

RUNA BOGER DRAWING AND PRINTING. RUNA BOGER. R.B.

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FOREWORD, AND THANKS

Many years ago, I was sitting and drinking coffee with Jan Groth, one of the foremost contemporary artists in Norway, with an impressive production and international success. As early as the 1960s, he had started to work exclusively with tapestry weaving and with black and white drawing. His works gave rise to enthusiasm: his tapestries, drawings and later sculptures have been exhibited all over the world, also at the prestigious Betty Parsons Gallery in New York. So I was extremely surprised when he told me about an episode at the same gallery in the early 1970s: at the exhibition opening at the crowded gallery an international collector sailed in. She had seen one of Groth's works hanging on the feature wall, after which she quickly forced her way through the crowd with positive words streaming from her lips like a string of pearls. 'I love it!' had definitely been uttered a number of times while she picked her way through the room. When she finally got close to the work, she stopped and took in the work as a whole. 'Oh,' she exclaimed in a less gushing tone of voice. 'It's a textile,' she went on. 'I hate it!'

Maybe I cannot recall the episode exactly as it was related to me, but I remember extremely well that I was surprised at the decision-making process of the collector. The physical distance of a few metres was enough to conceal Groth's choice of material, and the fact that it was a textile – and not an oil on canvas, as had been her original assumption – was something completely insuperable for the collector. To someone like me, who had not personally experienced the development that characterised both textile art and contemporary art in the 1960s and 1970s, it was almost inconceivable that one could summarily dismiss works and possibly entire oeuvres on the basis of a choice of material.

If one looks with present-day eyes at the relation between textile and oil on canvas or other materials, particularly the relative positioning and ranking of the materials, this repulsion still seems strange. Major works such as Sheila Hicks' colourful installation *Escalade Beyond Chromatic Lands* (2016–2017) in The Pillars room at the Norwegian National Museum testify to some extent to the breadth that textile art represents in contemporary art and the position it can fill. But also, earlier works such as Synnøve Anker Aurdal's *Magisk måne* (Magic Moon, 1967), Brit Haldis Fuglevaag's *Form I* (1970) and Gro Jessen's *Fuglegitter* (Birdcage, c. 1970) well illustrate the early span of textile art. If one could imagine these four works side by side and regard them as a whole, something of the

wide range of textile as a material for artistic works would perhaps surprise many people.

Textile is especially interesting as a material and object of study. The hand-dyeing processes and the colours, the diversity of textiles and materials, the sensual richness of the many ways in which one takes in the work (in a tactile and visual but perhaps also olfactory way), open up a vast range of possibilities for artistic practice and work. This was not as obvious or widely accepted in the 1960s and 1970s, and the path to present-day recognition of textile as a material and its techniques has been quite a thorny one.

At the same time, textile is also interesting historically from an artistic and cultural point of view. It is in this landscape that one should emphasise Runa Boger's production. Her works and oeuvre are a wonderful example of the journey textile has undergone in our modern age – from craft to art. We must of course include Aurdal, Fuglevaag, Jessen and several others in this narrative. Jessen in particular, with her textile prints and textile design, is a key figure in textile art in Norway in the second half of the 20th century. If one looks at Boger's works from this period alongside Jessen's production, one finds certain similarities. Even so, Boger's works and her career testify to something more.

Boger's production followed closely the positioning of textile in the artistic world in the 1970s, while also steadily developing in the direction of contemporary art. Her works have also held their own – the artistic techniques and Boger's eye for quality and craft have followed her throughout her career. The steps she has taken over the years towards contemporary art have not led to her distancing herself from textile as a craft; one could rather say that Boger has managed to take her craft along with her on her journey onwards into later processes and productions. That is why, in many ways, it is possible to compare her works with those of Tapta (Maria Wierusz-Kowalski), Magdalena Abakanowicz and the aforementioned Hicks – more at any rate than just compare her with Aurdal, Fuglevaag and Jessen. Boger's narrative, this journey and these works deserve attention and the opportunity of being visually analysed and experienced by many people, in the form of a major exhibition of her artistic activity.

I would like to thank Boger for giving me this unique insight into her work. On four occasions during the spring of 2023, I was

allowed to visit her in her studio in Tøyen. There, in the course of several hours, we were able to assess works from the beginning of her career right up until her most recent and ongoing objects, to discuss developments and study the totality of her work. It is not often one is able to work so directly with physical objects that span a long period when writing about an artist, one of their works or their oeuvre. Nor has it been easy to write this text. It has been an enormous process. But it has also been one of the most rewarding writing processes I have experienced. It has been a fantastic journey. So thank you, Runa.

GLOBAL FLUCTUATIONS, LOCAL VARIATIONS

It does not feel over-crammed in Runa Boger's studio in Tøyen, though every centimetre of shelf and table space is in use. Her municipally owned studio, where she has spent the main part of her professional career, feels spacious and full of light. Large works of wool, sisal hemp and silk have been carefully rolled up and stored under enormous, specially made work benches and on long shelves up under the studio ceiling. Notebooks with dated records and precise calculations of hand-dyeing processes and dye recipes seem to be arranged in a chronological order in a cupboard, next to a carefully thought-out selection of books and other written sources on orderly shelves in the corner between towering windows and the end wall of the studio. Works, sketches and notebooks have been sorted, organised and professionally looked after. Even her writing desk is neat and well-organised. A stylish chair for visitors is positioned by the writing desk, and on it lies a personally made square red cushion – made of wool, naturally, one of Boger's favourite materials. Apart from being her workroom as an artist, the studio can almost be regarded as an archive. This archive of materials, works, notebooks and books provides an insight into a particularly interesting journey through the last fifty years of the Norwegian, European and Western sectors of art and culture as well as art history.

This journey reveals a sector undergoing transformation, where what nowadays is often referred to as the creative industries and the role of textile production, but which back then comprised textile printers and seamstresses, was increasingly being challenged by sudden major global socio-economic changes. This had to do with international customs and quota agreements, free trade and *fast fashion*, and with whether the cultural and fashion-related preferences of Western society were keeping pace. Boger's

professional journey from textile printer, with the identification *RUNA BOGER drawing and printing*, to her position as a textile artist known as *RUNA BOGER* and her mature signature on independent objects as *R.B.* is a wonderful example of how the art and culture sector has been and still is interwoven with national and international politics and economic conditions.

The well-known textile artist and one of Norway's nestors in textile print and textile design, Gro Jessen, wrote about Boger's artistic work in 1996. In her text, Jessen offers a succinct and relevant outline of the development typifying Boger's textile production. After completing her education at the Norwegian National Academy of Craft and Art Industry in Oslo and further studies in Denmark, France and Poland, Boger established herself in Oslo along with a group of colleagues in the early 1970s. The aim was to offer clients such as Norway Design quality products of a personal, alternative and handmade kind. Without any price-raising intermediary, Boger and her colleagues intended not only to produce beautiful textiles but also to make a living from it. This focus on and contact with customers might perhaps seem almost a luxury from a present-day perspective, and after the production period of the 1970s it did not take long for such a focus on customers to come under pressure. The growth period in the textile sector that otherwise characterised the time after the Second World War was in fact over from the 1970s onwards, which stimulated changes in policies linked to the sector.

This meant that the 1980s presented challenges for textile printers, which Boger had primarily defined herself as being. Furthermore, from being at the highest global level of protection against the import of low-price textiles in the early 1980s, Norway began a gradual liberalisation of policy within this field from 1986. The most critical phase of Norwegian textile protectionism was in the 1977 to 1986 period, just when Boger and her colleagues were starting out on their careers and businesses. Cheap textiles from Asia and India flooded the European market, and Boger's direct contact with her clients – with the customer able to order blouses in cotton jersey, silk scarves and piece goods, fabric for own production – became limited to the Workshop Sales in Gabels gate.

The situation in Norway and Europe was not unique in a global context. In the USA, the textile industry had also changed, as had the relationship to the customer. Making fabrics and sewing made-to-measure clothes gradually became a non-competitive

occupation when access to reasonable fabrics and off-the-peg articles of clothing increased rapidly. Possibilities were limited for textile printers and seamstresses to compete with globalised production from the countries in the world with low or medium incomes where there was both capital ready to be invested and available qualified labour to produce textiles in a cheaper way. Textile production is admittedly labour-intensive, but it is also technologically simple and therefore mobile – and at the same time exposed to international competition. In addition, technological innovation and the production of new textiles during the first half of the 20th century contributed to changing the business model on which the production of textiles and clothing had been based. The situation gradually became intolerable for crafts linked to the production, design and printing of textiles.

In 1996, Jessen wrote that piece goods would resist the trend for a few more years in the encounter with this new, globalised production and daily life, as a kind of response to a broad and partly little-defined range of needs. Piece goods could be used for so many things if it was, as Boger suggested, round a neck or round a body – or, as Jessen suggested, on a sofa, in front of a window or on a wall. The problem was that such products required the customer to pick up the thread at the other end and also think about how the textile was to be, or could be, made use of. This became a challenge that did not correspond to the needs or expectations of the time. The production of the piece goods and textile lengths had only a few recipients at the other end, something which eventually led to Boger standing at a crossroads relatively early on in her professional career.

These global fluctuations produced local variations. One could further explore textile, textile printing, textile design and textile art and perhaps produce stagings of considerable lengths of textiles, as Jessen herself did, or one could pursue further the colours and forms involved and gradually detach oneself from a two-dimensional surface, construct a way out of the textile and find a form for contemporary art objects. Boger wanted to choose not one way or the other, but both.

INTERNATIONAL TENDENCIES

At the same time, it is misleading only to emphasise the economic changes stemming specifically from the political and economic areas which characterised the landscape in which Boger operated.

It is not correct to claim that Boger's production was pushed in the direction of art and that her interest in exploring textile as an artistic material was solely due to the decline in the possibilities of earning a living.

During her studies, Boger had shown an interest in and experimented with works that can remind one of Brit Haldis Fuglevaag's *Form I* (1970), a quite large natural-coloured sisal object using a 'spindle technique'. It is the technique and presence of the object as form which strikes one when encountering *Form I*, in the same way as when meeting other 'spindle technique' works by Fuglevaag. Boger's early comparable works, on the other hand, which are both woven and dyed, do not appear to be as advanced in their technique. It is first and foremost the colour and the material that Boger explored in these works, and only secondly technique and form. If there is a thread running throughout all of Boger's work, it is perhaps her prime competence and interest in colours and materials. Also, in conversations with Boger her innate interest in colour, form, composition and – then – the object emerges.

Nevertheless, this comparison with Fuglevaag is not at all unimportant. Fuglevaag is a highly central figure in Norwegian artistic life both because of her work as an artist and also her influence on the development and positioning of textile art in Norway. She studied at the Norwegian National Academy of Craft and Art Industry (SHKS), specialising in the textile line, for almost ten years before Boger studied there in 1969–1974. Fuglevaag then taught from 1972 onwards and was head of department for the textile line in the 1973–1980 period, partially overlapping the time Boger studied there. Among her fellow teachers Fuglevaag had Jessen. Fuglevaag must have left her mark on the textile line and on SHKS, and Jessen undeniably did the same. There were also others there who were later to become central figures in Norwegian textile art: Bente Sætrang, with her gradually monumental textile works, was in the same class as Boger, and she testifies to the exceptionally powerful environment that had successfully been established around textile art at that time.

This environment had its origins in the experimental textile environment in Poland. After completing her studies at SHKS, Fuglevaag was awarded a Polish state scholarship. She continued her studies at the art academy in Warsaw until 1964, during which time she came into contact with the internationally prominent

textile environment in Poland. The impressions and experiences gained from this stay became the foundation stone of her career. Fuglevaag took these tendencies back to Norway with her and as such was one of those who brought Norway and its art education programmes up to date with the growth period international textile art enjoyed during the 1960s and 1970s. In Norway, it became clear that Fuglevaag's internationally inspired works broke with the more classical or established conceptions about what textile and pictorial weaving could be. The renewal of Norwegian textile and weaving practice was also closely linked to the Polish textile artist Magdalena Abakanowicz. Abakanowicz was one of Europe's leading textile artists, a professor at the art academy in Poznań and a world-famous artist, and she created vast textile sculptures. It is perhaps not so surprising that Sætrang studied under Abakanowicz in 1974. Boger too had a state scholarship in Poland, at the Art Academy in Łódź (1972–1973).

The international tendencies that renewed textile and textile art were in no way merely a reaction against the changed international politics and economic conditions linked to the production of textiles and clothing. It was rather a live, engaged environment, with a foothold in major social and societal changes, where works led to enthusiasm and discussion. Furthermore, as early as 1967, one of Jessen's colleagues from, among other things, the studio community PLUS, Turid Holter, became the first textile printer to be accepted at the Autumn Exhibition. It was during this period – as the recognised Norwegian art historian Gunnar Danbolt has pointed out – that primarily ornamental textile printing moved over into pictorial art. The importance of this period can therefore not be underestimated: it marked the beginning of viewing textile art as a fully-fledged art form in Norway.

It was midway between these two historical tendencies – politics and economics on the one hand and experimental artistic renewal on the other – that we find Boger's artistic activity and works. This field of intersection is broad, varied and pulls in various directions. For example, on the one hand there are the almost organic forms of Fuglevaag, such as her *Form I*, but also *Spindle* (1973), and on the other there are Jessen's more traditional decorative textiles and piece goods, including a dress from the end of the 1960s as well as her other decorative textiles such as *Oak Leaf* (1969) and *Leaf Moon* (1978).

This period of tension in the 1970s was apparently treated with composure by Boger. The works from this period show her clear preference for textile as a material and a production of high-quality textiles. The change in the direction of the more experimental sizes, mountings and, in particular, use of the materials came in gradual steps. In many ways, Boger thus has more in common with Jessen than Fuglevaag – with regard to the large textile surfaces and, to a slightly lesser extent, the stagings of the textile. So it comes as no surprise that Boger participated in a group exhibition at Kunstnerforbundet with Jessen, Sætrang and Irene Myran as early as in 1979, with the title *Four Textile Printers*.

If one looks at Boger's production as a whole, one can broadly speaking talk of three periods of groupings of her works: the early fabrics from which one could sew clothes made to measure, the piece goods and textiles as objects and, finally, the break away from the two-dimensional to the independent objects.

METRE BY METRE WITH PIECE GOODS

There are few accessible examples of Boger's blouses in cotton jersey or silk scarves from her early career and the Workshop sales in Gabels gate. One example is, however, reproduced in Boger's catalogue from 1996: a blouse in cotton jersey from 1983. Its simple form, with short raglan sleeves and elastic waistband, also has a dynamic cut at the neck which gives it an undeniably 1980s look. The raglan sleeves are dominated by yellow and black stripes, and these stripes are reproduced in elements on the front of the blouse. The basic red colour of the blouse creates life in the design, both by being more dynamic than the strong geometrical figures and by consciously displaying shades of colour, with shadings of the white ground colour with the red colour.

It is unfortunate that so few examples of Boger's blouses and silk scarves have been preserved, since they are interesting from an artistic and art-historical perspective – particularly in the light of fashion in the transitional period between the late 1970s and early 1980s. One could also have compared Boger's items of clothing with, among others, Jessen's dress from the late 1960s (Jessen's textile printing, not necessarily her incision and seam), with regard to fashion and design.

It would also have been interesting to take a closer look at piece goods from this early period if one had had more examples. Piece

goods are there to be used, to sew clothes or other things as needed and desired; one must not only be able to balance and create movement in the ornamental elements of textile printing but also be able to recreate the elements and construct a pattern that does not appear to be framed by or limited to the object itself. Piece goods are demanding work, requiring accuracy and attention from the textile printer, which makes this a highly revealing occupation.

If we are to choose something from this early period in Boger's career, we can do well to look more closely at a quite related but yet different type of work: a length of textile with stencil printing, *Untitled* (1976). While blouses or scarves have a highly specific intended use, something else applies to Boger's printed length of textile. In a sense, it is neither one thing nor the other, or perhaps it is both – both piece goods and a textile picture. In this example, we can see that both the left and right edges are dominated by figures of elephants of indigo blue, a figure that is found in the pattern repetition in the textile length, but now as red elephants with dots and blue elephants with dots, respectively. Here, the ends are concluded by blue and green strawberry plants at the bottom and blue trees at the top, and the fields thus in a way frame the textile rather with colour than with stencil printing. One could sew with some of it, but one could also use it as a cloth, curtain or textile picture for mounting on a wall.

Because of this, the size of the textile is of interest. It is neither insurmountably large or unusably small. The width is perhaps no more than 80 cm and as a whole it becomes quite human and practically handy. To make use of such a textile as a cloth or curtain is not only a practical possibility – it is directly practical. Such a textile requires fewer creative ideas by the customer to enable it to function in the home – or as piece goods, if one prefers. Even so, such a product requires the customer to be able to see the potential uses of the material and, in particular, to have the initiative to do something with it. It is not certain that this coincided with the expectations of customers of that age, and the value of such products can have been much lower than only a few decades earlier.

The craft skills required for this work of just under two metres must not be underestimated. With a sure hand and an eye for detail, Boger drew and made the templates and constructed the textile length, which, unlike piece goods pure and simple, allowed more variation in the design. At the same time, the length of textile is not

art, nor did Boger have the intention or ambition for it to convey any kind of message. Boger's silkscreen signature at the bottom end of the piece of textile, *RUNA BOGER drawing and printing*, is a clear indication of how she positioned herself in this exciting early textile landscape between piece goods and artistic expression. Even though the textile length is experienced less as traditional piece goods, technique and material are still placed higher than expression. Boger's work was still to a great extent based on the textile material and the craft processes involved.

TECHNIQUE, PROCESS, MATERIAL – AND EXPRESSION

If we move ten years forward, into the early 1990s, it is clear that Boger's works have assumed a completely different character. Like Jessen, Boger persisted with piece goods for several more years in the period up to the end of the 1970s, but gradually she wished to break away from what can be referred to as more traditional textile production and shift her interests in the direction of textile art. A number of her works from this period deserve to be mentioned and analysed, such as *Den sjelfulle skikkeligheta* (Soulful Propriety, 1985) and *Othos* (1987). *Den sjelfulle skikkeligheta* is a sizeable textile picture painted with indigosol vat dyes as technique and made to be mounted on a wall. The composition displays a somewhat bombastic armchair in rose and red, with a black cat cosily ensconced in it. The background is held in a more neutral grey colour, with yellow, blue, pink and rose dynamic elements placed beyond the picture surface. Boger made several works in the same series, with the chair centrally positioned in the picture surface and with various elements on and around the chair. *Othos*, on the other hand, is experienced as an object that can be placed on the floor and as a seat cushion. The cushion shows a single white building with two small, curved windows against an indigo-blue background. The ambiguity – with the cushion operating in the field of intersection between a utility item and an object – is present to a certain extent, even though *Othos* is without a doubt a floor cushion.

In other works, Boger embraces the potential of textile art to explore the expression, although it is evident that this was a process which Boger worked on over a period of time. In the light of this, her decorative assignments, which she mainly carried out in the 1980s, were important for her professional development. In 1976, Boger was awarded a State Establishment Grant, and from then on, she was active on the exhibition scene, but it is during the 1980s that her career and work apparently really got under way. The period

between the 1980s and 1990s appears to have been a particularly busy one for her. During this period, she received various stipends to further her work, and she participated in several group exhibitions and also had her own individual ones. In addition to this, she carried out large-scale decorative assignments, such as that at the County Council Hall in Vadsø (1987) and the Court Building in Hønefoss (1988).

During this period, Boger produced several large-scale works where she mainly used indigosol vat dyes, a technique she had learnt while studying and also used early on in her career. Using indigosol colours is a laborious printing method which requires recipes of pigment and chemicals and then development in sulphuric acid. The value of the process lies in the bright colours which the method can produce, something which Boger's works also testify to. This preferred technique and process made considerable demands of Boger – her studio reminds us of the physical work required for these decorative assignments and her works. It is a process that is complex and time-consuming and requires a lot of preliminary work. In the light of how comprehensive the process is – with printing, development, neutralisation, boiling and drying – it is even more striking how considerable Boger's production was during this period.

Thanks to her professional skill, Boger could steadily move in the direction of emphasising the expression rather than the technique and material. Her distinctive signature, which previously had been *RUNA BOGER drawing and printing*, gradually lost the 'drawing and printing' part and became *RUNA BOGER*. This small change is interesting, since it symbolises how Boger moved from one environment into another one, while still retaining her identity as a textile printer. She also found inspiration on a number of trips abroad, and her works have distinct figurative elements that can also have an ornamental appearance, even though the picture surface was constructed and balanced in a completely different way than in her production of piece goods. The *Tropical Suite* series (1990), which admittedly does not show either buildings or localities, stand out as a particularly important series in this period of Boger's career. Here we find larger elements – lemons or mangoes, for example – centrally positioned in the picture surface. The background is dominated by bright colours with shadings and stylised movements or patterns. The works of the *Tropical Suite* series are large and require a considerable amount of wall space and are thus imposing

in a completely different way than her earlier works were. We are approaching monumental works where Boger does not distance herself from taking up space and using the room in its totality. This is something we will also find in Boger's later works, after she dropped her whole name *RUNA BOGER* and started to sign her works with the initials *R.B.*

FROM THE FIGURATIVE TO THE NON-FIGURATIVE

Unlike textile artists such as Jessen and Sætrang, who shifted very quickly from emphasising technique and material to emphasising expression, this was a fairly lengthy process in Boger's work. Moreover, it is not the case that these three periods of Boger's career are clearly distinct from each other – that a work or a series was that which made the *big* difference. Nor do we see Boger's production as being in constant motion, with her clearly having challenged herself as a textile artist. The objects become larger, take up more space, are more advanced and detailed. They are also more playful, breaking with the strictly controlled and detail-conscious work mode that characterised Boger's early career. Wool stands out as being Boger's preferred material, with her also preferring woollen army blankets – textiles that are thicker and stronger and can put up with rougher treatment. Silk, on the other hand, is less in evidence at this stage – something which may be coincidence, but even so is a conscious choice. With the transition to wool, she leaves behind indigosol vat dyes and explores other methods and groups of dyes that are suitable for wool.

Well into the 2000s, Boger has undoubtedly become a mature textile artist. She has explored wool as a material in depth, has become more playful and experimental. She starts to work with the actual surface of the textile works but cuts the outermost surface of the wool so as to create movement and variation in the expression. She works on hand-dyeing and further processing, using brush, block print, monotype, hand stitch, for example, and on building up the picture surface with various elements, like a collage. Examples from this period include *Narjordet* (2010) and *Jomars låve* (Jomar's Barn, 2012). Initially, it seems as if Boger is also moving further away from the figurative, exploring to a greater extent the field of intersection between the non-figurative and abstract and the figurative. At the same time, one can see that her craft is still at full strength. In several of the works the elements have been painstakingly sewn together. The small, regular overcast stitches are precise, and they reveal Boger's thorough grounding in the textile discipline.

Furthermore, one can see that the balancing, structuring and meticulous designing of the visual expression – something which Boger has retained from her days as a textile printer – are still just as visible in the works.

In addition to *Tropical Suite*, which marks without a doubt an important anchorage in Boger's career, one should mention the series *City Lights* (2019). In one of these works, which were also exhibited at Galleri Format in 2019, we find a large, thick sailcloth canvas that almost completely retains its form as a stretched canvas, without requiring the frame of a conventional painting. The work is minimalistic to a much greater extent than earlier works. From an art-historical perspective, it is reminiscent of what could be called the textile artist's equivalent to works by Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt or Robert Morris. The almost three-metre-wide sailcloth canvas has been dyed with a lighter blue-green colour that is interrupted by three diagonal yellow-green stripes, placed slightly to the right in the composition. These stripes lie behind the central element, which is a collection of dark-blue geometrical elements, precisely grouped in a chevron pattern. The pattern creates its own movement in the composition, where in addition one of the simple elements is lacking in the top left corner – except for the fact that this single element has its position on the right-hand edge, jutting out of the large pattern. The dark-blue fields of wool have been glued to the canvas – which is also interesting, considering Boger's exploration of the material. By gluing them, the canvas becomes even stiffer – and even flatter.

It is natural to make various art-historical comparisons, but one must finally at any rate point to yet another artist who has been a stimulus for Boger's work and process. Eva Hesse's spatial installations are inspirational, and Boger has made it clear that exploring and studying Hesse's work has been a door-opener for a number of her own processes and works of art. The interaction with Hesse's works was mentioned in one of Boger's exhibition catalogues. Hilde Mortvedt writes that Boger's works are neither copies nor appropriations of Hesse's work, rather that they have come into being via encountering Hesse's motifs – a choice of motifs that accorded well with Boger's own. If this is the case, it is this choice of motifs and expression which in themselves have stimulated Boger. But approaching Hesse's mode of expression, which is rough, aggressive and inchoate, Boger has pushed herself out of her own frameworks and traditions and given herself new

possibilities for exploring textiles.

THE WAY AHEAD

Boger has moved forward in her career. In her present-day works, she has taken with her all of her professional textile background and the supreme competence she has acquired in the course of her long career as a textile artist. Apart from the textile professionalism and the high quality of these works, it is interesting to look at the actual expression. The ornamental and the figurative are becoming increasingly less prominent. Instead, she is concentrating more on investigating colour, form and expression. The large work *Red Forest* (2020) is an example of that. Consisting of 22 long strips of various qualities of fabric, dyed in deep red colours with a touch of violet, the almost four-metre-wide work is a playful presentation of both geometrical form and the picture of a forest. When one examines the picture surface, one no longer observes 22 strips but rather trunks of trees packed tightly together. One is suddenly in the forest, with some of the tree trunks closer than others. This play with depth is not dependent on them being tree trunks, but it seems natural to read the work in this way, because of its title.

The Variables, on the other hand, a series from 2022, has no figurative hooks on which to hang one's experience of the work. *The Variables* is precisely what it says – variables and variations on simple constructions of the picture surface, with horizontal, vertical and diagonal strips of wool and, in certain cases, cotton cloth. Here Boger explores the very structure and juxtaposition of colours. The interaction between the various elements creates great variations between the works. Each variable is also considerably smaller than the large works she produced from the 1980s onwards. The incredibly time-consuming work with hand-dyeing enormous textiles has been replaced by far more manageable dimensions and involvement.

These small works are no less dynamic and interesting. In the first variables, Boger explores strong compositions of colours such as red, black, yellow, green and blue, while in the later works she has chosen to use white. White is a particularly awkward colour to work with, and it requires a great deal to create a dynamic picture surface and variation and to balance it. The difficult interaction between the extremely matt wool and the flat white colour challenges Boger. Once again, we see how Boger goes into the textile material so as to spread it out and pull it in various directions which we find

completely unexpected and do not believe are possible. At the same time, she is still completely bound to the textile. What we see here is the full breadth of Boger's artistic skill as a textile artist. This is not a turning point in a long career. These latest works testify rather to how Boger seeks out challenges to work her way into the textile as artistic material.

Now, in 2023, that Boger is perhaps going to have to leave her municipal studio, it is conceivable that her books of recipes and notes will have to be cleared away. Safely rolled-up works and lengths of textiles must be taken down or brought out. Sketches and leftover pieces must be taken out of their well-secured storage boxes. Practically an entire life as an artist will have to be pulled up by the roots. It will be exciting to see where this artistic career will now find a foothold, where and how Boger will continue her work. It is improbable that she will go back in time, back to piece goods. It is more likely that we can expect an interesting period where Boger challenges herself and textiles as a material yet one more time and takes us, as onlookers, further along her journey into the possibilities on offer in textile art.

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