sidewinder

images, mise en scène and editing by stefanie schneider
based on a short story by jd rudometkin
all scenes and dialog written by jd rudometkin
all music written, composed and performed by jd rudometkin
actors jd rudometkin and stefanie schneider

private history turned into an intimate mythology of elemental fantasies where reality is perceived through a veil of psychedelic memories and unconscious projections. such is a collection of passions and dreams, an uncanny diary of ephemeral narratives and mental intensities in Stefanie Schneider's painterly photographs where subjectivity of an ontological doubt uses a poetics of pastische as a vehicle for an intertextual journey towards the truth and the authenticity of primary emotions. here time is immersed in a nostalgic suspense of oneiric dimension, a sort of ambiguous coma of silence and comfort, and open space embraces a psychotic landscape of solitude and accidental pleasure. fetishisized surface of extreme feelings gives a stage for an unsolicited promise of unconditional love and unlimited freedom, a promise framed by sensual tension between fulfillment and expectation.

Adam Budak, Kunsthaus Graz, Oct 2005

Sidewinder

There’s blood on the dress that hangs in the Airstream trailer outside 29 palms. With the pistol in her sweat palm touching at his temple. Tell me what god’s gonna do for me and you now Stevie’s saying while Brother John Baptiste looks there across to where her cat seems weak and fed. All the good that comes to me from my believing man, I wanna hear about it said to me like that. Just the way you breathed it like you did 10 minutes ago when I was wrapped so well around your head. Silence then. A baby screams his mother out in the dessert night who wakes so late. Orion is a belt John Baptiste looks at through the torn-screen trailer window.

There, touching his calf are vipers crawling now across her feet between his knees in front of her he kneeling for his life and they are full of venom with their broken fangs.

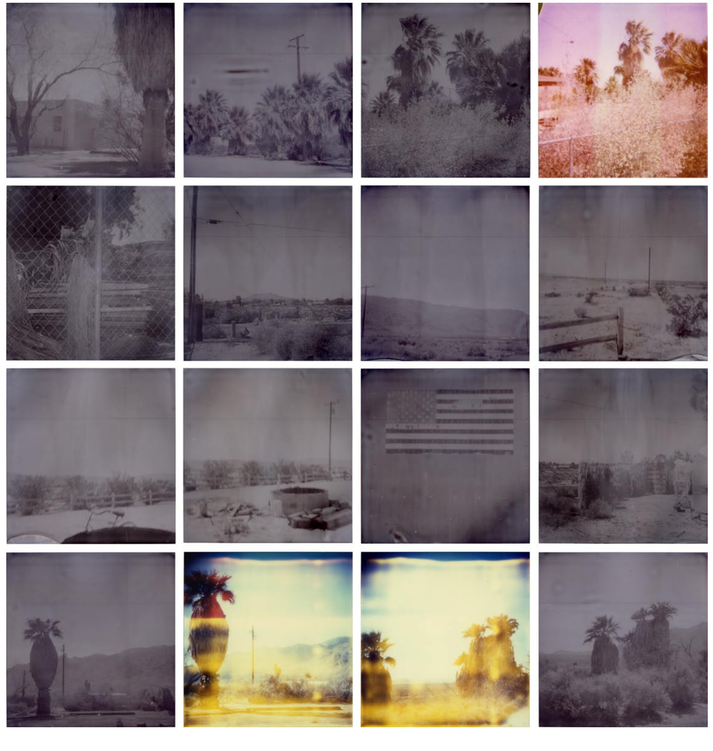
A gun at head, where even his breath, so short, is preaching. He’s in a wheat field. John Baptiste. Counting birds on telephone wires hung low in afternoon where his mother’s call cannot now reach him. There she stands a weeping willow with the sidewinder underneath the trailer step a drop of blood upon her ankle with the bullet through its head.

A scar follows sweat palm to wrist. Torn Stevie. Scars from the weapon to her toes an accidental act of God her father said. On Vaness at California 16 years ago but who’s counting 6 bullets for the barrel wait beside the temple. The long white shaft of tissue hemmed together gods tattoo along her ribs, hip to breast. She wants to fuck the preacher in her trailer with his bible on the alter front row Stevie asks forgiveness holy father from the car that shook her bones apart. John Baptiste asks to pray before she leads his temple head.

For twenty minutes darkness hides the accidents in trailer shade her childish screams a preacher underneath her shimmer blue bled dress. The prayers he said beside the bed with mother for relatives with tumors, brand new bicycles, and rain. Stevie takes the whisky in her mouth to wash him out the sidewinder skids across her wounded foot of scars. John Baptiste asks the Lord to heal her in the new day that is breaking mouth of whisky spits it laughing father forgive the trigger finger for the viper he gives thanks

And takes the barrel toward his lips through mumbling supplication kiss it Brother Stevie offers, please, but doesn’t wait him there. Copper penny Sunday School upon the tongue. And closed his eyes. A blur of her and mother. Other bodies. Women, gently crushing spirits. Prayers. His han under her weight in grams. The fingernail fang and fucks it.

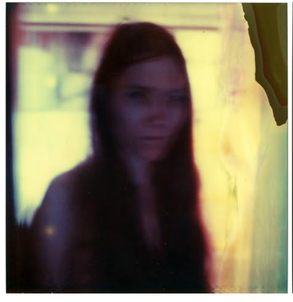
So slid the pull of metal out As god can answer. And into her mouth then. Settles. And wet the metal. He touches her, his finger. Viper like. And fuck it sore. Believers. Repentant whore forgiven preacher leaving town in that old ragtop down and left a rag dress bleeding in the Airstream soft, again.

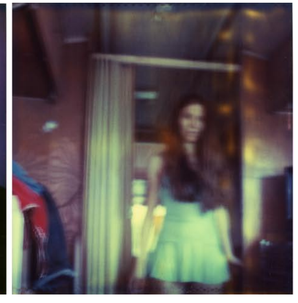














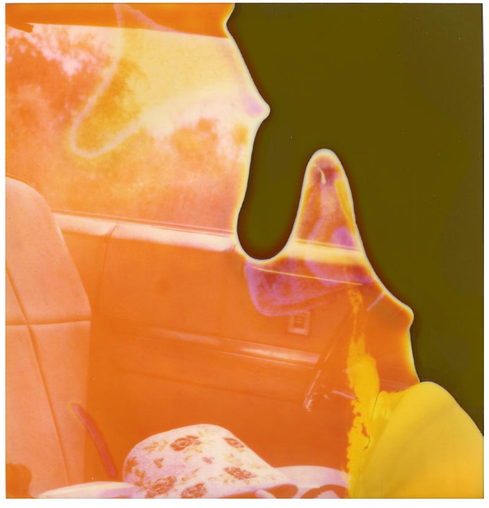






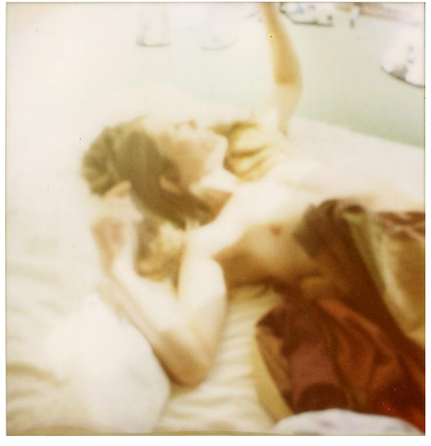


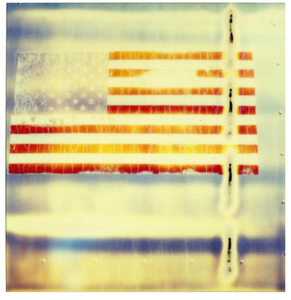



AIRSTREAM
Trade Wind











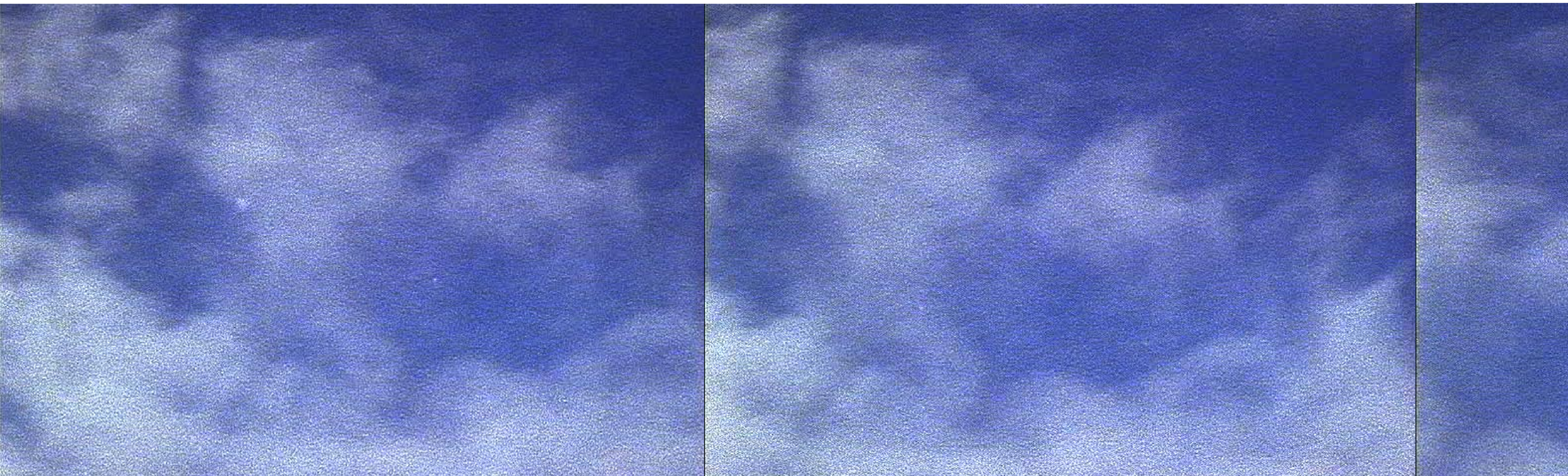












































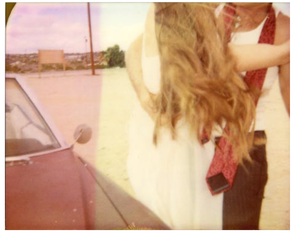






































































Field of Briar

They will call you from the field
They will call you from the field
They will call you from the field
When the body bends to heal.

The grass is tall in a field of briar
The grass is tall in a field of briar
The grass is tall in a field of briar
Mama been lying there awhile.

Chorus:
Go on join me
In the Sea of Broken Glass
Sunken ships broken bottles
Lets round off the edge
I could almost stay awake
Here below the screams
Of a thousand bloody angels
Stuck in heaven with a dream

Robe of flame and a veil of fire
Robe of flame and a veil of fire
Robe of flame and a veil of fire
Write my name in the book of life

Walk you out in a heather wave
Walk you out in a heather wave
Walk you out in a heather wave
Lay you down in a shallow grave



Landfill

Stevie asks only bury the crow. Black as cast iron she unfolds its wing span. “John I found him at the landfill with thousands of others breeding in the foul waste.” A school of diapers, a mess of thawed Alaskan salmon—their eyes rotted cataract white to gray. A beach pale split down its side never saw the ocean--which is light blue and cracked near the bone of lamb. Over here a bent gold rim from her old lover’s accident, the crisp Firebird he gathered her in so long ago now. She knows those rims below the burnt shell, crows resting on it there at the city landfill where she walks out from town every day this time of year to watch them sex the air. Its two miles. Why the dump for mating? She does not asks such things. Only to remember when they do so she will not forget to see them blacken the sky with feathers and all the craw baying air mutts hovering. Her visions stir what she sees into a scene as this looking at the litter-skies is now an upside down mug the tea leaf feathers up in blue as Stevie reads:

And I saw thousands hovering ‘ore our heads
As black as any desert night outside the city limit
though you cannot see them
Like we once saw things orbit long ago
And they could read our next step
As prophets only did
The new prophet’s hover above us
From out past gravity
Our steps are so predictable
And foul the wings
That keep us gathered there
I saw this John
For everyone under them forgot they were there
Watching ‘ore your heads
And took their loads to the dump year by year
Where the evidence is refuse
Where one million years from now
They’ll unearth our telephone wires
And septic tanks and priceless shoes
Our dental floss and half a tank of gasoline
And wonder what it all meant
Nobody will care about Bob Dylan or Mother Theresa
When they resurrect the golden calf
And find that evolution is so funny
Like meditation. As the sermon on the Mount.
I love those jokes because they are so blasphemous
You would not laugh but I will wait for you to see it my way
And always the bridesmaids wait, the crows that gather John,
What else can we do man, for Christ sake.
Forgive me. I know not what I see and so I cannot turn away
From these mother crows who have a season of hope and then
The bridesmaids wait.
And the bridesmaids wait.
What else can we do John.
What else is a girl to do?

He listens, John does, but will not look at her. The mystery of dreams. Their revelations. The way at night his father speaks.

Stevie
This one died in mid-flight her bird brain pecked out of this world by the male fetish
for skull feathers and she dropped so beautifully from the sun her black on light into the
landfill. The man on the tractor doesn’t see. The garbage man. He fills this ditch of waste
with that load somebody’s excess. I scream at him to stop, he doesn’t look and moves
the heap around. She falls so deathly carefree sudden over and over into the waste.

John
Is this the bird you brought back last week and I told you to take it away?

But no, not so. That one lives for several hours before John frees it from the cage. “Not this one John” it fell dead from 75 feet and fell to the earth in feathered cartwheels limp where the low currents took it—one wing now extended the male beak at her while she fails to give at all and watch her hit the ground here in my hand shes dead as nails. The tractor buries her where I dug her out. No, last weeks black bird was alive, remember that, but John will be hard convincing to put it in the churchyard where it must belong.

Stevie
Can we put it by your mother? Out behind the stone cross there John?

He does not look at her:
I have run with you for miles and miles until there is no temptation to not trust you
while you lie time and time again about visions and how all of this works together but
never why. The truth is your belief at every expense in its way. Why bury it Stevie? Why
don’t we set it out beside the palm and watch it waste away. What, you don’t like that?
Not tragic enough? Or does it hurt to much. What do you hope to see out in the landfill
Stevie—his eyes out to the hill, his eyes with red veins—a million black birds hosting
the ritual in a mire of shit we’ve heaped upon the ground. The crows are at it again you
say, the filthy mess they’ve chosen for the next crop’s conception—all the messy generic
cans of dog food and gluey q-tips where our parents once lay down together. And we
are so much wiser nowadays. At least you are Stevie, right? And where they make nests
for their young there in the curdled plastic half gallons of milk. between the melted
candles and yellow bottles of spent perfume on summer affairs. Now that we’d never do
to children, me and you.

Stevie
But John they do not stay. At night when the sex is gone for the season the nightfall
leaves the last crow at twilight mid-air along the dusk line. They do not stay at the dump
for long. Nobody ever stays there long unless they want to.

But not this one here in her hands. She would have stayed forever had not Stevie caught her there. This final black bird. And she must be buried now without regret. Come John, lets put her out behind the church yard by your mother. Cut some mustard flowers and bring the shovel. I’ll even say the prayer except I don’t know how.







He kneels. The folded hands

God, because she lies
I give thee thanks
Not because she's wrong
Not because she's right
She lies for the bigger picture
But father how large a frame will hold this crow
We bury here beside dear mother?
Is it the picture she wants or to watch me move the dirt around?

And then he prays aloud:

God take this bird from us and let it fly again in thy kingdom
Where the means end in means.
And if one day I bury Stevie here beside the bird and mother
Please forgive me, I am just a man.
And she was meant to die one day anyhow
(If I may use her trend).
Now bless this flight dear Lord
And let us join thee one day soon,
We wait
We the bridesmaids wait
What else can we do?





















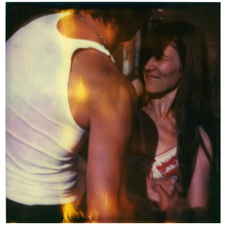






























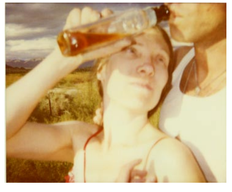
















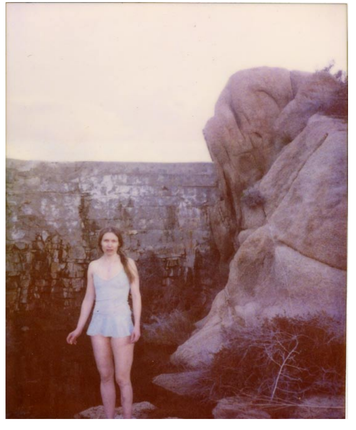




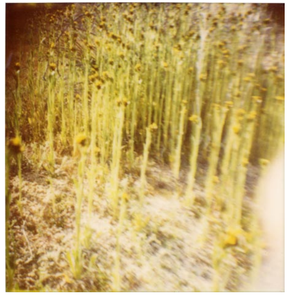
Whisky Dance

If the whisky dance he asks her to is far enough away. Go. There is no music there. If they are high enough to hear, everything gets still as broken glass. And the car, it's like it drove itself out. So quiet as Stevie passed the bottle off and everything begins to fade. He says that they are far enough away now, yeah? And it's just the way it was. The light like this. An old guitar. Like no stranger was saying how far you could not go. Look there. We could park the Cadillac out behind that shed where nobody can see. We'll play stupid games, and it gets hazy now 'til nobody can recall if Stevie ever meant to stay as beautiful as then.





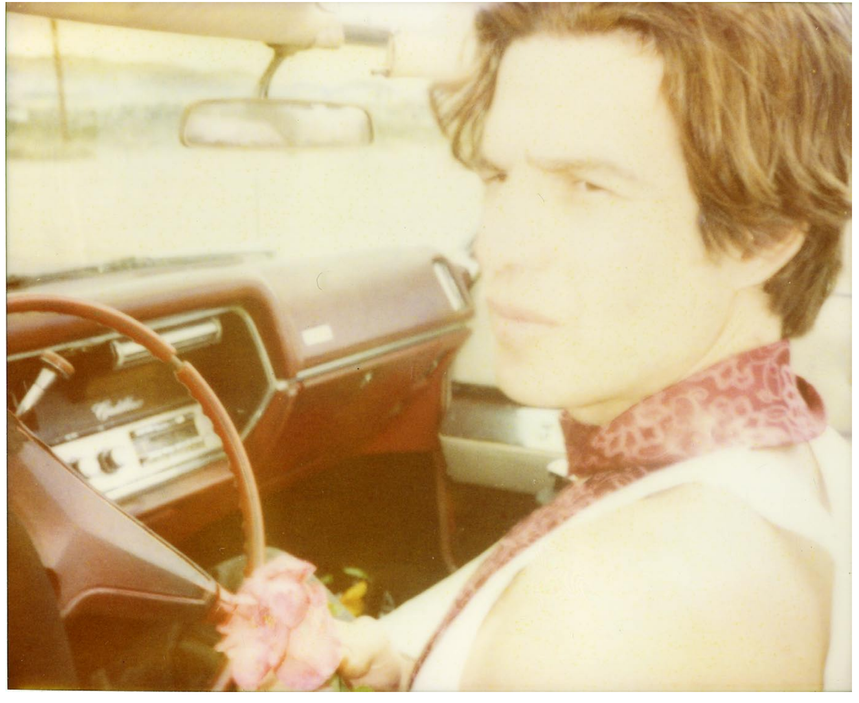










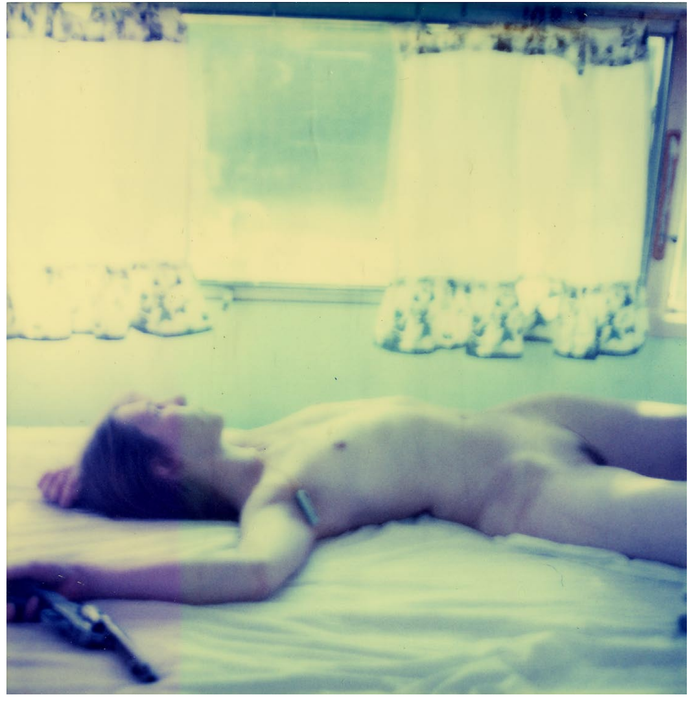




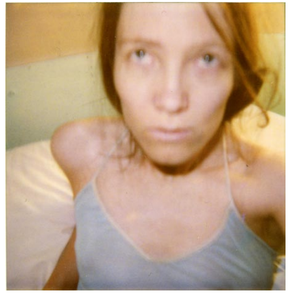
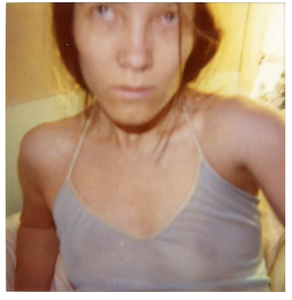
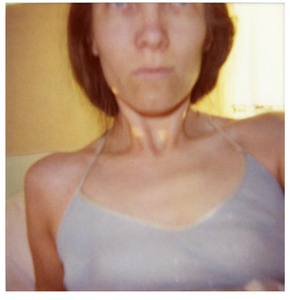


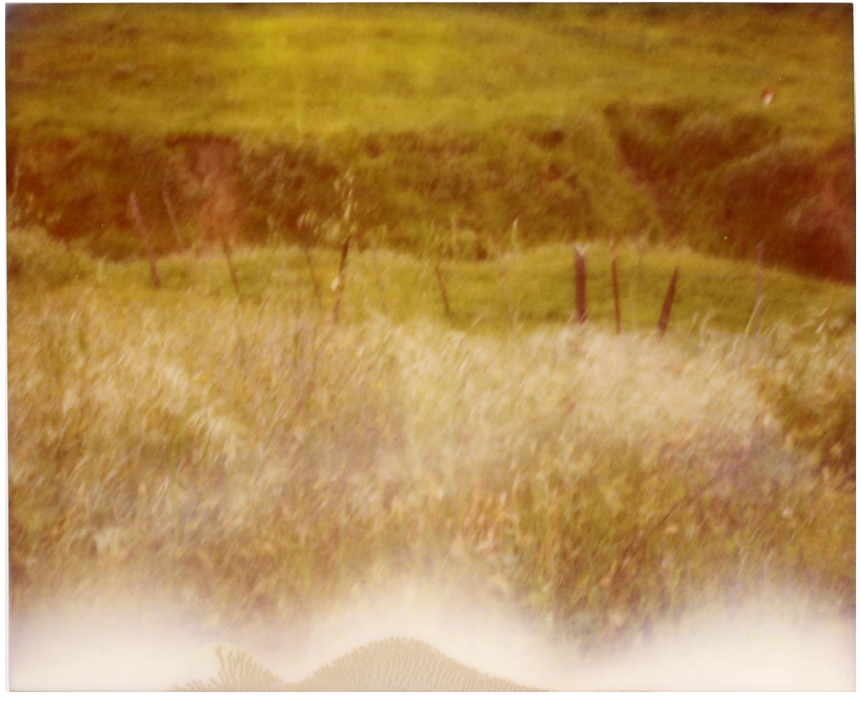


















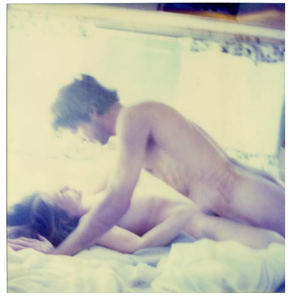




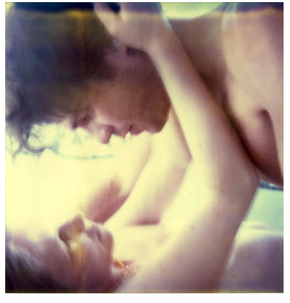








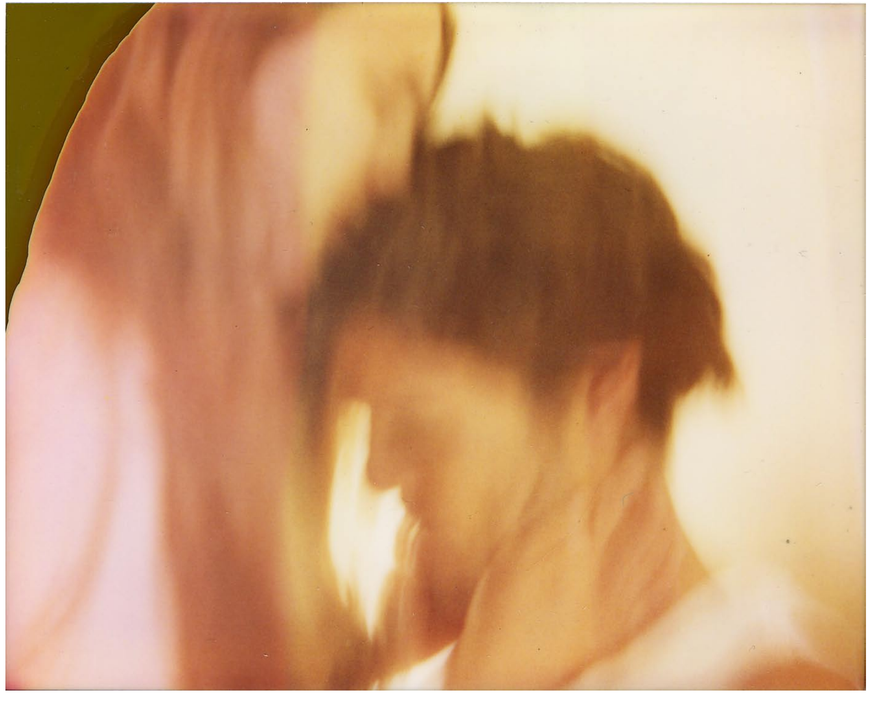






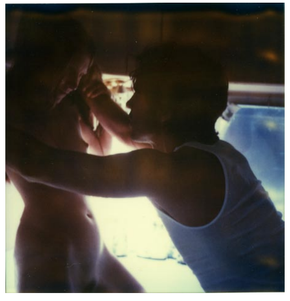












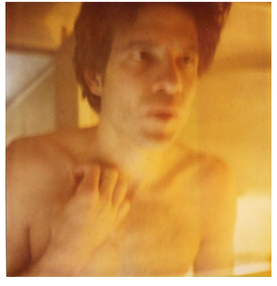
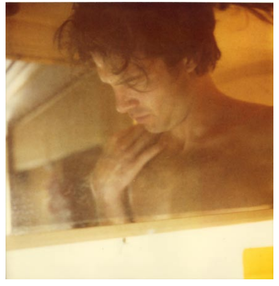
























Whisky and Water

The preacher, John Baptise and Stevie stand in the Airstream trailer: she at the sink, drinking whisky. He stringing his guitar on the bed.

John Baptiste
Do you think the whisky helps?

Stevie
I don't think about the whisky.

John Baptiste
You just need it.

Stevie
What do you need brother baptiste?

John Baptiste
Mostly water.

Stevie
So you can put the people under it. Drown them in the water so they're new and clean. Yeah. Just a little waters all you need man.

John Baptiste
I could hold you under.

Stevie
You are.

John Baptiste
You could die there.

Stevie
Maybe I want to.

John Baptiste
Maybe you just want to live really bad.

Stevie
Maybe you should save your fucking self instead of everybody else.

John Baptiste
That's how I save myself.

Stevie
And I drink whisky.











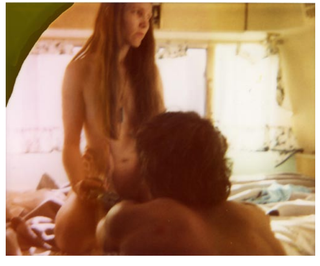










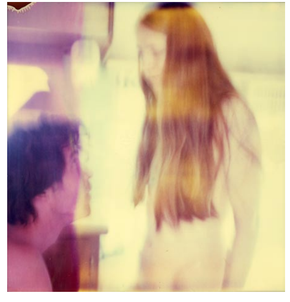














So Still.

She holds her head so still.
For he to lay his hand.
But carefully.
And who will understand you now Stevie?
Now that theres no order to the words.

She holds her head for him.
The hands of John Baptiste.

They do not speak again with words.
This wind alone across the desert flat.
The bending trees.
And hear the Airstream ache.

She doesn't cry for him these days. In front of him.
He holds her head.
And still.
And stillness for her mouth.

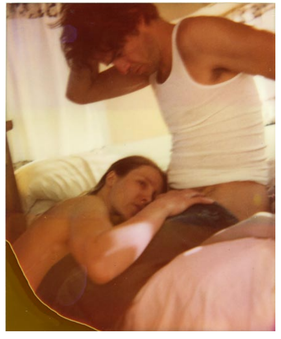
If she could learn to say it once again.
The upper lip, a tremble.
Like it was the first try.

Forgiveness then.

Just open your mouth a little, for to whisper.
She need not move.
And still.
And with the trailer sway, so soft upon her now, he listens.
See his hand?

For they to hold on carefully.
As does the mother.
The way the baby moans for milk.

















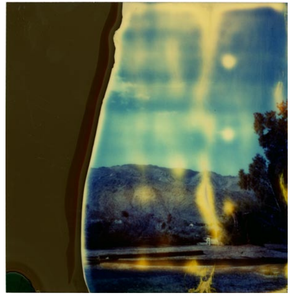






































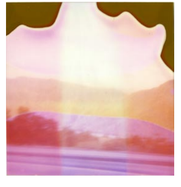
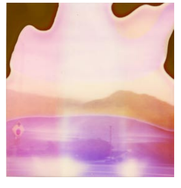


































If Jesus

If Jesus were true
He'd take care of you
Hold you in his strong arms
Believe what you will
He'll be with you still
And you would not die alone

I'm gonna paint you a picture
To hang on your wall
The picture looks like me
And if you get lonely
The way that you do
Then you got my company

Now sometimes I'm kind
Sometimes I'm cruel
The colors mix up on my face
Well I ain't no Jesus
But when he's not listening
This poor boy will just have to do

Pick me up, pick me up
A god and a pill
And a glass of dirty red wine
Pick me up in your Cadillac
At the top of the hill
And drive.

We still go
To the temple to pray
In hopes that somebody knows
They all got answers
For the questions I'm asking
But I'm afraid god only knows



Artist Note: JD Rudometkin

Working on Sidewinder with Stefanie Schneider was intense. It is a very personal piece for both of us, though I feel in very different ways. When overdue fears and aspirations are able to surface in a project, the work becomes a mirror. Such efforts are always a risk. I am still uncertain of what exactly to make of Sidewinder. How much should have been exposed. What needs to remain sacred. I almost did not drive that „68 Deville" out to 29 Palms on the day we were set to shoot. I followed her out there against a feeling I had. Was it fear? I don't know. Perhaps mistakes do not exist. What is our intuition composed of anyhow? When I look out across the desert, it seems so flat. So free of dramatic lines. That is when a human figure appears, even in the distance, a curiosity. There are so many of us clustered in these cities, who would care. Why take the time? I will always drive out of town back into parts of Sidewinder from time to time.