

## Making Faces: Art and Intersectionality in Iraqi Kurdistan

Abstracts for papers should be a maximum of 500 words. Additionally, please include a short biographical statement (max 150 words) or your CV with your submission.

Submissions should be sent to **autumn.cockrell@ung.edu**

Journal homepage  
<http://www.plutojournals.com/journal-of-intersectionality>

### Issue themes and topics

In Kimberlé Crenshaw's groundbreaking work *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color* (1993) Crenshaw has demonstrated that the politicization of identity, such as race, gender or ethnicity, often omits differences within the group. Through this work, she has contributed the idea of "intersectionality" which understands the interconnected and interdependent nature of social categorizations and the potential for overlapping systems of disadvantage. Understanding the intersectional nature of an individual's multiple and overlapping social identities, we can apply this concept to other cases.

While there is no politically recognized independent state known as "Kurdistan", it is socially recognized by millions of Kurds as their ethnic homeland (King 2014: 3). "Kurdistan", as both an imagined homeland and a territorial reality in Northern Iraq, functions as a quasi-state and is a powerful motivator for many Kurds in the Middle East and around the world. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, Crenshaw's concept of *intersectionality* enables us to see that the singular demographic identifier of "Kurdish", as a national identity, conflates and ignores intragroup difference and diversity and hinders the application of nuanced perspective and approaches to the questions posed there.

The Kurds factor significantly both as a key to some of the most critical conflicts in the Middle East but also as citizens of the world interacting with a highly global, highly interconnected reality. Yet, despite the Kurds' rise in prominence in global public consciousness, the sociocultural anthropology of Iraqi Kurdistan was arguably more robust decades ago than presently (King 2014: 6). In pursuing an investigation of ethnographic accounts of Kurdish society in Iraq, we are faced with a decided absence of scholarly literature and a significant gap in our knowledge. This gap in our understanding also extends to information about Kurdish artists in Iraqi Kurdistan, art forms created there or any analysis of such cultural products. Devrim Kilic (2005 & 2009), Ozgur Cicek (2012), Tim Kennedy (2007) and Lokman Meho(1997), Kurdish studies scholars noted for their work on Kurdish film, have noted that Kurdish art is a fairly recent topic for academic scholarship and an examination of the literature on Kurdish art forms shows that overall, Kurdish arts have generally been disregarded as sites for scholarly inquiry. While the field of Kurdish studies has expanded over the last three decades, research about Kurdish Art, particularly art in Iraqi Kurdistan, art forms created there or an analysis of such cultural products remains deficient.

The field of *Visual Arts* or *Fine Arts*, to include Conceptual Art, constitutes a particularly charged space in Kurdish society in Iraqi Kurdistan. Here, we denote the inclusion of the work of conceptual artists within a broader designation of "Visual Arts" and as an art form that may, predominately be consumed visually, although much conceptual art must be engaged with all of the senses. The act of producing

art in the field of *Visual Arts* or *Conceptual Arts* in Kurdistan is an expression of things Kurdish that must reckon themselves, in terms of service, to nation and ethnicity, but also to gender, class, language, sexuality, education and culture.

Working from within the arts, and utilizing arts-based perspectives, on the part of this journal issue, recognizes the importance of meaning making within a given cultural context and how meaning translates into ideas and behaviors, potentially, producing moments of conflict. In the arts and humanities, we can see strong examples of how the arts do more than simply express the culture, history and beliefs of a people. The work of practitioners and scholars in the fields of cultural geography, art history, public art, art therapy, art activism, to broadly include the various and different fields of art themselves, have demonstrated how art work and the work of artists have had the power to influence ideas and effect change (Rose 2012, Panofsky 1972, Meho 1997, Liebmann 1996, Lederach 2005, Leavy 2015 & 2018, Kiliç 2005 & 2009, Kennedy 2007, Gundogdu 2010, D'Alleva 2012, Cleveland 2008, Cicek 2012). In turn, arts perspectives possess the unique potential to inform and interpret (Shank and Schirch 2008), to explore, illuminate, and represent.

Placing the practices of Kurdish visual and conceptual artists working in Iraqi Kurdistan within the historical context of the Iraqi state, *Making Faces: Art and Intersectionality in Iraqi Kurdistan* will investigate the ways in which these artists are coming together to make art in a way that reflects and confronts the hard questions of a society in a period of rapid social, economic and political transformation. *Making Faces: Art and Intersectionality in Iraqi Kurdistan*, will broadly examine contemporary Kurdish art forms, in Iraqi Kurdistan, within the fields of Visual and Conceptual Arts and the ways in which Kurdish artists and the art forms produced are situated around and negotiate multiple intersections of interconnected and interdependent social categorizations such as nation, ethnicity, gender, class, language, sexuality, education and culture. Submissions should include no fewer than two co-existing identities in their work (ie: gender and art).

**We welcome proposals on, *but not limited to*, these topics/themes:**

- Characteristics, applied or formalized styles, popular themes or subjects found
- in the work of Kurdish artists
- Feminist perspectives and gendered analyses of or in relation to Kurdish art
- Accounts or histories of fine arts associations, schools of thought or notable teachers
- Accounts or histories of fine arts institutions, schools, galleries or museums
- Accounts of Iraqi Kurdish artists in the diaspora
- Notions of confrontation and resistance
- Accounts or descriptions of unique or noteworthy exhibitions
- Photo essays
- Art and activism
- Art and peacebuilding