

**Senior Editor**  
Grahame Weinbren

**Editors**  
Josh Guilford  
Rachel Stevens  
Kenneth White

**Picture Editor**  
Angela Ferraiolo

**Design**  
Rachel Stevens

**Additional Design**  
Lara Ellenberg

**Cover**  
FRONT Arthur Jafa, *Air Above Mountains, Unknown Pleasures* (May 4 – June 10, 2018) at Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, installation view.  
BACK Pat O'Neill, *Self Portrait*. Frame enlargement from *Water and Power* (1989), 35mm film.

**Title Page**  
Christopher Harris, *still/here* (2001), frame enlargement. Courtesy the artist.

**Printing**  
Benchmark Printing, New York.

**Millennium Film Journal**, issued twice a year in the Spring and the Fall, is dedicated to providing an international forum for discussion and debate of and around artists' cinema. Filmmakers, videomakers, those who use other technologies of image production, and all parties interested in advanced or regressive cinema are encouraged to submit articles, reviews, manifestoes, schemas, and proposals. Manuscripts should be sent to: The Editors, Millennium Film Journal, 119 West 22nd Street, 3rd Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011 or may be submitted electronically to [mfj@mfj-online.org](mailto:mfj@mfj-online.org).

**ADVERTISING**  
Please contact [advertising@mfj-online.org](mailto:advertising@mfj-online.org).

**SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**

**Individual** 1 year: \$27 \*Plus shipping.

**Institution** 1 year: US \$54 / Canada \$63  
Outside N. America \$81 \*Includes shipping.

Subscriptions and back issues are available through the MFJ website, [www.mfj-online.org](http://www.mfj-online.org).

Published by the Millennium Film Workshop, Inc.

Email: [mfj@mfj-online.org](mailto:mfj@mfj-online.org)  
Web: [www.mfj-online.org](http://www.mfj-online.org)

Copyright © 2019 by Millennium Film Workshop, Inc.  
ISSN 1064-5586

Distributed in the U.S.A. by PDG, Inc.  
and internationally by Central Books.



**Development and Editorial Associates**  
Vincent Warne  
Andrew St. Maurice

**Millennium Film Workshop Board of Trustees**  
Joey Huertas, Executive Director  
Paul Echeverria  
Roberta Friedman  
Steven Siegel

No. **69** | **SPRING 2019**

# DEEP CUTS



7 Introduction  
Josh Guilford

## REVIEWS

8 Jodie Mack's *The Grand Bizarre*  
Vincent Warne

12 Film Nights on the Venice Lido: The Space  
Between Painting, Film, and the Digital  
Vera Dika

25 Pat O'Neill, *The Decay of Fiction*  
Jennifer Peterson

28 Memories Silenced, Unspool:  
Anocha Suwichakornpong's  
*By The Time it Gets Dark*  
JinJin Xu

31 *The Image You Missed* and  
*Empty Metal* at RIDM  
Rachel Stevens

36 Tony Oursler *Tear of the Cloud*  
Annie Dell'Aria

41 *Jack Smith: Art Crust of Spiritual Oasis*  
Josh Lubin-Levy

46 Marianna Simnett at the New Museum  
Lucea Spinelli

50 Magic Lantern Film Festival  
Antonio Pezzuto

55 The Necessary Image:  
On the 64th Flaherty Seminar  
Teresa Castro

## STUDIO VISIT

16 Pat O'Neill Studio Visit  
Grahame Weinbren

## IN CONVERSATION

76 Cauleen Smith and Christopher Harris  
at the 2018 Flaherty Seminar

## ARTICLES

74 King's Speech:  
On Arthur Jafa's *akingdoncomethas*  
Soyoung Yoon

84 The Ecological Cut  
Ryan Conrath

96 Books Received

## MEMORIES SILENCED, UNSPPOOL

Anocha Suwichakornpong's *By the Time it Gets Dark*

Anocha Suwichakornpong's 2016 feature *By the Time it Gets Dark* begins with seemingly innocuous mourning—Ann, a filmmaker, holds up joss sticks, leading her crew to prayer. Shots and figures linger; the camera holds an illusory stillness mimicking the stasis of photography. The assistant director behind Ann holds up her camera, and suddenly, we shift to the cusp of violence—armed soldiers pacing amongst half-clothed students facedown on the ground. “Hands down in the front row,” the assistant director shouts. The camera pulls back, revealing a staged photoshoot of the 1976 Thammasat University massacre. Black and white photos from the shoot are centered in the frame—stillness no longer illusory—signaling that it is not merely reenactment, but photography itself that is at stake.

These photographs alert us to the particular violence occupied by photography during the Thammasat massacre—an event that is the haunting pulse beneath Suwichakornpong's film. In 1973, student-led demonstrations across Thailand ousted the

military regime of General Thanom Kittikachorn, leading to three years of democracy until the exiled regime returned. Military propaganda labeled students peacefully protesting Thanom's return enemies of “Nation, Religion, Monarchy,” and on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1976, the press published a photo of a Thammasat student play reenacting the death of two activists hanged for protesting Thanom several days earlier, which the press framed as a mock-hanging of the Crown Prince (many believe the photograph was doctored to support this accusation). In response to the report, the military instigated a massacre of the students on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1976. The camera and the assumed authenticity of the photograph thus participated, violently, in the making of this historical trauma.

The photographs that document the actual Thammasat massacre reveal scenes of shocking public antipathy and violence toward the students. One famous photo shows a man beating the body of a hanged student with a chair as the crowd looks

on in shock, terror, glee. This photo encapsulates the event's unspeakable violence in a society that still euphonizes and silences the massacre as “the 6 October Event.” It also bears a haunting resemblance to the original catalyst—the doctored photograph of the staged hanging. Staging and actuality blur in the massacre, exposing the camera's role as creator of both event and memory.

A deep awareness of this blurring drives *By the Time it Gets Dark* to interweave a multitude of stories and characters with varying fidelities to the 1976 trauma. More than forty years later, the title illuminates a future dependent upon the past—a moment prior to, yet cognizant of, an impending darkness. Most of the film takes place in daylight, patiently observing mundane acts: people in the midst of transit and physical tasks; time slipping by relentlessly as bread grows moldy, or as tobacco leaves are harvested then dried. Daytime's mundanity imbues the few night scenes with significance. When the power goes out, a second Ann—also a director—confesses her reason for

interviewing Taew, a former student protester involved in the massacre: “Maybe because my life is quite mundane.” Taew's reply is piercing: “I'm not living history. I'm just a survivor.” Unlike the directors looking at the massacre through their lenses, and unlike the photos distilling the event's violence, Taew does not allow herself to become representation.

This conversation unravels Ann's anxious yet cognizant participation as a filmmaker in the violence of representation. Soon after, she sets up her camera to emotionally confide a childhood experience with telekinesis. “Maybe because I told my best friend at school,” she reasons, she could never do it again. “Since then, I've never talked about it.” Resonant of Taew's hesitancy to speak, the act of telling made the event untrue, committed it as a private, unspeakable trauma—yet, the camera, in Ann's hands, becomes her confidant. Framing the confession with intimacy, she looks into the camera and speaks because she trusts its silent, documenting role.



Anocha Suwichakornpong, *By the Time it Gets Dark* (2016), frame enlargement.  
All images courtesy the artist and Kim Stim.

As the film self-consciously unspools the filmmaking process alongside the artifice of representation, it fatefully comes to embody the very tensions it seeks to interrogate—the effort of historical memory necessitating ambivalence and trust in its own process. Filmmaking is demystified, exposing its ordinariness, staging, labor, and deceptions. The aforementioned actor, Peter, shares an intimate scene with an actress who he later greets politely in real life; colors and faces are manipulated in a color grading theater, where the first Ann finds out about Peter’s sudden death but must continue editing; a third Ann, played by a heavily made-up actor, reenacts Ann’s conversation with Taew. Characters and scenes are repeatedly subverted and revealed as staged, so we begin to anticipate the cuts, their unveiling.

The behind-the-scenes revelations bring us to Nong, who seamlessly morphs into various background service roles. She speaks only once, to assert her position regarding Ann’s interview: “You should give it to [Taew] to write... it’s about her life, so it’s her story.” While Nong reappears as different service workers, her singularity becomes the link between otherwise unrelated film industry characters—who, in contrast, appear interchangeable, even deceptive. At last, we find Nong a nun,

calmly gazing into a TV. Nong’s interconnected lives embody a Buddhist way of perception—hinted metaphorically through bubbles and hallucinogenic mushrooms—that continues in its mundanity, even as the film and its participants grapple with historical and personal traumas that fracture role from reality, past from present.

Back in the color-grading theater, we find out alongside Ann about Peter’s death, revealing the source of her mourning in the opening scene. Yet, the camera’s stillness had already observed her private grief—had followed her into the darkness to mourn with her. Her crew seems too young to have memory of the massacre, but precisely so they are tasked to remember—to mourn those who did not share their lives—in a Thailand that took twenty years to publically cremate its victims, and where the massacre remains, in the words of Thammasat survivor Thongchai Winichakul, “unforgettable, unrememberable,” even as Thailand’s political climate resembles that of 1976, now more than ever.

JINJIN XU

Anocha Suwichakornpong, *By the Time it Gets Dark* (2016), frame enlargement.

