

KAROLIINA HELLBERG

Knot

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Karoliina Hellberg's paintings are rich in detail, employing colour intensely, sensitively and in an explicitly sensuous manner. To step into her solo exhibition *Knot* is to step into world of her paintings, as the elements of her works on paper and in oils flow into their surrounding space in the form of glass sculptures, wallpapers and a scent of lilacs delicately wafting in the air.

The works of the exhibition revolve around three themes: real and imagined places, erotic rococo and knotted braids and weaves of various kinds. Richly detailed interiors and luxuriant gardens are still the main subjects of Hellberg's paintings. They are structures with which she studies, for example, time, which does not proceed in a linear fashion in painting. Along with the scent of lilac, there is also an enigmatic feeling of memory in the air, layers of time attached to spaces and objects. In addition to past events, meetings, memories and secrets, they arouse expectations of what might happen or serve as reminders of what was never allowed to happen. By painting, Hellberg restructures and reorganises time – interweaving new layers into it and taking apart others to create weaves of concentrated moods and meaning from things that are of both an everyday and a special nature.

Certain details reoccur in the carefully considered exhibition: candles, lush hedges, lupines, small violets, and *putto* figures. Hellberg's interest in rococo imagery is reflected by the mischievous *putti* in her works on paper and for example features such as glass strawberries alluding to the still-lives of Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin. With regard to rococo, Hellberg is fascinated by its visual motifs and the levity, sensuality and mischievousness associated with them but also by its more sombre tones: the fears and things that are repressed underlying all that is beautiful and frivolous. Both are equally true for the artist.

The new aspect of Hellberg's work consists of various knots and weaves, as indicated in the title of the exhibition. They appear in the paintings and on lithographically printed wallpaper as forms resembling nets and basketry but, seen in broader terms, weaves are also created in the paintings by the grids of tiles on walls, the rhythm of staircases leading from one space to another and endlessly overlapping water lily pads.

The knots also have a thematic and methodological meaning. They can both prevent and permit movement forward. In order to be able to use a given knot, it is necessary to practise making it, to repeat its tying and untying, and to recognise and learn its logic. By the same token, painterly thinking is the tying and untying of increasingly skilful knots, finding a way into the painting and back.

Karoliina Hellberg (born 1987) graduated as Master of Fine Arts from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2015. She has held solo exhibitions at the Didrichsen Art Museum in Helsinki (2019), the Finnish Institute in St Petersburg (2017), HAM Gallery in Helsinki (2016) and Galerie Anhava in Helsinki (2016). In recent years, her works have also been on show at, among other venues, the CHART Art Fair in Copenhagen (2018), Galleri Kant in Copenhagen (2018), the Kuopio Art Museum in Finland (2018), the Finnish Institute in Stockholm (2017) and Galleri Elverket of the Pro Artibus Foundation in Tammisaari (2016–2017). In 2018, Karoliina Hellberg received the Didrichsen Art Museum's Pro Arte award. Works by her have been acquired for the collections of the Saastamoinen Foundation, the Päivi and Paavo Lipponen Foundation and HAM Helsinki Art Museum, among others, in addition to private collections in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the United States.

Sanna Lipponen