

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

Vogue

Artist Mamma Andersson on her collaboration with Svenskt Tenn

Laird Borrelli-Persson

7 September 2021

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### Artist Mamma Andersson on Her Collaboration With Svenskt Tenn



Image: The Discreet Charm collection by Mamma Andersson for Svenskt Tenn. Photo: Courtesy of Svenskt Tenn

In a book-filled studio in Stockholm, Mamma Andersson creates paintings that transform the ordinary—vases, landscapes, and the like—into another realm that exists somewhere between fact and fiction. Because her subjects are familiar they might evoke a sort of existential sense of déjà vu. This fall, Andersson's work is being celebrated in a major and career spanning solo exhibition at the Louisiana Museum in Denmark, on view through October 10th.

In Stockholm, a pandemic-stalled project with Svenskt Tenn finally came to life. The company, which is something of a national treasure, was founded in 1924 by artist Estrid Ericson, who cultivated talents in art, furniture, and interior design. The most fruitful of Ericson's working relationships was with the Austrian architect Josef Frank. Together they created the Swedish Modern style, which combines functionality with expressive, nature-inspired forms and patterns. Andersson's collection for Svenskt Tenn builds on these traditions. Titled *The Discreet Charm*, it includes freehand painted porcelains, as well as her installation at the store. Here, the artist discusses her banner year at home and abroad, below.



Image: An installation of Mamma Andersson's exhibition, "*Humdrum Days*" at Louisiana, on view through October 10, 2021. Photo: Poul Buchard, Brøndum & Co. Courtesy of Louisiana

*It's been a big year, with the show at Louisiana and now this collaboration....*

Yes, indeed. I usually work with my galleries, this is something else. From the very start I saw working with Svenskt Tenn as a fun project. The priority is and has been the exhibition in Louisiana, perhaps the most important in my life. The exhibition spans a long part of my career. It starts approximately where my solo exhibition at Moderna Museet finished in 2007 and shows paintings until today. Overall there are 60 paintings that have been carefully selected.

*How does it feel?*

Well, I do not know, there has been a lot going on in the last few months, but of course it is absolutely fantastic. Nearly every day since the exhibition at Louisiana opened people have been sending me text messages and have been in touch, all with positive responses.

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Image: Mamma Andersson's in-store installation. Photo: Mattias Hamrén, courtesy of Svenskt Tenn

*How did the project with Svenskt Tenn come about?*

At a very early stage about two years ago, there was an idea that I would exhibit a group of prints. Pretty quickly the project grew. I was asked if I wanted to design something and I answered without hesitation that I would

like to design a tea set with a tea pot and a mohair blanket. The pandemic happened and the opening was pushed forward twice.

I was then given the big showroom and the conditions changed. I was given the opportunity to decorate an idea of a dream home. I have really enjoyed choosing textiles of different materials, colors and textures. In the end, it turned out that my prints that are hanging on the walls work very well with the furniture, wallpaper, fixtures, carpets and not least the fabrics I have chosen for Josef Frank's furniture.



Image: The Discreet Charm. Photo: Mattias Hamrén, courtesy of Svenskt Tenn

*The title of your collection, The Discreet Charm, references Buñuel's film, correct?*

I am not such a Buñuel fan myself (there are, however, a few films by him that I enjoyed watching); it's the actual title that I found interesting. I am from a working class family myself. I could see my parents had a longing for the beautiful and to some extent the bourgeois—but also a distance, since we did not belong to that class and we were not aware of its codes. My parents therefore created their own feeling of aesthetics around them. Even as a child, I was attracted to the aesthetic. There were a few people in my surroundings who had more awareness and who became natural inspirations, not because I even knew what the word inspiration meant at the time.

The title is a comment on the distance to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie tries hard to make everything look happy and harmonious, but just on [the] surface. Most people know that it is largely like cosmetics, a consolation to cover the grief of being human. That is not to say that there is anything wrong with it; a beautiful home is guaranteed to make the residents feel a bit better. The problems arise when it becomes commercial, which requires high consumption. The market sells the concept of a happy life = plenty of expensive and special things. To own beautiful things does not have to cost much, the imagination can do wonders. On the other hand, a solid craft work is usually pricey, but because of its timelessness, it often pays off in the long run; like [some of] the furniture by Josef Frank. They are real classics, [and] they live on through all the coming and going trends.



Image: Mamma Andersson in her studio. Photo: Mats Liliequist, courtesy of Louisiana

*You are often described as an artist who creates "dreamworlds." How do these physical products fit into that?*

I believe that all artists create their own, say, dream world or state. It is the very precondition for creation. As an artist and as a human being, I am one and the same. My paintings can be a kind of mirror of my dream and reality, I am not quite sure myself where it all starts and ends. Painting for me personally is an ongoing process that can be both amazing and at times painful... In general, art

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can be anything—decorative, ugly, dangerous, boring, humorous, sensitive and insensitive, etc., etc. It's all in the eye of the beholder.

As for the trays in Svenskt Tenn, they fulfill the same function as the posters of some of my paintings they sell in Louisiana. It is something you can buy for an affordable price and take home. A nice tray is always lovely and useful.



Image: The trays Mamma Andersson designed for Svenskt Tenn. Photo: Courtesy of Svenskt Tenn

*For me, Svenskt Tenn is a sort of dream world in itself. Can you share a specific experience or memory that you have of the store?*

Svenskt Tenn is very professional in making people dream away and long for a better life. However, it must be pointed out that this does not absolutely apply to everyone. For my own part, it used to be a bit like a cleansing process to step into the store, as an impoverished art student living in a tiny place, moving through these beautiful environments with harmonious colors, fantastic fabrics and floral arrangements. I do not remember any particular experience, rather than that I repeatedly went into the store wearing secondhand clothes and just looking, never buying anything, only in my imagination.

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Images: Installation views. Photo: Mattias Hamrén, courtesy of Svenskt Tenn



Image: The handpainted, limited edition tea set by Mamma Andersson for Svenskt Tenn

What's your favorite type of tea and how do you like it served?

Earl Grey. I like black tea a lot, preferably with a little honey but absolutely no milk—it destroys both the color, freshness, and taste.

And your idea of a perfect afternoon?

Ideally a sunny and lovely day with close friends or family. Nothing much planned, rather go with the flow together and ending with a good dinner. But it can also be a great day in the studio when you feel connected and into your work. Or a rainy day when you decide to just be home and listen

to music, read, and cook a good meal.