

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan
Wood, Anton Vidokle
Editorial

e-flux journal #19 — october 2010 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle
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01/02

The tension in contemporary culture formulated in terms of a hackneyed clash between premodern tradition and fully modernized enlightened subjects has proven to be a dangerous one – and it has easily given way to patently racist scenarios in which premodern tribal types (such as the EU citizens who happen to be Roma) invade fully modern Western metropolises. It seems much more useful, and interesting, to consider these conditions to be one and the same – two sides of a single, irreconcilable anxiety with regard to cultural tradition, the promises of modernism, and the shortcomings of both. From this singular vantage point, we can perhaps discern something like a primary limit – which can also be a raw material – guiding our very ability to produce, or even reflect, culture today.

On a visit to Mount Gyeryong, Chan-Kyong Park encounters a sensation that seems similar to what is called “the sublime” in Western aesthetics, and may very well be. But is this sensation actually available, or is the sublime in this case more of an imprecise way of describing something familiar to traditional culture, something whose name has been forgotten? And how to explain its strange familiarity? While an alleged disconnection from tradition is commonly considered to result from a modern break, could it be that not only this break, but the very remoteness of tradition itself is one of modernity’s primary myths?

An author who has written and spoken extensively on the withdrawal of tradition, Jalal Toufic revisits the storytelling of *A Thousand and One Nights*, Inci Eviner’s *Harem*, Francis Bacon, and the book of Genesis as an algebra of phantasmatic depiction and hallucination – an economy or scenario in which blood is recurrently traded for images and distortions of dreams and projections.

Svetlana Boym outlines a condition she has termed “off modern,” whose lateral movements, fuzzy logic, edgy geography, and broken technology speak to an artificial intelligence of improvised and individuated maneuvers over and around established modern regimes. It is a way of seeing one’s own reflection through the screen of a “black mirror” – the *film noir* of perception itself.

Diedrich Diederichsen looks to the economy of self-directed, self-motivated, self-determined labor that is a relic or orphan of the generation that witnessed 1968, and its belief in wild emancipatory ideas and the potential for life to be full of intensity and abandon. But now that much of this generation has reached middle age, and those who have clung to these values find them to exist only in precarious freelance labor markets far removed from punk rock and

radical leftist politics, what remains of the life lived with intensity? And how did a hope for this life constitute a will to power that transformed into something else far removed from its original intentions?

In “Marx After Duchamp, or The Artist’s Two Bodies,” Boris Groys begins with Duchamp’s readymade as the thing that liberated the artist from the manual labor of producing art objects by hand. However, it seems that the artist liberated from having to produce objects is now placed in the position of having to maintain entire museums to present his or her non-objects. And it should come as no surprise that the shift in the location of work away from the handmade object to, say, pure idea, has paralleled the proletarianization and exploitation of intellectual and artistic labor – with or without objects or bodies.

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