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Special Issue Reprint

New Articulations of Identity in Contemporary Aesthetics

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In the late twentieth century, political and cultural activism increasingly tackled identity-based forms of structural inequality. During the cultural debates of the 1980s and early '90s, identity politics became a major arena for critical and intellectual inquiry and was increasingly the focus of creative endeavor. In the decades that followed, new discourses considered the construction and maintenance of rigidly defined identities—pondering whether the markers of belongingness (related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and nationhood) have become too fixed and exclusionary. The increasingly prevalent notion that identity discourses (often concerned with histories of coloniality, genocide, racism, nationalism, and gender and sexuality-based antagonisms) have become siloed, tribal, and engaged in so-called 'purity politics' has led to divisive but generative conversations.

Within this larger conversation, contemporary art and visual culture have emerged as crucial sites for interrogating the ideological construction of identity and difference in representation. This methodologically diverse collection brings together a range of voices that ponder the complexities of belongingness as envisioned in contemporary art and visual culture. This lively interdisciplinary discussion explores how the visual can foster intersectionality as a self-critical praxis while destabilizing fixed notions of identity.



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