

Maria Finn

In her video work *Summer after Monika* (2007), Maria Finn combines drawing, photography, and film, and thereby tests the potentials of narration in different media. In the process, she bases it on Ingmar Bergman's film *The Summer with Monika* (*Sommaren med Monika*, 1953), who had already changed the media when he adapted the novel *Sommaren med Monika* by Per Anders Fogelström, which was published just two years before.

Bergman's film tells the story of two young adults, Monika and Harry, who wrench themselves from their desolate reality and flee to a remote island to live a life that seems to be free of commitments. They live there as naturally and passionately as the film censorship barely allows. But love's bliss doesn't last long. Disillusioned and confronted with unexpected parentage, both are already forced to return to the regulated life of civilisation at the end of the summer. The gloomy future of the lovers is already anticipated by the images of the ship's journey from the open sea back to the claustrophobic buildings that line the river of the city.

Finn translates Bergman's film into a montage of moving and still images with a voice-over of passages from Fogelström's book that have been left out in this form in Bergman's film. The couple's life at the beginning and end of their time together in Stockholm is reflected by photographs that the artist took in Helsinki and the surrounding areas. These are stylistically reduced images of a bar, a playground, or a high-rise housing complex, as they are found in many places. Due to their muted colours and absence of people, they carry a certain kind of melancholy and loneliness and are therefore in contrast to the harmony of the recurring nature sequences, the surface of water glittering in sunlight, or the blades bowing to the wind. If Finn distanced herself in the city photographs from the film template by shifting the setting and the thereby expressed temporality, she gets closer to it again in her filmed nature clippings. For, they are sometimes not only direct quotations from Bergman's *The Summer with Monika*, but were also taken in Ornö, where Bergman also shot parts of his film. The drawings integrated in the video work display scenes that were taken from the original film. They reflect the time of the lovers' untarnished happiness and show Monika and Harry in a delicately pencil-drawn beach setting by the water, but their faces are only marked by empty spaces. In this way the artist protects the protagonists from a voyeuristic access and gives them – similar to the selected cityscapes that contain only limited social characteristics – a certain kind of anonymity. The photographs and the empty paper spaces of the drawings thus become inscriptive spaces where the viewer can project his/her own perceptions.

Finn's *Summer after Monika* is characterised by a simultaneous approach to and dissociation from Bergman's film. As she transfers the story into individual stills, she not only reflects the imaginative power of Bergman's film, but the power that springs from individual film images – that is of freeze images as we know them from film posters, but also remembered images that are evoked when thinking of a film one has seen. She has succeeded in bringing about a form of narration which through its representativeness and porous structure gives the viewer the freedom to insert the story around the images.

Petra Giezendanner (text in the catalogue for *In Silent Conversation with Ingmar Bergman*, Kunstmuseum Thun, Cristoph Merian Verlag, Thun, 2008.)