

Editors Editorial

01/02

“The end justifies the means. But what if there never is an end? All we have is means.”
– Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Lathe of Heaven*, 1971

In Ursula Le Guin’s 1971 novel *The Lathe of Heaven*, a seemingly unassuming young white male begins effective dreaming. Desperate to stop altering realities by night, George Orr borrows other people’s pharmacy cards (the world is overpopulated, resources heavily rationed) to obtain more than his share of dexedrine and barbiturates. Landing himself in the hands of an oneirologist, he becomes a tool – a proxy to make the doctor’s megalomaniacal utilitarian fantasies real. The doctor suggests, and George dreams. “This was the way he had to go; he had no choice. He had never had any choice. He was only a dreamer.”

Whose effective dreams are we living in now: A hoaxter, broker, autocrat, or warrior? A meal-replacement entrepreneur, or a pedophilic sculptor of language and form? A gentleman farmer, almanac full of pop-up weather events; a scientist who dreams of not detonating the germ bombs that he goes on crafting anyway? Maybe we’re caught in the dreams of somebody much more benign, or much more terrifying: cannibal, gallerist, curator, class warrior, populist, physicist, philosopher, artist, capitalist. Just wondering what phase of ideology’s public trade on the subconscious (art) market we’re in now.

It’s been said that talking about dreams is incredibly boring to the person who has to listen. But dreams bear repeating as reality shifts under the weight of them (some more than others). Surely the officially registered daydreams of certain ancestors resemble almost exactly the night terrors and centuries-long waking atrocities of others. Yanomami spokesperson and shaman Davi Kopenawa explains, “The white people, they do not dream as far as we do. They sleep a lot but only dream of themselves.”

There are no concepts without consequences. In *The Lathe of Heaven*, Orr’s psychologist, mad with power, commands the dreamer under augmented hypnosis to erase racial tensions. Twisted by Orr’s subconscious, this directive turns everyone’s skin dull, gray. Maybe soylent green is soylent gray – gray people. Travis Diehl pours into this issue the fact of soylent as rebranded substance, like so much science of former fiction, in the techno-creative-class present. Liquid removes the inconvenience of

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taste: gray, beige.

The present threatens to make hungry ghosts of anyone who survives to see the future. Certainly not all humans have had such luck. Whoever's dreams we – the dead, the outsiders, the cosmists, the content producers' content producers, artists – collectively find ourselves caught in, perhaps we can agree to enter tomorrow's nightmare, this time more lucid.

If so, to what end? All we have is means.

Let's take a look at the state of the influencer's union. "Today, everyone is a culture-producer, producing culture for every other culture-producer," Dena Yago tells us in this issue of *e-flux journal*. But being an influencer doesn't pay, so please don't forget to tip. Yago suggests that we must demand payment for any content created for a brand. We assume this includes #museums (12,933,587 hashtagged posts on Instagram). There are 3,292 posts hashtagged #curatorfindme. None tagged #curatorpayme. 52,834 #museumselfies, plus 15,700 #museumselfieday. Curator fin(e)d me indeed.

Also in this issue, Ben Davis's found document from 2027, a classic of art futurology by the presumable 2100s, predicts a future art when "the 'aestheticization of capitalism' is complete." At this point, "cultural life has largely migrated into various mediated and virtual platforms, all controlled by quasi-monopolistic corporations. The market for new singular art objects craters, as interior decorating trends favor the ultra-minimalism that best serves as a background for various forms of customizable augmented reality experiences." Contemporary artists live on only for "bespoke mythmaking," decorating daydreams of the ultrarich.

But maybe it doesn't, or didn't, have to be this way.

Tam Donner – who, along with Le Guin, inspired this short reflection on dreaming – "nightdreams of people dismantling a fascist state"; then she "nightmares" that the end of human time has already come, making that dream impossible. Donner brings to this issue a vital vision, a searing history – both a dream and a lucid waking account of the present.

Anastasia Gacheva details the transformative stratagies devised by Nikolai Fedorov and his fellow cosmists for overcoming death through art. Natalya Serkova maps cosmism's extended life through body modification and fusion with machines, to the point where a "hybrid, mutuating cosmist project" will bring into the sunlight the "cosmist worm with a thousand

eyes."

In another mode, Alexander R. Galloway reaches into the future pages of the third volume in Badiou's Being and Event series, *Being and Event 3: The Immanence of Truths*.

Marco Baravalle also offers something on which we can all focus our energies: "alter-institutions" that can help build multiple new "art worlds" outside and despite the neoliberal realities under which the current one operates. "In short," he says, "we need to associate the word 'art' with different forms of life."

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