



Dialogues in Social Justice:

An Adult Education Journal

From the Editors

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Welcome to this special edition of *Dialogues in Social Justice* on 'Feminist adult education, museums, heritage sites and exhibitory praxis'. The articles by feminist museum scholars, curators, artists and practitioners are responses to a world that is on one hand deeply troubling and resolute and on the other resistive, and forward looking.

Despite years of education and activism, gender inequity and inequality remain one of the most defining and resilient discriminatory practices of all time (United Nations, 2019). Moreover, we are currently in the midst of a disturbing global backlash of rising fundamentalist and fascist agendas that are shaping and reshaping the parameters of public discourse and consciousness like never before (Shameen, 2021). Alongside this are vilifying narratives of feminism and feminists as witch-hunters, angry anti-male and anti-beauty campaigners and threats to public morality and even, the future of the planet (Ahmed, 2017; Shameen, 2021). The asymmetries of power that maintain gender injustice are so embedded in our social, economic, cultural and institutional practices and resistant to change that Vintges (2018) likens them to a mythological hydra, a creature that simply grows a new head as the old one is severed. One of these gendered hydras is art, culture and heritage institutions. As ubiquitous public intellectual and educational institutions they "are not separate from our discussions of the politics of gender, race and representation" but rather, at their very heart (McCormack, 2021, p. 21). Museums, heritage sites and their exhibitions have for centuries not only reflected white hetero normative masculine privilege; they have actively mobilized it.

Yet this is not the entire story of the art and cultural sector. Keeping pace with discrimination and oppression are dynamic and hopeful forms of resistance and what Clover (this volume) refers to as 'possibility'. Working in or with museums and heritage sites or curating exhibitions and performances, feminist adult educators, artists, curators, researchers, activists, and practitioners across the globe are inventing creative disruptions and interruptions to the gendered order of things (Ashton, 2017/2018; Sanford et al, 2021). Employing a variety of critical aesthetic and creative research and educational strategies, they work to resist hetero-patriarchy, racism and colonialism, show and tell uncomfortable truths, and place a spotlight on diverse histories, ways of knowing and being, and contributions that have for too long, been relegated to the shadows. While much work still needs to be done, the scholars and practitioners are working toward a more gender just world that is visible, thinkable and achievable.

This special edition is divided into two sections. Section one includes feminist studies of museums and exhibitions, and section two, reflections on museum and exhibitory praxis. The first two articles in section one focus on the power of stories and their tellers. In *Feminist storytelling in the museum: Uncovering pedagogies of critique and possibility* Darlene E. Clover shares her study of how feminists working in public art and history and women's and gender museums worldwide use stories to reposition women and others oppressed by gender norms as significant historical and contemporary knowers and socio-cultural actors in the interest of gender justice and change. Perusing exhibitions in presence and online, she uncovers a treasure trove of herstorying, animating, reframing, re-centering, re-scripting, gender bending and revisualizing that operates on one hand as a language of critique and, on the other, a language of possibility. Positioning this work as a global chain of interruption, Clover illustrates how feminist storytelling is transforming experiences of oppression into critical insights.

To highlight the pedagogical value of storytelling and their tellers in Slovenia, Urška Repar in her article titled *Stories of women as a source of inspiration: Exploring the link between the stories we live and the stories shared*, introduces three case studies based on interviews with feminist artists who used narrative performances and tours to tell stories of women which as Repar argues, are as much about those women as they are about the artists who tell the stories. As the author describes how this highly creative work challenges perceptions and dynamics of gender, disrupts stereotypes and encourages new understandings of the historical expectations and limitations women face, she argues the educational potential of this type of work for the museum and beyond.

In article three titled *Feminist re-imaginings of a Victorian brothel: A dialogue between practitioners and academics* Micki Voelkel, Shelli Henehan, Angel Tracy, and Shanna Jones take us into the world of Miss Laura's Social Club, a former Victorian brothel in Fort Smith, Arkansas, USA. Although a popular tourist attraction this heritage site is problematic due to its inaccurate and highly sanitized portrayal of prostitution. Together, the two university researchers and two heritage educators embark on a journey to change the narratives in the front parlor exhibit space, re-imagining and restructuring them to stay appealing to tourists yet offer a realistic portrait of the lives of the women who lived and worked in the space. For these authors, collaborative university-community discursive explorations are effective means to address historical whitewashing of inconvenient truths and transform normative gendered narratives that have for decades, perpetuated ignorance and injustice in the name of entertainment.

Showcasing a different yet equally creative research approach is article number five - This strange flower... Changing the past and imagining feminist futures: Letters between a museum curator and an artist. Through a series of letters written between the manager of the Women's Museum Norway, Hilde Herming and feminist artist Thale Blix Fastvold they illustrate how this collaboration helped them to better imagine a new feminist future. Because the Women's Museum Norway is based in the childhood home of artist, writer, and pianist Dagny Juel, she acted as third voice. The authors argue that the letter format was highly effective in terms of bridging the two very different positions and offering a model for how the museum could better engage with artists as a safe platform of feminist adult education in an unsafe world.

The final article in section one is by Claudia Mandel Katz. In Afro-Caribbean women and resistance: An exploration of decolonial feminist pedagogies of an exhibition in the Women's Museum Costa Rica. Mandel Katz shares her study of how an exhibition in general, and their artworks in particular, help her Women's Museum contribute to the struggle for a more decolonial and anti-racist gendered future. Specifically, her analysis shows how selected artistic representations work to instill a new consciousnesses of Afro-descendent women's lives, challenge myths and norms, offer different memories of women's historical resistances, and visualize both individual and collective agency. For Mandel Katz exhibitions such as this are critical to their feminist pedagogical vision of imagining and re-imagining the world.

Section two begins with an article by Nabila Kazmi, Kathy Sanford and Darlene E. Clover. Titled Curating a feminist exhibition: Purpose, process and presentation the authors reflect on their process of curating the feminist exhibition Cultures of Head Coverings in a gallery at the University of Victoria, Canada. The exhibition was a response to global sexist xenophobia and, more specifically, a new policy in Quebec which bans the wearing of 'religious' head ware in public sector employment. Kazmi, Sanford and Clover reflect on the curatorial process from conceptualization to planning to data collection and finally to the actual curation. Through the lens of feminist adult education, they discuss issues of plurality, collaboration, subjectivity and responsibility to gender justice and change.

In the next article titled Feminist arts and craftivism: Opening spaces for dialogue, respect and recognition in the museum Gaby Franger, university professor and co-founder of the Museum Frauenkultur Regional – International in Germany explores the potential of her museum's feminist adult education work to create spaces for women to query and discuss artistic traditions of gender injustice and work as an entry point into other issues. She introduces curatorial practices that challenge ongoing aesthetic and gendered binaries between art and craft by placing feminist resistance art and crafts by Indigenous women side-by-side. The aims are to disrupt normative art-craft hierarchies but also, show respect for these art practices as a critical aesthetics important to the world. These practices empower all visitors to see and know differently, but particularly marginalized communities who see works in this equitable context.

In Radical collaboration: Co-creating feminist online graduate courses through a university and museum partnership Peggy Brunache, Tanya Cheadle, Katherine Lloyd, Maggie McColl, and Blanche Plaquevent of the University of Glasgow and Chanelle Pickens of the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum share their new model of curriculum development design and how this curriculum can respond to changing student expectations and contribute to a more gender

diverse, inclusive and equitable society. As the authors outline elements of the module including both its advantages and challenges, they show the potential of this type of transnational collaboration between museums and universities to teach history to graduate students through a global and intersectional feminist lens.

In the final article, 'Born in the first light of the morning': Feminist pedagogy, exhibitions and a new vision of care, Gaia de Negro and Silvia Luraschi share how an extraordinary experience of visiting First People's House at the University of Victoria and then various exhibitions and expeditions augmented their own learning about family history, colonialism, and relationships to the land. Based on this, they discuss how they used an art exhibition by South African artist Seshee Bopape', who uses organic materials to explore concepts of land, memory, identity, and colonialism and the method of I-poems to enable three female graduate social worker students in the University of Milano Bicocca to expand their thinking about 'care' in relation to the land.

The studies and different approaches in this issue of Dialogues represent a critical and highly creative insistent response to Vintges 'mythological hydra' and expand our understandings of where and how feminist adult education is taking place across the globe. Like feminist adult educators, museum practitioners, artists, curators, and scholars are working to create new spaces of dialogue, new knowledge, and new ways of seeing and knowing everything from history to the land, public artistic practice to decoloniality. Working in mainstream and/or women's or gender museums, feminists are making links between academic research and curatorial practice, and between academic teaching and museum education practice. And these women do so they make seen and heard voices, histories, cultural practices, resistances and methodologies that work to challenge, inform, expand and inspire. There is still so much work to be and therefore we close with an invitation to engage with the work of two critical networks that are offer opportunities to imagine and reimagine a more gender-justice world for all: The Feminist Imaginary Research Network (FIRN) and the International Association of Women's Museums (IAWM).

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