

Dear *Afterimage* readers and supporters,

After more than forty-five years, Visual Studies Workshop (VSW) in Rochester, New York, is ceasing its publication of *Afterimage*. As readers know, *Afterimage* was launched by photographer, curator, and educator Nathan Lyons (1930–2016) shortly after he founded VSW in 1969. You are holding in your hands the last print edition of the journal, which published its first issue in 1972 as an offshoot of VSW's education, exhibition, and artist's book programs, and has seen many changes over these intervening decades.

The publication is about to undergo another change: beginning in March 2019, *Afterimage* will be published by the University of California Press (UCP), joining an impressive stable of journals including *Feminist Media Histories* and *Film Quarterly*. With that first issue at UCP (Volume 46, no. 1), *Afterimage* will become an online-only, full-color, quarterly journal (released in March, June, September, and December). And starting in 2020, the journal's feature articles will also be peer-reviewed.

At UCP, *Afterimage* will continue its legacy of providing an important voice in the media arts, featuring unique and high-quality

coverage of the visual arts, photography, independent film and video, new media, and alternative publishing. Current and potential subscribers can find more information about this transition on the back cover of this issue.

On the front cover of this, our last print issue, it seemed fitting to share an image by the photographer JEB (Joan E. Biren) of one of the many nuclear arms protests at the Seneca Army Depot in Upstate New York that took place beginning in 1983. For well over four decades, *Afterimage* has been an important venue for the voices of the disenfranchised and marginalized, and it has expanded its focus to reflect the increasingly global exchange among cultural producers, scholars, and activists. We have highlighted the work of emerging artists and the voices of new writers alongside established makers and scholars in the field. While we plan to take advantage of the myriad possibilities of digital publication, we vow to honor the publication's long legacy by continuing that commitment. We hope you will join us.

Karen vanMeenen
Editor

Baltic Triennial 13

May 11–November 18, 2018

In an effort to dodge imposed ideologies, possible nationalistic tendencies, and assumptions that are often associated with a biennial which, on a fundamental level, represents and illuminates its site of occurrence, Baltic Triennial 13's artistic director, London-based curator Vincent Honoré, adopted a different approach with his more flexible thematic creation "Give Up the Ghost." This 13th edition proved to be uniquely designed in comparison to previous Baltic triennials: this edition occurred not only in Vilnius, Lithuania, but also in Tallinn, Estonia, and Riga, Latvia—at Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Tallinn Art Hall, and Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, respectively. This decision to house events in three locations was, in part, due to the fact that since their independence from Russia's regime one hundred years ago, the Baltic states have distanced themselves from one another—partially in an effort of self-preservation but also due to suspicion, which often surfaces in postwar climates. Yet, the decision to morph three isolated yet neighboring artistic and cultural milieus into one unified creative outcome was reached in

collaboration with Baltic-based curatorial voices Kęstutis Kuizinas, Maria Arusoo, Zane Onckule, and Renāte Prancāne, among others. Additionally, the decision was made that each city and venue should follow different formats—aimed to diversify content, context, and present art—and as a result, what was presented was a chorus of contrasting identities, ranging from fragmented to tenacious. The triennial attempted to push aside traditional constraints often used by default to categorize the structure of similar events, so that this edition would be perceived as more fluid and continually evolving.

The catalog text acknowledges that the political crisis at hand is not a contained event with clearly defined parameters of "then" and "now" but, rather, it is an ongoing condition that one must continue to negotiate over time. Given that the triennial is a response to conditions that are in flux, Honoré acknowledges the problem of attempting to exhibit concrete research of the current mindset and aesthetics of time. The curator emphasizes that time is a flowing entity, yet artworks are often perceived as encapsulated static representations, so one curatorial goal is to allow freedom for the event to remain inconclusive by illustrating works in a more flex-



Still from performance of *i ride in colour and soft focus, no longer anywhere* (2018) by Last Yearz Interesting Negro / Jamila Johnson-Small at Kunut Guild House; photograph by Kent Märijamaa

ible light. A Western observation has been made that the Baltic states are viewed by other geographic and political realms as

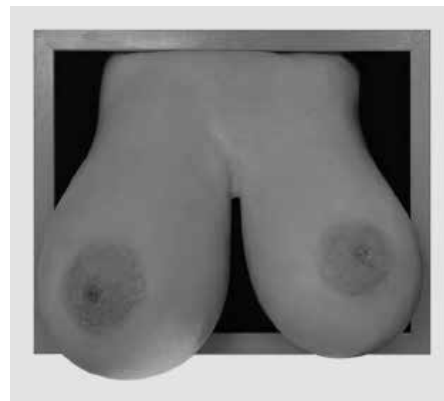
"limitrophe" (i.e., situated in between Europe and Russia); since Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia exist in such a realm, they are more likely to be involved in creative discourses related to inclusion vs. exclusion, infiltration, and resistance—as the curator notes in his curatorial statement.¹ The event appears to consciously avoid frames, parameters, and preconceived notions as a way to promote an amorphous path to subjectivity. The curator uses this approach as a tactic to redefine cultures and support communities that are unfairly positioned or muted.

With no clear path, anarchistic associations and welcoming outputs are more likely to arise—especially in comparison to more stringently designed previous curations. Regarding the artistic content of "Give Up the Ghost," Honoré made a conscious decision to include "bastard" objects and utilize "anti-categories" for display. These "bastards" are synonymous with displacement and highlight the age of crisis via their ability to hybridize with other objects of their own accord, often disregarding conventional rules for creation through uncharted mingling. The "anti-categories" are described as contaminations of already-established forms and types; such infections allow one to more effectively dodge default functions. Honoré argues that contemporary art cannot help but be contaminated by preexisting works that are simultaneously circulating. Due to a crisis based on the fact that relationships (e.g., subject-object, inner-outer, individual-collective) are not holding up, the curator suggests viewing art as a malleable and porous phenomenon that can be entered or left behind, depending on the circumstance. Here, "formlessness" is noted as a primary tool for questioning the relationship of subject and object as it stands to override formal thinking and instigate a better kind of disorder that expands upon or destroys limits. Honoré explains this tenuous dynamic further: "the artworks operating on this apparatus activate many kinds of relationships, affects and modes of embodiment and receptivity, operating as a process, a performative work in progress to be essentially co-authored by the viewer."

This triennial attempted to exalt instability and mixed form—where works

of art in transition are the highest form, where confusion or paradox are welcome because they illustrate a "bastard" doing as it wants and pursuing new explorations into change, and even progress. The event highlighted harmonious coexistence, where all works were allowed space, voice, song—and even a particular rhythm. Together, there was hope that these works, of diverse mediums and dispersed throughout three spaces in three different countries, would portray the disparate state of fragmentation that artists, at their core, attempt to either address, reflect, reject, or inevitably alter.

During the first chapter at CAC Vilnius (May 11–August 12, 2018)—where each chapter highlights a separate event in a different Baltic city and country—viewers were cajoled to embrace timeless works that highlighted the sub-theme of "belonging," such as Miriam Cahn's *Schlafen* (Sleeping, 1997), which was a presentation of thirteen haunting paintings. Figures in solitude and suspended within questionable spaces that are intimate and somewhat threatening present the human figure as both an emotionally charged nexus and a void. Darja Bajagić's installation *Molly 5 (Woods)* (2016) was equally eerie; one encountered brutal female figures, suspended and dripping blood. The artist is influenced by fan-gore, pornography, and crime shows; mingling the occult with a twisted eroticism, her works incorporate diverse media and approaches. For instance, a canvas may be deliberately irregular or misaligned. Mediums used are often complex and layered; her aesthetics lean toward an amoral yet poetic undercurrent. In Rachel Rose's short video *A Minute Ago* (2014), emphasis is placed on "transversal" thinking; one views a collage of images associated with the interior of Philip Johnson's architectural gem *Glass House* (1949), threaded with fragmented scenes of beaches, hailstorms, and Nicolas Poussin's painting *The Funeral of Phocion* (1648), and culminating in an explosive, pixelated panorama of shattered glass. The video slides from one questionably utopic scene to complete disaster—providing a commentary on absurdist vulnerabilities of our era that careens between natural and synthetic. The Lithuanian artist duo Pakui Hard-



Feminist Crisis of Identity. Version 2 (2018) by Sandra Jõgeva; courtesy the Baltic Triennial

ware (Neringa Černiauskaitė and Ugnius Gelguda) provides a sensual, hybridized ecology in their installation *The Return of Sweetness* (2018). The work beautifully infuses glass, silicone, chia seeds, cables, and latex to create an inverted "belly of the beast," as contributing writer Tamar Clarke-Brown notes; the artist duo frequently pinpoints delightful combinations of organic-industrial material to expand upon their artistry and unwavering spirit. In Korakrit Arunanonchai's twenty-three-minute video *with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4* (2017), one discovers an in-between sphere that rejects defined parameters of life and death, with the intent to create space for speculation; the video seeks to exalt a higher plane of existence, where the secular is not priority and unknown entities now seem within reach.

Tallinn Art Hall exhibited complementary works revolving around "the body" as a moving, political, desiring force. One entered the space to immediately encounter Baltic painter Merike Estna's bold installation-as-performance *kneeling banana/angel flew over my head on the 7th floor above the seabed* (2017). The work swept from the floor to the walls; the artist also recruited a young male nude model to linger quietly as part of the installation. Estna's practice questions what both a painter and a painting should be—and also in relation to gender, sexuality, and the environment. Her paintings invade the floor, outdoor spaces, and fashionable

REPORT

garments; they are even painted onto crafted items like tile and pottery. Estna plays with texture and layering to elevate the importance of "tactility."

Courtesy of the artist's estate, a selection of Derek Jarman's *Black Paintings* (1986–93) were also on view. These works were made at the height of the AIDS epidemic; they are heavy with mythology, symbolism, and raw emotion. On a pitch-black canvas, the artist incorporates kitschy, occult-inspired materials including mirrors, jewels, rosary beads, teeth, and discarded paraphernalia. A gold leaf is deliberately buried or hidden within Jarman's paintings, paying homage to a hidden voice that refuses to die or be forced into invisibility. These paintings bear the weight of Jarman's personal struggle for queer liberation in light of fighting HIV at the time; they embody the voice as it represents and extends from the body—combatting a heinous reality. Estonian artist Kris Lemsalu presented her sculptural installation *So Let Us Melt And Make No Noise* (2017), in which a skeletal figure (presumably "Death") is suspended in midair, perched atop a fishing boat in trendy attire, playing keyboard above a sea of blue balloons. The work forces one to encounter the sort of trivialities that sometimes reveal the inexplicable beauty of life, for the absurd and misunderstood also come to a brutal halt. The sculptures of Nina Beier and Daiga Grantina were an intriguing juxtaposition, for Beier mingles domesticity with technology and movement with sculptures of rust-colored fibrous clumps resting in adjustable armchairs and toy cars sporting hair extensions, whereas Grantina takes a globular, fleshy approach—illustrating vulnerability as strength via hanging works reminiscent of mutilated ballet slippers or blow-up figures. To conclude this chapter, there were three performances at the nearby venue Kanuti Gildi SAAL (a.k.a. Kanuti Guild Hall); Jamila Johnson-Small (her alias: "Last Yearz Interesting Negro") presented a final performance here incorporating dance, poetics, thumping sound, and image—impacting its audience with a trance-like yet confrontational approach.

The final chapter at Kim? in Riga focused on "citizenship" and related social structures. Works like Sandra Jõgeva's

Feminist Crisis of Identity. Version 2 (2018) were at the forefront, for the artist does not shy away from scandal or taboo in her interdisciplinary practice as a documentary filmmaker, writer, curator, and artist; she tries to avoid being pigeonholed or marked within movements or constructs that are regularly assigned, assumed, and . . . dodged. Jõgeva's aforementioned multimedia work is a shameless portrait of hanging breasts that protrude from its frame, into the viewer's personal space. The artist is contradictory: even though she is now firmly viewed as a feminist, she was once marginalized by the existing online feminist community during its earlier emergence for not representing the lifestyles of others claiming the feminist identity. The practice of Ben Burgis and Ksenia Pedan is intriguing; their punk installation of askew metal objects, furniture pieces, carefully orchestrated archaeological specimens, and mannequin body parts that have been altered—warped, irregular, sullied—was a refreshing detour from the rest of the chapter; their work serves as a provocative entry into fictive realms and provides a stage for peripheral performance, introspection, or escape. For instance, artists Adam Christensen and Keira Fox performed in this same space to a soundtrack by Vindicatrix. French artist Caroline Achaintre's witchy wicker and bamboo screens-as-sculptures that were constructed for the Vilnius CAC exhibition were later set on fire as part of the closing ceremonies for the Riga chapter. Contributing to Riga's public program, Pierre Huyghe's video *The Host and the Cloud* (2010) portrays a closed ethnographic museum in an attraction park on the outskirts of Paris; the work focuses on three holidays and gives light to the alternate, voluptuous realities of undefined realms associated with them.

The emphasis here is on thinking outside the proverbial box, and this triennial drew attention to the necessity for everyone to locate, collectively and individually, new ways to navigate creatively (and realistically) that are neither conventional nor binary. The event aimed to place works, artists, and contributors into some lovely metaphorical garden of delight—according to the curator, it was inspired by Édouard

Glissant's "Creole garden"—that should be explored by viewers and appreciators. Yet Honoré suggests that the danger of "incoherence" lurks when organization is allowed to be more flexible and loose. There is also the looming threat that an overbearing theme could cancel out the effects and impact of individual works, especially if certain works were not given room within the structure to "embrace fragmentation," as Honoré remarked in his introduction. The triennial took place in three countries; a decision was made to contain the event to only one venue in each city, so as to prevent unwanted ooze-ing or sprawling. All three chapters approached the show's theme which, in essence, addressed both death (related to World War I killings, as well as the death of ideas) and an inevitable rebirth that coincides with the effects of change—and both states are related to current socio-political realities, including the centenary of independence of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, as well as Brexit, Trump, US election outcomes, and charged movements and initiatives (#metoo #timesup #blacklivesmatter) that are evidence of discord. Many political ideologies and theories aim to highlight one voice or set of voices over others, yet the strategy of this event was to consciously collect a polyphony of voices so as to avoid dogmatism or superiority. Honoré notes that he was approached to artistically direct this triennial while the world was in the midst of transition; in my opinion, the viewer must now consider the entire event as follow-up, in relation to the specific decisions and subsequent actions of a wide range of individuals (e.g., artists, activists, politicians, scholars), existing in an altered context that is more forcefully influenced by the results of these changes.

JACQUELYN DAVIS is an American-Swedish writer and curator based in Stockholm.

NOTE 1. All quotations from Vincent Honoré's curatorial statement, "Introducing Give Up the Ghost" in *Baltic Triennial 13: Give Up The Ghost* exhibition catalog, 8–11.