

*PRESENCE AND TRACE - THE ART OF FANNY CARINASDOTTER*

Fanny Carinasdotter describes herself as an explorer.<sup>1</sup> The description is well founded. She is indeed an explorer but she is not a discoverer of far away places. There are no long and distant expeditions involved in her practice, and she does not direct the camera towards that which (from her points of view) could be called "the exotic". Instead, according to her, she digs where she is standing. And, according to me, she stands firmly and digs deeply. Each turn of the shovel is accompanied by curiosity and reflection. She is solidly present in the repetitive yet differentiated moves. The process is carried out with thorough consideration, but although the digging is in itself of the greatest importance, it does not embrace a self-fulfilling purpose.

While digging, Fanny Carinasdotter is constantly asking questions such as "what?", "why?" and "how?". At first these appear to be simple questions but taken into serious consideration they are no longer quite so uncomplicated. Fanny does not claim to deliver any final answers (if such answers exist at all), but she respectfully invites others to engage in her enquiries into the field of underlying but powerful structures which most probably (in one way or the other) affect us all.

For quite some time I have been contemplating on how to write this text, I have tried to figure out a sensible way to approach the artist and her art within this given space.

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<sup>1</sup> Fanny Carinasdotter, MFA-thesis, The Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå University, February 2009, p 1.

Of course, I am not sure if I am succeeding. In conversations which the two of us have had each "I" (Fanny and Anna) has been present. We have had a direct face-to-face dialogue. Here, however, Fanny Carinasdotter is being spoken of in the third person. Approaching someone in such a fairly removed manner is perhaps more often than not a tricky business. For instance: How does one speak of someone without at the same moment stopping the act of speaking *with* this very same someone? Or, how does one speak *of* someone else without muting the voice of this person? I think that similar questions are preoccupying the artist in her work. She seeks to speak a language which acts in an open and inclusive mode. This might be easier said than done, but potential difficulties do not put a halt to the search. It continues in her various projects, which shows that for her the concept of the "project" does not imply a start taking off from zero or an end of absolute finality.

To Fanny Carinasdotter the dialogue is essential. So also is cooperation. Dialogues and cooperation come in many shapes and Fanny has been involved in several of these while exploring the spaces surrounding her: The private and multilayered sphere of the home, the public space upon which different agendas are being inscribed, empty and decaying buildings filled with messages; and now, in her latest photographic/textual investigation, the buildings of the former mental institution of Umedalen.

This work, like some of her previous work, has been formed by a subjective documentary approach where the poetry of the real is very present. Photographic images - which at

times are rightly or wrongly called fragments - merge into a rich narrative or, in Fanny's own words, "a mini-archive". In her work the artist has carried out research and engaged methods which can be found within the discipline of ethnology. However, every method has been shaped to correspond to the specific subjectivities and objectivities within the project. At every point reflections upon her own position have been made but never with the intention of turning her "I" into a supreme topic for discussion. Fanny knows the subtle play of coming close and allowing space. She knows how to artistically approach other human beings in an indirect but yet direct way. In her visual exploration of the interior of the buildings she is focusing on the traces of a previous history. In her depictions of the traces there is always a present absence but never an absent presence.

Anna Rådström