

FOREST AS A JOURNAL

no. 1 2021





Contents

Editorial
Jurga Daubaraitė and
Jonas Žukauskas
p. 4

Neringa Forest
Jochen Lempert
p. 6

**Thinking Things
Through a Forest**
A conversation with
Nene Tsuboi and
Tuomas Toivonen by
Jonas Žakaitis
p. 16

**A Forest's Drive for Motion:
Acoustic Ecologies and the
Sonicity of Labour**
Sofia Lemos
p. 24

The Right not to be Offsetted
Interview with Cooking
Sections (Daniel Fernández
Pascual and Alon Schwabe) by
Jurga Daubaraitė and
Jonas Žukauskas
p. 34

On Forest and Time
Gabrielė Grigorjeva
p. 40

Infra-Baltic Landscapes
Jonathan Lovekin and
David Grandorge
p. 52

Cormorants in Ancient Woods
A conversation between
Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė and
Mindaugas Survila
p. 68

**On how the Tree Became a
Pellet: Capital Forests of the
Baltics**
Signe Pelne
p. 74

**On Forest Walking and
Ecologies of Care**
Agata Marzecova
p. 80

**Songs From the Compost:
Notes on Symbiotic
Relationality and Eglė
Budvytytė's Lichenous Poetics**
Amelia Groom
p. 86

The Grammar of Lichens
Aistė Ambrazevičiūtė
p. 94

**A Forest is Like a City –
With its own Streets,
Squares and Different
Land Uses**
Interview with
Laura Garbštienė and
Onutė Grigaitė by
Jurga Daubaraitė and
Jonas Žukauskas
p. 100

The Timber Couturier
Kotryna Lingienė and
Rasa Juškevičiūtė
p. 110

For Potato Peel
Monika Janulevičiūtė
p. 124

Neringa Forest Architecture
Egija Inzule,
Jurga Daubaraitė and
Jonas Žukauskas
p. 128

**Forest Paintings by
Algirdas Šeškus**
Virginija Januškevičiūtė
p. 136

Contributors
p. 140

Imprint
p. 144

Forest as a Journal Editorial

Guest Editors
Jurga Daubaraitė and
Jonas Žukauskas

This first issue of ** as a Journal*, focuses on *Forest*. Forest as a constructed space unavoidably reliant on human actions, no longer nature, but infrastructure; an environment of natural systems governed, exploited, and regulated by human interventions, technologies, industries, institutions and agencies. How can cultural practices enhance the optics through which society senses a forest?

The former natural habitats that defined the Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) – the forests and wetlands – were terraformed to become silviculture plantations, arable land and urban structures through waves of colonisation. Most of the recent attempts to break away from linear infrastructural dependencies that were conceived in the years of Soviet central planning into rhizomatic networks of interdependencies of the European Project are reflected in material flows, policies, territories and continuities of practices shaped by the overlay of these two modernities. Subsequent investments in the timber industry, technological advances, the restructuring of forestry and scientific institutions, the deregulation across national borders and the global climate disaster insist on an urgent need for cultural practices to re-assemble images and concepts in order to reconstitute an understanding of the forest as a vital and central infrastructure.

During the winter and spring Covid-19 lockdown of 2020 and 2021 we worked with the Neringa Forest Architecture programme (curated together with Egija Inzule), residents at Nida Art Colony, as well as a diverse group of others dispersed across wide geographies to translate the forest into a journal. The diverse ecologies of voices echo each other and form an assembly of photography, cartography, design, research, artistic work into a publication that may be conceptually compared to an optical device dedicated to reflect on the ways to be in, and with a forest.

To reflect the topic of this issue, graphic designer Gailė Pranckūnaitė created a special typographical layer as an intervention into the template of the Journal.

Following his visit to Nida, Preila and Juodkrantė last year *Jochen Lempert* responded with a selection of Neringa forest photographs. *Jonas Žakaitis* conversed with *Nene Tsuboi* and *Tuomas Toivonen* about their Kulttuurisauna routines, the synthesis of sound, and culture in relation to natural systems. *Sofia Lemos* unfolded the sonicity

of labour and forests on the move, reflecting upon the histories of timber rafting down the Daugava river in her writing about *Currents*; a large scale art installation and performance piece by *Lina Lapelytė* and *Mantas Petraitis*. We interviewed *Cooking Sections* (*Daniel Fernández Pascual* and *Alon Schwabe*) about dispossession that becomes increasingly common through the protection of natural environments and the right of trees not to be offsetted by prescribing them a value to compensate for the guilt of CO2 emissions made far away. *Gabrielė Grigorjeva* wrote about the conceptualisation of forest time, its definitions and spatial categorisation. *Jonathan Lovekin* and *David Grandorge* contributed photographs from their series *Infra* depicting Baltic forests and wetlands carved out for peat extraction, stacked in piles of logs and shredded into biomass. *Signe Pelne* explained the mechanisms of biofuel, carbon sequestration and subsidisation. *Mindaugas Survila* and *Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė* discussed how the meanings of forest are formed through their respective documentary film editing processes. With her baby, *Agata Marzecova* walked the forests around Nida contemplating the diverse landscapes and ecologies of care. *Amelia Groom* discussed the 'symbiogenesis' of lichens to reflect relationality in the artwork and soundtrack *Songs From The Compost* by *Eglė Budvytytė*. *Aistė Ambrazevičiūtė* revealed her creative process in synthesising lichen architectonics in her digitally generated architectural images. We conversed with *Laura Garbštienė* and *Onutė Grigaitė* about ways of being and living in woodlands, weaving and dyeing with plants, reading the roots of a plant, and the concealed relationships we are losing due to extensive logging and those we might save if we can learn about species by responsibly exploring forest habitats currently closed due to environmental protection regulations. *Rasa Juškevičiūtė* photographed and *Kotryna Lingienė* wrote about the studio and translation of timber into exquisite furniture by *Jonas Prapuolenis* whose career spanned the larger part of the twentieth century and became a design classic. *Monika Janulevičiūtė* carved intricate furniture pieces while reflecting on the simplest and modest yet authentic typologies of resourceful furniture found in photographs of homes advertised on real estate websites. Together with *Egija Inzule* we wrote about the timber cycle that became the basis to initiate the Neringa Forest Architecture research and artistic

residency programme at NAC we are curating together. *Virginija Januškevičiūtė* introduced the photographer Algirdas Šeškus' return to painting - for which he painted a forest.

* Initiated by the Lithuanian Culture Institute, each issue of this biannual magazine encourages the co-creation and research of topics valuable to both local and global readers, and features a different focus word in its title, relating to the topic explored by the guest editors of that issue.

A Forest's Drive for Motion: Acoustic Ecologies and the Sonicity of Labour

Sofia Lemos



Lina Lapelytė, *Instructions for the Woodcutters*, excerpt from the *Currents*, a work made together with Mantas Petraitis <https://tinyurl.com/w7adb27a>



Currents, Lina Lapelytė and Mantas Petraitis' site-specific installation on water with pine logs and sound. Commissioned by the 2nd Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art, RIBOCA2, 2020. Photo by Ansis Starks

Currents (2020) is an installation by Lina Lapelytė and Mantas Petraitis which brings together over 2000 pine logs to form a floating island on the water by the 2nd Riga Biennial's (RIBOCA2) main venue, Andrejsala, reminiscent of timber rafting on the Daugava River. This monumental structure reflects on the sonicity of labour and the relationships, ideologies and sensitivities that arose over centuries of Riga's involvement in the timber industry.

Western philosophies have associated forests' rootedness with their immobility.¹ Yet, we know that after the last glacial age, as temperatures began to rise, birch and oak trees began marching northwards, bringing with them their associated flora and fauna. From early on, humans understood forests' drive for motion: they converted their timber into fire, their logs into rafts, and their fibres into paper scrolls. In its boundless movement, bark was converted into nourishment, transport, housing and narrative. For those who are troubled by our predicament in the age of environmental devastation, acknowledging the

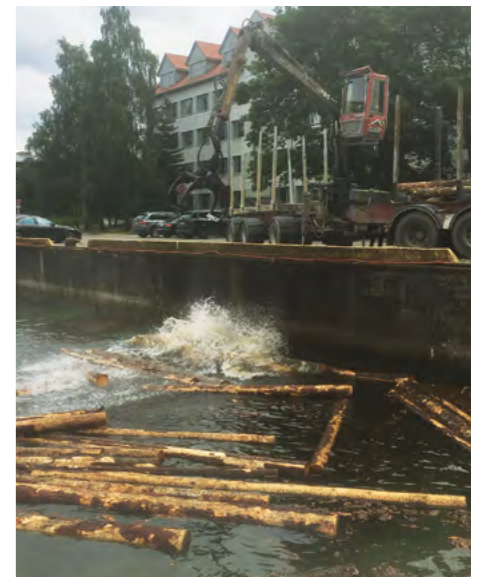
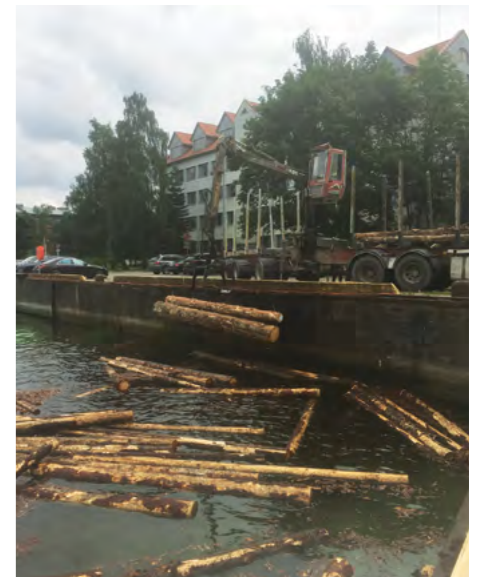
dragging march of a forest renders movement, decay and regeneration as fundamental features of our rapport with the world.

Where woodlands expand a large surface of the land, history and economic development become inherently tied to the movements of trees, thicket and timber. On the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, Latvian woodlands cover over half of the country. Since the Middle Ages, its forests have supplied Western Europe with timber for ships and buildings. In the 1930s, Latvian timber export represented 10% of the global market. While it provided economic protection, the forest also occupied a privileged space in society having harboured Latvians who fled to the woods to seek refuge inside its bark and atop its canopies during conflicts between the Russian, German and Swedish empires. Today, forests represent the nation's future as new markets emerge for biomass energy projects and biofuel.

Flowing westward over one thousand kilometres in a great arc through Russia and Belarus and discharging into the Gulf

of Riga on the Baltic Sea, the Daugava, played an important role enabling Latvian forests' economic flow. Referred to as the 'highway of rafts', the Daugava was central to the circulation of timber until the river was dammed to build Riga's hydroelectric power plant in 1974. Before, thousands of logs would be brought together on water, forming immense rafts carried by the currents and guided by raftsmen. The latter understood forests' drive for motion and learned to cohabit with the river, working with or against the current to carry the timber. In the apparent stillness of the forest and in the loud of the Daugava, raftsmen communicated through song. Their songs bear witness to their working conditions while capturing the acoustic ecologies of forest and water mobilised by the hope of economic development.

Departing from this global history of labour, Lina Lapelytė and Mantas Petraitis' sculptural and sound installation *Currents* investigates how the pulsing rhythms of raftman's songs are central to capitalist



Installation of *Currents*, photos by Lina Lapelytė and Mantas Petraitis.
Photo overleaf by Ansis Starks





Instructions for the Woodcutters, Lina Lapelytė and Mantas Petraitis, performed by Lina Lapelytė, Aliona Alymova, Salomėja Petronytė. Commissioned by the 2nd Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art, RIBOCA2, 2020. Photos by Andrejs Strokins

modes of production. Composed of 2000 pine logs arranged to form a floating island in Andrejsala, a decommissioned industrial port in Riga, alongside a sound installation playing through the outdoor warning speakers, *Currents* proposed a mode of listening beyond the ear, a visual and sonic composition attentive to the sonicity of raftsmen's labour and its more-than-human languages.

Walking through the ruined industrial port hundreds of logs drift at bay either too crooked or too thick to be used as wood for cutting before continuing its journey westwards by land and sea. A loudly resounding meter demands our attention. As I tune into its steady compass, I hear a combination of poetry and singing that flirts with the raftsmen's songs. A female voice describes their rhythmic arrangement, from a seemingly disorganised percussive amalgamation, where the narrator tells us 'everything belongs to Man', to the law-like sound of clock-time. The female voice is joined by others, initially in *acapella* and later to the

low-fi sound of electronics. In low tone, as one might imagine the raftsmen's songs to have been, they softly repeat 'they were going on and on and on, the super young and pretty old.'

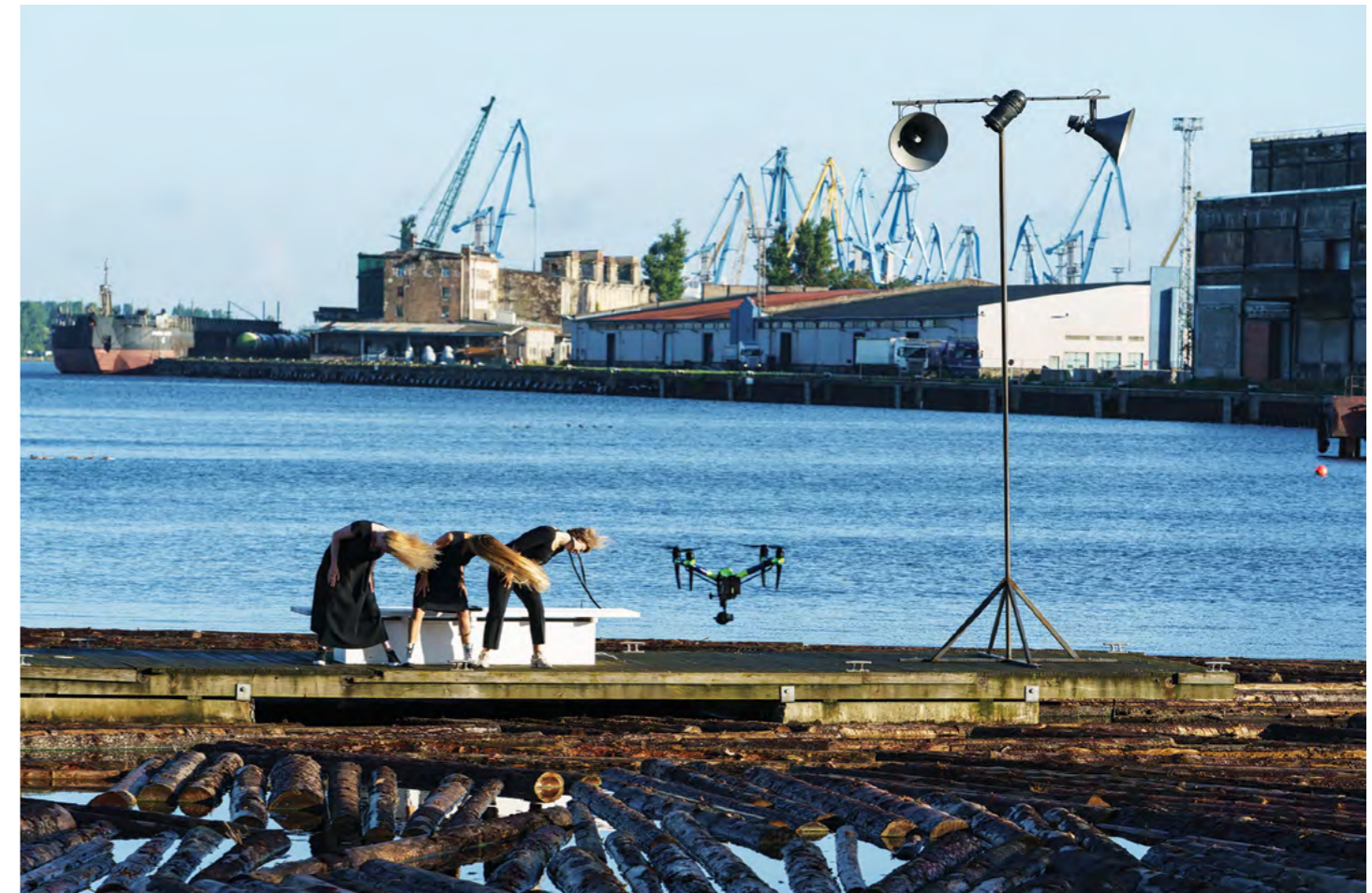
For the documentation of the installation, filmed on the deck that traversed the bay of pine logs, Lapelytė was joined by two singers who in unison turned their heads in circular motions in a gesture close to slow headbanging. In the performance itself, their voice goes out of words and into sound. The wood crackling at their feet and the river underneath them join in as a chorus of concatenated sounds, as if singing in unison the law-like sound of clock-time.

The socio-politics and sonicity of labour

Since the invention of the bell tower, as Lewis Mumford shows in his seminal *Technics and Civilization*, the measurement of time ushered a particular rhythm into the life of the craftsman and the merchant.² In

the nineteenth century, a wider debate about the management of time focused on how to organise labour and balance economic development with workers' rights. Rhythm was at the centre of this project. Echoing modern theories of resonance in the fields of acoustics and musicology during the formative period of modernism around the 1900s, the ear was simultaneously linked to the perception of time. These transformations profoundly impacted how meters, alongside clocks, organise time.

During this period, German economist Karl Bücher's *Arbeit und Rhythmus* [Labour and Rhythm] published in 1896 extensively reprinted until 1924, sought to uncover a relation between labour and rhythm by analysing work songs as well as performance in so-called premodern societies throughout the globe. Bücher examined work songs of ancient societies in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East and in relation to the work performed, such as milling, digging, lifting, carrying, scrubbing, and so forth. Despite his ethnographic efforts,



Bücher was unable to conclude a singular musical rhythm that could have dominated relations between song and labour. Yet, he nevertheless observed an 'original unity' in which 'labor, play, and art blended into each other' to establish 'rhythm as an economic principle of development.'³

According to Bücher, this unity was possible to the extent that in song, the worker did not perceive the commodity-form produced by their labour as alien to his or her expectations of life. For the economist, song was a relational language that allowed rhythm to stand as an emancipatory alternative against the law-like authority of clock-time. In modern management theory, however, his study supported a view of rhythm said to taxonomise time. At this time, chronophotographic investigations of labour processes inaugurated an international science of work. Frank B. and Lilian M. Gilbreth's time and motion studies, for instance, used chronophotography and cinematography to closely analyse work processes in order to determine optimal task management while reducing externalities to a minimum.

While conventional views of time describe it as forward-moving, one-dimensional, universal and made up of spatial successions, musical time shows us how it is made up of tempos, rhythms and syncopations that ward off, suspend, accelerate and re-organise our perception. I suggest that workers' songs alongside other evolutionary tempos might help us reframe our socio-political chronologies. Indeed, raftsmen's songs strengthened working class solidarity and more-than-human kinships through sound and ritual. Sang to the metre of synchronised axes cutting into the wood and at the tempo of deforestation, these songs tell us about enmeshed dramaturgies of time.

Rhythm's inherent capability to facilitate a shuttling across temporality and in delays, repetitions, glitches and overlays urges us to re-engage with raftsmen's songs and their productive rhythms as tools for interrogating the foundations of modernity and capitalist development. For Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung,

'Sound is considered as a testament of and survival device for workers, one that is

imbued with necessity, hope, and love, as it exists as the noise of tools and machines, as a vibration of exhausted bodies, as chants of protest, as laments and elegies of loss and pain. (...) These range from alleviating the pain of working under extreme conditions such as plantations, waste dumps, or 3 miles down the earth in the mines, as Gil Scott-Heron points out. Songs help to increase and survive the requests of high productivity by keeping with the rhythm of the work, or reducing the sentiment of boredom like it would be the case while sowing, picking cotton, mowing the lawn or cooking.'⁴

As Ndikung points out, the sonic opens up the effects of practices that divide subjects from objects, exposes the routes of racial capitalism and it renders hearable modernity's organisation of labour-time. In my research around what I term the 'sonic continuum', I look at how non-linear and syncretic sonic histories manifest our understanding of time and, by extension, our experience of the world, as constantly seized by the language that describes it. In an effort to de-essentialise

the ear and denaturalise the historical construction of time as a category of modern Western knowledge-making, I try to grapple with how time controls representation and what consequences this might have for the field of visual cultures.

Thinking through sound, silence and speech, whose voices are heard, who listens, and by what means, visual artists have explored the sonic as the articulation of tempos and cycles of time. By assembling multiple, overlapping timeframes, artworks and installations such as *Currents* propose rhythm as a relational language, which might inspire a sense of co-belonging between humans (historically recent and distant), non-humans (large and microscopic), and environments (near and far). In *Currents*, the sonic movement away from representation into expression serves as the stage for a poetics of temporal disjuncture revealed in mechanical motions of repetition and staged as tempo and text.

Temporal Disjuncture

The role of sound and phonic substance in *Currents* orients us towards an ethics of listening that enables us to recognise not only their shared forms of being and belonging with one another, but also with the river and the forest as they relate to gender, ecology and life under capitalism. *Currents* enmeshes the day-to-day struggles of raftsmen and their life-long and oftentimes generational connection with the surrounding watery and vegetal elements, with the accelerated tempo of economic development, the slow violence of deforestation and the longer scale of environmental change. By creating temporal complications in a rhythmic episode that disturbs the linear time of capitalist production, the installation puts forth renewed kinships and a longer tempo of auditory awareness.

Movement, circularity and repetition are the rhythmic aesthetics that Lapelytè and Petraitis' monumental installation tuned into, offering us a take on the expressive dynamics of listening across auditory registers of human and non-human solidarity across capitalist development. Inasmuch as deforestation and extraction are expressed in the law-like meter of clock-time, the raftsmen's songs also sound out other possible connections between human, river and forest. At this temporal disjuncture, Lapelytè and Petraitis' collaboration allows us to listen to the movement of forests alongside the

tempi of rivers and the currents of economic development, conjoining our senses with the unsound and the silenced to imagine new solidarities, aural alliances and forms of attunement.

Endnotes

- 1 See, for example, Michael Marder, *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*, New York, 2013; Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder, *Through Vegetal Being*, New York, 2016; and Emanuele Coccia, *The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture*, Cambridge, 2018.
- 2 Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, Chicago, 2010 [1934], p. 13.
- 3 Karl Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, Leipzig, 1909 (1896), p. 413.
- 4 Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, 'Force Times Distance: On Labour and Its Sonic Ecologies', *Sonsbeek 20–24 no.1*, June 2020. <https://www.sonsbeek20-24.org/en/editorial-room/issue-one/force-times-distance-labour-and-its-sonic-ecologies/>, accessed 23 June 2021

Photo by Ansis Starks

