Lisa Rosendahl: Your medium is the moving image, but quite often your videos are comprised of a succession of stills. What interests you in this way of working?

Lina Selander: First of all, there are no real still images — like photos on a wall — in a film as both the still and the moving image are subjected to the same overarching rhythm, the same flow of time. Having said that, I admit that lately I have felt that there is a greater concentration within the still image, a more immediate possibility for the viewer to stay in the image, to make it his or her own; it becomes a thought, an inner image. The still image also comes closer to a kind of sign, an ideogram or pictogram, without actually becoming one and this fits into my ambition that the gaze should be as free and calm as possible, exploring the image, sensing where it comes from and where it is going.
LR: For me, your use of single images creates a rhythm rather than a narrative, which allows for a tight composition that nevertheless remains open in terms of its interpretation. Looking back at the works you have made over the last few years it seems you have steadily moved further and further away from narrative, can you talk about that process?

LS: I think that rhythm has always been at the heart of my work, and that it has used narrative to further its own interests, so to speak. The rhythm needs something to work with. The more you think of it the more the two seem intertwined: a narrative without rhythm would perhaps only be a series of facts, and every rhythm is perhaps a beginning of a narrative.

LR: Several of your works deal with the desires and failures of modernity. The surveillance by the Stasi and the nuclear disasters in Hiroshima and Chernobyl are some examples. In your videos we encounter these displays and public archives. Your approach to these sites of meaning production seems to be to hone in on the nuclear disasters in Hiroshima and Chernobyl. And it was actually from the Forsmark nuclear reactor, in the vicinity of Gävle, that the world was alerted about the Chernobyl disaster. They discovered unusually high radioactivity there and first thought something had happened to their own reactor. But soon they found that all evidence was pointing towards somewhere in the Soviet Union. They called them, but were told that everything was fine and under control.

LS: The work is about the editing process, and a play between the still and the moving image. But also about the act of selection, the choice of information, the coincidence of history. But just as the museum presents events as related parts of a story, my work also finds its final form while being conscious of the fact that it is just one of many possibilities. One might say that it is the history of recording devices and technologies, that it is just one of many possibilities. One might say that it is the coincidence of history. But just as the museum presents events as related parts of a story, my work also finds its final form while being conscious of the fact that it is just one of many possibilities. One might say that it is the history of recording devices and technologies, that it is just one of many possibilities.

LR: Regarding my moving away from narrative I think it has much to do with the previous question and the problem or method really, the cross-pollination perhaps only a question of distance. It is the same logic of montage. This is characteristic of my practice as a whole, which, as a consequence, dissolves the boundaries between individual works to a certain degree.

LS: When content-based narrative is not the main focus of the work, the emphasis shifts to the logic of montage. This is characteristic of my practice as a whole, which, as a consequence, dissolves the boundaries between individual works to a certain degree. I don't make a film in order to open up the reading of previous films or the images they contain, but I often think about the relationship between my films and certain images in them. In a way it is perhaps only a question of distance. It is the same rhythm rather than a narrative, which allows for a tight composition that nevertheless remains open in terms of its interpretation. Looking back at the works you have made over the last few years it seems you have steadily moved further and further away from narrative, can you talk about that process?

LR: Working together on this exhibition I began to see your practice as an open system where each of your works. I think that rhythm has always been at the heart of my work, and that it has used narrative to further its own interests, so to speak. The rhythm needs something to work with. The more you think of it the more the two seem intertwined: a narrative without rhythm would perhaps only be a series of facts, and every rhythm is perhaps a beginning of a narrative.

LS: What role does the image of nature play in your work? It seems to be always there somehow, like a mute witness to the excesses of humanity. Nature is kind of the ultimate form, no content, all form. I think of my work as a form about form, a vortex that generates content: pieces of reference, knowledge, facts. In my films nature appears both as an opposite to is a process open to endless reinterpretation; could you relate to that?

LR: Anteroom of the Real was originally commissioned for a library. Can you say something about this work?

LS: The work is about the editing process, and a play between the still and the moving image. But also about the act of selection, the choice of information, the editing of the events that will become, or is supposed to become, the official history. The hands show this in a concrete way; that it is actually somebody's decision how history is created. It was commissioned for the public library in Gävle, a city in the part of Sweden that was most affected by the radioactivity from the meltdown in Chernobyl. And it was actually from the Forsmark nuclear reactor, in the vicinity of Gävle, that the world was alerted about the Chernobyl disaster. They discovered unusually high radioactivity there and first thought something had happened to their own reactor. But soon they found that all evidence was pointing towards somewhere in the Soviet Union. They called them, but were told that everything was fine and under control.

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LS: Nature is kind of the ultimate form, no content, all form. I think of my work as a form about form, a vortex that generates content: pieces of reference, knowledge, facts. In my films nature appears both as an opposite to
montage and as that which montage hopes to become: a non-constructed continuum, an absolute fact whose cuts, juxtapositions and rhythm form a complete and seductive whole. Apart from this, which you might describe as a kind of unachievable origin, images of nature also put whatever you place in relation to them into a certain perspective of deep, non-human time. A mute witness is a good description, only we can never be the beneficiaries of the testimony, only witness it...

LR: What interested you in the story of the plant Silphium?

LS: There are many interesting things about the plant: its contraceptive properties, that it became so valuable, that it turned out to be impossible to cultivate and became extinct. Then the story of the drought, the oracle, the exile... The fact that there is a historical/etymological link between the Swedish words for coin (mynt) and memory (minne) was also important. I was attracted to the phrase ‘to coin’, and to the image stamped on the coin. In the case of Silphium these images are the only trace left of the plant. This was the starting point, then other things and relations unfolded through a process of semblances; making the plant a witness, or a ghost, as if Silphium had lived on and was looking back at the world that eradicated it.

Right:
Lina Selander, Silphium 2014 HD-video, 22 min, b/w, mute and sound. Made together with Oscar Mangione.
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The Stuart Hall Library provides an extensive bibliography of reference materials and resources relating to this exhibition. The bibliography is available in print as well as through the Library website, and a display of these materials will be available in the Library throughout the exhibition. The Stuart Hall Library is open: Tues to Fri, 10am–1pm, 2–5pm. To make an appointment, phone +44 (0)20 7749 1255 or email: library@iniva.org. You can also plan your visit by accessing the Library catalogue online at www.iniva.org/library

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