

Baltic Triennial 13 - GIVE UP THE GHOST

Venue: Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga

Dates: 21 September – 18 November, 2018

Artistic Director: Vincent Honoré

Curatorial Team: Dina Akhmadeeva, Canan Batur

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BT13 – GIVE UP THE GHOST launches its third and final chapter at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga on Friday 21 September. Baltic Triennial 13 is a contemporary art event taking place in Riga as a part of Latvia's Centennial and restored Lithuania's and Estonia's celebration.

For the first time in its history, Baltic Triennial 13, under the title GIVE UP THE GHOST, is organised by all three Baltic States: Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. Spread across three locations and evolving sequentially, Baltic Triennial 13 makes a conscious decision to give up its unity in order to make space and time for a polyphony of voices to rise. The three exhibitions that form the core of the Triennial are all different in format, content and context. However, each of the chapters is informed by a shared concern: what does it mean to belong at a time of fractured identities? The fluctuating notion of belonging, which can be understood to exist within the conceptual and formal framework of a relationship, allows us to think beyond identity as something fixed, self-contained and essentialised.

The exhibition in Riga tackles the question of belonging by focusing on questions surrounding social norms, relations and structures, while also considering the notion of ghosting and fading away vis-à-vis the large-scale exhibition format itself. The immersive environment by Ben Burgis and Ksenia Pedan that engulfs the majority of Kim? is a psychologically off-kilter microcosm that bastardizes the accepted forms and symbolic functions of social spaces. At the same time, Kim? becomes a stage on which the full polyphony of Baltic Triennial 13 is played out. Works, new commissions and performances tackle the (non-)acceptance of different bodies in public space, the boundaries between subjectivity and collectivity, and the exchange value enacted between objects and their representations. Meanwhile, a room of ghostly presences, voices and

memories, brings back the full roster of the Triennial's artists as so many traces and gestures, and acts as a gradual swansong of Baltic Triennial 13,

In its form as an exhibition, Baltic Triennial 13 borrows from Édouard Glissant's idea of the 'creole garden', a space for the horizontal co-existence and blooming of different varieties. It is a place of disorder. A place where things can co-exist and avoid being in contradiction or opposition. If disorder allows us to think in a fluid way, outside of fixed, straight, binary norms, it is now more vital than ever. We need to disrupt the way we personally think, and to question our norms so they can migrate, evolve, change and mutate.

To 'give up the ghost' can be read in a negative way. After all, it means to die. Yet it also means to cease identification with something – whether gender, race, territories, class – and is a chance to rethink our presence within the world. Eventually, it encapsulates the idea of a renaissance.

As such, the Riga chapter turns into a natural coda for the Triennial, a natural inclination to consider what is given up and what is left behind. A ghost of a ghost.

1

NINA BEIER

Sofia Lemos

Known for negotiating social and political questions of exchange and oftentimes transferring information from objects to representations and back again in a curveball statement, Beier creates images that evade their referents to become another upon return. This process, akin to Charles Sanders Peirce's adopted term 'semiosis' defines the relative drive between the three actors and the impossibility of its resolution into actions between pairs. Beier works with what they term 'confused objects', such as a wig of human hair that is simultaneously both an image of hair and biological hair. As the artist noted in interview, 'The thing with wigs, of course, is that they're frozen in one hairstyle and they'll never grow. They really have that thing of being a still

image, somehow, but the fact that it's real hair at the same time is such a confusing thing, because it means that the wig is what it depicts. It really sits in both camps'...

As modern liberal economics abstracted value from its representation, images are continuously exchanged, circulated and consumed, vulnerable to further commodification into another form of exchange value. In *Automobile* (2017), two remote control Range Rover vehicles containing human hair roam the exhibition gallery at an anxious speed, in flux between miniature luxury vehicle with an intelligent design and an erratically controlled, poorly programmed, toy car. The viewer's intentions, projected here at face value, such as the image of hair blowing through an open window, are troubled by the remote labour of the gallery assistants who drive the miniature cars.

Nina Beier was born in 1975 in Denmark and lives and works in Berlin. They graduated from the Royal College of Art, London. They have held solo exhibitions at the Kunstverein Hamburg; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Objectif Exhibitions, Antwerp; Kunsthaus Glarus; and Kunsthal Charlottenborg. Group exhibitions include the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; the Power Station, Shanghai; 13th Biennale de Lyon and the 20th Biennale of Sydney.

2

EGLĖ BUDVYTYTĖ

Incantation Karaoke

Performance on 22 September at Kim?

Rado Ištok

Eglė Budvytė's most recent preoccupation has been to explore the boundaries between the human and non-human, particularly in relation to desire and eroticism. Eroticness, however, in Budvytė's work should be understood as a state of mind rather than a mere aesthetic contemplation of sexuality and sexual desire. If eroticism for the philosopher Georges Bataille was a transgressive force allowing the individual to trespass the limits of human subjectivity and thus achieve a communion with humanity, Budvytė's eroticism, even more radically dissolves

the boundaries between individuals' subjectivity and the collectivity of humanity, as well as the boundaries between humans and other species, reintegrating the human into nature.

While most of their works exist either as video or live work, the structure of the work takes reference from both mediums. Their live actions are constructed both choreographically and cinematically, in terms of thinking in images constituted by the movement of performers through a carefully studied and constantly changing environment, as if performed for an absent camera replaced by the eye of the public.

While the majority of Budvytytė's work has been conceived for public and predominantly urban space, the artist has recently turned their attention indoors... Songs written by the artist themselves are performed in a variety of modalities, ranging from gentle chanting to rougher genres. The tension between gentle and rough is at the core of Budvytytė's work, which is simultaneously humble, almost mundane, yet provocative and often antagonistic to the context from which it grows and simultaneously upsets.

Eglė Budvytytė is a Lithuanian artist based in Amsterdam. They make videos and performance situations to explore the relationships between body, architecture, environment and audience. Their work was shown amongst others at Lofoten International Art festival; Art Dubai commissions 2017; Liste, Basel; Art Basel; 19th Biennale of Sydney; De Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam; CAC, Vilnius; and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Budvytytė was resident at Le Pavillon, Palais de Tokyo, Paris in 2012 and at WIELS, Contemporary art centre, Brussels in 2013.

3

BEN BURGIS & KSENIA PEDAN

Performance by Adam Christensen and Keira Fox, with a live soundtrack by Vindicatrix, on 21 September at Kim?

Erik Martinson

Like walking into the morning after. A space that maybe isn't for you to see if you weren't there the night before and crashed out on the sofa. Must have been a real blast... There's an eerie calm as you take in this tiny apocalypse. Bottles have found each other and congealed; a table is skewed and barely standing; the chairs look like they crawl the walls when no one is looking. What seems like detritus has mutated into a landscape before you. It feels lived in, like you took a wrong turn into a door marked private, not the intended gallery. You are where you need to be.

To say the practice of Ben Burgis and Ksenia Pedan is immersive is an understatement. Sculpted components create installations as domestic spaces, public spaces, hybrid forms of both. Their work often functions as a stage set for performative actions. Frequent collaborators Keira Fox and Adam Christensen co-develop scenarios with the pair. As with the spatial context Burgis and Pedan create, the performances hinge on the edge of comfort. Like arguments in public that unfold as if no one else is present, Fox and Christensen unravel social codes. Through cues from a variety of sources, they may inhabit the entangling narrative arcs of couples, siblings, even a gallerist and assistant - all with associated power relations and ensuing tensions. They weave among you, and you among them. The space they inhabit is yours too, after all. Sometimes you can even hear their thoughts bicker. When the performance ends is a difficult delineation.

Ben Burgis was born in the UK and **Ksenia Pedan** in Ukraine. They have been working collaboratively since 2012. Together they create symbolic social spaces within galleries. Often combining a broad selection of of sculptured and painted elements, they present an ersatz reality where form and function are distorted by an emotional transformation. The installations also function as sets for performances where Keira Fox and Adam Christensen, with accompanying soundtracks, activate and hyperbolise the environments.

Adam Christensen was born in the UK in 1979. They are a London-based artist making performance, video, fabric and text works, and perform with the music project Ectopia, which was Wysing Arts Centre's band-in-residence in 2016. They have previously performed and presented their work at DRAF, Southard Reid, Institute of Contemporary Arts and Hollybush Gardens in London.

Keira Fox is a performance artist and musician based in London. They are part of the collaborative project New Noveta who have shown internationally since 2012, most recently with a solo show at Kunstverein Freiburg. New Noveta have also shown at Ludlow 38, New York; Liste, Basel; and the Serralves Museum, Porto. With Adam Christensen, they have performed at Frieze 2017, London; Raven's Row, London; and elsewhere.

4

PIERRE HUYGHE

The Host and the CloudFilm screening on 15 November at K-Suns Cinema

Neringa Bumblienė

Pierre Huyghe is one of the most prominent contemporary French artists, working in a variety of media from sculptures and film to installations and living systems involving a variety of life forms such as plants, bacteria, insects and animals. Over the course of their career, Huyghe has developed a specific artistic practice which elaborates on contradictory and complex relationships between humans and other life forms, and between artist and artwork, questioning the role and place of artwork in a museum and in the outside world.

The Host and the Cloud (2011), like most films by Pierre Huyghe, oscillates on a slippery fringe between reality and fiction. The work, with a duration of over two hours, is filmed in a closed museum at the far end of an attraction park in the Parisian outskirts. Conceived as a role play and recorded over the course of a year, it focuses on just three days; Halloween, Valentine's Day and May Day, and presents a hypnotic journey on a range of promiscuous, and undefined, behavioural models.

Pierre Huyghe was born in 1962 in Paris and now lives and works between New York and Chile. Their most recent solo exhibitions include Copenhagen Contemporary; Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; Sprengel Museum, Hannover; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City; Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; The Art Institute of Chicago; and Tate Modern, London, among others. They also participated in international exhibitions, including the Skulptur Projekte Münster; São Paulo Biennial; Manifesta

2 and 11; Istanbul Biennial; documenta XI and XIII; Sydney Biennale; Venice Biennale; and Whitney Biennial.

5

DEREK JARMAN

Blue

Film screening on 16 November at K-Suns Cinema

Anya Harrison

Obsessively autobiographical, Jarman's work - whether in film or in their assemblage works - proclaims a voice that will not be buried alive. It will not be thrown on the scrapheap with all the other voices, the social rejects that refuse to conform and comply with the socially enforced norms of Thatcherite Britain, so high on its own sense of morality.

...And then we get to Blue, Jarman's swansong, and one of the final acts not only for the Riga chapter, but for the Baltic Triennial 13 as a whole. An account of going blind due to AIDS complications, Blue is the fear induced by the illness; the tedious trips to hospital, IV drips and pills; the voices of friends and lovers, some already forever gone. And throughout it all, being suffused, swimming, floating, drowning in an expanse of the most glorious International Klein Blue that sears itself onto my retina for all of the film's 79 minutes until I'm engulfed. Refusing to be the fixed image of a martyr. Blue, the colour of transcendence and immateriality, 'an open door to soul / An infinite possibility / Becoming tangible'.

Derek Jarman was born in Northwood, Middlesex, on 31 January 1942. They died in London on 19 February 1994. They were educated at the University of London and at the Slade School of Art. Having begun making their own experimental films on a Super-8 camera in the early 1970s, Jarman's first feature film was the low budget *Sebastiane* (co-d. Paul Humfress, 1976), a story about the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, which created a stir in the art cinema market because of its overt depiction of homosexual desire.

6

SANDRA JÕGEVA

The Tit Show

Performance on 22 September at Kim?

Rebeka Põldsam

Sandra Jõgeva is a celebrated, undaunted, scandalous, revered and feared documentary filmmaker, writer and columnist, curator and interdisciplinary artist whose practice ranges from performance to sculpture and installation. The array of their activities come with all kinds of controversy, testing the vulnerability of human limits, and displaying emotional sincerity that gets mixed up with manipulation. They are perceived as an angry woman, who decimates those in positions of unearned power and expresses admiration for those who embody social marginality to the extent of absurdity.

For the Baltic Triennial 13, Jõgeva presents a pair of framed silicone breasts. Society has numerous opinions about women's breasts - their function, size, rules of presentation in public - and they are used as metaphors in discussions determining a woman's social role, age, body shape and sex appeal. Sandra has depicted the breasts of overweight women in ephemeral soft materials a number of times, and each time the works have been violated by the audience, just like the female sex robots that have been destroyed at robot fairs all over the world. How does a person relate to bare breasts in public space? Will this set also be mauled, or is it possible for the audience to just look at them with their eyes and stay cool?

Sandra Jõgeva was born in 1976. They are an installation and performance artist, writer and documentary filmmaker living and working in Tallinn. Their debut film *Love...* (2017) has won several movie awards in Estonia. They are currently working on a new documentary about the Soviet informal art scene and its connections to the west, titled *Art and the Cold War. Aesthetic Resistance*. As an artist, their preferred mediums are currently sculptural installations and, as they call it, stand-up tragedy.

7

MARE TRALLA

Anya Harrison

Mare Tralla first emerged as a queer, feminist artist in 1990s Estonia, at a time when the country found itself in the throes of a post-Soviet race for self-identification. In this newly capitalist world, one of their first works to address gender imbalances, and then changing attitude to women, was the video installation *This Is How We Gave Birth To Estonian Feminism* (1995). In this video collage, Tralla overlays found footage of hardcore German pornography with photographs taken from the artist's personal archive of their mother as a flower girl in ceremonies celebrating Socialist kolkhoz workers (usually older men), and diaristic texts taken from Tralla's own childhood as a Soviet pioneer, each diary entry followed by the titular text. The post-Soviet liberation of the body politic collides with naked and violated female bodies, the rawest denominator of commodity fetishism: one type of ideologically systemic violence deftly replaced by another.

Tralla has long posed questions about the problem of introducing feminism and gender equality as concepts into a nascent socio-political context. Their responses, in performances and video vignettes into which they insert their own body, have relied on humour, self-parody and irony as tools for resistance and survival, emerging out of a frustration with the singularly macho conceptual environment in which they found themselves in. In their most recent video vignettes, presented for the Baltic Triennial 13, Tralla may have shifted gears to address the inequalities experienced by a wider array of bodies across a broader geographical and geopolitical spectrum, as well as their own duality as both artist and activist, but the self-deprecating silliness is still at their core.

Mare Tralla is an Estonian queer-feminist artist and activist currently living in London. Mare's professional art career started in Estonia in the early 1990s, where they became one of the leading interdisciplinary artists of the younger generation. Drawing from their personal history and everyday experience, their practice was in direct critical response to how the transition period of East-European societies affected women. They were one of the very few artists conducting a feminist revolution in the field of contemporary art in Estonia.

8

MEMORY ROOM: A GHOST OF A GHOST

Anya Harrison

Responding to the haunted scenario presented by Ben Burgis' and Ksenia Pedan's installation, and referring back to the title of Baltic Triennial 13, "Give Up The Ghost", this space is populated by ghosts and memories that make up the entirety of the Triennial.

Over the course of the exhibition's eight weeks, this gallery will see a gradual and momentary (re)appearance of all the artists and poets that have appeared in Baltic Triennial 13 since its beginning, each one offering an ephemeral gesture or trace – be it a video, song, poem or text – in lieu of their physical presence. Its first indication is a ritualistic burning of Wicked Wicker I-III (2018), a set of large-scale wicker screens by Caroline Achaintre, which were first made for and presented as part of the Triennial's Vilnius chapter.

From the very start, Baltic Triennial 13 has embraced disorder and the convergence of multiple voices, perspectives, bodies, histories, forms that build into a polyphony. At any given point in this one space, there may be poems by Christopher Soto, Harry Burke or Khairani Barokka. Darja Bajagic's video of pornographic imagery pulled from the internet that desexualises the poses but gestures towards wider societal structural problems at play. Kris Lemsalu who, chameleon that they are, transmogrify themselves into Harry Nilsson's Coconut (1971) song. Jayne Cortez's voice that hurtles through the gallery. Dora Budor's dust that contaminates and ages anything and everything it comes into contact with, a "Midas touch" in reverse. Ghostly renderings on paper by Anna Hulačova and Ola Vasiljeva. Benoit Maïre's galloping horse that contains the universe within it. An homage to Anu Põder, tongues birthing tongues.

And the list goes on. No bodies shall be present in this space though, only whisperings, whether loud or gentle, soft or harsh.