TRANSLATING THE WILDERNESS

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ABSTRACT

I weave figurative tapestries, working with themes regarding our relationship to the wild, both in nature and ourselves. I dye my yarns with mushrooms and plants I pick in the forest. I go through this trouble because I want the material to carry a story within itself, I see it as giving it life. This method makes the work divided in three main steps: the foraging, the dyeing, and the weaving.

Research questions

- How can you use natural dyes as storytelling?

- How does the method intensify the image?

- How can craft be used as a way of widening our relationship to nature?

Key words
Natural dyes, Tapestry weaving, Forest, Nature, Religion
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PROLOGUE

My brothers convinced me I was a troll.

As a joke inspired by a myth about how trolls would swap their babies with human newborns.
Their real sweet sister was out in the forest with a troll family
and they were stuck with me.

I came to identify with this story.
Me, the messy, rowdy, dirty kid – of course I was a troll!
I would stare deep into the forest from the backseat of the car
looking for my true family
longing for them.

They wouldn’t dress me up in pretty dresses
And then get mad when they got torn,
they wouldn’t force me to go inside as soon as it got dark
or get nervous when I climbed to high up the tree
or played too rough with the dog.

They would let me be – me, free.

Image 1. The Troll Mother Seeks a Wife (Bauer, John 1915)
INTRODUCTION

Even if the woods often have been seen as something frightening or dangerous, it also carries this notion of freedom. It is a place to hide from the civil world’s requirements, a place to rebel. The wandering into the wild in order to get away from society and find freedom has been a theme for books and movies, such as Walden¹ and Into the Wild² and there have been descriptions of “wood-men” in Swedish documents from the 17th century. It was mostly not, as you would think, outsiders that where criminal or homeless who went to hide in the forest but rather people from wealthy families that have gotten tired of civilization and longed for a deeper meaning in the woods.³

Zoochosis – a term used to describe physical diseases or abnormal behavior in captivated animals, that because life in a cage differs so much from their natural habitat it causes stress.³ Isn’t this what many of us are experiencing? Isn’t our environment quite cage like?

So, I wander out into the woods, my natural habitat, position myself in the damp moss and breathe, waiting for the feeling of freedom to come. This is what I’ve been told to do but it just doesn’t work. I feel frustrated by how connecting to nature is often described as so passive. It always comes down to you sitting on the ground meditating. Does presence require passiveness? In our wealthy age nature has become something spiritual, a ritual you preform, somewhere to contemplate, relax. Nature used to be our place to work, to fight, to live. Of course, it was also a place for rituals and ceremonies, but that wasn’t all. We are reducing it to only that.

₁ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the woods*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854


This frustration is also present in my relation to craft. It is often described as meditative, as if making is an act of relaxation. I don’t recognize this, when I work in the loom, which can be seen as calm labor, I fight with the warp, I sigh and curse, it’s a struggle, and that makes me more invested.

To activate myself in the forest – I become a gatherer, and since I am a weaver, I gather organisms to dye my yarns with. The hunt leads me outside the walked paths, it puts me in this trance like state where I suddenly realize – I am totally exhausted. This is when nature hits me, this is when the woods swallow me. These are feelings that I am not able to articulate so I will not. I will just mention that it gives me an experience and I use the language of weaving to talk about it rather than words.
Most Nordic descriptions of dyeing came in the 18’th century, the chemical dyes were discovered during the first half of the 19’th century. Before that, according to record, we mostly imported either pigments or already dyed fabrics. Since the chemical dyes came, they’ve been dominating the industry, they are much more controllable, have more vivid colors and are understandable to mankind, whereas plants are still somewhat of a mystery, or at least components of it.

Mushrooms are an even bigger mystery. Though there’s been some old recipes using lichen, most of the mushrooms used for dyeing today began their history in the 70’s, Combining that with the fact that new fungi emerge every day, it is certainly a field that is open to a lot of exploring.

When I’m out hunting, I look for both mushrooms that I know from reading is able to dye textiles and also for species that look like they could contain some pigments or are similar to ones I know do. Once in the dye lab I experiment with different techniques and PH-values in order to achieve the most vivid color. Most of the time it turns out beige.

Because this project is not only about dyeing with natural pigments, but also about finding the actual plants which you extract the pigment from, the local knowledge becomes important. I have searched for information from different Facebook groups, discussion forums and recipe books, both old and modern ones.

4 Carla & Erik Sundström, Färga med svampar. Västerås: ICA bokförlag, 1983. p.10
5 Carla & Erik Sundström, Färga med svampar. p.11
Me and my dog, Ior, walk off the bus. We cross a busy road and head for the tall trees beyond a few houses. A school. A church. A group home.

I unleash Ior, He runs away, further, and further in between the trees, until he is out of sight. After a while I see him up on a hill, jumping between the rocks with his tail wagging. He sees me and skips towards me, stops, and looks into my eyes with a smile, I imagine him saying thank you.

I had spotted a lake on the GPS and we walk towards it. I’ve noticed that taking a swim the first thing I do helps my mood. I can sometimes get grumpy, I’m not used to being without distractions, it isn’t always uplifting, although necessary.

As the degrees dropped the swimming eventually became more of a quick dip, but the colder it gets the more effect it gives. It’s such a kick, sitting naked on a rock in November, not cold at all. I guess it’s adrenaline, your body gets warm and your mind focused, you’re present. This is my greeting ritual - receiving a hug from the landscape.

Now I have focus, now I have mushroom-gaze. Eyes on the ground, zooming in, zooming out. Small orange mushroom-gaze, big brown mushroom-gaze, blueberry-gaze. Somedays I fill a whole camper backpack (a huge one), must have been 20 kilos in there once. Somedays I eventually give up and start to pick berries instead.
I have realized, working with this project, that religion, or spirituality, is something that is hard to ignore regarding nature. The relation I, and many with me, have to the forest, is easily read as spiritual – although also deeply bodily - which can be seen as a contradiction. In *Granskogsfolk* (2020) (translates to spruce forest people) religion historian David Thurfjell writes about Swede’s relation to the forest, seen from a theological viewpoint. It has been a great source in understanding my own relationship to the forest, which is also the relationship many of us north Europeans have. We tend to have a very spiritual bond with the woods, treating it as a church. It is often said that Sweden is the most secularized country in the world and the replacement for Christianity is for many people nature.6

One could argue that this is maybe not a secularization, it is more of a rejection of the institution church and a move backwards to our type of spirituality we had before the missioning of Sweden began. Maybe Christianity never really fitted us since it came from someone else’s landscape and culture – we are very far away from Jerusalem, whereas the old myths took place in our back yard, perhaps resulting in a stronger bond with them.

A Roman historian Tacitus, born in the year 55, visited northern Europe and he described it as a culture that lived very close to nature, we did not build cities or temples, we used the forest for rituals7. We charged different natural environments with spiritual meaning and the plants or animals taken from those places were highly valued. Of course, he would probably have said the same about any pre-civilization, but still, it could be a clue to understand the obsession with the outdoors that many people experience in this part of the world.

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6 Thurfjell, *Granskogsfolk*, p. 209
7 Thurfjell, *Granskogsfolk*, p.80
Although we have lived many centuries with Christianity, both in its Catholic and Protestant form, there are still traces left from the time before Scandinavia were missionized. Old myths regarding spirits or creatures living in the forest are still told (like the one about the troll baby in my prolog), although mostly as fairytales to children rather than phenomena you need to relate to, by avoiding them or pleasing them, as it seems to have been in earlier times. But above all, we still have a deep longing for the outdoors in us, of connecting to nature.

I go into the woods
Hoping that a bear takes me home
Somewhere calm
Somewhere quiet
Big fury arms around me
The spot where I last year found my only Cortinarius sanguineus, a small mushroom full of red pigments, is no longer the same. The whole forest now looks like this:

Image 3. My friends are killed!
There is a big difference between how the Swedes feel towards the forest and how we take care of it - *We are ruining our temples.*

The method of the Swedish forest industries is simple; cut down all the trees in an area, the big ones become lumber and the small ones goes to the paper industry. When an area is empty you prepare the soil and plant new trees.  

The problem with this is that it destroys the living ecosystem of the place, the forest is more than the trees, it’s also the microorganism such as moss, lichen, insects and mushrooms. The new trees are usually of the same species, and are planted very close to each other, ending up with dark landscapes with straight lines of identical trees of the same age.  

Not really a forest anymore, more of a plantation. For the ecosystem to work at its best it demands a varied environment, with old and new trees of different species, space for the light to shine through and dead trees on the ground contributing to the *circle of life.*

In this context, I also feel I need to address *beauty,* the sublime forest, the origin of so much art, poetry, and music. Our church, our God, our mother, we cannot kill her and replace her with straight lines of monocultures.

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9 Röslund, *Skogslandet: En granskning.* p.18
Also, a more concrete reason; it has a huge effect on our ability to reach the climate goals we have signed. Much like the rainforest, our Nordic forests serves as a natural carbon sink, the trees capture carbon dioxide, so we really need those trees to stay put. Today, we are no better than Bolsonaro, and the EU are constantly on our back about how we mistreat our forests.  

2000 Swedish species are endangered due to the current methods the industry use. The interests of the landowners and the forest is opposite, you make more money the tighter the trees grow but many species need light and continuity to grow. This is the type of habitat my favorite dye mushrooms also demand. Sarcodon squamosus (Motaggsvamp, blue color) and different types of Cortinarius (spindlingar, ex. red, orange). Luckily for me, Stockholm is full of nature preserves that are protected from this kind of commercial cynicism. Motaggsvamp is even listed as close to endangered, it needs old pine trees to grow, and the trees die younger and younger in the Swedish “freedom under responsibility” managed forest industry. For me that is shocking since in the forests where I mostly walk they are everywhere.

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10 Röslund, Skogslandet: En granskning, p.18
11 Röslund, Skogslandet: En granskning, p.15
- A word impossible to put your finger on. I will let a quote by the Swedish political scientist Bo Rothstein phrase it

*While mountains are geological phenomenon’s, trees botanical phenomenon’s and birds zoological phenomenon’s, nature is a linguistic phenomenon.*

By forcing nature into linguistics, we simplify it. Horkheimer and Adorno blames the enlightenment for this. In its pursuit to explain and control everything, the things which do not fit into this framework becomes the *other*. Nature, or at least the complexity that is nature, does not fit in to this formula, therefore we need to reduce it to something manageable, manipulatable, resulting in the *disenchantment of the world*. Making us only see nature as something to control and use to fulfill our needs. It goes from being a mythical place that we admit us inferior to, to a reduced version that fits in the scientific framework. But somehow it seems impossible to talk about the forest, nature or even the earth without acknowledging the sublimeness of it, the spirit, the soul.

The Romantics glorified nature, or rather romanticized it, referring to it, in its “natural” state, as *Eden*. That there once was an innocent, harmonious nature that society has ruined. It put a large distinction between nature and culture and therefore also makes it in to *other*. But is it possible to get rid of this *otherness*? It is hard to deny that the experience of walking in the forest compared to the street *is* different. The sublime – this overwhelming feeling, is more commonly described regarding the “natural” outdoors, a stormy ocean, a tall mountain, or a dramatic landscape.

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15 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Upplysningens dialektik*. p. 17 (a formulation made famous by Max Weber)
16 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Upplysningens dialektik*. p. 22
Slavoj Zizek, philosopher/psychoanalyst/Marxist/icon, has some interesting thoughts regarding ecology, calling mother nature a *dirty bitch*\(^{18}\). Basically, what he is saying is that nature has never been harmonious and balanced to begin with, this earth has been through multiple catastrophes far worse than what we are about to face. That to view the climate change as a catastrophe is human centered, that just because it will no longer fulfill *our* needs, it would be destroyed? The most respectful thing towards nature we could do is just to sit back and let the catastrophe happen, the earth can handle it, although *we* won’t. We don’t fear climate change because we care about *nature*, we care about *ourselves*. The reason for stopping this situation is not to save the planet, it is to save us, or, to begin with, save us from all the violence, injustice and suffering this will lead to.

The term *Deep adaptation*, introduced by James Bendell\(^{19}\), is used to discuss the case that we need to admit the climate changes and prepare ourselves for a catastrophe. We have to start having discussions about what types of changes we have to make in our ways of living, not only to prevent climate change, but to deal with the consequences of it - what would life be like in that world?

Maybe admitting the apocalypse doesn’t have to be so terrifying? Shouldn’t we be able to find some meaning in living a simpler life? Maybe it’s not only a sacrifice we make but a salvation? I’m a person who often wishes I was living in the Stone Age, so I have no problem at all seeing the benefits from re-wilding\(^{20}\) us humans, but for someone who might struggle, one could try to trigger the beauty in the alternative and art is the obvious tool for that.

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\(^{18}\) *Slavoj Zizek — Mother Nature is a dirty b****! [online video], The Radical Revolution, 14 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75_nisowGX8>, accessed 10 February 2023*

\(^{19}\) *James Bendell, "Deep adaptation: a map for navigating climate tragedy". University of Cumbria. Archived from the original on 8 May 2020. Retrieved 8 October 2021 (PS: This essay is not peer reviewed but is of interest not due to its accuracy but to its popularity, it has had a major spread outside of academia and an impact on the debate.)*

\(^{20}\) A term used to describe projects of rewilding domesticated animals ex. https://rewildingeurope.com
I’m reading the book *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Kimmel, who is a biologist but also brings a more philosophical viewpoint to the subject through her traditions as native American. One passage stuck with me extra; as a teacher she asked her student whether they thought the earth loved them back, to which she got no response.\textsuperscript{21} This is a question that seems far away, we only learn that we cause this world harm. Throughout the book she gives us different examples of how nature rely on our care, like how ash trees declined in population as the tradition of basket weaving faded away, they reduced in numbers not by overharvesting but underharvesting.\textsuperscript{22} Or an experiment with sweetgrass, plucking one plant carefully, one carelessly and one not at all, the latter died while the first two thrived.\textsuperscript{23}

I am told by a classmate that the trees don’t like it when I hug them, they absolutely hate it. But maybe the mycelia are grateful that I pluck their fruits, why else would they be so beautiful and appealing? No matter what it is an important lesson to learn, nature takes care of us and we take care of nature, although we’re currently doing a shitty job. We have a relationship, it’s not one sided, it makes me feel more welcome in the woods.

\textsuperscript{22} Kimmerer, *Braiding sweetgrass*. p. 149
\textsuperscript{23} Kimmerer, *Braiding sweetgrass*. p. 136
During this project the imagery has been largely decided based on what colors I have collected, you could say that it has been a collaboration with nature. The first time I managed to achieve a blueish color I knew I had to make a Mother Mary and weaving an image in spring forced me to work with yellows and greens, as those are the colors available in that season.

I am a sucker for bright hues and one thing that has been important during dyeing has been to work against the typical aesthetics of natural dyes. It can easily fall into either one of two categories – The 70’s vibe with the dull brown, oranges and yellows or the more current bleak pastels, that might give the viewer the impression that only synthetic dyed fabrics can be colorful.

My aim is usually to produce the brightest possible color, after that I continue to drag out all the pigments from the bath, some dyes produce a fading color palette while some shift in color as the bath gets older. Once I’m in the weaving phase the dying tends to get more experimental as I must try out different overdyes to be able to produce the right hue, maybe as a result of running out of a color or a lack of a specific nuance. Usually, it is the most muted anonymous colors I’ve put the most amount of time on, attempting to recreate the right hue of a grey sky, a shadow or muddy water.
The first snow came mid-November, that was my cue that it was time to go inside. I had decided that I wanted my last piece to be monumental, something that is bigger than the viewer, it should overwhelm them, swallow them. Le Corbusier called tapestry a “nomadic mural” 24 and I want to embrace that. A piece that can fill a whole wall and have a dramatic impact and then be rolled up and carried away, there is something powerful about that.

I decided on the scale 200x370 cm, which meant I had to rebuild my loom. I had bought a simple standing tapestry loom that I used as a base and made new, longer beams for it. The result wasn’t very stable, but it served its purpose, I just had to retighten the threads now and then. I put a sketch behind the warp and started weaving. Back and forth, thin shapes, wide shapes, plucking until my fingers bled. If the beating in a cloth loom is the rhythm, plucking a tapestry is the melody.

I have heard many tapestry weavers talk about the resemblance between painting and weaving 25, I would say it’s more like sculpting or building, the image is built from the bottom up, and the technique I use, that leaves open slits, allows me to work on one shape at a time, where as if I would join the borders of the shapes as I weave, I would have to build the image up one line at a time.


Many people say “I don’t have the patience to weave tapestries”, implying that my patience would be better than others, which for me, and people who knows me, is absurd. I have said the same thing many times myself before I tried weaving tapestries - *I could never do that, it doesn’t suit my tempo, I’m too restless for that pace*. The first time I sat down to weave this manner a few years ago I was surprised – this suited me perfect!

I discovered that for me it was actually the opposite. In tapestry I get a constant gratification, in one day maybe I’ve woven a bird, a flower and a claw, whereas one days work weaving cloth maybe results in a 1/10nth of a fabric, a constant repetition, often every cm looks pretty much the same as the last, the kick only comes once you finish the weave, for me this requires more patience. Not to mention all the planning and counting if you work with binding, in the tapestry the basic technique is simple, plain weave and back and forth, it’s perfectly logical which allows you to work very intuitively and direct.

Although I wouldn’t say you need more patience to weave a tapestry you definitely need more time. I spend about 3–6 months on each weave, or rather *with* each weave. This is, I think, a reason why tapestries often become so personal. After such a long time the work naturally becomes a part of you, you can’t keep distance to something your eyes and hands are glued to for that many hours. Clues about the time you weaved it in appear in the fabric.

![Image 6](Image6.jpg)

*Image 6. After Russia invaded Ukraine, a raven appeared on the weave.*
I tend to make self-portraits. When the weave becomes you, you can no longer hide behind it and you might as well make it official. I treat my weaves like a diary, I weave my thoughts and feelings. The imagery is charged with emotions and the colors with memories. Like that summer night walk with my seven-year-old niece where she helped me pick reeds, on the way there she saw her first snake and we still talk about it. I weave a snake with the reed-dyed green yarn to make sure we remember.

The image becomes a composition of different symbols or characters from a mashup of interests. It is more about creating a world that is mutual for all the weaves, than telling a single story within one image. I like to work with clichés, what is the most obvious way to portray a fire? a tree? A snake? A God? Exhaustion? Desire? Objects with a lot of symbolism can often be read in many ways, allowing the viewer to pick up on what suits the mood at the time. I like to think of my work as pop songs or love poems, something generic that you can provoke your own emotions on to.

Saying so much that, in the end, it says nothing at all? This seems to be a known truth and something I worry about often, is it all too much? Is it possible to feel anything when there is a constant pulling in another direction? I’m not sure but personally I like that it is relatable in many different moods or states. Again, I wonder if it has to do with the time spent behind every weave? I started sketching for the big piece in the summer, concerned about labor, working a heavy full-time job and the boredom that comes with that. At that time it was a piece about the discomfort of living in a civilization, far away from our instincts and inner animal. This is still the overall theme though it has come to talk about more concrete issues over time. I have also been able to mirage myself on it while consumed with thoughts on addiction or codependency, bodily pains, or a longing for salvation.
MAKING MY IMAGE

A blurry image of a posture appeared in my mind. I concluded, due to the float of the clothes on the body, that she was in water. The posture aligned with the march of progress images that we all are so used to seeing, where the monkey transforms into a man, my favorite is the body right before we walked upright. The arms are longer, and the back hunched. I made a first drawing.

The frame looked like someone with big tits swimming, so I gave her a bikini and a French manicure

I had access to a canoe one night and I took it out for a ride. Paddled in between the reed to study what plants were growing in there and how. Picked up some underwater stems to examine how the leaves grew on them, what hue they were and how they floated in the water. I am aware that my style is simplistic, so I won’t portray them realistic, but I still want to understand it.
After that I went to Spain to attend my brother's wedding, there was a pool connected to the apartment I stayed in, so I decided to try out movements in the water. I had this idea that instead of her walking, maybe she should swim, but in a way dogs and babies' swim. Like how you would swim if you never learned how to. So, I spent a day dog paddling, it was hard. I tried to feel how my body was moving, where the left arm was as the right leg pushed back and so on, took breaks out of the water to draw what it felt like my body was doing.

I preferred the hunchback in the previous ones. Time to put some extra attention into the details. Making the vegetation more of ornaments and letting her have at least some stability.
I love ornamenting my pieces, to organize the imagery in a way that works to frame and highlight certain parts of the image. I am sculpting nature rather than portraying it, how romantic of me, othering it. I could say that it underlines the human need for categorizing nature, I could also just say that I do it for the beauty. Adolf Loos called ornaments vulgar and primitive\textsuperscript{26}, and those are my ideals.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image10.png}
\caption{Almost ready}
\end{figure}

I also gave her a fish head, she was too pretty. I thought it gave some humor to the image, like she is lurking in the water, playing a character. It is also a clear visualization of being out of your element. After some sample weaving, measuring, weighing and calculating I realized I did not have enough red yarn for the frame, and winter was here = no more mushrooms. I had to make a new one, this is what I decided on:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{26} Marit Paasche, \textit{Hannah Ryggen: Threads of Defiance}. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019, p. 213
\end{quote}
I’m usually more spontaneous when it comes to weaving, but the pressure of this being the last piece during my masters and a previous failure made me decide to be very prepared for this one. A decision I now might regret, the weaving easily gets quite boring, I feel just like a machine, It’s like I’m doing a commission for myself. The personal reflections I previously clamed appear in the loom, now happened mostly during the sketching phase. I’m worried this might affect in the result, that I didn’t manage to bring it to life. However, this is a good experience and a lesson learned.
CONCLUSION

I now have, for the past 2 years intensified my own relationship to the wild, and by doing that, to some degree reconnected with the wild within myself. I have not yet found an answer to the question whether this is transferable to the viewer, a question I don’t expect to get a clear answer to. In this text I have written about the dichotomy between human/nature, from different viewpoints and about how spirituality and religion play a big role in this relationship.

With these questions in the back of my mind I have gathered numerous organisms to dye wool yarns with. The material ended up in three tapestries, two smaller ones and one massive one. I have not yet decided if I will show all three of them or just the latest big one. Regardless of the number of weaves, the finished work will be shown in a matter that flirts with a sacred expression and I aim to make the viewer feel inferior to it, the same way you would viewing a dramatic landscape.

xoxo
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Slavoj Zizek — *Mother Nature is a dirty b****!* [online video], The Radical Revolution, 14 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75_nisowGX8>, accessed 10 February 2023

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Image References

Image 1. Bauer, John, *The Trollmother seeks a wife* [painting, 1915](http://www.johnbauersmuseum.nu/konst-6/).[1/5-2022]


Image 3. Englund, Lisa, *My Friends are killed!* (20/8-2022)


Image 5. Englund, Lisa, *Cortinarius semisanguineus* (*Rödskivig kanelspindling*) (18/10-2022)

Image 6: Englund, Lisa, *After Russia invaded Ukraine, a raven appeared on the weave* (22/3-2022)

Image 7: Englund, Lisa, *First sketch* (12/7-2022)

Image 8: Englund, Lisa, *First color plan* (27/7-2022)

Image 9: Englund, Lisa, *She has swum into deeper water* (8/10-2022)


Image 11: Englund, Lisa, *Final sketch* (23/11-2022)
APPENDIX
— final thought after the exhibition

For the exhibition I decided to only show the final piece, which I call Träskmarschen (The swamp march). It took me some time to come up with a title. From the beginning I knew I wanted to use the word march in it, as my initial inspiration for the posture came from “the march of progress”. I also like the word as it suggests some kind of mission, maybe even a forced one, it’s not a stroll or a walk, it is more dramatic than that.

I tried to put a lot of extra time on finishing the weave, which I’m often too lazy to do. I retightened it by pulling the warp threads and nailing them on to a particle board, when it was tight I could alter areas that was wobbly (to a certain extent, many places was impossible to move), this was a relief, as the wobbliness of my homebuilt loom made some errors in the final result.

Because of the gaps in the piece, I couldn’t properly reinforce the piece by sewing on a liner on the backside of the piece, ideally I should have made it at least ¼ of the piece, I could only do about 40 cm. I sewed it on the warp threads in a zigzag pattern, letting the weight be distributed across the top pf the weave. In the lining I sewed on a wooden beam that would fit perfectly in the mounting system. This method allowed a very easy hanging, just a few screws and not so much need for measuring and adjustments.

For spring exhibition, I was placed in A5 together with 4 other students. Our room turned out nice, the curators did a great job with pairing us up, as we, in my opinion, played off each other very well. My spot was under a roof window which emphasized the streams of light on the weave, for this reason I decided not to put any access light on it.
I showed the final piece together with a bench in front of it. I wanted to invite the viewer to have a longer look at it. To sit and view the piece in silence, how you would sit down outside to look at the view. This was also an opportunity to bring in some connotations to the church. For the design of the bench, I looked at old church benches and made a more scaled down version of it, removing the back rest and simplifying the ornament. I painted it with the remains of the iron bath I’ve used throughout the project to darken my dyes. This resulted in a dark brown polish. Later on, I coated it with another layer and the bench turned black, this suited the room, as two of the other artists in the room had black wooden parts of their work.

Overall, I was happy with the result, the weave continued to be perceived as big, which I wasn’t sure of as the rooms at Konstfack tends to eat up many works. I have a lot of experience of making works that look big in the workplace that then disappear when hung on the large walls of the school. For me the hanging was an easy experience as it was very straightforward, it was just about letting the work shine and not to make an exciting or new type of mounting.

At the examination I had Åsa Elzén as an opponent and I really enjoyed our talk. One thing that stuck with me is the idea of weaving side panels for it, turning it in to a triptych. My initial idea was to use the previous weaves in that manner, but as soon as I took out the final weave out of the loom, I realized that this wasn’t possible, in my head the difference in height between the them one was much smaller. In reality they were almost half the size and the balance wouldn’t work. For the future I’m excited to make new ones, they don’t need to be as full of information as the main one but just something to frame it and to further emphasize the religious vibe of it.

Beside this, I am eager to become a better dyer of cellulose fibers. Using natural dyes on linen and cotton can be difficult, it doesn’t stick as well as on animal fibers. The coming season I will try to use the pigment that I’ve found during this project on linen and see if it is possible to achieve a somewhat vibrant color on it. After this huge piece I am probably going to go down in size quite dramatically. As this piece took me a year I have collected many images in my mind that I want to realize and this needs to be done in a faster pace. I’m looking forward to working in a more manageable size, where I can have more control over the outcome.
Träskmarschen, photo by Barthélémy Garcia (30/3-2023)