

Nº094

Bifo – Franco Berardi

transverse

In this text I will try to understand some of the intentions of dOCUMENTA (13) according to my particular point of view, which is based on the belief that the current agony of capitalism will be a deadly trap for human evolution unless we adapt our culture and lifestyle to exhaustion, the dominant trend of our time. I will also try to understand how some of the works presented and assembled by dOCUMENTA (13) express propositions for emancipation and autonomy through withdrawal, exodus, and a proliferation of morphogenetic processes of recombination.

I am writing and acting in Europe, where the modern utopia of infinite growth has come to an end, and a process of irreversible decline is unfolding. The dissolution of the last great political project of modern times, the European Union, is approaching, and this process can be seen as a failure and a catastrophe, but also as the condition for the imagination of a new Europe—based on social solidarity and no longer on competition. From my (European) point of view, the collapse and rebirth of the European project may be seen as the beginning of a new process of autonomy based on frugality rather than accumulation, on friendship rather than rivalry.

Trauma

We have been told for so many years that “everything will be okay” that now it’s hard to believe that everything is more or less collapsing: pensions, social security, public sanitation, schools. Prosperity, democracy, civilized manners, may therefore disappear too.

What exactly is happening, down here, on Planet Earth?

Climate pundits have stated the matter clearly: time is up for the environment; floods and catastrophes are increasingly frequent and violent. But the Durban Conference, the umpteenth climate summit, has gone neglected. Nobody has money to spare for the rescue of mankind from the apocalypse of the planet, since everybody is haunted by the financial conundrum. Should we care about the collapsing physical planet and the growing number of starving people and unemployed or should we care about the abstraction of the abstraction of the abstraction?

Finance is the most abstract level of economic symbolization. It is the point of arrival of a long process of progressive abstraction that started with capitalist industrialization. Marx speaks of abstract labor in the sense of a growing distancing of human activity from its concrete usefulness. In the sphere of capitalism, the ap-

plication of human skills is only a means to obtain a more abstract goal: the accumulation of monetary value. Nevertheless, in the old period of industrialization as analyzed by Marx, the production of useful goods was still a necessary step in the process of valorization itself. In order to produce abstract value, the industrial capitalist was obliged to produce useful things. This is no longer true today, in the sphere of semicapital. Accumulation in the world of financial capitalism no longer passes through the production of goods, but goes straight to its monetary goal: extracting value from the pure circulation of money, from the virtualization of life and intelligence.

Financialization and the virtualization of human communication are obviously intertwined: thanks to the digitization of exchanges, finance has turned into a social virus that spreads everywhere, transforming things into symbols. The symbolic spiral of financialization is sucking down and swallowing up the world of physical things, of concrete skills and knowledge. The concrete richness of the Europeans is vanishing into a black hole of pure financial destruction. Nothing is created from this destruction, while the financial class is expropriating the outcome of the general labor force and of the general intellect.

Years ago, Jean Baudrillard said that the ever-growing debt has disappeared from the scene of the world, and is orbiting above the earthly atmosphere.

An electronic billboard in Times Square displays the American public debt, an astronomic figure of some thousands of billions of dollars which increases at a rate of \$20,000 a second. . . . In fact, the debt will never be paid. No debt will ever be paid. The final counts will never take place. The United States is already virtually unable to pay, but this will have no consequence whatsoever. There will be no judgment day for this virtual bankruptcy. . . . When one looks at the billboard on Broadway, with its flying figures, one has the impression that the debt takes off to reach the stratosphere. This is simply the figure in light years of a galaxy that vanishes in the cosmos. The speed of liberation of the debt is just like one of earth’s satellites. That’s exactly what it is: the debt circulates on its own orbit, with its own trajectory made up of capital, which, from now on, is free of any economic contingency and moves about in a parallel universe (the acceleration of capital has exonerated money of its involvements with the everyday universe of production, value and utility). It is not even an orbital universe: it is rather ex-orbital, ex-centered, ex-centric, with only a very faint probability that, one day, it might rejoin ours.²

Contrary to Baudrillard’s (disquieting? tranquillizing?) prediction, the “very faint probability” has come about: debt has come back to Earth, and it is now acting as a condition for the final predatory abstraction: life turned into time for repaying a metaphysical debt. Life, intelligence, joy, breathing—that which defines our life as human—is going to be sacrificed in order to pay off the

metaphysical debt. By its nature, debt has a physical side and a non-physical one. Debt is an act of language, a promise (I'll give back what has been lent to me), and is therefore immaterial. But when they performed the semiotic act of promising, the old industrial city dwellers referred to physical things. Money was the signifier of houses, kettles, and all kinds of material goods. In the late modern age, the financial sphere is acquiring an autonomous ontological feature that can be called metaphysical since it does not imply any reference to material goods or to physical acts of transformation. It only refers to the sphere of semiotic exchange: the self-valorization of money.

The autonomization of the financial sphere is based on the transformation of debt in a purely linguistic (both informational and psycho-relational) entity. A non-entity indeed. Kettles, houses, and food are no longer signified, but rather, abstract power. Baudrillard calls this "orbitalization" of the debt. But in the end, the metaphysical debt has come back to Earth, and in order to be paid, it is starting to predate the resources and energies of social life.

Transition

Do you remember the promise? Perfect harmony of the market, perfect harmony of the network. The invisible hand of the economy is going to spread wealth around the world, protecting humans forever from evil and chaos.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, which trusted in the future, the invisible hand was embedded in the global technology of the linguistic machine, and language, the essential environment of mankind, was turned into a wired, automated system. The imaginary apocalypse of Y2K announced the real apocalypse that actually came in spring 2000: the dot-com crash, the Prozac crash. The Internet economy was broken, and panic was spreading.

When panic is looming should we slow the rhythm or should we accelerate? The doctors were looking for answers when the towers of Manhattan were set ablaze, so answers were forced through emotion and fear. Doctor Bush decided to cure panic and depression with uppers, the stimulants called war, murder, bombing, destruction, invasion, hyper-violence. Did the therapy work? Actually, the economy was relieved: huge conglomerates of death like Blackwater, Halliburton, Texas oil, started pumping money and aggressive euphoria into the social brain and body. But everybody knows that injecting amphetamines into a depressed organism is not a good solution. Sooner or later, the patient jumps out of the window.

Eight years after the amphetamine injection, the U.S. economy crashed again, and this time for good. The crisis that broke out in September 2008 is not going to end in a recovery. And now we need to know: what if capitalism is dead and we are unable to create a higher form of social production, based on collective intelligence and on sensibility? What next, if society is unable to rebuild in solidarity a future based on frugality?

Tragedy

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, artists have essentially been the diagnosticians of the spreading disease of the first connective generation, the generation that has learned more words from the machine than from the mother. Now we perceive the emergence of a sense of tragedy. dOCUMENTA (13) goes beyond this phenomenology of suffering and alienation, because it is trying to start from the present tragedy without fear.

"Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it? That's what it is, to be a slave," says Roy Batty in *Blade Runner*.³ He does not want to be a slave; he does not fear tragedy or death. We are now starting from a tragedy that can no longer be concealed or ignored. We are moving beyond fear, depression, and panic. We are ready to stare out the Finazist (the frightening hybrid beast of financial coldness and resurfacing fascist aggressiveness) catastrophe that is destroying the legacy of modern culture. We are ready to start from this point and go beyond it. This is the innermost meaning of dOCUMENTA (13) as far as I can understand it.

According to Peter Szondi, tragedy is the unavoidable interference and mutual disturbance of conflicting irrepressible forces. Irreversible trends of devastation, pollution, impoverishment, are marking the horizon of our time. Slavoj Žižek reminds us that no end of the world is in sight, only the end of capitalism, which we are unable to imagine. He may be right, but we should consider the possibility that capitalism has so deeply pervaded every physical and imaginary dimension of the world that its collapse may lead to the end of civilization as we know it.

According to Greenpeace, in the month of September 2011, the level of radioactivity in Tokyo, a city of twenty million people, reached the level of Fukushima. The manmade apocalypse of nuclear power is beyond man's control. The product of man has turned into an ungovernable force of nature. This is the meaning of the word "tragedy." Tragedy is the sudden understanding of the impossibility of mastering the external forces of nature and history, because the external force is proceeding from within. Human action has polluted water and air and is now destroying the expectations of future generations. At the same time, human action is becoming less and less human. It is more and more the result of the logical concatenation of machines that oblige human beings to follow self-destructive paths.

For Nietzsche, tragedy is the effect of the return of Dionysus in a world civilized by Apollo, who represents the principle of measurement, the commensurability of things and words: reason. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche writes that Apollo, as ethical god, embodies the spirit of moderation and the principle of individuation, while Dionysus, the god of exploding joy and of chaos, embodies the spirit of dissolution, confusion, and orgasmic loss of individuality. Although the two principles were distinct, and civilization was identified with Apollo's hegemony, ancient Greek culture ritualized the temporary explosion of Dionysiac instincts.

In our day, the Apollonian harmony produced by modern civilization and technicization (the not always pacific *Hubris* of *Rationalisierung*) is based on the repression and discipline of the orgasmic compulsions lying inside the social body. When the social body

breaks the bonds of civilized normalcy, chaos reappears in the city. The crisis of modernity is first of all a crisis of the all-encompassing rational measurement: the end of the law of value, the end of the fixed relation between work-time and capital, the deterritorialization of productive energies, and the dissolution of fixed identities.

The hubris of civilization is giving way to the *nemesis* of hyper-complexity (chaos) and to the exploding effects of techno-psychosis. Rhizomatic deterritorialization breaks hierarchy and order, opening the door to the chaotic forces of aggression and panic. Dionysus is hidden in the machine, in the rhizomatic proliferation of self-reproducing virtual-financial viruses. Semicapital has unleashed the accelerated energy of the connective rhizome. The hyper-complexity of the financial machine is jeopardizing the rational relation between money and goods, finance and growth, and the commensurability of time and of value is giving way to the aleatory forces of floating values. Panic is the outcome, and government becomes a utopian goal of politics.

The techno-linguistic machine that is the financial web is acting as a living organism, and this mission is drying up the world. The main concern of the political class is to please the markets, whimsical deities that often become nervous. In order to placate the gods, politicians have to sacrifice the life of people. Markets want people to pay back their metaphysical debt because they are absorbed in the frenzy of keeping proliferating processes under control, and the effect is a spiral of deregulation, panic, and compulsory regulation.

Markets want to confiscate in advance future resources produced by society. The more money we give them, the more they will ask for, because the never-ending thirst of greed is embedded in their software, no matter what the human terminals of the financial machine are actually thinking and saying. Warren Buffett admits: "I'm ashamed of what we are doing to the human race," but he cannot stop the all-destroying software that builds the financial machine.

Tragedy occurs when human will is unable to take control of the automatisms embedded in daily life and is obliged to submit to their action. We are experiencing the explosion and the dissolution of the last great political project of modern times: the European Union. The failure of this project would be an introduction to violence, war, impoverishment, and cultural regression. The humanistic horizon itself would crumble. But the consolidation of the union, within the present guidelines, would also be disastrous. So we have to wish for, simultaneously, a failure of the European Union and a reinvention of it.

This is the task of the movement, today, in Europe: not resentment and reterritorialization, but the reinvention of Europe based on social solidarity and the potency of the general intellect. The movement is not opposing the post-national trend, is not reclaiming national sovereignty. It has to create the cultural conditions of a post-capitalist Europe. Therefore the collapse of Europe may become the premise for the abandonment of the monetarist stranglehold of Maastricht, and the condition of a higher form of sociopolitical union. Europe version 2.0 may start from the creation of the institutions of sharing and solidarity, instead of competition and greed.

Trans-human Worlding

dOCUMENTA (13) seems to present two possible and interlaced prospects outlining the horizon of our time. The first prospect could be named: too late. Too late for change, too late to save what has been labeled "human" during the past 500 years. Finazism is here and is going to inflict all its unavoidable effects on the living flesh of the planet and the living flesh of mankind. The second prospect may be seen as a *ligne de fuite*: Earth as seen by the largest meteorite in the universe, before it falls on our planet. This second prospect is the emergence of a trans-human history.

We have become accustomed to thinking about the process of morphogenesis (the creation of a new form) in terms of conscious and voluntary choices, in terms of political programs, political decisions (democratic or not), and political transformation. Now politics is dead. Not only is democracy over, but politics at large, intended as voluntary and efficient action, has ceased to exist. The brutal ejection by the European Central Bank and by Goldman Sachs of George Papandreou, who was guilty of calling for a referendum before taking vital (lethal) decisions about the economic future of the Greek people, has been the ultimate death knell of democracy in the very place where the word was conceived twenty-five centuries ago. On the other hand, financial dictatorship is a chain of automatisms, a second nature that we cannot change or destroy.

Trans-human history starts with the creation of a side space, a second human environment based on the full implementation of the general intellect and of the possibilities of the bio-web. Living cells separating from the decaying body of capitalism will proliferate. The methodology of morphogenesis, the methodology of the creation of the new world, will not be revolution, but schismogenesis.

Donna Haraway remarks that the limits of the modern humanistic horizon are becoming challenged and blurred, and that the new horizon is larger than *mankind*. She suggests that we should be able to look at our present from the point of view of women, and even animals and stones.⁴

Following a philosophical suggestion of Iritt Rogoff,⁵ I think that exhaustion is the defining cipher of our time: exhaustion of physical resources, exhaustion of the energy sources, exhaustion of the hyper-exploited mental energy, exhaustion of the social body that is growing old. The word "exhaustion" is anathema for the capitalist mythology of growth, but we have to get rid of this mythology, so exhaustion may become a wonderful starting point for accepting the present unavoidable going-back-to-darkness in a light way. I use "light" in the two meanings of the word: the sense of luminosity and the sense of levity. Italo Calvino, in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, sees lightness as the first feature of the new millennium (the heavy and dark millennium we are now inhabiting):

At certain moments I felt that the entire world was turning into stone: a slow petrification, more or less advanced depending on people and places but one that spared no aspect of life. It was as if no one could escape the inexorable stare of Medusa. The only hero able to cut off Medusa's head is Perseus, who flies with winged sandals; Perseus, who does not turn his gaze upon the face of the Gorgon but only upon her image reflected in his bronze shield. Thus Perseus comes to my aid even at the moment, just as I too am about to

be caught in a vise of stone—which happens every time I try to speak about my own past. Better to let my talk be composed of images from mythology. To cut off Medusa's head without being turned to stone, Perseus supports himself on the very lightest of things, the winds and the clouds, and fixes his gaze upon what can be revealed only by indirect vision, an image caught in a mirror. . . . Perseus's strength always lies in a refusal to look directly, but not in a refusal of the reality in which he is fated to live; he carries the reality with him and accepts it as his particular burden.⁶

Don't look directly at the horror; don't look directly at darkness. Indirect vision (irony) is a condition for avoiding fear, for avoiding slavery; a condition for autonomy. Amid the devastation of the ongoing depression we have to create a territory of carelessness, and therefore of care. Irony—not cynicism—will be the language of this movement, which is already anticipating the coming tragedy, fully aware of the force of exhaustion.

Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don't mean escaping into dreams or into the irrational. I mean that I have to change my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification. The images of lightness that I seek should not fade away like dreams dissolved by the realities of the present and future.⁷

Autonomy is an army of enlightened trans-humans who no longer care as much about the future of humankind because they are merging in the bio-neuronal web of the animal and of the machine.

Pris' words to Roy in *Blade Runner* are the best declaration of this passage from the human to the trans-human: "Then we're stupid and we'll die."

We have come to know that we humans are stupid, that we'll die. Due to exhaustion, the affective general intellect is dissolving identification, reducing attachment to the self. Shared behaviors like empathy and solidarity tally with different spheres of collective behavior. Transcending the human is trans-substantiation, the ability of the individual mind to merge into a trans-generic web of sensibility.

Transcendence

After the disappearance of the non-capitalist world in 1989, many started to believe that otherness was over, and that therefore an alternative was unthinkable. "There Is No Alternative," said the neoliberal-converted Stalinist with a sardonic grin. But the neoliberal-converted Stalinist is wrong, since the non-capitalist world never existed; it had never been an alternative. The Soviet Union was not the outside. Rather, it was an avatar of never-ending authoritarian-military darkness. Russia has not become a democracy since 1989.

And Leninism, as a historical embodiment of Communism, has been a deadly trap for worker's autonomy in the world. The creation of the Third International subjected the autonomous process of the emancipation of society to the dialectics of alternative, the proliferation of autonomous forms of life to the duality of revolution versus capitalism. The end of historical Communism (or real Communism, in the cynical parlance of the worshipper of reality) has opened the way to autonomy, a space of possible emancipation of the general intellect from capitalist software, a space of prolif-

eration of uncountable diverging and interweaving singular drifts, possibly merging and recomposing in a process called movement.

Since 1989, we have been catapulted into the hyperspace of perfect immanence: no outside is left. Desire has been absorbed by competition, acceleration, aggressiveness, violence, war. Desire has been invested into business. Business: the most horrible word in the vocabulary—the Protestant triumph of being in the light of God because we are exchanging value, the vile relief of suspending the naked experience of time—getting busy. Everybody wants to be a businessman. What for? In order not to see, not to feel, not to understand the otherness inside.

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have written that there is no longer any outside to capital, since everything is always already "subsumed" into the capitalist network.⁸ They are right. So resistance has to be a process from the inside. But we want to go beyond resistance; we need to go beyond resistance. We have to create a space autonomous from capitalist rule, since capitalist rule is now annihilating good life.

In order to go beyond resistance, in order to create an autonomous space, we need to create an outside from within. Imagination, poetry: the act of creation of an outside is the poetic act we need now. Call it, if you want, imaginative transcendence.

It's not true that everybody wants to be a businessman. Some months ago I read in a newspaper that when asked the question, "What do you want to do in your life?" 30 percent of German youngsters answered: "I want to be an artist." I don't know why. I guess they wanted to say: "I don't want to be a slave."

Traces

When confronted with a flow of information that is too fast for conscious elaboration, the individual brain tends to panic, then disinvests desire from the flow itself, and finally disconnects and falls into depression.

Don't you see the traces of exhaustion everywhere in the present world? Humankind is growing old, because of prolonged life expectancy, and because of the fall in the birth rate. Everywhere in the world (with the remarkable exception of the Islamic world), the average age is rising and the collective brain is growing old. "Exhaustion" is a keyword of the next insurgency, an insurrection that will be based on withdrawal and a refusal to lend life to the machine, based on the overall rejection of participation in the malignant trap of democracy, on the refusal of time, and on the creation of an autonomous time-space.

In my opinion, future artists will explore the happy evolution of exhaustion, but so far its painful side has been their common ground of perception and understanding.

In a letter sent to Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Kai Althoff, for example, invited to take part in dOCUMENTA (13), asks to be freed from the exhausting task of participating: "free me from fulfilling my prior agreement to participate in next year's documenta, as I feel that the things lying ahead of me will crush me . . . make me feel as if trapped in a chain of obligations . . . I now ask you to let me go . . . but I am fully aware I let you down."

Have a look at the cities of Europe, where the financial dictatorship is sucking out life and future and hope. Some people are peacefully demonstrating, but the ruling class is totally deaf. The markets cannot accept any negotiation, and democracy has been silenced. Some people are fighting against the police and are burning banks. This is totally understandable and may be of some psychological relief. But burning banks is useless, since the power is not in the banks, but in the ethereal cyberspace, where figures, algorithms, and software are circulating. To withdraw energy from the economic game, we must invest desire in the outside horizon of exodus and temporary autonomous zones. Enhancing the potency of social imagination is the only path we can follow now.

The word “revolution” is resonating again in the streets of Europe, as the future is destroyed by the financial dictatorship and by the arrogance of neoliberal politics. But “revolution” is misleading. Revolution is an old metaphor for social change, based on the belief that human will is able to govern social processes, based on the belief that the infinite complexity of social life can be reduced to a totality. In the past, this reduction was thinkable, since the relevant flows of information were few in number and relatively easy to encompass. But now it is impossible and unthinkable.

The revolutionary illusion thrived when society was partly silent, strongly territorialized, and easily identifiable in a massive condition of homogeneity. Modern revolutions (the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the proletarian revolutions of the twentieth) have always been conceived as the instauration of a new totalizing form replacing the old totalizing form. This is unthinkable in a society where social class is a vectorial concept, and labor, like capital, is deterritorialized and dematerialized. Revolutions of the past were triggered by the effects of disruption: wars, economic crises, earthquakes, generated processes of insubordination and the overthrowing of the central power. But in the present conditions, disruptions no longer act as triggers to revolution. On the contrary, since the density and the speed of information are too high to be grasped and subverted by a revolutionary group, the disruption tends to be morphostatic and to reinforce the pattern that has produced the disruption itself. Fear, panic, palsy, now follow disruption, not revolutionary action.

We have to abandon the belief in subversion and overcoming (*Aufhebung*) and adopt the idea that social becoming is not the transition from one totality to another totality, but the withdrawal from the space of domination, and the occupation of spaces for survival. When the Argentinean economy collapsed in 2001, people did not try to reinstate the force of the centralized state and of the economy, but opened popular restaurants in the streets, occupied factories and public spaces, in order to escape misery through proliferation and self-organization of the living cells of society.

The word “insurrection” is much more fitting than the word “revolution” if we wish to conceptualize the social revolts that are increasingly punctuating the contemporary agony of capitalism. Social morphogenesis has to be re-thought from the point of view of the biological metaphor of recombination, not from the point of view of the metaphor of astronomical revolution. Mutating cells may arise from the rotting organism of capitalism, and insurrection is the process of recomposition and concatenation of these cells. Insurrection means rising up, but also deploying the inner potencies of a body. Insurrection hints at the idea that the potency of the general intellect can no longer be contained by the capitalist mode of production. Insurrection is the disentanglement of the potency of the social body from the present gestalt.

As the Buenos Aires-based group of Errorists named Etcetera has pointed out, the error, the misuse, the misunderstanding, will be tools for the coming insurrection, recalling Erkki Kurenniemi’s remark of some decades ago: “as long as humans can misuse technology we’ll never be never slaves to it.”⁹

Exodus, the creation of a new space for production and exchange, the creation of a time that is outside debt and guilt and sacrifice, will be the methodology for autonomy. Insolvency will be the relation of autonomy with the world of exploitation: do not pay any debt, neither the monetary nor the symbolic kind. This is the condition for the emancipation of the potency of the general intellect, reconciled with the body. This is the condition for the emptying of the overcrowded time-space of exploitation. Spreading consciousness of this process of withdrawing as a way to revive local life and communication is the meaning of the AND AND AND project.

Notes

1 | Doug Ashford in a project proposal for dOCUMENTA (13).

2 | Jean Baudrillard, “Global Debt and Parallel Universe,” trans. François Debrix, in *Digital Delirium*, ed. Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997 [orig. 1996]), p. 38.

3 | *Blade Runner*, 1982, directed by Ridley Scott, produced by Michael Deeley, screenplay by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, based on Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*.

4 | Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge; London: Free Association Books, 1991).

5 | In a conversation with the author.

6 | Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 4–5.

7 | *Ibid.*, p. 7.

8 | Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

9 | Quoted after Erkki Kurenniemi, *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, no. 007 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011), p. 3.

October 4, 2011

To the General Assembly and Affinity Groups of Occupy Wall Street,

14 months ago, a group based in New York, on Beaver Street, a few blocks south of your occupation sought inspiration and new cultural forms by visiting the US Social Forum. This trip into one of the nodes of contemporary social movements was not just symbolic. Pulsing through this journey to Detroit, a site which encapsulates the apocalypse and abandonment awaiting anyone who believes capitalism and our planet can both survive this crisis, was a question which asked where does and how can art reside within social movements.

2011 has brought us into a new era and we have tried to look around us. Those who believed that change will only come from without have been shown that even those working inside this machine are ready to revolt. How better to understand phenomena such as Wikileaks and all of those who have risked their lives to reveal that at many scales, the systems we inhabit are corrupt. Then the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were a call that we have truly entered another epoch. And those who stand against the emancipatory struggles resisting a global mafia, that has sought to privatize and financialize everything from our homes to the wheat in our bread, stand against history.

Left to a previous era are the suicides of 'martyrdom' operations which revealed their impotency (in confronting racism, poverty, inequality and new enclosures) by only emboldening a worldwide security state, armed and ready to build new walls and designate any resistance to its rule as terrorism. This era has brought us the convergence of bodies that fight not in the name of any afterlife, but for life here and now. What else could one expect when the basic subsistence of millions is daily exposed to the fate of a senseless pseudo-market, which has become the playpen of bloated vampires who go by names like 'hedge fund manager' 'billionaire investor' or 'chief executive officer.' Those same vampires have held up an untenable equation to us: Privatize gains yet socialize losses.

A revolutionary wild fire has spread from Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Occupied Palestine, even to Israel. The sparks have spread to Portugal, Greece, Spain, back to Greece again and to the streets of London. Now they have landed in yet another one of the capitals of capital, maybe THE symbolic capital of this financial mafia, Wall Street. In all of these sites, we have heard different variations of ENOUGH.

And you have put a number to this: 'the 1%.'

You have used every means available to find a language to utter these words in a process that gives potential meaning to democracy. As opposed to the false oppositions between parties who vie for the power to govern how the ship should sink or the train should crash: you are asking to stop the train or bring the ship to shore. We need to change our coordinates: the numbers don't add up, and the equations seem to always miss the most elemental of things.

Your lack of demands acknowledges the multiplicity of demands and commands that our imaginaries yield to daily. Your lack of demands leaves space for a discussion to emerge and for ideas to grow through a common time. Your lack of demands refuse to recognize that there is anyone manning the ship other than abstract algorithms and economic laws which miraculously always seem to benefit only the 1%.

Thus your hand-made placards, your communiqués, and pamphlets are not simply a call to a sovereign pleading for new privileges, rights or protections. They are beacons of hope, of love, of refusal, of solidarity, poetry for a multitude to construct a common space in one of the centers of Empire and to rethink what a common horizon could become. Our forests, our water, our air, our soil, our seas are our commons. Our labor, our ideas, our words, our relations are our commons. These cannot belong either to a state or to private enterprise, as they cannot be contained by any border nor controlled by any single entity; they are the basic components of life. Yet, what we have been asked to accept as our common destiny has been toxic debt and toxic waste.

Joseph Beuys once claimed that everyone is an artist. And Robert Filliou once asserted that art is that which makes life more interesting than art. In these and many other terms, we can understand you as artists. But we would like to add another proposition to these statements: art can also be that burst of creation which does not properly belong inside the domain in which it first emerges. And though we are clear that, what you and the millions behind you and with you, from Tunis to Cairo from Athens to Madrid, are doing is politics; we also see these actions as a deterritorialization of the politics we knew over these last decades.

We have heard of efforts to bring artists to Wall Street in the name of an Occupennial. While we support all efforts to bring attention and legitimate your undertaking, we believe that we must not miss this opportunity to recognize the artists and artistry within this emergent movement. Art is not outside or separate from this movement, it is taking place each day you persist to build this common space/time.

We should not abandon or overlook what this moment of history calls from us. We don't need recognizable artistic names to add legitimacy to this movement, we need the multitudes, the whatever singularities, the dark matter, the hackers, the day laborers, the 'service providers', the precariat, the cognitarist, the caretakers, the general intelligence that is and has been cultivated across multiple virtual, material and invisible networks- to translate their specific know-how and know-what into political action.

How to translate this massive collective and common intelligence into political action? This has been a critical question of this young century. The nascent processes taking shape globally, which you are a part of, are an attempt at an answer. The art that aspires to become political, especially in moments of upheaval, must have the capacity, awareness and grace to become imperceptible, become part of a movement.

In a lecture on February 22, 1969 Michel Foucault, concluded his remarks on the 'Author Function' by speculating that at the very moment when our society would be in the process of changing, the author function would disappear, and invoking Samuel Beckett, ... Today anonymity calls us out of a tyranny of naming, which runs the risk of subsuming every political action or statement into someone's property or a spectacular game for attention. And all of you, who have anonymously and collectively plastered with texts and occupied the streets of Tunis, Athens, Madrid, Cairo, London, New York and beyond have introduced a new game to politics. No authors for this movement and no leaders. And whatever new rules belong to this game remain to be explored. Certainly, the old tricks of trying to subsume or reduce molecular processes to individuals or parties will have no place here.

This is not solely a game of appearances, but also of consequences. And the most significant political actors as well as artists of this new century recognize this fact. The fate of a planet and all forms of life and culture which inhabit it, hang in the balance.

We remain inspired by your ability to spread across continents and build up the consistency of a new socio-cultural-political movement. And if politics has an aesthetics then you are the aestheticians of an emergent politics. And thus, a potent contributor to an emergent force not only in the politics, but also the political art of this new century.

In solidarity and singularity and multiplicity,
and ... and .. and ...