

Lina  
Selander

When the sun sets  
it's all red, then it  
disappears

2 October  
— 2 November

Nordlin

Gallery

## About Nordin Gallery

### English Information

### About Nordin Gallery

Nordin Gallery opened in Stockholm in October 2007. The gallery is set up by owner/director Axel Nordin as a project room for young contemporary artists. Our intention is to represent emerging Scandinavian and international artists, establishing a programme dedicated to video, photography, performance and installation art.

We welcome you to the gallery!

For further information, please contact the gallery at +46(0) 706 934 528 or [info@nordingallery.com](mailto:info@nordingallery.com).

Opening Hours  
Thursday – Sunday  
12.00 – 17.00

### Svensk Information

### Om Nordin Gallery

Den 11 oktober 2007 öppnade Nordin Gallery på Tulegatan 19. Lokalen som tidigare tillhört konstruktivisten Nils Kölare har under sommaren renoverats varsamt för att behålla något av ateljérummets särart. Nordin Gallery har valt att presentera ett program inriktat på skandinaviskt foto, video, performance och installation. Genom att hålla oss med ett tydligt fokus vill vi försöka fylla ett upplevt tomrum för unga multidisciplinära konstnärer.

Välkommen!

För mer information, var god kontakta galleriet på +46(0) 706 934 528 eller [info@nordingallery.com](mailto:info@nordingallery.com).

Öppettider  
Torsdag – Söndag  
12.00 – 17.00

### Design

Anders Nord  
[www.andersnord.com](http://www.andersnord.com)

## Artist Information Lina Selander

### Exhibition No 9

Lina Selander b.1973  
Stockholm, Sweden

Artist Website  
[www.linaselander.com](http://www.linaselander.com)

Lina Selander's work *When the sun sets it's all red*, then it disappears takes Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 film *La Chinoise* as its starting point. 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, colored 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. Lina Selander's 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 works mainly with moving images in film and video, but also with photography, text and sound. Her works are often installations where these different medias and components converge and interrelate to one another. She is interested in the image's ability and lack of ability to reproduce time, memories and experience and she explores how different narrative forms and techniques transform and change a story. Her works investigate film as medium, examining its possibilities and limitations as form of expression. Lina Selander's work have been shown at Gävle Art Center, Bonniers Konsthall, 300 m3 Art Space and Moderna Museet as well as in several group shows and festivals abroad, for example the Transmediale 05 in Berlin where she received an honorable mention. She has also received the Maria Bonnier Dahlin prize for young artists and The Edstrand Foundation Art Prize 2008.



## Ett skådespel över skådespelet

Text Sinziana Ravini  
Konstkritiker och curator

“När solen går ner är den alldeles röd, sen försvinner den”. Så lyder den första repliken i Lina Selanders verk. En replik som inte minst upphöjts till titelns betydelsebärande nivåer tack vare dess kryptiska egenskaper.

För vad betyder denna symboliska solnedgång i ett verk som behandlar de visuella och i viss mån även ideologiska spåren efter 68-rörelsen? Ett verk som transporterar betraktaren in i en tid vars ära och glans sedan länge slutat skina, som består av en dubbelprojektion som visar ett purpurfärgat lövverk ställt mot en bildodysse genom 68-rörelsens hjältedåd och misslyckanden? Är det en sorgesång över en tid som flytt eller en distanserad betraktelse över en söndermytologiserad tid? På skärmen som bär upp bildodysseen ser man hur det offentliga hela tiden blandas med det privata. Bilder på en badande Mao alterneras av bilder på beväpnade militanter, bilder på Lina Selanders far som var en aktiv del i rörelsen och stillbilder från Jean Luc Godards legendariska film La Chinoise som kom ut 1967, bara ett år innan studentrevolutionen i Paris nådde sin kulmen. Dubbelprojektionens splittrade berättelse som är så karakteristisk för Lina Selanders dekonstruktiva stil och som här delats upp i stillhet och rörelse, i monokromens meditativa estetik och i bildkavalkadens sensationshunger, överbryggas av ett ljudspår som består av en dialog som lika gärna skulle kunna vara en inre dialog mellan två olika positioner. Denna dialektiska metod som låter motsatspar mötas i ett tredje motsatspar är ingalunda försonande eller syntetiserande, utan ständigt splittrande, som ett sår som inte slutar blöda.

Därutöver har Selander förenat sin verklighet med arkivbildernas verklighet genom att fotografera av en skärm, där fotoblixten lämnat en vit cirkel efter sig. Det är dessa ”befläckade” bilder som betraktaren får tillgång till, där den ljusa fläcken i denna nya kontext konnoterar såväl solen som ännu inte gått ner över bildlandskapet som den blinda fläck som omöjliggör förståelsen av det givna. Denna blinda, ständigt återkommande fläck som ibland täcker, ibland förstärker bildens narrativa egenskaper, passar kusligt väl ihop med Jacques Lacans teorier om objet petit a, den rest som blir över när det symboliska träder in i det reala och som skapar ett oåtkomligt begärsobjekt – begäret efter 68-gemenskapen,

föreningen mellan estetik och politik, mellan ord och handling, idén om den rena verkligheten. Verkets objet petit a är det centrala begäret som hela tiden projicerar sig på den andre, på skillnaden, i sitt sökande efter oändlig jousissance.

Detta begär kan konstruera transitionala objekt, fetischer och andra ställföreträdare i sitt sökande efter den totala kärleken, den totala sammansmältningen med det som det en gång förlorade, men det kan aldrig nå fram till sitt mål. Dess törst är outsläckt. Så är också fallet för det begär som vävs fram i verkets inre dialog och som drivs vidare genom verket. Redan efter den första repliken – ”När solen går ner är den alldeles röd, sen försvinner den” – följer en replik som återupprättar förlusten: ”Men i mitt hjärta går solen aldrig ner”. Det politiska begäret, som i röstens fall balanseras av ett begär efter tillhörighet, efter fadern, efter erkännande och även efter mening, glöder likt en sol som aldrig går ner, likt en önskan som aldrig kan gå i uppfyllelse.

Är då detta begär – som aldrig vill känna sig självt – medvetligt gjort i Lina Selanders verk? Jag skulle vilja påstå att så är fallet. Den bländande solen, den blinda fläcken är det punktum, för att tala med Barthes, som kämpar mot objet petit a, detta undflyende begär. Framställningen av den blinda fläcken är en process som är både beroende och oberoende av Selanders intentioner, både resultatet av en slump och kontrollen av detta resultat. I verkets tonala, eller låt oss kalla det stämningsskapande, affekter finns både glädjen och sorgen, naiviteten och sakligheten som kännetecknar ett identifierat begär. Samtidigt finns det ett tydligt avståndstagande från Godards modernistiskt inspirerade estetik. Jean Luc Godards La Chinoise är exempelvis strukturerad efter Mondrians teosofiska kubism, med vilken han ville skildra den rena verkligheten. En verklighet som han uppfattade som absolut och som bara kunde uttryckas med hjälp av räta linjer och grundfärgerna rött, blått, gult jämte svart och vitt. Samma färger återkommer i La Chinoises borgerliga hem. Varje rum, varje scen, bär upp denna färgsymbolik, likt kulisser för en universell och totalitär vilja att kontrollera verkligheten. Dessa revolutionära färger har sammanblandats i Lina Selanders verk, likt vattenfärg i två glas. Det ena innehåller en intensiv purpurfärg som skimrar i den artärliknande lövverksbilden, det andra en matt grönsvart färg som vilar över det ihopklippta arkivmaterialet. Det är en skicklig och subtil appropriering.

Metoden påminner om den postproduktiva arbetsmetoden som går ut på att man samlar och samlar befintliga tecken för att deformera och rekontextualisera dem, men här finns också en nyromantisk vilja att tillföra någonting nytt, att både göra historien till sin och skriva in sig i historien, samtidigt som den blottlägger försökets fåfänglighet och den skådespelets logik som kännetecknar alla revolutioner.

För att inte tala om revolutionens korrumpierande egenskaper, revolutionen mot revolutionen och revolutionen inom revolutionen. Alla revolutionära system övergår i sin motsats och blir konservativa. Mao bytte ut en diktatur mot en annan, så också Lenin, Castro och Ceausescu. Men revolutionen är ingalunda en kommunistisk eller socialistisk produkt. Den revolutionära mentaliteten har funnits i alla dualistiska världssystem som delat upp världen i ont och gott, svart och vitt. Den har funnits i zoroastrismen, den grekiska mytologin, manikeismen, kristendomen, hos bogomilerna och katarerna, i det tyska bondeupproret, den franska revolutionen, den industriella revolutionen och slutligen i den teknologiska IT-revolutionen vi fortfarande är en del av. De kortvariga revolutionerna är iscensatta, teatrala, många gånger brutala, men de långvariga revolutionerna smyger sig på, döljer sina avsändare och sina mål, och inte minst det revolutionära direkta tilltalet. Den kapitalistiska revolutionen är onekligen det mest lyckade skådespelet. Om den naturalistiska teatern lät en vägg falla för att höja känslan av verklighet, låter kapitalismen alla väggar falla. Verkligheten har blivit det ultimata skådespelet. Om det är något som Godard lyckas med i La Chinoise är det just att visa hur revolutioner blir skådespel och hur skådespel kan leda till revolutioner.

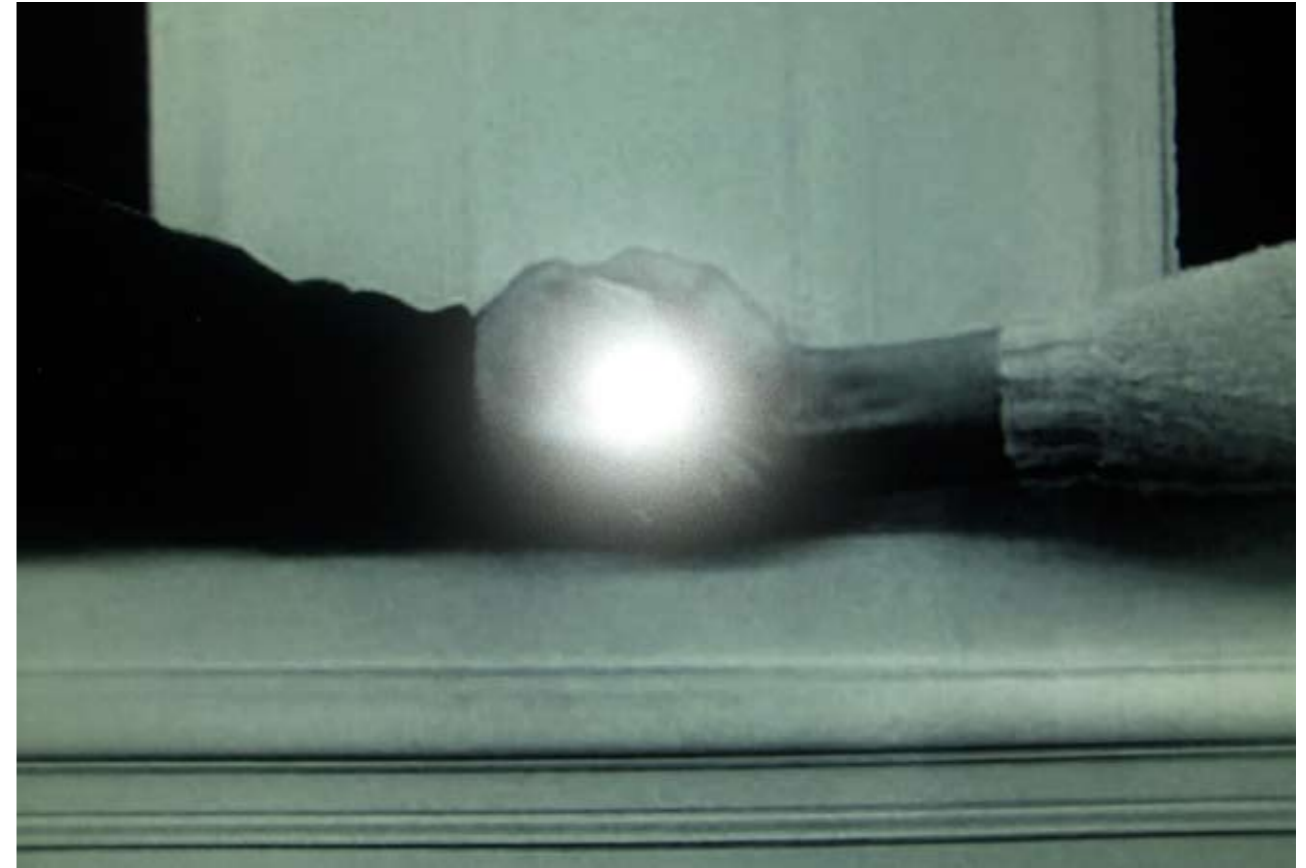
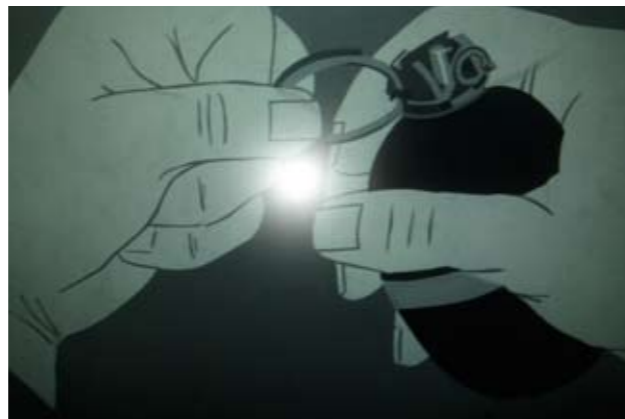
Hur förhåller sig Lina Selanders verk till skådespelet över skådespelet i La Chinoise? Filmen reflekterar över den iscensatta handlingens logik i scener där revolutionära akter iscensätts, imiteras, och många gånger förlöjligas. Som protagonisterna i Godards film hävdar, var den kinesiska revolutionen i Moskva ett skådespel, men ett verkligt skådespel. En annan paradox som en av Godards figurer framlägger är: ”Jag tänker inte vara ärlig bara för att en kamera står framför mig.” Utsagan är uppenbarligen själv motsägande, då han är uppriktig om att han inte kan vara uppriktig. Äktheten vinner till slut över falskhet. Så också i Lina Selanders verk som är uppriktigt om att det är konstnärens personliga projiceringar på materialet vi får tillgång till och inte materialet i sig.

Det finns flera inkonsekvenser eller låt oss säga osannolikheter i Godards film, som till exempel det faktum att maoistiska och marxist-leninistiska studenter lyckas bo under samma tak och äta vid samma bord, i en tid där dessa båda gruppering ut i samhället bedrev ett ideologiskt skyttegravskrig mot varandra. Det är också märkligt att dessa vänsterridna studenter väljer att bo i ett borgerligt hem och köra lyxbilar. Kanske kan man se deras dekadenta livsstil som ett försök att undkomma den politiska korrekthetens diktatur, som ett direkt svar på en av väggaffischernas paroller som ständigt dyker upp i filmen: ”En minoritet i en korrekt politisk revolutionär kontext är inte längre en minoritet”.

I sitt verk uppställer Selander samma kamp mot den politiska korrektheten och historiedeterminismen, men hon tar den till en annan nivå - nämligen den språkliga. Enligt Jacques Derrida finns det ingen verklighet utanför texten, ingen kritisk instans. Våra tankar tillhör oss inte, utan ingår i en text som hela tiden skriver oss. Det finns med andra ord ingen punkt utanför texten där reflektionen är möjlig. Vi är för evigt fångna i språket, ett språk som inte tillhör oss. Något som voiceovern i Selanders verk hela tiden påminner oss om. Rösten säger: ”Vi är de andras ord” och längre fram: ”Ord och bild. Du och jag. Historien om oss, berättad av andra”. Det handlar om att ”förstå de allra enklaste sakerna på nytt.” Att återbruka språket, ty ”ord ändrar ju mening med tiden”. Sist men inte minst vill rösten ”tala som om ord var ljud och materia”. Selander tycks vilja uppställa en skyddsmur mot tolkningens ständigt påträngande egenskaper, mot den scientistiska kunskapstörsten i viljan att detektera meningen bakom ett verk, idén i ett ting, budskapet i ett verk. Hur skall man annars tolka voiceoverns följande repliker om de nu alls låter sig tolkas?: ”Att se är inte att förstå. Kanske förstår man inte när man ser. Och ser inte när man förstår.”

Ja, det är inte lätt att umgås med sin icke-förståelse. Som kritiker förväntas man hela tiden lösa rebusar, inordna konstverken i en sociologisk eller konsthistorisk kontext, lyfta fram aspekter hos dem som kan ha gått andra förbi och fälla irreversibla omdömen. Om det finns något som kännetecknar god konst så är det just att den gör motstånd mot dessa analytiska mödor och istället uppmanar oss att umgås med vår icke-förståelse, vår känslas intellekt framför vårt intellekts känslor. Selander behåller onekligen denna svåra konst att både locka fram ett förståelsebegär och lämna det otillfredsställt. Om Sheherezade, den stora förförerskan i Tusen och en natt, höll sultanens intresse vid liv genom att klippa i historien precis innan solen gick upp, håller Selander vårt intresse vid liv genom att klippa i historien precis när den börjar, när solen går ner, blir röd och försvinner för att sedan dyka upp igen i våra hjärtan. Det är först där som berättelserna kan ta vid igen. Och dessa berättelser känner inga slut, inget ljus, men heller inget mörker.

Still images from  
video installation





## A gap in history, an empty space in the image

Text Fredrik Ehlin  
Independent art critic, editor Geist Magazine  
Translation: Kalle Mellberg

**Taking in Lina Selander's work, there is a danger of staying in the instant initiating the encounter with them and one-sidedly letting yourself be captured by the exceptional feeling for rhythm established by their visual, aural and textual layers.**

Because Selander's works commence without any delay, very effectively opening up a space full of ambience where you can wander between feelings, memories and experience, and where you like to stay. It may not sound very harmful, more as if you have become very sympathetic towards an aesthetic expression. And the point is not to find fault with neither such sympathy nor with the capacities of the works to produce it; it is simply to make clear the rather obvious fact that the aesthetic experience is merely one side, and if you overlook the other, the conceptual work going on between the layers of the works, you also miss what is perhaps most important: the interaction between concept and aesthetic form, where the forms of ideas and of surfaces enrich one another and where the works can break off with both the stiffness of the formalism enticed by the concept and with the self-sufficiency of the spaces the rhythmic compositions establish.

Paying attention to this interaction puts the suggestive traits in a different light. The surfaces' force of seduction opens a room that on the one hand catches the beholder's attention and acts as an echo chamber for associations, but the seductive also acts strategically by forming a resistance against the colonial claims of intellectualistic reductions. For, as always, seduction is a way to share and convey the uncertainty of what is seducing. I, as a beholder, am able to introduce ever-finer differentiations and try to break the works down into a set of statements, but I will still just slip on the ambient surfaces and lose my footing – well, until I realize that these surfaces are something bordering on nothing. Because that's the way it is with Selander's work: in the joint between what they show, in the link between concept and the form of the surfaces they are always handling, carefully and painstakingly, a void or a nothingness – what might be called a spatiality of emptiness or simply an empty space.

Strictly speaking this actually means that something is not hiding something else. In the interaction between sign, material and media, what is instead conjured up is how the joints between sign and object are filled with this emptiness, how the nothingness possesses a configuration and form, and forms a system of empty passages between and within the works. That which is hidden by something is ultimately a nothing – “it hides nothing,” one likes to say – but this nothing is as a non-thing nevertheless of the same order as a thing and is formed as a spatiality and as a site. That this site is most paradoxical goes without saying: empty but not shapeless, absent in the representing sign but still possible, in the interaction between such signs, to search out, to work on, to give meaning and figure to. To Selander's practice, the empty space is essential both as the place towards which the works escape the problematic presence set up by representations, and as the place where this escape is enabled. The space is the place you find yourself to (already) be, as well as it is the horizon for lines of flight and for emancipation. So the empty space is also the object of an complex of existential questions, a complex that she has explored in relation to the possibilities and difficulties of autobiographical narration, primarily in a series of works that begins with the early *Instant* (1999), continues with *Reconstruction* (1999-2000), finds its abstract finale in *27 Kilometer Drawing* (2002), and has its two reconciling appendices in the text 117 of 146 *Instamatic* images (1999–2003) and in the installation *Total Eclipse of the Heart* (2004).

These works follow an evasive but productive motion that on the one hand leaves the place where you might expect to find the biographical subject, on the other unfolds in a series of translations and transformations that dwell on and revolves around the autobiographical experience. In other words, it is a matter of spreading this experience and transferring it to the action that creates the works, in order to thus generate a confrontation primarily with the rudimentary ways in which different visual media in their subjects and motifs try to summarize life. What goes on is a critical challenge with the way of the image to represent memories by deforming them and introducing a seemingly unbridgeable distance to what is called the Self, processes that in the end can make it seem as if the images have taken control over life and turned it into the loss of life. In a sense it's about regaining control over such biographizing images, not by juxtaposing image and recollection, but rather by entering the empty space between the signs of the image and other sign systems where the image's qualities can't be summarized as memories or representations of memories.

In *Instant*, this is done by Selander searching out a bunch of photographs of the kind usually found in family albums,

scattered images of life's moments, and literally take depicted things which endow a biographical subject with signs, clothing and place, have them sewn again to be sewn onto the photographic paper. The depicted is not abandoned but is opened towards the pictures' backsides, and in the play between the turned-away motif and the new sign emerging on the backsides of the photographs in a strange meeting of needle, thread and photographic paper – the sign that is the red or black thread, the relief craters of the perforations sometimes filled by the thread, sometimes not, the grime spread by the work of hands and the pieces of tape that occasionally hold down the thread but mostly just spread out in chunks – an empty space is opened and which the performative act of sewing gives both a new history and a new future to the autobiographical experience at play.

That future turns out to be merry, for the translation taking place in the initiating act of sewing eliminates the possibility of back translation, while at the same time the new signs become the subject of new translations, narratives, interpretations and fictionalizations which in addition open towards other media, for instance as when descriptions of the motifs of the sewn pictures return in 117 of 146 *Instamatic* images, a text used in the installation *Total Eclipse of the Heart*. In connection with an exhibition in Georgia in 2004 the text was also published in an abridged bilingual (Swedish and Georgian) version as a collection of poems, and even if the text as a whole doesn't exist as a book, I'd like to treat it as such, perhaps because that is predominantly how I'm familiar with it. In any case, one can now discover how the writing now sew the images onto the letters of the words (and pages of the book) as well as onto the semantic content and punctuation, and by comparison to the motif one has never seen the written text challenges the untitled but numbered images of *Instant*: “Farsta Centrum, red brick high-rise, window perforated and the façade outlined with black thread.”

If the play between *Instant*'s signs and the turned-away motifs takes place in an empty well being on the one hand an empty space, on the other a concrete spatiality embodied by the holes of the perforations in the photographic paper, and if this play has displaced the subjective experience from the representation of the motif to the act of sewing, then new representations have actually been created, requiring further destabilizing layers not to look like statements about an autobiographical experience's actual content that has a fixed place.

That is also what the poems do by returning to the sewn motif, extracting it in a new medium and so spreading the experience to yet another place. The poems do indeed have the fronts as their point of departure, but metaphorically they

also describe the backsides and intervene in the interplay between front and backside in a densifying act joining them together and actually take them back to the album, though not the family album but the album of the collection of poems.

However, it does not end there and cannot end there, but the process that displaces, dissolves and spreads the biographical subject's experience sees its ultimate materialization in *Total Eclipse of the Heart* when a recording of a man's voice reading the poems is played. Certainly, the voice can always be related to the text and likewise the Lina mentioned in the fragment “Lina in profile, in light blue shirt, with a 7-Eleven cup, sewn over her mouth” can probably be traced back to Lina Selander, but for such detective's work there are still no guarantees. Furthermore it seems useless as the kind of subjectivity made possible here follows the autobiographical experience's spread and moves between many different embodiments. Now and then it can be glimpsed as a visible pattern of an experience, in a poetic image or with the acts that have created the pattern and the image, indeed the experience occasionally takes on a name, but it's always done in the assurance of maintaining the anonymity opened by the turning of the picture and the perforations in it and of being able to move through the empty space's branches and passages between the works.

A thorough reading of *Total Eclipse of the Heart* would prove the recitation of 117 of 146 *Instamatic* images to be even more complex than what has become evident here. However, such an exercise would become so elaborate that I must stop myself, and even though I have pointed out the film *27 Kilometer Drawing* as the abstract finale of this series of works I must (more or less) leave it aside as well. Without going into too much detail I do want to say that it is a film that tells the story of the conditions of filmic narration by attending to a journey and showing power lines, shot from a train window, which have been abstracted into white lines, while the poles have been edited out and the background abstracted into black surfaces. Here the imminence between concept and aesthetic form is maximized, and the camera's unity with the movement of the train constitute, in relation to the horizontal extension of the power lines, a closed body that is the image area and the film's movement through this area. Only the cutting marks an intervening movement and the perspective has been phased out. (Continues on page 14)

Construed as part of the investigation into autobiographical narration, 27 Kilometer Drawing is the theoretically most acute work, but at the same time as one claims that it constitutes such a part one must add that it offers, in that case, an utterly thinned-out subjectivity presented in its absence by the eminent quality of the tone to make a corporal dimension be present in absence. The film medium is reduced to an abstract unit of line, surface and time, but the tone complements this unity by introducing an absent corporeality and materiality. The hand that sewed the images of Instant is replaced by the prosthetic video camera, the tactile qualities of the handiwork is replaced by the formal conditions which comprise the camera's gaze, but one is at the same time reminded of the hand and its touches by the feelings of loss, vanity and loneliness evoked by the synchronous interaction of the tones with the motion in the film. This is of course speculation wanting to play with the abstractions and it is perhaps too much to say that what 27 Kilometer Drawing in the end is about how tactile experiences are to be able to remain at an abstract level of conditions. Still there are things that suggest this, like how the hand connotatively linger in the title as a result of the work wanting to construe itself as a drawing. Furthermore it can be said that the autobiographical experience, which is always about corporeality and sensibility, lives on as a subject via the analogy between life and film such as they are linked in an idea about the journey and via the fact that 27 Kilometer Drawing abstractly coalesces an actual journey with the journey of the film.

**“The effect is intensely, not to say vehemently, evocative and it is hard to relate to the film as anything else than something painfully beautiful.”**

The object of this text's last stopover in the series of works problematizing autobiographical experience is Reconstruction, a film that applies on the surfaces of Instant the same abstracting technique as 27 Kilometer Drawing. The seams and perforations, the grime and tape, the text of the photographic paper, scratches and creases come forward in varying light intensity in lines, dots and fields through the otherwise black surface of the image area. In the film, a red dot performs a reading of the formations as if they were notes in a musical score and set them to music. The effect is intensely, not to say vehemently, evocative and it is hard to relate to the film as anything else than something painfully beautiful. Hollow trebles are widened or densified, minced to shorter pulses or remains as softly marked beats in sonic interpretations of a film that appears to have captured a better version of the nighttime sky of the desert. When you are finally able to tear yourself from this state, you do slowly start to wonder what it is that the red dot reads. The intensity of the tones changes as the dot passes the lines of the needlework, the periods of the perforations and the other fields, but how the sound relates to the individual shapes or the intensity of the light, you cannot know, and you are even less able to ascertain the meanings of the interpretations. In the face of this uncertainty, it bears recapitulating that the images

of Instant more than anything manifest the act of stitching through the motif, turning away from it in an opening of an empty space between the front and back of the photograph. Now when the backsides return in an abstracted form it can be seen as an attempt to on the one hand make clearer the contents of Instant in terms of surfaces, dots and lines, and on the other make clearer the meaning of the very acts that made the images, but it can also be seen as an attempt to, in relation to these images, once again open the empty space. That the former happens is beyond doubt – the formal content of the images stand out more clearly. Whether the latter happens is however harder to know, and one actually must ask whether the meaning of an act can be traced back to abstractions or at all be reconstructed. The answer to that question is, I believe, affirmative – well, if one agrees that reconstruction entails a translation where the signs, forms and shapes it produces in themselves don't say anything exhaustive, but that on the other hand the very act of translation can make room for sensations that mirror the act it translates and so give it meaning.

It is like this I want to construe Reconstruction in relation to Instant: a film which opens an empty space where the actions creating Instant can be sensed as exertions and risk-takings generating crucial experiences within Selander's hard-to-balance project of investigating autobiographical narration by a telling that is increasingly withdrawn and scattered. In relation to the logic that is commanded by a family album's relation to memories and images, a logic that no doubt finds the act of stitching in photographs to be deeply irrational, not to say insane, Reconstruction offers a room where the escape from these norms is allowed to go on and the initial breaking off with them in a most concrete way becomes sensibly and emotionally available as an interpretation of sensations. As previously stated, Reconstruction is vehemently evocative and instills the kind of feelings of abandonment, loneliness and exposure that follows from confronting an elementary void – that the images that are supposed to show what is supposed to be you are full of holes leading into empty spaces and that you in that discovery realize that what's vital must be molded as a configuration in nothingness.

It is against this background that I want to regard the 2007 installation The Hours That Hold the Form (a Couple of Days in Portbou), a meditation on historical narration which takes the form of film and in several ways share questions and problems with the works investigating autobiographical narration. At the same time, The Hours That Hold the Form differs markedly from these and the formation's ways of opening the passages of the empty space is different. The style of communication is more open, more generous with making statements and images available, and the focus appears to be the creation of a rhythmic unity in the composition. Neither is it only a meditation on narration, the work searches out places, events and experiences by taking on the refugee's collisions with borders and the decisive and pressing situation such events signifies. Such as the tragic story of the suicide of Walter Benjamin – one of Europe's leading intellectuals, fleeing through the south of Nazi-friendly Vichy France, arrives in the small town of Portbou, finds the border to Spain closed and commits suicide the following night; the day after the border is once again opened.

This fate and how it is connected to the experiences of untold numbers of refugees is what The Hours That Hold the Form revolves around. This is done in a wonder at how to tell about such things without either getting stuck in testimonies which might primarily say something about the forms of testifying, or getting stuck in a documentary return which tries to build a cathedral of facts from the events and experiences under consideration, but never recaptures the sensations encapsulating them in their singularity. What Selander, from within a certain material, instead attempts is to carefully approaching both the refugee's experience of the border and the event that is Walter Benjamin's death, and through the connections between them already there establish a narrative formation where testimonies and documentary images are used in a fashion that exposes the very mechanisms of narration.

To see how this is done you must regard the composition of the work. The installation consists of a video projection on a white screen and an open-reel tape recorder, along with speakers and some chairs, and if you sit down what you see is a black-and-white film mixing stills and moving images, and you hear a man's voice reading a text. It's a voice very capable of reading, letting the text take its time by rhythmically marking the pauses and putting together a collage of what's really a bunch of disparate statements. For the set is in many ways a peculiar one, spanning all the way from meta-reflections on the conditions of retelling events to disconnected pieces of accounts of traumas and catastrophes more or less obviously referencing the fate of the refugee. It appears to be notes from encounters with people, perhaps conversations listened in to, and sometimes they seem like notes of a more private nature. How and to whom these notes would be private can however not be known and the subjects of the statements remain anonymous, something which in part strengthens the impression that the voice is commenting the images of the film.

If the voice on the soundtrack for the most part bares witness to the fate of the refugee, the footage is from Portbou and revolves around the town's surroundings; buildings and façades, sequences from a plane ride, service staff setting tables, a visit to the Benjamin museum, light sources on which the camera lingers, fascinated. It all forms a collage roughly of what you might see, spending a couple of days in Portbou, and like the soundtrack it is a rhythmic composite of loose pieces where one series of images opens another, the cuts are smooth and the tempo of the flow of images never changes. Insofar as it can be seen as a documentation searching the place for its connection to Benjamin, that is secondary to the interest in everyday objects and life and above all the interest in beauty. Beautiful it is, and most of all its beauty comes from how the rhythm of the images and the rhythm of the reading appear to form a single unit. It is as if the punctuation of the voice works as beats to the flow of images of the video while the cuts and the transitions from stills to moving images in turn punctuates the reading. This unifying effect is made possible chiefly by the fact that word and image maintains loose relationships, both within the tracks and between them. Every clause and every image has its meaning, but they don't relate to one another by any meaning breaking out, questioning another and disturbing the common rhythm. Instead it is the narrative of an anonymous gaze that meets the anony-

mous statements of the voice track, giving the impression that they belong together allegorically in a perfect way.

So there you sit, in the echo chamber for the free play of associations, taking in the beauty and sensing that everything has a specific meaning without knowing exactly what it might be. Yet you might start to ask how this work conveys a critical attitude to the representations of the signs – indeed, if perhaps the rhythmic unity of the composition rather presupposes a unifying cosmos where everything adds up in an endeavor towards a closed and total film. You get the answer if you stay put, because The Hours That Hold the Form is an impostor who first seduces you but soon exposes her deceit as a very simple but immensely effective trick. Sound and image are not only separated into two tracks, but their loops are of different lengths and the experience is at once relativized. The atmosphere of melancholy but also delight set up by the installation until just now, falls apart and gives way to an uncanny feeling that is created as word and image glides over one another. The Hours That Hold the Form proves to hold a vast number of films which in relation to a documentary approach exposes the relativity of such projects and demonstrates how the bulk of history always holds a gap between word and image, between an event and the retelling of it. Once again in Selander's work an empty room emerges which word and image hides with thin surfaces. Once again the surfaces prove to hide nothing, a nothingness which however is involved in everything that can be told, because it is in the empty space that the event and the retelling of it becomes possible and it is through its passages that the time of the narrative flows and spreads in the gapping, loose joints of the story.

The room of history stands open by holding a gap following the stream of time and this openness is the future where every look back, documentation or retelling must make use of the relativity enclosed by the emptiness of that gap, something from which follows that every writing of history entails a measure of fictional composition. That is what evokes the feeling of uncanniness: the fictionalizing effect of the composition seems to have no outer limit, it spreads through the room of the installation and finds a hold on everything, and in the further end of this process it actually seems to dissolve the facticity and the singular in every moment's event and experience. Does this mean that The Hours That Hold the Form transforms the refugee experience and Benjamin's death into pure fictions? No, life is after all not film and between life and film there are crucial differences. As a matter of fact, these differences is what the difficulty of relating to and retelling the experience of an event by creating a composition through an artistic practice concerns, so the question ought instead to be how The Hours That Hold the Form does or does not do this.

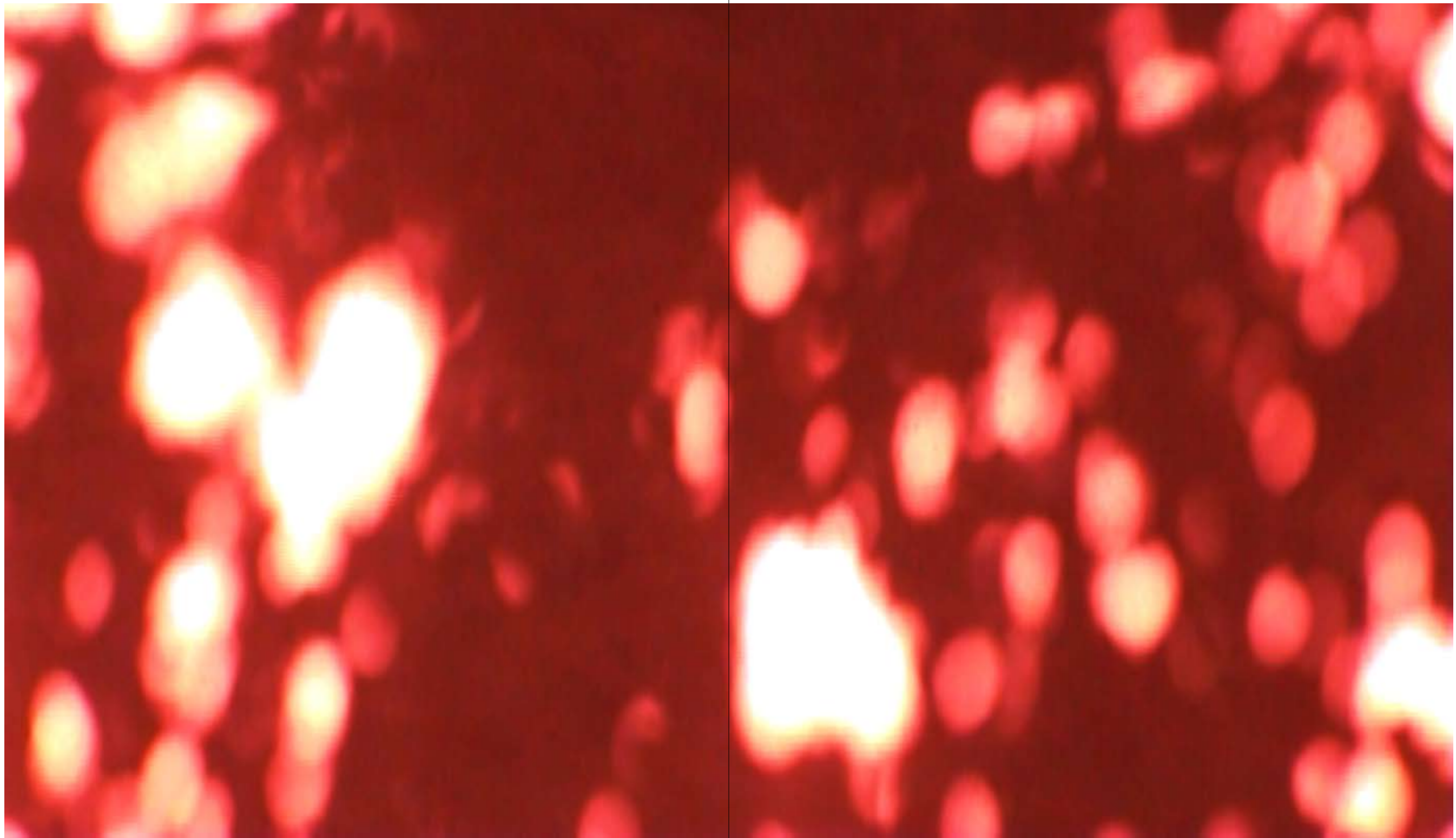
I believe that Lina Selander in this work is capable of such a composition and such a narration and it's done by means of what rather resembles a method, that which springs from her work with autobiographical experience and which follows from the recognition that reconstruction implies a translation that opens an empty space wherein is enabled the sharing of experience as sensation. (Continues on page 16)



However, the circumstances are somewhat different– it is about events past connected to the irreducible experience of the Other and the attempt must be based on sympathy and speculation, in about the same way as my attempt to write about it must as well. In any case, is it perhaps in the uncanniness of the relativization of everything that I approach the refugee's experience of the border and Benjamin's night in Portbou? That the uncanniness echoes the feeling of being the object of a regulated arbitrariness, directed by someone for a purpose unknown and where every image (so too the image of myself) appears to be an empty container for whatsoever. I myself can stand up and sneak out through the curtains, shake off the uncanny and trivially state that it was only a film, but to the refugee it is not a film and the uncanniness does not belong to someone else's fate, but he finds himself in reality enclosed in the frame that can hold whatever and translates his existence into whatever, that is to say turns him into something that is temporarily subjected to definite relations while at the same time being determined as wholly interchangeable. That suicide can be a way of protesting such being-whatever is rather obvious: with its fatal outcome a quite useless protest, but entirely on par with the experience of the acuteness of the situation.

Along the paths of seduction The Hours That Hold the Form opens a gap in history and an empty space and lets the mechanisms of narration stand out as configuration of gapping, gliding and displacing movements. It gives an insight as to the conditions of historical narration, but it is more than anything in the maneuver that exposes the composition of the work and in the sensations aroused by this disclosure that its greatness lies – that the beholder is placed in relation to the feelings that encapsulated the events and experiences which the narration gently has sought to draw near.







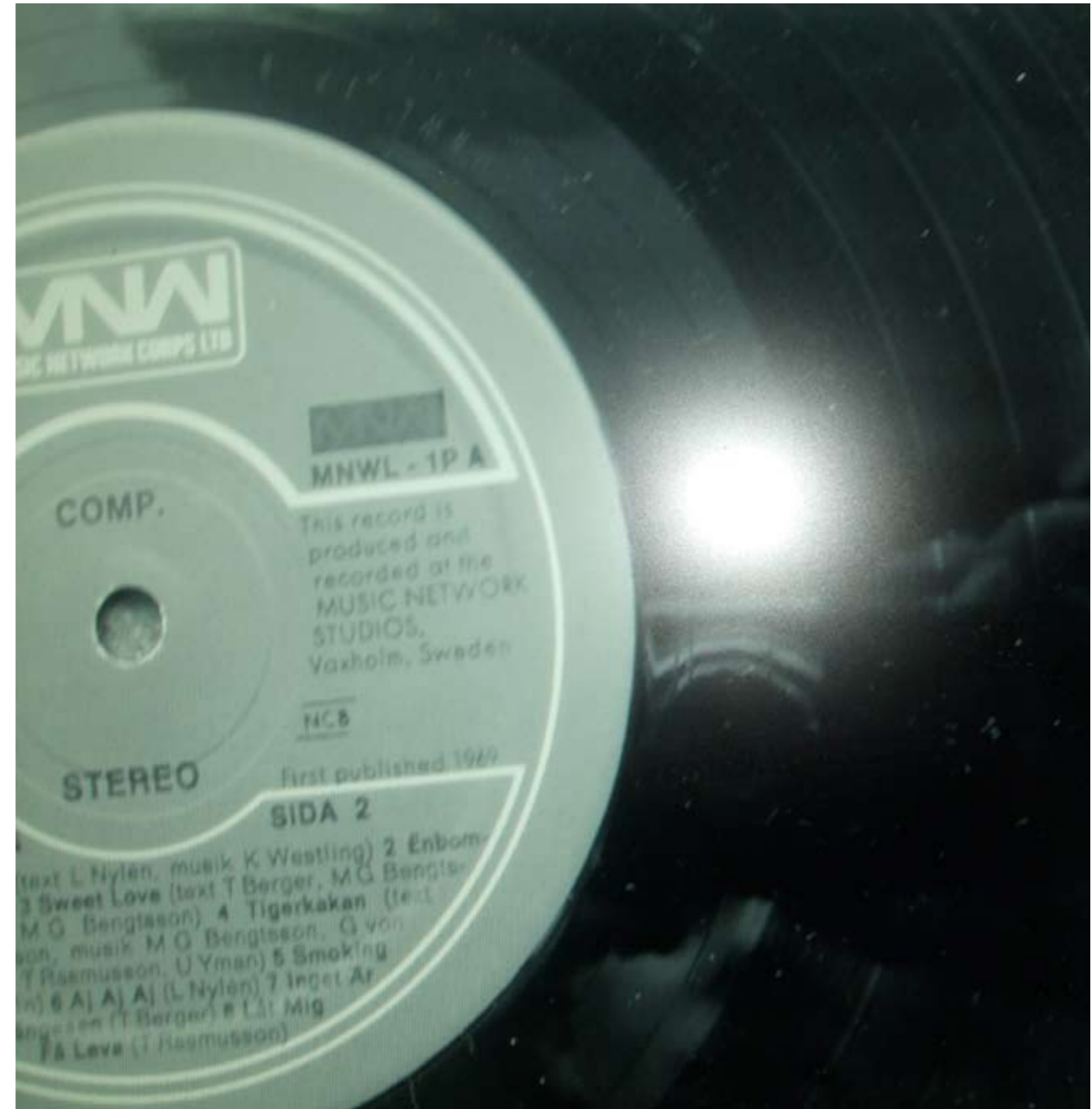
Still images from  
video installation



Still images from  
video installation



Still images from  
video installation





Still images from  
video installation



## Exhibition Inventory “When the sun sets it’s all red, then it disappears”

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Title: When the sun sets it’s all red, then it disappears  
Technique: Video and sound installation. Edition of 5  
Duration Video 1: 8.14 min, loop, colour, sound  
Duration Video 2: 1 h och 31 min loop, colour, silent  
Size: Various Dimensions  
Year: 2008

Inner room: 12 C-prints mounted on aluminium.  
15 x 21 cm. Edition of 3

## Lina Selander wishes to thank

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Lars Åkerlund, Sofia Johansson, Oscar & Karlo Mangione,  
Kim West, Monika Nyström, Kristina Bength, Kira Carpelan,  
Caroline Elgh, Lena Bergendahl and Sofia Rundgren.



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**Opening Hours**  
Thursday – Sunday  
12.00 – 17.00  
or by appointment