

WORLDS

Central to this volume of *Millennium Film Journal* is a collection of texts commissioned by our guest editor Barbara London. London is the founder of the Video-Media Exhibition and Collection Programs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and author of the book *Video! Art: The First Fifty Years* (2020). She has assembled texts by and about several artists whose work she's been following for some time. Her dossier, "Focal Points," provides a loose impression of political and artistic worlds beyond US- and Eurocentric institutions and movements. The selection includes essays by writers and practitioners working in Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong and China, artist pages, and the transcript of an interview drawn from her *Barbara London Calling* podcast. Much of the work discussed involves rethinking what media or mixed media means, especially to artists themselves. Questions of geographic and cultural difference are also raised, complex and even unanswerable, with implications for the world at large. London describes the ways "cultural complexities evolve, sometimes fester and cause rifts, especially now as crises are erupting throughout the world." The present moment—characterized by accelerating climate change, faltering democracies, a new Cold War (with frightening nuclear risks), and an unabated pandemic disrupting all aspects of life—calls attention to these complexities as well as the multiple future scenarios they foretell. Artists invariably play a role in helping to make sense of these conditions, as well as imagining planetary futures.

Throughout MFJ 76, authors are attentive to the way film and filmmakers engage with Worlds: those of media culture, geo-political hotspots (Hong Kong), and more generally the political-cultural and post-colonial linguistic formations (Singapore) of the various countries and cities in which these artists operate. Correspondences between formal strategies and the political complexes artists seek to address are among the key semantic strategies used to address worlds near and far, present and past. This is evidenced in the work of Walid Raad, reviewed by Andrzej Jachimczyk, in recent films by Abraham Ravett, reviewed by Jan-Christopher Horak, and in Sarah Bliss' *Unless You're Living It*, reviewed by David Bendiksen.

In the wide-ranging reviews of books, festivals, exhibitions and screenings, the impact of changing conditions of presentation occasioned by the effects of Covid and recent political events is traced. In his review of the European Media Arts Festival (EMAF) held annually

in Osnabrück, Grahame Weinbren's discussion of Chiara Caterina's *L'Incanto*, a film that draws on archival audio material of a historical mass murder and a rape and kidnapping in Italy, leads directly to a discussion of the mass shootings in Uvalde and Buffalo. Another work made from archive footage, in this case 100 hours of VHS tape, is Agustina Comedi's *Playback* (2020), a portrait of her gay activist father, reviewed by Mike Hoolboom.

Also largely retrospective, David Curtis' major new book *Artists' Film*, reviewed by Simon Payne, returns repeatedly to the 1930s to trace the development of distinct themes and genres over the subsequent decades. Payne's own book, *Film Talks*, co-edited with Andrew Vallance, is one of several initiatives the two have undertaken in recent years. It is reviewed by Luke Aspell. The ethos of this book fits very well into that of the *MFJ*, with its focus on making, close analysis and the conditions of presentation, as opposed to the application of external theory to generate material imposed on rather than generated by its object of study. The text calls attention to the world of the film — and even political dynamics that cannot be seen with a filmwork, lying beyond the frame.

The associated themes of collage and de-collage, implicit in Weinbren's take on working with archive film, is rehearsed differently by Kaya Turan in the review of *The Camera Was Always Running*, the Jonas Mekas retrospective held earlier this year at the New York Jewish Museum. Here's a rare example of curation that finds an appropriate fit between the original form of the work and its reconfiguration for the gallery.

Reconfigurations are also traced by Chris Kennedy in his glowing review of the annual Media City Festival held in Windsor, Ontario. Kennedy notes how the 2022 edition of the festival adapted and thrived in the face of Covid restrictions, making a larger than usual and globally accessible selection of work available for online viewing.

There is a strong focus on environmental questions, highlighted in Chris Dymond's account of the films of the Mongolian-Canadian filmmaker Alisi Telengut, and Natasha Chuk's review of the *Moving Picture Show* curated by Peggy Awesh. Nature is often thought to be a world beyond human artifice—sometimes imagined to exemplify the forms of reciprocity and co-existence that the political world sorely lacks. In many of the examples discussed here a reciprocal ecology of means and concepts is realised, for example in Walid Raad's analysis of waterfalls and the symbolic role they play in Lebanon, or the water traces on the hand-processed film that correspond with the washing of a store-front window in Sarah Bliss' *Unless You're Living It*. One discerns in these examples a desire to reintegrate the natural into everyday lived experience in such a way that ecology is not something external to us but with which we are wholly bound up and dependent upon, a re-thinking of ecology in terms of reciprocity.

NICKY HAMLYN for the Editors