

Åsa Ersmark  
*LUNATIC*

Text by Elina Suoyrjö

*“The moon had been observing the earth close-up longer than anyone. It must have witnessed all of the phenomena occurring - and all of the acts carried out - on this earth. But the moon remained silent; it told no stories. All it did was embrace the heavy past with a cool, measured detachment. On the moon there was neither air nor wind. Its vacuum was perfect for preserving memories unscathed. No one could unlock the heart of the moon.”*

— Haruki Murakami, 1Q84

The concept of time seems to structure not only our everyday lives but also our whole existence. Our mutual understanding of time arranges the rhythm of sleeping, working, socializing, eating, thinking. The lack of capacity or unwillingness to be part of this agreement can derail one from the socially acknowledged way of living, the unwritten rules of the society. In her exhibition *Lunatic*, artist Åsa Ersmark takes given structures, such as the conception of time, and questions them: she plays with them, turns them upside down. The exhibition – consisting of installation, sculpture, video and photographic works – explores and discusses parallels between mythology, astronomy, psychoanalytic undercurrents as well as social disobedience.

The exhibition revolves around Ersmark’s new video installation *Lunatic* (2012). In ancient Egypt the conception of time was based on lunar calendars, on the shifts of the moon’s phases. Ersmark’s work developed while she started photographing and documenting the lunar cycle from her balcony. The artist suggests a return to a natural way of experiencing time, while at the same time experimenting on something completely unnatural. Through the installation we become part of the uncanny and even psychotic experience of existing simultaneously within several points in time as the different phases of the moon flicker in front of our eyes. Time appears not as a linear structure, but rather as a structure consisting of several parallel planes. The work features music by artists Simon Mullan and Theodore Trottner. The haunting pulsation of the beats builds the sensation of being out of control, a sensation amplified by the hectic rhythm of the images. The physical body of the visitor and their presence in the space is brought to the centre of the installation through the overall visual and audible stimulation.

When entering the exhibition, one passes by the work *Sphinx, I bring the shadow with me* (2012). The sphinx, usually depicted as a powerful yet inactive guardian, is absorbed in some kind of introverted activity, either sucking on or defecating something. Entering the exhibition suggests entering a space of its own, characterized by magical realism resembling the artist’s literary references, Haruki Murakami and Jorge Luis Borges. The exhibition space is governed by a certain chaotic order – one where dreamlike settings and mythical elements take over; where strong symbols and conceptions we are accustomed to gain new meaning.

Ersmark’s works offer us various layers of interpretation, from humorous to melancholic to psychopathological. The works are characterized by a strong ambiguity and undertone of desire. The artist brings out and plays with several powerful, and in part kitsch-like symbols such as the moon, the sphinx and the planet Saturn. The thematic of the show even touches upon the concepts of the feminine and the masculine. Using references connected traditionally to male authorities, Ersmark challenges these associations, creating her own space and meanings through the introduction of these same symbols in a new context. The artist invites us into the realm of the uncanny; one with unexplainable dreamy elements, where notions such as time or gender-roles appear as mythical entities, to be categorized alongside other symbols discussed in the exhibition.

Elina Suoyrjö is an independent curator based in Stockholm.