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Interior cover image: Holly Coulis, *Peaches*, 2016, courtesy the artist and Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery.

EDITORS' LETTER

TITTERING IN THE HIRSCHHORN: This was how *apricota* was first conceived. In the winter of 2015, we visited the museum to tour Shana Lutker's exhibition "Le 'NEW' Monocle, Chapters 1–3," with the artist. As we stood in a room of her installations—stage sets of sorts, decked with forms that suggested props or players from several historic Surrealist fistfights—our conversation began to offer a certain jocular delight. Lutker sketched for us a world in which the assertion or defense of poetic principles could erupt in physical violence. At the time, that world seemed remote, as well as benignly outlandish. Its protagonists were as strident as Lutker's work was layered and oblique. Their excess of machismo thickened under her hands into a pantomime of open, ambiguous, and even decorative postures—a quality Lutker underscored with a palette that included one peachy-pink hue, somewhere between calamine lotion and canned salmon, that captured our attention.

apricota draws its name from this Benjamin Moore paint color, "Apricotta." We liked that the title could enact a chromatic bleed from brassy sunshine to fired earth to the red of revolution. Its seriousness did not need to be asserted, but could be embedded within a lively affection for the decorative, for kitsch, queerness, eccentricity, and otherness—in essence, the sphere we knew and inhabited, but one that lay largely outside the forums for art-historical scholarship. We envisioned *apricota* as an antidote to their cool remove, and we decided to devote our first issue to "fights," in the hopes that it might assemble new reflections on contestation within our field. *apricota* was intended to generate fresh models of academic art-historical polemic, stylistically and methodologically, just as Lutker had presented fresh forms of art-historical storytelling.

This was two years ago. Born of our labors in 2016–2017, our inaugural issue developed in a much different social and political climate. As we write this letter, white-supremacist demonstrators are clashing with anti-fascist protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, under the pretense of defending their patrimony. Across the country, massive counterprotests are squaring off against armed and militarized "Unite the Right" factions emboldened by a prevaricating president, while cities and college campuses are bracing for more violent confrontations this fall. And this is only in the United States. The world over, we are seeing fights about ideas move swiftly from the discursive to the physical, with alarming and occasionally lethal consequences.

In this climate, we want *apricota* to be no less humorous, unorthodox, poetic, and luxurious than we had initially planned. Not as an escape from these clashes, but as a slantwise analysis of their terms—terms that the material reality of fights can make appear immovable and inevitable. In his 1957 essay "The World of Wrestling," Roland Barthes draws a distinction between wrestling and boxing. Boxing, he explains, is a sport based on the demonstration of excellence, in which each match presents a coherent progression that concludes with a winner and a loser. Professional wrestling, by contrast, is a "sum of spectacles," in which each grandiloquent gesture serves only to reaffirm fixed positions of justice and defeat, and where truth, Barthes reminds us, is "no more a problem . . . than in

the theater." Barthes's distinction, however, no longer looks so clear. In the fights that have overtaken city streets this past year, spectacle has been endowed with the dramatic stakes of the genuine match, while the demonstration of excellence—whether through argumentation or moral expression—has been supplanted by a zealous rehearsal of historical positions that largely discredits or refuses the nuance of artists and intellectuals.

The practices and rituals that formerly held play apart from fight, and fight apart from war, no longer seem to obtain, even if these separations have always been precarious. *apricota* aims to provide glimpses into these intervals so that we might better understand their collapse today and more thoughtfully strategize for their reconfiguration tomorrow. This work requires both different content, directed at the interstices of our discipline, and a different style better suited to centering marginal positions. It also asks that we consider the publication itself as an arena for the fight. The contents that follow tussle over method and form. As a model for this skirmish, Shana Lutker has contributed our first artist insert. It reminds us that to read a journal is to cleave it in two, but that to cleave is also to adhere firmly: centering our divisions, a cleft on the apricot's cheek.

–Andrianna Campbell and Joanna Fiduccia, Coeditors

The Turkish idiom *"bundan iyisi Şam'da kayısı"* (literally, "the only thing better than this is apricot in Damascus") means "it doesn't get any better than this."

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INUIT ENCOUNTERS: THE GOING-NATIVE OF ROCKWELL KENT AND THE SHAMING OF LENI RIEFENSTAHL

MATTHEW ABRAMS

ON 21 JUNE 1932, Rockwell Kent, the American artist, memoirist, illustrator, cold-climate adventurer, and rabidly socialist political agitator, celebrated his fiftieth birthday. He did not, however, celebrate with his friends and family. Rather, Kent was in Igdlorssuit, which is a small seal-hunting village on an island off Greenland's western coast. Kent first visited Greenland in 1929, but he returned in the summer of 1931 for a one-year stay. And he lived in Igdlorssuit, on Illorsuit Island—a small spit of volcanic rock that stands above the Arctic Circle and bisects the mouth of the Uummannaq Fjord. Kent spent his time there painting landscapes, journaling, sketching, and integrating himself into the community. A trained carpenter and architect, Kent built his own house; sledded dogs, kayaked, and hunted with the men; adopted traditional clothes; and lived with his housekeeper, a local woman named Salamina, who became his paramour, amanuensis, and mistress. To fête the man whom, by Kent's account, the locals had wholeheartedly accepted, they arranged a dance on the site of their new town hall, which Kent was personally building but was then only a platform. And during the celebrations, a boat—visible from the plein-air dance floor—beached itself and several men approached. Among these men was Ernst Sorge, a German scientist, and Ernst Udet, a famous ace pilot from the First World War (and soon to become the second-in-command of Hitler's Luftwaffe).[1] Serendipitously, Kent spoke German, and he quickly learned what it was they wanted. They had come to the Uummannaq Fjord to make a movie, *S.O.S. Eisberg*, starring the famous Leni Riefenstahl, and they needed Igdlorssuit's sandy beach to moor their sea planes and serve as an advanced production camp (fig. 1).

The locals granted their request and then invited the crew to Kent's party, where they gladly celebrated their new American friend.[2] It was a happy day, but the cheer would not last. Kent especially grew to resent the Germans, although this should come as little surprise. The American artist-adventurer had labored to join one of the most remote settlements in the northern hemisphere, but his fever dream of "going native" could not endure the western industrial spectacle that accompanies a modern film crew. Kent began to lash out, especially at Riefenstahl. Riefenstahl, who was acting in the film, had begun an on-set affair with a crewmember, and Kent, quite simply, began to shame her. Both he and the Inuit began to call Riefenstahl by the Kalaallisut word *Kâk*, which means *the mattress*. Kent's shaming of her should not be overlooked. Indeed, this article's purpose is to demonstrate that there is a strange congruity between Kent's desire to go native, which involved numerous sexual encounters, and his seemingly countermanding desire to shame Riefenstahl, who, for all intents and purposes, was doing something very similar (having lots of sex). Indeed, we might even theorize that fetishizing indigeneity (of which going native is the supreme act) and shaming sexuality are two sides of the same coin, or that they have sometimes manifested thusly for Western, heteronormative artists. Usefully, Kent and Riefenstahl's Igdlorssuit encounter provides an ideal case study for mapping this relationship. And if we track Kent's time in Greenland, both before and after that fateful day, we can identify how these desires alternately consumed the artist, and how they broke along social and ethnic lines.

GOING NATIVE

By 1929 Kent was a both a famous artist and an established sailor-adventurer of Arctic climates, having made extended trips to Newfoundland and the Alaskan outback. And like many artist-adventurers before him, Kent became fascinated with the non-western communities that he encountered, especially the Inuit. Kent then aligned his fetishization of otherness with a pointed sexual fantasy, namely that Inuit women (much like their land) embodied a kind of purity, and that a liaison with them could purify him. But if one were to study Kent's many Greenland paintings, this attitude might not be obvious. Kent's primary subject was the land, and he labored to convey Greenland's magnitude. The works are sober, even austere; they are sublime requiems in the manner of Caspar David Friedrich. There is little that one could say is sexualized or salacious here. Additionally, Kent inserted into these landscapes his careful observations of daily Inuit life. The power and subtlety of a painting like *Greenland Winter* (fig. 2), for instance, helped solidify Kent as a major modernist landscape painter. Moreover, works like this remain valuable ethnographic recordings of interwar Kalaallisut culture.[3]

And in this way Kent was more like Bruegel than Friedrich; he always immersed people into a larger world, and he let their unheroic, mundane actions stand unvarnished. Paintings like *Greenland Winter* are then both requiems to the sublime and paeans to the quotidian. Consider what Kent showcases in *Greenland Winter*, which he painted before the shimmering, frozen fjord and the icebergs that it has uncannily immobilized: several sod huts, a few outdoor racks of cured meat, and three Inuit women cleaning and tending to children. In other words, Kent gives us a landscape painting and a tender, honest genre scene of Inuit domesticity. And while these women do bask in a piercing, arctic light, they perform their duties in earnest, oblivious to the shockingly beautiful vistas around them. To Kent's credit, and much like the more successful adventurers that had come before him, his paintings sensitively and fastidiously recorded a cultural otherness. The immersive character of *Greenland Winter* actually rhymes with Kent's own immersive relationship to the

Fig. 1. Set photograph from *S.O.S. Eisberg*, 1933. Leni Riefenstahl on kayaks. © 2017 Granger Historical Picture Archive. The Granger Collection. All rights reserved.

Igdlorssuit community. Consciously or not, Kent was practicing what was then a new strategy in American anthropology, pioneered by Malinowski and Boas, called participant observation. But even before the formalization of anthropology in the early twentieth-century, the American ethnologist Frank Hamilton Cushing had mastered this method. Cushing "went native" at the Zuñi Pueblo in southwestern New Mexico for five years in the early 1880s, eventually becoming an accepted member of that community; he then went on tour and became a celebrity. Given Kent's deep interest in adventure, otherness, and going native, he likely knew the work of Cushing, if not also Malinowski. But Kent's interests stretched beyond the pseudo-ethnographies that he produced. His deeper desire, which his writings make clear, was not to produce a scientific record but to go native as Cushing had: to immerse himself in otherness until he could speak the language, perform the customs, and, most importantly, engage with the women. A painting like *Tryst* (fig. 3) hints at this other, more impassioned desire.

Tryst shows a landscape like *Greenland Winter*, but it is a pendant, summer depiction. We see the towering coastline go blue and hazy in the distance; we also see a marshy, tundra-like meadow in the middle ground and a woman tucked into the foreground. She appears to be Inuit, wearing the local whale-skin boots. But *Tryst* also gives form to Kent's Arctic fantasy: antimodern solitude, indigenous women, and, to use the married man's term, a tryst. Unfortunately, Kent's trysts might have been little more than sexual assaults. Consider this brief record of his behavior:

Shortly after his arrival Kent acquired a *kifak*. *Kifak*, Kent explains in his first memoir, *Salamina*, "means neither wife nor concubine. Nor does it mean servant in that menial

sense that servant has to us. Employee is its honorable equivalent."[4] But in Kent's second memoir, *Greenland Journal*, where the artist published his diary entries, Kent shifts the definition. Now he describes a young woman named Salamina as his "housekeeper, cook, wife perhaps—in short, kifak."[5] This is a common occurrence. Kent was married to an American woman, Frances, during his first visit, and he published Salamina in 1935, four years before their divorce. Strangely, *Salamina* is about Kent's eponymous *kifak*, but it's dedicated to his actual wife, Frances. Sexual tension abounds in *Salamina*, but it never crescendos into sex. Thirty years later, however, Kent published the unsanitized version.

Kent had obtained an initial *kifak* but found her lacking. Locals suggested a woman named Salamina (fig. 4), who was widely praised for her beauty and skills, and Kent's quest to obtain her reads just like that—a sort of Arthurian legend starring a hero and a maiden. "Of all the women of North Greenland, it had been told to me," Kent begins, "the most faithful, noble, and most beautiful, most altogether captivating, was she named Salamina. Too much? Ah, no!"[6] And so, around August 21, Kent met Salamina (fig. 5) in a nearby town and procured her services. She and two of her three children returned to the island town Igdlorssuit and shared Kent's one-room house. Five days later, Kent forced himself on Salamina, but she repelled him:

> Salamina was lying as though asleep upon my blankets. So I went to her and lay down and put my arms around her and kissed her. And she held me warmly in her arms and returned my kisses. It was mostly great tenderness between us . . . But as we lay there a struggle began, and Salamina at the same time drew me toward her and repelled me. She was strong and fought both fiercely and as though she loved it. But at last I held her powerless. And that instant her struggles stopped and she began—so plaintively—to cry.[7]

Kent leaves the house for an hour, and when he returns the incident repeats itself:

> There on her bed, all dressed in white, sat Salamina; sat there as though waiting for me. I kissed her and she clung to me . . . But soon my caresses growing hotter met Salamina's resistance. She wants me to make love, I thought; I will. But then when I had, after a wild struggle, at last again overpowered her, then again Salamina, bitterly and reproachfully, began to cry. She left my bed. I tried to follow and come near her, but it was as though she hated me.[8]

Whether an accurate documenting of events, an old man's confabulation (these passages are from *Greenland Journal*), or a disturbing fantasy, Kent's narrative is chilling. No less shocking is Kent's behavior two days later, when he finally gets "to have his way":

> I had gone to bed and Salamina was out. Coming home, she undressed in the dark. I called her to me. She came under the covers and nestled close. She resisted my advances, yielding when I desisted. Then at last, against the mildest show of protest, I had my way. And Salamina revealed herself to be affectionately warm, taking an elemental satisfaction in being possessed by a man, but revealing not one quiver, note, or sign of passion. And now Salamina is all ardor. It would be ridiculous if it did not all appear so childlike on the part of S., and so charming.[9]

Sexual purity, femininity, and childlike naiveté—for Kent these characteristics marked the holy trinity of the fetishized, female Other. And it was not just Salamina that Kent pursued. Indeed, Kent used the word tryst in both memoirs to describe his near-successful or successful pursuits of various women. There is Anna, for instance, his first kifak, who Kent almost beds in the schoolhouse; there is Cornelia, whom Kent meets for casual sex in the local church, and then there is Pauline, with whom Kent shares a sleeping bag for six days at a remote outpost (after Kent had requested that his friend send him "rice, oatmeal,

Fig. 2. Rockwell Kent, *Greenland, Winter*, c.1933. Image courtesy of the Rockwell Kent Estate and Plattsburgh State Art Museum.

Fig. 3 Rockwell Kent, *Tryst*, c.1929. Image courtesy of the Rockwell Kent Estate and Plattsburgh State Art Museum.

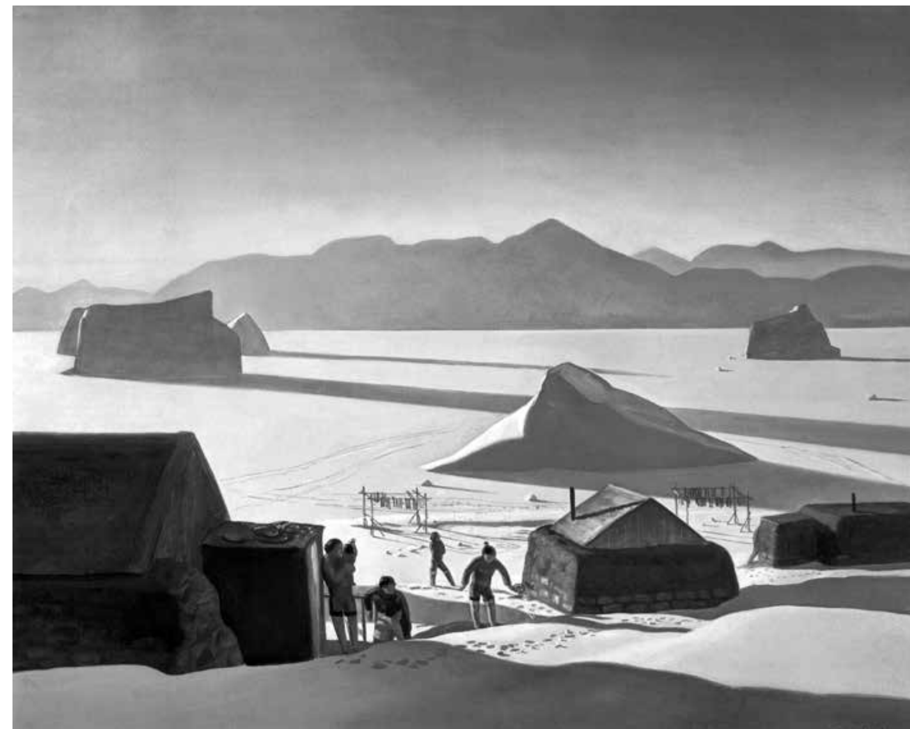

Fig. 4 Rockwell Kent, photograph of Salamina, c. 1935. Image courtesy of the Rockwell Kent Estate and Plattsburgh State Art Museum.

coffee, a Greenland halibut . . . and a pretty girl."[10]

But what can we say about this behavior, beyond noting its philandering and misogynistic character and, at least with Salamina, its sexual violence? Kent, we could say, perfectly embodies the modern western desire to "go native," in all its flawed, psychosexual ugliness. To be sure, "going native" is a typically Euro-American phenomenon, and an extension of that related phenomenon, primitivism. As such, it's worth unpacking how these two terms apply to Kent.

"Historically," Hal Foster writes, "the primitive, then is articulated by the West in deprivative or supplemental terms: as a spectacle of savagery or as a state of grace, as a socius without writing or the Word, without history or cultural complexity; or as a site of originary unity, symbolic plenitude, natural vitality." Central to the West's definition of the primitive then, is its binary function, its ability to serve as a dialectical foil to Western culture and, in many ways, to prop up that culture as superior. The primitive is as old as the Enlightenment, but modernist primitivism hit its full stride in the late nineteenth-century, when figures like Gauguin, and later Picasso, the Surrealists, and legions more, began mining non-western, non-industrialized communities for aesthetic and formal inspiration. The subsidiary behavior—going native—is therefore the radical but logical conclusion of the primitivist impulse. No longer is appropriation sufficient, now the artist must leave his studio and attempt to shed his western self in exchange for a nonwestern otherness.

Kent, ironically, had much to say about the primitivist impulse. He understood it as a base western desire; he also thought he was exempt. "We are, it is to be feared, hopelessly prejudiced and academic in our consideration of alien cultures," Kent writes in *Greenland Journal*.[11] Kent continues in this vein rather eloquently, especially when he discusses the western man's sexual misunderstanding of the native woman; but Kent's conclusions are self-serving and his logic circular. Kent argued, for instance, that the western notion of love was foreign to native women, and that to expect as much from them was irresponsible and indicative of the primitivist spirit. Implicitly, then, Kent is arguing that his detached casual sex with various Inuit women represented a more responsible behavior than that of other men who go native wishing to fulfill more romantic goals. Kent is saying that this is the great folly of most who have gone native. "If a romantic white man lured by the visionary primitive did fall in love with [a native woman]," Kent writes, "she'd serve him in her own behalf as other 'primitives' have served such men."[12] Kent argues, therefore, that his self-awareness and chilled disinterest regarding romance and intimacy somehow inoculated him against fetishizing the other, or at least created a space for "respectful" sexual encounters. A strange illogic and a deep denial govern Kent's whole premise, although the attitude perfectly fits his narcissistic character. Stranger still, it was likely the French painter and artist-gone-native *par excellence*, Paul Gauguin, whom Kent was denigrating when he spoke about primitives who "have served such [romantic] men."

To be sure, going native proper has its roots in earlier figures like Cushing, but also Gauguin, who abandoned France, his studio, and his family in exchange for a Tahitian hut and native teenage lovers. Kent was anti-modern in his aesthetic sensibilities and rejected the French avant-garde wholesale, including Gauguin. He certainly knew that artist's work, and he likely saw his paintings firsthand in the Museum of Modern Art's inaugural exhibition of November, 1929, *Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, Van Gogh*. And if Kent interpreted Gauguin's Tahitian experiment as a bungled attempt to go native, then we find here the American artist's argumentative foil.

Understanding Gauguin's own well-documented experience, therefore, and the copious amounts of scholarship that attend it, can help us better situate Kent's later quest, which he all but insists was completely different. It will also help us understand Kent's later resentment of Riefenstahl. First, the similarities between the two are unavoidable. Importantly, both Gauguin's and Kent's artistic adventures developed a strong, if not dominant, sexual dimension. This is not unusual, or as the art historian and Gauguin expert Abigail Solomon-Godeau aptly notes, "The quest for the primitive becomes increasingly sexualized."[13] Kent's going-native embodied a similar impulse, but one, like Gauguin's, that could never quite be satisfied. There is always a rift between an indigenous community and the man who goes native, because, at end, what the man seeks is something impossible—something that could only exist in fantasy. Going native is misleading, a chimera, a sexual mirage. Unsurprisingly, Frantz Fanon once argued that white Euro-Americans beheld "the sexual potency of the Negro" as a hallucination.[14] The colonizer always seeks more than flesh, and much more than pleasure. He seeks an impossible dream—a return to a state that he intuits as being fundamental, originary, prime. The artist who goes native embodies this desire more desperately than anyone else. But Solomon-Godeau demonstrates the impossibility of going native, or really, its messy reality. Her investigation of Gauguin shows that the artist, far from achieving some utopian vision, festered in venereal disease and was daily mired in the French-colonial bureaucracy. A testament to Gauguin's utter failure is that the artist subsisted on imported canned foods. The irony here would be comic, if it were not so insidious: The near-global capitalist modernity that Gauguin had so desperately tried to escape came to replenish his body, which, now fortified, painted scenes that were sanitized of such colonial interventions. Kent suffered a similar fate when the modern world literally crashed his