LAVA
Letters from the Volcano
#1 BE WATER
AN AESTHETIC CONCEPTUAL BULLETIN
IN THE FORM OF AN EPISTOLARY RIOT
Forcing ourselves to live inside the furious and hyper-accelerated present this garbage society is forcing us to live (or better die) into, is a mistake. Believing that with LAVA #1 we could do something for the insurrectional present that was unfolding in front of our eyes during the Autumn and northern Winter of 2019, rushing after the dopamine rush, was setting up the condition for its after-glow, post-orgasmic down. It’s not possible to do anything “actual”, anything present, because the present doesn’t exist anymore, because, in a time of computational production and surveillance, the present moves too fast for human emotional and cognitive capacity. The shrinking of the present into fragmented instants becomes the state of the socio-political, the non-human scale of the speed at which the political events unfold in a time of ecological, social, economical and political collapse. If this is true, running after the present, or the instant – which, as such, is overcharged affectively and in turns produces its allure and addiction – can only produce frustration and unhappiness.
This is what has happened in relation to LAVA – we tried to be in the instant (the insurrectional momentum), and the constitutional impossibility of succeeding in doing that, together with the pandemic emergency, opened up the space for doubts and frustration. Does it make sense to come out with LAVA #1 Be Water, now, that everything seems so different?

Obviously, also the past and the future, do not exist anymore. And yet, the destruction of past, present and future is exactly the reason why LAVA makes still sense. It makes sense because the only thing to do is doing things après-coup, post-mortem, after the glow, from a limbo: not to galvanize crowds and hoping in the global revolution, the way our naive enthusiasm was telling us only a couple of months ago, but to slowly put the seeds for another inevitable to come, to care and preserve some of the energy that came from the outburst, when the outburst is gone, dissolved, silenced, in Santiago as much as in Hong Kong or elsewhere. Because the inevitable opens to a new temporality, and although the inevitable is the event that we can’t predict, I want to believe that there is a way to prepare the ground for the it, or, better, that there is a way to prepare us for its arrival. This preparation is LAVA, too. And this is care at its best, I think, cause it’s care without aim, it’s care for itself, it’s care for caring, and, as such, desire of desire.
Doing something post-mortem, resisting the dopamine rush and not get fooled by it, breath slow, remember, build an alternative version of the story. This makes us feel good cause it’s out of the performative stress we have charged ourselves with in the fall, cause it doesn’t make any sense to do it, cause there is no right or wrong time for doing it, and now it’s too late. Yes, it is too late, although it has always been too late, and that’s exactly why we need to do it, to do LAVA.

Since February 2020, the world of the human shakes under a pandemic caused by an invisible virus called COVID-19. The volcanic explosion and its LAVA – the collective body resuscitating after more than 50 years of psychic and financial abuse – turns into an implosion, forcing people to separate from each other and to forget the joyous transnational insurrectional moment. COVID-19 is a form of LAVA, too. Governments promulgate laws that limit individual freedoms to face the spread of the LAVA-virus, while at the same time the global economy enters a phase of recession of unknown length. COVID-19 is the non-human force that enters the realm of human politics towards both regime-like repressive politics and the possibility of reimagining politics from scratch, rethinking the rules of the bulimic capitalist trap from below. For these reasons, we decide to release the first number of LAVA – Letters from the Volcano, without modifying the tone.
and energy we felt during the Autumn 2020, to remember people in quarantine about the political situation right before the spreading of the virus, and to help building a bridge between the two moments, opening up a discussion about the political possibilities implicit in this new normal, which will be addressed in length in the second number of LAVA.

Now, our proposal is the following: let’s reframe the furious madness we were taken by while working on LAVA a few months ago, let’s add a gigantic vortex around the 4 vortexes of LAVA and call it COV-19, and release a clandestine version of LAVA - BE WATER, spamming it everywhere, torrent, webpages etc. At the same time, let’s work on a second number - which cannot be FIRE, as we were thinking a while ago, but it will need to be AIR. LAVA – AIR will be about this new phase, the zombified phase of capitalism and the movement, the virus as a mean for the system to tie up computational surveillance on a global scale, while at the same time being the strongest and strangest and most unimaginable form of an imploded a-signifying non-human variation of resistance to global capitalism, freezing everything, putting everything in a pause, clotting the arteries of economy, the movement of goods and people, killing the elders but not so much the youngsters, scaring the white male bodies and giving them a taste of what’s been already happening on a
daily basis in some non-white parts of the world, prefiguring the new normal which will emerge when the virus and bacteria unfroze from the arctic will be circulating on a global scale. Isn’t, in a strange way, the COVID-19 virus a form of LAVA, too? And, as such, ambivalent, Janus-faced. Let’s get infected and sit somewhere around the fire, looking at the sky, and talk about this - once again, as always, a new unpredictable will emerge, again and again, because this is the magic of the biosphere, and it’s beyond politics. LAVA is the fire around where to sit and breath, touch each other, make love, discuss, fight, and do the impossible or simply be prepare for the impossible to come. Let’s make LAVA #2 - AIR an abstract issue, about COVID-19, about fire burning, about pollution, and about the political insurrectional subjectivity that this dramatic state of things can hopefully help to build up, let’s exchange a new set of letters from the four corners of the world and try to understand the LAVA that is boiling under the global lockdown, possibly helping in keeping it alive, waiting for the next explosion....
'You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water my friend.”

(Bruce Lee, 1971)

The convulsion started during autumn 2019. Like a Volcano that has long been compressed, the social body of the new generations began erupting. What will happen next? What are the possibilities embedded in this uprising? What shapes will the LAVA take as it rapidly floods like water, inflaming the air, to then slow down and crawl as honey, turning finally into solid matter? Let’s swim into the currents of the LAVA and fall into the proliferating eyes of the Volcano, so to foresee the forms of the unpredictable.

Destitution and constitution cannot be separated. They make part of the same process. Fire and Water. How to foreknow forms, in Fire and Water?
Both in the incandescent LAVA and the liquid flow, no form does pre-exist to the collective disposition of an emerging swarm. When one can read shapes in LAVA and water, it’s already too late. The dissolution of the identitarian form must happen simultaneously with the creation of new social relations via a bottom-up constitutional process where people re-invent the rules of the game.

Dissolve Identity
Inundate Be Water
The planet is on fire, fueling Earth’s six mass extinction. Meanwhile, a convulsion shakes the world of humans.

From Hong Kong to Bogotà, Barcelona Beirut Quito and Santiago, young people are revolting. The dynamics of the revolt are different, divergent, even centrifugal at times, impossible to be reduced into a common political process. Maybe.

Are these kaleidoscopic dynamics leaving traces that are symptomatic of an underlining sickness? Are they producing common emerging aesthetic and strategic threads, shared transversally by these seemingly distant outbursts? The Volcano is exploding. LAVA is spilling all over the places. This is not only a social revolt, because in our time social dynamics intermingle with ethnonational processes. We urgently need to learn how to deal with the fact that from now on the orientation of future conflicts will be ambiguous, fragmented, multifacets, double, Janus-faced.
Our eyes have seen things that you can hardly believe: capitalism crumbling and money thrown in the dustbin.
All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain? Time to die?
Is pleasure over, is freedom over, is the love of wisdom over, forever?
Is extinction unavoidable?
Is the war going to expand from Iraq and Syria to the whole of the Mediterranean basin?
Is civil war exploding everywhere, as a merciless metastasis?
Is fire going to invade every corner of the planet?
Is smoke going to invade the lungs of our souls?
Not really.
Let’s see what happens close to those places in the world where the movement marches again.
During the last few decades, capitalism has taken the upper hand, everywhere.
Putrid criminals by the names of Tony Blair and Emmanuel Macron have flooded the world and minds with their poisonous formulas of death, calling this invasion “competition,” “growth,” “meritocracy.”
Now, their filthy venom has entered every pore and crack of the planet, and the detox process struggles to start because unhinged Nazis are swiftly occupying the suffering minds of the silent majority.
And the forests, the forests are on fire everywhere on the planet, and billions of creatures are unable to find a way out: birds, insects, squirrels, wolves, children are being burned by the
monsters who meet in Madrid at the summit of deafness and
greed. Towns devastated in Australia, thousands of people flee to
the beaches seeking rescue.
Is it life? Who can dare to call life this no future no past and no
present that we are obliged to endure in order to buy shit on Black
Fridays, at the fair of death and narcissism?
You can no more go to college because college is too costly, only
those who belong to the caste of the winners, only the progeny of
wolves can afford education. The others, those who are dogs, like
you and me, can only enjoy apprenticeships, the affordable paths
to white-collar careers. You won’t study Plato and Lu Hsun, you’ll
never know the beauty of Raffaello and Petrarca, you’ll only learn
how to churn out abstract wealth for the rich.
The beauty of this model is that you are not a human anymore,
you’re a farmed chicken, you’ll grow up with canned shit, and you’ll
be paid as much as it is needed to feed your children with canned
shit, and so forth, forever.
Forever?
If you do not like it, or in the unlucky case “you’re waking up every
day on the wrong side of capitalism”, and by tragedy you are a
migrant coming from a place where life has become impossible
because of war or pollution – you will be pushed into those
concentration camps that resemble Auschwitz. Because you’re
guilty of seeking a better life, of willing to be alive, and of running
away from the consequences of a system which sees your life as
an externality nobody wants to pay the price for.
Planet Earth is becoming a refugee camp, and your destiny is to
roast in the sun and eat shit in a can until you die - living like a
dog, and fighting like a dog for that shit in a can, while the wealthy
eat salmon and enjoy the necrotic shitshow they’ve orchestrated
around you.
This is why one million women and men are filling the streets of
Santiago de Chile shouting down with the fascist dictatorship of
money.
This is why the throngs of workers and students are marching
together in Hong Kong against the fake communism of the totalitarian god who sits in Beijing. This is why children are gathering on Friday to say there is no planet B, I don’t want to be roasted for your profit. The collective body is trying to rise again from the squares of the planet, the eroticism flooding the streets has taken over for a moment the abstract exorcism of the capital engrained in its bones. Bodies start sweating again, singing together and licking each other wounds, filling the sky with serotonin, from Chile to France, Lebanon, Hong Kong, Bolivia, Catalonia, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Haiti, Indonesia, Palestine, Puerto Rico, Rojava, Syria, Sudan, Teheran, Venezuela…

Are we going toward the final stampede, are we going to perform the worldwide hecatomb as a sacrifice to the Abstract God of the Economy? Are we doomed? Maybe not. Are we going to destroy the intimate subjection to money, and emancipate time from the rationale of accumulation? Are we going to come out from depression, and to fall upward in a joyous suicidal act of insurrection?

INUNDATE BE WATER
Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, global capitalism has been panting. The clearest sign was the fall in the rate of profit. However, this was only a symptom of a general phenomenon. In the XIX century, during the first liberal phase, capital could easily pay very low salaries. Work was precarious, workers were generally ignorant, and Unions outlaw. Capitalism wants to go back to that condition.

Traumatic events are directed at and affect whole groups and communities. More than diagnostic labels of depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder, “collective trauma” behind them highlights the inextricable link between state violence, sociopolitical oppression, and the psychological wounds they provoke. Importantly, by defining the wound as one that is inflicted by the system onto a community, the wound itself allows to connect to others who are similarly situated in solidarity and opens up the possibility for imagining collective healing solutions.
Only the fascist barbarity of Pinochet in Chile, of Videla in Argentina, could fully achieve the precariousness of work, the monetization of education, the privatization of public services, the destruction of industry and the submission of the working class. Chile is the place where this monstrous experiment has endured the longest.
(Excerpt from Pedro Camarero: La siesta terminó)
Santiago / November, 5 2019
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(Excerpt from Pedro Camarero: La siesta terminó)
We are not strong enough to surrender. They dare to declare war against us. Once and again. A war that broke out 30, 40, 500 years ago. The recent declaration of war against the Chilenian people exposes what has always been the content of the so-called “transition to democracy” which happened after Pinochet step down, towards the creation of a military-inspired “protected democracy”. Nothing in this laboratory they called Chile could come into existence but at the price of a radical overthrow of the consensus that prevented the people from creating an after to this catastrophe they called progress. It seems imperative to inhabit those nascent structures, seeking to deploy the most indomitable intensities, those that sustain the openness in the face of all those seeking to close the emerging process, because this is a new world that we are only sketching and that we are not going to give up or abandon.

(Excerpt from: Vitrina distopica, We are not strong enough to surrender)
As the protests roll into their sixth consecutive month, many in the movement have begun to make a “sixth demand” — to disband the HKPF altogether. The remarkable uptake of this demand has sparked debate around exactly what dissolution of the HKPF would entail: reconstitution and reform? Or a more radical type of abolitionist politics?

The Hong Kong police’s job is to protect the establishment Hong Kong has a long tradition of struggle against its unjust social, political, and economic order. For just as long, the police has played an integral role in maintaining the status quo.

(Excerpt from: Vincent Wong and Edward Hon-Sing Wong, How to abolish the Hong Kong police Thinking through the ‘sixth demand’)
Responding to the tactical failures of the 2014 Umbrella movement in Hong Kong, the motto “be water” (水) emerged and became the leading principle of 2019 unrest. In order to protect against the surrounding empire intersecting with the financial structures of neoliberalism, we need to live in a daily confrontation, to practice spaces of resistance, attack the infrastructures, block and short-circuit the nerves of the global metropolis, plug the veins of the Empire, particularly the subway and the airport.

On August 9th we went to the airport and occupied it. We decided to do this peacefully, and this was a moment of cohesion between the two different souls of the movement (the nonviolent wing and the direct-action wing). Inside the airport police cannot use their tear gases, nor use violence to avoid the global media repercussions, and negative effects on tourism.

Beside Be water, another state must be added, the gaseous one. Since the government has decided to obey the Peking master slavishly and subtly, the police have fired over 16,000 sticks of tear gas – obviously, aiming for the body. The gaseous state has become typical of many urban areas of Hong Kong. The gas remains for hours and days. Tear gas sticks entered everywhere, houses, universities, fired at random, by trial, by game, by threat, by retaliation. The gaseous state of the local government is the response to the liquidity of the population.
It is therefore not just a matter of no longer making a stable occupation of a place, but it is an action, a movement without a fixed shape and direction. “Like water”, the protest actively seeks new ways, to climb “the mountain” (the mountain is freedom from fear, it is an ethic of respect for difference and therefore based on mutual trust).

We fight on, each in our own way (xiongdi pashan, gezi nuli in putonghua, hing dai paa saan gok ji nou lik, in Cantonese): that is, we climb the mountain, each following their own path).

On this basis, the movement has developed a sort of second principle of action. Don’t divide, don’t betray, don’t blame, don’t dissociate. Protect your space, or make it water, or set it on fire. Neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics, born thanks to the production of special areas that have freed the violence of the new and old forms of original accumulation, dries out life, consumes air, devastates the future.

(Excerpt from: Diego Gullotta, Be Water)
January 15, 2020

What can a virus do?
The infiltration of “be water” at the frontiers of the new empire gave the way to a gaseous state. But soon, gas dissolved and melted in a nationalistic and patriotic air. Air pollution. Be water, be gassed, and now be infected. Although the coronavirus had already welcomed the new year in late December and early January, the Party insisted it was a rumor. The Party helps “the people” not to know what is happening in the air until the air could effectively “pollute” some hundreds of thousand people. A virus does not talk about politics, economy, culture and society, a virus is a political, economic, cultural and social upheaval. It extends the governing logic of the camp from the periphery to the center. Camps are proliferating and are disseminating. Coronavirus transforms the “new normal” into the “new abnormal”; it closes doors, streets, communities, quartiers, cities and villages; it closes schools and working places; it divides families, stigmatizes and vaporizes social relations. To fight the virus, the Party uses nationalism and patriotism, which is an empty ideology but imperative. Like the virus itself, an empty ideology can also kill the People.
(Excerpt from: Diego Gullotta and L.L., What can a virus do?)
July 19, 2019

Gilet Noirs – a radical decolonial diversion of the Gilet Jeune movement which reclaims papers for all sans-papiers and shed light over the racist French asylum and immigration system – decided to take over one of the strongest symbol of White Reason, and of the Enlightenment: the Pantheon. The alien black body takes over white reason — in a way.

This gesture prefigures the next years of social struggles, which will be characterized by the arrival of a colored body from the four corners of the world, a body the Western General Intellect has been missing for at least 50 years.

The only thing to do for the white zombified body of General is to prepare for this arrival: to welcome the colored body, and to learn from it and from the forms of reason it will be bringing along”.

(Excerpt from: Mitra Azar, From white reason to Gilet Noir)
December 7, 2019

Internationalism is dead, VIVA the alliances of worlds!

Through the archetypal model of the terrorist and its absorption, the politics of fear has not ceased to designate new enemies: the migrant, the gang of youngsters, the suburban youth, the youngster tout court, the hacker, the rom, the squatter, the partygoer, the anarcho-autonomous ultra-left, the black-block... The collapse of the twin towers in 2001 gave a tremendous boost to this process which has resulted in the piling up of liberticide laws, exponential growth and the ever less-controlled process of profiling through more and more refined processes of datafication, and the development of new forms of surveillance emerging from these new tracking techniques, counterpointed by the trivialization of formerly scandalous practices, including torture.

(Excerpt from: Serge Quadruppani: L’internationalisme est mort, vive l’alliance des mondes)
The strike against the retirement reform has been going on for more than a month now and mainly involves transport and energy. Trains and subways are stopped and the streets are clogged with cars. Despite some flashes of lightness, the mood is gloomy. On January 3, the police killed a rider, Cédric Chouviat, suffocating him on the asphalt after his face had turned blue due to the violent pressure of 4 agents who immobilized him on the ground.

The state medical board issued a statement in which police injuries on demonstrators were reported as “war wounds”.

“Fin du monde fine du mois même combat” [End of the world, end of the month, same struggle], shouted the Gilet Jaunes to say that the protest against the ecological disaster could not be conducted if not from an anti-capitalist position.

It seems to me that the unrest will unfold as a true heterogenesis in the sense of an unpredictable dynamic that is capable not only of generating forms but also of modifying its spaces of possibility. Unlike structural dynamics, in which the spaces of possibilities are fixed a priori, during heterogenesis the possibility spaces change in an unpredictable way. It is a continuous recombination of a chaotic virtuality that cannot stop creating new forms. I don’t know if this unfolding took place in ’68 or in ’77, but I have some feeling that it happened in 1789.

A suivre ...

(Excerpt from: Alessandro Sarti, email exchange)

“Gilet Jeune, C’est quelle votre metier? Ahuf Ahuf Ahuf!”

The Volcano is erupting, the becoming-animal of politics is unleashing its ambiguous and amorphous figures...

(Excerpt from: Mitra Azar, email exchange)
In Defense of Swearing in Public (and in Unison)

Revolutions don’t happen as a result of individual enlightenment but through the realization that everyone else thinks the same way you do, that what you have taken to be evident for years but that few others thought, is actually shared by most people around you. Because at the end it is about a common sensibility against a profoundly hostile world. This is why it is important to curse in public. Gebran Bassil Kis Imo, (Gebran’s mother’s cunt) is a phrase that people would say without hesitation in the privacy of their homes or in a one on one conversation but to say it publicly, in unison, is an intensely political act. It is basically saying that the Lebanese people are not hypocrites, that what they say in private they will repeat in public and that the sentiments shared by a few are actually the cries of the many.
Currency Apartheid

In the weeks I was in Lebanon prior to the outbreak of the revolution you couldn’t get American dollars out of the ATM machine. Why is this dollar thing significant? Because it is some sort of currency apartheid. The creation of two distinct Lebanon’s, the Lebanon represented by the diaspora, by those with another passport, by the Bankers, by men like Hariri - the Lebanon of the wealthy tied to the ebb and flow of the global economy, whose money is paid in wire transfers and on-line transactions and the Lebanon of hard cash, Lebanon on the ground, of bread and fuel, the land of the gun where the militias roam and where Nabih Berri and Hezbollah are kings.

(Excerpts from: Malek Rasamni, Laysh al Thawra)

February 1, 2020

“KAFEH!": “We Will Annihilate the Old World!"
The movement that raised the banner was “Kafeh!”, the newly formed Anarchist movement in Lebanon. The movement adopts a realistic point of view in the achievement of decentralization in the country, One of its founders considers that, “it can be achieved in stages through legal legislations in the People’s Assembly that aim to grant wider powers to municipal councils at the expense of the central authority in Beirut”.  

(Excerpt from: Kafeh declaration letter)
No to Early Elections
The greatest trojan horse of the counter-revolution is early elections. The task ahead is to have an alternative political eco-system altogether.
The worst possible outcome would be for the sectarian political powers to triumph electorally because they would have then acquired a semblance of democratic legitimacy. Another revolution would not be possible for the longest time.
That is why it is important to negotiate a transitional government emerging from the activity of the revolutionary committee, and to delay elections for several years. In the meantime, we can work on building that alternative eco-system of non-sectarian parties that, come election time, will work to actually de-legitimize rather than re-legitimize our enemies.

(Excerpt from: Malek Rasamni, Where to now)
The insurrection
The murderers who control the state machine are killing torturing blinding arresting. This is the way they react to the LAVA spilling from the Volcano.
Is there a way out? Is suicide the only way out? Why resist? Because a dreadful end is better than dread with no end. From a conventional political perspective, Hong Kong and Santiago are very different things. Divergent programs, opposed ideological frameworks.
But that kind of politics is no longer relevant, unable to scrape the surface of the events. The methodology of politics is out of service. Democracy is an empty word, at least since Greece has been raped by the European Central Bank, and its instigators, in 2015. Conventional (representative) politics is over because it’s impossible to decide timely at the infinite speed of computational communication flows. Techno-finance blindly administrates the chaotic complexity of social life, and the digitally exploited-explooded unconscious has made the course of events both indeterminable and pre-formatted – and as such, Janus-faced.
The connective machine has embedded automatisms in language, cognition, behavior. This cycle started in 1973, when North-American economists used a murderer called Pinochet in order to destroy the democratic experiment of Salvador Allende, elected by the majority of Chilean people, and killed by the fascists who wanted to defend profit-driven economy.
In the following years, Thatcher and Reagan exported the counter-revolution experimented in Chile and Argentina all over the planet. Let’s not forget that the philosophy of Neoliberal capitalism is based on the same principles of Hitlerian Nazism: natural selection, and the imposition of the law of the strongest: a form of social Darwinism which has been accelerating in the last 20 years due to technologies used to pampered inequality instead of redistributing wealth. Techno-fascism on steroids.

The neurotic and necrotic embrace of late capitalism pushes representative politics out of the window, and the towers of power resist ad nauseam against the continuous waves of social rage by killing and mutilating people in the streets. Furthermore, dissociative forms of political and suicidal schizophrenia threaten wars and fuels climate hecatombs, bringing real politics out of time, and manipulating social conflict through fears and misery. There is something pathetic in the frantic acceleration of contemporary politics. Like the unlucky guy who, locked in an elevator, falls precipitously towards Hell, the contemporary citizen is desperately pushing buttons which say: right-wing, democracy, nation, justice and similar words that no longer have value or meaning...

But, if politics is over – then what is left?
The desire of desire beyond capitalism-driven addictions and compulsions is finally at work again as the engine behind the inundation of millions of people sharing a collective vision and a different form of life, at the frontlines of capitalism devastation, for months in a raw.

It is urgent to go beyond the absurd counter-position between constitution and destitution. In the intensity of the convulsive proliferation of revolts against the psychosis, neurosis, and necrosis of abstract capitalism, we’re looking for new weapons, and building new strategies. We need to conjoin and melt in the LAVA of the insurrections that are erupting all over the world, find in the rivulets and lapillus the emergent orientations towards the improbable, over the calculable.
Destitution and constitution attempt to unfold symbiotically not only in Chile but also in Lebanon, where people have realized that the Lebanese constitution based on sectarianism has been the way to divide et impera. We are striving to build a transborder and transoceanic process of subjectivation capable of turning the fire of the LAVA burning the lungs of the planet into water. We’re LAVA, and we’re water.
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