

cover

ISSUE 72 | AUTUMN 2023

WEAVING THE RUG STORY

TISSAGE



AUTUMN 2023 £5 €8 \$10
cover-magazine.com
Hali Publications Ltd.

COVER CONNECT NEW YORK • AI DESIGN
RUG STAR • GABELLINI SHEPPARD
MAISON RHIZOMES • 60 YEARS OF AMINI



The softness of experience

Honouring the delicacy of nature, Danish textile composer Signe Emdal creates extraordinary textile sculptures using her own signature weaving techniques. Lucy Upward speaks to the artist about her multi-layered creative process

The intricate delicacy and beauty of Signe Emdal's recent textile artworks is breathtaking. It comes as no surprise that the Danish artist has observed viewers of her unique artworks being drawn to tears. Perhaps it is the softness and vulnerability her textile works exude that touches those open to the ideas expressed. When talking to her, it is very clear that Signe has a receptivity and sensitivity to the world around her that she is able to make (a very soft) concrete in these pieces she has been working on since 2018.

Artworks like *Lady Pharaoh* and *Silky Way* concern nature, music, locations and their histories. They are a synaesthetic manifestation of Signe's experience of this crazy planet. As with historic textiles—which teach us about ancient times and places—they are a summary of Signe's direct environment, a space where all points meets. While talking to Signe I realise it is almost impossible to separate her story and the narrative of the textile. 'All creations are a mirror of their creators, whether you want them to be or not,' she says. 'For ten years I have practised Tibetan Buddhism and mindfulness. When people have been pushy with me I have thought to myself, "Why are you not honouring something delicate?"' Through her artwork we can definitely honour this beautiful trait.

Signe is busily working towards her first solo exhibition, 'Fantasia', in September, at the Galerie Maria Wettergren in Paris, which has represented her work since 2022. That Signe's story of how she reached this pinnacle of artist development is full of synchronicity is no surprise, so completely in tune with happenstance is she.

Back in 2016, when we first spoke of her work in COVER 42, she was making unique jacquard craft works on a large German factory machine, on which she worked for fifteen years. As Signe began developing her work, producing tapestry artworks alongside the craft pieces, she became increasingly conscious that she



02



04

03



01 *Lady Pharaoh*, 2023, Signe Emdal. 91 x 55 x 18 cm, Icelandic wool, Italian mohair and Merino wool on a Swedish cotton warp

02 Signe Emdal on the loom weaving *Palladio*

03 Signe Emdal's analogue-film

photography taken during an artist residency. Image from *Toronto Island*, 2019

04 *Palladio*, 2021, Signe Emdal (shown in detail). 50.5 x 115.5 x 4 cm, Italian mohair and Merino wool on a Swedish cotton warp



06

needed to discover her own journey. This took off during a residency in Iceland in 2018. There she let herself work freely and intuitively with yarns on a wooden loom. She transformed into a textile composer and created the piece *My Little Icelandic Pony*, which appeared in COVER 54. For this work Signe developed one of the two innovative 'Fusion' weaving techniques she currently uses, called 'touch'.

For the upcoming exhibition in Paris, Signe decided she wanted to travel, which had not been an option with the jacquard looms. 'I wanted the show to be about trying to create out there, how it is when you study the ancient history of place in the location and make work at same time,' she explains. In January she was in Mallorca, in February a residency in Copenhagen, Italy in March, the Danish countryside in April and a residency in Copenhagen in May. Each work expresses her experience of the exact time and the place. 'It is the energy of the location and people I spend time with. It is the way textiles were always created, reflecting the culture, the people, the landscape,' she says.

In these spaces Signe works in a community of creatives, which is an important element to her practice, the celebration of community and the communication of emotion and ideas. 'My show is very much about community and how nobody ever creates alone. We are always in co-creation, even though we seem like "solo" artists.'

Made of Icelandic wool, Italian mohair and Merino wool with a Swedish cotton warp, the astounding *Lady Pharaoh* was made with Signe's new travel loom, on which she set up the warp inspired by a combination of Navajo and Ancient Egyptian weavings. Composing the work, she had in mind Egyptian textile offerings intended to protect the deceased in the afterlife, as well as traditional Coptic textile techniques. For Signe the sculpture is 'an artistic transposition

05 *Silky Way*, 2023, Signe Emdal. 65 x 183 x 28 cm, Icelandic wool, mohair, on a cotton warp

06 Signe Emdal's analogue-film photography taken during artist residency. Image of Signe Emdal and friend Anne Nowark on Christiansø, a small island in Denmark, 2020

07 Signe Emdal's analogue-film photography taken during an artist residency in Iceland, 2018



07

of a visual sensation that one may feel when passing to other dimensions...'

As a conjurer who makes the intangible, tangible, her weavings are never pre-planned: 'I let it come through naturally, without forcing anything. This is how I mediate,' she says. Signe taps into the energy of her location, she studies its history, she listens to music and keeps important images next to her loom—her own analogue photos (which have become part of her artistic output), her watercolours or images she feels have the right vibration. 'When I start tapping into the history of a place, I feel it very strongly. It can be very intense at times.'

Woven in the second 'Fusion' weaving technique developed by Signe—titled 'loop'—*Palladio* is a translation of the pattern from the terrace of the Basilica of San Giorgio, on San Giorgio Maggiore island. The countenance of *Silky Way* is that of a perfectly formed dandelion clock, ripe and expectant, created by the 'touch' technique. The artwork draws from

“

It is the energy of the location and people I spend time with. It is the way textiles were always created

Signe's Mallorca, Paris and Rome studies and is a narrative about the Silk Road, the exchange of ancient knowledge and the history of Tyrian purple. Her ideas span centuries but are condensed into a unique form that surprises us and moves us in the way nature is able to do.

'Signe Emdal: Fantasia' will be open at Galerie Maria Wettergren from 8 September to 25 November 2023. For the catalogue, each of Signe's beautiful works is accompanied by poetry written by a curated group of creative friends from her life and travelling. They have each been invited to express their emotional reactions to one of the artworks.

Looking to the future, Signe is full of light and hope. 'My motto is "Joy is your destiny",' she says. 'I want to keep shining light on how delicate and important we are for each other in this world. The better we support each other, the better this world will become.'

www.signeemdal.com

www.mariawettergren.com