

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan
Wood, Anton Vidokle
**Editorial –
Harun Farocki**

e-flux journal #59 — november 2014 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle
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01/02

Organized in collaboration with Antje Ehmann and Doreen Mende, this issue of *e-flux journal* pays tribute to Harun Farocki (January 9, 1944–July 30, 2014) with a series of essays and reflections on his work and life by friends, collaborators, film scholars, and admirers. Those who knew Harun personally remember not only the epic influence of his work, but also his generosity as a friend and collaborator. As for us, we have never before dedicated a full issue of *e-flux journal* to a single artist.

From his best known films such as *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969), *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1989), and *Videograms of a Revolution* (together with Andrei Ujică, 1992) to endless others such as *How to Live in the German Federal Republic* (1990), *The Interview* (1996), and *An Image* (1983), he used cinematic techniques to make the functioning of power seductive, even thrilling to witness. "More images than the eye can see," the voice of Ulrike Grote taunts in *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, a film reflecting on the surveillance photos taken by US warplanes that had aerially documented what was happening in Nazi camps during World War II. Even though these images were not seen by human eyes – whether willfully or not – we realize that allied cameras were complicit in seeing, but not in knowing what happened.

Farocki's films lead us to think that the real brutality of power that uses advanced forms of technology, transmission, and mediation goes far beyond the application of physical violence on human bodies, and towards something much more delicate, much more refined. Its real violence arrives in something like boredom, in rendering the actual functioning of power as boring – uninteresting and technical on the surface, but eventually and ultimately authoritarian in its inaccessibility. It is from this point that Farocki's mastery begins by identifying cinema as a historical meeting point between technology and seduction. Cinema has always been the name of the machine for merging warfare and entertainment, propaganda and pornography.

So why can't we then draw a direct line from its history into a present where cinema has already been weaponized as the primary technique for mobilizing vision – for drones and romantic comedies alike? From here it only takes Farocki's elegant sleight of hand to twist the apparatus back on itself, to render its own technologies of control interesting, seductive enough to be perceivable, perceivable enough to be accessible. It is through cinema that power can become fascinating in its complexity, charming in its grace, and deadly in its poetry, to the point where the spell of its technology is

broken. Once the aura is gone, slippages appear at the very centers of command, where every lock can be picked and US generals fumble blindly with their own software. The technology has become impossible to master, and also available to anyone. With Harun's precise scrutiny, an intimate world of techno-social micro-machinations comes to life. When an automated gate closes and latches, Harun is there. When looking into the LCD screens replacing rear view mirrors in cars, he is there. He is there when we address a colleague at work with a certain title.

Farocki's last work looked at the design of worlds within video games. If we understand the history of cinema as also being the history of optics, then what are the physics of a world made out of vision, of a living cinema? In gamespace there is always a problem when you try to leave, when you reach the edge of the world and you try to go past it, to exit completely. And in Farocki's *Parallel I-IV*, the moment you reach the edge, you hit a transparent border. Even if you fall through past the limit, the film loop starts again and you are urged to return.

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