

1620

1774

1834

1859

1867

1921

1620
The first corners
come

1741
A wharf is to be built.
The Elder Thomas Faynce
can points a shaky finger

The Old Thomas sits in
a chair. The strong men
carry chair to the
shore.

First ForeFathers Day
Dec. 22 1769
Deacon Ephraim Spooner
points to Old Thomas's painting
finger

1774
Dec. 22 Forefather's Day
Wharf → town square

1884
Meeting House Square
(chipped off) →
Pilgrim
Hill
the shore

pre-1867
lower half hoisted
up placed to the side,
exposed, stolen, doorstop

1867
lower half doesn't
fit into display case,
trimmed and placed
under canopy

pre 1921
lifted by crane to
make way for new
portico. Crack rebreaks.
Rock waterproofed

1921
sculptor
Cyrus Dallin reassembly
parts

1989
Paul Chiquette

shore →
-20 or thirty yoke of
oxen
-jackscrews
-iron chains.
-strongest liberty men

Meeting House
Square

Two wheeled cart,
Plymouth Band
standish guards
half a dozen (6) youths
a model of the Mayflower

pin comes out of cart, the
bed of cart, cart tiring,
tilts, dropping rock
Rock splits into many
pieces

The men and oxen drop rocks,
splits in 2
"like a bagel"
"like a layer cake"

Rock party
- nothing changes,
rock continues to
be used as rock base

Each vein is a healed
crack, planes of
weaknesses (sap streaks),
rainwater penetrates,
winter freezer, wedged.

Biggest piece to
Pilgrim Hill
of lost pieces.

under wharf
(grocer)

TEAR DOWN
WHARF
FREE BOTTOM
ROCK

Trisha Baga: Plymouth Rock 2

For her first museum exhibition in the United States, Trisha Baga is presenting *Plymouth Rock 2*, a two-channel video installation in the Whitney's Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Lobby Gallery. The two video channels are projected on top of one another, with the primary video channel facing the viewer and the secondary channel facing the gallery and filling most of one wall, and the year, secondary video projecting from the opposite side of the room, ceiling, and floor. The secondary, larger projection is almost entirely composed of color fields that cycle through the color spectrum, only interrupted by carefully timed interluding scenes of water. The front projection, in contrast, is a wandering, collaged narrative that often frenetically, sometimes slowly, jumps from reference to reference, mixing found footage and original material. As the light travels from these two overlapping feeds, it falls on objects Baga has placed throughout the room: tentative sculptures composed from cheap, found materials and cast in plastic; a light projector, casting the resulting leached video and becoming decorated with the projector's dancing light.

Baga's multimedia installation-based practice evolved from an attempt at creating a sitcom. *There's no "I" in Trisha* (2005-7). As the videographer, director, cast, and set decorator, she not only learned to be incredibly resourceful with the materials around her and to adapt her own persona into a variety of different needs, but also picked up valuable lessons about sculpture, objects, and their interaction with video. Since this earliest work, Baga has been drawing on her own instincts and precise sensibility to compose environments that combine all of these elements in a precarious yet ordered way, allowing video to spill onto sculpture, painting that and the viewer, implicating everything that comes into contact with her work.

Baga's first major piece, *Madonna y el Niño* (2009-11) is a single-channel video projection that examines the disparate narratives of Madonna, the "Queen of Pop," the Christian iconography of the Madonna and Child, and the El Niño weather pattern, named for the Christ child by sixteenth-century South American fishermen. She juxtaposed found footage of Madonna's 2006 Confessions concert tour, with, among other material, original

for each presentation," *Plymouth Rock 2* is a second version of an earlier work, *Plymouth Rock*, which was installed at the Vilna Gold Gallery in London in the spring of 2012. While it presents itself as a sequel, *Plymouth Rock 2* is more akin to a re-cut. Baga retained the video from the initial exhibition and reworked the sculptures and paintings to fit the architecture of the gallery, using materials available to her in New York, creating a new, more intimate work. The reference to the "second" part of the title is the reference to the "second" part of the title. The reference to the "second" part of the title is the reference to the "second" part of the title.

Baga's history of reimagining and redefining her projects, a result of her dogged desire to continually work and re-work material and subject matter, adapting it for each new exhibition or context until the problems being explored are satisfactorily resolved or exhausted.

Plymouth Rock 2 takes the history of the presumed founding site of the Pilgrims as its inspiration and narrative structure. The landing of the pilgrims on Plymouth Rock is a tale of two halves: the story of the Pilgrims actually first landed on the tip of Cape Cod, before moving closer inland, and the current site of the rock is a mere symbol for these events, rather than an actual denotation of a historical site. The rock's state as a kitschy tourist attraction is described by Baga as "the saddest story of an object, where it becomes a symbol, and then is moved from place to place through overly elaborate processes, broken in half and brought back together, chipped away, all of this to accommodate various presentation modes... Right now, they've built a gazebo around it to protect it from the rain, a risk predicted from the rain. It's my favorite, isn't it?"

This focused interest is emblematic of her artistic approach: Baga often begins with an image, story, or object that is synecdochical and then explores and mines its references methodically, beginning in a humorous vein but then giving way to a subtler, more nuanced commentary. While *Plymouth Rock* is the founding inspiration for this project, Baga's source material becomes alternately more and less directly related to the original narrative as the presentation progresses and themes are allowed to expand and contract with Baga on her illuminating tour of free associations.

In both of the *Plymouth Rock* works, Baga relies on sculptures she places in the space to interact with the projection rather than using her own body through performance. These sculptures, placed throughout the gallery, interrupt the video imagery and bring the virtual into the real space, and the real into the virtual. Moreover, by adding, removing, and changing elements—be they, as in the case of *Plymouth Rock 2*, entirely new paintings and sculptures or the live performances and additions of recordings of previous screenings and the images of Madonna and Child—Baga allows the viewer to see the work in a new way, to be fluid. The distinctions between each evolution, like the changes that the *Plymouth Rock* has acquired over time, themselves become the important record, outside of the materials of the work itself.

Like many young artists today, Baga is not troubled by formal distinctions between mediums; she moves fluidly between and successfully combines the often-disparate discipline of video, sculpture, painting, and performance. Further, she is less concerned with challenging the historical implications of each of these modes of working than she is focused on creating just uniquely combinatory works that speak to her own concerns and with a great deal of humor and whimsy. In one section of *Plymouth Rock*, as a black-clad man with a metal-detector hunts for treasure on a beach, a swath of paint separated from its canvas floats disembodied across the screen, gliding over a "real" canvas hung on the wall in actual space, while a boom box covered in faux-rock spray paint interrupts and blocks out the lower right corner of the video. Baga's freedom to select at will from among these

moder allows her to employ conventions and clichés of these various techniques to create a whole that, like the aesthetic of her videos themselves, oscillates between a seamless environment and a discordant collage.

In addition to the vocabulary of established artistic practices, Baga is comfortably fluent in the language of the internet. This is not a surprise given her age. What is surprising, however, is that she manages to utilize the frenzied, strangely juxtaposed, free-form "researching" that has become a defining characteristic of the internet in a way that strays far from being a commentary on the rampant distraction of our times. Instead, Baga uses the internet's style of rapid information dissemination and renting just as confidently as she incorporates the tropes of painting and sculpture into her work: the "Internet aesthetic" becomes just another method of presenting narratives delicately balanced between personal and universal. In working this way, she is not only tapping into a methodology popular with many young artists working today, but also drawing on the traditions started in the expanded cinema practices of the 1960s, the time she spent in her videos, as in her sculptures. Baga is recombining and remaking found footage—objects in the case of the sculptures—with her own video and audio recordings and creating a new product that retains many of the qualities of the original material.

One of the strongest devices that Baga utilizes consistently throughout her work is the exploration, expansion, and examination of metaphors, symbols, and mythologies. She chooses references that are malleable, with meanings that can be stretched and changed to serve a variety of situations, often playing with the notion of the "Internet aesthetic" as a metaphor for the way that we manipulate properties in one of these types of images and the one that appears most often in Baga's work. For her, water is an important narrative tool. In *Plymouth Rock 2*, Baga uses the water that the Pilgrims traversed to reach America as scenery, protagonist, and everything in between. It is just barely visible behind the Rock itself. It appears behind a man wandering on a beach hunting for lost treasures, and at one point, it even totally fills the frame, giving the viewer the sensation of bobbing along like a buoy. Much of the rest of Baga's source material in *Plymouth Rock 2* points to incredibly specific cultural references, each moving, like the water, from the personal to the universal. We find this playfully and satirically in a particular place and time in popular culture that will, for many viewers, rekindle personal associations as well. Water, on the other hand, is not only a very varied substance that takes on different states and uses in everyone's daily life, but also a powerful symbol, appearing in many different meanings: a fish out of water, in hot water, like oil and water, treading

water, water under the bridges, and so on.

Like the water that appears throughout her work in the *Plymouth Rock* series, Baga's water is a powerful, often humorous pun that, like the Rock itself, can be manipulated and forced to stand in for a variety of ideas. For example, when Baga first presented this work in London in 2011, the exhibition was called *Rock* and made up of three component works: *Plymouth Rock*, *Hard Rock*, and *Soft Rock*. In the titles alone, Baga managed to draw in references both serious and frivolous. With this nomenclature, she refers to a variety of types of American mythology and the heroes and imitators of popular music as well as the dead, pres and categories created in the 1960s, the time she spent in her videos, as in her sculptures. Baga deploys her skill at carefully riding the line between silly and poignant, managing to be both, rather than neither.

Baga's use of a specific image stands for the power that *Plymouth Rock 2* and each of her installations has over the viewer. She bridges the specific and universal in a sudden and surprising way. Each of her choices, both in her videos and sculptures, and across the combination of the two, is intensely personal. She has an affinity for sparkles and flashes of light, using disco balls, mirrors, glass, and prisms frequently. She trends towards cultural references from the 1960s, the time she spent in her videos, as in her sculptures. Baga deploys her skill at carefully riding the line between silly and poignant, managing to be both, rather than neither.

Baga's use of a specific image stands for the power that *Plymouth Rock 2* and each of her installations has over the viewer. She bridges the specific and universal in a sudden and surprising way. Each of her choices, both in her videos and sculptures, and across the combination of the two, is intensely personal. She has an affinity for sparkles and flashes of light, using disco balls, mirrors, glass, and prisms frequently. She trends towards cultural references from the 1960s, the time she spent in her videos, as in her sculptures. Baga deploys her skill at carefully riding the line between silly and poignant, managing to be both, rather than neither.

Trisha Baga: *Plymouth Rock 2* is organized by Whitney curatorial assistant Elisabeth Sherman.

All images courtesy Trisha Baga.

Text © 2012 Whitney Museum of American Art

A RELATION OR

of the beginning and proceedings
of the English Plantation settled at Plimoth in New
England by certaine English Adventurers both
Marchants and others.

With their difficult passage, their safe arrivall, their
counsell building of, and comfortable planting them-
selues in the now well defended Towne
of New Plimoth.

AS ALSO A RELATION OF FOVRE
seuerall discoveries since made by some of the
same English Planters there resident.

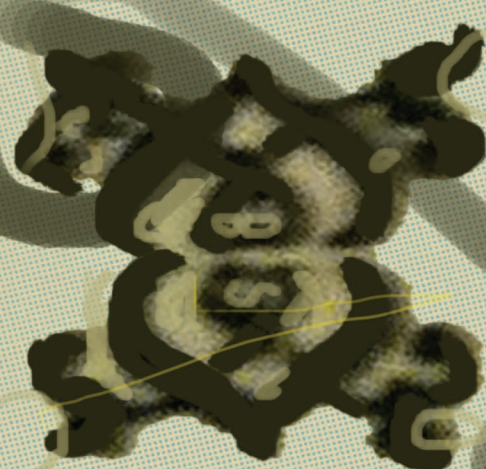
A Survey made of the habitation of the Indians great
King Powhatan & also their message, the offer and entertainment
of him.

Of the manner how some of them to the Kingdome of Newbet, to seeke
warre with the Indians in the woods: with such accidents as befell them
there.

Of the manner how some of them to the Kingdome of Narraganset, in defence of their
possessions against the Narraganset, and to revenge the
death of their Interpreter Tisquantum.

Of the manner how some of them to the Massachusetts, and their entertainment there.

With answer to all such objections as are any way made
against the lawfulness of English plantations
in those parts.



LONDON,

Printed by Iohn Bellamy, and are to be sold at his shop at the two
in Cornhill near the Royall Exchange, 1622.