

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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TAPESTRIES BY HELENA HERNMARCK

An exhibition of nine tapestries by Helena Hernmarck, a young Swedish-born weaver whose work is based on photographic images, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from August 11 through October 10.

Unlike most contemporary weaving which has been abstract, its design derived largely from the properties of the materials used, Helena Hernmarck has restored to tapestries their familiar narrative imagery. Her tapestries incorporate images taken from photographs and range from faithful transcriptions of photographic detail to highly selective bits of pictorial information. Although at close range the resulting designs appear abstract, a clear image is always retained. Her first work of this kind was a portrait of George Washington made in 1967 from a photographic enlargement of a dollar bill.

Tapestries in the exhibition include Launching of the QE2, her only tapestry based on Xerox copies of photographs; Bubba Smith, her first work based on a color photograph; Circuit, made from a blow-up of a transistorized computer circuit; Bay Street, a 1940's view of the Toronto financial district; Mao, which is in the Museum's Design Collection; and Rainforest, which is probably her best-known piece.

Her working procedure involves selecting a photograph and making photostatic or Xerox enlargements, which are fastened to the weave with safety pins. The color tapestries may involve up to ten threads of different texture and color, to match as closely as possible the tones in the photograph. Most of these tapestries are of wool; the portrait of Mao, like some of the others, also makes use of plastic thread or plastic strips discarded after sequins have been stamped out of them.

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Helena Hernmarck was born in Stockholm in 1941, imigrated to Canada in 1964, and now lives in London. Her work has been exhibited throughout Europe as well as in North and South America, and has been commissioned by many architects and corporations here and abroad.

The exhibition, directed by Arthur Drexler, Director, Department of Architecture and Design, is installed by John Garrigan, Assistant Curator.

 Photographs and additional information available from Linda Gordon, Associate
 Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art,
 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-2648.
