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# Artist Lina Selander introduced by curator Sara Arrhenius

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[Sara Arrhenius \(http://www.radicate.eu/sara-arrhenius-director-of-the-bonniers-konsthall-stockholm/\)](http://www.radicate.eu/sara-arrhenius-director-of-the-bonniers-konsthall-stockholm/) is the director of the Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm, Sweden.

[Lina Selander \(http://www.radicate.eu/lina-selander/\)](http://www.radicate.eu/lina-selander/) is an artist living and working in Stockholm.

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Conversation transcription below

**“Model of Continuation” by Lina Selander. HD-video, 24 min, colour, sound and mute.**

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**Sara Arrhenius** (<http://www.radicate.eu/sara-arrhenius-director-of-the-bonniers-konsthall-stockholm/>): **When the atomic bomb detonated over Hiroshima it emanated a light so bright 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, are recurring images in your latest films: To the Vision Machine and Model of Continuation. What did you find interesting in these images?**

**Lina Selander** (<http://www.radicate.eu/lina-selander/>): I had worked with referentiality, radiation and indexicality in Lenin's lamp glows in the peasant's hut (an installation exhibited at Manifesta 9 in Genk 2012), both in the film with images of, for example, fossils, early x-ray photos, shadows, etc., and in the photographic work that is part of the installation, the radiographs (photographic paper on which I had placed stones containing uranium and kept in solid black boxes for a couple of weeks). I was fascinated by a photographic image made without light, where something invisible becomes visible, as the radiation reacts with the silver in the photographic paper. This also points to how nuclear radiation was discovered, as a photographic event, by Henri Becquerel during his experiments with photographic plates. So, the elements of the installation are both material witnesses of the experience of modernization and agents of the very same history — a propaganda tool in the service of modernity, but also directly connected to the scientific discovery that made it possible to harness nuclear power as an energy source. Then Trond Lundemo, who has written

beautifully about Lenin's lamp, recommended that I read the book Atomic Light (Shadow Optics), by Akira Mizuta Lippit, and that led me to pursue the "visual inscription's invisible centre", the non-visibility of film and the photographic image, and the uncertainty regarding our visual access to reality... And the detonation of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima is like an original event here, itself a photographic event, an extreme light that exposes darkness, shadow and invisibility at its core, as Lippit writes: "... a form of total photography that exceeded the economies of representation, testing the very visibility of the visual. Only a negative photography is possible in the atomic arena, a skiagraphy, a shadow photography. The shadow of photography. By positing the spectator within the frames of an annihilating image, an image of annihilation, but also the annihilation of images, no one survives, nothing remains..." So, in short, these ghosts and imprints of ultimate destruction uncover a lot of trails to follow... They are brutal, poetic, unintentional, a kind of true photography, more photographic than the photographic image...

**SA: In your work, a decisive historical moment often 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.**

**LS:** I am generally interested in over-documentation, places and events and such that are really well documented, where there exists an abundance of texts, stories, images and that are seen as historically important and are part of a collective memory... So I guess the archive, in the sense as an encounter between history and media, becomes an important and decisive place. Even more so of course if the historical moment in question is itself connected to topics such as photography, image, referentiality, indexicality, editing, surveillance, control, etc., as it perhaps always is, through the archive. I think what is important here is the chain of reflection. A good way to describe a film! I often think about what it is that makes this chain, what is it that ties it together. The materiality of this reflection and the many turns it can take.

**SA: In Model of Continuation, 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 cameras shift viewpoints, you become aware of your own gaze as well as the technological apparatus enabling the flow of images on the screen.**

**LS:** When I began working with To the Vision Machine I had a vague idea of a kind of detached perceptual state that I wanted to evoke, that would be both registering and projecting in the same instant, producing images for itself to

consume. And that we, who would look at these images, this series of images, would find ourselves in front of something extraneous, not really by us and not really for us. This vague idea was also an attempt to read the “visual inscription’s invisible centre” as the digital code that can become images only when opened with the right software. As if this digital information was produced and processed completely by the technology itself, with the visual aspect, what we see, as a kind of residual product, a waste material. When watching the finished film (after some time, after it had been shown) I began to feel that there was something missing. I sensed a lack of experience in the material, that it had not been challenged, not examined enough, not enough subjected to or marked by the ideas and experiences I wanted it to connect to... There wasn’t anything in it to measure and examine itself so to speak, not enough commerce between its elements... they seemed too close to each other, and the text was (is) in an unclear position in relation to the images. At this time, the dialogue around my work that I have been having more or less since 1999 with Oscar (my husband) took a new turn, and he hesitantly became more involved in the actual shaping of the work. After having discussed the matter with him, I decided to project and re-film the film in the studio where I had filmed myself disassembling the camera that I had filmed with in Hiroshima. (The disassembling was a way to “search” for the invisible image, the absent negative in the digital camera, which I thought of as a metaphor for radioactivity). This return of (part of) the material to its place of origin — was performed to re-examine and question it again — opened it up for a new way of viewing the material. The room became a perfect container, it showed three different layers of time and images at the same time: outside the window, with the gardeners and the vegetation, the room with the ordinary objects, the plant, books, etc., almost as a still image, and then the projected film itself. In creating a rather static position for the viewer, a kind of locking of the gaze, a calm evaluation of these different image spaces, their interaction as well as their common surface or interface becomes possible. The fusion of producing and consuming (viewing, reading, interpreting, recognizing) images — the vision machine — becomes visible, perhaps. I dreamed of a closed circuit between projector, computer and the film... a detachment, a weakening, and drainage of the meaning of the images. Also, there is a sort of space between the text applied to the projected film in the room and (almost) the same text applied to the film, a visual fissure through a repetition, or a doubling, of the subtitles. One scene from *To the Vision Machine* that is shown was not projected, not in the room, 1:1 so to speak, in *Model of Continuation* is a model of the Peace Memorial Museum, in the Peace Memorial Museum in

Hiroshima, where the auto focus of the camera finds a reflection of a window on the other side of the model (which becomes blurred) and we see on the outside of the museum, a person walking by, some cars, trees, accompanied by the sound in the museum — the voice and music form a dramatic documentary. (The museum plays an important part both in Alan Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) and in *Children of Hiroshima* (1952) by Kaneto Shindo.) Needless to say, the material from *To the Vision Machine* that is used in *Model of Continuation* is re-edited, rearranged, certain things have been removed, others added. I would not let a simple concept, for example just filming a projection, stand in the way of the new rhythm that can emerge with a new setting.

**SA: In your work you often use a montage method. Images are interwoven with found footage, other artworks and texts.**

**LS:** As I mentioned, I like to work with material that is already marked by collective experiences and references. I often use images, texts and text fragments, and sounds from very different sources in one and the same project. Materials from different times and in different techniques, subordinated to a coming order. And often the topics that attract me already have enough material, and better than I could hope to produce myself. After having spent some time, sometimes a very long time, with an idea or a set of ideas, taking notes, reading, identifying key places and such, slowly carving out a conceptual structure, I begin a process of seeking and gathering. I put things together, tentatively. While I work, various more or less strong connections emerge. A system of vicinities, that in their turn, further structures the material. Stories, or parts of stories, take form. It is an editing process. And with the editing comes a growing strength of the formal aspects, and new ways of seeing things. A quote from *What an Editing Room Is* by Harun Farocki, says it all: "At the editing table you learn how little plans and intentions have to do with producing pictures. Nothing you have planned seems to work... You prepare cuts and stage a movement so as to allow reediting, only to find at the editing table that the picture has a completely different movement, one which you have to follow... At the cutting table you discover that the shooting has established new subject matter. At the cutting table a second script is created and it refers not to intentions, but to actual facts." The continuum or rhythm that I aim at, that turns coincidence into necessity — the images (and words) put in a specific order — also seems to end with every image, both at the editing table and when I later watch the finished work, but in two different ways.

**SA: You often juxtapose organic natural forms with life threatening high technology in your work. Our relation to nature and the destruction of earth's natural resources are themes that keep coming back in your films.**

**LS:** Nature is the ultimate form... no content, all form... The Absolute Master? I think of my work as a work about form, a form about form, a vortex that generates content: pieces of reference, knowledge, facts... There is an unachievable hope, to perform nature, and perhaps I include so many images of nature in my films as a kind of primitivistic ritual, to become what you look like. This mask is a film, a thin skin, between forces I don't know the names of, but which keep appearing to me in the guises of trees, plants, animals, machines, recording devices, image making... So the juxtaposing of natural forms with high technology is, I think, a way of letting the technology of seeing, of film and video, imagining itself in a mirror. The film sees but is then tragically excluded from itself. Very speculative... I could make a list of the natural forms and the technological devices in my films.

**SA: What are you working with at the moment?**

**LS:** I am working with a finalization of a public commission called Mehr Licht! for MAX IV Laboratory, the Division of Nuclear Physics at Lund University. It will be a roughly 10 hour long film played through 1500 led lights placed on the façade of the main building. The film consists of chapters about different aspects of light: scientific, mythological, philosophical, etc. I'm also preparing a bigger solo exhibition at Kalmar Konst museum in September, where I will show film installations made between 2007 and 2014. Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut is in the process of being translated (the film and the text plaque) to Korean for the SeMA Biennale, Mediacity Seoul in September – November, 2014. But what I really long for is isolation in my studio and starting a new film project with Oscar Mangione. The new project will be ready next May.

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