

Mohair wool blanket, €1,180, Lena Rewell.

## Dream Weaver

Words by CAMILLA ALFTHAN Photograph by MARGARITA SHEREMET

LENA REWELL'S DECADENT MOHAIR BLANKETS are a culmination of a lifetime obsession with material and craft. Thick, luxurious and in colours plucked from the Finnish landscape, each is handwoven by women in the Finnish countryside and finished with those substantial signature fringes. "If you want to create luxury you must work with the best," says Rewell. "I always buy the most expensive mohair and then send it to the best weavers. It's never been about the money but about fulfilling my visions as a designer."

At 91 years old, Rewell has left her namesake company, Lena Rewell Studio, to her daughter Dita (these days, the elder Rewell spends her afternoons painting). The blankets, however, stay true to her original vision, brought to life using the same traditional methods – slowly, by hand – as they were when she first designed them in 1963. The blankets' vivid colourways were inspired as much by Finnish nature as they were by Rewell's own well of emotion. "I've had a

long relationship with the archipelago and the sea," she says. "But in the end it's all about perception and how I feel." It tracks that the throws have names such as Cloud and Rock. Others, meanwhile, take on Finnish monikers including Kämpy (pinecone) and Tuuli (wind).

It all began in Helsinki, when a young Rewell was given a loom and started to weave her very first blanket. "As I was a little lazy, our maid offered to finish it," she says. "That was an early hint that I shouldn't do the weaving myself but rather delegate to others." Growing up on the Finnish capital's idyllic island of Brändö, Rewell first got a taste for sumptuous materials courtesy of her father, a textile engineer. Though she didn't take to the loom, she was certainly ambitious. "I always loved making plans," she says. "When others relax with a book, I get my pen and my sketch pad and start to compose something."

After studying at the now-shuttered Ateneum School of Art and Design (among

her professors was the legendary Kaj Franck. Today the school is part of Aalto University), Rewell set off to Paris to seek a job with a major fashion house. Her audacity paid off; during the 1960s and 1970s she designed fabrics for the likes of Dior and Lanvin while also forging a long-standing design relationship with iconic Swedish design house Svenskt Tenn, which still stocks her blankets today. Though Rewell once produced a full collection of mohair products under her own name, today the studio has distilled its offering down to the signature blankets, as well as a handful of winter accessories.

Over the years, Rewell has accrued many famous fans, from Queen Margrethe, who once bought her woven dresses in Copenhagen, to Hermès – Rewell was tapped to design and craft blankets for the house in the 1990s. Today, however, the biggest fans of her work are her grandchildren, proving a cosy mohair blanket never loses its appeal – especially here in the Nordics. ❁