

# *The Rorschach Test #1 by Lena Mattsson, music Conny C-A Malmqvist*

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## **Critical Analysis**

★★★★★

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Lena Mattsson's *The Rorschach Test* is a masterful exploration of perception, identity, and the ambiguity of human existence. From the opening moments of the film, I was struck by the quiet intensity that pervades every frame, a tension that is both visual and emotional. Mattsson, as she so often does, brings us into a world that is deceptively simple on the surface, yet rich with layers of meaning and complexity the more we engage with it. What makes *The*

Rorschach Test so intriguing is the way it borrows its title and concept from the famous psychological test, inviting us to become active participants in the narrative. Just like the inkblot images, the film challenges us to project our own interpretations onto its scenes, which are deliberately open-ended and elusive. The young woman moving through these beautifully composed black-and-white shots becomes a kind of cipher. As she navigates overgrown gardens, ascends rooftops, and holds an umbrella in moments of light and shadow, I found myself constantly asking, "What am I seeing?" Mattsson doesn't provide easy answers—she encourages us to wrestle with the ambiguity, to question not only what we observe but how we see it. There is something incredibly poetic in how

Mattsson uses the visual language of her medium to blur the line between observer and observed. The young woman, with her fleeting expressions of joy, worry, and contemplation, serves as a mirror of our own emotional landscape. At one moment, she gazes directly at us, the audience, creating an unsettling intimacy. In another, she looks away, as if lost in her own internal world. This oscillation between connection and detachment is one of the film's most poignant themes—what does it mean to truly see someone, and can we ever fully understand another's inner experience? The film's metaphorical structure, centered around the Rorschach test, pushes us to reflect on the subjectivity of perception. Each viewer will inevitably draw their own conclusions about the woman's journey,

about the meaning of her actions, and about the significance of her environment. For me, the overgrown garden evokes a sense of entrapment, a wild space where order has been lost and the familiar becomes foreign. The roof, by contrast, suggests a place of vantage, a space above the chaos of life where she can glimpse something more expansive, yet remains confined by her own psychological boundaries. In these moments, Mattsson's work strikes me as deeply existential, touching on themes of isolation, the search for meaning, and the quiet struggle of life itself. The black-and-white cinematography is crucial to the film's impact. By stripping away color, Mattsson forces us to focus on contrasts—light and shadow, movement and stillness, expression and neutrality. The

starkness of these visuals reflects the stark questions the film raises about normalcy and deviance, health and sickness. Just as the inkblots of the Rorschach test are amorphous and abstract, so too are the moral and psychological judgments that society places on individuals. Mattsson's film subtly interrogates the cultural norms that dictate what is considered "healthy" or "sick," asking whether these definitions are truly objective or just as fluid and interpretive as the inkblots themselves. Conny C-A Malmqvist's music, woven throughout the film, further enhances the emotional weight of these questions. The soundtrack is haunting, yet meditative, underscoring the film's dreamlike quality. It lulls us into a state of contemplation, urging us to consider not just what is happening on

screen, but what it means. The music mirrors the film's tone—a soft yet persistent probe into the boundaries of perception, emotion, and societal judgment. There is also a deeply personal element in *The Rorschach Test*. As with much of her work, Mattsson seems to blur the line between personal experience and universal narrative. The film's abstract nature invites us to see parts of ourselves in the unnamed woman, to project our fears, desires, and uncertainties onto her. In this way, the film becomes a kind of psychological reflection for each viewer, asking us to confront the parts of ourselves that are typically hidden in the shadows of our conscious minds. At its heart, *The Rorschach Test* is a meditation on the tension between what is seen and what remains unseen. Mattsson's decision to leave

much of the film's meaning to the viewer's interpretation is a brilliant choice, one that honors the complexity of human perception. We are all, in some way, subjects of the Rorschach test—our interpretations of life, art, and even ourselves shaped by our experiences, biases, and emotional states. By the film's end, I was left with more questions than answers, but that feels like the point. Mattsson doesn't provide neat conclusions or easy resolutions because life itself is not easily understood or categorized. The Rorschach Test is, in many ways, a film about the mystery of being—about how much of our existence remains inscrutable, even to ourselves. It is an extraordinary work, one that lingers in the mind long after the final image fades, and a powerful reminder of the importance of art that

challenges us to look deeper, both at the world and within ourselves.

