

In the tapestry called "De Tre Brødre" (The Three Brothers), the tale that this tapestry is based on describes how three beautiful princesses are kidnapped and locked inside the trolls' castle. The trolls throw the key out the window and bewitch the women's sweethearts, three brothers, transforming them into a deer, a fish, and a bird. After years of searching, the bird finds the key and, with the help of the deer and fish, rushes to the castle to unlock the door. The princesses recognize their sweethearts, who then instantly return to their human forms.

The motif "The Three Brothers" was probably woven for the first time by the Norwegian Handicraft Association for the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. A rug with the same motif, also woven on the Handicraft, was shown at the large "Nordische Kunstausstellung" in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld in 1902, an exhibition that was strongly dominated by Munthe which showed 54 pictures and two tapestries. The motif fits into the series of images inspired by old folk songs, fairy tales and legends, many of which were transferred to tapestries. Some relate directly to concrete stories, while others, like this one, have references to several different mythical legends. We see three young girls with long blonde hair, perhaps princesses, who each relate to one animal; a bird, a fish and a reindeer. The title suggests that this may be a transformation myth. In the background we see the mountain the blue, and over this the trolls peek out.

The picture is a loom box that belonged to the loom Anna Johannessen (1905-1978) from Bergen. She was a student of the famous artist Ragna Breivik. Breivik, together with Augusta Christensen and Kristine Johannessen, are considered the most important weavers of Munthe's rugs.



Breivik was a student of the latter two. In 1919 she contacted Gerhard Munthe to get permission to weave from his cartons. Munthe was so impressed with her work that she was given a blank power of attorney to choose and weave his motifs.

Anna Johannessen also had direct contact with Munthe and was given permission to weave his motifs, but Munthe wanted Ragna Breivik to ensure the quality of the work. In a letter to Johannessen dated November, 6 1925, Munthe writes: "I hereby give you permission to weave a rug according to my motif: 'Proud Margit' - provided that a good working drawing is made and preferably collaborates with Ragna Breidvik. Good luck!"

A tapestry version of "The Three Brother" is owned by Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and one is at the Lutheran Deaconess Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois donated by King Håkon VII and Queen Maud in 1909.

*For more information see Weaving Bewitchment: Gerhard Munthe's Folk-Tale Tapestries, by Laurann Gilbertson and Kathleen Stokker. Vesterheim Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2003.*