

## About this issue's Cover: John Clark's Lao Tzu meets *Reptilian CEO*

Artist Richard Mock often spoke of his ambition to awaken people to 'the real worth of humans and the planet', which entailed bringing us into consciousness of 'the naturalness' of our being in contradiction to capitalism's monetising narratives.<sup>1</sup> In 1998, *New York Times* columnist David Gonzalez sought out Mock to discuss his latest artwork, and the issue of money came up.<sup>2</sup> 'Money isn't a big thing for Mock', Gonzalez related, but the artist observed 'for some people it's an object of affection that alienates them from life. People follow the market as if they were monitoring their pulse, with the Dow as a measure of self-esteem'.<sup>3</sup> He then quotes Mock: 'When money becomes too big a focus of life, it takes over other areas that could have been emotionally rewarding. Money itself has no emotion attached to it. To value it as you would a life companion is absurd'.<sup>4</sup> This perspective echoes John Clark's incisive explication of Taoism's anarchic dimensions in 'The Tao of Anarchy', published in the *Fifth Estate* some months before the *Times* interview and illustrated with an untitled linocut by Mock. Clark pointed out that the ancient scholar Lao Tzu (author of the sixth century BCE *Tao Te Ching*) cautioned against 'glorifying the pursuit of material wealth and permitting economic domination' not only because it results in 'conflict, disorder, envy, and crime': it also distracts us from our authentic selfhood, which is founded on loving compassion for other beings and connectedness with the natural order.<sup>5</sup> Following from these tenets, Mock's sardonic linocut, *Reptilian CEO* (2002), references our falsifying capitalised selves, devoid of compassion or empathy, gleefully murdering living beings for money.

*Allan Antliff*

### NOTES

- 1 Richard Mock interview, Allan Antliff, 25 June 2001.
- 2 David Gonzalez, 'About New York: An Artist Gets His Hooks on Some Money', *New York Times*, 11 Nov. 1998, Metro Section, B10.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 John Clark, 'The Tao of Anarchy', *Fifth Estate* 33 no. 1 (1998): 18-19.