



The unique exhibition *Look at the rugs – find me* opens in the Hall of State at the Royal Palace in Stockholm on 13 October this year. Photo: Emma Fredriksson

Look at the rugs — find pioneering entrepreneurship, world-renowned artistry and a fascinating textile history

“Look at the rugs – find me,” said world-renowned Swedish textile artist Märta Måås-Fjetterström when asked to describe her artistry. *Scan Magazine* spoke to Kerstin Hagsgård, curator at the Royal Palace in Stockholm, about the fascinating artist and the rugs that took the world – and many a royalty – by storm. This year, the rugs will be on display at the Royal Palace as part of a unique exhibition about Måås-Fjetterström’s inspiration, life and work.

By Linnea Dunne | Photos: Royalpalaces.se

“She compared the rugs to works of musical composition, where she was the composer and the weavers the musicians,” says Hagsgård. “And, of course,

a musical piece is worth repeating. Just because you’ve woven something once, that’s not to say you shouldn’t weave it again, she used to say. These creations



Märta Måås-Fjetterström was one of the foremost textile designers of her time, and her rugs are hugely popular across the world still today. Photo: Märta Måås-Fjetterström AB

made 100 years ago are still very relevant, still loved the world over.”

Major exhibition in the Hall of State

Ever since the artist set up her workshop in 1919, the Swedish Royal Family has been purchasing rugs from her, starting with the King’s grandfather, who was a big fan and commissioned a large number of rugs for the private rooms of the royal palaces. In fact, there is still today a large number of Måås-Fjetterström rugs at the royal homes – but only one is available for public view, at Ulriksdal Palace.

This October, coinciding with the centenary of the birth of Måås-Fjetterström’s weaving business, a major exhibition will open in the Hall of State at the Royal Palace, named after Måås-Fjetterström’s own saying: *Look at the rugs – find me*. Showcasing cultural heritage and craft this way is nothing new; it has been a regular occurrence since 1921, when the Hall of State was dressed in an impressive collection of tapestries. This is the first time, however, that Måås-Fjetterström’s work will be on display at the Royal Palace in Stockholm.

“All the benches and furniture will be removed, and the entire hall will become an expose with woven pieces on the walls and floors. You’ll get to go for a stroll through Märta Måås-Fjetterström’s world,” Hagsgård enthuses, explaining that the rugs from the permanent Royal Collections will form the basis of the exhibition, complemented by borrowed pieces that help showcase the sheer variation in the artist’s work and skill, as well as her life and personality. “It’ll be a diverse, varied world, in terms of both pattern and colour – perhaps more so than many might expect. You’ll find everything from 40-square-metre pieces to very small rugs, and patterns ranging from bold, folkloristic styles to traditional, oriental expressions.”

Pioneering entrepreneur and celebrated artist

While renowned for her exceptional skill in textile design in particular, Märta Måås-Fjetterström was also an impor-

tant figure in terms of her role as business woman and employer. She started out riding the wave of women’s suffrage being voted through, with more and more women being seen on the labour market. The textile industry, meanwhile, was already a woman’s domain, and with a boom in the construction of new hotels, courts and other official buildings around this time, the demand for durable textiles was huge. It became an important, natural way for women to work and earn a living, and Måås-Fjetterström played an important role in training and employing these women.

Abroad, however, few people thought of her as an entrepreneur; she was simply considered one of the world’s foremost textile artists. From the big world exhibitions in Paris, Chicago, London and New York to prestigious commissions for royalties and luxurious design hotels, her portfolio demonstrates what a global star she really was – including some collaborations with her friend, the renowned designer Carl Malmsten, on a suite at the New York Waldorf

Astoria, the interiors of the living room at Ulriksdal Palace, and the luxurious cruise ship *M/S Kungsholm*.

‘Broke new ground as designer and entrepreneur’

In a universe built up of 60 rugs, the unique exhibition at the Royal Palace allows spectators to experience all this and more. “It shows not only her rugs, but also her sources of inspiration, her career and the conditions under which business women worked during the first half of the 20th century,” says Hagsgård. “She broke new ground, both as a designer and as a female entrepreneur.”

The exhibition *Look at the rugs – find me* opens at the Royal Palace in Stockholm on 13 October 2019 and runs until 19 April 2020.

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The Ulriksdal rug in the famous living room, designed in 1924. Photo: Sanna Argus Tirén



King Gustav VI Adolf visits Märta Måås-Fjetterström’s workshop in Båstad, 1970. Photo: Hans Karlsson/Royalpalaces.se