

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Gean Moreno, Stephen Squibb, and Anton Vidokle

Editorial – “As the world falls apart...”

e-flux journal #79 — february 2017 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Gean Moreno, Stephen Squibb, and Anton Vidokle
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So this is the plan that we came up with in the huddle, stunned and not so stunned at the storm clouds that have broken, at the deluge that is here: we are putting up alternative facts to the alternative facts that are being deployed in a rightward swerve that has us up against the rails. We are also putting up an alternative common sense to the centrist liberal one that is what ultimately, at the fundamental level, keeps this world from coming undone, preservation being its constitutive mandate. “Let us imagine,” David Marriott begins his essay in this issue, “that ‘black lives matter’ is a scandalous, even decadent claim, characterized, as the definition has it, by excess or luxury.” If this is so, Marriott makes clear, it is an excess we cannot afford to not afford. It is evident that #BlackLivesMatter and the organizations that coalesce the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) represent the most important and promising developments in the theory and practice of abolition. The luxury it is bound to may be communal above all else.

Unwinding fantasies of a post-racial society, the movement has rerouted political conversations and reignited imaginations. But we should bear in mind – keeping the alternative facts at bay – that this is happening through pelted riot shields and clogged circulation illuminated by the light of a blazing CVS store. And also, as Jared Sexton points out, through “the independent generation of a vast digital archive, a prolific online social-media commentary, and a rich analogue protest culture involving political graffiti, fashion, and dance, among other things.” Ferguson, as artist Carl Pope would probably put it, was and it ain’t: the future is its real name. It is what is happening, at all times and on all frequencies, as long as the desire to disorganize this world, to mangle it into something radically unlike itself, continues to burn. This is what is exemplary: the scorch-trail that the new insurrectionary bodies have put through everything, and which in turn is beginning to texture our moment away from the homogenous continuum of a resilient neoliberal and anti-black status quo, despite the desperate efforts to retrench it with executive orders and crony appointments.

The mandate we face is a new articulation of race and its role in reproducing class society. Or perhaps it’s the reverse: a new account of class and its role in reproducing racist society. Certainly the whole thing is gendered. The whole thing is increasingly difficult to disentangle from a mutating earth system, too. The whole thing is rotten. Everything must be considered, especially what lies beyond the world as it is currently assembled and the institutional practices holding it together. It is important to record this rethinking, to report back, to circulate

the material, and build the archive. History teaches that neither reform nor revolution is possible without revolutionary theory.

The mass media knows this too, and it has hostilely presented M4BL in general and BLM in particular in ways that simplify its ideas, downplay its organizational capacity, shade over its intersectional potency, and demonize the young black bodies whose availability to unaccountable state violence is the oldest and most consistent American reality since the European invasion. It certainly predates the republic, such as it is, and as of this writing, it may outlast it, now that a white supremacist has been elected. In light of such distorting narratives, it is important to provide a more robust, dynamic, and truthful image of this new activism through a partisan but critical lens. It seems necessary to place this current revolutionary sequence and its ensembles within a larger landscape of radical thinking, to highlight the bonds that exist in the crawlspaces of the common project.

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