

Jan Paul Evers – Voluntarismus vorbedachter Unbedachtbarkeit (The Voluntarism of Deliberate Indeliberation)

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“The insurrections have come, but not the revolution. (...) however great the disorders in this world may be, the revolution always seems to choke off at the riot stage.”

The Invisible Committee, 2013

1 Structure

The past decades have been marked by far-reaching social, economic, and technological transformations, whose effects can only be marginally read on the surface of the reality of Central European life. However, the structures that determine our everyday lives are perhaps less the streets before our doors, but rather the international complex of firms, banks, trade, tariffs, and tax laws. The increasing abstraction of capitalist processes and the global circulation of labor power, commodities, capital, and property as digitalized information are transforming the conditions of the political. Multinational corporations operate unpredictably between the borders of national states — as Keller Easterling has analyzed in her study *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* — while free trade zones increasingly equipped with powers of self-government threaten national sovereignty worldwide and evade the jurisdiction of democratically legitimated power.

2 Protest

In 2007 the Invisible Committee published their widely-received essay *The Coming Insurrection*, in which they verified the crisis of western democracy and called for the active establishment of alternative communal social forms while formulating concrete instructions for how this goal was to be achieved — demonstrations, occupations, sabotage. The insurrections came: Occupy Wall Street; significant protest movements in Spain and Greece; those in Turkey and the Arabic countries albeit under vastly different conditions; and numerous others. Yet, in the best cases, their transformative effects have remained unrealized. Though SYRIZA was able to ascend to political power in Greece, it would nonetheless have to defer to the austerity politics of the European Union and the IWF. Meanwhile, the economically liberal and culturally conservative Partido Popular continues to rule in Spain after the parliamentary elections last year. In Turkey, Erdoğan was able to continue expanding his autocratic program and the repression of political opposition, while the revolution in Syria has developed into one of the largest humanitarian catastrophes and international political crises of the past decades.

But what are the reasons for these failures? We can be certain that they are specific to each instance. The conditions in Turkey and the Arabic countries are decisively different from those in the USA and the European countries. The protests that were essentially directed against autocratic rulers and regimes were usually crushed by even greater repression. But what about the protests that have essentially been directed against the consequences of neoliberal politics? In

their book *Inventing the Future*, philosophers Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams assert that the western anti-neoliberalism movements have failed to recognize the actual and existing political, social, and especially technological structures of power — already in 1933, Brecht would ask in his *Threepenny Opera*, “What 's a jemy compared with a share certificate? What's breaking into a bank compared with founding a bank?” Furthermore, Srnicek and Williams also accuse these movements of a folkloric complacency, in which they celebrate demonstration as a self-representation of their own moral superiority that conforms to the dictates of social media, supplemented by a stubborn retro-chic that dwells, as it often has in Europe, on the protest movements of the sixties. As recently as the middle of last year, Chris Dercon, the former director of the Tate Modern, declared, “Protest is part of our brand.” Carrying out protests, or preserving the possibility thereof, no longer aims at structural transformation, but rather at preservation. Under these conditions, what is there left for artists to do?

3 Visual Practice

In his process-oriented practice, Jan Paul Evers examines the ways in which images function, from the diverse processes by which they arise through to the ways in which they seduce observers. Every photographic image incorporates not only the material but also the social and cultural conditions of its production and is thus already the object of a decidedly subjective fiction — an excerpt of the whole which it simultaneously conceals — which then, in the moment of observation through the lens of an observing subject's individual horizon, is newly fictionalized once more. In other words, there can be no external verification for subjective perception. Nevertheless, an observing subject can still recognize the difference between various perceptions of the same object and can thus approach knowledge of the object through a sort of triangulation. The object demands ever more images of itself and thus more image-objects in order to be understood. In his practice, Jan Paul Evers uses elements from a variety of image sources. Through both digital editing and analog development, he focusses these elements, exposing and recombining them outside of their original contexts. He practices a reverse Constructivism which does not refer to a utopian other but rather deploys its artificiality in order to allow the occasionally hidden structures of the given to come to light. In this process, contingency — the space of indeterminacy created by the potential inherent in the objects and materials he uses — always plays a constitutive role in the development of the concrete works. The specific way in which the images are edited is influenced by the nature of the digital tools available, while the material itself escapes the artist's overarching control during the process of analog development.

According to Srnicek and Williams, it is these uncharted spaces of indeterminacy within social, digital, and administrative technologies which contain the potential for lasting revolutions against the disastrous global repercussions of neoliberal politics. Instead of closing ourselves off from the future, we should allow ourselves to become involved with it. The present has already passed in every moment, and the structure of reality has barred any way back.

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