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20th Anniversary Editorial: Feminisms Coalitional Power

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Here we are at the 20th anniversary of the journal “Visual Culture & Gender,” the first multimedia online journal in the field of art education. Each year, with co-founder, Deborah Smith-Shank, until she retired after our 10th *Visual Culture & Gender* (VCG) anniversary, we discussed the events of the year and brought that discussion into our co-authored editorial, as a way to situate the curation of a set of articles in current events. Each volume, the articles emerged through a critical yet mentoring process by the generosity of high impact international scholars of feminist theories, practices, and pedagogies who believed in VCG as a scholarly venue to write about topics that countered the gatekeeping of societal taboos. We hope each article in the 20 years of VCG has helped to curtailed indoctrination into misogynistic ideals of patriarchal dominance.

With the demise of democracy and arise of autocracy in the US in 2025, my main desktop folders, I titled “house” and “hide” and “seek,” reflected the year to me. Within my “hide” folder, a folder, I titled “chaos,” continued to fill with documentation of burgeoning economic, environmental, national/international insecurities, and public health crises. I did my best with calls, letters, signing petitions, protests, and economic support, maintaining five such actions (see Figures 1 and 2) per day, for months, to address the politically manufactured and provoked chaos in 2025, which is spurring racially gendered oppression and violence. In my chaos folder, I kept a documentation of the letters I wrote and who I sent them to and when. In this 20th VCG editorial, I include excerpts from my protest letters, along with others standing up for diversity, equity, inclusion, and women, to mitigate the manufactured chaos by the convicted felon elected as US president. The fateful outcome of the election was supported by billions of dollars pumped into fabricating and escalating fear and hate with xenophobia, Islamophobia, transphobia (among many other phobias) embedded into stolen-White-patriarchal-pride-narratives. VCG counters hate narratives, recognizes racially gendered oppression (Jeffers, 2025), and contributes to feminisms coalitional power.



Figure 1. The photo captures the zeitgeist of pride parades in June 2025 throughout the US and beyond. On June 7, 2025, I (Karen Keifer-Boyd) participated in the State College, Pennsylvania, Pride Day Parade, holding the Penn State College of Arts & Architecture banner of support for LGBTQ rights with the Penn State Director of the School of Visual Arts, Vagner Medonça-Whitehead. The banner was designed by Rodney Trice. Photograph courtesy of Paul Mattingly-Daniels.



Figure 2. On June 14, 2025, I (Karen Keifer-Boyd) hold a sign in Mentor, Ohio, joining 1000s who turned out locally joining an estimated four to six million who participated on the same day with protest rallies throughout the United States, and beyond (Demopoulos, 2025). I made the sign with my son, which on the back of the sign we wrote: “The wanna-be king has legitimized violence toward his opposition by releasing enemies of democracy from prison including J6 treasonist kidnappers and murderers. Democracy is under assault.” Photograph courtesy of Ernest Boyd.

Feminisms coalitional power values lived experiences with emphasis on the plurality of feminisms and experiences. Feminisms Power is enacted by exposing and dismantling hierarchical power structures toward a more equitable distribution of resources, education, and opportunities. Feminisms power is relational awareness of how one's agency and empowerment impacts the world, and strives for cooperative balance so including difference and diversity can thrive.

Feminist Global Solidarity Rebuke, Refuse, Reject, Repudiate, Resist, Resound

On Juneteenth 2025, *The New York Times* reports: “Since returning to office, [the US President] has moved to purge the federal government of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and sanitize — or even erase — references to Black history” (Kavi, 2025, para. 8). Honorée Fanonne Jeffers's (2025) book, *Misbehaving at the Crossroads*, brilliantly pushes back on such erasure with essays on Black women's strategies to resist White supremacy and patriarchy racially gendered oppression. V (2025), formerly Eve Ensler, a feminist activist, *Vagina Monologues*¹ playwright, and the founder of V-Day and *One Billion Rising*,² a global movement to end violence against women and girls, writes:

This tyrannical white supremacist landscape is erasing our sense of existence and meaning. Daily forms of rebellion birth us back into our bodies and our purpose. Non-compliance is art, as art is meant to defy the status quo, question the givens, expand the boundaries of knowing and freedom. And as you courageously make your mark of refusal, you carve a path for others to be brave. Non-compliance is praxis, stretching and transforming the muscles of our discontent into impactful and embodied action. (para. 7)

Feminist global solidarity rebukes, refuses, rejects, repudiates, and resists such erasures with scholarship and art such as the work published in VCG throughout

¹ The *Vagina Monologues*, a playscript originally written in 1994 by Eve Ensler, has since been performed, typically on February 14, in every state in the US and more than 130 countries, raising \$85 million to stop domestic violence and rape (Makers, 2018).

² *One Billion Rising* (2025) is a global feminist solidarity movement that arises annually in song, dance, and art activism on February 14 since 2012.

its 20 year history. In this volume Afreen Zehra and Snigdha Singh's article, *Through Her Eyes: Art as Emotional and Political Expression Among Kashmiri Women*, bring to readers' vivid attention the lived experiences of five Kashmiri women, who challenge their erasure, process trauma, and assert agency through their art. Zehra and Singh align their research methodology with feminist strategies in recognizing personal is political when situated in broader socio-political contexts. In a letter from the *Ms. Magazine* executive editor, Kathy Spillar writes: “This week has made clear what feminists have long known: the matter of whose violence is taken seriously is deeply political” (2025, September 13, para. 6).

African feminisms address “intimate and bodily pursuit of liberation” critically aware of the socio-politics that enable violence (Decker & Baderoon, 2018, p. 228). In the 20th anniversary volume of VCG, Indira Bailey's article, *Breaking Gender Stereotypes and Cultural Taboos: Ghanaian Women Art Educators Confront Gender Bias in Art Education*, is situated in African feminisms. My colleagues in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department at The Pennsylvania State University, Alicia Decker and Gabeba Baderoon, in their groundbreaking launch in 2015 of the African Feminist Initiative (AFI) and its support of the collaborate staging of the play, *Reclaiming the P...Word* (Hames, 2015), “helped to foster transnational feminist solidarity” (Decker & Baderoon, 2018, p. 221). Indira Bailey began her study in Ghana with a 10-day research visit in 2018 while working on her dual-titled doctoral degree in Art Education and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Penn State. She returned to Ghana in 2024, well after earning her Ph.D. in 2020, seeking to connect to the same women art educators. Their stories breakthrough limiting stereotypes of girls' capabilities and value that prevent girls from pursuing artforms such as sculpture and weaving.

Resilience in Chaotic Times: Rise and Resound

Undermining hard-won civil liberties, on July 24, 2025, the US President signed an executive order to remove from public view those he deemed unsightly due to their poverty and disability (Allbright, 2025, August 12). Disability rights advocates recognize the ableist act as a cruel violation of civil liberties, which parallel the United States history of Ugly Laws that discriminate against people with visible disabilities presence in public view. “The Ugly Laws” in the US, as

outrageous as they sound from civil respect for all humanity, were not repealed in many states and cities until the 1970s. The city of Chicago was the last to repeal its Ugly Law in 1974. The Ugly Laws date back to the 1800s in the US such as in San Francisco a law of 1867 deemed it illegal for “any person, who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or deformed in any way, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, to expose himself or herself to public view” (Schweik, 2009, p. 291). VCG 20th anniversary volume author, **Eunkyung Hwang**, counters such ableist ideology infused as well in South Korean culture, in her article, *Woven Memories: Arts-based Autoethnography of Scar Stigma and Body Modification*. The social pressures to mask disabilities are often deeply internalized. Yet, as readers can witness in Hwang’s article, reflective art and writing offers resilience to recognize and resist harmful societal bias toward visible differences as flaws to conceal.

I wrote to Pennsylvania House and Senate Representations to stand up for the Commonwealth.

Attack after attack on the health and wellbeing of people in the US since Trump took office is causing great suffering in communities across the Commonwealth and beyond. Donald Trump is putting mental health parity protection at risk, and soon, insurers could once again deny therapy, addiction treatment, and psychiatric care—pushing millions into crisis. The flippant lies coming from the Trump loyalists unqualified for their positions and extremely biased work are destroying education, health, the environment, safety, and the economy in the US. Please listen to those in the Commonwealth, some who voted for Trump, who are frightened and distraught with the cruelty, violence, and corruption fueled and unconstitutionally charged by Trump. Please stand up for the Commonwealth people and stop the Trump wreckage of the US. (2025, September 6)

Also, I have been feeding AI with questions such as: “Is it a fascist regime when students and professors cannot critique the government without retribution?” Many of my questions, AI will not answer. Instead, a propaganda image appears. Renown feminist philosopher, Jewish scholar, and queer theorist, Judith Butler, who has been a faculty member at University of California (UC) Berkeley for more than 30 years, learned in September 2025 that they were on a list of people to investigate,

a list requested by the US Federal Department of Education. Those on the list, in seeking more information, received none. There are no specific allegations but rather in Butler’s words a “well-known practice from the McCarthy Era” as part of the current US government regime’s attack on those who do not align with White supremacy patriarchal ideology (Levin, 2025, para. 11 quotes from Butler’s letter to the UC statewide general counsel). Butler in their letter to the University of California statewide general counsel states:

We should not be naive. Will those of us named now be branded on a government list? Will our travel be restricted? Will our email communications be surveilled? ... It is a time to resist injustice that now threatens to be normalized by those who capitulate, sometimes in advance, to bullying tactics of extortion at the expense of basic standards that govern shared governance, institutional autonomy, due process, and fair review. ... To allow universities to be bossed by political operatives in this way undermines the basic ideals of the university as well as [its] important links to the future of critical thought, dissent, and democracy. (Levin, 2025, para. 13 & 14)

It is in this context that VCG’s independence from institution hosting on their server is ever more necessary, and VCG’s original mission continues with no subscription to be freely accessed online and the copyright of the articles is held by the authors. The VCG journal itself is feminist activism. Publishing here what I wrote to Pennsylvania House and Senate Representations to address education and economic issues is feminist activism.

Many of my women friends and family members have taken out loans for higher education to develop a career and then because of caregiving responsibilities (of spouse, parents, and/or children) were not able to complete their last year or two of university and instead have student debt that has kept them from getting credit to buy a car to pay off from their minimum wage jobs. The public transportation does not run during their service-type evening work hours and thus job earnings go to uber transport to get to their low minimum-wage paying jobs. There are more than 40 million Americans now trapped under the weight of student loan debt. (2025, September 3)

Feminist publishing as activism takes many forms: zines, blogs, memoir, websites, podcasts, to name a few. Writing for publication about the feminist theory inherent in the process and form of developing a website has precedence in feminist work such as for *The Cyberfeminism Index Project* (Atzmon, Seu, & Coombs, 2023). Carly Sherman's discusses in her article, *Tinkering the Glitch: Cyberspace and Activism with the Coalition for Feminisms in Art Education Website (re)Design*, the intentional use of feminist glitch art aesthetics in designing the *Coalition for Feminisms in Art Education* website. Glitch art has become a contemporary feminist visual language to disrupt societal expectations of fixed binary gender identity by emphasizing malfunction of such controlling dominant systems. Naomi Klein's (2023) cover for her book, *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World*, (Figure 3) is an example of glitch art aesthetics highlighting identity distortion and chaos from virile disinformation in contemporary times of

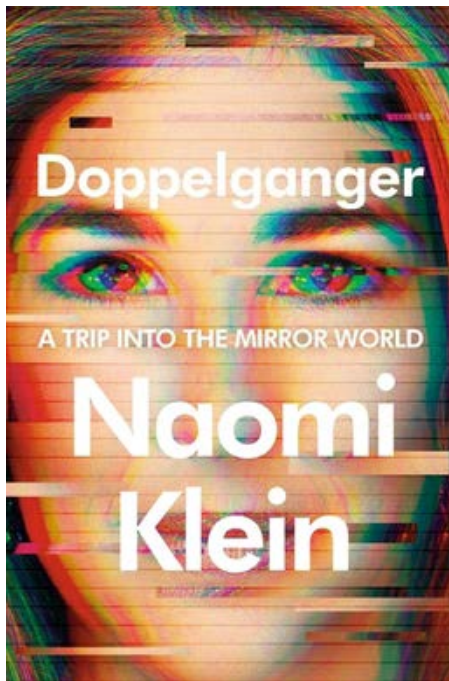


Figure 3. Feminist glitch aesthetics cover image for Naomi Klein's 2025 book, which is scholarly work that seeks to liberate with and from identity glitches. The digitally glitched self-portrait photograph is altered by Naomi Klein using digital processes of copy, color filters, offset, and paste.

mixed and multilayered realities set deep in the algorithms of bias and surfaced in the noise of media saturated lives. *Eclipse*, is a brilliant glitch ecofeminist tech art work by EcoArtTech, a collaboration between Leila Christine Nadar and Cary Adams (2009), which glitches photos of US National Parks posted online based on the government's air pollution data of the area in real-time (Figure 4). The original photograph is corrupted "through a set of programmed algorithms that affect color, saturation, and contrast and that impose intermittent mirroring, deletion, or cropping of the file's data" indicating the level of pollution (Nadir & Adams, 2009). Artificial Intelligence (AI) is data processing in accordance with instructions to perform responses to specific calculations. The instructional design guides the performance, which is why data feminism AI activism (Klein & D'Ignazio, 2025) is necessary to stop White supremacy and patriarchy.

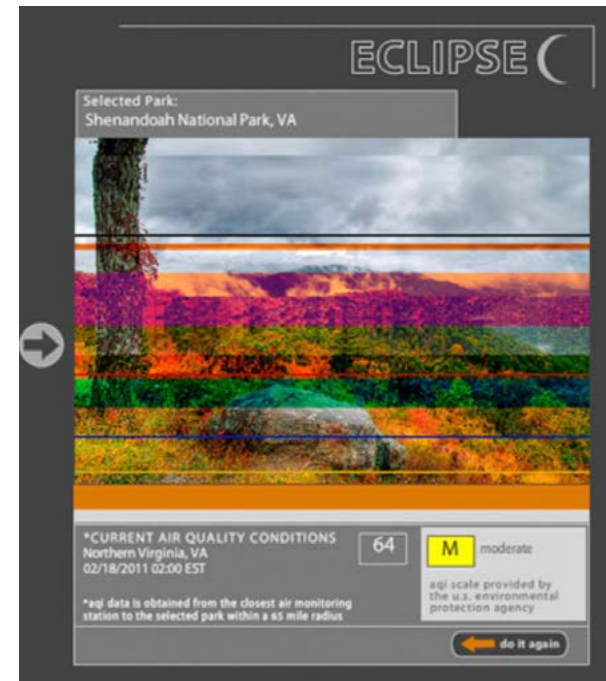


Figure 4. The screenshot from the *Eclipse* project by EcoArtTech shows an example of how the real-time air pollution data glitches a photograph of Shenandoah National Park. The intervention from the *Eclipse* project by EcoArtTech.

Sherman's glitch tinkering becomes purple in her listening to multiracial intergenerational perspectives on feminism. Similar to the question posed by Sydnie L. Mosley Dances multimedia installation, in asking "What Does PURPLE Sound Like?"³ Sherman investigates the symbolism of purple in feminism and womanism. Sherman's tinkering in website creation is informed from Sherman's research annotation process of the National Art Education Association's *Women's Caucus* (WC) archives and is a living archive of the process in recreating the WC website aligned with its name change in 2023 to the *Coalition for Feminisms in Art Education*.⁴

Somi Lee's article, *Introduction to the Inclusive Q&A Learning Environment Design*, presents her case study of critical feminist art pedagogy, examining how her design of an inclusive Q&A process with the 137 students in her course engaged dialogue with a guest artist, Catalina Alzate, about her art and the issues raised by her art. Colombian feminist artist Catalina Alzate infuses feminist theory into participatory design interventions of technological systems impacting women's bodies. Alzate's long-term community-based design interventions particular attend to health and reproductive justice. Somi Lee's case study offers strategies of how to facilitate dialogue to foster critical consciousness and encourage action toward mitigating oppressive systems that attempt to control and prevent women's healthcare.⁵

Dialogue is at the heart of the next VCG article sparked by the question: Where is your studio? **Pin-Hsuan Tseng** (曾品璇) and **Ann Holt**'s visual essay, *Mobile Studios as Sites of Transnational Feminist Pedagogy and Creative*, is a reflective commentary on the notion of studio. They posit that mobile studios can be sites of transnational feminist pedagogy and creative resistance, and nature as

³ The Center for the Performing Arts (2025) website includes images from the February 2025 multimedia art installation along with video excerpt of the performances from *PURPLE: A Ritual in Nine Spells* by Sydnie L. Mosley Dances at The Pennsylvania State University.

⁴ For more on histories of activism by National Art Education Association Women's Caucus and transition to the *Coalition for Feminisms in Art Education* see Hoepfner Poling and Keifer-Boyd (2025).

⁵ Gloria Steinem, iconic feminist activist at 91 years old, opened her living room, a space that has generated coalitional feminist actions for more than 50 years, once again on September 9, 2025, to address the attacks on women's health (Benveniste, 2025).

studio can be restorative. The essay is written in third person to theorize and reflect on the first person narratives collected in their journals and diaries of their journeys to resilience from loss and discrimination. In what follows are excerpts from some of my protest letters written between February to August 2025. My laptop and phone have become my mobile studio. For the moment, my protest letters are part of my art of living in these chaotic times.

As a representative of the people of Pennsylvania, you are elected to uphold the US Constitution, and therefore, must oppose H.R. 569, a blatantly unconstitutional attack on US citizenship. The 14th Amendment is clear, and the century-old precedent of *US v. Wong Kim Ark* affirms that anyone born in and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States is born a citizen, no matter what. Stop the disrespect of our Constitution now. (2025, February 1)

I am writing to urge you to investigate and stop the Trump administration's attempt to reassign IRS agents to immigration enforcement. It's a dangerous and unprecedented abuse of executive power. (2025, February 14)

I am appalled that Congress is considering proposals that take food assistance and health care away from people to pay for tax cuts for the rich. Such proposals are un-American. (2025, February 23)

I am frightened because Congress does not stand up for truth, and instead allows misinformation to be spouted and not challenged. Trump is a bully as we saw his treatment of President Zelensky. Stand up to the bully. Together, constituents will stand up since Congress is not, as we see through the lies and are disgusted with such behavior and worried that our country is failing decency, peace, democracy, plunging into greater and irreparable debt, and harming all of us. (2025, March 5)

Thank you Planned Parenthood. You made a difference in my life so that I could become pregnant when it was right for me. If my miscarriage was in today's times and in states with bans, I would have either died or not been able to have children. Thanks to Planned Parenthood, I had two healthy babies. (2025, March 12)

Please only select convention sites in states that do not allow carrying of guns, have not banned abortions, and that have not succumbed to eliminating DEI. Instead chose convention sites that support DEI, gun reform, trans rights, reproductive justice, and ERA. (2025, March 24)

Costs of everything is going up and stock markets are going down due to the fELON's harmful and foolish tariffs. (2025, March 26)

This could have been me, as I had a miscarriage. It is a devastating sad experience, and if I was not treated at a hospital being RH-, I would have died or not been ever able to have children. Thankfully, I did not live in the dark times of Georgia in 2025 when I miscarried but during the time when America was great and women could be treated with respect and given medical care as they suffered a miscarriage. (2025, April 3)

Congress is complacent with the fascist regime if you allow criminalizing peaceful protestors without due process. (2025, April 19)

I'm your constituent and I am urging you to raise the federal minimum wage to a living wage. It hasn't been raised since 2009, and in that time, it has lost 30% of its value. (2025, April 26)

Sadly, one out of five women experience rape in the USA. Even the current US President has sexually assaulted women, serving as a role model and validating (e.g., proudly proclaiming "grab 'em by the pussy") that it is okay to enact violence against women. Planned Parenthood is necessary and needs more funding to serve communities, which have become reproductive healthcare deserts. Without the reproductive healthcare I received from Planned Parenthood, I would not have been able to have children when I was ready to be a loving mother, who could provide for my children. Congress should invest in health care to meet the needs of people in this country, not attack it. I urge you to stand against attacks on Planned Parenthood and Medicaid. (2025, May 4)

Trump is planning a 45-million (plus the cost of repairing roads after the tanks destroy public property, paid for by our taxes), birthday parade on the streets of Washington, DC. I am sure you recognize that the parade

is about idolizing his power to destroy democracy, not honoring service fighting to preserve democracy, and it's an outrageous waste of money. This flagrant parade is horrific after his actions through tariff chaos bringing financial hardship to businesses and homes, and installing DOGE to manufacture job loss, and irrevocable damage to health and safety of this great nation. (2025, June 1)

I am writing because I am deeply concerned about the budget bill currently with the Senate for reconciliation, and hope you are just as concerned. The damage will be irrevocable in harming the lives, livelihood, and well-being of US families and their environment. We are slipping quickly into an unsafe environment such as a reststop on I-80 in PA has brown water from fracking with signs do not brush teeth or ingest. I feel for those who live in the contaminated area, and throughout the US. who will suffer from the proposed bill—no water, food, medical care, renewable energy. (2025, June 2)

End ICE workplace raids & military escalation. As a United States Senator, it's time to decide: Are you on the side of the U.S. Constitution, democracy, and the U.S. people or the cruel unlawful attacks ordered by the convicted felon in the oval office? (2025, June 10)

I urge you to reject the dangerous provision in the House-passed budget reconciliation bill that would impose a 10-year moratorium on all state and local AI regulations. (2025, June 21)

America is no longer a leader of the free world, certainly no longer "great" but instead in 2025 has become an unsafe, cruel, inhuman, fascist nation rounding up and torturing innocent children, adults, and elders—our students, neighbors, family, friends, co-workers, ourselves—no due process, instead death, trauma, and undue suffering. (2025, July 30)

The culminating article, I curated for the 20th anniversary of the journal, *Visual Culture & Gender*, is an invited multimedia essay composed by a coalition of 21 authors, all involved in designing and flying 10 kites intended to generate dialogue about feminist issues raised by the tension necessary to rise toward liberation. *Coalition for Feminisms in Art Education 50th Anniversary Kite*

Events: Rising Against the Winds of Resistance is authored by Chien-Ling Chen, Liz Langdon, Jess Grubenhoff, Lori Santos, Christine Liao, Laura Lee McCartney, Ann Holt, Eunkyung Hwang, Karen Keifer-Boyd, Adebola Adalumo, Eric Anthony Berdis, Fouz Aljameel, Linda (Shijing) Fu, Carrie Lordan Heron, Youngjoo Kim, Wanda B. Knight, Brandi Lewis, Nashormeh N. R. Lindo, Carly Sherman, Simin Zargarán, and Yi-Ning Zhao. Feeling the tug of the kite when it catches the wind (see Figure 5) metaphorically sensate Black Marxist scholar and feminist political activist Angela Davis (2016) mantra: “Freedom is a constant struggle,” espoused in Davis’s lectures and writings, and in her lived experiences of activism. The kite stories, in this article, rise and resound with peace, love, race and gender equity, valuing difference and promoting health and environment care—throughout the algorithms of life with boots on the ground.



Figure 5. A group of Penn State art education doctoral students from Bangladesh, China, Iran, Nigeria, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States, on the campus grounds on May 3, 2025, liberate their kites to take flight high above them by adjusting tension with pull and release of the kite strings. Photograph by Karen Keifer-Boyd.

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Editor’s Bio

Karen Keifer-Boyd, Ph.D., Professor of Art Education and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Penn State University, co-authored several books *C.H.U.T.N.E.Y. Power* (Taylor & Francis, 2025); *Teaching and Assessing Social Justice Art Education: Power, Politics, Possibilities* (Routledge, 2022); *Lobby Activism: Feminism(s)+Art Education* (NAEA, 2021); *Including Difference* (NAEA, 2013); *InCITE, InSIGHT, InSITE* (NAEA, 2008); *Engaging Visual Culture* (Davis, 2007). Her research focuses on feminist critical disability studies, feminist art pedagogy, transcultural dialogue, and eco-social justice art education, and has been translated and published in Austria, Brazil, China, Columbia, Finland, Oman, S. Korea, Turkey, and the US. She was the 2012 Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Gender Studies at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria, and a 2006 Fulbright Scholar in Finland and awarded a National Art Education Foundation grant (2017-2018) for social justice art education and a National Science Foundation grant (2010-2012) addressing gender barriers in technology. In 2005, she co-founded and continues to serve as editor of the *Visual Culture & Gender* journal, the first multimedia online journal in the field of art education. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9498-0489>. Contact: kk-b@psu.edu

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