

JOHN SKOOG

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Aron Skoog Is it important to do it directly in English?

John Skoog Yes, I think so. But it's a bit strange. You know what, I'll just translate it afterwards. What do you think?

Aron Skoog Yup, certainly a bit strange. Like it's not us.

John Skoog Let's go for Swedish. That is nice, concerning the films, to discuss which language we should speak in.

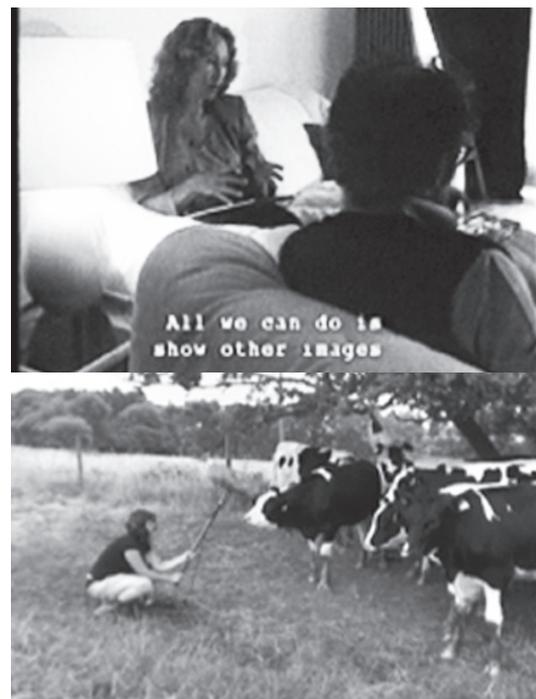
Aron Skoog So, when I think about the films, I obviously keep returning to myself, my childhood, I wonder if it is something to talk about at all? Because when I thought about it, I also thought about that gmail-correspondence we had several years ago, you know the image-association one.

John Skoog Yes, that's how I thought about this talk, that it would be exciting to see where we end up if we follow the association starting from the film. And, because you have such an intimate relationship with them, I thought it would be nice to do it together. What I like, and something that is very important for me with the films, is that it's almost like we're all playing together. You know, Martin comes, we drive around in cars, collect the camera and the equipment, there is a list of things that have to be filmed each day. A reason to stay up late. Of course it's different, but it's also a fantastic collaboration with Ita (cinematographer). She likes all this, understands it for real, and immediately became a part of it.

Aron Skoog Yes, that is exactly what I think about the films and all your other works I've been a part of. That for me, now, it also becomes like a memory of childhood and play, in some strange double way. When I looked at *Sent på Jorden* earlier today, I thought the whole thing felt like a memory of places, images, which don't belong just to the film.

John Skoog was born in Skåne, the southernmost part of Sweden, in 1985. There, he grew up together with his two brothers on an old farm. In the presented issue, he talks with his youngest brother Aron Skoog .

John Skoogs showed his works at Towner Contemporary Art Museum in Eastbourne, Johan Berggren Gallery in Malmö, M.M.K. in Frankfurt am Main, PS1 Contemporary Art Center Long Island City in New York, Rotterdam International Film Festival and many other places.



John Skoog Or also memories of other films, that we've seen together.

Aron Skoog Yes, all those films. What I remember the most - and that seems important - are all the Buster Keatons we saw after school, as an afternoon-snack-film. That I really liked them, but also the ritual of watching them.



John Skoog A bit like going out for a walk together to take photographs, like we used to do, with or without a definite plan. I keep thinking that it must have formed some sort of aesthetic alliance. Looking in photo-books, then taking a walk trying it out.

Aron Skoog Indeed. Before doing this, I looked through your *family album*, and now the pictures are really like memories, in so many ways, but not just that... When I looked at them, I also realized how much I recognize myself, but also similarities to what you do now. Especially of course with the two films *Sent på Jorden* and *Förår*. The same searching camera-eye.

When I am back in Skåne for a while, it means arriving at a very charged place. Memories, pictures, anecdotes. It turns into an image, into something beautiful. I keep having (mostly) beautiful memories. I mean this is very romantic.

John Skoog I'm not sure, for me maybe it's more like the only place from where one can even start to speak. That there is a connection to what I am filming, not just something that interests me, but a closeness/intimacy that is hard to avoid.

And there was another story about a helicopter landing on the main square, offering people a ride through the sky. One man hurried there during his lunch break and took the ride. It's very nice when he describes how he could look at his village from up above, that he was able to see everything at the same time.

And I don't think about it like romanticizing, but more like the only possible starting point, without being completely seduced by one's own good stories, smart ideas and beautiful images. To be honest, it also just happens automatically. I mean it feels like there are reasons to do something there.

Aron Skoog Exactly, but not just that. I mean this is not a film that romanticizes country life or rural Sweden, but instead touches the alienation and aridity here. What happens, when you live in a place like that, when you're shaped by that place, that atmosphere.

John Skoog Would you also say, that the films have a bit of a strange relationship between the ordinary/mundane and the special? Many people wanted to talk about that, when I applied for money for *Sent på Jorden*. I never knew what I should answer...except: obviously it will be special in all its mundaneness, the way we're going to film it...that is the effect.

Aron Skoog I don't think there is any strange relationship, rather a really natural one, as if everything is just happening. The word *strange* seems really foreign to me, thinking of *Sent på Jorden*.

Aron Skoog It's like this *Det skiter jag i* ("I don't give a fuck") of Gunnar Ekelöf.



Aron Skoog I also used to think of Strountes, especially one poem.

Ty natten kommer / då lycka och olycka / vilar i frid med varann // Du ser hur skymningen faller snabbt / som klockklang / och fönster efter fönster tänds // Därinne har de ätit sin spaghetti / och utan en tanke på morgondagen / sover de snart med varann // Ty natten kommer / Det finns ingen morgondag



Aron Skoog Poetry for me has always been close. I think of your works, films and poetry. How you use it, as a language, as a (non-?)narrative structure. For me it's a way to understand you. Is that close at hand?

John Skoog quoting *Birgitta Trotzi* "How do you write? Things come up. Landscape, rooms, streets, faces. Fragments, starting with incoherent pieces. Only gradually the whole reveals itself, where they came from, the underlying map. One of the things that persisted to appear in my mind in this way, was the story's title. "Dynd-kongens datter" (The Marsh King's Daughter), one of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. I read it as a child, but the memory of it - rather, the reflection from it - has continued to operate in me. It is the tale of a creature half animal and half human, child to the Princess in Svanhamn in the Land of Egypt, and the Marsh King, who lives in the deepness of the swamp. She is of a dual nature: a struggling human at day, a guiltless amphibian when night falls. After this, the being of night and day, destruction and resurrection, the fairy tale's portrayal of the soul's metamorphosis, I've wanted to name my story."

Aron Skoog I think of something Dziga Vertov

wrote, "to replace the truth with the sheen/shine of the truth", it's really exciting with the truth, what is the truth in your films? As I've kept trying to pin down, with all this, your films, works, is a truth, depicting something that is. As I said, there is nothing strange, it's something that is straightforward in the images, the few words, the narrative, the relationship to truth (in the Gunnar-Dziga-spirit).

Aron Skoog I also have to mention Lukas Moodysson's poem, which has meant a lot to me, I kept it like an anthem. But maybe it fits well with the films, it is about similar stuff, same feeling, same touch. And because he has always been there - Lukas Moodysson - as something we cared about, seen and read.

*I remember my childhood wanderings.
I walked into the forest. And never came back.*





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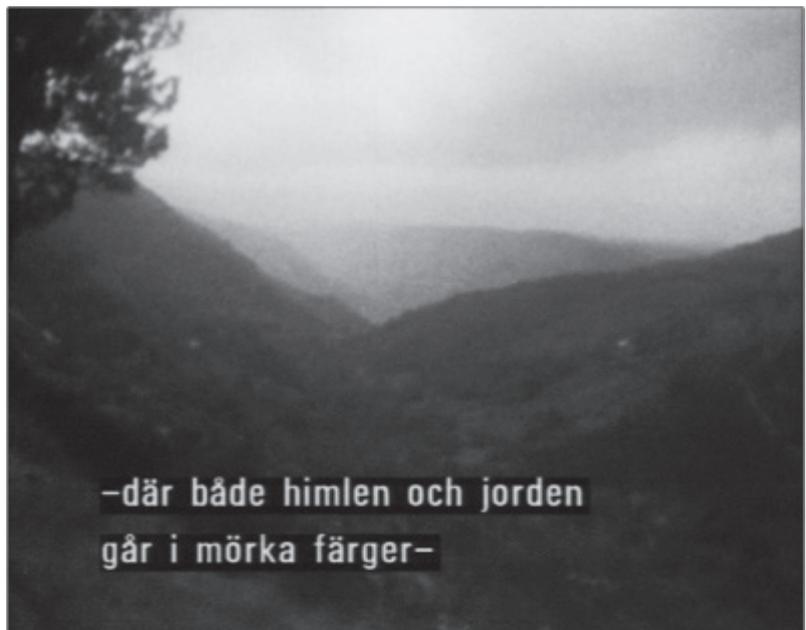
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Aron Skoog I often think that Söderåsen is like the Cévennes, like in Eric M. Nilsson's Profeten, gloomy but beautiful. Something that I can find in the films, the gloomy landscape, the heavy skies, the dark dirt.

John Skoog Yes, or just like Skåne in Trotzig's books. Flat, muddy, dark.



-där både himlen och jorden
går i mörka färger-

-where both the sky and the earth is in dark colors-