

Editorial

01/02

It's unclear how many people still alive today can remember feeling the strange, warm rains that fell over the riverside city of Pripyat on the Ukraine-Belarus border in late April 1986. Pripyat was built in 1970 to serve the nearby Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, dedicated to harnessing the *mirnyy atom* ("peaceful atom") for the Soviet Union. For the past thirty-six years, Pripyat and a surrounding exclusion zone of inconsistent bounds bridging swaths of today's Ukraine, Belarus, and a bit of Russia have been off limits to most human beings. In this issue of *e-flux journal*, Svitlana Matviyenko disagrees with Paul Virilio when he says that the Chernobyl disaster was "the original accident" of war and peace converging in technological "shipwreck modernity." For Matviyenko, a Ukrainian scholar of cyberwar and nuclear colonialism, the full and non-accidental activation of the same nuclear-plant-turned-weapon happened this year, just a month ago.

Also in this issue, Boris Groys finds Vladimir Putin leading Russia into a self-destructive search for cultural foundations, to a point where even Western sanctions could be part of a much larger suicidal plan on Putin's part. But this fanatical drive to restore a non-Western essence becomes especially dangerous when such an essence may not actually exist. For Groys, what does exist is a very long story of restoration following the (also long story of) Russian Revolution; in this restoration, prerevolutionary symbols of capitalism, monarchy, and local culture are supposed to heal the wounds of revolutionary violence. However, the delusion that Ukraine should welcome being restored to its rightful place in a coherent "Russian World" shows that, while revolutions are often characterized by purposeful violence, restorations have their own kind of senseless and blind violence.

Boris Buden asks: What the hell is "the West," if not another vague regional abstraction, boasting democratic principles without even being a truly democratic political entity? In this sense, Putin's criminality doesn't exonerate the West for abandoning Ukraine to fight its war as a proxy while hiding behind money, bombs, and liberal values watered down from real revolutionary vision. Similarly empty of ideas beyond the expansion of its own identitarian bloc or "European family," the West is also the result of a counterrevolutionary project far more robust than Putin's. But crucially, for Buden, real revolutionary vision is what is sorely needed to prevent an accelerated decline into senseless identitarian war. Today we need to "make love, not war" – harnessing the radical utopian vision

e-flux journal #126 — april 2022
Editorial

of sex and love embodied in that slogan, not its reduction to mere freedom of expression – in order to mobilize our common desire for peace and reconciliation for Ukraine and Russia.

Raed Rafei explores Pier Paolo Pasolini's visit to Beirut in 1974, during the golden era of leftist struggle in Lebanon. Just one year later, Pasolini would be dead and the Lebanese Civil War would begin. As Rafei writes, Pasolini's intertwining of sex and politics speaks to how queerness might have shaped radical politics in 1970s Beirut and the Arab world if the civil war had not put an end to the cross-fertilization of anti-imperialist struggles and sexual revolution.

Gregor Mobius, a theoretician of visual languages, writes that recent events have radically shifted his perception of the world. Between the Cambrian explosion of 530 million years ago, when new animal species proliferated, and the literal explosions of today, the world "has gradually turned from a well-organized 3D structure into a flat, chaotic 2D universe." To restore some sense of synaptic order, Mobius considers possible scientific and philosophical starting points for a new "big narrative." Perhaps the next one can be more inclusive of the startling diversity of human civilizations, and can even imagine the possibility of an emergent, self-aware biosphere. What unit of time should the next big narrative use? Or should it dispense with time altogether? "It is important and necessary," writes Mobius, "to begin articulating a story about the world/life/existence that is completely different from one that is dissolving now."

×

02/02

e-flux journal #126 — april 2022
Editorial