

GLADSTONE GALLERY

“Andro Wekua,” *Artforum*, April 2013, p. 227.

ANDRO WEKUA

HE HAD A FACE LIKE AN ASH-COLORED MASK. I could hear his heavy breathing beneath it.

During warm, humid days he left the city and went to the swamp. He liked to use his foot to test the swamp. To this day, the memory of it takes his breath away. This was in March.

A white motorcycle stood by with its headlight on. Dressed in a white T-shirt and blue sneakers, he was in the swamp up to his waist. He said he wanted to try standing on the surface or to at least feel the bottom of the damn thing. But I can't really remember what he wanted. I waited, transfixed by his face. As I stared, I felt my hand sweating around a soda can.

In that city, everything was estranged. At fourteen, she was walking along the beach, going home from the hotel. The evening cooled: A gray tree was green, the silver sea light blue; the dry breeze felt humid. Even though it was red, the sunset appeared black-and-

white. There wasn't enough air in the streets. Shadows disappeared between buildings. When she came home she turned twelve, having never been fourteen.

Her legs were very thin and so was her face. When I met her, she had on black shorts and a light blue top. We were crossing a black asphalt bridge with handrails painted white. An often anxious, mud-colored river passed under us. It's been seventeen years since she was last there. During that time, the city lay empty and emptier: the sanatoriums, hotels, parks, beaches, and the sea; dark, wide streets with white facades, trees—big eucalyptus trees, palm trees—and humidity; a thirty-four-kilometer-long beach covered with wide cement tiles. On the hill opposite, some buildings were still visible among the vegetation. A window in her apartment had once opened to a wide balcony overlooking the city. But since the city was abandoned, everything has continued to grow, continued to change. □

ANDRO WEKUA IS AN ARTIST WHO LIVES AND WORKS IN BERLIN AND NEW YORK.

Andro Wekua, *Yet to be titled*, 2012, acrylic plaster, wood, steel, gypsum fiberboard, acrylic paint, 13 1/4 x 17 1/4 x 16 1/4".

