

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan
Wood, Anton Vidokle
Editorial

01/02

e-flux journal #2 — January 2009 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle
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The nature of artistic speculation is, in part, to create new spaces and defer their use to others. While the pioneer gets first dibs in deciding the ideologies and governing principles of the spaces he creates, he is seldom present to see his planning in practice – he is off to new adventures while the subject must find ways of translating this vision into something inhabitable. Beyond the issue of governance, these circumstances beg the deeper question of the potential for simply inhabiting existing spaces, for properly addressing important questions that have already been asked before seeking the questions of the future. After all, we have set aside many models for possible use, and speculation on their viability has yielded productive results. How then do we begin to use or inhabit these possibilities?

In the first installment of a two-part essay on discursive practices in art, Liam Gillick suggests that the first step in doing this is perhaps to accept that, in our present condition, everything is based on projections and perpetual expansion. The idea is perhaps not to suspend speculation, but to acknowledge, as he puts it, that “true work, true activity, true significance will happen in a constant, perpetual displacement.” The urgent forms that can accommodate this displacement and engage these multiple temporalities are perhaps yet to be found, though for Gillick, the forms of co-authorship generated by informal groupings and their “collaborative, collective, or negotiated positions” remain perhaps the closest thing to them.

In Hassan Khan’s *RANT*, a text based around his video work of the same name, there is a darker side to discursivity to be found in the way art practitioners must market themselves within an informal network of perverse rituals, hierarchies, rivalries, unrealized ambitions, overworked anxieties, and a general “hysterical defensiveness.” Tracing a particular sort of cultural “scene” (with close ties to an international community as well as to a specific cultural context), from the exhibition out to the dinner after the opening, Khan finds in the operations of this scene – or of scenes in general – a dysfunctional condition that does not really serve as a model for anything. But if the weight of these operations is so heavy, they must necessarily begin to change the basic character of the field, prompting Khan to ask, “more importantly, what kind of aesthetic choices do these conditions lead to?”

In *Politics of Installation*, Boris Groys considers the multilayered nature of the artist’s sovereign will and the challenge posed to it by the fundamental act of exhibiting work to the public. Here, within the modernist notion of

absolute artistic sovereignty, he identifies a kind of short-circuit in the Western conception of freedom. This is very simply because, in exhibiting work to the public (in the name of the public), the artist effectively justifies the place of his or her work in public discourse (through the mouthpiece of the curator or institution). So the artwork's sovereignty is, in a sense, limited by the same process that allows it to exist as such. In order to recover this lost agency, Groy finds in installation practice a public space in which the artist's sovereign will can be reclaimed.

Silvia Kolbowski contemplates the current schizoid condition of the US, simultaneously suffering from deep economic anxiety, a hangover following the heady enthusiasm of Obama's victory, and a general state of uncertainty regarding its future. In the voice of an intrepid Googler looking for answers in a mad panic, Kolbowski reflects upon the toll that the current political transition and the fallout from capital speculation are taking on the American subject.

In Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson's 1990 interview with Jacques Derrida, the late philosopher muses eloquently on the process by which knowledge and meaning are incorporated through an interpretive act of "digestive" assimilation. For Derrida, this symbolic "eating" constitutes a site where meaning can be received, where we begin to have difficulty distinguishing between human and animal, and where fundamental organic reactions of revulsion and disgust mark the limits of that which cannot be assimilated or understood.

In the last installment of a three-part contribution by the artist group Reartikulacija, Marina Gržinić addresses the dissolution of borders characterizing late capitalism's "imperialism of circulation." Gržinić proposes that in the face of a borderless world, the critical resistant strategy might become one that counters the free flow of capital by drawing new borders and establishing new coordinates for movement that can limit and redirect critical and capital flows to the places where they are most needed.

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