearl embroidery 100 x 60 cm
Cotton, syntetskinn and glass beads.

4b. Mechthild's pillow (2018)

Installation on plexiglass shelf 50 x 50 cm
Pearl embroidery .
Wool, silk, wadding, acrylic plastic and glass beads.

6. Brasan och kjolen (2018)

Embroidery, collage
Wool, silk, cotton yarn, silk yarn and textile paint.

7. Penna med sudd över liten dolk (2019)

Embroidery 20x20cm
Silk, ull, viscose- and cotton yarn.

8. En sa (2016).

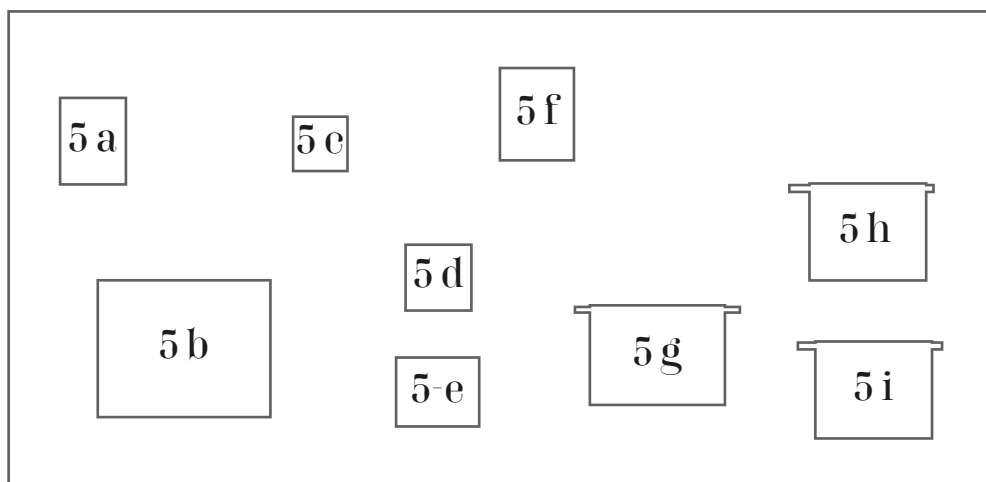
Embroidery, 32 x 42 cm
Wool, cotton yarn and plastic beads.

9. Mechthild's clothes (2019)

Sweater
Linnefrotté, viscose, polyester and glass beads.

10. Mechthild's clothes (2019)

Video, 5 min and 29 sec
Photo and editing: Marius Dybwad
Brandrud.



5a. *Att klappa något okänt* (2016)

Embroidery 50x 40 cm

Wool, cotton.

5b. *Tyget och spikarna* (2018)

Embroidery, 84 x 104 cm

Wool, cotton yarn and plastic beads.

5c. *Svärd med liten frans* (2018)

Pearl embroidery, 37 x 38 cm

Cotton, viscose fringes and glass beads.

5d. *Karta över bördiga fält* (2018)

Cotton 43 x 44 cm

Cotton, polyester fringes, textile paint and glass beads.

5e. *Eld och A4-papper* (2018)

Pearl embroidery, 44 x 52 cm

Cotton and plastic beads.

5f. *Bålgetingen, bulten och handen* (2019)

Embroidery, pearl embroidery 50 x 60 cm

Wool, cotton yarn and plastic beads.

5g. *Mechthild 874* (number 1)* (2016)

Embroidery, pearl embroidery, 60 x 70 cm

Flax, cotton, cotton yarn and plastic beads.

5h. *Mechthild 874* (number 3)* (2016)

Pearl embroidery 60 x 60 cm

Cotton, synthetic tassels and plastic beads.

5i. *Mechthild 874* (number 2)* (2016)

Pearl embroidery 60 x 60 cm

Cotton, synthetic tassels and plastic beads.

Events in the exhibition

March 2 at 12pm-4pm

Cast a language and a light - **workshop with Åsa Norman and Fredrika Anderson.**

March 17 at 4pm

Conversation between Åsa Norman and Jonna Bornemark based on the exhibition and Bornemark's book *Kroppslighetens mystik - En filosofisk läsning av Mechthild från Magdeburg* (2015).

"For a long time I saw a purgatory that looked like a burning water. It boiled with burning bell metal and was coated with a dim fog. In the water swam spiritual fish that were similar to humans. These were the souls of the poor priests who, in this world, were captivated by greed and fullness and who had burned in unwanted wisdom which dazzled them so that they could not love anything good. On the water traveled fishermen. They had neither ship nor net, but fished with their glowing claws because they were ghosts and devils. When they took them (the priests) into the shore, they cruelly pulled off their skin and immediately threw them into a boiling cauldron. There the devils thrust into them with glowing forks. When they were then cooked to the devil's pleasure, they ate them with their beaks. Then the devil again went out on the water, dropping them under his tail, fished, boiled, ate them up and melted them again."

Mechthild from Magdeburg from the book *Kroppslighetens mystik - En filosofisk läsning av Mechthild från Magdeburg* by Jonna Bornemark (p. 213), Volante förlag 2015.

Exhibition team: Sebastian Dahlqvist, Emanuel Hallklint, Signe Johannessen, Mikael Jonasson, Caroline Malmström, Peter Olsén, Erik Rören.

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