

THE JOURNAL OF INTERSECTIONALITY

CALL FOR PAPERS:

“Making Spaces: Art, Culture and Difference in Iraqi Kurdistan” *The Journal of Intersectionality*

[“Making Faces: Art & Intersectionality in Iraqi Kurdistan”](#) (2018) was a special-issue of the *Journal of Intersectionality* (Pluto Journals). This groundbreaking interdisciplinary issue broadly examined contemporary Kurdish art forms in Iraqi Kurdistan, within the fields of Visual and Conceptual Arts. It looked at the ways in which Kurdish artists and the art forms produced in Iraqi Kurdistan are situated around and negotiate multiple intersections of interconnected and interdependent social categorizations such as nation, ethnicity, gender, class, race, language, sexuality, education and culture. “Making Faces” is unique as one of the very first works to address contemporary visual art in Iraqi Kurdistan and its unique role as interlocutor to conflict.

Building on this foundation, the editors request work for a second special issue: “Making Spaces: Art, Culture and Difference in Iraqi Kurdistan” (Fall 2022). “Making Spaces” will engage with first-hand accounts, interviews, social criticism and analysis from Kurdish artists as well as research from scholars and practitioners that engage broadly with all genres of contemporary Kurdish art, including but not limited to, music, literature, visual arts, dance, conceptual art, poetry, street art, cultural production, museums, and the claiming of space.

“Making Spaces” will continue to explore the complex intersections of interconnected and interdependent social categorizations such as nation, ethnicity, gender, class, language, sexuality, race, disability, religion, education and culture in Iraqi Kurdistan through the consideration of the spatial composition in which art is created and in which artists work. It will focus on reexamining the mediums through which Kurdish national stories are transmitted and those “other” modalities and spaces where marginalized narratives may be found, and how the occupation of a space can allow for strategic constructions of meaning within that space and those that allow for contestation of institutionalized inequalities, ideologies, behavioral scripts.

Abstracts for papers should be a maximum of 300 words. Additionally, please include a short biographical statement (max 150 words) or CV with your submission. Please send questions regarding the special-issue and abstract submissions to acockrell@piedmont.edu before July 31, 2021. Full paper submissions will be expected by January 31, 2022.

Frameworks

In Kimberlé Crenshaw’s groundbreaking work *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color* (1993) Crenshaw has demonstrated that politicizations of identity, such as race, gender or ethnicity, often omit differences *within* the group. Through this work and the legal struggles from which it grew, 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 questions posed under its aegis.

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, we are still 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. 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. The field of *Fine Arts*, including *Conceptual Art*, constitutes a particularly charged space in Kurdish society in Iraqi Kurdistan. The act of producing art 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 special 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, and that the works of artists have had the power to interpret history, influence ideas and effect change (Rose 2012, Panofsky 1972, Meho 1997, Liebmann 1996, Lederach 2005, Leavy 2015 & 2018, Kılıç 2005 & 2009, Kennedy 2007, Gundogdu 2010, D'Alleva 2012, Cleveland 2008, Cicek 2012, Shank and Schirch 2008).

Nato Thompson, chief curator at *Creative Time* and author of *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the Twenty-first Century*, suggests that, “We tend to think of time as the dominant paradigm of progress, but perhaps space should have its day in the sun as well”. Demonstrations worldwide like those of the Arab Spring or the Occupy Wall Street movement have demonstrated that history has a deep connection to its public spaces (Thompson 2015). These revolutions have inaugurated new political subjectivities and modes of citizenship, but have also altered public spaces (Hasso & Salime 2016). Such public spaces are particularly interesting for our discussion of contemporary Kurdish art, the spaces in which it exists and is produced, and in which it encounters its audience. Of course, this conversation must also extend to the manner in which users inhabit those spaces, engage with the art as well as the way in which individuals and groups encounter others within the confines of those spaces.

In their work *Freedom Without Permission: Bodies and Space in the Arab Revolutions* (2016), Frances S. Hasso and Zakia Salime define an understanding of both spaces and places in the revolutions and uprisings of the Arab Spring. For these authors, *space* refers to arrangements and interactions while *place* refers to “the lived and dynamic location where different people, social agents or powerful

actors come together in unpredictable and even shifting ways” (Hasso & Salime 2016: 6). Grounding in Henri Lefebvre’s understanding of space that is socially and linguistically produced, and which shapes and constrains thoughts and actions, together with more recent work by sociologist Anthony Giddens, which argues that some spaces form circumscribed areas for the generation of administrative power and for the concentration of resources, or “power containers”, this special journal issue will attempt to examine the work of Kurdish artists in terms of space and power. Authors are welcome to introduce and utilize other frameworks and theories of spatial composition to consider these topics.

We welcome proposals on contemporary Kurdish art as it intersects with questions of identity and engages with the notion of space. Some topics/themes might include:

- 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
- Interviews
- Brief histories
- Photo essays
- Art and activism
- Art and peacebuilding
- Inclusion/exclusion
- Marginalized peoples

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