

Julieta Aranda, Kaye Cain-Nielsen, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle
Editorial

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e-flux journal #94 — october 2018 Julieta Aranda, Kaye Cain-Nielsen, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle
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Masaccio painted his fresco of the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden* (c. 1424–28) just about 600 years before 2030, which is the current cutoff point for humans to curb global temperature rise, or risk quicker extinction. In Masaccio's rendering, the expelled pair walk together from the green valley crying with open-mouthed agony. Caught in this moment during their walk of shame, their lips, especially Eve's, surround gaping dark ovals: Where are their teeth?

It may be that early Renaissance painters simply did not depict the bones inside human mouths unless the subjects were demonic or dead, appearing in the form of skulls. But maybe it's that the famous biblical duo both cut and lost their teeth biting into the profane fruit. There is life after expulsion. In fact the entirety of history really starts when those two are kicked out.

Nowadays, with twelve years to contain the heat, we're alternately chomping at the apple or chomping at the bit. Perhaps we can harness our bridles to engineering something beyond a quick fix this time around ... Don't you remember what happens to carbon like us?

One possibility: we actually won't feel a thing. Mice infected with a parasite called toxoplasmosis learn to devolve; they completely lose their ingrained fear of cats. Perhaps they remain unaware of danger right up until, or throughout, the moment where they find their little bodies in the feline jaw, softly seizing, much to the cat's delight. What does that soft fluttering do for the mouse itself? If it wasn't deterred by the cat's smell from faraway or even up close, is it fearful by now in its clenches, or just holding on for the ride?

When all the exhibitions burn up and/or flood, whose fossils and shards will remain buried, or somehow rise out of the liquid plastic? Whoever or whatever is tasked with cataloguing and identifying remains – post-forensic curation – will have a hell of a time locating accompanying dental records. Various forefathers' commands to dig up sacred sites for the purposes of extracting museums continue to resonate. They were barked with stolen teeth.

And if and when breathing lifeforms phase out, will photographs and archives of them persist – whether physical or located somewhere in the cloud? In the meantime it matters to dive deeply into these records and archives and understand their modes of identification, classification.

Unlike the earth's first known predator, the

Conodont, adult human beings have not evolved to the point to regenerate lost teeth when there is too much prey to handle at once. Full-mouth restoration or decay are both possible now; what else? Via a handbook of affective sciences, we remember that what is now considered a human smile began in the animal world with baring fangs in a show of either dominance or submission.

These days we may feel ourselves crushed, farmed, bogged, productive, or frozen. There will be death, sure. Rising temperatures, literal and otherwise, bear seismic pressure down onto artists and artworks too – tasked to mobilize, amass, comically relieve, boil it down, prod into action. How and what to produce, gather, think – what to gnash and sink our fangs into, if we've got them? Can we make positive, emancipatory propaganda, with or without nuclear aesthetics? Is it possible to mobilize artworks toward other life-affirming, restorative, just ends – against means like the lying-through-the-teeth death traps and summits that princes and billionaires deploy?

It's strange to consider, after 400-some years of deforestation – and at a moment when Amazonian rainforests may now rest dead in the hands of Brazil's presidential hopeful – that one of the previous five extinctions on earth may have been caused by too *much green*: an overabundance of life. Here's part of one possible story: Giant ferns, trees, and flowers went rogue, choking earth's surfaces. The breathing plants broke down rocks and minerals; these tumbled into the rivers, then oceans. Algae bloomed, plugging up the oceans and their biting and cellular beings alike. The ocean turned green and lost its air. Huge armored sea monsters went bust. 90 percent of everything went that way, but as ever, not all was lost. Some pockets of sea life survived – smaller sharks included.

In the sixth extinction, will we go down gaping, laughing, unaware, buoyed, or baring teeth when we sink back into the garden?

– Editors

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