Editorial

This week in Russia, Alexei Navalny was sentenced to over two years in prison, partly for violating parole while in a coma from a state-sponsored murder attempt. Following a week of large-scale demonstrations across Russia protesting his arrest, the skilled lawyer and anti-corruption activist stood in court before his sentencing and stated, “I hope very much that people won’t look at this trial as a signal that they should be more afraid. This isn’t a demonstration of strength—it’s a show of weakness. You can’t lock up millions and hundreds of thousands of people. I hope very much that people will realize this. And they will. Because you can’t lock up the whole country.”

In this issue of *e-flux journal*, Ariel Goldberg and Yazan Khalili reflect on photographic images’ ties to violence, surveillance, and the state—“the camera that eats all other cameras.” In their essay “We Stopped Taking Pictures,” the recently appointed cochairs of the photography department at Bard’s MFA program explain the irony of their own coincidental decisions to stop taking pictures themselves by identifying a vastly expanded photographic regime that the field must now account for. Today, the two photographers who stopped taking pictures teach their graduate students through photographic media (webcams) about the double-edged sword of surveillance—the CCTV footage from cameras Palestinians install to prevent theft that are also used by the IDF to surveil them, or the cop who kills regardless of his body camera or the bystander filming him. The overabundance of photographic documentation makes harder questions necessary. For example: “How can one photograph laws, these less visual forms of violence that remain the status quo?”

Jace Clayton replays Meriem Bennani’s video of a pale crowd at the US Capitol—but the one that sang there in triumph (or in this version, screamed) four years ago, not last month. Despite all that’s horrible now, including the fact that “the crumbling nation-state is inhabited by networked communities that no longer share a remotely consensual reality,” Sven Lütticken looks deeply into the present (and recent past) for, among searing critiques, signs of emergence and potential possibilities.

Two essays in this issue round out the special miniseries co-commissioned by Katia Krupennikova and Inga Lāce as part of “Survival Kit 11 (Being Safe Is Scary).” In addition to Goldberg and Khalili’s text in the series, Imogen Stidworthy, an artist and filmmaker, brings together fragments of her work and relationships with language amongst people on and around the spectrum of nonverbal autism.

Nikolay Smirnov peers into the history of Russia’s cultural and religious immanentism—a family of syncretic worldviews rejecting Abrahamic religious transcendence in favor of the immanent physical world of “earth, cosmos, ecumene, material environment, or social relations.” Fahim Amir’s “Cloudy Swords” encounters a colonial

avant-garde of honeybees spreading with white settlers in America, mosquito armies that recall past colonial panic and present viral dilemmas, and insects determined to colonize the colonizer in the twentieth century.

J.-P. Caron traces world-making and world-unmaking between sci-fi, the philosophers Nelson Goodman and Peter Strawson, and the constitutive dissociations of Henry Flynt. Xenia Benivolski writes on Dora Budor's *The Preserving Machine*, an ongoing installation based on a Phillip K. Dick story about a scientist's desperate attempt to use animals and insects to preserve European music. This is an entryway to tracing human relation to birdsong, which reveals "otherwise invisible political interventions into landscapes and soundscapes."

Sonali Gupta and H. Bolin urge us to understand the coronavirus beyond good and evil, through fugitive mechanics, and on the farther side of the calculus of survival—"in a manner that neither applauds the virus nor remains paralyzed by fear, uncritically accepting state measures of control and austerity in hopes of a return to normal."

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