

Everything is at a Standstill at a Dizzying Pace

Loss, absence and restraint characterises Maria Finns melancholic drawings, writes Thomas Millroth.

Thomas Millroth

Maria Finn: Four telegram and a short story, Olseröds art gallery, until August 7 2016.

Maria Finn's drawings are fragile and elusive. Plants from patterns of design by William Morris and Josef Frank. Or somewhat surreal pencil landscapes in which almost everything is erased. Here the flowers of Morris and Frank could be secret guests. Although these were originally magnificent on fabrics and wallpapers, Finn has just left behind the outline.

The landscape drawings are appreciative of the paper's white surface and the pencil's grey shimmer. But they contain something else that has happened. People can be sensed only vaguely, and sometimes nature and figure blends together in mutual anonymity. Yet there is a strong feeling that someone has just been there, as vividly as in intrusive memories and dreams, in which everything is at a standstill at a dizzying pace. There is a lingering sense of escape and past.

This sensation is also present in the pattern drawings, which she has placed parallel to a dialogue between Sigmund and Anna Freud. Here loss becomes a theme. As Frank they fled Nazism in Austria. But the exhibition is not an illustration. Finn drills inward toward a stream of absence and disappointment, which is also present in the texts, not least the child's loss of important things - and love.

But does this fit with Morris and Frank's designs? Perhaps, both shared a dream that they would create something genuine and lasting, a beauty that could be available for all. One part of an abandoned struggle for social justice.

When Finn works with the patterns, she only retains the outlines of the beauty that made them so popular. She has left behind the shadows of the hopes and dreams of the past. We have to fill in the rest ourselves. It is like a memory game, which becomes even clearer when Finn in some drawings work with the telegrams of Anna and Sigmund Freud, fabulating about these short messages regarding everyday occurrences. Nowhere, is the sense of loss as strong as here.

Finn takes sense of loss far. But she avoids the sentimental by rather selecting in the broadest sense open, unfinished images, which then dissolve in the backlighting of the past.

When she consistently undresses the prodigious beautiful patterns of all dreams and examines what remains, the drawings feels like portraits of a nearly forgotten past. The luster of the graphite becomes a reflection of the loss. What is missed and forgotten and with which she is probably not at peace. To access the contradiction between then and now, memory and awareness, utopia and modernity, she has worked under restraint. The result is a melancholy, which she manages to give a meaningful and poetic convincing form.