

Lina Selander. *A Series of Images About You*

Curator: Helena Holmberg

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Lina Selander, *Silphium*, still, 2014, HD-video, 22 min 9 sec. Courtesy of the artist.

Lina Selander's films build 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 shadows, the blinding light, the reflexes and the gaps through which the image can sometime appear point to a deep interest in the notion of image as such—as memory, imprint, representation and surface.

From their many points of entry, the films unfold in essayistic narratives in which the artist makes use of image material and sound from different sources—her own footage along with still images, quotes and archive material.

Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut (2011) takes as its starting point the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, Ukraine, in 1986. On the plaque that is a part of the work and may be viewed as an index, 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. Selander visited Pripjat—the now contaminated and deserted town founded for workers at the nuclear power plant—to film and photograph, and collected material from the Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum in Kiev that administers the historical heritage of the accident. The title and short excerpts are borrowed from Soviet director Dziga Vertov's film *The Eleventh Year* (1928) and connect the utopian dream of the early 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. The millions-of-years-old fossils that appear in the film may be read as the first images. Images without human interference, without purpose, but still razor-sharp impressions of a reality long gone—an indexicality reminiscent of that of the photograph. The images that are presented in the vitrine also hold an indexicality—they are imprints, not of light but of radiation, from rocks containing uranium placed on photographic paper, a method that points to how radiation was discovered by the French scientist Henri Becquerel during his experiments with photographic plates.

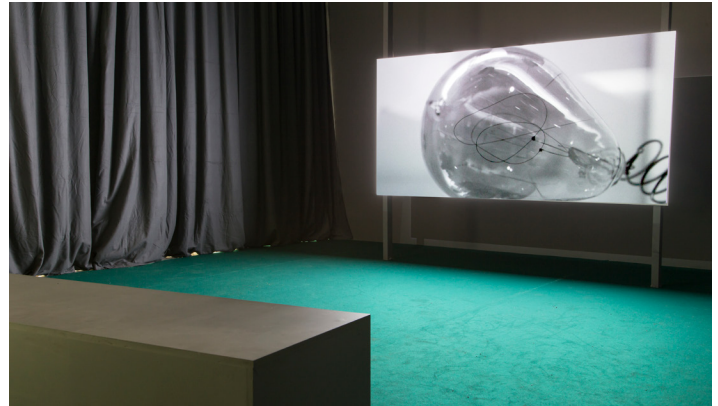
Humanity's efforts toward development and expansion, the desire for control over nature and the wish for visual control, depiction and surveillance are at the core of Selander's work. These human ambitions are always met by a contradicting force, a theme that is most distinctly elaborated on in the film *Silphium* (2014). *Silphium* was a plant that grew on the coast outside the northern African town of Cyrene in antiquity. Its high economic value became the financial ground for a prosperous Greek colony, which declined following the overexploitation and extinction of the wild plant. Another kind of greed and control is directed towards the human, and executed by the gaze, represented in the film by imagery from the Stasi museum in Berlin. In *Silphium*, nature seems to be returning our gaze with empty eyes. The contradicting gaze and force puts the viewer in focus. Among the many parallel lines of narration, the film contains an essential aspect that points back to us. The interest in the human being, her conditions and the possibility of choice expressed in Selander's oeuvre make her films political in the deepest sense. They are, as the exhibition title suggests, a series of images about us.

The Offspring Resembles the Parent (2015) is a new film made for the 2015 Venice Biennale. Like Selander's earlier works, it takes as its starting point a specific event or situation of crisis within society—in this case the current economic state and our increasingly crumbling faith in the monetary systems, with links to the European situation during World War I and the interwar years. A major part of the film's imagery consists of Notgeld—emergency banknotes—often colourful and with a strong visual impact, printed on paper or fabric. Their obviously fictitious character—they represent gigantic figures—points to the imperceptible flows within today's digital economies. Not unlike language, economic value is built on an agreement, a mutual understanding. The fictitious reality of finance only reveals its relation to the human, the body, to work and to nature in a situation of crisis in which the human conditions and connections to colonialism and warfare become clear.

Lina Selander's films oscillate between the wonder of image, of seeing, and the understanding that the image is never a given. In her films she reveals the invisible core of visuality, and still insists, as is said in one of the films, that "under some conditions we can see."

The exhibition includes the above-mentioned film installations and an archive for further reading and viewing of additional film works.

VOX is pleased to present, in collaboration with Kunsthall Trondheim (Norway) and with support from the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, the first major exhibition in Canada of works by artist Lina Selander.



View of the exhibition *Lina Selander: A Series of Images About You*, Kalmar Konstmuseum, from September 13 to November 23, 2014.

Captions: Michelangelo Miskulin



Lina Selander, *The Offspring Resembles the Parent*, still, 2015, HD-video, 13 min 44 sec, Courtesy of the artist.