
From the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of *Afterimage* for 2022 (Volume 49, no. 1).

This sizeable issue begins with in-depth interviews with two contemporary media artists. Marcus Civin talks with Allison Maria Rodriguez about her recent multichannel video installations that address the health of the planet and the interconnection between species. As Rodriguez explains, she utilizes an “overall philosophical trajectory” to explore identity, nature, and animals as well as family legacy and culture—through both travels far afield and explorations close to home. The conversation reveals that the artist remains hopeful about the future and the possibilities for humans recognizing the intelligence of other animals as well as the potential for “some healing, responsible growth, and reconnection.” Vicki Callahan discusses with Lance Weiler his “evocative storytelling,” detailing how “loss and restorative groundwork are jointly shared” between Weiler’s own story and those of the participants engaged in his multimedia installation work, which he refers to as “generative documentary.” Through the very personal project *Where There’s Smoke*, in particular, Weiler has come to see the “possibilities within healthcare, specifically in the field of narrative medicine.”

Another highlight of this issue is a dossier titled “Mediated Identifications: José Esteban Muñoz and Visual Studies,” inspired by Muñoz’s work and his posthumous book *The Sense of Brown*. Joshua Javier Guzman and Iván A. Ramos edited this dossier and provide an overview of the five contributions exploring the idea that “a mediated identification is an identification exposed to contradiction,” noting that Muñoz’s work was “centrally located in the fields of performance studies and queer theory, and a major influence in both.” Lucas Hilderbrand first posits the question of disciplinarity that provides the overarching framework for the dossier. He discusses Muñoz’s work in the context of Li Cheng and George F. Roberson’s 2018 film *José*, exploring how diverse critical lenses ultimately affect the potential empathetic responses of an audience.

Also in the dossier, Hoday King situates the “brown commons” in a time of social isolation, describing two livestreamed performance events whose organizers took on the challenge of creating virtual commons during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amber Jamilla Musser positions the performative photography of Maureen Catbagan within Muñoz’s “theorizations of relational embodiment as it pertains to brownness and performance in *The Sense of Brown*.” Richard T. Rodríguez explores the practice of gossip, focusing on Andrew Durham’s 1995 queer cult video classic *Mi Pollo Loco*, writing that “gossip holds considerable weight, especially for those grasping for a sense of belonging within

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disempowered, ‘subterranean’ communities.” Nao Bustamante concludes the collection with a personal recollection of Muñoz.

This issue’s peer-reviewed articles section includes art historical, media studies, and digital studies examinations of diverse artistic productions and cultural considerations. Alex Zivkovic’s essay “Joan Jonas’s Ecological Portraits: Echo and Narcissus” considers how the artist’s ecological portraits “reveal her multidirectional entanglements with spaces near and far.” In these projects Jonas repeatedly uses water, mirrors, and projectors as a means of “reflection, refraction, and electronic distortion to create images that intermingle her body within its mediation” while honoring her unwillingness to “penetrate space.” Zivkovic demonstrates how Jonas “attempts to manifest ecological relationships at intimate and global scales” by repeatedly “sta[ging] a form of (eco-) narcissistic presence that shows human bodies as part of landscapes, environmental interactions with those bodies, and the potential impacts of these interdependencies between and across media.” While weaving into the discussion other artists who have also traversed this conceptual territory, including Robert Smithson, Ana Mendieta, Hans Breder, and Lynda Benglis, Zivkovic argues that Jonas “foregrounded larger shifts in art of the 1970s toward indeterminacy and openness.”

In “Red Planets: Cinema, Deserts, and Extraction,” Daniel Mann begins with the premise that “the cinematic portrayal of worlds ravaged by resource scarcity and climate peril too often sustains the perception of the desert as an unruly, lawless, and dead land,” and continues on to explore the “stakes of further abstracting the specificity of geography and extending the colonial imaginaries of wasteland.” Focusing on such films as *The Martian* and the most recent adaptation of *Dune*, Mann interrogates how and why cinema “not only uses the desert as the ultimate location but becomes complicit in sustaining [this] fallacious imaginary.”

The Digital Inequality Lab, whose members all work in or attend doctoral programs at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, offers “The Lag Manifesto.” Employing the lenses of media studies and digital studies, as well as critical theories of race, gender, and sexuality, the authors of the manifesto were motivated by two recent pandemics: COVID-19 and anti-Black racism. This piece puts lag, “a social condition and a technical artifact that exposes the always-already-present disjoint between realities,” in conversation “with other cultural theories of slowing down action in a media-saturated present.” As the authors note, SARS-CoV-2 “highlights the precarity of our taken-for-granted infrastructure” even as we “challenge the assumption that we are responsible for our own digital infrastructure,” and Big Tech, academia, and other capitalist social formations are implicated in how we “manage our virtual, material, and infrastructural spaces in a SARS-CoV-2 world.” Like Mann, the authors of this manifesto, too, are concerned with an increasingly extractive world and offer several suggestions for “a future that builds in positive forms of lag to allow for disruption, care, and repair.”

Our reviews section begins with coverage of the recent exhibition *Devour the Land: War and American Landscape Photography since 1970* at Harvard Art Museums, which writer James Cuning Holland characterizes as offering a “multifaceted visual terrain” that is “groundbreaking, sweeping, and haunting.” Georgia Phillips-Amos reviews *Culture*

Strike: Art and Museums in an Age of Protest (2021) by Laura Raicovich. As Phillips-Amos writes, Raicovich calls for “nuanced accountability, collaboration, and an overall *slowing down* to allow time for inclusive and intentional decision-making” by all parties in the cultural sphere. Last, Brian Arnold examines Guido Guidi’s 2021 monograph *Cinque viaggi (1990–98)*, writing that it offers a glimpse inside the photographer’s creative process as he documents the changing landscapes of Milan and greater Lombardy, places that are “evolving with the new global economic paradigms.”

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In this new year, we continue to welcome submissions of scholarly articles intended for peer review, as well as reports on events and happenings (in person and online); essays; photo essays; interviews with artists, curators, writers, and theorists; and exhibition, book, film, video, and project reviews. We are pleased to also now be publishing dossiers and soon, guest-edited issues; please inquire about guidelines.

We at *Afterimage* hope your new year has thus far been safe and peaceful.

Take good care,
 Karen (Ren) vanMeenen
 Editor
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