

Editorial

01/02

In the first *e-flux journal* issue of 2022, Bifo points out a recent social protest movement in China known as *tangping* (“lying flat”), in which young people increasingly opt out of the pressure to overwork by taking low-paying jobs or not working at all. In the US, “the Great Resignation” has been the name for four and a half million American workers who left their jobs at the end of 2020. But Bifo reminds us that “resignation” also means re-signification – a new meaning given to pleasure, richness, activity, and cooperation that may unveil a previously hidden egalitarian and frugal sensitivity following the exhaustion of the Western geopolitical order.

“ZAD” means *zone à défendre* (zone to defend); two of our writers report from the ZAD in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, an enormous territory that farmers and people from around France have squatted for over a decade to halt construction of an airport. With chainsaws and horse-hauled logs, nearby inhabitants survey the woods and decide which trees to fell, which to leave standing, and what projects their trunks and branches will comprise, as the art of communal defense and living becomes a sustained reality, with the woods as a comrade.

“What is the risk I pose?” asks the Indian anti-CAA/NRC activist Umar Khalid in a video that Skye Arundhati Thomas describes in this issue. “Is it that I claim this country to be as much mine as it is yours?” Thomas maps how videos and photographs from the 2019 police assault against students at Jamia Millia Islamia, as well as documentation of BJP members riling up the violence, remind viewers “that the end goal of resistance against the Modi regime is not to return to an India of the past, but to fundamentally reimagine the country we have inherited.”

Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa takes Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida* to task for an unchallenged belief in the book’s forty-year-old photographic theory of the studium and the punctum – the relation between the cultural-political and the “wounding” of affect. For Wolukau-Wanambwa, Barthes, who “most certainly is not outside of culture, however forceful his desire,” develops a theory of the visual disavowal of racist histories even when faced with “the material historicity of the photograph.”

Yuk Hui, in the first of a two-part conversation with Brian Kuan Wood, speaks about his new book *Art and Cosmotronics*, where he inverts the old question of how

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technology disrupts artistic practice by asking, more crucially, how art can contribute to the imagination of technological development. When that imagination has been constrained by the universalizing appetites of industrial growth, how might art provide an opening to the cosmologies and local technologies that have been there all along?

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Boris Groys relays how, for the nineteenth-century Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, “Sophia” represented many possible entities: a female expansion of the divine trinity, the figure in whom the fundamental fallenness of the world could be overcome, and the possibility of harmonious, true life. How did Soloviev and his predecessors, working against Western pessimism and through their love of Sophia, seek to transform the world and reach a state of all-unity? In another essay in this issue, the Order of Sophianic Marxists, with the aid of a perhaps-recently-unearthed text, draw mystical lines between gnostics, alchemists, the same Russian Sophiologists, and Karl Marx – who echoes the Sophiologists’ project of all-unity and world transformation. Every so often, a prophet visits the world to illuminate a path to humanity’s collective task. Many centuries ago, the Russian gnostics saw this prophet to be Simon the Sorcerer, and for the Order of Sophianic Marxists, the same great revelatory force is to be found in Marx.

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