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MAJA DANIELS
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The photographer and filmmaker Maja Daniels likes to play with the boundaries between documentary and fiction. Referring to an old story about a girl accused of witchcraft in a village in Dalecarlia, Sweden, she combines past and present, myth and reality and challenges the course of history.
In 1667, on a cold autumn day in Älvdalen in the region of Dalecarlia in Sweden, a twelve-year-old girl called Gertrud Svensdotter was accused of witchcraft. Her supposed crime was to have walked on water using supernatural powers. The episode marked the beginning of the Swedish witch-hunts, a period of mass hysteria and terror that lasted eight years and caused the deaths of almost 300 people. In Sweden as in the rest of Europe, witch trials marked the end of feudal society and ushered in modernity and subsequently the capitalist era. In the new fear-ridden world order, the role of women and the perception of nature changed radically: women became more restricted in their freedom (they were confined to the traditional ideas of the nuclear family: to stay indoors and have children), and the forest stopped being a place of myth and became a natural resource.

Maja Daniels spent a lot of her youth in Älvdalen and would listen to stories told by her grandmother. The exhibition *Gertrud* brings the story of the little girl who walked on water into the present, allowing the world in which Gertrud lived to be reborn according to different laws. In this new world, the succession of events is not yet determined. The photographer examines the way in which dominant ideologies and a culture of silence in Sweden have shaped a particular understanding of the world.

For Maja Daniels, photography and film are magical spaces that defy knowledge, meld past and future, and redefine the boundaries of the world as we know it. One might argue that photography, like myths, is based on a dangerous form of deception. Is magic not ultimately the promise of something in exchange for nothing? This is perhaps its most redemptive power: not everything must, nor can, be measured and explained.

Most of her work is the result of performances in natural environments, where Maja Daniels constructs her own rituals and creates new mythologies. Her approach reflects a surrealistic desire to re-enchant the world. Here, the forest, which is threatened by climate change, becomes more than a mere natural resource. It is a place of memory, language, history, culture, mysticism and imagination. Perhaps magic is not an activity but an entire way of thinking.

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