

ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

AnnaSofia Mååg

By Lina Ingeborgrud

In the small village of Jukkasjärvi in the northern part of Sweden lies a fairytale-like hotel and art exhibition made from scratch out of ice and snow. It was founded in 1989 and is reborn every winter. The structure of the ice hotel remains below freezing, around minus 5 °C, and the hotel lasts from December to April when it melts away and finds its way back to the nearby Torne River. The architecture of the hotel varies from year to year, but it consistently features a church, reception area, and unique suites for guests. A jury selects artists by application and they are invited to Jukkasjärvi in November to work for an intense and limited period.

Swedish artist AnnaSofia Mååg has been translating her ideas into ice and snow in the hotel almost every winter since 2006. Here, she has created six different art suites on her own, and her plan for Elephant in the Room was chosen for an art suite during the winter season of 2015/2016. The work is a life size (three-meter tall) African Savannah Elephant hand carved out of snow and ice. Mååg says the following about the process of making this piece of art on her website:

"During a sculpture process like this, I always get connected with my piece. The passion of sculpting grabs me and I get lost in time. In this case, I could feel the majestic elephant, how it moved, its sounds, the flapping of its ears, the sway of the trunk, the soft imprint and weight changing through the body when it sets down its foot... It is a she. She comes from the African Savannah and her name is Betsy."

Mååg explains that working with ice as a medium is different in several ways. For instance, you cannot add material to the sculpture in the same way as when working with materials such

as clay. With ice, you have to work your way into the block, removing the material that is not to be part of the sculpture. Further, ice is transparent, which creates a completely new set of possibilities and challenges. In particular, working with ice requires particular conditions such as stable low temperatures – like those found in the village of Jukkasjärvi.

Mååg's sculptures give an immediate impression that always conceals another movement; a silent and obtrusive worry. They deal with the tension between what is hidden and what is revealed, between what is expressed and what remains silent. An 'elephant in the room' is an English-language metaphorical idiom for an obvious problem or risk that no one wants to discuss. Betsy is an elephant in a very particular type of room – she is removed from her normal habitat and transplanted into a frozen Nordic context, making her presence even more intrusive. Moreover, much like the other sculptures at the ice hotel, Betsy is a transient piece of art. She will melt away in the end, but the issues she represents may not disappear. As such, Betsy materialises issues not properly acted upon, like those of climate change and the preservation of endangered species.

AnnaSofia Mååg works in the fields of sculpture, ceramics, ice and snow, and her art has been exhibited in Sweden as well as abroad. Her work is included in the permanent collections of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Stockholm, the Röhss Museum in Gothenburg, Sweden, and the Icheon World Ceramic Center in South Korea.

To learn more about AnnaSofia Mååg and her work, visit her website: <http://www.annasofia.se/>