

Lina Selander *Silphium*
Kunsthall Trondheim 6 March – 27 April

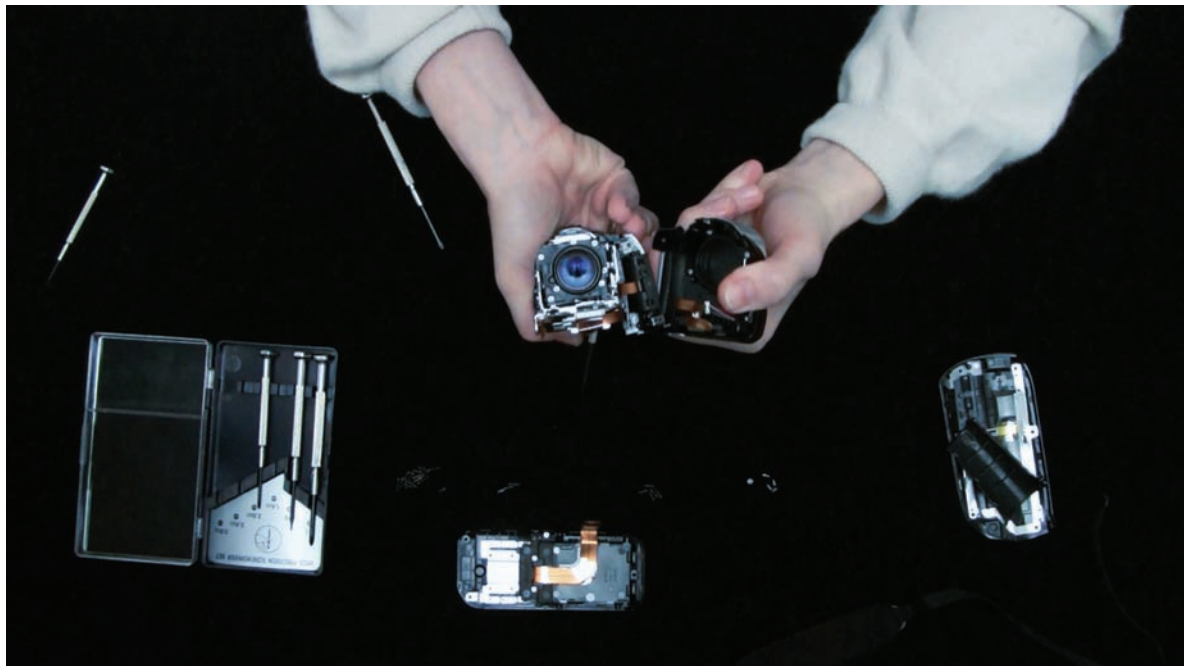
When the atomic bomb detonated over Hiroshima, it emanated a light so strong that it penetrated every building. The shadows of cremated bodies were burned onto the city's surfaces as photographs. These ghosts, the imprints of ultimate destruction, figure as recurring images in Lina Selander's recent films *To the Vision Machine* and *Model of Continuation* (both 2013). As in most of the Stockholm-born artist's layered and complex works, a decisive historical moment becomes the starting point for a longer chain of reflection on how our visual culture is intimately linked to technological and political shifts in human history. *Model of Continuation* is ingeniously set in the artist's studio, where the viewer sees the earlier *To the Vision Machine* being projected on the wall. The screening of a film within a film creates a stunning stratification of different image spaces. As the camera shifts viewpoints, you become aware of your own gaze as well as the technological apparatus enabling the flow of images on the screen. It's an elegant Brechtian trick, further intensified when the film repeatedly shows the artist disassembling the object that made the film: her camera.

I'm watching the film on a monitor in a narrow, corridorlike room in the miniscule Kunsthall Trondheim. It's a newly opened institution, temporarily residing in a former shop in the city centre. For almost a year the space has been energising the local scene with a low-key but challenging contemporary programme, as well as an artist residency. This show also includes Selander's new film *Silphium* (2014), in which she further develops and refines the montage method that has become her artistic signature. Images are interwoven with found footage, other artworks and texts. Here fragments from Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) and Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* (1533), with the famous anamorphic skull, are keys to a dark story about man's destruction of the earth's natural resources.

Packed with such more-or-less-hidden quotes, Selander's work could be read as a series of learned riddles posed to the spectator and demanding to be solved. However, I prefer to take another way, at the risk of getting lost in her labyrinthine montage of image and text, and move through her works as if through a

dream where all images and stories are possible at the same time. The point of departure in *Silphium* is the eponymous, ancient and now extinct plant, which once grew on the coast of North Africa in the Greek colony Cyrene. Its medicinal qualities made silphium valuable; intensive trade finally made it extinct. In Selander's film, an ancient coin that bears the plant's imprint becomes the catalyst for a vertiginous image-essay travelling through the collection of the NTNU Museum of Natural History and Archaeology in Trondheim and onwards to the bizarre and paranoid surveillance technology at the Stasi Museum in Berlin. A persistent trope in the film is the futility of our efforts to exert control over nature and matter by creating technological systems that contain the potential to ultimately make man obsolete. As Selander underlines with her recurring visual references to the robotic qualities of the camera, our technologies for seeing don't need us any more. Like the camera drones flying over us, they function independently, constantly filming what they see without the help of the human eye.

Sara Arrhenius



Model of Continuation, 2013 (still), HD video, 24 min, colour, sound. Courtesy the artist