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Wood, Anton Vidokle  
**Editorial**

01/02

e-flux journal #4 — march 2009 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle  
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Much of the tension within the sphere of contemporary art is generated by the insularity of the art context, which often prompts artists to be on the lookout for other situations. The museum is too exclusive, the artwork overly framed, the discourse too removed from everyday life. And yet, attempts to liberate artworks from their conditioning often finds them still connected to the art context by a rigid tether. Boris Groys has suggested that in order for art to be shown in public spaces and still maintain its status as art, it must by necessity be more conservative than art shown within institutions, because by forsaking art's traditional context, it bears the burden of having to justify itself through other means.

So maybe this idea that art needs to be liberated from its own specificity should be flipped around: rather than thinking of art as a fixed space that should defer to the real world in order to realize its full potential, it can be important to remember that the real world, with its own models of production and consumption, is itself the fixed space, and that art is the contrivance that provides the exception. The insularity that grants objects, gestures, statements a moment of suspension and a capacity for self-reflexivity is precisely that which protects them from the tugging instrumentality of the everyday.

In a complex game he played with the basic perimeters of artistic practice, Duchamp accepted this tug, and used it as a weapon against art's insularity – just as he used art's insularity as a weapon against everyday objects. In her extensive essay on Duchamp's self-conscious studio practice, Elena Filipovic discusses how the artist treated objects in his studio as “objects of contemplation” while also remaining highly skeptical of public exhibitions: “All exhibitions of painting or sculpture make me ill. And I'd rather not be involved in them.” And yet when he did participate, he would attempt to absorb the entire exhibition into his own artwork.

In “Religion in the Age of Digital Reproduction,” Boris Groys considers the reemergence of religion as a force that compels and explains the increasingly private, sovereign spaces of contemporary image production and proliferation. Where the Enlightenment introduced ethical, political obligations to the public sphere, we now find a discussion around the spirit to be beneficial for understanding the increasingly sovereign spaces of the internet and digital culture.

In “The Way of the Shovel: On the Archeological Imaginary in Art,” Dieter Roelstraete questions whether an increasing tendency in art towards a historiographic mode

might overemphasize romantic notions that truth lies buried in history. Perhaps an archaeological art of reenactments, reconstructions, and recoveries distracts from the more pressing issues of the present and the future.

In the first of a series of four comics, Michael Baers offers a short introduction to his upcoming series of comics for the journal and reflects upon his current state of exhaustion, quoting Deleuze: “The tired person has merely exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts the whole of the possible.”

Silvia Kolbowski edits President Obama’s inauguration speech to “remove references to religion, the celebration of militarism, delusions of national power, the phantasmatic projection of enemies, the glorification of the struggles of the poor, the puritanical elevation of suffering, the erasure of difference, etc.”

And Dieter Lesage responds to Irit Rogoff and Tom Holert’s recent contributions to this journal on the role of the art academy, addressing the Bologna Process and its influence on art education throughout Europe.

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