

When this project began back in 2019 we had no idea that the COVID-19 Pandemic was going to alter our plans so entirely. Sofia Hagström Møller had come to Wisconsin and flown home without issue in early 2020. Our next step was to produce an exhibition celebrating the work she'd done on campus. When it became unavoidably clear that in-person shows were unsafe, we adapted to an online venue. This essay was mostly written while I was sitting in a camp-chair in my backyard with a cup of iced coffee, deep into Wisconsin's quarantine summer. We were thrilled to reopen the doors of the Center for Design and Material Culture's galleries in fall of 2021. Getting to hang Sofia's work was one of our top priorities. In the wake of the pandemic, telling international stories feels more important than ever, especially when they allow us to explore the ways in which our intermingled histories confirm our shared humanity.

Sofia Hagström Møller: Lineage interweaves narratives of inspiration and iteration, function and symbolism, the past, present, and future.

No matter how beautiful they are, online exhibitions are inherently different from in-person ones. After months of looking at photographs of these pieces, my goal with *Sofia Hagström Møller: Lineage* was to revel in tactile sensation and to provide opportunities for visitors to relate to the work, the ideas, and the histories as much as possible. From tablecloths on actual tables, to getting to try weaving through in-gallery Hello Looms and other tools, my hope is that visitors will leave with a greater embodied understanding of history and contemporary art, and the myriad of potential relationships between the two.

-Nora Renick Rinehart, Curator

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The Center for Design and Material Culture is the primary destination for the multi-disciplinary study of material culture and design at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Center focuses on the study of textiles, material culture, and design thinking and is a hub for innovative programs that engage local, national, and international audiences. The Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, the Ruth Davis Design Gallery, the Lynn Mecklenburg Textile Gallery, and the Dorothy O'Brien Innovation Lab support the work of the Center for Design and Material Culture.



SOFIA HAGSTRÖM MØLLER

LINEAGE

Presented by the Center for Design and Material Culture
at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

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WOVEN CONNECTIONS

Like many before her, as Sofia Hagström Møller prepared for her trip from Denmark to the United States, she packed a family heirloom: a tablecloth woven by her grandmother, Astrid Linnea Sofia Äng. But unlike the thousands of Scandinavian immigrants who put down permanent roots all over the United States, Hagström Møller was preparing for a two-week artist residency hosted by Design Studies Associate Professor Marianne Fairbank's ongoing project, Weaving Lab. During her time in Wisconsin, through studio work and research in the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, Hagström Møller and her art traveled through time and space.

Astrid Linnea Sofia Äng was born in Småland, Sweden in 1898. While she decided to stay in her home country, many of her neighbors — and even some of her family — moved to the United States in search of economic opportunities and religious freedom. According to the catalogue for *Scandinavian Design and*



The United States, an exhibition by Bobby Tigerman and Monica Obinski, by the 1920's the United States had welcomed as many as 2.3 million immigrants from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Norway. Many of these immigrants settled in the Great Lakes region of the Midwest. With them they brought not only beloved hand-crafted objects, but also the tools and skills necessary to make them. It's fitting that Hagström Møller visited Wisconsin for this residency as it continues a history of weaving, serving as a point of connection between Scandinavia and the United States.

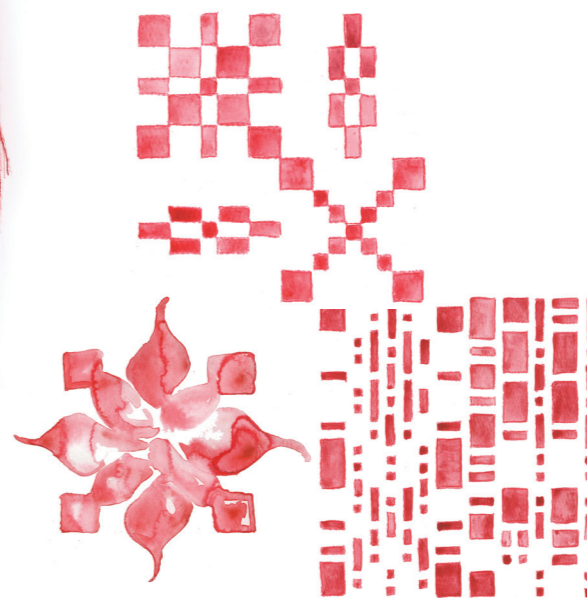
Äng — and all the rest of the women in the Hagström family — were prodigious weavers. On the simple loom built for her by her husband (Gustaf Algot Leonard Äng), she produced all sorts of textiles for everyday

use: tablecloths, rugs, bed covers, and hand towels. Most of these fabrics were made with fine cotton and linen threads in delicate shades of grey and white. The tablecloth Hagström Møller initially chose to bring with her for inspiration is one of the only examples of a fabric woven by her grandmother featuring color, a pale pink. The pattern is a common overshot weave structure called a Daldräll which can create intricate repeating patterns with as few as four loom shafts. Structures and patterns like these aren't limited to Scandinavian design, as Hagström Møller discovered in the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection's selection of early American coverlets. There, among the more complicated patterns created by jacquard looms, she found fragments woven in almost the same pattern as her grandmother's tablecloth. The main difference between the two was one of scale: the American cloth was woven in cotton and wool, with threads significantly thicker than its Scandinavian counterpart.

Hagström Møller analyzed and reacted to these historic textiles. Calling upon her deep understanding of weaving, she created drawings of the "drafts," or diagrams, of overlapping threads that look much like simplistic, pixelated drawings or even sheet music. A trained weaver can follow these instructions to recreate the patterns or riff

off of them to create their own. In response to the images created by these repeating patterns, Hagström Møller made illustrative watercolor paintings. In many ways, these paintings and drawings serve as both research and translation. They draw a connecting thread between the traditions of the past through Hagström Møller's experiences and into the new work that she produced.

The next step in Hagström Møller's process was to employ UW's powerful digital TC2 loom. Unlike a traditional wooden loom, a TC2 loom can raise and lower each individual thread, of which there are thousands. Directed by a computer and software that translates unique designs into weaving patterns, this technology can produce cloth with an amazing level of detail: perfect for the nuanced surfaces of her watercolor paintings. Inspired by the scale of the American coverlets, Hagström Møller expanded the structure of her work by using thick fibers in a variety of materials: cotton, rayon, silk, and more. Influenced by her grandmother's light hue of pink, Hagström Møller



embraced hot pinks and deep maroons. This choice may also have been inspired by Marianne Fairbanks' work, whose studio the artist spent much time during her residency. Hagström Møller produced a series of three weavings with compositions that recreate the weaving pattern on multiple scales: as a structure for the threads that create the fabric, and as a decorative image rendered by the digital software.

While Hagström Møller and her family choose to honor the labor of their ancestors by keeping and using their woven textiles, she also sees the immense value in collections like the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection that preserve and interpret historic textiles. She's excited to have her grandmother's work featured alongside the textiles in this collection. The pieces Hagström Møller created here at UW will guarantee that this conversation through time and space will continue on into the future.

IMAGES Cover: *Weaving Threads Through Time and Space* (Detail), 2020. Tencel, mixed materials woven on a TC2 loom. 43.3" x 43.3" (110cm x 110cm). Image Credit: Martin Yam Møller. • Far left: *Tablecloth*, 1920-1930. Astrid Linnea Sofia Äng, Småland, Sweden. Cotton, 31.5" x 31.5" (80cm x 80cm). Image Credit: Martin Yam Møller. • Top left: A photograph taken by Hagström Møller's father featuring the artist, her sister, mother, and grandmother, Astrid Sofia Stenqvist Äng. Image Credit: Courtesy of the artist. • Center: Sofia Hagström Møller Weaving at UW-M. Image Credit: Marianne Fairbanks. • Above: *Weaving Threads Through Time and Space*, 2020. Tencel, mixed materials woven on a TC2 loom. 43.3" x 43.3" (110cm x 110cm). Image Credit: Martin Yam Møller. • Left: *Process Sketches*. Watercolor on paper, 2020. Image Credit: Sofia Hagström Møller. • Back: *Weaving Threads Through Time and Space*, 2020. Tencel, mixed materials woven on a TC2 loom. 43.3" x 43.3" (110cm x 110cm). Image Credit: Martin Yam Møller.