

Editors Editorial

01/02

We have never completely understood poetry. As a contemporary art publication, there's no shortage of affection, admiration, or affinity for poetry, and *e-flux journal* has certainly published a few memorable poems over the years. But it always felt like a stroke of luck or a gift from the ether when someone brilliant would send us a poem. You won't be surprised that this didn't happen often. But now is the time to change that, and we're honored to welcome Simone White as *e-flux journal's* first ever poetry editor. Simone is the author of the collections *or, on being the other woman* (forthcoming from Duke University Press), *Dear Angel of Death, Of Being Dispersed*, and *House Envy of All the World*, and lives in Brooklyn. We're so glad that she's joined us.

The *journal's* inaugural poetry section features the work of three remarkable poets: Tongo Eisen-Martin, Erica Hunt, and Nora Treatbaby. By way of introduction, Simone writes:

My selections are guided by a not-so-imaginary reader whose lust for the book is organized by chance. What is near to hand, on its way, minimally printed or unprintable, flippantly deposited in the bibliography: she reads that and chases down some more. She suspects that genius is abundant and irregular – not deep, not guarded by anybody. She is not a joiner. I wonder whether it is possible to think about whether the in-person reading will give way after the pandemic, as a heuristic and as a quasi-social aspect of poetry. In *e-flux journal*, I want the poetry to appear as great poems often do (to me), exploding full-grown out of the head of the main god, giving no clue as to what might have occurred at a less mature stage or what might have caused or preceded the thing. That doesn't mean we cannot trace the poems' development, although it can't be tracked to a room or the poet's City or a press because poetry is moving in a different circuit now, and its raised surface has to be felt in order to get any kind of knowledge of what the circuits are, how they are moving. You have to run your fingers across the poems as a group, like. Poems and people are in this extreme moment of mystery and anticipation, precipitated by our losses.

The words among these poems I most want to point to are those of Erica Hunt: 'We are beyond counting ...,' she writes. I take this to mean we are within incalculability, and I get a surge of joy thinking about the

e-flux journal #116 — march 2021 Editors
Editorial

opportunity to be out of counting and how poetry might begin or has already begun to practice such non-numerosity.

“with new distinctions.”

×

Issue photo: Zun Lee, *At Home with the Millers*. Bronx NY, December, 2012. All Rights Reserved.

Also in this issue, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney talk with their publisher Stephven Shukaitis about a friendship so profound that it is a practice in itself. That’s how they describe the essence of their friend Zun Lee, whose photograph – part of his series on black fatherhood – is the cover of this issue. It’s not just that he’s their friend, but rather that he is *a* friend. As they explain, that is what he does. Moten and Harney talk about how their ongoing conversation, their new book, and their thought is fully populated with other figures. They share in “the anger of a common love,” in “being lost with others.” It’s a beautiful fullness to study, especially after a year of isolation.

Boris Groys explores the gap left open by the near disappearance of the critique of ideology amidst the proliferation of conspiracy theory. In the atomized world of internet discourse and followership, he argues that the critique of ideology becomes all the more necessary. Franco “Bifo” Berardi dissects the concept of freedom as claims to it mutate and morph between leftists and fascists in mid-pandemia. The rhetoric of freedom, he argues, is based on a misunderstanding, and autonomy, potency, and consciousness might help us find a way back out – or even back in. The artists and filmmakers Sasha Litvintseva and Beny Wagner go in search of a taxonomy of monsters, and find, between the pages of a sixteenth-century illustrated compendium, the monstrosity of taxonomies that arose in the age of Early Modern science and film.

Tyler Coburn thinks though the counterfactual: what that might have been if history had moved differently. Maybe mushrooms experimented on human soldiers during World War II. Maybe the Vietnam War era was replaced by a march toward an American universal basic income. Soo Hwan Kim wonders why Walter Benjamin and Sergei Eisenstein, whose work and worlds circled each other during the same period, never actually met. He finds common ground for them not in film, but in the looming presence of the glass house in architecture and literature before and during their tumultuous time. Maria Lind situates the curatorial through her time at Tensta Konsthall, in a northwestern suburb of Stockholm, where civic engagement negotiated disparate cultures, timescales, hardships, and politics, with an eye to intensifying our focus upon art in all its variety, but, as she suggests,

02/02

e-flux journal #116 — march 2021 Editors
Editorial