

*Iben Elmstrøm*

Laila Svensgaard's practice is invested in the ontology of the photographic materiality and how to create art through different photographic processes. Svensgaard's works across a connected span of mediums such as sound, drawing, photography and independent artists books publishing.

Her works is on a fundamental level investigating registration in the photographic process, Yet her artistic experiments are often rooted in the irrational aspects of the conditions for light, movements and materials. A working method more similar to a painter's request, than the indexical truth ridden properties connected to the photograph as documentation.

In the recent years Svensgaard has mainly been focusing on creating 'camera less' photographs, which materialize through a curious medium experimentation. The images are created through the use of a simple light source exposure and light sensitive photographic paper that preserves and trace the imprint as a negative image. Often her approaches are taking a starting point peculiar small experiments, such as developing 'Pockets Photos' by asking people to carry light sensitive paper in their pocket, creating a small active camera inside the trousers, that records light, movements and the pocket fabrics patterns, resulting in an abstract composition. Or by registering the movement of the moon, by installing a self-made pinhole camera on a rooftop to capture beautiful drawings of light, made by cosmic movements.

Through a philosophical investigation of photographic materiality, Svensgaard creates a small photographic universe, conditioned by phenomenological questions. In Svensgaard artistic work the photographic image is not necessarily statement about the world, but represents itself as a small piece of our worlds reality. Her photographic works draw us into a poetic universe of dust, cracks, light, shadows and darkness to explore esthetic meditative dimensions of the photographic process.

The photographic experience has become a mass cultural phenomenon everyone practices today, as way of dispersing a fluid self into various digital platforms as a mean to create identity. Yet the photograph is rarely practiced as an art form. Philosopher and anthropologist Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach writes a few years after the invention of the camera 'we as humans prefers the image to the thing, the copy to the original, the representation to reality, appearance to being' setting an early predicament for how we today in our late modern society are impacted by photographic image making and circulation. Svensgaard's work ask us for a different kind of engagement with the photographic, where our sensory and perceptual registration is activated, seeking underlying philosophical and phenomenological question imbedded in photography. Svensgaard's art works opens up a rare and esthetic dimension of the medium, asking the viewer to question our own sight, the science imbedded in the photographic and how philosophical questions are connection to trace, space, light and darkness.

About work series *Paper Planes* and *Folded Plane*:

The work series *Paper Planes and Folded Plane* originate from the idea of hand folded paper planes as a metaphor for movements in space. Through these two series of work, Laila Svensgaard examines the fundamental principles behind light exposure and spatial dimensions. *Paper Planes I - VI* consist of a series of photographs, created by folding light sensitive paper into basic shapes of paper planes, which is then exposed to a source of light. In a large frame small photographs, - all folded identically and exposed to the same amount of light – in a range of different abstract and minimal photograms are neatly arranged, showing all the outcomes of the photographic experiment. The piece highlights the multiple variables that light exposure entails, and the works hereby unfolds the ungraspable aspect of light's eternal, abstract and ambiguous nature. Each photograph differs from the next and light appears from all angles, giving a certain rhythmic reading for the eye and mind. The piece operates on two aligned mental levels, where you as a viewer both question the process of photography and your own subjective way of perceiving visual information. This position between our visual perception and reality is a reoccurring theme in the works of Laila Svensgaard, where the small experiments are like magical activities that pull our understanding of images making into new dimensions. Culturally we understand the photographic as a system of information and classification, ranging from sequences pasted into family albums, to photographs used in weather forecasting, astronomy, microbiology, geology, police work, medical work or used for military reconnaissance, yet Svensgaard's investigation of the photograph is opening up the aspects of photography's material that we never see at all, exposing all indeterminable elements embedded in the perception of the photographic. The rational aspect of photography is turned into a magic science, investigating how we perceive through our sight and how truth can be undermined in experimentation, opening up new intellectual and philosophical thinking.

In the *Folded Plane* series Svensgaard has scaled her works up to a large installation. The installation almost functions as a device for experiencing the basic science connected to photography, light and darkness.

The paper plane is the reoccurring shape that defines a beautiful and peaceful minimal abstraction. Large paper sheets hanging from the walls are exposed to a squared light source, an image projected from a Dias-projector. The paper plane's folds create shadows and new three-dimensional forms occur where the projected image meet the three-dimensional form, creating a spatial situation, from the simple parameters of light, shapes and shadows. The pieces strangely blend the actual folds of paper plane and the shadows casted by the light, creating a wonder about which source informs which. The piece is altering as the viewers are passing the low installed projectors, activating new perceptual disturbances that makes the shapes go in and out of form. The large-scale work draws us further into the material of how imagery can be created between light and darkness. Images are usually understood as surfaces, but in Svensgaard's *Folded Plane* viewers are asked to participate and sense beyond the photographs surface and investigate the layers of materiality and science opened up by light, forms and darkness. The piece invites you directly into the inexhaustible interventions of space, light, speculation and perceptual magic. The installation creates a sort of pseudo-presence, where our vision is destabilized and confused to the extent that brings the mind into wonder.