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Nº 37 TRANSFIGURATION

ARTS OF THE WORKING CLASS

**Critical Imagination
Deficit** by Sarnath Banerjee
& other stories from
the 13th Berlin Biennale
for Contemporary Art
(14.06.-14.09.2025)

Commoning Grief
by Lea Kristin Würtenberger

**Die Einberufung
zivilgesellschaftlicher
Tribunale**
von Madlyn Sauer

**Ruth Patir's
(M)otherland**
by María Inés Plaza Lazo

Everyone Is Thirsty for a Line

**Accumulation
Speziale:**

**REFLECTING ON
THE STRUCTURES OF
INSTITUTIONAL
COLLECTIONS**
with the **Migros Museum
für Gegenwartskunst**

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VELVET, ARTS OF THE WORKING CLASS
& KÜNSTLERVEREIN MALKASTEN

(Hydrate Telepathy)

5.-7. Sep. 2025

SOUND SESSIONS BY STAV YEINI, TOLOUSE LOWTRAX,
MONELLA, GREGOR DARMAN, SEBASTIAN WELICKI & OTHERS

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ID_03 Ruth Patir, (M)otherland, 2024, video still. © and courtesy of the artist

A certain truth emerges from our inability to trace how beliefs manifest across times and cultures: we are drawn to believing that faith is the most powerful source of reality. Faith doesn't bring us to transcendence, but rather to transfiguration: the alteration of matter and meaning through constraint—economic, emotional, and historical. In this summer of hell and hot commies, we consider how beliefs, like bodies, are shaped by the systems they inhabit and resist. Everyone is thirsty for miracles, but few ask what this thirst says about the flames in which we're caught.

The thirst also reveals a troubling paradox: we no longer move forward through our beliefs. Instead, we remain frozen in place clinging too desperately to them. This condition is a consequence of capitalist indoctrination, the religious characteristics of which are described by Walter Benjamin in *Capitalism as Religion* (1921). In the text he warns that **capitalism is the only religion that permits no exit; a cult of scarcity, a liturgy of guilt, a theology of endless extraction.** Amid genocide in Gaza, anti-migrant brutality in the U.S., air war against Iran, and a tightening net of identitarian politics in Germany, belief becomes a site of suspicion—a fragile posture more than a force. We cling to belief, not to build power but to survive the absence of empowerment. Under recrudescing austerity economics, art communities mirror the conditions they once challenged. They are **fragmented by**

funding cuts, fatigued by call-outs, and too overworked to protect the joy that once resisted alienation. The (art)market absorbs critique as flavor. The polarization becomes profitable.

And yet—transfiguration names another register. This issue departs not from ideology, but from a shift in consciousness. It is the shapeshifting fury of Meii Soh's fugitive bodies. It is Naama Shoshana Fogiel Lewin's insistence that we abandon the illusion of the indivisible "I." It is Ruth Patir's litanies reclaiming birthing from the death drive of state control. It is Alessandro Y. Longo's unabating "wonder," which insists on enchantment as a form of resistance to despair.

To stay with the wound long enough to name it—this is transfiguration. The Mothers of Tel Rumeida, Hebron, document survival not for spectacle, but for memory. Pablo Amaringo's ayahuasca cosmologies—revisited by Verónica Brands—do not offer escape but insurgent clarity. Zoncy Heavenly mediates herself, asserting presence as refusal. Sarnath Banerjee and Cosima von Bonin—each dissolve the barrier between the sacred and the quotidian, the tragic and the comic.

In the marketplace of belief, even miracles are priced. Our contributors insist, however, that the true miracle is not transcendence—it is stubborn endurance: a letter from a worker; a tribunal convened by the community; a museum forced to

confront what and whom it excludes. We reflect upon such forms of endurance with Raqs Media Collective, and on the embeddedness of life into labor, as well as how accumulation is not only a capitalist formation, but a sediment left by the passing of time. A resource, rather than a commodity. In Eigentums formen, Eric Golo Stone drafted a questionnaire through which museums can reflect on their collection acquisition process. It seems to ask what the underlying parameters are, beyond ownership and prestige? Our columnist unifies a choir of atheists. Thus, this issue is not an antidotal doctrine—it is an exercise in difficultation. Jas Wenzel and Duygu Örs ask us to live with such contradiction.

So **what does it mean to change form under pressure?** It means refusing consolation. It means turning fracture into a method, as suggested by Jota Mombaça. Not magic that blinds, but transformation that burns. Not belief as obedience—but belief as practice, as possibility, as refusal.

In the ruins of consensus, everybody is thirsty for miracles. But what if we are the site of their making? **What if belief, when unfastened from loyalty to power, can again become a tool—not just for coping, but for changing the world?** Transfiguration is not a cure. It is a crack where pressure meets form, and something, finally, arises.

Imprint

Founders / Publishers / Directors
Verantwortlicher i.S.d. 18 Abs. 2 MStV
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Layout / Design Issue no. 37
optikom.com

We thank our volunteers:
Louisa Stank, Teresa Mayr, Nanna Kaiser,
Hannah Lu Verse, Mika Schneck, Nicole
Yildirim
Druck: Die Rheinpfalz
Alle Vertriebs- und Kund*innenanfragen an
die Verlagsadresse:
Reflektor Monde gUG (haftungsbeschr.nkt)
Schillerpromenade 10, 12049 Berlin
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Rochelle Feinstein

11.07. – 14.12.2025

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Rochelle Feinstein, ROYGBIV (Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain), 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

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Dear Mum,

It is strange and performative, writing to you in a language you don't speak fluently, English. It is strange to write to you at all. I haven't done that since middle school on your birthday. But one must step out of what they habitually do once in a while. To find something new, a pebble of truth on the shoreline of the sea of everyday thoughts.

I think you have always wanted me to believe in something. Anything. I don't know if I do. There are days when I feel like a lone boat sinking in water. My body submerged, and my head, above the waves.

You sent me to religious school when I was 7. There, I learned about the history of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and being Jewish. You were proud of me when I decided to be a Buddhist for a year. You were proud of me when I tried to fast half days with you during Ramadan. You were proud of me when I passionately told you about the mikveh. You were even proud of me when I followed one of your best friends to Easter Mass and told you thereafter that I was jealous of people who'd get "the little biscuit" at the end. You were ready for me to join anything. As long as it made me whole. As long as it made me happy. We've barely talked about god, whom you believe in and would be terrified to learn I don't. Your brain, suddenly frazzled, lost. Your brain is like one of those seashells that you used to hold to my ears for me to hear the sea. Only louder, scarier.

You taught me everything you thought I needed to know about rituals and superstitions. Believing in something is crucial. That everyone needs to trust in a higher power that guides them through life, through right and wrong. You often talk about the angel watching over your shoulder. I pray it exists, and that it's watching over mine, too. I sometimes think that your father, my dad's father, my grandmother, and one of my best friends are all protecting me "from above". I'm unsure what that would mean, but I think of their spirits silently drifting, their bodies surrounding me like sea foam to a starfish.

You taught me about fate, maktub, the written. To check for signs, for appearances. Ants bring good fortune. Hornets intensity. Salt keeps demons at bay. You told me that faith in Islam is truly about generosity and tolerance. And how the rules I follow in life have to be the ones I choose for myself. So you've never forced me to do Ramadan, or to pray, and you were against any form of interdictions or frustrations. Everything had to be "between God and you".

But...

Mya Berger is a Moroccan and Swiss curator, artist, and writer with a background in economics, sociology and cultural studies. Her practice touches upon the poetry and **viscerality** of research and documentation. She is interested in non-didactic approaches to learning and communication. She also researches maintenance practices and their artistic and cultural representations in the Moroccan diaspora.

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I am not allowed to be inside a red car, or to read about witchcraft, because someone in our family passed years ago. And I should be careful with whom I share information about myself, so as not to bring the evil eye. I shouldn't rejoice too quickly. I shouldn't believe something bad will happen to me, or that it will happen inevitably. Remedies for the evil eye include knocking on wood, saying "55", listening to surahs of the Quran, saying "Allah y fhad", or touching Fatima's hand pensively.

Intuitively, and automatically, I follow your precepts. I don't know if I believe or if I even understand them, but my gestures must reveal I do. And I love seeing raised eyebrows, here in Europe. Because people don't know you are my mum. They don't know I was raised on the other side of the Mediterranean. Just like you.

You once took my little sister to the sea and doused her with water seven times, with each passing wave. You told us that was the ultimate way to get rid of her string of bad luck. You and I, we were both born by the sea. I think that must amount to something. When I visit you, one of the first things we do is run to the beach. Our bare feet planted in the sand, our calves submerged in water, we take in the sun. You better than I, since your dark skin contrasts with my pale one.

The waves, whether raging or calm, fill us with the same sense of purpose. The sea is here. Uncontrollable, unpredictable. But we must believe that it will be good for us. We listen to its sounds, lying on beach towels, and I feel happy. **I realize that what I believe in is faith itself.** And maybe I believe in you, too.

Mya

PS: I think I wrote this in English and not in French or Darija because I don't want you to understand what's in this letter, I want you to feel it. That's what we do.

