

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan  
Wood, Anton Vidokle  
**Editorial**

01/02

e-flux journal #5 — april 2009 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle  
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It's worthwhile to question the field of art from time to time, to demand to know its basic motives and intentions. Where is all this production actually heading? How do we locate the work of the work, as it were?

But finding a resolution or consolidating art's meaning into some form of criteria is probably not the point. Perhaps it makes more sense to simply continue asking, in as many ways as possible, the question of what art should do, and how it might do it. These questions can produce a degree of clarity when posed from outside of the usual context of the art field. After all, it is precisely the anxiety caused by this displacement that generates many of art's most vital forms. When the usual questions concerning modes of production or categories of art are suddenly posed by an immigration official, or an organic supermarket, or a Beijing *hutong*, the pressure to translate art into vernacular terms becomes extremely productive.

Sean Snyder's "Disobedience in Byelorussia" attempts to reconstruct a series of interrogations he once experienced on a flight to Israel. Placed in the position of having to justify his profession as an artist to an El Al security officer, Snyder was forced into a series of frank admissions through which his relationship to his own practice and to the mechanisms of the art word were laid bare.

In her conversation with Thomas Keenan, Natascha Sadr Haghighian returns to a Whole Foods supermarket near the New Museum for the second part of "Sleepwalking in a Dialectical Picture Puzzle." Beginning with the question of why the act of revealing atrocities and events on the political stage often fails to lead to direct political response, the two proceed to examine various ways of negotiating relationships to representation through which knowledge and action might merge.

Metahaven takes a look at the EU's struggle to forge a cohesive identity for itself while simultaneously avoiding the invocation of specific cultural and historical signs. As a form of state branding inadvertently informed by a Europe of practices rather than one of histories, only a melancholic patchwork of managerial protocols, border security, and surveillance seems to emerge. Meanwhile, Europe's dispossessed occupy its abandoned historical symbols in an effort to stake their claim to its legacy as well.

In the second part of his series of four comics "concerning matters to be left for a later date," Michael Baers looks back at a project he half-began with artist Pia Röncke in 2006, about a Danish terrorist group from the '70s and '80s known for their professional bank robberies.

After many attempts to develop material for the project, including a photo shoot of the two artists casing a bank in Copenhagen, Baers now revisits his collaboration with Rönicke in comic form.

For the latest installment of his “Positively Revisited” column, Simon Sheikh revisits Renate Lorenz’s 1993 essay “Copyshop: Kunstpraxis und politische Öffentlichkeit,” and looks back to a time in the early ‘90s just before Relational Aesthetics took hold, when artists aggressively sought to place art within the realm of the political.

And Carol Yinghua Lu looks at three small-scale artist-run initiatives in China establishing their own miniaturized conditions for producing and exhibiting art on their own terms. As a response to both an overblown Chinese art market and the looming financial crisis, it seems a perfect time to seek out human-scale means of artistic engagement in places and formations that the market can’t reach, possibly even benefitting from the crisis by re-inhabiting its vacated spaces.

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