

Åsa Jungnelius

Thunder Rotator

22 June – 31 July 2023

We are pleased to present Åsa Jungnelius' first exhibition in Germany.
The opening takes place on **Midsummer Eve, Wednesday, June 21 from 6 to 10 pm.**

Åsa Jungnelius' artistic practice entails a material exploration, shifting between the monumental, the social and psychologically constructed settings. Through the physicality of the object, she inquires how identities and bodily desires are formed and expressed. Her interest in body and matter is centered around issues concerning the constant re-negotiation of these two entities throughout human history. She broke new ground early on with her astute examination of identity politics and gender identification.

SHE TOO, A VESSEL

A text about Åsa's practice by Masha Taavoniku

Year after year she has stood in front of the furnace in her workshop, each time performing the unwritten choreography that both facilitates and, ultimately, refines the task itself. Thirty years have passed and no day is like the last one, no movement identical with the next one. Nothing is simple but, nowadays, everything is a species of controlled repetition with a difference. In spite of the noise of the workshop, there is a quietness about her and, without even thinking the thought, she never has to worry about what to do next. Like a vessel, she carries in her body all the years that have passed.

For as long as she can remember, she has felt a dissatisfaction with the state of things. In her workshop, she found her chance to manipulate the world. The plasticity of the molten glass challenged her sense of security at the same time that she challenged the supposed

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limitations of the material. Domestic wares opened the doors to people's homes, thereby giving her the opportunity to influence the movements and interactions that take place within the four walls of a home. Without blinking, she took every opportunity to create some sense of meaning. Right from her earliest work in the workshop she has made glass using moulds or free-blowing, she has worked as a product designer and created sculptures and site-specific public art. For her, glass dissolved all the previous limits of what was possible.

Taking deep breaths, she now blows vases using clay moulds that she has excavated by hand. Enclosed within the cavity, each vase assumes its singular shape; rough upside-down mountain tops, as though carved from dramatic mountains or rocks that often serve as a border between land and sea. Domestic wares and sculptures are united in the silence. The transformation in the workshop is from rock-hard grains of sand into an object which can be crushed into a thousand fragments at any moment. For anyone who is not an initiate, this can be difficult to grasp but she can be calmed by the reminder of everything's transience.

Her artistic work unites her with times long before she herself existed. In Pliny the Elder's (23/24 – 79 CE) book *Naturalis Historia* an event is described that, in earlier times, was claimed to describe the origins of glass. The written narrative deals with the manner in which an unknown number of natron merchants sailed from what is now Egypt to the coast of Palestine. Towards evening, as they began to feel hungry, the merchants lit a fire on the beach, making use of a lump of natron from their cargo to support their pan. The heat from the fire caused the natron – which is rich in soda – together with the sand to become the transparent viscous substance which, the following morning, had solidified into glass. Åsa Jungnelius is entertained by the story, but she knows exactly the temperature necessary for sand and soda to fuse and become glass. She knows that a modest campfire on the beach would not create the necessary heat. In all probability, the discovery of glass was a serendipitous event related to ceramics or to the production of metals; a process that later came to be imitated. But the fact remains that no one knows exactly how or when the first glass was produced.

Outside the workshop spring is in the air, trees are in bud and her body aches from the arduous work. One by one she carefully dips the hot, heavy vases into the icy water, whereupon the surfaces crackle. The shiny vases' seductive characteristics and the cracks that break the light testify to beauty and to the closely related fragility. From her stomach the colours are produced that have become characteristic of her art: billowing; sharp and pale nuances of green, blue, yellow, orange, violet, pink and white.

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In the hot workshop, she wanders slowly over miles of beaches while the waves erase her footsteps in the sand. On her journey, she blows shells filled with pearls, lava-like candlesticks in bright colours, silver-coloured objects and sculptures. She knows that not everyone can see this but the glass carries with it everything she is and does; and therewith hundreds of years of time past. At any moment, the vessel can be broken. "Precisely for that reason," she thinks as she takes another deep breath and blows into the glassmaker's pipe.



Åsa Jungnelius b. 1975, lives and works in Stockholm and Månsamåla, Sweden. She has been exhibiting regularly in Sweden and internationally since the beginning of 2000 and is engaged in numerous public commissions such as the new public subway station Hagastaden in Stockholm, opening in 2026. Jungnelius' breakthrough was with her early works in glass and she has since held the position as one of Sweden's leading artists within the field. Her works are represented in the collection of Moderna Museet, Stockholm, The Swedish National Gallery to name a few as well as several prominent private collections around the world.