

Letter From the Editor

“In each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in each man’s brain, the man predominates the woman, and in the woman’s brain, the woman predominates over the man... if one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man inside her.”

Virginia Woolf
A Room of One’s Own

It is a form of imperial logic to demarcate social divisions; us vs. them, black vs. white, man vs. woman. The further our world advances technologically and scientifically, it seems the deeper the ‘us vs. them’ logic embeds; radicalized groups act in the extremities of our social divisions. Virginia Woolf acknowledges these dualities—and their supposed rupture—and then challenges us to “have intercourse with” our opposing other. This is a radical proposition.

To partake in a metaphorical intercourse—a place of vulnerability and shared power—with our “other,” we must shatter the imagined walls between. Woolf goes on: “Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all of its facilities.” By communing with our opposites, there is a potential for a richer and more full understanding of ourselves. Yet, we are often instead reactionary; the schism between various social groups widens.

This issue of *Carla* proposes several dialogues around art practices that may on first glance be seen as participating in these types of reactionary gender divisions. But, a closer look into these disparate artists and practitioners—who dissect systems of

power and gender inequalities head on—reveals that they are in fact in search of a deeper understanding, not an inquisition. Often the work of these artists (many, but not all of whom are female) are pitted against the heavy weight of their patriarchal counter-movements, even as they are uninterested in their output being framed by such simple and digressive dualities.

It is undeniable that our patriarchal systems of logic heavily inform our perspective; it is not illogical to use this logic as a litmus to compare alternate perspectives. This issue however divulges that thinking about such a fluid concept as gender with such rigid dual parameters—even how Woolf describes it here—is both counterproductive and reductive. In this issue, Mernet Larsen discusses her early days as a female art faculty in the ’60s (the all-male hiring committee only granted her an interview because they thought her name was a man’s). Travis Diehl delves into the practice of Kenneth Tam, whose portrayal of male culture in his work presents a faceted definition of manhood, and the nuances therein. Catherine Wagley attempts to chart a new “school” of female painters working in Los Angeles, their intuitive processes guiding them, while Amanda Yates Garcia describes the use of contemporary witchcraft to contend with many capitalist and patriarchal forces. In the many gender discussions that grace this issue, you will find that vulnerability is a common thread.

In a time when marginalized bodies are increasingly vulnerable, and bigoted political speech seems to be the norm, choosing to maintain our vulnerabilities, rather than hardening ourselves to them, becomes a political act. Vulnerability does imply a silencing of self or voice; in fact these too are patriarchal implications. Vulnerability is a place of potential and risk, yet also one of power and autonomy. As Matt Stromberg writes in this issue, “vulnerability does not preclude a wider range of emotions.” Perhaps by sitting back in our distinct vulnerabilities and considering communing with our “others,” we may find that there are in fact no opposites, only a multiplicity of experiences. We no longer live in a black and white world; the truth is, we never did.

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