

Editorial

01/02

Two women sit at a sidewalk cafe in Manhattan.¹ There are others around: suited bros poring over a spreadsheet, a possible fashion blogger, generally well-dressed white people. The women engage in dialogue and play a game. They talk Platonism, Nietzsche, femmunism, and also traps. The initial point of the game is to decide who has partaken in a particular sexual act, and who has given it or been taken by whom. As they speak, the women, in a dialogue written by McKenzie Wark, create a trans-for-trans space for communication, for a world both part of and separate from the cis one. As one woman tells the other, “They think they know our little secret, but we have information about being that they will never know.” As she says earlier, “We turn the cis gaze back on itself.”

The voguers that Sabel Gavalton writes about in this issue know a lot about gaze. Gavalton traces their poses – set to the clicks of camera shutters – from the Christopher Street Piers to Harlem balls at the end of the twentieth century to recent scenes in the ballrooms and streets of Mexico City. Capturing and scrutinizing posture, gesture, movement, and criminality have long been the purview of photography in the hands of those who want to classify subjects. The voguer, intimately aware of the potency in each shutter click, literally poses a challenge to legibility and power. “The voguer is one with the camera, internalizing its gaze with mechanical exactitude.” Throughout the voguing years and stances, no gesture, Gavalton writes, guarantees a stable reading.

Meanwhile, photographer Sohrab Hura is convinced that “the photographer today is out of touch with the complete image world.” He writes that politicians – in this case Narendra Modi and his administration – are in closer proximity to the broader system of images and afterimages. Photographs become vessels for creating truths from untruths, apparent danger in the present culled from repurposed images from another time and location. Examining the remaining glitches in an otherwise growing sea of perfected images may be our best hope for navigating reality.

Images are masks, Hura says. And Irmgard Emmelhainz echoes this by providing an image of images as a veil over a world full of living dead. We have to “flee from the invasion of images,” find a way out of a shared culture marked by repression. In an intricate discussion of culture, Hanan Toukan traces the loaded politics around cultural production in Arab countries, and examines the European players who aim to use *al tamwyl al ajnabi*, or “foreign

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funding,” to center their interests.

The work of four poets, selected by poetry editor Simone White, rounds out this November’s offerings. Lewis Freedman, erica kaufman, Lynn Xu, and Peter BD speak in handwritten, video, and typed-text form. Xu writes in her poem: “LIKE / THE / WAR / TO / NOURISH / YOU? // HAVE / TO / FEED / IT / SOMETHING / TOO!” In the middle of one poem, erica kaufman writes: “i’m really aware of how identity / shudders as if line dancing / through omniscient points of view.” Peter BD’s video encourages white people to get it together. Freedman ends one poem like this: “We do not make things / appear or disappear / except by / repeating them.”

The image, writes Emmelhainz in this issue, has ceased to have liberating potential. Serubiri Moses plumbs the influences behind a particular theory of South African art – neither hopeful nor pathological – that ultimately establishes artistic thought as a realm of liberation.

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Speaking of Manhattan, after more than twenty years in the borough, e-flux has moved to Brooklyn. We look forward to opening our doors at 172 Classon Avenue soon and welcoming you to our new space, including a cinema and small library in the works.

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