

Discussions about sexuality and gender have resurfaced with a vengeance in US culture with the recent debates about same sex marriage and the rise in visibility of transgender subjects and themes in popular culture, most notably in the Amazon television show *Transparent*, featuring an older man who is transitioning and dealing with his children's bafflement, to the E! television show *I am Cait* and the accompanying public interviews (in April, with Diane Sawyer on ABC television) and magazine articles (in July 2015 *Vanity Fair*) documenting the transition of former Olympic athlete Bruce Jenner into «Caitlyn».¹ Major newspapers such as the *New York Times* have, in response to this mass culture rush to embrace transgender culture, published news articles on trans issues, including a major front-page story on a trans-female judge, Phyllis Frye, who has been a trans activist since the 1970s.²

So what about the art world and academic art and art history discourses? How are debates and discussions about gender and sexuality informing (or not) art practices, theories, and curatorial strategies as well as the teaching of art history today? Since the 1970s with the consolidation of cultural studies (particularly strongly in the UK) and the debates of the rights movements (especially in the US), feminism, gender studies, and queer theory have been central to the arts and humanities in US universities. By the 1980s most US universities included some kind of «Women's Studies» department or program; often the name of such programs would have shifted in the 1990s to «Gender Studies» or some variant, due to the important developments in queer theory and LGBTQ (Lesbian Gay Bi-Trans Queer) discourses. However, these programs were largely driven by social sciences faculty from disciplines such as sociology or anthropology and rarely connected to the visual arts or art history. Feminists could be found here and there in US art history and art departments from the 1970s onward, however. Art historians focused on retrieving the work of gay and lesbian artists have had a presence in US departments to a limited degree. Queer theorists less so – in fact they have been almost entirely absent. Erin Silver, a Canadian queer feminist art historian, and I have just edited a book exploring why queer theory has had little impact in art history, entitled *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*.³

All the same, gender theory of one kind or another has become integrated into teaching and research relating to art and culture of all kinds in universities, and debates about the representation of women or queer artists in art institutions are still circulating, thanks to dedicated feminist scholars and curators such as Maura Reilly, Katy Deepwell, and Hilary Robinson.⁴ Relating to this last point, theories of representation taught in art and art history programs are deeply indebted to the rigorous feminist critical theory of the 1970s through the 1990s, whether or not

they explicitly address feminist and queer issues (texts such as Laura Mulvey's classic 1975 essay «Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema» and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity are still commonly assigned in basic critical studies – art theory and history as taught in art schools in the US – and art history classes).⁵

In spite of this foundational importance, the key political urgencies of feminist, queer, and gender theory have been largely sidelined in contemporary art discourses and practices (including curating). We are clearly beyond the heyday when feminism (the 1980s into the 1990s) and queer theory (the 1990s) stood out on their respective limbs to challenge the closures and oppressions of art discourse, art institutional practice, and the disciplines in the humanities – although it must be said that neither of these discourses had the purchase in US art history departments and art schools that they did in the UK (feminist art history in particular) or in other humanities departments in the US (queer theory has long been a strong force in departments open to cultural studies approaches).

While many of us queer feminist theorists working in art history departments or art schools still make arguments and base our research on structures of analysis relating to feminist and queer theory, there is little direct risk in doing so at this point. My recent book *Sexuality* (published in the Whitechapel Gallery's *Documents* series) is a case in point – this book includes material that was viewed as highly controversial at the time it was published – including texts and interviews by Cosey Fanni Tutti, Ron Athey, and Claudette Johnson; Yayoi Kusama's *Homosexual Wedding* (*Press Release*) from 1968, Orlan's *Carnal Manifesto* (c. 2000), and Lorraine O'Grady's *Olympia's Maid* (1992) – but I have now compiled it for its historical importance to a study of sexuality and art.⁶ Arguably books such as *Sexuality* defuse the original political pointedness of these art practices and critiques by presenting a range of earlier views in condensed form.

At the same time, focusing on issues of gender and sexuality is still controversial in art-related discourses in the US. Insisting on performing an explicitly queer feminist approach to art history or to critical studies or visual culture studies will not forward a scholar's career in the same way that performing traditional art history (focusing on reception, materials, form, or the object-status of art without questioning the structures through which these arguments are articulated) or teaching theory as a grab bag of approaches with no attention to historiographic and social concerns or identity politics will. In US art history departments, cultural studies has largely been repelled – the hugely influential group surrounding the journal *October* has been central to this exclusion, and their arguments have joined forces with those of conservatives who believe art history is a «neutral» discourse without method or point of view and hence not in need of an interrogation of the structures through which it operates.⁷ In art history, teaching and research methods remain structurally just as they were, more or less, in the mid to late twentieth century. The kinds of deep interrogation and reconfiguring called for by major scholars such as Donald Preziosi and by queer feminist theorists in other disciplines such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick have not been forwarded.⁸ In the art school, the grab bag approach to teaching theory is common – for example, teachers (who often have MFAs rather than PhDs and have not studied art history intensively) tend to include key theories of the past and of the moment with little attention to where, when, and why these theories were developed; it is rare to see critical studies courses in art schools explicitly address questions of power and theories of identity and identification – including feminist ones – with any consistency or force.

The contrast between the way histories and theories of literature, film, popular culture, and certain kinds of music and theater are being taught (often with a deep investment in cultural studies and its attention to politics and power in relation to how culture *works*) and the way visual arts histories and theories are being taught in art history departments and in art schools can be stark. At USC, for example, a number of cutting edge scholars addressing queer feminist and anti-racist politics are clustered in the English and American Studies and Ethnicity departments as well as in the Cinema, Music, and Theatre/Drama schools. The art history department courses do not address contemporary feminist or queer theory to any extent. My presence at the Roski School of Art and Design has changed the curriculum there, but before I came there was a general interest in social practice and political theory as it plays out in art criticism, but little attention being paid to how identifications condition how we make, display, curate, write about, and experience art in all of its forms. Feminism was implicit in some of the studio curriculum but not explicit in critical studies classes.

In sum, feminist and queer theory are embedded in much art theory, but not generally explicitly foregrounded in art schools and art history departments in the US. If anything they are suppressed, ignored, or kept to the margins. There are exceptions, based of course on personnel and vision (Norma Broude and Mary Garrard have taught feminist art history for decades in the Department of Art at American University; UC Irvine's Claire Trevor School of the Arts has been groundbreaking in diversifying their faculty for decades, and this in turn has strengthened their curriculum and the attention paid to issues of power and identification in the visual arts world; at State University of New York, Buffalo, the pioneering queer art history scholar Jonathan Katz has spearheaded an innovative PhD program foregrounding queer and feminist art history and a lecture series on Gay and Lesbian Art). But no art history department in the US foregrounds feminist art history, other than through the work of a few individuals here and there; curatorial studies and studio art programs tend to ignore or marginalize feminist and queer approaches.

While – as I argue in my book *Sexuality* – sex and sexuality, gender and gender identification are central to the making, interpretation, and display of art, these aspects of human experience are still viewed as marginal concerns to art discourse and the teaching of art and art history. Even in the face of the popular culture move to embrace debates about sexuality and gender identification noted at the beginning of this article, the academy and the art world remain largely blind to the centrality of an understanding of these questions of identification to any comprehension of how art *works* in contemporary US society.

Zuerst erschienen als: «Le sexe et l'enseignement (de l'histoire de l'art» *Perspective: actualité en histoire de l'art* 2, 2015, p. 9–12, auf Englisch auch: Amelia Jones, «Sex and the (art history) academy», *Perspective* 2, 2015, <http://perspective.revues.org/6033>

Anmerkungen

1 The same sex marriage debate culminated in the Supreme Court decision in the summer of 2015 basically making this a federal right. And on celebrity transgender folks, see the cover story Buzz Bissinger (with photos by Annie Leibovitz), «Call Me Caitlyn», *Vanity Fair* (July 2015); the Diane Sawyer interview took place on ABC News' 20/20 show, April 24, 2015.

2 See Deborah Sontag, «Once a Pariah, Now a Judge: The Early Transgender Journey of Phyllis Frye», in: *New York Times*, A1 front page story (August 29, 2015); available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/us/transgender-judge-phyllis-frye-earlytransformative-journey.html?_r=0.

3 Jones and Silver, ed., *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming, 2016).

4 See Maura Reilly's recent special issue of *Art News* on «Women in the Art World», (June 2015); I contributed «On Sexism in the Art World», p. 69–70; available online at: <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/on-sexism-in-the-art-world/>; Katy Deepwell edits the important online feminist art journal *n.paradoxa* (see <http://www.ktpress.co.uk/>); and Hilary Robinson is adding to her important publications bringing together texts in feminist art history with her forthcoming edited collection, *Companion to Feminist Art Practice and Theory*, Bristol forthcoming 2016. I contributed the essay «Essentialism, Feminism, and Art: Spaces where Woman «Oozes Away»» to the latter volume.

5 See Laura Mulvey, «Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema» (Screen, 1975), reprinted in Amelia Jones, ed., *Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, second edition (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), p. 57–65; and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York and London 1990. The original argument was published first in Butler, «Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory», in: *Theatre Journal* 40, n. 4 (December 1988), p. 519–531.

6 Amelia Jones, ed., *Sexuality*, London 2014.

7 See the infamous «Visual Culture Questionnaire» published by the journal *October*, which has long mounted a defense against new methods informed by identity politics concerns or cultural studies; Alpers et al., «Visual Culture Questionnaire», in: *October* 77 (Summer 1996), p. 25–70.

8 See Preziosi, ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Oxford 2006; and Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, New Haven 1991; and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's oeuvre, especially *Tendencies*, Durham 1993.

Linda Hentschel and Anne Söll: In your article «Sex and the Art Historical Academy» you conclude, that art history as a discipline is still largely «blind» to how central sexuality and gender actually are for the production of art and its reception (we agree!). How, in your own teaching, do you try to ratify this and how does an art historical curriculum look like that takes into account feminist, gender and queer theory?

Amelia Jones: Right now I'm teaching in an art school, so art and design undergraduates and, at the graduate level, curatorial practices MA students and studio art MFA students. My approach is to frame the history and theory curriculum in a meta-critical way, establishing the foundations of the development of art as we know it in the early modern period with the rise of colonialism and capitalism; design comes in a bit later, in the nineteenth century, with the invention of photography, printing techniques, and the burgeoning of consumer culture.

All of these historical and theoretical insights are always presented from a queer feminist point of view – the key point being that art and design and curating never occur in a «neutral» setting, but are always already formatted within belief systems that inform our beliefs about gender/sexuality, and our understandings of ourselves and others. This approach includes, of course, a direct study of feminist and queer artists, designers, theorists, curators, and historians. But also a study of non queer/feminist practices from a queer feminist point of view. I seek to encourage my critical studies faculty to nurture a more meta-critical awareness among the students so that they can be aware of the stakes and be more self-reflexive in their engagement of art and design and their respective marketplaces.

The overall point is that not only are value judgments about art *not* neutral, but art itself (as we know it) is a constructed discourse and belief system marked by beliefs about gender/sexuality, class, race/ethnicity, nationality, and so on.

Why do you think is the discipline of art history so resistant to the issues of feminist, gender and queer thinking? What is at stake?

I love this question as I feel I have addressed this in everything I've ever written, in one way or another. What is at stake is the maintenance of power. Power is uniquely connected to money in the visual arts fields because, unlike any other realm of the humanities, we have a huge international marketplace attached to most of the objects/images we study (this is less directly true of hybrid areas such

as performance art, which I study extensively, but overall remains a huge issue). To interrogate structures of power attached to value systems set forth by art institutions as well as their operators (including universities, museums and galleries, art historians, critics, art teachers, art magazines, MFA programs, and so on) is to interrogate the very assumption that art transcends capital (or the legacies of colonialism, capitalism, and so on), an assumption still deeply embedded in even the most radical arguments about contemporary art.

For example, I have experienced in the art school a particularly contradictory tendency among some faculty to suppress the direct links between art and the marketplace, which sometimes takes the form of denigrating my design colleagues for their «commercialism», while at the same time nurturing commercial gallery and other marketing connections for themselves and their students.

My job has always been to expose these contradictions, which of course always veil structures of privilege whereby certain kinds of people – for example, white male American artists such as Jeff Koons – gain more than others from the value systems. Exposing the stakes is to nurture a greater critical awareness of the roles of art and its related discourses – ultimately exposing our own privilege. In my view, we most want to be sure we are not simply reinforcing racist, classist, sexist beliefs about «high» culture in our teaching, research, writing, and curating.

What do you think are the intersections of Visual Culture and Gender Studies?

For me, these overlap with the intersections among art history and gender studies and queer theory. It kind of depends on what version of Visual Culture Studies you are referring to.

Visual Culture Studies can be broader than art history (including all visual imagery and practices) or sometimes narrower (relying on fewer tools, with a more superficial relationship to histories of visual imagery and art). In some rare cases it can be deeper and very rigorous – the work of Mieke Bal is of course exemplary here, in that she opens the study of the visual to a broad range of considerations but rigorously understands the theoretical and historical issues at stake. If art history tends to fetishize objects and formal strategies of analysis, with attention to historical issues, and Visual Culture Studies tends to focus on semiotic analyses of the visual, then gender studies should be central to both (but for different reasons).

Do you see an opportunity (or risks) in the debates on «Affect theory» and «New Materialism» for queer politics?

I think these new theories entail both opportunities and risks. I have written at length on feminist new materialist theories such as the work of Karen Barad, which is brilliant. I am interested in affect theory to some degree, but have always approached issues of emotion and affect through phenomenology (from early on in my work). As for how each relates to queer politics or theory, clearly affect theory has been key (through the work of theorists such as Sara Ahmed) while new materialism has been more important for feminist theory – the materialities of embod-

iment are more at issue for feminism (at least on an obvious level) than for queer theory, for obvious reasons (queer is driven by a de-essentializing motive, although interesting things happen with trans*/trans debates).

I am particularly interested in how questions of embodiment are bearing down on queer theory and politics in relation to discourses and debates around trans* or transgender people. I have written about this vis-à-vis historical debates about essentialism.

In Germany we experience a strong backlash against gender-studies in the mainstream media and in parts of the conservative academy (queer studies seems to be not relevant here, because most of the anti-gender critics seem not to be even aware of its existence). Gender-studies is being attacked for «wasting tax payers money», for indoctrinating and radicalizing students. The main point of the attacks are theories on the body, that there is no «natural» body or gender. This is construed as denying the existence of bodies and genders and is conceived as a threat to a «stable form of society». Now, one could think that this controversy is a sign, that gender studies is «working» and in a way successful. How, in your view, must these conservative backlashes be judged and how must the field of gender, feminist and queer studies position itself to deal with it?

I agree that these accusations seem to prove that gender studies is working. I think we are at the point where we need to listen and respond, rather than rolling our eyes and/or ignoring such complaints, or otherwise polarizing the debate further. It can be very challenging for non-university educated people to comprehend or accommodate gender fluidity – the most effective artists and theorists, in my view, are those who approach such criticisms with a spirit of generosity rather than hostility.

That approach is easier to call for than to do, however, particularly in the face of overt hostility and violence (viz., Orlando massacre) – and arguably such situations call for rigorous attention rather than compassion. At the very least we have to retain an atmosphere of generosity and openness in the classroom, so younger generations who have questions or are confused or threatened by these ideas can actually be heard.

What comes after «Queer» art history and theory?

I think art history itself, in its more conservative forms, will never be queer (this is the case in the US for the most part). Those doing radical queer and feminist work are marginalized – there is a reason I am teaching in an art school! Art history as it exists in the US in particular cannot accommodate discourses or ideas that truly challenge fixity, for the reasons alluded to above: the discipline is tied to the marketplace, which demands that values be presented as fixed and knowable, rather than as situational, experiential, relational, and fundamentally biased.

That said, I think we push forward by acknowledging the crucial tensions in the world right now around ethnic/class difference, which are coloring and informing

all debates from the global political to the local. Brexit is huge. Trump is huge, whether he wins or not. We need to pay attention, in our concern for gender/sex issues and equity, to how these other issues relate to our experience of gender and sexuality. They are all related. (It's not hard to see how a queer feminist critique is called for in dealing with Donald Trump and his explicit racism and xenophobia!)