

MATRIX 288 / Andro Eradze: *Shifting Stillness*

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Andro Eradze (b. 1993, Tbilisi, Georgia; lives and works in Tbilisi) creates mesmerizing films, photographs, and installations that draw from surrealism and magic realism to dissolve distinctions between the real and imagined, alive and inanimate, domestic and wild. In his work, animals, plants, and other nonhuman subjects are often in tension with a looming human presence, as they navigate the vestiges of attempts to tame or conform them. In focusing his lens on the space between the organic and the synthetic, Eradze reveals an interconnectedness between all things.

MATRIX 288 / Andro Eradze: Shifting Stillness brings together three works that form a trilogy for the first time: *All Hands Bury the Dead* (2020), *Raised in the Dust* (2022), and Eradze's newest film, *Flowering and Fading* (2024). All three works are connected by the presence of unseen forces, which shift and intensify throughout the films as the wind takes on a life of its own, fireworks emit strobing light, and objects rise weightlessly to cast a choreography of shadows. Situating viewers within an otherworldly landscape of entangled perceptions, Eradze blurs the boundaries not only between the real and imagined, but also between the perspectives of those at all angles to the lens.

Curated by Margot Norton

Wind of change

I first met Andro Eradze's work at the 2022 Venice Biennale. As is typical of any visit to a visual arts biennale, I was already somewhat exhausted from seeing several images from such diverse historical and artistic contexts. Suddenly, I arrived at the Biennale area near Ponte dei Pensieri, with its usual group of works dealing with public space and its various rooms, often dedicated to videos. I entered one of them, and a series of strange images captured me: stuffed animals appeared within a forest.

In a longer shot, a wolf appeared, its eyes staring directly into the camera lens; initially, I wondered if I was looking at animals whose bodies were illuminated by various types of bombs, a reference to war. A few minutes later, I realized they were different fireworks, casting hues of yellow, green, and red over these ghostly presences. These images prompted not only me, but a large group of visitors, to watch the video from beginning to end several times, even amidst the excitement of a biennial.

In daily life, where we are constantly being invited to see new images—mainly due to the virtually uninterrupted use of cell phones to communicate—the construction of audiovisual sequences permeated by mystery that invite viewers to question is something rare and worthy of note. More than creating images, Andro Eradze can create audiovisual environments that embrace all the audience's senses. When we observe the three-video works shown in sequence here at BAMPFA, there is something that quickly catches the eye in their technical details: the consistency of the professionals with whom the artist, as director, works. It's the combination of exquisite framing, cinematography, image editing, and sound editing that

makes these videos, when projected in a dark room like the one we see here, suggest a kind of poetic portal for the viewer.

There's another element in his research that contributes to the environmental character of his work: the constant presence of what we conventionally call, simply and binarily, "landscape." When we watch the trilogy of films shown here on a single channel, following the order in which they were made, the constancy of his research into woods, forests, and the dichotomy between "civilization" and "nature" unfolds more noticeably.

"All Hands Bury the Dead" (2019) begins with a dark screen and a sound mix between what appears to be the sound capture of an open space and music whose instrument noises evoke the sound of some animal—a cicada? As the images follow one another, everything begins with a bonfire that cuts to a wide shot of a wooden house in the middle of a landscape. Between fire, wind, and vegetation, the frames show a forest and suggest a rhythm for the viewer's body through mechanisms of classical cinematic language: fixed shots are intercalated with the artificiality of zooming in; the winds howl, dawn and dusk seem to converge into one. Are these winds, insistently trying to shake these bushes, mechanically produced? What are the boundaries between location and studio in Eradze's images? As these doubts arise, what was supposedly background converges in front, and that wooden house slowly disappears before our eyes.

"Raised in the Dust" (2022), a work already discussed here that debuted at the Venice Biennale, seems to begin from the ashes announced in the previous video. After two minutes of familiar vegetation, fireworks, and the sound of voices suggest a more mundane tone to these images; the mystery of the forest gives space to our need to collectively celebrate life's ephemeral events through the union of fire and wind. When this last element acts directly on leaves and trunks, a succession of stuffed animals slowly emerges from the forest, suggesting a jigsaw puzzle always missing many pieces. The camera focuses on the bodies of these beings, always using fragments: the eye of one cut to the teeth of another, leading us to observe how the wind acts on the fur of a third body. From species to species, what unites them is their inanimate nature, always contrasted by the insistent wind. When the fireworks end and the wind dissipates, without the artificial lighting that illuminated these forest beings, we are left only to contemplate the shadows and silence of this environment. Calm returns.

It is this wind that triggers the sequence of images in "Flowering and Fading" (2024). The house, and its sense of shelter and privacy so common to humans, is one of the central settings of this narrative, where we see a woman and a dog sleeping simultaneously. A gust of wind causes a window to open. With it, the action of the exterior influences the interior, enabling a series of movements, from the pouring of a jar of honey to a dance between kitchen furniture that floats and spins through the space. The forests so typical in Eradze's narratives metamorphose in the room, causing interior and exterior, home and landscape, human and non-human, dream and reality to become one—until, finally, the same wind makes someone open their eyes and question the boundaries between the visible and the inexplicable, between what we can feel and what we cannot verbalize.

More than a narrative presence that moves leaves, fur, and windows, the wind, through Andro Eradze's lens, is always a sign of change. While not explicitly conveying a political project, Eradze's films denote a belief in metamorphosis and existential changes that can generate, in

their organic rhythm, a whirlwind. A sequence of blows can generate a gale, and this can affect, more than the filmed spaces, the viewer. May it inspire a willingness of change from the micro to the macro, while maintaining the belief that images can still generate layers of doubt, even in such uncertain times.

Just as the sound of the wind felt in that video room during the Venice Biennale still echoes in my body, I hope that a similar effect can be felt and last a long time for the audience of his first solo exhibition in the United States.

Raphael Fonseca