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ScholarArt Issue 2 Introduction. Sexism, Racism, and Technology: Diverse Subjects of Scholar Art

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Sexism, Racism, and Technology: Diverse Subjects of Scholar Art

In this inaugural issue of Scholar Art the editors deal with a few different themes. We received so many intellectual contributions of research that it was hard for us to choose among them. Many of the papers presented in this issue confront stereotypes through analyses of visual representation. They examine the damaging effects that stereotypes have inflicted on communities and how artists are fighting to change the narratives that prejudices bring forth. At an early age we are exposed to stereotypes. Whether positive or negative, they affect our outlook on life and become entangled in conscious and subconscious thinking. These stereotypes are not just racial in nature, but also spiritual, sexually-oriented, and disabled preconceptions. Unfortunately the tendency to create clichés and biased views is even truer in today's political climate. Just when American culture began to look progressive, bigotry shows up as a reminder that we as a human race still have more work to do if we are to attain equality.

Another theme covered in this issue is sexism, which is associated with stereotypes. We are living in an era that has made many strides when it comes to ending gender discrimination. Especially in the art world, there have been major advances since, not so long ago, women artists were not even included in art history textbooks. However, a few of the papers in this issue question the progress and really confront this subject head-on. The amazing papers in this issue review, test, and challenge the ideals of femininity and masculinity. And the last theme addressed in this issue is the effect of technology on the mental condition. Initially, one might not see the connection among all of these themes with art history. However, when reading the papers all together, the themes take on a whole new meaning when recognizing the visual statements that these artists have made. They provide distinct outlooks allowing us to comprehend the subjects from a different point of view.

The first essay explores David Levinthal's photographic series *Bad Barbie* (1972). Timothy Haerens's essay, "Put Another Ken on the Barbie," acknowledges how Barbie is viewed as the symbol of impeccable femininity. However, through his analysis of *Bad Barbie*, Haerens begins to question how the world views the doll as a sexual icon. When looking at Levinthal's sexualized poses of Barbie, we are forced to view this purportedly wholesome doll in an alternative perspective. Haerens argues that Levinthal's photographs have put the viewer in the position of the subject rather than placing Barbie in that position. She becomes a tool, an instrument, and a doll used for objectification and manipulation as she stands in for the treatment of human women.

Women artists have always been linked to femininity and womanhood rather than approached as simply an "artist" like their male counterparts. In Debbie Nuno's essay titled, "Sexism in Art: from the Fundamentals to Art Critiques," she discusses how sexism has always been present in the art institution, from the fundamentals of art discourse to the practices of art criticism. Supported by historical evidence and adopting facts provided by The Guerrilla Girls, her paper returns to the work of Georgia O'Keeffe to show how society has viewed women artists since the 1960s until the present-day. This paper raises the question: "Is there still sexism in art?"

In the next paper titled, "Men Want to Be Looked At," Sandi Harageones examines the male nude through photography. In art history, male nudes are typically overlooked for their female counterparts. While the Greeks made an abundance of male nude statues, in today's society, the gaze toward the nude male represents homoeroticism. Harageones makes the argument that the heterosexual gaze has become more comfortable viewing male nudity and its artistic expression more acceptable.

In "Let's Talk: Stereotypes and Subjectification" by Rebecca Chrisler, the explicit prejudices toward African-Americans are deconstructed. Chrisler analyzes Kara Walker's black cutout installation titled African't (1996) in which she argues that Walker's intent is to make the viewers uncomfortable and to force them to see the horrific injustices that are still being forced upon the African American community today. In this exemplary essay, Chrisler explains how Walker's overall objective is to start a conversation about tearing down the systematic prejudices.

In Candice Serrano's paper, "The Vanishing Race: Dealing with Native Stereotypes Through a Lens," she surveys early twentieth-century photographer Edward S. Curtis. Curtis photographed North American Indians, depicting them as noble savages in a romanticized nostalgic perspective of people from the past. Serrano compares Curtis's viewpoint to contemporary Native American photographer Will Wilson by investigating Wilson's efforts to erase the ethnocentric stigma through the same wet plate collodion process used in the early 1900's. She argues Wilson's project titled Critical Indigenous Photographic Exchange reveals how the stereotype of a "vanished race" is one that is unsubstantiated as well as dangerous to Native American people today.

The essay "SUR-FAKE: Identity Shaped by Technological Impacts" by Melissa Dailey explores the mass consumption of technology in our society today. The need to be technologically connected is of epidemic proportion in today's world. By looking at photographer Antoine Geiger's series SUR-FAKE (2015) we do not see the individuals faces of his subjects, rather what appears to be a face sucked into a cellphone screen. Dailey discusses how the ever-present need to be on

social media is having adverse effects on the formation of personal identities and the maintenance of good mental health. The stretched faces represented in Geiger's photographs are visual representations of this irrefutable need to be connected to a screen rather than what is going on around us.

The final paper by Shayne Mitchell titled "Intuition" examines the use of the rational and irrational sides of our brains. By looking at Jason deCaires Taylor's sculpture *The Lost Correspondent* (2012), a work sited in underwater locations, Mitchell argues that in our society today we do not value the right side of our brain which controls the senses, intuition, and irrationality. This devaluation ultimately disconnects us from being the best that we can be. By implementing both hemispheres of the brain Mitchell argues that we will be capable of generating new opportunities for ourselves.

Throughout the ages and including today, artists have addressed many different social issues that affect people all over the world. The contributors to this issue of *Scholar Art* were given the opportunity to research these different subjects in order to help readers gain a better understanding of not just art but our humanity. The various themes in this issue show a wide range of ideas that emerge from feminism, from the problem of racism, and even from the effects of technology. Overall, the essays demonstrate the complexities and diversity of social issues represented by art. The editors are proud of all the contributions in this inaugural issue and hope the reader appreciates the efforts of the authors.

Editors: Candice Serrano & Debbie Nuno

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