

In one of her latest works, an installation now on view at the TONSPUR_display showroom at Museumsquartier in Vienna titled *Time To Listen*, the artist Helena Wikström invites the viewers to observe models of the human inner ear. The models have been placed together with an animated video where we follow the wave movement of a hand.

In addition a bunch of branches are installed on the black carpet of the showroom that the artist picked during some of her frequent forest walks. The branches, now covered in gold, take us on new adventures.

Wikström often works in this way. With the help of skilfully executed forms, or perhaps we can call them props or spatial components, and often in combination with moving images and sound, she lures the viewer into her work. Like a smart plant that by its nature knows how to attract pollinators, in a similar way the artist works to attract the fascination of the viewer as her works emit visual stimuli. This way of drawing in, of paving the way enables the viewer to step into the artist's narrative. While the process feels biologically based, it is also reminiscent of stepping down into some kind of Wonderland where the sizes of the objects appear on a sliding scale.

The delicate process that results in humans and mammals having hearing, takes place in the inner ear. The inner ear also contains the organ of balance and spatial orientation, which is the result of the function of the cranial nerve, in turn is connected to the inner ear and which together with hairy sensory cells transmits both sound and balance information to the brain. The human's ability to experience space carried out in a similar way.

In Wonderland, Alice navigates an environment that is constantly changing. With an emphasis on transformation, disorientation and various challenges, the environment reflects her inner experiences. Below the surface, nothing is as it initially seems. Through anomalies, Wikström plays with our perception of reality. What does an enormous inner ear tell us?

In a previous work, *Bottnens beskaffenhet* (the Seabed's Nature) the artist set out to poetically explore the bottom of the sea. Through large-scale lead weights hanging from the ceiling in the exhibition room, the artist showed the analogous way in which people made maps of the

ocean depth and could determine the special properties of the seabed throughout history. In Wikström's version, the audience were invited to put their heads into one of the large-scale sculptures that hung like a diving bell among the lead weights. Once inside the diving bell, audiences experienced a magnificent soundscape in private and had the opportunity to contemplate what may be hidden beneath the surface of the water and along the seabed.

In the exhibition at TONSPUR_display which takes place behind glass windows, the enlarged models of the inner ear invite speculative interpretations of the space and perhaps with the call to listen more carefully. The gilded branches on the floor bring to mind some form of writing, or perhaps a score to be interpreted with the help of musical instruments. The ambiguity opens the mind to possibilities, to various reflections, interpretations and orientations. The balance between the branches in its newfound environment, the memory of the forest leaves its marks. Perhaps we can listen to the poetic scales of the branches as the model of the inner ear stands as metaphor for the ingenious capacities of humans/vertebrates. Are these colourful organs reminiscent of the pattern on exotic fish, or do they perhaps show the variegated expression of the mycelium in the underworld? A tribute to the magnificence of the organic body and to the functions of the mind where hearing, spatial orientation and balance reveal itself.

Helena Wikström (1964) lives and works in Umeå northern Sweden. Wikström works primarily with installations containing film, photography, sound and sculpture, often in collaboration with other artists, musicians and filmmakers. In addition to her involvement in the artist-run gallery Verkligheten in Umeå, she works part-time as a curator for Vita kuben, Norrlandsoperan. Her work has been shown at, among other places, the Tromsø Film Festival, Bildmuseet, LCCA in Riga, National Gallery, Prague, Swedish Television and a large number of exhibitions, festivals and projects, nationally and internationally. Represented in several municipalities and county councils, Moderna Museet and the Swedish National Art Council.

Cecilia Andersson curator Bildmuseet Umeå University, Sweden