

## Engelskversion Katalogtext *Perceived Memory, Projected Future*

Jesmonite, silicone, pigmented concrete, glass, relief or clay are just some of the materials and techniques that are being used in the work of Hilda Hellström. In her practice, there is a constant movement. An essential and continual transformation from one material to another, from one technique to another, creating an openness towards the finished work of art.

In Hellström's practice, no craft or material stands above the other. Instead, Hellström plays with the illusion and perception of the specific technique and the appearance of a material. Traditional definitions of craft are no longer maintained, and the categories become fluid, allowing the spectator to be suspended in a moment of uncertainty and suggestiveness. It is through specific tools and techniques that Hellström is able to contain and present her perception of the world. Through the use of creative combinations and compositions of materials, new interpretations and ideas about the role of craft and materiality are on display.

The exhibition *Perceived Memory, Projected Future* is a form of memory research combined with notions about the future. The pieces explore questions about one's own memory: what do we remember? How do we remember? How does a memory travel and change over time? What memories do we have a strong relationship with, and why? But the future is also involved in the project. Since the future has not yet taken place, we can only speculate about what will come. The future is characterised by chance, dreams, destiny and the choices that we make. Questions about the future merge with questions about memory: it is in the union of these two that Hellström sees the present.

*Perceived Memory, Projected Future* starts in the memory of the memory. Processing a memory is a continuous movement of thought, place and time. Memories travel through us, and in the exhibition, they also travel through the artwork. Despite the movement, the exhibition focuses mainly on the ability to remain in the moment that has already passed, or possibly one that will come. *Perceived Memory, Projected Future* encompasses one's own self and future, but by additionally considering second-hand memories and interpretations of the future, the work also expresses a more extended self.

Hellström dissolves the chronological timeline wherein the past always leads up to the present and continues into the future. Here, the past, the present and the future are working together and are given a shared space to coexist and interact with one another. This could be seen as a manifestation of Hellström's idea that the world is in constant transformation with fluid boundaries. It is undoubtedly a fluid concept of reality that Hellström experiments with. The exhibition does not offer a utopian, dystopian or anthropocentric state, but instead goes beyond any categorisation of the world.

The 3D-scanned stones from Hellström's childhood garden make up the scenography of *Perceived Memory, Projected Future*. Therein, the spectator is invited into a scene of future prospects and memories. The piece "Recycling System" is based on a hands-on manifestation

of a tool that Hellström's father built in the 1990s. This tool was used to flatten aluminum cans for the purpose of more effective recycling. In place of cans, cylinders of clay have been flattened and then cast in broken glass. Side by side with these hands-on memories are pieces based on prospects of the future, two of which are prophecies about Hellström's future. Milled in a stone tablet are the notes from a meeting Hellström's mother had with a fortune teller. The future, however uncertain it may be, is here captured in palpable sentences within a tangible form. In the lavender coloured relief "Night Visit", water floats over a woman's neck, shoulders and back, indicating the desire, hope and dreams brought by thoughts of one's own future and the collective future.

The future is incalculable, and just like memories it is also changeable. The future is determined by an infinite number of factors in our lives and we can never be one hundred percent sure of what the future will bring. Even so, *Perceived Memory, Projected Future* portrays prospects of the future and allows the spectator to step inside the unknown. It shows that the opposition between the future and the past is false, and that these could well be thought and experienced together.

Since the future is unknown, it is subject to influence and transformation. Hellström's focus around transformation, is being expressed mainly through the use of transformative and malleable materials, making haphazardness an element in the formation of the pieces. Hellström challenges the idea of where a process begins and where it ends. The craft is built on timely procedures where controlled processes meet the unplanned, when a material converts from one form into another, from liquid to solid, or solid to liquid.

Author Maria Steponova writes that: "The territory of memory is also filled with projection, fantasies, misrepresentations, today's retrospective ghosts." (my translation) Our understanding of a memory is constantly being reshaped through new experiences by our present self. In *Perceived Memory, Projected Future* these flexible boundaries are being articulated in both the portrayal of the memories but also in the second-hand memory. A second-hand memory is a memory that is not one's own, but that has been retold and then perceived as being as strong as a self-experienced event. The work "The Cormorant and the Gull" embodies such a second hand memory for Hellström. The incident the piece is built on was not witnessed by Hellström first-hand, but in her memory she still experiences it as intensely as if she had seen it herself. As an event that is retold and also remembered as self-experienced, the story of these birds almost has a mythological identity. Literary theorist Roland Barthes asked himself if everything could be a myth. And the answer was yes: since the universe is endlessly suggestive, all objects can transform from a closed condition into an open mythological one. Barthes meant that the myth depends on how the subject matter is being expressed. It is not established by its material or substance, but rather, everything can be loaded with a mythological meaning. The image of the gaping birds and its narrative dimension lead one's thoughts to the mythological.

How do we remember, and can we trust our memory? As a small child, a stone can be perceived as a rock and a fish shoal can be experienced as infinite. However, it is not the object

that goes through a metamorphosis, but rather the memories themselves that are being affected by time and experiences. Maria Steponova writes that: "The preoccupation with the past, means that there is always a place for it in the present: it works as a light filter, a pair of sunglasses, in that as it shields us from the surroundings, it also gives it another luster". (my translation). There are several reasons why we remember things. For example, through repetition. We tend to remember phenomena that are repeated daily over a long period of time. We also remember events that cause a great emotional response in us. In *Perceived Memory, Projected Future* both of these are included.

Hellström gives new narrative to the treasures that she uses. A memory is a treasure, but someone else's memory is also Hellström's treasure. By putting these side by side in a new context, she fills them with unique dimensions. A memory confronts the present with the past, and you can almost approach a memory as a raw material that needs to be edited and processed. In *Perceived Memory, Projected Future* the spectator steps inside a space that evokes thoughts on our inner sensibility and the way reality can appear to us, where the present, the past and the future explicitly interact with each other.

*Perceived Memory, Projected Future* is an exhibition without a clear beginning nor a sharp end. Neither memories nor the future begin or end at a distinct point. This thought is a development of Hellström's process and ideas that push the boundaries of reality and our perception of it. Here, Hellström plays with our definitions of the present, of the past and of the future, of materiality, of crafts, and of what we usually see as universally absolute.

*Perceived Memory, Projected Future* becomes a demonstration of how to be in this world, one that resists a linear narrative and elevates transformative materials to give them emotional and physical shape.