



Fotografiska

Viviane Sassen

UMBRA

September 1–November 12

You have your way of seeing. And Viviane Sassen has hers. Sometimes, however, we share the weight and value of an experience, although each gaze always remains its own. True, photography has the ability to make our unique perceptions merge into a shared creation, into a place for free associations in which each viewer contributes his or her own perspective.

Viviane Sassen (b. 1972) is a photographer who creates such places and encounters in the exhibition *UMBRA*. She invites the viewer to fill the images with their own histories and associations and become co-creators in an artistic work that is very personal. Selecting a point of departure that lays oneself bare while opening up for participation is a true form of art, of which Sassen is a master. Generously, courageously, thought-provokingly and sensually abstract, she captures shapes, shadows and patterns that lead to...

“I can’t really explain my fascination with shapes, but it has to do with how my brain works. I transform three dimensions into two. I have always enjoyed experimenting with the perspective. As a child I used to play games like closing your left eye and looking with the right, and then swapping, to see how the perspective had shifted. I was always interested in body shapes and the sculptural aspects of the body. I used to stand in front of the mirror with a large towel, making new shapes that I registered and stored in my mind and that I now use in my work. It’s this way of seeing that I have brought to photography, as a technique,” an animated Viviane Sassen explains.

A Dutch artist based in Amsterdam, Viviane Sassen has a strong international career. Moving effortlessly between artistic projects and fashion photography, she is famous for her abstract work in which she employs bodies to create forms, frequently working in Africa where she grew up. Here she operates comfortably beyond the stereotype, enticing viewers to sharpen their gaze in seeking the universal in the unique.

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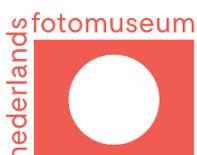
The exhibition *UMBRA*, from the Netherlands Fotomuseum, fills the galleries of Fotografiska with eight series of photographs, videos, light and sound installations, creating a powerful experience which will make the viewer turn both inwards and outwards. We all grow by changing the perspective sometimes.

“The exhibition *UMBRA* demonstrates Viviane Sassen’s fascination with shapes and content, often verging on the abstract. Bright colours are contrasted with deep shadows, not just as shapes that fire the imagination but as metaphors for the dark sides of life. The shadow represents the human psyche — our innermost fears, desires and need for protection. We at Fotografiska are very happy to be able to provide our visitors this enriching experience,” Johan Vikner, Deputy Exhibition Manager at Fotografiska says.

For Sassen, her childhood desire to view life from different perspectives continues.

“I don’t want to say too much. I want to provide the viewer with a possibility to encounter something in themselves. In *UMBRA*’s shadows, much of that which is considered important is of no consequence. Here there is room for free interpretations. I find it difficult to conform to the idea of definitive truths; there are always two sides to the coin so everything should be allowed to exist at the same time.” ●

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Footnote: “The *umbra* (Latin for ‘shadow’) is the innermost and darkest part of a shadow, where the light source is completely blocked by the occluding body.”