ARTFORUM

SEPTEMBER 2022 INTERNATIONAL

60TH ANNIVERSARY
LOVE'S WORK

HAL FOSTER
ON ANTINOMIES

DAVID JOSELIT
ON DOCUMENTA & VENICE

HUEY COPELAND
AND JANET DEES

JOHANNA FATEMAN
ON BARBARA KRUGER

BRUCE HAINLEY AND
WAYNE KOESTENBAUM
ON GUILLAUME DUSTAN

ELIZABETH SCHAMBELAN
ON CRITICISM

GRAHAM BADER
ON PORTRAITURE & AI

PROJECT: RACHEL ROSE

OLAMIJU FAJEMISIN
ON ARTHUR JAFA

ROSALIND E. KRAUSS
RALPH LEMON
TUAN ANDREW NGUYEN
AMY TAUBIN
DAVID RIMANELLI
PRECIOUS OKOYOMON
RACHEL KUSHNER
WOLFGANG TILLMANS
YVONNE RAINER
EMMELYN BUTTERFIELD-ROSEN
ADRIAN PIPER
JOAN JONAS
ANICKA YI
MARTINE GUTIERREZ
RYAN PONDER McNAMARA
GARY INDIANA
SARAH NICOLE PRICKETT

thirty artists and collectives from Maine, Canada's maritime provinces, Greenland, Scandinavia, and the indigenous nations throughout. The show's title, "Down North," linguistically reoriented the Arctic Circle, usually thought of as being geographically "up" on the map, reflecting a curatorial conceit more commonly applied to the Southern Hemisphere in recent years.

A preponderance of the artists here addressed the climate crisis and the relationship between humans and nature, often with overlapping concerns regarding the colonization of indigenous peoples and their land. Many of these documentary-style offerings were both aesthetically and conceptually appealing, including Mattias Olofsson's sparklingly detailed photographs of Swedes in front of their rural village homes, and Katarina Pirak Sikku's delicate watercolor cartographies—drawings that record the histories of her tribe, the Finno-Ugric-speaking Sámi. Other works were more straightforwardly didactic. For example, Finnish artist Hans Rosenström's 2019 video titled *Folgefonna*, after the rapidly melting Norwegian glacier, showed a glacial fragment dissolving in his hand.

Jessie Kleemann, *Arkhticós Doloros* (The Arctic in Pain), 2019, video projection, color, sound, 12 minutes.

Yet a handful of artists—particularly those working in video and performance—pushed the exhibition's thematics into stranger and more compelling territory. In Greenlander Jessie Kleemann's performance *Arkhticós Doloros* (The Arctic in Pain), 2019, re-presented via single-channel video, the artist staged a series of actions—wrapping herself with a tarp, binding her face with a rope, rubbing her hair in meltwater—on the remote Sermeq Kujalleq glacier. A powerful wind whips through the scene, overwhelming the mics and shaking the cameras; the work also captures the massive crew the artist needed to reach the glacier. At the end of the piece, we see the artist packing up her props and boarding a helicopter to return home. Kleemann's performance, simultaneously ritualistic, improvisational, doleful, and absurdist, is a sharp contrast to the brutal conditions of the location, and offers little in the way of solace or catharsis.

Markedly different in tone was D'Arcy Wilson's very funny video *#1 Fan (Long Run)*, 2018–19. Recorded with a drone, the work shows Wilson struggling to run along a picturesque oceanside cliff in western Newfoundland, dressed in pastel athleisure and waving, at different moments, a white flag, a pair of yellow cheerleader pom-poms, and a banner that reads LUV U 4 EVR, possibly addressing the viewer, the landscape, or simply no one at all.

Elsewhere were modest selections of contemplative, materials-focused artworks, which offered moments of respite in this dense exhibition. Two large-scale wall hangings by weaver Ann Cathrin November Høibo conveyed a sense of place and cultural history through the artist's evocative use of color, traditional craftwork, and abstraction. The pieces are also an homage to the Norwegian sheep whose wool the artist used to create the works. Nearby, two somber paintings by Lewiston, Maine–based Reggie Burrows Hodges, *Bathers and the Cleansed* and *Bathers and the Cleansed: Pearl*, both 2021, depicted solitary Black women bathers, the figures and backgrounds rendered in the same matte, velvety black.

Selections from Joan Jonas's ongoing multimedia project *Moving Off the Land*, 2019–, were installed in a different part of the museum. A video documented a series of live performances by Jonas and her collaborators, which took place in front of projections of underwater footage (some of which featured the artist swimming) while they read excerpts from *Moby-Dick* and other maritime-themed texts. At one point we saw Jonas making ink drawings on a beach. The images echoed drawings of fish both overlaid onto the projected imagery within the video and displayed nearby in the gallery. Yet the physical distance between Jonas's playfully Conceptualist installation and the rest of the exhibition felt like a missed curatorial opportunity. A more thorough integration of this well-known figure's piece with the contributions of other artists here—who might not be all that well-known to American audiences—could have spurred a richer dialogue regarding shared histories, approaches, and lexicons. Nevertheless, the exhibition provided a valuable snapshot of artistic production in a region more frequently discussed in abstract terms.

—Jared Quinton

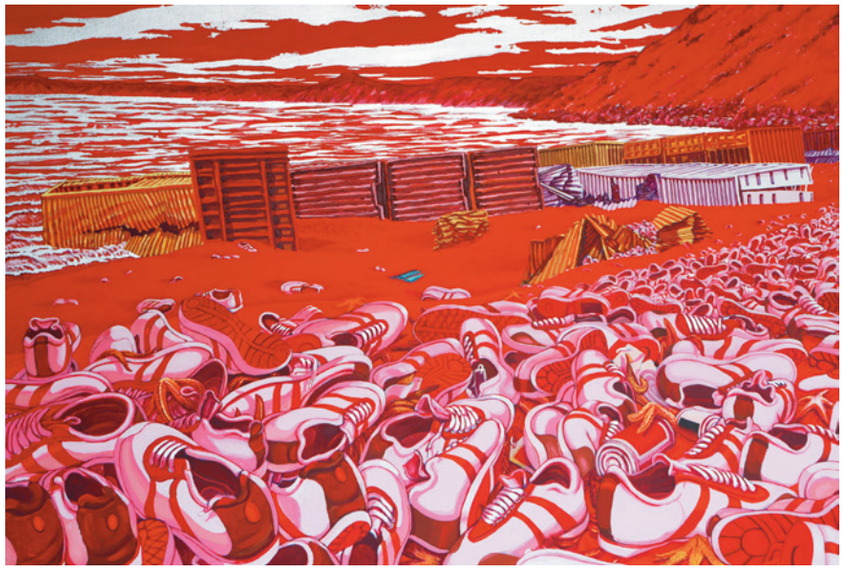
RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Dewey Crumpler

RICHMOND ART CENTER

Dewey Crumpler has long been preoccupied with the ways in which objects can be sites of exploration for what it means to be African American. One day in the mid-1990s, while out on his daily walk, he was transfixed by a tower of colorful steel shipping containers stacked at the Port of Oakland in California. To him, the looming rectangular structures were mysterious and foreboding. He saw them as monumental metaphors of the geopolitical power that moved goods across space and time, possessing the history of commerce and oppression in their

Dewey Crumpler, *Untitled 2*, 2018, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 60 × 74".



hidden cavernous interiors. Compelled by a fascination with this form and its shadow, he began to sketch and paint the crates daily. "Dewey Crumpler: Crossings," his exhibition here, showcased 122 of these prophetic images, which he began making roughly twenty-five years before the collapse of the shipping industry brought on by the pandemic. Vibrant dreamscapes were weighted with the gravitas of their subject matter: mass migration, globalization, and the tangled yoke of capitalism within the Black diaspora.

When Crumpler started as a young artist in San Francisco in the 1960s, he couldn't find any art in the museums that portrayed Black life. As a result, he sought inspiration from an eclectic array of sources, among them European art, coffee-table books on African American art and culture, the work of social-realist muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros (which he got to see in person during a trip to Mexico), and the improvisational sounds of jazz greats including John Coltrane and Miles Davis. By establishing a practice that focused on a specific object for an extended period, Crumpler was able to ground the panoply of influences he brought to each body of work.

The artist has said that he is drawn to an object because of its capacity to create a shadow, an element that is continuously affected by light and time—i.e., the thing and its shape-shifting companion serve as a jumping-off point. After a trip to Amsterdam in the early 1990s, he created a series of tulip paintings and dioramas that investigated the power of beauty, trade, Blackness, and genetic manipulation. A few years later, he used his son's discarded hoodie as a subject for a number of cartoonish caricatures and videos, adapting it as a metaphor that delved into Black Futurism and cultural narratives of marginality. Like the tulips and hoodies, the container paintings are conduits for unraveling patterns of empires and capital.

In Crumpler's renderings, each vessel is a locus of awe, wonder, and terror. Ranging in size from small sketches to large-scale paintings executed in saturated acrylic hues, the works depict wrecked cargo ships overflowing with the colorful bounty of plunder and trade. In a pen-and-ink sketch, *Untitled (Crash)*, 2014, a cascade of crates topples, domino style, off a dock. In *Collapse*, 2017, more than forty containers sink into a raging turquoise sea. Shimmering gold leaf surrounds them, a nod to the practice (and utility) of employing glitz as a distraction from the darkness that is too often concealed within the politics of trade negotiations. Crumpler's receptacles are vehicles that not only transport actual goods, but also represent the positive spread of art, culture, and religion wrought, ironically enough, by capitalism. In *Untitled 2*, 2018, marooned and shattered boxes pour forth their contents—including a phalanx of shell-pink tennis shoes washed up onto a poppy-red shore, calling to mind a herd of sea creatures, bloodied and dead. In *Green Bananas*, 2017, a beached cargo carrier offers up a giant spill of the titular fruits. Yet hidden among them is Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917. Crumpler has painted the urinal before; its rounded shape recalls the form of a hoodie. Yet here the placement of the porcelain toilet protruding from a pile of green banana skins represents both an homage to one of avant-garde art's most legendary innovations—the readymade—and a comment on transcultural diffusion.

Similar to a container, a painting is a vehicle that delivers information as it forges new relationships—Crumpler's "vessels" do this while encapsulating codependent histories of destruction and creation. In *Bright Moments* and *Bitches Brewing in Space*, both 2020, the stacked rectangles have been reduced to their most elementary forms: steel bands. Here, the artist's grids look more like jail bars than like Mondrian's pure abstract compositions, to which they also allude. Yet, in these more recent works, shadows dance in syncopated rhythms across the surface, reminding us that art, like commerce, has the power to alter the world.

—*Gabrielle Selz*

SAN FRANCISCO

David Huffman

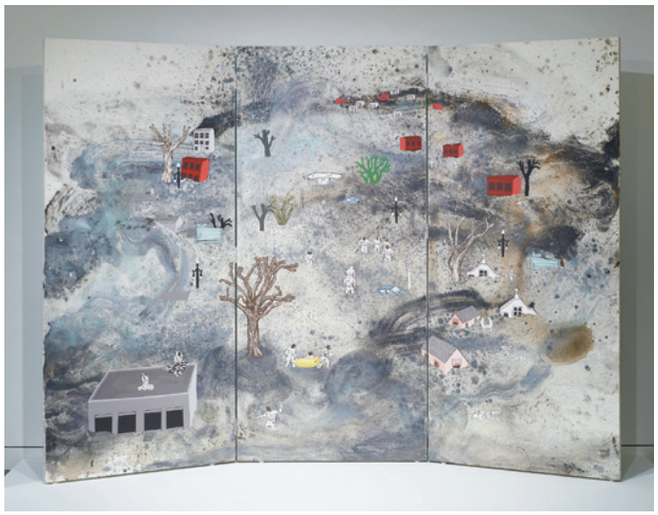
MUSEUM OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

"Terra Incognita" is the first museum show to focus on painter David Huffman's deeply engaging "Traumanaut" works: a meditative action series—if such a thing were possible—that he began in the early 1990s. This extended walkabout through the artist's Afrofuturist-inflected narratives features Black men in NASA-style space suits encountering a variety of landscapes and situations. Even Huffman himself makes an appearance in a video, wearing a replica suit and gently hugging trees.

Born in 1963 and raised in Berkeley, California, Huffman grew up attending Black Panther rallies while simultaneously witnessing the apex of the American space program via the historic 1969 moon landing. Later, as a young artist, he found himself considering the "happy darky" imagery of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: a beaming Aunt Jemima, for example, or the tooth-baring grins worn by blackface figures in minstrel shows. He began making works in a range of media—painting, prints, even ceramics—investigating what this "traumasmile" (to borrow the artist's term) really meant. For him, this grimace was not an expression of happiness or conciliation, but rather a survival strategy adopted in response to white hostility and racism.

Huffman's explorations have a context within the larger body of work by Black artists who have foregrounded the existence of such imagery in American culture. Landmarks range from Kara Walker's monumental sugar sphinx (*A Subtlety*, 2014) and Betye Saar's Aunt Jemima sculptures, to Robert Colescott's code-switching send-ups of canonical Western artworks and Ellen Gallagher's abstracted grids of goggle eyes and smiling lips borrowed from images of minstrelsy. But the NASA astronauts were still on Huffman's mind, as they represented an escape from the gravitational pull of racism and the possibility of traveling to new worlds. The artist's figures quickly evolved, from the *Astro Boy*–esque aesthetics of *TraumaEve*, 1999, a ceramic sculpture with cylindrical limbs and a mesmerizing polka-dotted head wrap, to the neatly limned and slightly more realistic depictions of men in space suits he created during the following decade—via paintings, prints, and drawings—which make up the majority of the show here.

Often, Huffman's Traumanauts seem to be intervening in one grim situation or another. In a panoramic three-panel screen, they slog through Hurricane Katrina's hellish floodwaters, trying to save each other. Sometimes, they are fighting in mysterious wars or traveling



David Huffman, *Katrina, Katrina, Girl You're on My Mind*, 2006, mixed media on panel, 80 × 108".