

**ELLEN EHK** GEOMANCY



# ELLEN EHK GEOMANCY

This is a presentation Ellen Ehk's third solo exhibition at Berg Gallery titled *Geomancy*. The exhibition opened August 20, 2020 and will continue until September 26, 2020.

All installation photos by Jonas Ingerstedt.

## BERG

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Ellen Ehk was born in 1976 in Nybro, Sweden. She received a Master of Applied Arts in Ceramic Art at the University of Design and Crafts in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2002. Ehk has made several solo presentations in Sweden including three at Berg Gallery, Stockholm and two at Vida Museum & Art Hall, Öland, and also at Galerie NeC, Paris and PULS Gallery, Brussels. She has made many group exhibitions, among others at the Da End Gallery in Paris, the Röhsska Museum, VIDA Museum and Solliden Royal Park in Sweden and galleries, museums and art fairs in Japan, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, South Korea, China, Denmark, Spain and Finland.

Ehk has made several public commissions, including “Throne” in Gröndal and “Stone and Lantern” at Södertörn’s University, both in Stockholm. She is represented in the collections of Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Röhsska Museet, Gothenburg, Shanghai Arts and Craft Museums, the Swedish Public Art Agency (Statens Konstråd), several Swedish regions and cities, and in several private collections. In 2019, she was the first artist to receive the Ulrica Hydman Vallien Memorial Grant.



*"Night Tree" and "Riverstone (Blue)"* (No. 14 & 15 (referring to the "List of Artworks" on page 21 – 22)).



*Installation picture of EHK's third solo presentation **Geomancy** at Berg Gallery.*



*"Geomancy (Space)", "Gyromitra (Shell)" and Gyromitra (Brown)". (No. 08, 07 & 09)*



*"Terra (Towers)". (No. 04)*



*"Riverstone"*. (No. 03, 01 & 02)





*"Geomancy (Purple)", Geomancy (Alchemy)" and "Gyromitra (Shell)". (No. 06, 05 & 07)*



*Installation picture "Geomancy". (No. 07 to 20)*



*Gyromitra (Blue)", "Flower of Tan (Pappillatum)", "Geomancy (Red)" and Night Tree (Roots)" in the front. (No. 13, 12, 11 & 10) (In the background No. 22 - 27)*



*“Geomancy (Red)”, “Flower of Tan (Pappillatum)” and “Gyromitra (Blue)”.* (No. 11, 12 & 13)



*"Flower of Tan (Resin)", "Flower of Tan (Coal)", "Gyromitra (Green)", "Riverstone" and "Terra". (No. 16, 17, 18, 19 & 20)*



*"Riverstone", "Terra", "Geomancy (Sorrow)" and "Gyromitra (Green)". (No. 19, 20, 21 & 18)*



*Installation picture from "Geomancy". In the back, on the shelf from left "Geomancy (Root)", "Flower of Tan (Dirt)", "Entangled", "Geomancy", "Moss (Amber)" and "Moss (Carapax)". (No. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 & 27) (On the podium in the front No. 09, 07, 06 & 05)*



*"Geomancy". (No. 25)*





*"Geomancy", "Moss (Amber)" and "Moss (Carapax)". (No. 25, 26 & 27)*



*"Gyromitra (White)", "Night Tree" and "Geomancy (Carapax) on the wall. (No. 29, 28 & 30)*



*"Night Tree" (No. 28)*



*"Geomancy (Carapax)" (No. 30)*

# LIST OF ARTWORKS

## ON THE PODIUM

### **RIVERSTONE (No.01 – 03)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
11×18×17/16×28×27/18×32×30 cm

**SOLD/SOLD/SOLD**

### **TERRA (TOWERS) (No.04)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
48×44×29 cm

**SOLD**

### **GEOMANCY (ALCHEMY) (No.05)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
28×32×32 cm

### **GEOMANCY (PURPLE) (No.06)**

Glass / Unique / 2020 / In co-operation  
with Kosta Boda  
34×47×19 cm

**SOLD**

### **GYROMITRA (SHELL) (No.07)**

Glass / Unique / 2020 / In co-operation  
with Kosta Boda  
44×44×42 cm

### **GEOMANCY (SPACE) (No.08)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
25×37×30 cm

**SOLD**

### **GYROMITRA (BROWN) (No.09)**

Glass / Unique / 2020 / In co-operation  
with Kosta Boda  
57×35×35 cm

**SOLD**

### **NIGHT TREE (ROOTS) (No.10)**

Bronze / Unique / 2020  
80×65×55 cm

### **GEOMANCY (RED) (No.11)**

Glass / Unique / 2020 / In co-operation  
with Kosta Boda  
36×48×16 cm

**SOLD**

### **FLOWER OF TAN (PAPILLATUM) (No.12)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
43×32×20 cm

**SOLD**

### **GYROMITRA (BLUE) (No.13)**

Glass / Unique / 2020 / In co-operation  
with Kosta Boda  
50×36×36 cm

**SOLD**

### **NIGHT TREE (No.14)**

Bronze / Unique / 2020  
61×38×42 cm

**SOLD**

### **RIVERSTONE (BLUE) (No.15)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
20×36×34 cm

### **FLOWER OF TAN (RESIN) (No.16)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
36×24×22 cm

**SOLD**

### **FLOWER OF TAN (COAL) (No.17)**

Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
45×28×23 cm

**GYROMITRA (GREEN) (No.18)**  
 Glass / Unique / 2020 / In co-operation  
 with Kosta Boda  
 44x35x35 cm

**RIVERSTONE (No.19)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 26x47x26 cm  
**SOLD**

**TERRA (No.20)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 37x32x23 cm

#### ON THE FLOOR

**GEOMANCY (SORROW) (No.21)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 76x53x38 cm

#### ON THE SHELF

**GEOMANCY (ROOT) (No.22)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 30x17x36 cm

**FLOWER OF TAN (DIRT) (No.23)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 44x24x19 cm  
**SOLD**

**ENTANGLED (No.24)**  
 Bronze / Unique / 2020  
 35x83x25 cm  
**SOLD**

**GEOMANCY (No.25)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 41x61x24 cm  
**SOLD**

**MOSS (AMBER) (No.26)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 22x28x24 cm  
**SOLD**

**MOSS (CARAPAX) (No.27)**  
 Porcelain / Unique / 2020  
 23x26x21 cm  
**SOLD**

#### ON THE FLOOR

**NIGHT TREE (No.28)**  
 Bronze / Unique / 2020  
 76x61x55 cm

**GYROMITRA (WHITE) (No.29)**  
 Glass / Unique / 2020 / In co-operation  
 with Kosta Boda  
 50x33x33 cm

#### ON THE WALL

**GEOMANCY (CARAPAX) (No.30)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 43x57x3 cm

#### IN THE SHOWROOM

**GEOMANCY (BONE) (No.31)**  
 Porcelain / Unique / 2020  
 32x33x12 cm  
**SOLD**

**TOTEM (No.32)**  
 Bronze / Unique / 2020  
 29x18x14 cm

**GEOMANCY (STUMP) (No.33)**  
 Stoneware / Unique / 2020  
 35x26x20 cm

# ELLEN EHK AND GEOMANCY

*By Joanna Sandell 2020*

Slick stones in a river. The thought of water running over them, rushing, gushing. Soft algae that colour the surface, so surprisingly green, almost fluorescent. The next object; a coarse surface, seemingly volcanic, but originating from the forest. A knotted pine crouches down, appearing to be on the run, sneaking away from its place. What if the trees move during the night? Fittingly, the sculpture is called "Night Tree" and came into being through Ellen Ehk's research into the soul of nature.

In her art Ellen works both methodically and intuitively. In many ways you could say that she personifies the new artist's role. Contemporary artists today seem to take on a role that was previously carried by many different professions, the adventurer, the priest, the journalist, the scientist, the shaman. What kind of discoveries can be made through a material?

In Ellen's expertise of working with ceramics, glass and bronze, among others, it is impossible to stay within the boundaries of the medium. The material is so intimately tied to the story it is telling, to the question it asks. Does a stone in a river shine? Does a tree dream at night? What does it dream about? Can the memory of a forest hold a physical form? And what form could that possibly be?

Geomancy is a concept connecting diverse spiritual practices of fortune telling in natural elements such as sand, bone and pebble stones. It is a method practiced around the world in many different cultures, and the concept has guided forth new works by Ellen Ehk, giving weight to the form of the material, the intention of the practitioner as well as the importance of chance. The spatial relationship between objects are central to the belief system and tells us how life here on earth is connected to planetary bodies. Within art, where the connection between form and intentions of the artist is of great importance, a concept such as geomancy is also fitting as it alludes to ancient relationships that artists have to many different materials.

Is there a difference in growing up in rural and urban spaces? Could it be said that we are equally brought up and fostered by surrounding rocks, plants, animals and the elements of weather as by human kin?

Ellen grew up in proximity to the forest. As a child she spent much time in the forest, it was her home, her place of adventure and of consolation. An informal learning environment where she was taught strength, agility, intuition and healing. With her (human) best friend she took turns climbing as far up in trees as possible, to

dangerous heights that pushed the boundaries of what the body might perform. The cuts and scars in the skin of their legs became proof of victories won, something to flaunt in school, something to use as a tool for measuring bravery. When Ellen reached her teens “her” forest was cleared through a severe form of clearcutting that is no longer allowed in forestry. She describes the experience as a form of silent trauma. If her childhood house had burnt down everyone would have understood her deep sorrow, but her home happened to be a forest that no longer existed.

In her early biography Ellen EHK focused on the field of craft and she became well known and much respected in Sweden for her explorations of utility objects. Thin cups, stylish teapots, an interest in functional objects as a form of intimacy. A cup made by the hand to be passed on into another hand that raises the cup toward his or her own lips. But in the creative process of making sets of beautiful craft objects a frustration also arose in Ellen. This is how some of Ellen’s first artworks were formed, as quite heavy rocklike forms.

These early sculptures have a heaviness and darkness attached to them. Ellen EHK also completed an art exhibition where the art objects were laid onto benches and tables of stainless steel, alluding to autopsy and dissection. The clearcutting of her forest had now received a series of physical narratives.

What are the effects on nature in the human desire to extract value, maximize profit and tame natural environments?

Ellen EHK shows us the relationship between the body of nature and our physical bodies. The “Night Tree” that came about through Ellen’s persistent experimentation by glazing small pine trees and firing them in the kiln illustrates both Ellen’s interest in nature’s own intelligence and rhythm of time as well as her untiring ways of exploring a certain material. After months of finding broken porcelain pines in the kiln a night tree finally came out whole, unbroken but infinitely fragile. Later, she developed a production form of creating similar trees using wax and casting them in bronze. And, in a further development of these art objects she started building new trees that seem to stand on or run on their roots through consolidating several different trees and their root systems into a single sculpture.

In ceramics Ellen EHK continues her discoveries. After having explored the boundaries, conditions and the limitless possibilities of clay as a material over two decades, she has come to work mostly with liquid clay. Sometimes the work with a sculpture begins with what is usually the finishing procedure in ceramics, the glazing of the object. Ellen also continues to invent new ways of casting ceramics. The studio becomes a laboratory where new findings around material and form are made. At the same time a visit to her studio brings to mind natural phenomena such



as the elements of wind, water and heat; the weather. A sculpture takes on the form of a coral, but the point of departure is actually forest moss. In her personal manner Ellen manages to reveal what indigenous populations and mystics across the world have always known. What is found on land has a mirror in the ocean. The roots beneath earth reach forth and forward in a form that meets the crown of a tree.

In the fall of 2019 Ellen Ehk received an award in the memory of the late artist Ulrica Hydman Vallien that included a production residency in the glass blowing studios of Kosta Boda, Sweden. Once again, Ellen invented her own method of producing sculptures, this time in glass. In the material glass, as in ceramics, the material is put under extreme physical challenge. Sand in the form of glass moves as water and soon solidifies in the same manner as ice. Ellen asks the glassblowers to blow the glass within large moulds that contain wet clay. Once again, nature is given a memory that is fixed as it meets the gaze of you and I.

That which is living has a definite physical form, yet the living is in a continuous cycle of becoming and of disintegration. In a similar manner the forest of a child or a beloved seaside cliff is also temporal. We grow up and develop as humans, the perceived distance between a path in the forest and a well-known rock is different for the person that is no longer a child. But what about an artwork, a sculpture? In the story about an artwork and in the materialization of the artwork itself there is something that overcomes time. I would like to suggest that this is what happens in the experience of the art of Ellen Ehk. I remember my own experiences of nature, as well as Ellen's. The material has received an exact form. It has transgressed both time and decay.

In Ellen Ehk's ways of approaching a material we are given a key to the intentions of the artist. In the contradictions of what we experience when seeing her sculptures there is a similarity to the many questions confronting a child surrounded by nature. To touch ice can feel both hot and cold, a spider's web is fragile, yet surprisingly strong, the shimmery powder of butterfly wings turns to a dull dust when our fingers touch them too forcefully. The ceramic river stones are surprisingly light, the Night Tree is fragile and asks for protection. But Ellen's night trees are cast in bronze. The trees that were once cut down have been cast in a material usually saved to commemorate kings and powerful leaders long after their death. The young plant, already so full of character but equally fragile and seemingly temporal in its character has been given an eternal memory through becoming art.

# ELLEN EHK: CURRICULUM VITAE

Born in 1976, lives and works in Nybro, Sweden.

## EDUCATION

HDK, Academy of Design and Crafts:  
Master of Applied Arts in Ceramic Art,  
1997-2002

Capellagården, School of Arts and Craft:  
Ceramic Form and Craft, 1995-1997

## SOLO PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

Berg Gallery, "Geomancy", Stockholm,  
2020

Gallery Nec, "Enraciné", Paris, 2019

Galleri Anna H, Göteborg, 2018

Puls Gallery, Brussels, 2018

Daniel Berlin, Skåne Tranås, 2018

Berg Gallery, Stockholm "Through the  
trees" 2017

Berg Gallery, Stockholm "Forest theme"  
2016

VIDA Museum & Konsthall, Öland, "Dark  
Woods", 2015

Kaolin, Stockholm, "Dark Woods" 2015

Konsthantverkarna, "My Woodland  
Fantasies" Stockholm, 2013

VIDA Museum & Konsthall, "My  
Woodland Fantasies", 2013

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

Galerie Nec, Paris, 2020

Hallwylska Museet, Stockholm 2019

Småland Museum, Växjö 2019

Nordic Art Center, Xiamen, Kina, 2019

Sollidens slott skulpturpark, Öland,  
2017,2019

Collectible Art fair, Brussels, 2019

Chart Art & Design Fair, Copenhagen,  
Berg Gallery, 2018

"Sculpture Unleashed" Cecilia Hillström  
Gallery, Stockholm, 2018

Galleri Sebastian Schildt, Stockholm, 2018

Da End Gallery, Paris 2013, 2014, 2016

SIDE Gallery, Barcelona, 2017

Krapprups Konsthall, Höganäs, 2017, 2010

VIDA Museum & Konsthall, Borgholm,  
2016

Vogze gallery, Seoul, 2015

Keramiskt Center, Höganäs, 2013

Sofiero Slott, Helsingborg, 2012

Hanasaari, Helsingfors, 2012

Virserums Konsthall, 2012

Signerat, Arkitekturmuseet, 2012

Form&Design Center Malmö, 2012

Falkenberg's Museum, 2012

Collect, Saatchi Gallery, London, 2011

Claska Gallery, Tokyo, 2011

Deici Gallery, Tokyo, 2011

Nature Gallery, Nagano, 2011

Sugata Gallery, Kyoto, 2011

Ameland Art Month, Holland, 2010

Arkitekturmuseet, Konstslöjdsalong, 2010

Gustavsbergs Porslinsmuseum, "Merikipe,  
Stockholm-Tblisi 2010

Röhsska Museet 2002, 2009

Shanghai Arts and Crafts Museum 2008

**PUBLIC COMMISSIONS (SELECTED)**

"Tron" ("Throne") Stockholms Konst,  
Gröndal, Stockholm 2019

"Sten och Lykta" ("Stone and Lantern")  
National Public Arts Council, Södertörns  
Univer-sity, Stockholm, 2018

Örnens äldreboende, Tingsryd 2015

Smedjans förskola, Kalmar 2014

Färjestadens skola 2010

**GRANTS (SELECTED)**

Ulrica Hydman Valliens  
minnesstipendium, 2019

The Swedish Arts Grants Committee,  
working grant (2007, 2012-2013, 2017-2018,  
2020-2021)

Gyllene fjädern, Barometern OT's  
kulturpris 2016

International Artists Studio Program in  
Sweden 2008, 2014

Konsthantverkets Vänner 2009

**COLLECTIONS**

Röhsska Museet, Museum of Arts and  
Craft, Gothenburg Sweden

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden

Statens konstråd, National Art Council of  
Sweden

Stockholm Konst, city of Stockholm

Region Västra Götaland

Göteborgs Stad, City of Gothenburg

Uppsala Läns Landsting

Stockholms Läns Landsting

Shanghai Arts and Crafts Museum

Svenska Kyrkan, Swedish Church

Municipalities of Örebro, Stockholm,  
Tingsryd, Nybro, Torsås, Kalmar,  
Mörbylånga and Karlskrona.

Private Collections

**PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS  
(SELECTED)**

Teacher in ceramics, Capellagården 2007-  
2016

Teacher in artistic practice, Swedish  
School of Glass, 2018-2019

Examinator BBFA, Oslo Art Academy,  
2019, 2020

Guest lecturer, The Pottery Workshop,  
Jingdezhen China 2017

Artist in residence, Shenhou China, 2014

Artist in residence, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2010

