

**MELK**

**ERIK GUSTAFSSON**

***Time Loop Rabbit Hole***

May 19 – June 12, 2022

MELK is excited to end our spring season with Erik Gustafsson's second solo show at the gallery titled Time Loop Rabbit Hole.

Gustafsson begins with his personal archive of photographs, which he reworks into abstract pictures. His process often involves cycles and loops of photographing, developing, printing, re-photographing, and scanning. The resulting pictures can be seen as metaphors for memories, where traces of the process are layered on top of each other. Or, simply as pictures demonstrating the potential for change that lies in the act of reproduction.

In this exhibition, Gustafsson is showing 11 new works. By turning accidents and intuitive actions into a playful way of working, he has created a series of pictures that all have replaced the reality of the original photograph with their new appearance.

Solarization, a darkroom technique that creates partly or wholly reversed tones, is the experimental process Gustafsson has explored when making these works. The technique was a staple of experimental photography in the first decades of the twentieth century. For the artist and theorist László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), polarization was an example of an "intensified" manner of seeing that he associated with the use of chemical manipulation more generally. Seeing is intensified also in Gustafsson's solarized works, in which several of the prints hold barely legible figurative motifs. Hence making the works oscillate between what is represented and being present.

**Erik Gustafsson** (b. 1987) is a Swedish artist currently based in Gothenburg, Sweden. He holds an MFA from the Valand Academy and has presented his work through exhibitions in the Nordic region and internationally. Recent exhibitions include NSFW/Svilova in Gothenburg, Gallery Steinsland Berliner in Stockholm, as well as the Mariatorget subway station in Stockholm. He also presents his work through publications, where he examines the format as an alternative exhibition space.

## Seeing With

Perhaps it has always been like this with photography: the character of opposition. From the outset discussion of the medium was riven with divisions: science versus art, machine versus human, object versus subject, matter versus spirit, document versus expression, registration versus vision – all of them mirroring a more profound dualism in Western thinking that separated consciousness from the world's actuality. More recently, others have been added: digital versus analogue, and its correlate, information versus form. Thought about in this way, photography can never be healed of such divisions because it is not a single thing, rather a medium with many uses, all shadowing each other – infecting each other, if you will. So the so-called truth value of photography was only an agreement to look at photographs in a certain way while ignoring so many other aspects. Given the diasporic, deracinated distribution of images in digital space, even that narrow expectation should probably be curbed or even abandoned. But we cannot, even at this late date. Erik Gustafsson's work insists that we can retain a vestige of that lost confidence, or naivete, only if we accept other dimensions at the same time and learn to embrace them. To look with, not at, the photograph, which may awaken us to our own experience of memory and to the world too.

The way back to photography is through it. Gustafsson begins with photographs he has already taken and commits them to a new and complicated evolution. Gustafsson is not the only photographer to treat his own images as, in some sense, found objects. Sometimes this is an optical proposition, sometimes a psychological one. With Gustafsson, it is both and more. By rephotographing, solarizing (overexposing), printing and rephotographing again – however many stages he chooses – the artist diminishes the familiarity of the "original." Further, he may treat the same source image in different regimes, creating yet other versions. The source image may retain some of its documentary or denotative content, but that foundation is not easily accessible. Yet this description, which to some degree follows the artist's own rationale as a distancing or effacement, is misleading. It implies that the source image is buried or obscured under layers, and that, for this very

reason, retains a lost authority. Viewers then are incited to perform a kind of image archaeology to experience the work.

What Gustafsson's images offer us, I believe, is a very different experience. In them, the different temporalities, embodied in the different iterations of his process, gather and convene in the final object. So memory, in the trace of an event, is only one aspect of these photographs, modified or enhanced – or compromised, if you prefer to read it that way – by light, colors, textures and the overwhelming manifestations of photographic chemistry, itself increasingly a thing of the past. If there is an elegiac aspect to these images, it is at least as much in the memory of a lost medium as it is in the memory of lost personal time.

Yet think how much has been gained. Any sense of defeat has been overwhelmed by a lush sense of possibility, of the many ways a photographic image might be for us an opening to other kinds of visual experiences. The augmenting of iterations creates relations, provokes other emotions, and renews the status of the document as something else, something not given but reconstituted in our sight as part of wider field. Digital technology has already made the breakdown of photographic definitions inevitable. Gustafsson's work shows why it should be celebrated.

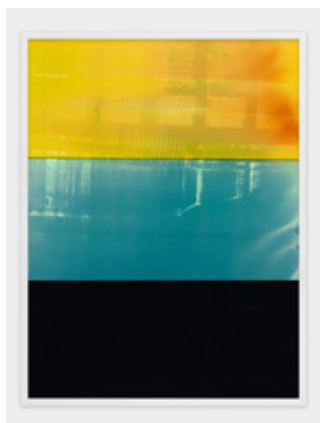
Lyle Rexer  
Brooklyn, New York



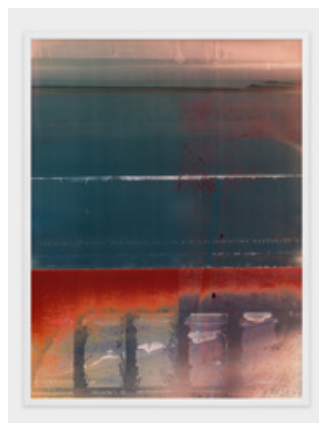
**Untitled I**  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



**Untitled II**  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



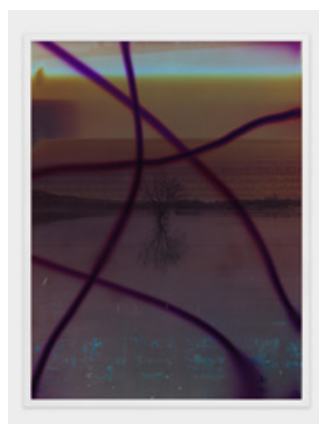
**Untitled III**  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



**Untitled IV**  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



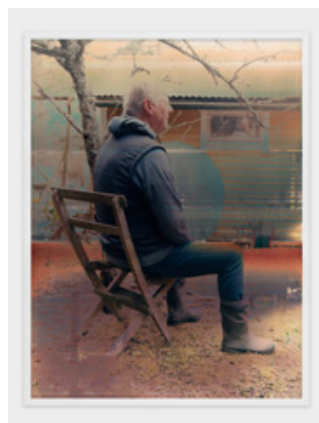
**Untitled V**  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



**Untitled VI**  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



*Untitled VII*  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



*Untitled VIII*  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



*Untitled IX*  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



*Untitled X*  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK



*Untitled XI*  
*(Time Loop Rabbit Hole)*  
2022  
146 x 111 cm  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP  
45.000 NOK

5 % Art Tax not included

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### ***Untitled I (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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## ***Time Loop Rabbit Hole***

Erik Gustafsson

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### ***Untitled II (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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## ***Time Loop Rabbit Hole***

Erik Gustafsson

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### ***Untitled III (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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## ***Time Loop Rabbit Hole***

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### ***Untitled IV (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

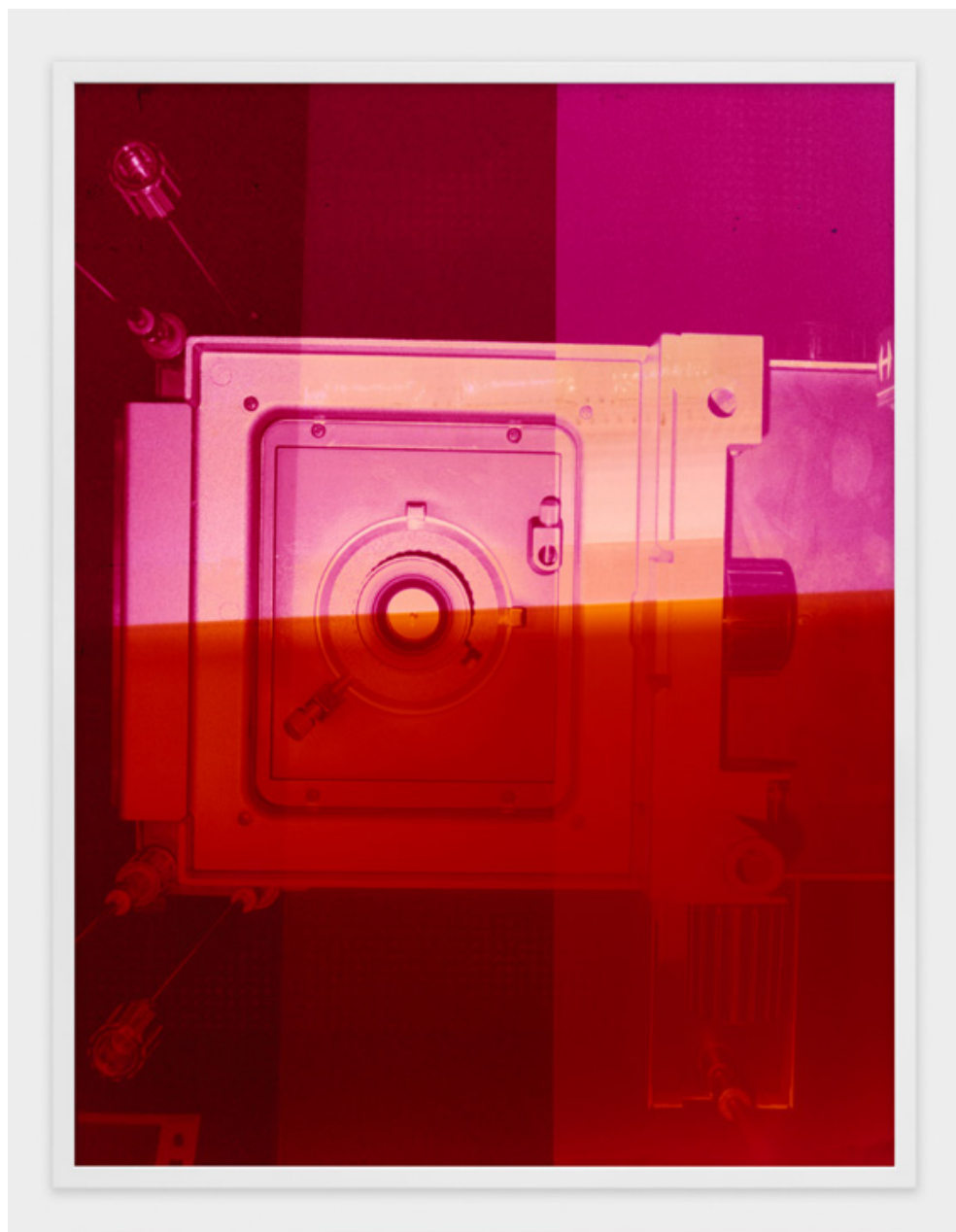
45.000 NOK

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## ***Untitled V (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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## ***Time Loop Rabbit Hole***

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### ***Untitled VI (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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## ***Time Loop Rabbit Hole***

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### ***Untitled VII (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK



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### ***Untitled VIII (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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### ***Untitled IX (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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### ***Untitled X (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK

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## ***Time Loop Rabbit Hole***

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### ***Untitled XI (Time Loop Rabbit Hole)***

2022

146 x 111 cm

Archival pigment print

Mounted on dibond, white wooden  
frame, museum glass

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

45.000 NOK



**MELK**

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