

Editors Editorial

01/02

Revolutionaries are people who need to run around in circles. Revolution is a cycle of toppling and replacing, of killing God and building a Church, as Camus says. It is nothing if not intense.

In “The Intense Life,” Tristan Garcia presents intensity as an ethical ideal peculiar to modernity. The pursuit of intensity moves through stages, from variation, to acceleration, to what Garcia calls “primaverism,” or the obsession with first experiences.

In “Notes on Blacceleration,” Aria Dean locates an absence in the text of accelerationism: a decided failure to come to grips with the first experiences of accumulation, and in particular with the way “the black” divides, and has always divided, capital from the human. In “‘This Is a Story About Nerds and Cops’: PredPol and Algorithmic Policing,” Jackie Wang considers predictive policing and shows how algorithmic crime zones can intensify the violence at work in this process.

If revolution doesn’t mean Haiti and doesn’t mean intensity, it might mean apocalypse. Irmgard Emmelhainz examines the tendency towards apocalyptic imagery in recent political photography and film, as a symptom of modernism’s lingering Christian mission. Is the end of history ever anything more than a kind of top-down resignation to disaster? Is there such a thing as an authentically bottom-up apocalypse?

Antonio Negri deepens and extends the distinction between change directed from above and from below, presenting a new reading of the major episodes of the twentieth century in the process. Kuba Szreder provides an invaluable theoretical account of how these movements from below have manifested recently in the art world as strikes, occupations, and boycotts – all examples of what he calls “productive withdrawals.”

A lecture from Theodor W. Adorno on the concept of beauty reminds us that beauty is often nothing other than a kind of experience of intensity, a necessary moment in the process of fashioning divine madness into objective truth.

In “The Glory Hole,” Karen Sherman considers a different kind of productive withdrawal in tracing the fate of language, the body, and touch in between dance-making and glassblowing. This kind of movement work shows the limits of describing everything in terms of the performative.

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Performance as a genre has its own history. Wayne Koestenbaum transcribes a performance of his talk-sung soliloquies over piano miniatures by the likes of Rachmaninoff, Chopin, Alexander Scriabin, and David Diamond, improvising his incantations specifically for the occasion, twelve days after the 2016 US presidential election, and dedicated to the memory of the late poet David Antin.

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What if intensive performance is all that separates the avant-garde from a furniture catalog? What if the necessary changes require that we stay loose, chill out, and perform? Tadashi Suzuki once said that the only emotion an actor should feel onstage is the exhilaration of concentration. Is this intensity sufficient? Even if it looks like indifference? We might be capable, but are we interested?

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