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**Editorial**

e-flux journal #20 — november 2010 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle  
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01/02

Should everything be seen as raw material? It is a promise at the very heart of the language, the experience, the reception, the production of art. Hardened systems full of authority should be beaten back down to a point where their basic components become malleable, where as raw material they can play host to potentials, to promises of other ethics, of other forms completely. This can be done using literal, formal, figurative, poetical, or contextual means, and over the past century, just as now, this process of reduction and reconstitution has most often centered on the relationship between human labor and the commodity. And it is in the field of art that the relationship between the two becomes most vivid, while at the same time it is absolutely and completely confused.

Keti Chukhrov asks how immaterial goods produced by cognitive labor can be connected back to a field of general social knowledge. While cognitive labor adds value to commodities (in the form of branding, for example), perhaps the worker can still capture and direct the knowledge it produces. Many are familiar with the slavery of networked, freelance labor, but the possibility of a “communism of capitalism” seems to suggest that the conflation of work and leisure, of production and consumption, have produced entirely new terms with which to understand the fluid dynamics of freed time.

In a response to Sven Lütticken’s “Art and Thingness” series, Joshua Simon embarks on his own three-part series with “Neo-Materialism, Part One: The Commodity and the Exhibition,” speculating on whether the commodity can be understood as the thing that precedes any object, including art objects. If one takes up the provocation to view the commodity not as a passive carrier of value projected onto it by humans, but as a form of being that decides its own value and relationship to other objects through an inanimate language of things, one finds that it is perhaps objects that decide *our* value as humans, and not the other way around.

Franco Berardi examines how cognitive labor exacts a severe emotional toll on the networked, “liberated” worker. It seems that the unlimited potential of technology, while freeing the worker from material work, produces another, immaterial form of enslavement precisely in the removal of material limits by means of which the worker would otherwise sense pleasure, as well as time. Under a regime of constant intensification and availability, we find cognitarians in search of a body, of new terms by which to understand limits within the paradigm of immaterial work.

Nato Thompson considers how accelerated, wired life negatively affects the human body and

the way it experiences time, and if the patience and resilience of long-duration, socially applied projects might find ways of working within a capitalist economy while escaping the negative effects of commodification.

Simon Sheikh continues his “Positively Revisited” series of short essays looking back at pivotal pieces of critical writing from recent history. This time, Sheikh looks back to Hito Steyerl’s landmark text “The Articulation of Protest,” published in 2002 by republicart.net. Starting with a meditation on the ethics and aesthetics of activist filmmaking, how do we begin to overlay a kind of aesthetic ideology on a mode of image production that justifies itself in purely pragmatic terms as being shot “in the field” and “in the heat of the moment”? How do we locate the set of finely crafted aesthetic decisions that guide such a spontaneous form?

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