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Ruby Nilsson: RECANTATION
10 September – 1 November 2026

RECANTATION transforms Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation into a ritualistic setting for Ruby Nilsson's new video work of the same name. Nilsson confronts visitors through a grim economic science fiction, a worldbuild that explores a compromised and uncomfortable future of transsexual labor. Here, the artist follows the dark poetics of trans misogyny and unleashes it in all its unsettling and amoral glory; a move that can be read as a critique of what she regards as deeply ingrained social and cultural demands on trans artists to produce autobiographical works with an impossible moral high-ground.

The exhibition at Index is in some ways a conceptual continuation of Nilsson's recent host-assisted solo *RESPAWN*, presented at Inkonst, Malmö in February 2026. Of the similarities, the artist states that "both of the works cynically undertake transsexual embodiment as an abomination and use trans medicine as a potential site of supernatural horror". The invitation to create a new work for Index necessitates a shift from performance and the context of the stage towards a dramatisation of the exhibition space – opening up possibilities for Nilsson to play with dramaturgy through a different set of spatial, visual, textual and temporal parameters. The work weaves together inspiration from historical references including medieval witch trials, religious symbolism, mysticism, christian confessional literature and the strange convergence between the social cultures of trans and looksmaxxing communities.

The artist clarifies: "The work explores growing divides between identitarian alliances and how 'new' compromised forms of labor might be offered to future transsexuals in times of trans extinction. It also proposes potential forms of political and spiritual organization that, in their absurdity, push the current cultural imagination of trans existence. With the ongoing rise of progressive endocrinology alongside the systemic lack of scientific data on transsexual biology, the work speculates on a possible 'revived' interest in trans medicine as a zone of experimentation with molecular enhancement and gender optimization."

RECANTATION is an installation centered around a video structured as a prologue, three consecutive chapters and an epilogue that follows the life and transmogrification of P-2026-007, a "passoid"[1] resident/employee of New Endocrinological Order (NEO). Writing in blood on salvaged materials, P-2026-007 records a series of "confessions" that move between autobiography, political polemic, and mystical visions. As the narrative unfolds, an impossible scientific discovery transforms her into a foundational figure within *The Recantationist*'s belief system.

A recantation is a public disavowal of a previously stated belief. Its Latin root means to "sing

[1] 'Passoid' is a (most often) derogatory term referring to a trans person who passes. The word originates from trans internet culture, probably first coined on the imageboard 4chan, where the suffix "-oid" (like femoid or foid) forms a grammatical backbone.

again" indicating the performative power of public utterance. As the title of Nilsson's solo exhibition, recantation refers to a renunciation of performative gender visibility politics. In times where systemic attacks against the material needs of trans women are being made, Nilsson uses the exhibition format to investigate possible consequences of disavowal of earlier belief and community, as well as the need for something else to believe in. In the video, a group of transwomen devote themselves to a dominant pharmaceutical company, as it remains the only option for them to secure the expensive and dangerous reality of changing sex. As a consequence, in this fictional world, earlier notions of liberation, solidarity and resistance within a larger LGBT-community are completely disavowed, giving way to antagonism within the community, as well as new modes of political and spiritual organization and radicalization among trans women. Nilsson also teases out parallels between the sociohistorical position of medieval nuns and transwomen within the worldbuild, comparing the trans employees of NEO to historical examples of how cloistered nuns came to be used as free labour power, seized upon in a form of capitalist philanthropy.

Worldbuilding is a crucial part of Nilsson's overall artistic practice. The world does not appear from pure fabulation, but is crafted into existence through stringent *speculation*, with multiple references across temporalities. The border fiction and factual history is often blurred in Nilsson's worldbuilding, using history as a tool to invent new scenarios and futures beyond the obvious and expected.

From an institutional perspective, exhibition making is also a form of worldbuilding. *RECANTATION* can be read as a challenge to the oft-perceived neutrality or contextual vacuum of the "white cube" gallery space – instead incorporating elements of the "black box" or theatre, to employ theatrical and dramaturgical devices that support a suspension of disbelief – and resist demands on the work to provide answers. The installation asks of the visitors the same suspension of disbelief: when you enter this room, these are the conditions that are the truth. Folded black molton fabric transforms the room into a casket-looking shape, making the space emerge as something that feels like a burial site of earlier beliefs. To take part of the work, one is invited to kneel on a curved prayer rail. This can be read as an invitation to physically participate in the forms of subjugation that the installation explores.

Ruby Nilsson (SE, b. 1993) is an artist and writer whose work explores how sexual difference is staged through aesthetics of enmity. Nilsson's work spans performance, video installation, curation, and writing. Her projects unfold as extended series of intricate worldbuilding that together operate as closed systems of investigation, often expanding and evolving with each new installment.

Recent projects include the host-assisted solo *RESPAWN*, presented at Inkonst (Malmö), and the ongoing performance project and curatorial initiative *Center of Unseen Trans Survival* (*C.U.T.S.*) (2025), presented at My Wild Flag (Stockholm) and Warehouse9 (Copenhagen). Earlier works has also been shown at institutions and venues including Göteborgs Konsthall

(Göteborg), Norbergfestival (Norberg), Turteatern (Stockholm), Skånes Konstförening (Malmö), Konsthall C (Stockholm), Rewild (Copenhagen) and Fylkingen (Stockholm).

Nilsson is educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Her writing has been published in journals including Bastard and Paletten Art Journal.

Works

Recantation (2026)
Projection on canvas, folded black molton, charred pine and plywood.
Ruby Nilsson

Video installation
Duration: 30 min

Written and directed by Ruby Nilsson
Animation: Jacob Habinc
Sound design: Ruby Nilsson
Music and sound design: Hannes Ferm
Color grading: Daniel Pherson
Construction of prayer rail: Johannes Hägglund