

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan
Wood, Anton Vidokle
Editorial

e-flux journal #8 — september 2009 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle
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01/02

This issue marks the beginning of *e-flux journal's* second year. The open-ended editorial model seems to be working – contributors have frequently chosen to borrow, extend, or elaborate upon concerns opened up by previous texts. So far, discussions on self-design have spoken to an interest in self-building practices, the factory as a museum became the museum as a factory, while a speculative model for granting legitimacy to artistic acts in the absence of exhibition infrastructures sidestepped both spaces. An essay on the dormant potential in the art academy stimulated a discussion about art education, while questions of how art pedagogy can contribute to a broader understanding of literacy overlapped with an exploration of the borders between legibility and illegibility.

In this issue, Anselm Franke surveys modernity's borderland between the rational and the irrational. As the perception of modernity as a fundamentally rational enterprise was often exploited by imperial interests to provide a cover for not only irrational, but even heinous, acts abroad, the "rationalist veil" marks an important distinction between modernity's self-image and its actual practice – a site of potential reversal and collapse. Artists have been interested in moving back and forth across this territory for some time, and if conceptual artists are indeed mystics, as Sol LeWitt remarked, then the rationalist veil is what thinly conceals a rich place of artistic work: "a privileged site of a particular modern practice aimed at creating continuity, blending systemic knowledge, belief, and the power of imagery."

Bilal Khbeiz considers modernism's sensitive side, or, rather, its underside. How was an ethical imperative to protect the weak, conserve the ephemeral, and nurture the future translated into a representational mode mandating the weakness and frailty of subjects, returning them to the wreckage of the pre-modern, and enlarging the figure of the artist as compassionate god? As modernism's ethical plane twists around itself, the careful deployment of sympathy mobilized by artworks and images constitutes a form of violence all its own.

Following this twisting plane around a corner, Sven Lütticken discovers certain crevasses and eddies in the exceptional ethical space opened up by the unofficial circulation of viewing-copy DVDs of artworks. If an alternative art-world economy based on availability rather than scarcity could be inferred from the format and circulatory patterns of these bootlegged editions, then surely it would be one poised to engage a "complex, aggregate temporal

economy” that has more to do with the act of viewing than with display.

Barbad Golshiri reflects upon how a set of empty geographical and cultural signifiers has been deployed in the service of many highly visible exhibitions and lucrative artistic practices peddling the “aestheticization of stereotypes.” Careers have been built by reinforcing terms such as “Middle East” and “Arab” with meanings previously granted to them by political imperatives. When artists relinquish their last ounce of sovereignty by marketing cultural peculiarities with which they themselves are unfamiliar, surely we need to start thinking about what is to be done with the void that opens up in this space.

Another significant gap is the one that exists between work and life. Marion von Osten remembers Helke Sander’s 1978 film *Redupers*, which deals with the plight of a young woman in West Berlin struggling to reconcile work with life at a moment when the two were just beginning to become less distinguishable. Overworked and underpaid, self-determined yet enslaved, the anxiousness and precariousness that often accompanies flexible working patterns should not distract from “being able to consider the “material, social, and symbolic conditions necessary for life as interconnected entities that can overcome the traditional dichotomies of public/private and production/reproduction to set new standards for living life in its entirety.”

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