

# Editors Editorial

01/02

*As we put the finishing touches on this issue last week, we heard the terrible news that our colleague and comrade David Graeber passed away. You and we are among so many changed by David's work and acts of solidarity. His fierce commitment to a just world will be sorely missed at a time when it is especially needed. Along with Nika Dubrovsky, his wife, David wrote "Another Art World" (parts 1 and 2) in these pages. In the close future, we will publish part 3. Over the weekend, Nicholas Mirzoeff wrote a tribute to his friend and fellow traveler for this issue. We anticipate that further remembrances will be forthcoming. May his memory be a call for a radically better future; may he rest in power.*

*We dedicate this September issue to David Graeber, as well as another e-flux journal author taken far too young. Robert Bird, scholar of aesthetic practice and theorist of Russian/Soviet modernism, died on Labor Day. His essays on how to keep communism aloft in Soviet cinema and articulations of Soviet realism should have been only the beginning of a longer series.*

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Who remembers the title of last year's Venice Biennale? One long year and change later, it seems that nobody's worst enemy could have made a threat, a promise, or a curse that we may live in times quite as ... "interesting" as the ones we find ourselves in now. Arguably, anyone paying even the most distant attention to 2019 – or to history and the evolving present in general – could have foreseen what we were heading towards. It's hard to imagine, though, that someone could have envisioned just how deadly fascinating these times would turn out to be.

In any case, here we are. A new semester begins in old virtual digs; renewed vigor bubbles up behind decades- or centuries-long movements and ancient oppressions. Perhaps, through the summer, a glimpse emerged of something like hope for new regimes, new leadership, or better yet, new solidarities, despite the stubborn persistence of failed (or rather, too-efficient) structures and institutions across the globe. It promises to be a wild ride ahead; perchance we'll eventually enter into less interesting times.

From Jerusalem, Berlin, and Beirut, Lara Khaldi, Yazan Khalili, and Marwa Arsanios discuss the post-1990s turn that saw politically active cultural organizations in Lebanon and Palestine become neoliberal fundraising bodies promoting competitive, individualistic visions of contemporary art. Franco "Bifo" Berardi takes us to the thrumming edge of the American abyss, shattering any rose-tinted lenses that remain

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with words coming directly from that exceptional pit. Serubiri Moses, charting Édouard Glissant's use of language, traces a fecund and generative landscape of self-expression in exodus. Iman Issa courses the complex evolution of the state of monuments in Egypt over recent years. Sophie Lewis, nine months after her mother's death, finds a needed, if only digital, being-with grief in today's physically distant reality.

Ben Ware confronts the many real threats of the end and of extinction that define our shared present. In a text written in the 1980s that reads just as pertinently today, Boris Groys examines the metamorphoses of engagement, and artistic autonomy, through a study of Trotsky. From Australia, Terry Smith attends to the deep art-historical and contemporary importance of the *Yirrkala Church Panels*, large-scale paintings by the Yolŋu people that will tour the world when traveling exhibitions and museums are open to visitors once again.

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