



EDITORIAL: FEMINIST RESEARCH DISMANTLES POWER STRUCTURES AND BUILDS EQUITABLE PLATFORMS

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Feminist research seeks to dismantle oppressive hierarchical power structures and to build equitable platforms for dialogue and working together toward caring for each other and the planet. Feminist research concerns issues of power and privilege. Linda Åhäll (2018), honorary Fellow in International Relations at Keele University in the U.K., conveys the core of feminist research in stating: “What makes research feminist is not limited to analyses of ‘women’ or perhaps even gender ... Feminist research questions are about power and how the world works through power structures” (p. 12). Feminist research exposes hierarchical structures that maintain constricting gender norms, privilege, and dominating forms of power. Privilege from a feminist perspective is when specific identity markers provide advantages that are not related to accomplishments or anything that a person has done. Feminist intersectional research exposes how systems of power and privilege converge to disadvantage groups marginalized by those with privilege and power. Gender is a lived experience, socially constructed, and political in affordances of privilege and power. Gender is both lived and symbolic relationships of privilege and power in terms of recognition, agency, and access to education, healthcare, and employment free from sexual harassment and discriminatory biases. Feminist art and feminist art pedagogy are creative resistance and cultural production that talks back to patriarchy by dismantling patriarchal hierarchical systems privileging men.

Linda Åhäll (2018) finds affect methodology helpful for feminist research to expose how the “policing of gender norms is a subtle process, at times performed through unconscious structures immediately mediated as common sense” (Åhäll, 2018, p. 27). Intrigued, I explore affect methodology for creating feminist art. Åhäll draws on Clare Hemming’s (2015) concept of affect dissonance to develop a feminist methodology, which I employ as a feminist affect dissonance arts-based methodology in the creation of an art installation for the 2019 U.S.-China College Art Exhibition, *Heterotopia-Platform*. Heterotopia is a condition in which nodules of neurons are dislocated in the brain, which can cause seizures. Philosopher Michel Foucault (1984) adapted the concept of heterotopia in his 1967 essay, *Of Other Spaces*. Foucault describes heterotopia as “a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another” (p. 3). Such is the case with the art that comprised the U.S.-China art exhibition as a heterotopia platform to “draw us out of ourselves” (Foucault, p. 3) to not only become aware of simultaneous and entangled networks of relations in which we exist but to be inventive in relocating ourselves into newly understood networks in which contradictory meanings reside.

The U.S.-China College Art Summit at Penn State sprung from Xinxin Guo’s mentor Gayle Weitz’s introduction of Xinxin to me, a professor of art education and women’s, gender, and sexuality studies at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State). Gayle Weitz is my long-time friend, art educator, scholar, and artist, whose larger than life-sized wooden sculptural furniture bring humor and poignancy to contemporary global issues.¹ In 2017-18, I worked with Xinxin Guo to coordinate the inaugural U.S.–China Art Summit and Exhibition, which was held at Penn State in April 2018, and we worked together throughout the next year to coordinate the August/September 2019 U.S.–China Art exhibition and one-day summit. The exhibition includes art by art faculty members from China’s universities (i.e., Tsinghua University, China Art Academy, Beijing Institute of

¹ See Gayle Weitz’s art at <https://artrageus1.com/our-members/gayle-marie-weitz>

Graphic Communication, China Women's University, Jilin University, and Inner Mongolian Normal University) and from the School of Visual Arts at Penn State in the United States.

It is within the context of the exhibition *Heterotopia-Platform* that I installed my art, *Inside Realities, Outside Perceptions* (Figure 1 & 2). The materials in the installation included a three-cent stamp with an image of the five Great Lakes in the United States, the largest grouping of freshwater lakes on the planet (Figure 3). The stamp was amongst an assortment of stamps I gathered from my parents' house, where I grew up on Lake Erie, one of the Great Lakes. I inherited my childhood house, its beach, and views of Lake Erie, as my parents and brother are deceased. I spent most of summer 2019 at my Lake Erie house and gathered things from the house and from sunset beach walks to assemble a collage of relational significations to place inside and outside the bell-shaped wine glass, a 1942 wedding present to my parents that I planned to center in the assemblage.



Figure 1. Installation view of *Inside Realities, Outside Perceptions* (Karen Keifer-Boyd, 2019) at the 2019 *Heterotopia-Platform* exhibition designed by Karen Keifer-Boyd as part of the U.S.-China College Art Summit at Penn State University's Zoller Gallery. The exhibition catalog is linked at [here](#). Photo by Karen Keifer-Boyd.



Figure 2. *Inside Realities, Outside Perceptions* by Karen Keifer-Boyd (2019). Media: Great Lakes stamp; Lake Erie sand, stones, and rusted metal; my *Rencontre* etching and hair; mother's 1942 wedding wine glass; father's fishing reel; wooden box constructed by Ernest Boyd. Photo courtesy of Carlos Rosas.



Figure 3. Close-up of *Inside Realities, Outside Perceptions* by Karen Keifer-Boyd (2019) of a three-cent stamp with an image of the Great Lakes. Photo courtesy of Carlos Rosas.

The wine glass had lost its base and upside-down reminded me of Sylvia Plath's (1966) narrative, *The Bell Jar*, completed in 1963 while living in New York and Massachusetts at the age of 20, and a month before the author committed suicide. Esther, the young woman in Plath's narrative, seeks to escape the social conventions expected of her. The glass ceiling is real, a barrier made of gradual processes of habituation of power and privilege. The bell-curve sets the boundaries of normalcy. In the installation, the bell-shape floral-carved glass dome sits in sands of Lake Erie and houses a curled lock of hair, cut from my hair during the summer. My father's old, worn fishing reel is slightly undone with its line cast outside the box of assembled items, dangling a lifeline, or is it a noose. The handle of the fishing reel still spins, like the whirling green triangle in the etching behind the reel. Two rusted metal forms are spirit animals somewhat hidden from view if one does not look closely at all angles. A section from a series of etchings I made in the late 1970s, titled *Rencontre*, fills the back wall of the black box. I placed the bell glass so that its imagined swing would follow the curve of the raised lines of thick red ink that filled the areas etched into the zinc plate from which I printed *Rencontre*. Below the black box assemblage, a wooden bowl with Lake

Erie sand and stones sat on a tall pedestal. The stones that encircle a mother-with-child shaped stone are unique in their striations and configurations yet share commonalities made more evident by the groupings I arranged. When de-installing the exhibition, two feminist artists from China, whom we had learned about each other from the summit panel on feminist art and art education, offered me a paper-cut from the university's daily newspaper, and I gifted them each a stone of their choice from the assemblage (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Lake Erie stones gifted to and selected by two feminist Chinese artists during the dismantling of Karen Keifer-Boyd's (2019) art installation, *Inside Realities, Outside Perceptions*. Photo by Karen Keifer-Boyd.

How are gender norms perpetuated? Marc Ouellette's article, "*And nothing she needs*": *Victoria's Secret and the Gaze of "Post-Feminism"* exposes how patriarchal power structures stage female empowerment to control the image of female sexuality and range of subjectivities.

Renown art educators, Renee Sandell and Enid Zimmerman, draw upon their 40-year friendship and co-authored scholarship on feminist leadership to

present intimate subjectivities and political perspectives in their visual essay, *Using Feminist Advocacy, Collaboration, and Arts-based Practices to Heal Ourselves and Others*. The visual essay includes their “Empowerment/Leadership Model for Art Education,” their collaborative art making process, and Sandell’s (2015) *Marking and Mapping* methodology, which she refers to as “open-ended graphic organizers” (p. 20). Their work is an example of feminist arts-based research in that they seek to dismantle disabling power structures and to build equitable platforms. Sandell uses her *Marking & Mapping*® methodology to map “form+theme+context” of sexual abuse and harassment issues, along with remediation strategies. Her work contributes to the #MeToo Movement. Enlarge the chart and mark it up with your stories, perspectives, and emotional response. Share widely. The complex textual patterns in Sandell’s art (see *Visual Culture & Gender* volume 14 journal cover and p. 20 in the journal) come from Renee Sandell mapping her mother’s life from listening to her mother speak about her childhood in Berlin, surviving the Jewish Holocaust, and immigrating to the United States. Her mother’s story was recorded in 1999 by the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Enid Zimmerman applies Sandell’s methodology to affect resilience through daily visual-verbal graphic organizers.

Barbara Bickel’s review of *Vibrant Voices: Women, Myth, and the Arts* (Reger & Hauk, 2018) contextualizes the book in the current “terrified patriarchal culture in the USA” as a recovered perspective of a “rich lineage of art history of women from the ancient to the present” framed “within a matriarchal and Indigenous economy based on the gift” of connecting to one another (p. 26). Luke Meeken’s review of Aubrey Anable’s (2018) book, *Playing with Feelings: Video Games and Affect*, highlights the author’s scholarship as feminist intervention using affect methodology to critique the limits of game studies focused on the interactive mechanics and narrative content of video games. Awareness of affect dissonance, the disjuncture between inside realities and outside perceptions, can become a creative force to build equitable platforms that engender care for self as interconnected with care for others.

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About the Editor

[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, was the 2012 Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Gender Studies at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria. Her first Fulbright Scholars award was in Finland (2006). She is a recipient of a National Art Education Foundation grant (2017-2018) for social justice art education and a National Science Foundation grant (2010-2012) regarding gender barriers in technology. She received the NAEA's 2013 Edwin Ziegfeld Award, Women's Caucus 2014 McFee Award, NAEA's 2015 Technology Outstanding Research Award, and the 2018 Special Needs Lifetime Achievement Award. She serves on the [Art Education Research Institute Steering Committee](#); the Council for Policy Studies; the NAEA Data Visualization committee, and served on the NAEA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Taskforce and as coordinator of the Caucus on Social Theory in Art Education. She is co-founder and editor of the journal [Visual Culture & Gender](#). Her research on feminist pedagogy, visual culture, inclusion, disability justice, transdisciplinary creativity, cyberart activism, transcultural dialogue, and social justice arts-based research are in more than 60 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); co-edited [Real-World Readings in Art Education: Things Your Professors Never Told You](#) (Falmer, 2000); and served as editor of the *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* and guest editor for *Visual Arts Research*. In her chapter *Creativity, Disability, Diversity and Inclusion* in the *Handbook of Arts Education and Special Education* (Routledge, 2018), she draws on *Disabilities Studies* theory and practices that change attitudes and environments to create an inclusive world of difference.