

RHYTHM STRIPES SPACE

PETTER HELLSING EXPLORES ORNAMENTATION IN OUR SURROUNDINGS: THAT OF URBAN LIFE, OF RESISTANCE, THE ORNAMENTATION OF OUR EXISTENCE. MIGHT THERE BE A UNIFYING FACTOR IN PATTERNING, IN ORNAMENTATION?

Petter Helsing

Konstfack, Stockholm
1983–89.
Royal Institute of Art,
Mejan Arc
Textilism 2011–12.

Selected work:

Danderyd Hospital,
Stockholm, 2016
Lappverk/PatchUp,
Katthammarsvik
Retirement Home, 2014
Contemporary Patterns,
Stage Curtain for
the Aircraft Museum,
Linköping, National
Public Art Council
Sweden, 2010

petterhelsing.se

*The Ornamentation of
Existence*
1 March – 8 April
softgalleri.no.

THE INSTALLATION ARTIST Petter Helsing built for his show, *The Ornamentations of Existence*, incorporates handwoven cloth, ceramic forms and wooden constructions into his open investigation into patterning and ornamentation. Into what is capable of creating order out of chaos. As a unifying factor amongst people, from smaller groups to whole societies and the world at large. This show was his on-site creation. Some of it was pre-determined; otherwise it was created there and then.

– I have an idea, but nothing fully formed.

Something has to remain unplanned, which makes the journey worthwhile. His website shows the process. Handwoven lengths run between strips of wood, ascending ceilingwards. An image of cloth growing on the loom. Stripe sequences in black, greys and the odd, carefully chosen colour. Stripes that speak to us from their primordial origins, stripes in ticking, in folk costumes, handtowels, clothes, furnishing fabrics, rag rugs ...

The horizontal wooden struts, divided up into smaller compartments convey an image of the reed, but also serve as mainstays in a built construction, perhaps in our lives as well. Huge pulleys suspended by rope, like those on a boat or the pulleys on a loom – have functional significance.

Sculpture is Petter's background, in which he trained at Konstfack in Stockholm. After graduat-

ing he travelled to Guatemala and there came across the indigenous people's handwoven textiles with their brightly coloured stripes. Stripes that unite a vulnerable group, oppressed for centuries, strengthening their resistance.

Raised in a creative family, learning to appreciate theatre, literature and music, he had a box of creative tools to hand. Following his Latin American trip, textile materials took the lead in his art work. Hand as well as machine stitched embroidery. Collages of textiles as building blocks for three-dimensional work. He has used a digital Jacquard loom for weaving, sometimes working on smaller weaving machines, occasionally for larger works, in Tillberg, Holland. Images forming narratives.

Now, standing in the midst of this installation, there are no images apart from the photo slideshow up on a screen. Those pictures were taken in China, where he has exhibited on several occasions. Patterns, a play of colour, lines, stripes ... ornamentation. In suspension, wandering up towards the ceiling, on cloth he wove himself. After being given a loom that had stood around waiting. Last year he beamed two 30 metre warps and just wove them up. Creative work at the loom renders it into an extension of his body, the maker in touch with the made. The work of the hand is vital.

Eight pedals and different tie-ups gave him plain

This show was created for the SOFT galleri space in Oslo. Petter Hellsing built the whole installation on site.



weave, twill and various other weaves in between. He learnt handweaving by looking online, in books and just getting down to it without really being that knowledgeable about the technique itself. An approach that suits him.

– When I embark on something I have not fully mastered, it can only improve, which is deeply satisfying.

So at a seminar held at Linköping University where Petter gave a talk a few days after the show opened, I raised the question as to whether he feels obliged to keep to any particular codes in weaving.

– Not at all! I am really privileged as a man in the textile field. Nobody bothers to look at the back of my work, or how it is woven.

The woven cloth in *Ornamentation of Existence* clearly ties in with Petter's first encounter with textiles in Guatemala.

Visitors are invited into a context embracing a whole room, visible through the windows from the street, with vistas in the slideshow from a completely different part of the world. Glimpses surface in those images of stripes, patterns, colour, compositions. Urban ornamentation. The colour scale gets picked up in the cloth, urban building in the wood constructions. Pattern and ornamentation that are universal the world over, uniting us in the ornamentation of existence.

