



3OHA

PHOTOGRAPHS CLAYTON VOMERO,

AUGUST MANUSH IN CONVERSATION
WITH CAIRO CLARKE

Can the past be divided from the present? Do physical and digital spaces exist separately? Could we have gotten to this point without the point before it? Is the point before it one point or many? We have come to a state of such deep confusion, a sense of global paranoia; many feel what they know is being taken from beneath their feet and the only way to hold onto it is to firmly tighten their grip and back further and further away from one another. It is as if time travel really does exist, and that humans really can de-evolve. The world is being pushed further and further apart into polarising positions. We perpetuate ideas where freedom exists and where it doesn't, platforms where you can express it and nation states where you cannot. Them and us, reality, fantasy, real, fake, image, icon.

There is however, also the feeling that everything is a lot more kaleidoscopic and blurred. Rather than dividing reality into past, present, online, offline, how instead do the essences of all inform one another? Inform our actions, thoughts, relationships to history, trauma and in turn our constant re-negotiation of the self.

Clayton Vomero's 3OHA which premiered at CPH:DOX this year explores this more succinctly. A complex, thought-provoking film, 3OHA offers a critique of consumer culture and the manner in which that culture repeats and insinuates itself into our collective memories of historical events. Examining the margin between reality and spectacle, the film in particular dissects the significations and symbolism of culture and media and how it constructs an understanding of shared existence.

3OHA is comprised of two parts, beginning with a fragmentary, dream-like account of the Soviet Union's dissolution in the early 1990s. Using archive footage and interviews with notable cultural commentators and artists, such as Artemy Troitsky and Igor Shelinsky, as well as rap artist Husky, Vomero documents the early adopters of Western consumerist culture. The second part of the film seeks to examine the world of their 'children'—the inheritors of this legacy.

One of the children of this legacy is August Manush. August embodies freedom of movement in the widest sense, through the internet, the body, personality, and memory; much in the way that two years prior Vomero captured this exploration and agency of existence in Russia first hand. When interviewed here August eloquently calls out the bizarre nature of being asked to identify as one thing or the other, how it stagnates ones ability to think of themselves beyond the binary, and celebrate existence in its many forms. Now with a physical distance between the two, (Clayton in London and August in Vladimir, Russia) the internet becomes a mode in which their relationship continues. Constantly in flux, through lightness and with humour, August performs the self through his own creative economy and therefore creates his own economy through the agency of his ever evolving self.



How would you describe yourself as a person?

August: How would I describe myself as a person? Hmm ... I will tell you one thing now, tomorrow it will be another thing, it was another thing a month ago, and something else a year and a half ago. Any answer will not be true, because you will know it at a specific time, and by that point the “personality” may already have changed.

I do not know who I am. Let's think together. How do you think you can describe “yourself” when you have nothing to cling on to that makes it true and which can be considered the core of “myself”. I am on the path to disintegration and expansion, where for sure even the place for the “I” in the usual sense of this word will not remain, and all these questions narrow my space to merely an image or a picture.

A person is not a centre around which to describe something. You are a constantly changing structure and illusion at the same time, depending on your attitude to the world, to yourself, people, God/the universe/creative power/source ... Therefore I cannot pick any specific descriptions for the ephemeral presentation of myself and I don't actually want to.

In the meantime, let's all be real human beings. Together we will remember what it is - to really be human being, to remember what extends beyond this. The question confused me at first so I cannot answer it as you would expect it and I don't want to confuse you or myself even more. But the question gave me a ground for interesting reflections which I thank you for. Hugs.

How would you describe yourself as a person online?

Well, this is again a question about personality. Of course, this is a certain structure, different from the structure that I use for communicating with people. But this is nothing supernatural or serious, it's just a game. This is a game through which I can share with people joy, ease, my sense of beauty. Sometimes I can share my deep personal experiences of life, but more often it's spontaneity and joy. Although the experiences I mentioned before are also presented with ease and irony, I think this is my gift - to communicate with people in this way. Although, who said that joy and lightness are not a deep experience? It sooo is!

When I experience a state of inspiration, I strive to create something in a form of visual art - sometimes I leave it for myself in order to fully experience and remember the state, so that later it can be called upon.

But it is important to know that I quickly disassociate from what I create and erase it as part of a non-existent past. Sometimes I don't recognize myself and think, ‘wow, was it really me?’ Or ‘how beautiful’ or ‘how rude’. As I progress, my attitude to what I create also changes, so sometimes it quickly loses its relevance to me.

Two years ago I had different values and beliefs about life, so everything I did also had a different quality and meaning. I generally attached great importance to this then, and it was so necessary and useful for me during that period. But the overall idea has remained: self-expression. Only the quality and message behind it has been transformed. Together with the attitude towards the world, oneself, people...

I feel like an artist, author, creator, as we all do. I feel that we are all now creating the process of creation, being a part of it and the process itself. ;-): - *

How do you think other people would describe you?

A couple of years ago, it seemed to me that I was very concerned about what people thought of me and a huge amount of energy was spent on it. And keeping attention within the social networks and those values. Within the screen of the smartphone - sometimes you can miss the experience of life itself, remaining only with a digital memory in a form of a picture. But it was a certain stage and it was fun. I am learning to trust. Trust myself. I am trying to practice a holistic perception of myself, where descriptions of other people do not guide your life and your perception of yourself.

If you are confident in your value, you feel it. If you are self-sufficient, then you can really share something, and then you will have the same people around you and you will enjoy abundance and goodness together. This is just me thinking out loud ... Thank you for the question, it allowed me to plunge deeper in myself both mentally and verbally, and to shape some aspects of my vision as it is at the current moment.

By the way, I like to say “at the moment” — by stating that you deprive your intellect of the opportunity to catch on and create a long-term mental conviction. This is sort of a game.

Do you see the internet as an alternate reality?

I think such a question can only be asked by a man of the last century, where black-and-white televisions were just being created ... and everyone had to study history at school.

It seems obvious to me that the Internet is part of reality and not an alternative. It is the same part of reality as anything else. In the new century, space and time have changed their structure, now more dimensions and possibilities have become available. One thing is to treat it as a part of reality, another thing is to become obsessed with it. Although the main thing is that it is used with good intentions.

How important is your physical body in comparison to your digital body? Is one more sacred than the other?

Again you dissect reality, divide it into a physical body and a digital one, what is this about? I have my favourite body, a wonderful vessel. It is physical, like an avatar. “Digital Body” is from the category of Marvel fantasy in Hollywood, in my opinion. Do you have superheroes flying over the city who protect you from villains or aliens? How do you treat a superhero flying behind your window? What do you think is sacred? Generally a physical body or Tony Stark on the roof of the house? It's some kind of science fiction ...

So! In general, my body and my digital body are the same.

Is it possible to protect the performance of self-identity from being capitalised on?

One's personality and uniqueness, in my opinion, help one to gain greatness and prosperity.

Is performing IRL (in real life), online and in general a form of image production and if so who is it for?

Well yes, in a sense.. Communication, with the help of images and symbols comes before that information is encoded into words, does it not? You continue your essence and look for responses and echoes in others, who in turn continue their essence. You study and move on.

Can performance be a form of protection?

I think yes. I also think it might be a hidden cry for help. Or a form of art, of course, an opportunity to demonstrate your attitude. It all depends on the person and their motives - sometimes unconscious. I remember myself when I dyed my hair ... I loved looking extravagant and even weird. It seems to me I used to be very attention seeking and looked for external validation from like-minded people.

How do you feel when you become an image/video?

I do not become an image or video. Images or videos are continuations of me, I don't move my centre in the photo, I learned this a long time ago ;-) Although it used to be different before, yes. Of course, sometimes I review my videos or photos when I like them, as if I look at someone else. Someone who I like and who makes me happy.

But I say that over time it has lost it's relevance. It is just a visual form of mood, message, or something like that. A state of being.

Do you think travelling through the internet is a form of global travel?

No, not in the physical world. In virtual space, yes. Dense matter has its own laws, guys.

When you watch beautiful videos from the Hawaiian Islands or online broadcasting from the Gucci show - it does not count as a holistic experience, only psychological satisfaction. Therefore, I hope I will fly to Hawaii myself and will run barefoot on the beach and drink a smoothie enjoying the sun after shooting a Gucci campaign, a fashion film or just after shooting some cool movie. <3

What is home to you?

It's cool to remember God within yourself.

