

**“The material reminds me a lot of the light expression of drawing, which feels vibrant with the solid wooden shapes. The strength of the wood meets the fragility of the glass.”**

How does one describe the sensation that Julia Bondesson’s universe evokes? A prelude? A threshold where the morbid meets the sublime? Could one perhaps detect the same sense of multi-layered ambiguity as the puppet theatre in *The Double Life of Véronique* by Krzysztof Kieslowski or Louise Bourgeois’s later sculptural works in textile (like *High Heel*, for instance)?

In her practice, Bondesson has combined her fascination with puppet theatre and her infatuation with wood. Her current atelier is even situated in a former carpenter’s workshop.

“I feel like I’m in a blocky phase right now, where everything is big, voluminous, and lovely”, Julia Bondesson says with a laugh when I speak to her over a video call from her studio in the countryside in Halland, two months before the opening in Stockholm.

“I feel that pine is my material, I like the smell and the density, it’s just the right level of hardness and weight”, Bondesson answers when I ask her if she has a favourite among the different types of wood. For the upcoming exhibition *Stay* at Belenius Gallery, Bondesson’s expression has become noticeably more abstract – allowing the more haunting qualities of her earlier work to recede somewhat, though not without leaving a trace of their quiet allure. “For this show, I’ve worked exclusively with the electric saw and focused on developing that technique. It results in a more stripped-down expression, which I think suits this exhibition.”

She shows me around the studio, and we linger in front of a series of new works, with working titles such as *Nest* and *Tulip* “These pieces are more of a different track than before, and it’s more about working quickly and almost letting chance determine what the final form becomes.” Some of these works have shapes in neon added to them – another signature trademark of Bondesson. “It was in the search for dynamics and energy that I began working with neon in some of my sculptures. The material reminds me a lot of the light expression of drawing, which feels vibrant with the solid wooden shapes. The strength of the wood meets the fragility of the glass.”

#### **What’s the backstory to the exhibition title *Stay*?**

“*Stay* is about being still, but also about the fact that it takes effort to be or remain in one place – that *Stay* becomes an active passivity. And I feel that several of the works are in a meditative phase, yet still in motion.”

#### **Do you have a repertoire of characters that tend to reappear in your work?**

“Yes, there are a few: for instance, *The Child*, which is a character that first appeared in a video work that I made when I attended Mejan (The Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm). *Mother* is another one, and lastly *The Guardian*, a sculpture that was initially part of the Beckers Art Award Exhibition at Färgfabriken (for which Bondesson was a recipient in 2015). Supposedly, a lot of the visitors got really spooked by him, due to his strong expression.”

**Julia Bondesson / Stay**

08.05 – 04.06.2026

**When do you know when a piece is ready?**

“What determines whether a work is finished is usually that I no longer see what I can add to the material. That the dialogue between us is complete – up to this point. Then there often comes an exhibition where the space and perhaps more works want to join in the conversation.”

– *Malin Ebbing, 2026*

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**Julia Bondesson** (b. 1983) in Kinnared, Sweden. Lives and works in Åléd, Sweden.

Bodies and body parts are the backbone of Bondesson's works. Her material is predominantly wood, and the meticulously carved and chiselled sculptures, with occasional scorch marks, have an exposed and vulnerable quality. She often combines the traditional qualities of wood sculptures with paint, stain, neon light, rope and textile elements. Trained in sculpture and puppet making in both Sweden and Asia, her work combines tradition with a very personal and contemporary language.

Bondesson's interest in Chinese philosophy and western psychology can be sensed in the works. The beauty of the material and the careful craftsmanship of sculpting, is often somewhat disturbed and highlighted in the combination of materials and the elements of paint or stain. The artist often activates the sculptures physically, using them as matter in performances or videos, where the sculptures are activated as puppets, blurring the boundary between object and subject. For Bondesson, the performances can be seen as a collaboration with the sculptures, as a dance, a choreography between the artist and her works.

Bondesson graduated from the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm in 2011 and has also studied hand puppetry in Taiwan and art in Japan and Thailand. Recent solo exhibitions include Ronneby konsthall, 2025, Kungsbacka konsthall, 2023, Trelleborgs konstmuseum, 2022, Åstorps konsthall, 2022, Galleri Verkligheten, 2022, Belenius, 2021, Moderna Museet, Malmö, 2021, Eskilstuna konstmuseum, 2019. In 2015, the artist was awarded the Beckers artist grant. Bondesson is represented in the collections of Moderna Museet, Ståhl Collection, Hallands konstmuseum, Malmö konstmuseum, Region Skåne, Stockholm Konst, Växjö kommun and Jönköpings läns landsting and many prominent private collections.