

MATRIX 288
ANDRO ERADZE
SHIFTING STILLNESS



Wind of Change

Raphael Fonseca

I first encountered 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 hundreds of images from such diverse historical and artistic contexts when I arrived at the Biennale area near Ponte dei Pensieri. This area featured its usual group of works in public spaces and in its various rooms, often dedicated to videos. I entered one of the rooms, and a series of strange images captured me: taxidermied animals 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 the illumination came from fireworks, casting hues of yellow, green, and red over the animals' ghostly presences. These images prompted me—and a large group of visitors—to watch the video from beginning to end several times, even amidst the excitement of the Biennale.

In daily life, 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 what they are seeing is rare and worthy of note. Eradze creates audiovisual environments that go beyond

simply making images to embrace all of the audience's senses. When we observe *All Hands Bury the Dead* (2020), *Raised in the Dust* (2022), and *Flowering and Fading* (2024)—shown in sequence on a single channel here at BAMPFA—there is something in their technical details that quickly catches the eye: the artist, as director, consistently worked with the same skilled professionals on all these films. The combination of exquisite framing, cinematography, image editing, and sound editing makes these videos, when projected in a dark room like the one here, a kind of poetic portal for the viewer.

There is also an element in Eradze's research that contributes to the environments he creates: the constant presence of what we conventionally call simply landscape. When we watch the trilogy of films in the order in which they were made, the artist's dedicated research into woods, forests, and the dichotomy between "civilization" and "nature" unfolds more noticeably.

All Hands Bury the Dead opens with a dark screen and a mix of what seems to be a sound capture of an open space and music whose instrument noises evoke the sound of an animal (perhaps a cicada). The images begin with a bonfire; the scene then 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 classic cinematic language: fixed shots

are intercalated with the artificiality of zooming in, winds howl, dawn and dusk seem to converge into one. Are these winds, insistently trying to shake the bushes, mechanically produced? What are the boundaries between location and studio in Eradze's images? As these questions arise, what was supposedly background converges in front and the wooden house slowly disappears before our eyes.

Raised in the Dust, the work 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 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 the latter element acts directly on leaves and trunks, a succession of taxidermied animals slowly emerges from the forest, suggesting a jigsaw puzzle 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 with the insistent wind. When the fireworks end and the wind dissipates, without the artificial lighting that illuminated these forest beings, we are left to contemplate only the shadows and silence of the environment. Calm returns.

It is the wind that triggers the sequence of images in *Flowering and Fading*. The house, with its sense of shelter and privacy, is one of the central settings of this narrative. Here we see a woman and a dog sleeping. A gust of wind causes a window to open; thus, the action of the exterior influences the interior, enabling a series of movements, from pouring 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 nonhuman, dream and reality to become one—until, finally, the same wind might cause the viewer to open their own 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 is always a sign of change through Eradze's lens. While not explicitly conveying a political point of view, his films denote a belief in metamorphosis and existential changes that can generate, in their organic rhythm, a whirlwind. A sequence of gusts can cause a gale, which can affect—more than the filmed spaces—the viewer. May it inspire in us a willingness to change from the micro to the macro, while maintaining the belief that images can still produce layers of doubt, even in such uncertain times. Just as the sound of the wind that I experienced in that video room during the Venice Biennale still

echoes in my body, I hope that the audience of Eradze's first solo exhibition in the United States will feel a similar effect that will last a long time.

MATRIX 288 / Andro Eradze: Shifting Stillness is curated by Margot Norton, Chief Curator.

The exhibition is part of BAMPFA's ongoing MATRIX series of contemporary art exhibitions. Founded in 1978, MATRIX provides artists with an experimental platform to make and show new work.

The MATRIX program is made possible by a generous endowment gift from Phyllis C. Wattis.

Works in the Exhibition

Andro Eradze
Tbilisi, Georgia, born 1993

All Hands Bury the Dead
2020
4K; color, sound; 13:41 min.
Courtesy of the artist and
Kunsthalle Tbilisi

Raised by the Dust
2022
4K; color, sound; 8:12 min.
Courtesy of the artist and
La Biennale di Venezia

Flowering and Fading
2024
4K; color, sound; 16:22 min.
Courtesy of the artist, Lo schermo
Dell'arte, Fondazione in Between Art Film,
and SpazioA Pistoia

Cover: Andro Eradze: still from *Flowering and Fading*, 2024; courtesy of the artist, Lo schermo Dell'arte, Fondazione in Between Art Film, and SpazioA Pistoia.