

Beautiful Surface with a Disturbing Depth

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It is the time of the honeysuckles. In Olseröds art gallery Maria Finn outlines the contours of the flowers only to erase them in the next image. Everything is about patterns and stories. About what is said and what remains unsaid, about the winding roads of history and the human psyche.

"Four telegrams and a short story"

Maria Finn, Olseröds Art Gallery, until August 7, 2016

Her drawings in the series "Honeysuckle" derive from William Morris's patterns by the same name. Here meandering flowers surround the fragrant honeysuckle. As a driving force in the British Arts & Crafts movement around 1900 the English designer, author and reformer combined his passion for craftsmanship and beauty with a strong social commitment. His designs belong to the classics of design history, and are still produced today more than a hundred years later. However, few people links these designs to the rigid position against the industrial exploitation of man and nature, which permeated Morris's work. What remains is the exquisite ornamentation, whose enchanting vitality at best hints at another possible world.

Maria Finn draws the lines of the pattern in pencil. Yet, as one image follows another the white spots spread across the paper. The honeysuckle fades and the subject gradually blurs out. Each excision is accompanied by a quotation from Anna Freud's text "About Losing and Being Lost", about the ability of children to lose their possessions when they feel unloved. As a practising psychoanalyst in the 1900s she was especially interested in child development and the defence mechanisms of the ego. Placed in the shadow of her famous father, Sigmund, her life's work has often been lost in the blinds spots of history. In another piece Finn focuses on precisely that. The suite of drawings titled "Telegram" is based on telegrams sent between father and daughter in the 1920s and 30s. "Sorry you suffer for the glory of the name" Sigmund lamented in the scarce wordings of the costly telegram. Just as twitter and SMS do today, the medium of the telegram brought about its own concentrated language.

These quotations are also combined with pencil-drawn interpretations of textile patterns, this time originally designed by architect Josef Frank (1885-1967). Like Anna Freud (1895-1982), he was based in the dynamic metropolis of Vienna in the early decades of the twentieth century before the Nazi regime forced them all to flee. The family Freud moved to London, while Josef Frank arrived in Stockholm where he began his collaboration with Estrid Ericson's firm Svenskt Tenn. However, the main part of the patterns that are today regarded as beloved treasures of Swedish heritage was in fact made during his exile in New York during the World War. Just as William Morris Frank had a belief in design and architecture's social mission and power, but in both cases, their work was often too upscale to reach a wider audience.

In the hands of Maria Finn the complexity of the patterns is simplified when the individual layers of the printing are exposed and the details stripped away. The familiar becomes unfamiliar almost as an illustration of Freud's concept *unheimlich*, even if the estrangement does not really have the eerie element with which the expression is normally associated.

Equally interesting is the third series of images that Finn exhibits, which is built around the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar's novel "Las babas del Diablo" (The Devil's Drool). Its dramatic play with voyeurism, eroticism and the uncertainty between what actually happens and what the eye thinks it sees inspired the Italian film director Michelangelo Antonioni in the 1960s to make the cult film "Blow-Up", which also was the English title of Cortázar's short story. Maria Finn skilfully combines the visually refined with intellectual multi-layers in an exhibition, which beneath its beautiful surface reveals disturbing depths.