

‘The Van, the Sock and the Shadows’**LOU MELCHIOR****GALLERY46****9 - 18 OCTOBER 2026****WITNESSES OF THE AFTERMATH:
A LOU MELCHIOR EXHIBITION***by* **SOPIA MARTINS GRAY**

This October, from the 9th -18th, GALLERY46 presents a decade of photography work by LOU (LOUISE) MELCHIOR, a Danish artist living in London. Despite initially studying sculpture, photography subsequently became her main medium. ‘The Van, the Sock and the Shadows’, is a series that defies homogeneity or a stable nomenclature, by addressing the multiple and the inconspicuous of everyday life.

There is an uncomfortable truth being brought to the fore in Melchior’s photographs, and we are invited to witness it. She exposes what we tend to forget.

The idea of a single definition is anathema to Melchior’s work. For her photographs are of uneasy categorisation, as they capture the multitude of everyday life resisting “the larger narrative”¹ as she tells us. At first glance, this statement challenges our interpretation because, if we exclude a wider narrative of something, it forces us to rely on a cropped or incomplete meaning. To answer to this, we could evoke, for example, Gestalt theory or the Kantian a priori concepts, but in fact, it is only necessary to follow our natural perception: everything we see is within a context of a context and so on.

The larger narrative must always be there as condition sine qua non. But Melchior reaffirms her approach to visuality even further by adding that “the artist strips away context and sense”², which invites us to assume there is a suggestive absurdity or an incomplete capture in the pres-

entation of visuality. None of this is implausible, visually. These statements could define a practice of creating ad novo. And in fact, we can argue she uses the repetitive-mundane to create the new. Melchior, indeed, creates a visual dilemma, possibly coming from her sculptural compositional knowledge - but isn’t impossible to resolve. The larger narrative that she rejects visually is always there as creation and meaning, but in an imperceptible way. We, as viewers, look at her fragmented contexts, but we naturally project the rest. The same Gestalt theory that questions Melchior’s statements is the same theory that validates them: our natural perception adapts to what we see, irrespective of her contextual stripping, because the larger narrative is given indirectly.

Her visuality is partial – the solitude of an un-contextual window, a damaged van - but the meaning of these images isn’t constrained to the partial; it expands outside of them. What we witness in Melchior’s work, in a formal sense, is the interpretative struggle between parts and their whole. As a result, the whole, or the interpretation, is ours only: she suggests the possibility of interpretation, but that’s for us to pursue it or not.

Let us not forget that a witness is separated from the event, and there is a sense of being late when looking at Melchior’s work. The damaged van is an aftermath that we cannot do anything about, and the absurdity of the sock being doubled by the mirror and against the carpet is nothing we can reconstruct anymore. We can only guess it. The truth becomes ambiguous. And existentially, we also arrive late to the loneliness of the anonymous light- shadow that is the window. I’ll argue that Melchior places herself at the end of a causal trajectory of everyday life and does it as

a creative practice. She captures the mundane in its still-unfolding. Whatever remains of this, it remains as truth and interpretation. In her work we become witnesses of the aftermath.

The detachment of the witness is merely practical, but as viewers, we belong to the same places and to the same objects that Melchior works with. However, belonging doesn't prevent us from the uncomfortable. There is an unstableness that comes from the familiar mundane that she captures but coming from that very same familiarity. This isn't a redundancy, but rather an unfolding: in Melchior's photographs there's a tense dialectical relationship between the familiar we know and the familiar we forget, that unfolds into an uncomfortable exposure. There is, after all, a functionality to forgetting the familiar: it allows us to navigate through it without the burden of overthinking. Familiarising is always a form of domestication. Melchior's photographs are a resistance to domestication.

When familiarity becomes exposed, as if its functional landscape of everyday life is caught by a stranger's eye, we become self-conscious. We then overthink because we are overexposed. For familiarity to function, it must occur in a state of unawareness or easiness.

The exposure of everyday life leads to an autoimmune reaction, where the familiar antagonises with itself. The things we tend to forget shouldn't be exposed, as they function as our backgrounds, not as foregrounds. Exposing them creates a shift in the natural order of living and perception.

Hence, Melchior's work accomplishes the unusual task of opposing recognition and forgetting as coming from a same place. She reveals sameness as an even opposition. One would expect different sources to capture both opposites, but Melchior turns opposites into one discourse.

In a sense we can say Melchior's photographs challenges photography's traditional subject, almost as a manifestation of an anti-subject. We witness causality's own unchanged end, which is a very different creative instinct from capturing what one plans ahead. Melchior encounters

causality's ending; she doesn't idealise it. It seems there's not much of a desire for an ideal, but rather to represent life itself in its own trajectory, leaving us lingering with the question what happened here? She gives us causality as a result. She obliterates the cause as stripping context and sense.

When Roland Barthes mentions "the stubbornness of the Referent"³ that comes with the object of photography (without which one can't photograph and must negotiate with), Melchior embraces this stubbornness of the factual as a status quo. And again, another pair of contraries arise, as her work equates truth with ambiguity. It's up for us to decide.

¹ Lou Melchior, "Home", Lou Melchior, Lou Melchior, accessed 14 September 2026.

² Melchior, "Home".

³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), p.6.

Opening:
Thursday, 8th October
6 – 9.30 PM
Exhibition dates:
9th – 18th October
Daily
12 – 6 PM
Tuesday - Sunday

ABOUT

Lou (Louise) Melchior is a Danish artist based in London. She primarily studied sculpture during 1990s before photography became her main medium. This interdisciplinary practice developed in her a sense of composition, where she reinvents contexts that are suggestive of a decontextualised perception. Melchior exposes what we tend to forget in direct confrontation of familiarity with itself, unfolding an ambiguous but factual viscosity.