

In the time of objects

A table balances precariously on slender ornate legs, overshadowed by an uncontrollable black growth; a strange thing. The contrast between the delicate table and the threatening growth above it creates a tension that draws the viewer in and leaves them wondering whether or not their physical surroundings are governed by the normal rules of existence. The work *...innerst, mitten* (2007) is crooked and skewed, and at the same time exquisitely appealing... black, intricate, and then suddenly these things - a forest of rounded forms, could it be a disease? A fungus that proliferates, grows, has a life of its own. Sometimes I think that it looks like a sea of people with outstretched arms. This round, organic form is a reoccurring phenomenon in Jennifer Forsberg's art. Black, red, white, occasionally yellow. It is wild, yet sometimes tamed, in wreaths, on a table or on the wall, always in a state of transformation.

Jennifer Forsberg returns again and again to the idea of *inertia*. She says that working with clay gives her time to reflect. The necessary slowness of working with clay creates a respite, a space in which thoughts are born. And there is a sense of resistance, though subtle, that is present throughout her work. It creates some sort of fundamental aesthetic, in which the function of the objects has long ago ceased to matter, or even exist. An object doesn't necessarily confine us to a specific purpose, but leaves us free to create an individual interpretation. This is how I see Jennifer Forsberg's work. Inviting forms, confusing forms, round and pointed, tempting and teasing, strongly present.

She plays, confidently and uninhibitedly, with the medium and with the three-dimensional nature of her work. Like an abstract expressionist, she works spontaneously with colour and shape, following her impulses, but only to a certain point. Time is important, and every step of the creative process is influenced by what has already occurred. "A certain amount of time passes between beginning and finishing a work, sometimes a long time. This can be a problem because my thoughts develop faster than the work itself, and sometimes I lose respect for the work before it's finished. But afterwards I can come back to it, and see it and respect it anew," she says. However, the element of time is not visible in her work, as it is in, for example, complex tapestry or a magnificent painting. Neither is there any particular value attached to the time it has taken to create the work, as is the case with traditional handicrafts. So while the aspect of time is important to the artist herself, she does not make it obvious in her works. This approach is a relief; we are freed from time and space, established positions and obvious references.

In the work *it's three a' clock in the morning* (2008) this is particularly clear – a whole wall covered by white porcelain clocks, that are actually not clocks at all, but hermeneutic houses without doors or windows, weighted down by black malformed pendulums. Black against white. With simple symbolism she shows life's order; yin and yang, darkness and light, that which rules and that which obeys.

In other works, Jennifer Forsberg continues to investigate and transform her characteristic, strange, twisted and swelling black form. In her series *there is a bear in the woods* (2008) the shapes are split up into individual entities that cluster on a wall and seem to take on human attributes – alone, in pairs or as Siamese twins that attempt to lunge away from each other. It takes time to understand and absorb the works, both individually and as a whole. In *as you as me* (2007) the

form has become two playful piles of long winding ropes, lit from below by a red light. Once again, she plays with colour and shape, the immaterial warm light, the hard, black, winding clay. The contrast reveals a sense of humour and of fellowship, as you as me... With an appealing simplicity the object is deconstructed. The exclusive and exotic is reduced and appropriated, only to later be recreated in a new personal form.

The work *A short story in three parts –It, the Oak and the Cloud* (2009) can be found in the open space between the buildings of Ekeskolan in Örebro. A daring approach, new materials and a bigger scale. *It*, large and shapeless, raised on a shelf-like throne like a king with his red crown... as one might imagine a mythical mountain king, or a contemporary Jabba the Hut; shapeless yet impressive, both repulsive and attractive. *The Cloud* is its counterpart; formalised raindrops, as if cut out and then pasted in place on the grass between the school buildings. *The Oak*, on the other hand, grows directly out of the ground, but is strange and mystical with its black buds.

House and home, table and treasure, imaginings and symbols of the safety with which we surround ourselves... in Jennifer Forsberg's hands these transform into signs, often unreadable and ominous, always demanding our attention. The objects are the result of chance and coincidence as well as the artist's careful control over that which emerges serendipitously. There are no riddles to solve, there are no answers to existential questions, and the viewer receives no sign as to whether they have interpreted the works correctly or not. The objects do not harbour any universal truths, we see them and we might, or might not, understand.

Jennifer Forsberg's technique has its foundation in her mastery of the material. She combines craftsmanship with the postmodernist approach of gathering references, and a will to reconstruct them and create new meanings and contexts. Nothing is true or false, right or wrong. The objects are without purpose, and we, with our expectation of receiving definitions and directions, are thrown off balance. The material itself sets our thoughts flying to themes of loneliness, identity, fragility and time, to something that exposes a romantic longing for a bigger story, a story of what we are and what we may one day become.

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