

I Inherited a Forest
Monica Förster



Ogeborg

I inherited a forest

I never wanted to come here
always longed to get away
As soon as I could
I traveled out into the world
and when I got home it wasn't
voluntarily but reluctantly

But my father died
and I inherited a forest
it drew me here again
to the mountains, the colors and the shapes
now I won't come home
reluctantly but voluntarily



Stockholm was my world – and then it was Dorotea

My parents lived on Östgötagatan on the island of Södermalm in Stockholm when I was born.

That's where I learned to read and to dance ballet.

It's where my friends were, my whole world.

When I was eight years old, my parents took over the Dorotea hotel and restaurant, and we moved here, to my mother's home turf. But I never wanted to come here; I never wanted to live here. In Dorotea, people called out, "You and I are fourth cousins!" but I didn't know what that meant, and I didn't think the other kids at school knew anything at all. They did, of course – much more than me – but not about what I thought was important.

Dorotea is so small that it had no upper secondary school. You had to drive to Vilhelmina, 70 km north – either round-trip, 140 km a day, or you stayed in town and went home on weekends. I moved to Vilhelmina when I began upper secondary school, and then to Umeå, Munich and Brighton before I attended Beckmans College of Design in Stockholm.

My sights were set outward: I was always going elsewhere, and even if I went home regularly, I never craved to come here.

If you drive off the road, it can be dangerous

The forest I inherited was divided into six forest plots, each one slightly different in character. One has water and fishing, and all are situated near the village of Avaträsk, northwest of Dorotea.

Dorotea is in southern Lappland, north of the border between Jämtland and Västerbotten counties, at the same latitude as Skellefteå, but much closer to the Norwegian coast than the Swedish one. This municipality is rich with untouched nature – marshes, lakes, forests and mountains, but not many people. It isn't built up here, like it is in Åre. It's wilder and more pure, but also harder to access. Driving from Stockholm can take eight to ten hours or more. If you fly to Frösön in Östersund then you can rent a car and drive two and a half hours north to Dorotea, plus another 15 minutes to Avaträsk. Or you can fly to Vilhelmina in a teeny-tiny plane, rent a car, and drive an hour south to Avaträsk.

Sometimes there are animals on the roads, which aren't always plowed, and sometimes there isn't a drop of light – it's pure wilderness. If you're coming from the south, the last toilet is in Ramsele. Then you've got close to 100 km without anyone to help you.

If you drive off the road, it can be dangerous.



Then we moved even further north

Later, my parents sold the Dorotea hotel and bought a farm with a lake and woods in Avaträsk, a village with about 30 houses located northwest of Dorotea and even higher up in the mountain.

I didn't realize it then, but when my father died, my mother was experiencing the onset of Alzheimer's. I had to help her with everything – the farm, the woods, everything that has to be arranged when someone dies.

The farm consisted of a house, a machine hall, a big barn with a slaughterhouse and a baker's cottage. It gets unbelievably cold here in wintertime, so you can't just close up a building. All of the buildings need service if the electricity goes off and the pipes freeze, so someone has to be there the entire winter.

I had to sell the farm.

The forest was nothing but trees to me

To me, the forest had only ever been a bunch of trees. I didn't see what I see now. I thought about selling that too initially, but I didn't want to be hasty, and maybe I didn't want to cut ties altogether. There were six forest plots and I didn't know what was expected to be done with them or how to care for them. There is a law that regulates how to care for forests, but I didn't even know where my forest was located or how to find it.





How was it for them that it wasn't for you?

This is a tree that fell into the marsh. You can tell it's been there a while, because it's sunken down and overgrown.

How was it for them that you didn't want to live here?

It really hurt them. None of us ever came to any understanding, not on my part or on theirs.

I found a forest management plan

I found a forest management plan among my father's papers and understood that it covered what had been done, if they had planted or felled. Later, I remembered that they had said that about the forest: we went out and planted trees, but I never thought about what they meant and I never understood just how much forest it was.

A few times, I went with my dad to the woods. He would point and say: here's a plot, and there's another one. In my world, you pick up a map and it shows you where the plots are, and then you get there by car or snowmobile and take a look. But he just said: it's over there. I don't remember which trees he pointed to; it was really hard for me to understand.

We learned to read the woods

I realized eventually that I was going to need help to care for the forest, that I had to hire a forest manager. First Andreas Hedberg, then Adrian Nilsson, both of whom are trained forest inspectors, went into the woods with me and my son Bruno, and showed us where the plots were and how to read the woods. They said that here a moose has rubbed up against the tree trunk, and there it has rested, and here the moose has recently passed by, and there you can tell it was a while ago.

I don't know what my father thought

What did your parents think of you becoming an internationally established designer?

I don't think they understood it. My father was a famous television chef. He sat on the Chef of the Year jury; he was established in that world and it was strange to him that I could be more established than he was. It wasn't necessarily positive.

I had a complicated relationship with my father
and I don't know what he thought about these woods
why he didn't prepare me to take care of them
He never said what he thought about anything
I did what I did because I had to
I had to get out and get away

*They answered you in their way, gave you the forest and brought you back here.
Could we say they were right?
Maybe so.*





I turned the forest into rugs

Sweden is so big and the forest is a part of us. It is the origin for many, and an enormous source of our country's prosperity.

I learned that there are many ways to own a forest, that you don't have to do everything they initially said.

The forest inspired me to create rugs, and it wasn't only the forest that taught me about the rugs – the rugs taught me about the forest, too.



The Mountains (rug)
16



The Mountains (wall)
17



You have to walk carefully

It's soft and squishy in the marsh, and when you walk you have to be careful not to step through and get your boot stuck. It will sink in even further, and you have to balance on tufts of marsh grass and hope you don't step the wrong way.

The marsh grass grows mightily from a heavy base, forming these streams or strips that curve in different directions. They have a lovely movement when the wind takes hold of them.

I'd say that the marsh is at its loveliest when covered in frost. It's like a sheer, delicate silver blanket has been spread over all the colors.

Then the bottom water freezes, and you can walk on the marsh differently, so much more freely.

I made the marsh into a rug. To me it's about texture, evolution, movement, those changing colors – it looks like this right now, but in a week, maybe it will have snowed. The rug is composed of cut strands, and the color and texture change depending on how you walk.





Through the ravine to the mountain peak

Now we've reached northern Borgafjäll, which is home to many mountains. One is Borgahällan, which is so beautifully situated on Borgasjön Lake, and which means so much to me.

Borgahällan is special to me because I climbed it with my friends so many times while growing up. You go up through the ravine, a crevice further to the right, where there was year-round snow when I was a child. The top has a view and a little lake that you can swim in, even though it's cold.

People live off the land here

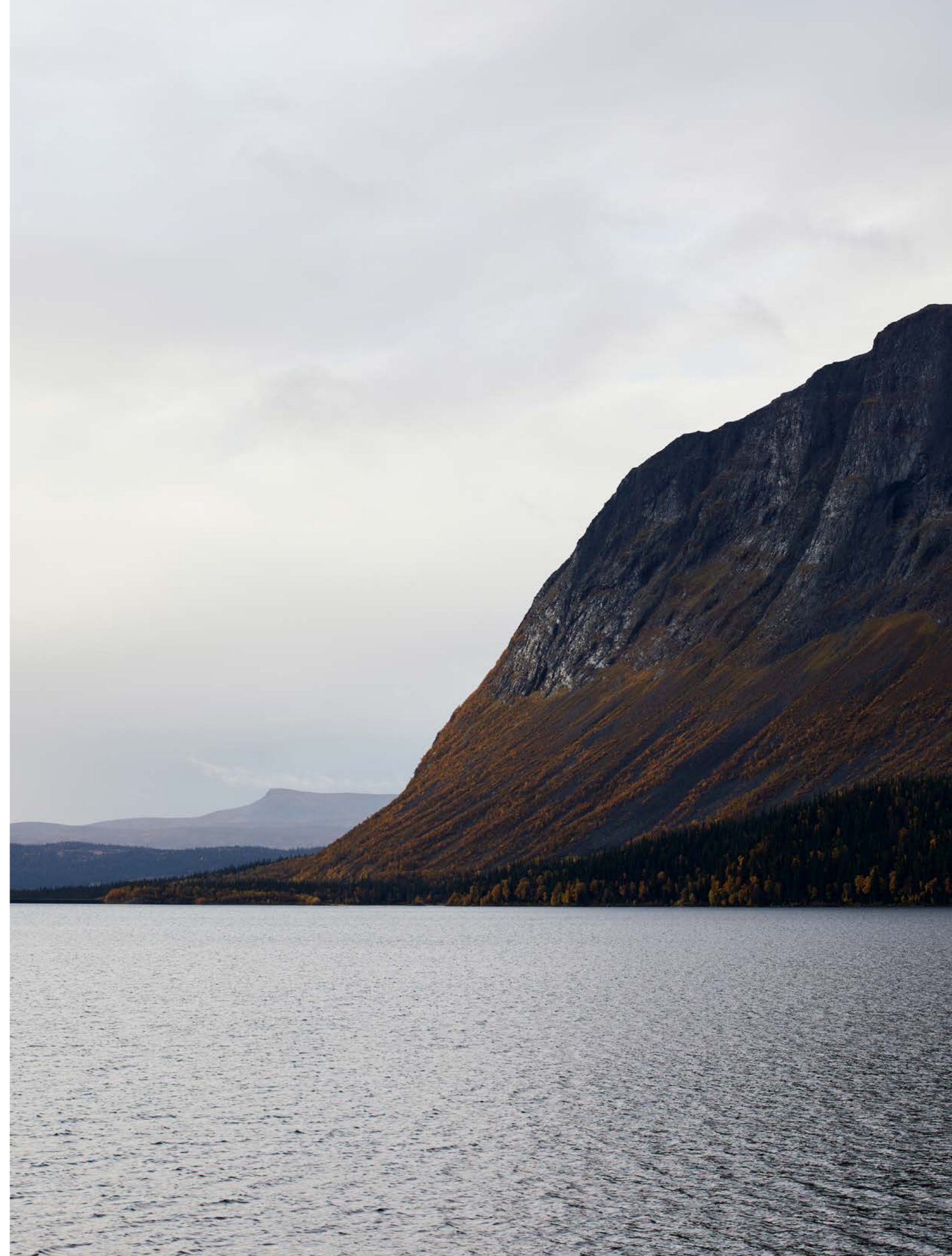
A lot of people live off the land up here, eating berries and mushrooms picked in the woods. They hunt grouse, small game and moose, and fish for trout and char in the river and lakes by boat in summer and through the ice the rest of the year. They live off timber from thinning and logging.

I think we should listen more to the people who live off the land, and not just to what people who live in Stockholm or the EU think should be done in a forest.

It's only wilderness from here

Sannaren Lake is located more than 600 meters above sea level and this is the end of the road. You can't get any further by car, and there are no buildings, just untouched nature.

If you're going further into the mountains, it has to be on foot. In winter, you can drive a snowmobile or be picked up by a pontoon plane or helicopter. From here on out, it's only wilderness.





My mother's family, a rug and a tapestry of heather

My mother has many relatives up here. They were farmers; they fished and worked the land and woods. They made handicrafts – bowls out of tree limbs, furniture, instruments, all with a beautiful feel. My grandfather often played the fiddle at parties. It was the culture of Norrland, probably with Sami roots.

Heather grows in the mountains and woods, and has also become a rug. Being able to experiment has been important to me. Helene Ogeborg and I visited the factory in Portugal. When we were there, we saw how it looks when the yarn gets caught in the machine, causing it to stop and run in one place. It was beautiful, so we applied that to a bigger rug and a small tapestry. The error was intentionally programmed so that the machine would do it again. It creates a lovely texture, and the combination of glossy and matte threads results in a shimmering quality, reminding of heather.



The Heather (rug)
28



The Heather (wall)
29

I was angry with him, but not her

I am angry with him, because I think he could have prepared me better.
I could have been mad at her too, but she wasn't the one in charge of the forest.
It was a conservative environment. She took care of everything at home and he took care of everything on the farm.
I wonder if she knew where the plots were.
I think she just went with him in the car.

The significance of owning land

My father's family had a farm with a lot of land in what is now the Czech Republic. After the war, everything was taken from them. One Christmas Eve, Russian soldiers came and said they had to leave. There's a lot we never talked about, things he carried that I don't know much about.

My mother's parents also had a lot of land, but of eleven children, only one inherited the forest, and it wasn't the eldest son.

What do I know about the feelings that stirred up? Almost nothing, but there are surely more reasons why owning land meant so much to both of them.

He managed everything there was to manage here

My father hunted, fished and managed everything there was to manage here, but he didn't have a lot of access to his emotions.

He came to Sweden as a "mâitre pâtissier," a master pastry chef. He was on his way to Greenland when he met my mother, got a job at the Grand Hôtel and Werner Vögeli took him to Operakällaren. Later, he managed the restaurant at Hotell Foresta on Lidingö.

When he and my mother were going to start their own business, they had two choices: a hotel in Gambia and one in Dorotea. Someone else got Gambia, but Dorotea was perfect for him; he fit into this setting.





It's easy to get lost

The weather can change in a matter of minutes in the mountains – it's like being at sea, but even more dramatic. The crosses are there to keep you from getting lost in winter, when visibility can suddenly be so poor that you can't see more than a few meters ahead of you.
When you live here, you learn to have great respect for nature.

I didn't know I knew

When I was growing up, my mother and father went into the woods all the time. They picked berries and mushrooms, went fishing and hunting – they did everything in nature, while I waited in the car, reading books.
I didn't want to go out into nature. That desire came much later for me.

Still, I knew the names of plants here that I didn't realize I remembered. I was raised on hunted grouse; that was everyday food for me. But it would be a while before I would realize that all of this is mine, that I belong here too, that I know the words for the things that grow and live here.
I knew much more than I realized.





Downy birch, stubborn and gnarled

Now we're above the tree line. Only alpine woods grow here, mostly downy birch, which is sturdy, gnarled and stubborn. It won't give in, just like us, the people who are from here.

Nature doesn't need us – we need nature

The forest and mountains don't need us; whether or not we are here, they are steadfastly there, if not more so without us.

There's so much power in nature, and I like that all of this just continues without us.

We're living in a time when so much is about the environment and sustainability. That's a good thing, but I think aesthetics has had to take a step back, and we're forgetting the importance of beauty to our well-being.

Why do we go into the woods and up into the mountains? Why do we sit and behold the ocean? What does it mean for us as people?

To me, the rugs have been a way to come closer to that, and I think this is the beginning of an artistic exploration that has the potential to become much more.

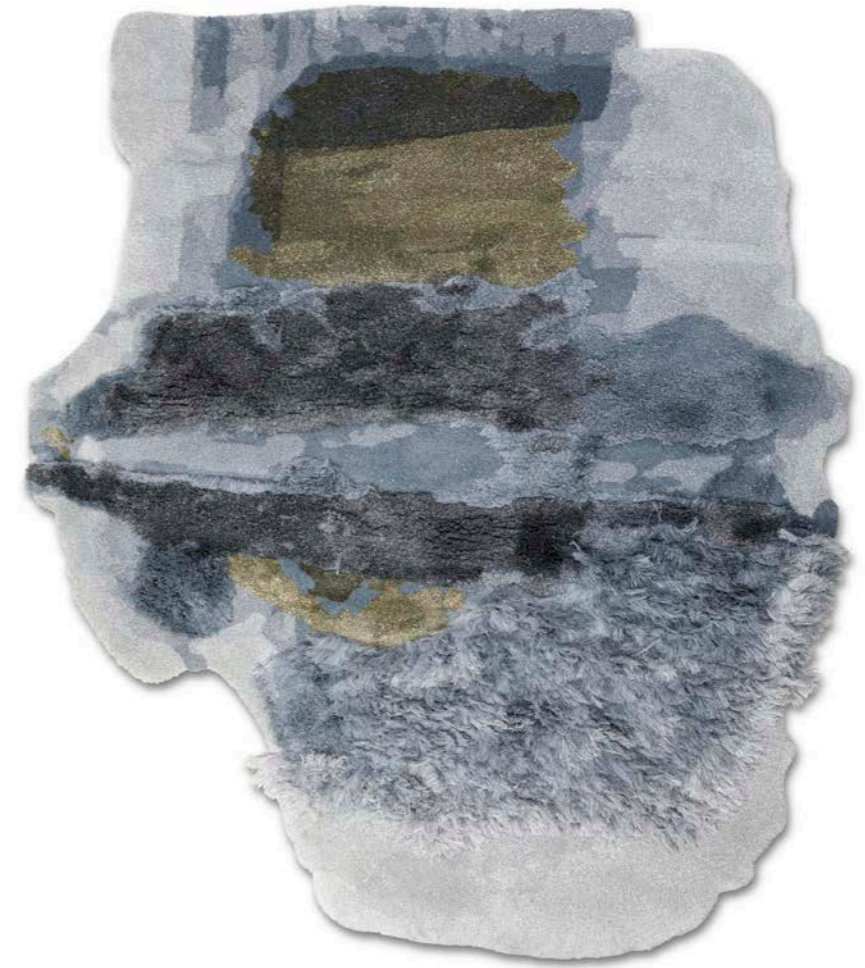


Ferns grow in the mountain heath

Ferns grow in the mountains, and they're one of the oldest plants in the world. Dark streaks of ferns grow in the ravine; that's how they look in autumn.



The Mountain Heath
40



The River
41





When he inherits, he won't be unprepared

Now we've reached the end of the Korpån river, between Borgafjäll and Avaträsk. My son visited my parents often when he was a child, at least one week every summer. He really liked them. Being here was easier for him, maybe because he wasn't stuck, and they were in a better place than they were when I was a child.

It means so much to me that he's wanted to be part of this, that he wants to learn about the forest.

It's his forest too, and when Bruno takes over one day, he won't be unprepared.



Ogeborg

Timeless carpets in sustainable materials, carefully selected yarns, skilled craftsmanship, established designers, lowest possible climate footprint and a company with a long family tradition.

The rugs in this catalog are made by Ogeborg – a company that is also a story of parents, childhood and heritage.

For 20 years, Helene Ogeborg has been CEO of the carpet company that was founded in 1963 by her father Paul Ogeborg, and in which her mother Gull-Britt Ogeborg soon also worked with the company. In the first years, Ogeborg was run from home at the kitchen table, and during the upbringing of Helene and her brother Jan – the whole family was involved.

The focus was high-quality carpets for private and public environments, and when Jan Ogeborg became CEO in the 1990s, he brought a contemporary and innovative focus on the environment. An important decision was to operate in Europe to ensure good working conditions, non-toxic manufacturing and reduced transport footprint.

When Helene Ogeborg took over in 2003, high quality and durability were still a matter of course, and to that she has added a strong design orientation with her sense for the expressive. It includes collaborations with designers such as Axel Bjurström, Claesson Koivisto Rune, Josefin Tolstoy, Sundling Kickén, Alexander Lervik, Tekla Evelina Severin, Luca Nichetto and Note Design Studio.

In addition to hand-tufted and hand-woven carpets, the range includes all types of textile floors as well as leather, cork and quartz stone. Over the years, Ogeborg has received several design prizes and awards, including the “German Design Award 2018,” “Residence Grand Design Award 2019 – Accessory of the year,” and “Plaza Interiör’s Honorary Award 2022 – On the floor.”

Monica Förster Design Studio

Making the necessary unforgettable and the functional fascinating – that’s what Monica Förster Design Studio is about.

Since the studio was founded in 1999, it has created furniture, everyday goods, interior details, exhibitions and public interiors for producers worldwide. As one of Scandinavia’s most internationally established design agencies, Monica Förster Design Studio has clients such as Alessi, Artifort, Bernhardt, De Padova, Georg Jensen, Fredericia, Offecct, Orrefors, Poltrona Frau, Svenskt Tenn, Rörstrand, Tacchini, Tecno, Zanotta and Zanat.

The basis is a close collaboration with the client, often with inspiration from the company’s history and from visits to craftsmen and factories. Monica Förster is the founder and creative director of the studio also working with the vision and strategy. She also works as Creative Director for several companies, for example Zanat.

Monica Förster is often invited as a jury member in committees for international awards.

She had her breakthrough in 2002 with “Cloud” for Snowcrash, a wayward and poetic screening room designed for a public environment. The independent expression is a hallmark – the studio is deeply rooted in the Scandinavian design language and at the same time has a clear design language of its own.

Monica Förster has received the award “Designer of the Year” five times – three times by Swedish *ELLE Interior* and twice by *Residence Magazine*. In 2021 she received the prestigious Mathsson Prize and in 2023 Monica Förster was named “AW Designer of the Year” by the design magazine *Architektur & Wohnen*. Her work is represented in the permanent collection of the National Museum in Stockholm, the Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg and Nasjonal-museet in Oslo. Her work has also been exhibited at MoMA in New York and the V&A in London.

Monica Förster Design Studio

I Inherited a Forest

The rug collection

2024

The Mountains (rug)

Ogeborg Design Collection

Handtufted in variable heights 14–100 mm

2.00 x 3.00 m

Yarn: Siri; thin wool, Aster and Astro; viscose from sustainably cultivated eucalyptus

p. 16

The Mountains (wall)

Ogeborg Design Collection

Handtufted in variable heights 14–100 mm

1.50 x 1.30 m

Yarn: Siri; thin wool, Aster and Astro; viscose from sustainably cultivated eucalyptus

p. 17

The Marsh

Ogeborg Design Collection

Handtufted in variable heights 14–65 mm

2.00 x 2.60 m

Yarn: Siri; thin wool, Astro; viscose from sustainably cultivated eucalyptus

p. 23

The Heather (rug)

Ogeborg Design Collection

Handtufted looped base 10 mm, cut over tuft

16–100 mm, individual threads 100–200 mm

2.00 x 3.00 m

Yarn: Vega Natural, ucolored wool, Siri;

thin wool, Astro; viscose from sustainably

cultivated eucalyptus

p. 28

The Heather (wall)

Ogeborg Design Collection

Handtufted looped base, cut over tuft

10–16 mm, individual threads 100–200 mm

1.20 x 1.60 m

Yarn: Vega Natural; ucolored wool, Siri; thin

wool, Astro; viscose from sustainably culti-

vated eucalyptus

p. 29

The Mountain Heath

Ogeborg Design Collection

Handtufted in variable heights 14–80 mm

1.70 x 3.20 m

Yarn: Siri; thin wool, Astro; viscose from

sustainably cultivated eucalyptus

p. 40

The River

Ogeborg Design Collection

Handtufted in variable heights 14–85 mm

2.00 x 2.30 m

Yarn: Siri; thin wool, Astro; viscose from

sustainably cultivated eucalyptus

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The Forest Day

Contract Print Design Collection

Wool Style

Roll 4,00 m

100 % wool; tufted loop

p. 46, top

The Forest Night

Contract Print Design Collection

Wool Style

Roll 4,00 m

100 % wool; tufted loop

p. 46, middle

The Heather

Contract Print Design Collection

Wool Style

Roll 4,00 m

100 % wool; tufted loop

p. 46, bottom

Ogeborg aims to deliver long-term sustainable textile carpets and floors, of the highest quality and with a sustainable certified production that has the least possible environmental impact. The hand-tufted rugs are produced in Portugal, and the printed ones in Italy.

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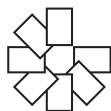
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