

Editorial

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Federica showed up for her appointment with the person who had agreed to purchase her soul. Thus begins Franco “Bifo” Berardi and Massimiliano Geraci’s novel *Morte ai Vecchi* (Death to the old), in which a device called KapSoul delivers “waves of empathic excitement” to young people before they descend into orgiastic violence against the elderly. The first serial installment of the translated novel is published in this issue of *e-flux journal*, with further installments coming in the near future.

Also in this issue, Jonas Staal illuminates the Martian designs of Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, with their unabashedly extractive colonial ambitions. But Staal also reminds us of radical visions, sketched by authors like Alexander Bogdanov and Octavia Butler, of deep nonhuman comradeship on the red planet.

Against the backdrop of the fires engulfing the Amazon rainforest, Teresa Castro outlines the importance of queer kinship with vegetal and other forms of life, which have much to teach us. Warning against anthropomorphizing the rainforest as “the lungs of the earth,” Castro reminds us that this is ultimately part of a colonizing view that frames “nature” as something we own – as something that works for us. Castro also traces the history of plants on film; this history reveals our limited imagination when it comes to vegetal life, but also includes magical moments of other-than-human autonomy and subjectivity.

Samer Frangie makes sense of his own generation in post-civil war Beirut, one that rushed into the future in the absence of a past, seeing itself as the product of a historical rupture. Frangie writes that Beirut’s late-nineties generation became the “vanguard by default.” Taught by the previous, prewar generation to distrust presentism, they had no time but the present, and no ground but the reconstructed one, on which to center themselves.

Claire Fontaine responds to this year’s Venice Biennale, where visitors are faced with an acute contradiction. Fontaine writes that the displaying of such a massive, incoherent volume of “experimental gestures” from all over the world drains the works of the very value that drew the curators – and maybe even the artists themselves – to them in the first place.

Nika Dubrovsky and David Graeber also use this year’s Venice Biennale as a springboard to detail how the art world has come to “operate simultaneously as a dream of liberation, and a structure of exclusion.” Can there be – or has there perhaps always been – another art world serving utopian ends? Dubrovsky and Graeber examine art’s paradoxical conceptions of value

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and its corresponding ability to either reproduce or potentially overturn the dominant social structure. According to Malevich, they remind us, artists were to be prophets and founders of a new communal world where everyone creates, free from political threats and from the possibility of their work being turned into clichéd commodities.

In McKenzie Wark's exploration of prettiness as an aesthetic in trans art – especially in the recent film *So Pretty* by Jessie Jeffrey Dunn Rovinelli – she asks: If the utopian is to be more than a momentary illumination, how do we organize love? In “Femme as in Fuck You,” Wark explores the potential for a glimmer of utopia in the pretty, if it can be something with agency – something other than the traditional lasso for men's desires. The pretty can be utopian to the extent that it keeps certain types of violence at bay. Wark also asks what a utopian cinema might look like, and whether *So Pretty* falls into this category.

Ways and categories of thinking, as Yuk Hui urges in his interview with Geert Lovink, must also be reorganized in the face of current existential threats and emergent technologies. Academic disciplines need to speak to one another, insists Hui, while also admitting that the chasms between them can't be mended, “since when you attempt to bridge a gap, this gap is at the same time maintained.” Hui offers a different possibility: “to create a new discipline in which this gap no longer exists.”

– Editors

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