

15th Baltic Triennial Review: Antitheme

Jennifer Teets Reviews 28 November 2024 ArtReview



Andrius Arutiunian, *Armen*, 2023 (performance view). Photo: Kristien Daem. Courtesy Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius

The 2024 edition in Vilnius, *Same Day*, explores the relational lifespan of artworks

The first time I tried to experience Andrius Arutiunian's *Armen* (2023) I missed my ride. The three early-1990s Mercedes Benzes that convey participants (and drivers) through the artist-composer's 42-minute performance cruised past me from the dingy sculpture-yard-turned-temporary-parking-lot of Vilnius's Contemporary Art Centre (CAC). I was luckier later, at sunset. Arutiunian's piece was among a series of performances organised by curatorial team Tom Engels and Maya Tounta to mark the opening of the 15th Baltic Triennial, *Same Day*. Timed to match the two sides of a cassette tape that plays during the journey, the work entailed a petrol-infused *dérive* across the city while listening to a mix of diasporic Armenian pop, disco and chanson trumpeting from the ageing taxi's sound system. The sensation was mind altering, and in retrospect the ride summarised my experience of the 50-artist show – a moody, winsome, dizzying spin.

Same Day is an antitheme exhibition indebted to the legacy of experimental practices in the Baltics that functions as a call to experience aliveness and 'the everyday'. At a press conference last year, Engels and Tounta described the show as one attuned to the "sensitising capacities of poetic experience in its material, gestural and written forms". On the ground, this approach requires some unpacking. Unlike previous editions, this international and intergenerational exhibition is held exclusively at the CAC, where no scenography or labels are offered, only a guidebook and floorplan, but this minimalist approach works in the curators' favour. Artworks punctuate the space in discreet albeit lively ways, drawing visitors towards intersections of private life and dynamic motion. After all, poetry is a praxis.



Same Day, 2024 (installation view, featuring an installation by Jason Dodge). Photo: Kristien Daem. Courtesy Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius

Take the visual rhythms that dot the main hall, including Kitty Kraus's *Untitled* (2024), a menacing, spinning trolley handle on a motor that hangs at eye level, the handle stolen from Lithuania's largest retail chain, Maxima; Kazimierz Bendkowski's *Centre* (1973), a film that