

Künstlerhaus Bethanien  
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**Nellie Lindquist**  
***Make the World***

24 October, 2025 – 14 December, 2025

*Anyone can break up a showing of an enemy propaganda film by putting two or three dozen large moths in a paper bag. Take the bag to the movies with you, put it on the floor in an empty section of the theater as you go in and leave it open. The moths will fly out and climb into the projector beam, so that the film will be obscured by fluttering shadows.*

*Simple Sabotage Field Manual*, pp. 26-27

In 1944, the Office of Strategic Services, a precursor to the CIA, authored a remarkable document: the *Simple Sabotage Field Manual*, a 40-page list of instructions for “simple acts which the ordinary individual citizen-saboteur can perform.” Intended for distribution among the population in German-occupied European countries during the late stages of World War II, this secret document – declassified and publicly available since 2008 – offered encouragement for covert ground-level acts of disruption that any citizen could carry out.

Nellie Lindquist takes a most peculiar detail from this list of practical instructions as the starting point for her animated video, in which she employs a group of moths as the protagonists fulfilling the task of sabotage as laid out in the *Field Manual*. Released into a dark space, the moths flutter across the screen, making their way to the only source of light – the projection beam, rendered into a flat shape reminiscent of the sun or the moon. In the cartoonish animation, the projected image remains absent from our view, obstructed by the shadows of the insects’ stroboscopically flapping wings. Intermittent flashes disrupt the dark mood of the animation otherwise characterized by its *chiaroscuro* lighting: the use of dramatic contrast between light and dark achieves a sense of volume, modelling a three-dimensional glow into the flatness of the hand-drawn critters at work on screen.

Installed on a structure evoking classic billboards, the video’s presentation extends into the exhibition space, where lightboxes on the walls similarly mirror advertising, or propaganda, strategies and their material carriers. Dark silhouettes dissolve into the blueish-gray tinted panels, illuminated by the cold glare of the LED installed behind the glass. Reminiscent of a phone screen’s glow scrolling late at night or a deserted window display, Nellie Lindquist’s sculptures appear as ghostly objects: like props taken from a movie set, removed from the continuity of the filmic reality they help sustain.

Nellie Lindquist's practice is driven by an interest in narrative fiction, not as an escape from reality, but as an important building block in understanding how many of the structures that shape our world are maintained by fictions. In a reality increasingly indistinguishable from dystopian storytelling – as we witness the fasciation of world powers, a genocide, and defacto lawlessness on the international political stage in its wake – the *Simple Sabotage Field Manual* itself reads like a fiction. From a contemporary perspective on the vast technological capabilities of intelligence agencies such as the CIA and other power players determining our world, the *Field Manual's* list of practical instructions, in contrast, evokes the innocence of childish pranks.

Indeed, it may be exactly the naive, or banal simplicity of each step listed in the document, however questionable its source's connotation, that makes it relevant to the current moment. When Hannah Arendt coined the "banality of evil" – outlining how the routines of law and bureaucracy, the countless tasks and duties performed by seemingly ordinary people, and their unreflective and preemptive obedience, make up the innumerable "cogs in the machine" of a totalitarian system – she equally pointed to the fact that disabling a single cog, like a single flap of a wing, may have a decisive effect on the machine's overall capabilities. Nellie Lindquist's employment of the moth-saboteurs, whose wilful participation in the act of sabotage remains a fiction, serves as a reminder that we can all *make the world*, and shape its realities.

– Linnéa Bake

### ***Make the World***

2025

HD video projection with sound, 5'15, looped

Installed on wooden structure

#### ***Credits:***

Direction, edit and animation design: Nellie Lindquist

Animator/CGI: Axel Lindquist

Sound design and score: Oliver Nehammer

### ***Lullabies***

2025

120x92,5x9 cm

Acrylic glass, UV foil, LED lights, printed foil, window film

### ***Gleam and glare***

120x92,5x9 cm

Acrylic glass, UV foil, LED lights, printed foil, window film

*Exhibition text* by Linnéa Bake

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