



The catalogue-cover and opening-invitation for the exhibition. Photo: Ian Hobbs.

Emelie Rëndahl's solo exhibition *Grounded Theory/Crying with Soft Eyes* at K.A. Almgren Silkmuseum (Sidenväveri & Museum) in Stockholm was exhibited between November 11, 2017 and January 13, 2018. Museum director Jan Lindo gave an opening talk on the history on the museum and made a connection to the works exhibited. Annika Ekdahl tapestry weaver and former honorary Professor gave an opening talk and wrote a text in the catalogue, which will be quoted in the end of this text.

The works displayed included:

Child Picking Cotton in Uzbekistan (2017), hand woven rya tapestry

At the Shore of Amygdala (Seeing What I Want to See), (2015), hand woven rya tapestry
Rana Plaza – the Collapse (April 24th 2013) (2015-2016), hand woven rya tapestry
Sewing Machine (2017), hand woven rya tapestry
Display (unfinished) (2016-), hand woven rya tapestry
Pixel of a pixel of a pixel (2017), digital projection on wall

All works are hand-woven rya tapestries made by me, Emelie Røndahl, except from *Pixel of a pixel of a pixel*, which is a projection of the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013.

The work *Child picking cotton in Uzbekistan* is described by me as forced labour embedded in wool, where the “sketch” is printed out from the first google search hit on a specific day, by entering the words “child picking cotton in uzbekistan” after coming across the fact that most cotton in the textile industry originates from Uzbekistan. The same method was used for the earlier work *Rana Plaza – the Collapse*, by entering the words “rana plaza disaster”. Hours spent with these pictures by the loom have left me with feelings of sadness as well as questioning ethical concerns about my decision to choose this picture and theme.

Holding a solo exhibition in a place such as the K.A. Almgren Silk Museum is relevant for me because of the museum’s connection to the textile industry and the circumstances of historical textile labour. Almgren’s silk weaving mill was Scandinavia’s largest workplace for women for several decades and is today one of Scandinavia’s oldest preserved industrial environments.

In my own Artist Statement, printed in the catalogue, I write:

I weave because I can, because it must be done. My knowledge creates presence and establishes relationships; my motivation is recognition as a phenomenon, to capture the viewer’s attention and provoke a hidden longing for putting fingers into stuff you cannot see the end of.

The seriality of the sad and droopy threads, and the one-to-one ratio in the warp, form a platform on which I can see into the near future. The DNA of my ryas traces back to the DNA of the fishermen’s ryas that covered their bodies out on the deep and dangerous oceans. Weaving deals with the prevention of death.

Tapestry weaver Annika Ekdahl writes in her catalogue text:

Emelie says she weaves because she has to. I believe her. I also think she weaves rya because she understands that innovative thinking and experimental courage does not necessarily require new materials or techniques. Among all the limitless textile

possibilities, Emelie has identified a technique that can visualize her ideas and carry her stories. The cotton picking boy in Uzbekistan will never know that a Swedish artist spent months weaving him. But he will disturb the viewer's romanticization of the textile context.

My choice of working with a traditional technique, in a traditional manner, is a way for me to connect to the past, and use the fuel created from that connection to encourage us to see links between materials and labour. The rya rug was initially a part of bedding, providing warmth during sleep, and I am drawn to the idea of tying those (different) sides of world and life together.



Installation view with *Child Picking Cotton in Uzbekistan*. Photo: Emelie Røndahl



Installation view with *Pixel of a pixel of a pixel*. Photo: Emelie Røndahl



Installation view with *Rana Plaza – the Collapse (April 24th 2013)*. Photo: Emelie Røndahl



Close-up on *Rana Plaza – the Collapse* (April 24th 2013). Photo: Emelie Røndahl.