

Foreword

Dear Marija,

The postman brought me a wonderful gift this morning: The Language of the Goddess. I wanted to just glance through it, but wouldn't you know it – I spent two hours of my day looking at your Goddesses.

What an enormous amount of work has been done since the manuscript you first entrusted to me! How hard your brain has labored! You know that I'm very sparing with words of praise, and I disagreed with a lot in the field of Lithuanian mythology. But this time – bravo! Or as they French say: Chapeau!

Algirdas Julius Greimas
writing to Marija Gimbutas
La Chaussée, France, 20 March 1990

The Marija Gimbutas era continues... The revealed secrets of prehistory created the prospect of an ideal world for the future. The visual attestations of divinity – in the form of figurines – testified to the vast possibilities of creative exploration and discovery, inspiring the imagination and expanding the space of our experience.

By becoming a medium between prehistory and the present day, Gimbutas did not vanish within the enveloping 21st century media. Her legacy of ideas, concepts, and work remains with us, fascinating us with its originality, eloquence,

and hypotheses that have withstood the test of time.

By focusing on current issues, we have to seek to show Gimbutas' continuing relevance today and to introduce new scientific achievements. The introductory article by *Rita Repšienė*, a researcher of contemporary media and culture, examines Gimbutas' academic theories and polemical concepts through the prism of ideas that are relevant to the present and the visions necessary for a meaningful future. This article reveals the relevance of Gimbutas' legacy and sheds new light on feminist spirituality as it pertains to the restoration of tolerance, egalitarianism, and a respect for nature.

Reflecting on Gimbutas' archaeomythological reconstructions, the prominent Lithuanian philosopher *Naglis Kardelis* precisely elucidates and discusses in detail the roots of philosophy in the worldview of the people of Old Europe. The issue of the interpretability of prehistoric symbols – the possibility and feasibility of interpreting them – is analyzed from two directions: from Gimbutas' point of view and from the attitudes prevailing in contemporary interpretive archaeology. The problem of the interpretability of prehistoric symbolism is also linked to the question of the existence of a distinctive proto-philosophy in Old Europe.

Delving into Marija Gimbutas' creative legacy, American art critic and professor *Gloria Feman Orenstein* provides

a compelling overview of the impact of Gimbutas' ideas on art and creativity. In her latest publication, French scholar and art historian *Mathilde Desvages* discusses the creative links between archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, semiotician and mythologist Algirdas Julius Greimas, and sculptor Antanas Mončys, exploring the interconnections between heritage, myth, and art.

Using Gimbutas' ideas as an opportunity to manifest the complex situation and challenges of women in the contemporary world, Polish cultural studies scholar *Małgorzata Litwinowicz* raises topical and meaningful questions. How does this relate to Gimbutas' discoveries and her idea of the Civilization of the Goddess? I am convinced that Gimbutas' work is much more than an archaeological study: It is a coherent cultural project that draws on prehistory to form a strong link with the present. What can this mean now? What significance can be conveyed and evoked by reading Gimbutas in the reality we experience now?

In her article "Textile as a Medium of Thought in the Art of Monika Žaltauskaitė-Grašienė (Žaltė)", visual culture theoretician *Odeta Žukauskienė* proposes a textile approach characteristic of the artist's creative practice, from which conceptual metaphors are derived, encompassing a wide network of cultural codes. Fabric and textiles in her interdisciplinary practice are perceived as a medium of experience and perception, encompassing the matter of life and the life of matter, addressing the problem of the materiality of being, the medium of multiple identities and the processes of becoming, sensitivity to the environment and solidarity with nature.

Drawing on the philosopher Paul Virilio's notion of "temporal catastrophe", where space in the world of real-time images is erased by the "dromospheric time of light", the insights of Roland Barthes, and the reflections of Peter Osborne, art critic *Agnė Narušytė* analyses the photography transformed by the flow of digital images and the photography of Akvilė Anglickaitė and her 2017 installation *Ocean*, where waves seemingly captured on film rise and fall on a screen-framed space. The algorithm-generated image was used as a tool to explore how digital photography affects our changing experience of time, where it becomes both a desert and an ocean, in the hope of understanding the paradoxical time of photography and its relation to reality.

In a discussion of the conceptual work of Vitas Luckus, photographer *Valentyn Odnoviun* focuses on the *Pantomime* series from 1968-1972, created in collaboration with the Kaunas Pantomime Troupe (directed by Modris Tenisons) and which differed in style from the popular photographs of that time. This series presented a new expression of photography as a medium. This innovative approach emphasized the role of the audience in creating the meaning of a work, thereby shaping the local development of visual language through photography.

Visual culture as an incredible, mysterious, and imaginative space is full of extraordinary stories, realities of the past, and relics of heritage that speak to the exceptional discoverers who are able to see what is encoded in the past. By having opened the treasure trove of prehistory, Marija Gimbutas inspired a belief in a peaceful existence for our time: "to bring back to life the suppressed vital elements:

the earth, the body (health), the feminine, and the subconscious. Building the 21st century will require a global effort, but improving the world will depend first and foremost on each of us, on each individual who feels a responsibility for the future,” as the distinguished archaeologist herself once said. As we ourselves follow in the footsteps of the sages and improve ourselves, we will also change the world.