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Karen Keifer-Boyd & Deborah Smith-Shank, editors • published by Hyphen-UnPress

**RACIAL AND GENDER VIOLENCE > PEOPLE SEEKING SAFETY
10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITORIAL**

DEBORAH L. SMITH-SHANK & KAREN T. KEIFER-BOYD

Abstract

We candidly reflect on 10 years as founders, editors, and publishers of *Visual Culture & Gender*. Our collaboration began in 2005. We believe in the power of visual culture to affect behavior and attitudes and the need to work toward social justice through the creation and critique of visual culture, and activism through visual culture.

Keywords: *visual culture, gender, autoethnography, gender-coded adornments, surveillannce, hair, racial tropes of Black male bodies, narrative inquiry, gender violence, Lolicon, Rorikon, critical discourse analysis, arts-based methods, mapping, memory, metaphor, feminist ceramics, ad-diction, incarceration, diasporas*

2005-2015: Ten Volumes of *Visual Culture & Gender*

Reflecting on 10 years of VCG publishing, we continue to be in awe of the fabulous authors with whom we have had the opportunity to work. Many of them were published for the first time in VCG and others have a long history of sharing their ideas in other stellar journals, and because of the unique contribution and distribution of VCG, they wanted to include us in their portfolio.

Our first conversations about this journal began because we felt there were a limited number of journals available that directly addressed both gender and visual culture. The beginning was rocky and at times, controversial. Online journals were relatively new at the time and many institutions wondered about the rigor of online journals for promotion and tenure. With amazing support from our community of scholars, many of whom became reviewers, we persevered because even after 10 years, we continue to believe that an online, freely accessible international journal with lots of pictures and intelligent scholarship is really important. The journal is now referenced in the following databases: Proquest ART-bibliographies Modern, Feminist Periodicals, Wilson, CNKI SCHOLAR, and EBSCO.

Our dedicated reviewers are thorough and thoughtful. Many of them have been with us for the entire time of the life of the journal, while others have rolled off and on. We could not have done this work without them and we are grateful for their work for VCG. Several graduate students have also helped us in various ways throughout these past 10 years, and we want to acknowledge their gifts of time and thoughtfulness.

VCG has changed over the last 10 years. We started with articles primarily focused on girls and women. Today the journal still includes

articles on girls and women, but we have also published articles on masculinities and queer issues. Gender is way more complex and multifaceted than we had initially considered and always include issues of race, socioeconomic status, aging, discourses of abuse, and love for oneself and others.

We find that one of the most interesting things about each issue of VCG is that while we do not do a thematic call for papers, the articles always work not only work individually, but together as a gestalt of the times in which they were published. This very special 10th issue includes a group of 10 authors who come from very different places and research traditions. Two authors focus on women's clothing and accessories.

Verónica E. Betancourt gives us history, context, and autoethnography in her article about a necklace given to her grandmother for her from Nelson Mandela. She troubles not only the provenance of the necklace, but also the gender codes embedded in the gift. **Phil Bratta** takes readers back to the 19th century to an innovation in woman's costume, bloomers. Bratta considers how print media coded fashion, class, gender, and *pants-wearing women*.

Several authors address types of media surveillance of bodies. **Julianne Guillard** revisits her 6th grade pre-adolescent body hair with a directness and honesty that made the editors revisit their own awkward pre-teen bodies. Guillard juxtaposes the memories of her own body with contemporary media advertising surveillance and representation of the female body, with both culturally desired and aberrant body hair. **Jessica Baker Kee** invites us to remember two horror films, *Night of the Living Dead* and *Candyman*. Through her critical textual analysis of these films, she suggests alternate readings that complicate the use of racial tropes of Black male bodies as either abjected victims or hypersexualized monstrous Others.

Maria Leake uses narrative inquiry to share the artistic practices of two contemporary artists, Adriana Cristina Corral and Jungeun Lee who research acts of violence against women in their home communities and who create art that (re)members and pays homage to victims of

social injustice.

Shari Savage introduces readers to the girls of Lolicon and it's more erotic cousin, Rorikon. Linked to Lolita, these Japanese enterprises have spread virtually and physically worldwide, and Savage takes them on using critical discourse analysis.

Using arts-based methods, **Cathy Smilan** creates art with *Barbie* dolls to illuminate workplace struggles. In her artwork and prose, *Barbie* is transformed to address issues of body image and self-imposed silence, as well as other women's complicity in maintaining patriarchal sexist proclivities of the status quo.

Two visual essays grace VCG this year.

Leslie C. Sotomayor uses autoethnographic mapping to navigate the spaces between her artwork and her scholarship. She employs metaphors of harvesting, roasting, brewing, and savoring derived from childhood memories of her *abuela's* kitchen.

Anthony Merino considers the body as a container, especially as seen in artwork exhibited in the international ceramics exhibition: *Body & Soul: New International Ceramics*. Using Simone de Beauvoir's ideas, he invites readers to reconsider the work of artists Klara Kristalova, Jessica Harrison, Chris Antemann, and Tip Toland.

Global Issues of Social Justice

These authors have been working for over a year to develop and bring their ideas to you. As we all worked on this issue of VCG several global issues of social justice surfaced in the news and in our lives: the rise of heroin addiction, refugee migration, child prostitution, violent deaths of Black children, and the political move to the right throughout the world. The lack of respect by politicians for all teachers and the diminishing number of arts teachers in schools worry us. All of these issues

relate to visual culture and gender. What follows are contemporary crises that we find heartwrenching and inhumane. The issues require ongoing attention from many fronts to address the human rights violations. The world does not have to be in crisis. Karen writes in red font of the mistreatment of those with addiction disease and Debbie writes in blue font about a world of diasporas.

Inhumanity of Treating Addiction as a Crime

Eric Holder, Jr., Attorney General of the United States from 2009 to 2015, announced on August 12, 2013 at the American Bar Association's House of Delegates meeting the "Smart on Crime" program, which the U.S. Justice Department has enacted (Carter, 2013). The initiative requests judges to not incarcerate people for lengthy prison sentences, whose offense is addiction not crime. "Nonviolent drug offenders with no ties to gangs or large-scale drug organizations will no longer be charged with offenses that impose severe mandatory sentences" (Horwitz, 2013). Instead, direct to medical treatment and employment opportunities.

Sentencing reform also entails considering reductions in sentence for inmates facing extraordinary and compelling circumstances – and who pose no threat to public safety. In late April, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) expanded the medical criteria that will be considered for inmates seeking compassionate release. (Justice Center, 2013, p. 3)

Yet, in 2015 U.S. prisons are filled with men and women whose offense is addiction, not a crime or threat to public safety. Those who have attempted suicide or respond to intake questions with a sense of hopelessness, which if interpreted as potentially suicidal, are stripped naked, placed in isolation, and gazed at from surveillance cameras. Young women menstruating have blood stream down their legs, as pads are not permitted. Eventually, they are shackled and taken to shower. The emotional scars are deep, the treatment ineffectual.

People Seeking Safety

The Refugee Project (n.d.) tells us that every day, all over the world, ordinary people must flee their homes for fear of violence, persecution, and death. When people cross international borders, they are called refugees.

By the end of 2013, there were 33.3 million displaced people in the world (UNHCR, 2014) and from daily news reports, there are even more in 2015. Families are forced to flee their homes by armed conflict, generalized violence, and because of human rights violations including rape and systematic murder.

There are continued conversations about illegal immigrants crossing the southern border of the United States taking place in political debates, daily in coffee shops, and on television. Lately though, the North American geographic refugee crisis has been eclipsed by the migration of thousands of people fleeing Syria and other war torn countries to affluent capital cities in Europe. The television images are heartbreaking, the interviews compelling, and as I sit in my comfortable home with plenty of food and at least the illusion of considerable safety, my thoughts and feelings grow incredibly complex.

Many refugees have had to leave their homes and communities with almost no notice, taking only what they can carry. Many of them will never be able to return to the places that they once called home – often because their homes do not exist anymore. These migrating people brave the hazards of boat trips across seas and oceans with their children and grandparents. Walking miles and miles across old minefields, they risk their lives and their futures. This is not a frivolous road trip for any of the people looking for a future.

A few years ago, after participating in the DNA Ancestry Project, I learned that my ancestors began traveling from somewhere near the Caucasus Mountains toward Europe and eventually my grandparents migrated to North America. There are very few visual documents that show

the trials of the earliest of these migrations but there are written and art documents that indicate these people suffered similarly to contemporary refugees. Because of the near instantaneously published visual culture images shared by the press to people worldwide, we have access to a plethora of sometimes overwhelming data that begs us to consider the ways our lives intersect with contemporary refugees and what the future holds for all of us.

Forward Looking

We call for works that address these and other pressing issues. We believe in the power of art and art education, and that Visual Culture & Gender is a venue to encourage and promote an understanding of how visual culture constructs gender in context with representations of race, age, sexuality, social units, (dis)ability, and social class and to promote international dialogue about visual culture and gender. VCG concerns the learning and teaching processes or practices used to expose culturally learned meanings and power relations that surround the creation, consumption, valuing, and dissemination of images, and involves issues of equity and social justice in the learning, teaching, and practice of art.



Karen and Debbie at the United States Society for Education through Art (USSEA) regional conference “An Inclusive World: Bridging Communities” held at Queens Museum in July 2015.

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About the Editors

Karen Keifer-Boyd, Ph.D., is professor of art education and women's, gender, and sexuality studies at the Pennsylvania State University. She is past president of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) Women's Caucus (2012-2014), NAEA Distinguished Fellow Class of 2013, and 2012 Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Gender Studies at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria. She is co-founder and co-editor of Visual Culture & Gender, and served as editor of the Journal of Social Theory in Art Education and guest editor for Visual Arts Research. She has been honored with leadership and teaching awards, including two Fulbright Awards (2006 in Finland and 2012 in Austria) and the 2013 Edwin Ziegfeld Award. Her writings on feminist pedagogy, visual culture, inclusion, cyberart activism, transcultural dialogues, action research, social justice arts-based research, and identity are in more than 50 peer-reviewed research publications, and translated into several languages. She co-authored *Including Difference: A Communitarian Approach to Art Education in the Least Restrictive Environment* (NAEA, 2013); *InCITE, InSIGHT, InSITE* (NAEA, 2008); *Engaging Visual Culture* (Davis, 2007); and co-edited *Real-World Readings in Art Education: Things Your Professors Never Told You* (Falmer, 2000).

Deborah L. Smith-Shank received a Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1992, and currently serves as Chair of the department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy (formerly known as Art Education) at The Ohio State University. She is also Emeritus Professor of Art at Northern Illinois University where she served as Head of the Art Education program. Smith-Shank has taught K-12 art, as well as undergraduate and graduate students for over 30 years. Her research is involved with artifacts of visual / material culture and social justice examined through semiotic and feminist lenses. She has published more than 100 articles and has presented her work internationally in venues including Australia, Northern Ireland, Finland, Portugal, Brazil, Chile, Canada, Croatia, Japan, Hungary, Slovenia, Turkey, Cyprus, The Netherlands, Belgium, and the United States. Smith-Shank is co-editor and founder of the journal of Visual Culture & Gender, an international, freely accessed, multimedia juried journal (<http://vcg.emitto.net/>). She is a Fellow of the National Art Education Association and currently serves as elected Vice President of the International Society for Education Through Art (<http://www.insea.org/>), and Treasurer of the United States Policy for Council Studies in Art Education. She previously served the National Art Education Association as president of the Women's Caucus from 1998-2000, and president of LGBTIQ from 2001-2003.