



A SERIES OF IMAGES ABOUT YOU

Lina Selander
13/9 — 23/11

Kalmar konstmuseum

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Curator: Helena Holmberg

The exhibition is produced in collaboration with Kunsthall Trondheim

FOREWORD

Lina Selander belongs to a new, interesting generation of artists. They are united by an approach that embraces a diversity of aspects in the artistic work. In Selander's case it involves a mix of science, poetry, society, history, and a meta-narrative that has to do with seeing and the actual situation in which we take part of the work, in equal parts and with respect for the entire complexity of the existence. Art can be true only if allowed to deal with several things at once. On the contrary, it does not mean that her art is difficult to approach. It is highly visual and assumes full confidence in us as viewers. There is no right reading of her work, just a series of challenging opportunities.

In *A Series of Images About You*, Selander in collaboration with curator Helena Holmberg has put together four different installations from 2007 to this year, which together constitute the first

major presentation of her art. The exhibition also contains an “archive” of individual films and a number of books by Lina Selander. The books should be seen as Artist Books rather than as “exhibition catalogues”, i.e. they are independent projects in the form of books, in various ways relating to her other artistic work.

As curator this is the third exhibition Helena Holmberg is contributing to Kalmar konstmuseum. In this case also as director for Kunsthall Trondheim where Lina Selanders *Sylphium* was exhibited this spring. Helena Holmberg has previously curated *Encounters by Manon de Boer* (2013) and the group exhibition *A Complicated Relation, part I* (2012). It's invaluable to have partners with initiated and dedicated knowledge, her work adds to the growth of both the museum and the art. We are deeply grateful.

A very warm regard to Lina Selander for preparing this exhibition and for the confidence she has shown Kalmar konstmuseum through this. It is with pleasure we offer Kalmar County, Sweden and the world, an opportunity to learn more about an art of a particularly concerned interest.

Bengt Olof Johansson, Museum Director

A SERIES OF IMAGES ABOUT YOU

SILPHIUM

In the first sequences of the film a story is told about the ancient, now extinct, plant silphium. The plant grew on the coast outside the North African town Cyrene – a settlement of Greeks from the over populated island of Thera in 630 BC – which became the main town in the Greek colony, situated in today's Libya. The plant was famous for its medical usage (it was used as a contraceptive and abortifacient) and for its richness in flavour, which made it the base of the colony's export. Its importance for the economic wealth was so crucial that the image of silphium was imprinted on the coins. When exploitation of the plant led to extinction, the city declined. As is often the case in Selander's works, the film builds on layers of images and meaning, layers that link history and pre-history to contemporary society, and in which nature as a prerequisite for life is one of the focal points. The human strive for development and expansion, the desire for control over nature, and above all – visual control, depiction and surveillance, is always met by another contradicting force. The nature looks back at us, its eyes empty – a reoccurring image in the film.

In *Silphium* this double movement of visual and earthly mastery and its opposite – loss of visual control, awareness of vulnerability – is first expressed in a shot of the famous 16th century



Silphium (2014)
HD-video, 22 mins, b/w, mute and sound

painting *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein. The ambassadors are depicted together with the emblems of wealth and superiority of the countries they are the representatives for. A contradicting image is hidden until you view the painting from a specific angle, but when you do a human skull becomes visible, the sign of mortality. Selander lets the image oscillate in and out of visibility; the painted image emerges as in a rupture of light in the dark whilst mumbling voices count – numbers, years maybe. The sound fragment is a loan from Chris Marker's 1962 film *La Jetée* – another important point of reference. The film's narrative tells the story of how a man is used in time travel experiments in order to save the world. He travels through sediments of memory and images, much in the same way as Selander's film, only to return to his beginning.

The references to Holbein and Marker are subtle points of departure in the film, as is the history of silphium. From these points the film unfolds in an essayistic narrative, in which the artist makes use of image material and sound from different sources – her own footage and still images, quotes and archive material. The Stasi archive and museum in Berlin as well as the Museum of Natural History and Archaeology in Trondheim have been important sources. A deep interest in the notion of image as memory, imprint, representation and surface is at the core of the work. The appearance of the image, the fact of its existence in the first place, its relation to the seeing and the gaze and to image technology, is never unquestioned.

Helena Holmberg (2014)

LENIN'S LAMP GLOWS
IN THE PEASANT'S HUT

Lina Selander's film installation *Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut* is a work with many points of entry. In the text piece which is part of the exhibition and may be viewed as a sketch for the film that constitutes the main component of the installation, she likens the conceptual content of the film to a number of mineshafts, various vertical movements that are joined together and create a system of meanings into which viewers may descend.

One of these shafts and one of the film's points of departure is the 1986 nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, Ukraine. While making the film, Lina Selander visited Pripyat, the town founded to house workers for the nuclear power plant, and, on site, photographed the contaminated zone. She also gathered material from the museum in Kiev that administers the historical heritage of the accident.

The film begins with a sequence of images from the approach over the snow-covered countryside surrounding Kiev. The ground below floats away in a horizontal movement while Selander establishes the vertical movement that corresponds to the distance between the viewer's gaze and the ground far below. These two movements recur in several aspects of the film. Pripyat is located on a tributary of the Dnieper, upstream from Kiev. On the shores of the Dnieper is also where the 1928 film *Odinnadcatyj* [*The Eleventh Year*] by the Soviet film director

Dziga Vertov takes place. The film, which celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Soviet state, depicts the construction of a power plant, focusing on electricity as the prerequisite for the development and progress of modern society. The title of Selander's installation is borrowed from an intertitle in Vertov's film and the artist also uses footage from *The Eleventh Year* in order to connect the utopian dream from the first decade of the Soviet state with a contemporary set of problems in regard to modern society's insatiable need for power and its consequences, as well as with the role of the mediums of film and photography in this development.

Vertov's famous statement, "I am the machine /---/" echoes in Selander's film. The human being as machine, a component of the social structure, is a consistent theme that addresses the reduction of the human being to labour, subordinated to ideological systems. Against Vertov's Soviet workers who radiate youth, pioneering spirit and enthusiasm, the artist places images of the liquidators – decontamination workers – who, after the nuclear disaster, were despatched to dig a tunnel under the reactor and who all died shortly after, from injuries sustained. The montage is completed with pictures from the museum in Kiev and from Pripjat's abandoned schools, houses and hospitals. The historical parallel that Selander draws between the Soviet power plant construction and today's dead zone in Pripjat is carried forward through an image of a Scythian grave borrowed from Vertov. The image, which in Vertov's film functions as a reminder and a continuation of the proud heritage from a long-



Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut (2011)
Continuous HD-video, b/w, 23 min



Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut (2011)
Vitrine (steel, glass and wood) with 22 radiographs (90 x 500 x 36 cm)

gone civilisation, establishes, in Selander's work, a historical shaft that extends much further and deeper down into a pre-historic time. A series of pictures of plant fossils and drawings of how the original forests may have looked find their counterpart in nature images from Pripyat, a place where human history has come to an end and where nature has been left to heal itself.

The millions-of-years old fossils included in the film may be read as the first images. They are images without human interference, without purpose, but still razor-sharp impressions of a reality long gone. They have an indexicality reminiscent of that of the photograph. Present here, among other things, is a trace fossil, a so-called Cruziana, which preserves the digging movement from a pre-historic trilobite. The Cruziana is a depicted movement, the first film image, as it were.

Like Vertov, who regarded the film medium as a tool in the construction of society, Selander points to the development of photography as part of modernity. From the fossil, the first image, the work continues to delve into mining, the rails as a symbol of expansion and power, electricity as a symbol of knowledge, enlightenment and efficiency, and, more precisely, and connected to film and photography: the silver mine, Roentgen technology, the camera. The camera lens is a tunnel in which light travels; the movement is the prerequisite of the image. If the vertical movement of the mineshaft points to history and to the descent, the many horizontal movements

of the film – tunnels, corridors – are geared towards the film strip and the camera's objective lens. In images from the archives of the Swedish Museum of Natural History, the walls are covered with documents and preserved objects. Against the corroded light, reminiscent of the photographic flash light, which Selander often places central in her images, the history is outlined.

Another indexicality is created in the photographic work which is part of the installation. Selander has had rocks containing uranium emit their radiation onto photographic paper, a method that points to how nuclear radiation was discovered by the French scientist Henri Becquerel during his experiments with photographic plates. Here, the photographic image is not just a propaganda tool in the service of modernity, but directly connected to the scientific discovery that made it possible to harness nuclear power as an energy source. Radioactivity is also a movement; the radiation is a relocation of energy. In Selander's photographic work the uranium-containing rocks have been exposed onto the photographic paper, resulting in black spots reminiscent of the after-images that emerge when one looks into a bright light for a long time.

Helena Holmberg (2011)

MODEL OF CONTINUATION

Model of Continuation is based on the invisible core of the visible inscription, the image as an interior object and its relationship to seeing and various reproduction technologies. In my work I have attempted to follow an idea of the illusion's beginning in the simple fact of images, like radioactivity or leakage between layers: vegetation and sporadic work outside the window, the room, the studio environment, the lonely plants, as well as the projection with its different layers of time. A camera is disassembled in a studio in front of another camera whose images are then projected in the same studio, and re-filmed. The material is lent an experience that interferes with and modulates that which the camera does not contain: the images.

The eye witnesses the end of its role as witness. Images will belong to the technologies that generate them. We are at a distance.

In Hiroshima things and people were erased in a flash. Their shadows were impressed on the city's surfaces (plants, the man on the staircase). The flash of the atomic explosion can only be witnessed at the cost of one's eyesight or life. Under some conditions, we can see. The sound from the whistle and the scene at the end is from the film *Children of Hiroshima* (Kaneto Shindô, 1952). Some images have been borrowed from *Hiroshima mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959) and *Hiroshima Nagasaki August, 1945* (Erik Barnouw, 1970)

Lina Selander and Oscar Mangione (2013)

THE HOURS THAT HOLD THE FORM
(A COUPLE OF DAYS IN PORTBOU)

is an installation with a video on a projection screen and a reel-to-reel tape recorder, loudspeakers and some chairs. The film, which is in black and white, shows motives from the Spanish-French border town of Portbou, where the philosopher Walter Benjamin took his own life the night between the 27th and the 28th of September 1940. The border had closed the day before he arrived and was opened again the day after his death.

The images, both moving and still, are accompanied by a voice that tells different stories of refugee-hood: fragments, details, thoughts. Both the video and the sound are looped, but of different duration, this brings about a multitude of relations between word and image which both exposes and bridges the distance between them. A continuous shift of perspective that shows that a comprehensive narrative is never possible. Eventually, the images are perhaps more related to the voice than to the stories it tells.

The title, *The Hours That Hold the Form*, is a quotation from *One-Way Street* by Walter Benjamin, and the text continues: have passed in the house of dreams. The images from Portbou, where I spent ten days in the summer of 2005, witness to such hours, they are documentations of simple things: a restaurant, the old Custom House, the railway station, tracks, trains, the Benjamin museum... At the same time they are form, ordered



The Hours That Hold the Form (A Couple of Days in Portbou), (2007)
Continuous b/w and colour video projection with sound, projection screen, chairs, 15 mins
Sound on a reel-to-reel tape recorder, 14 mins

by a more or less open system of significance, the film itself and the varying relations to the stories. In one way, the images in the film are simple containers of any form, in another way they are precisely the form they become. It is a border which is explored in a documentary as well as in an abstract way, in a meeting between history and present, between meaning and silence.

Lina Selander and Oscar Mangione (2007)

AROUND THE CAVE OF THE DOUBLE TOMBS

The double tombs in the title are situated in the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron. The tombs of Abraham and Sara, a holy site for Jews, Muslims and Christians. A site that in itself contains a duality – half mosque, half synagogue.

The frame work of the film is the way to the mosque, a way that passes a number of control stations and cordons, the last one inside the mosque itself. The image of this last cordon is confusing, what we see resembles an incinerator or a dumpster. A sheet-iron construction with two blind openings. The way to the mosque leads through a divided town, on the surface and in layers above each other. We move on the bottom, both in a literary meaning and in a wider sense. This is a way and a place that can only be described as a bottom layer. The camera is directed upwards, towards a net that stretches between the houses, towards what feels like a water surface. We walk as under water – it's the

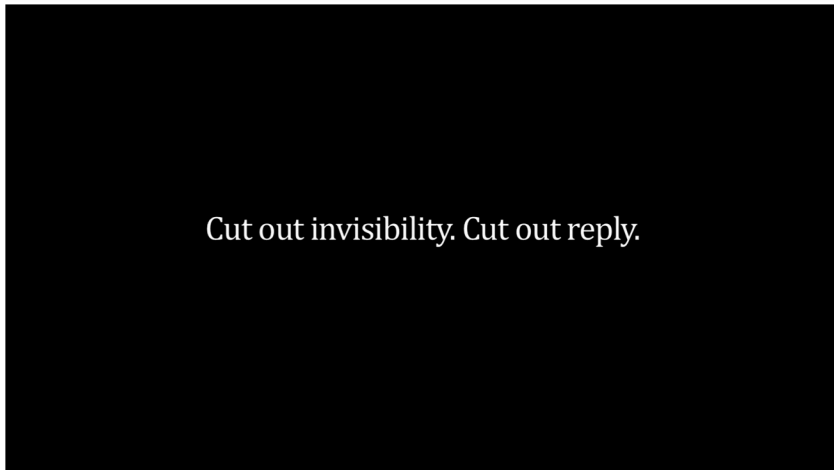
kind of image you see when swimming under water, looking up to the surface. The images are again confusing, but in another sense than the still image from the mosque. Initially hard to read, to orient yourself within. The unusual perspective and the instability of the camera create a fretting feeling of inconsistency. When understanding the image, one is horrified. Due to the lack of stable ground under one's feet, the water surface appears as the only thing real. The net, the expression of the horizontally divided city, is what's solid and real in this bottom layer. Against the net silhouettes of objects are visible, objects thrown down by Israeli settlers onto the Palestinians inhabiting this bottom layer. The objects appear as black images towards the sky above, the sky we are separated from.

These are the only moving images in the film, but they remind of still images, the kind of photographs that are not real photographs but what is called photograms. Images which appear if you put light on an object resting on a light sensitive paper, a method which doesn't make use of a camera and a negative, a direct imprint, a more direct indexicality. On the photographic paper the objects appear white as burn marks, they are absent but has left their mark directly on the material. In the moving sequences of the film we wander below a kind of inverted photograms, not white but black imprints, a series of black signs which form a wordless and violent text. /---/

The bottom layer of reality investigated in Lina Selander's film is a place without future, without hope. Is that why the camera



Anteroom of the Real (2011)
Continuous colour HD video, silent, 14 mins



Around the Cave of the Double Tombs (2010)
Continuous b/w HD-video, silent, 16 mins

is moving forward so reluctant, spasmodic and uncertain? Is the forward-looking gaze, normally an aspect of the film as medium, plainly not possible here?

Helena Holmberg (2010). Excerpt and translation of text published in *OEI* #59.

ANTEROOM OF THE REAL

The film takes its starting point in the deserted town of Pripyat, located within the zone of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. A pair of hands flip slowly through a pile of photographs: images of a model of reactor 4, buildings in Pripyat, books in deserted offices, empty rooms, trashed interiors, pictures of a TV monitor showing a documentary about Chernobyl, etc. As the timelines of the still and moving images cross, the film raises questions about what an editing room is and can be, and about narrativity, time and images.

Lina Selander (2011)

WHEN THE SUN SETS IT'S ALL RED, THEN IT DISAPPEARS

The work takes Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 film *La Chinoise* as its starting point. Originally it is an installation in three parts: a series of almost entirely black-and-white stills, a film showing the shadow on a wall of a moving foliage of a tree, coloured

red, and a voice reading a text. It examines the relationship between political, utopian and emotional expressions in words and images, it explores the revolutionary zeal of a time and the desire to start all over again

La Chinoise is a film in the making, a film that tells the story of a revolutionary and truth-seeking common narrative while at the same time trying to be a part of it, sharing its inherent expressions and problems. The installation is also a work in the making, engaging and evolving around Godard's film and the questions it addresses and responds to. But it is also an installation about photography and storytelling.

Most of the photographs in the series of stills are from the 1968 student revolts in Paris and Stockholm, taken at meetings and manifestations. But they also show other motifs, such as a close-up of a growing blob of moisture on a news reel showing Chairman Mao swimming in the Yellow River, personal photos and some stills from *La Chinoise*. All images have been photographed with flash and all photos have a white circular reflection on them which may represent or constitute a common space where the spectator's space and that of the motif overlap, but where they are also defined as separate – a blinding dazzle or hole in the image which ultimately blocks any final narrative and forces itself into the motifs and events that are being documented.

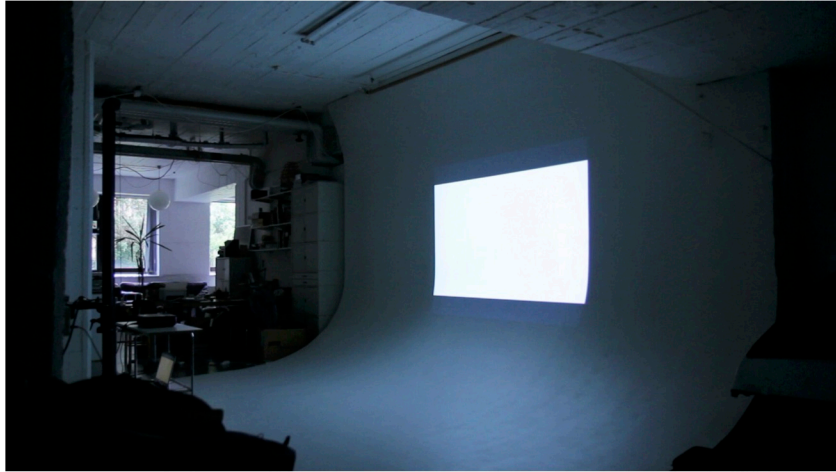
Lina Selander (2008)

TO THE VISION MACHINE

The film was the beginning of a larger work on the visual inscription's invisible centre, a process that led to the production of *Model of Continuation* (2013), a work that in parts makes use of the same material.

The starting point is the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, or more precisely: the detonation of the atomic bomb as a photographic event. The first atomic bomb created a flash that lasted one fifteenth of a millionth of a second. The light penetrated every building and shadows of objects and bodies were exposed and burned onto the city's surfaces. When bodies and objects turned to ash, their traces were left as unintentional monuments. The sound of the whistle and the scene at the end is from the film *The Children of Hiroshima* (*Genbaku no ko*, 1952), which shows the Peace Memorial Museum while it is under construction after the U.S. occupation had ended and it was allowed to remember the disaster again.

Lina Selander and Oscar Mangione (2013)



Model of Continuation (2013)
HD-video, 24 mins, colour, sound and mute

Lina Selander (b. 1973) lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden. She works mainly with moving images in film and video, but also with photography, text and sound. Her works are often installations in which these different medias converge and interrelate to one another. She is interested in the image's ability and lack of ability to reproduce time, experience and memories and she explores how narration is created and how different techniques transform a story. Her works investigate film as medium, examining its possibilities and limitations as form of expression, and they often raise questions about history, media archaeology and authenticity.

Selander's work has been shown at Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Moderna Museet, Kunsthall Trondheim and in international group shows such as Manifesta 9 in Genk, Belgium and the Bucharest Biennale 2010 and at Haus Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. Upcoming exhibitions include Seoul International Media Art Biennale, Momenta Art, New York and INIVA, London.

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Helena Holmberg is based in Stockholm and Trondheim, where she since April 2013 is the leader of Kunsthall Trondheim, a new institution for contemporary art. The activities include exhibitions, programmes, collaborative projects, residencies, and the establishing of a permanent space for the institution, planned to open in 2016. She was earlier the curator for Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm.

Recent projects include Image at Work (Xposeptember 2010 – exhibitions in collaboration with institutions in Stockholm and publication OEI), *A Complicated Relation* (Index and Kalmar Konstmuseum 2011), Lina Selander: *Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut* (Index 2011) and the publications *Manon de Boer – Encounters* (published by Van Abbe museum, OEI and Index, 2013) and *Lina Selander – Echo* (published by OEI and Index 2013).

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