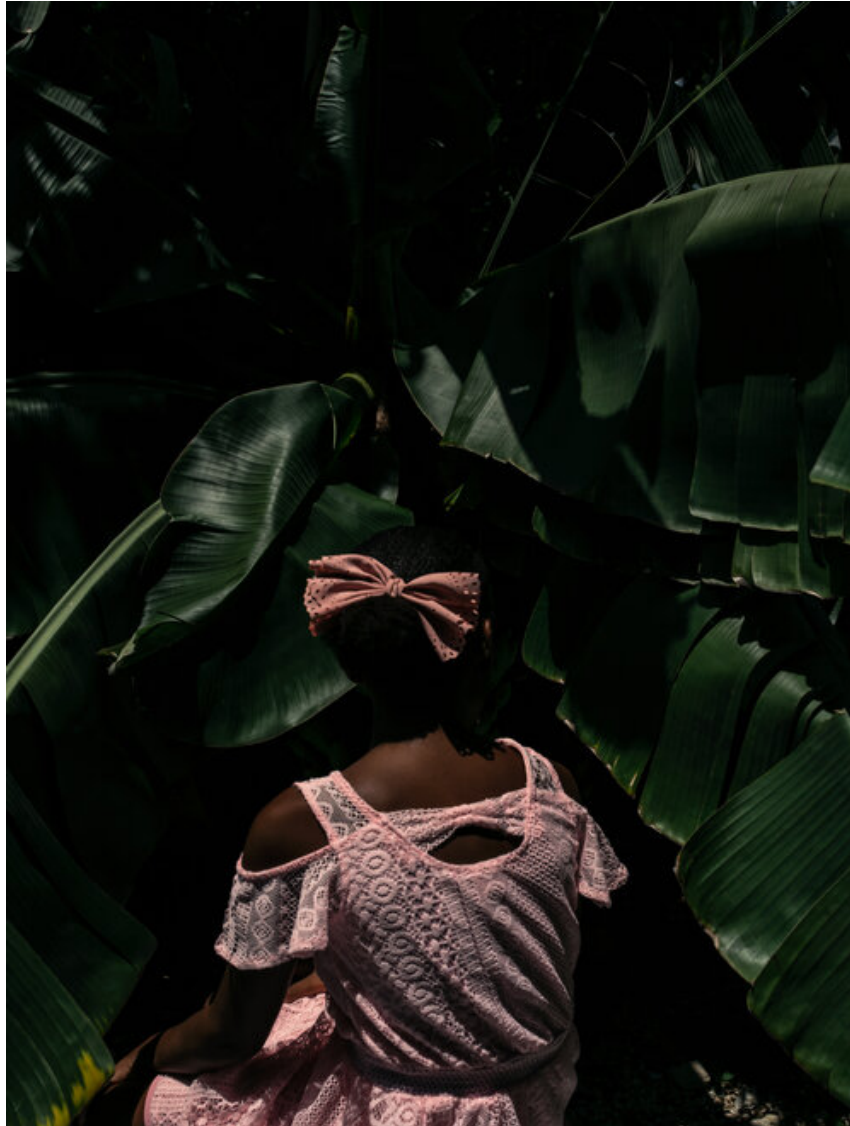




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CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES
A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism



Ellie and the Banana Tree (2020), by Melissa Alcena. Courtesy of the artist.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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SPECIAL ISSUE—Gender Articulated: Visual Language
and the Un/Seeable Self

Call for Submissions

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SPECIAL ISSUE— Gender Articulated: Visual Language and the Un/Seeable Self

GUEST EDITOR:

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Naomi (2019), by Melissa Alcena.
Courtesy of the artist.

In her 2021 article for the *Stabroek News*, Krysta Bisnauth notes a way of seeing selves and others in the Caribbean—a visuality framed by an understanding of people as “a means to an end.” Our societies, forged by the apparatus of colonialism, “were artificially implanted literally to be used by plantation owners, by the sugar barons, by the market,” she writes. “We were created—so to speak—as a means to an end.” Bisnauth links this shaping of how we see to enduring attitudes: to the dehumanization of, and violence against, women and girls, who are “view[ed]...as objects to be acted on.” Illuminating her point, she adds:

Women are for sex, for bearing your children, for cooking your food, for a good wine, to look at and touch. To be sexualized in popular culture—such as soca, dancehall, fete and chutney culture—but not the owners of their own sexuality. They don’t have the right to bodily integrity—to not being touched by people they don’t want to be touched by. To be educated about and have access to family planning. To leave relationships that no longer work for them. To be upset when they feel disrespected. To demand that better be done by them.

Bisnauth presents a picture of women rendered visible in a certain way; women contoured by sight lines that create rough sketches of identity, interpreted with little dimension and agency. Yet, dominant frameworks for visualizing what it means *to be* in the Caribbean are not without contestation. Work by Bahamian photographer Melissa Alcena, for example, offers a countervisuality, a challenging of what is constructed as seeable. In such images as *Naomi* (2019)

and *Ellie and the Banana Tree* (2020), Alcena portrays her subjects from behind, or with neck and head turned away from the viewer. In the absence of the face—the visage—the *visus*, or the act of looking, is challenged. Going beyond *looking at* these girls, we are prompted to *look with* them. Drawn into their perspective we might consider: What is holding their gaze? What are they thinking? Feeling? These subjects do not countenance, or, put another way, they do not consent to an observer's easy reading. The women and girls in Alcena's photographic portraits are not invisible. They are, instead, deliberately unseeable. Here, unseeing is a refusal.

Other visual strategies for identity making in the Caribbean include practices of concealing and revealing. Patricia Mohammed has argued for the unmasking of masculinity. She asks: "What are Caribbean men if they are not irresponsible and emasculated as a result of their history of colonization?" (2004: p. 56). She expresses a proposal for an unseeing, not a *not seeing*, but an undoing of hegemonic sight. She explains: "To unmask masculinity is not to reduce what is deemed masculine or manhood to the known and therefore without mystique...To unmask masculinity is to remove some of the stereotypes associated with the term, and to subject men themselves to an interrogation of what it means to be a man, how their masculinity is defined and to question who determines where the boundaries of masculinity lie" (p. 53). Along with veiling and unmasking, is the method of blending in as a tactic of constructing self. Magna Szcześniak observes that as "a visual model, camouflage opens the possibility and (perhaps utopian) potential of negotiating and queering the visual sphere. It allows us to imagine a situation in which a queer subject would remain visible to other queers and true to her identity...and capable of tactically 'blending' into the background when needed or desired" (2014). Camouflage, therefore, facilitates a simultaneous seeing and an *un-ing* of the seeable.

This special issue of *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* focuses on visual modes as a critical means by which gender is lived, negotiated, organized, and resisted. It is particularly interested in constructions of everyday ways of seeing and unseeing. Attention to visual culture is not only about what is made visible to us. It also entails "the unseen, the unseeable, and the overlooked" (Mitchell, 2002: p170). The issue, therefore, welcomes contributions that problematise sight. What is out of sight, and hiding in plain sight in our constructions and deconstructions of gender, sex, and sexualities in the Caribbean? What is seen? What can't be seen? What is unseen in our personal experiences and individual, interior histories? What is un/seeable in our beliefs about ourselves as woman, man, non-binary and transgender folk?

The title of this issue is borrowed from the book *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (1995), a project of sociolinguistics that explores connections between language and feminist theory. Expanding the analytical frame and the intersections of language and gender, this issue emphasizes visual language as key to world-making, to configuring realities in which gender, sex, and sexualities are enacted. It centres Caribbean contexts in those realities. The issue *Gender Articulated: Visual Language and the Un/Seeable Self* invites study and debate on Caribbean visual arts, where the word "articulated" signals both expression, art in its broad sense, and the linkages between gender and visual artistic practices. Linkages formed under certain conditions: social, cultural, political—connections that are "not...absolute and essential for all time" (Hall, 1986: p.53).

Caribbean scholarship on the dialogue between visual and gender studies exists. Such work includes the interrogation of mundane objects (Cozier, 1991), readings of illustrations of women pirates and practices of cross-dressing (Paravisini-Gebert, 2003), a film about the coming of a black female messiah (Ramesar, 2006), a discussion of picturesque images (Mohammed, 2009), a video projection on the subject of interracial, same-sex desire (Gosine, 2015), a curated exhibition on queer visualities (Scott, James and Cunningham, 2016), and a look at the visual performances of female deejays in dancehall arenas (Saunders, 2022). Yet, there is room for further engagement with visuals. Acknowledging what Kempadoo and Fifi describe as “the increasing importance of visual arts to the self-consciousness of Caribbean critical practices” and aiming, more specifically, to give space for sensations of the un/seeable in imag(in)ing gender, sex and sexualities, this issue solicits a breadth of aesthetic forms including paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptural works, experimental videos, short films, performance, interviews, reflections on everyday actions and objects, exhibition reviews/discussions, and critical essays.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION

For visual artworks, potential contributors are asked to submit low-resolution jpeg or PDF files. Artwork must include title of piece, year created, media, and dimensions. 3-4 images may be submitted. For videos/short films/performances, a viewing link should be supplied (Vimeo, YouTube or another suitable platform). A 500-word statement about the artwork should be included, along with the artist’s brief biographical note of not more than 80 words. Larger files sizes, and any further visual particularities, will be requested once artwork is accepted for publication.

For critical essays, interviews and exhibition reviews, potential contributors are asked to submit a 300-word abstract, along with a brief biographical note of not more than 80 words. Accepted essays may be as long as 7,500 words. Interviews and other commentaries should be between 2,000 and 5,000 words, and exhibition reviews should be no more than 1,500 words. All accepted manuscripts should follow The Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition). Chicago has two referencing styles. CRGS uses the author-date citation style not the notes and bibliography style.

Important Dates

**Submission of Artist’s statement
and artwork/Writer’s abstract**
October 30, 2023

Notification of Acceptance
December 1, 2023

**Submission of Final Artwork/
Full Manuscripts**
February 29, 2024

Email submissions
STA-igds.crgs@sta.uwi.edu

CONSENT TO PUBLISH

As part of the submission process you will be required to warrant that you are submitting your original work, that you have the rights in the work, and that you have obtained and can supply all necessary permissions for the reproduction of any copyright works not owned by you. Writers are responsible for obtaining written permission to reprint any material not covered by fair use (text, illustrations, images, etc.). Submission of work to this journal will be taken to imply that it represents work not under consideration for publication elsewhere. On acceptance of work, visual artists and writers agree that the rights to reproduce and distribute the work have been given to the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies.

ABOUT CRGS

Caribbean Review of Gender Studies is an Open Access online journal. It offers a forum, both to persons already recognized in the field, as well as to new scholars, to present work which is accessible and available to our students and to readers as far and as wide as the web can take it. These works should capture the realities and contradictions of what is constituted as Caribbean, whether it is generated within or outside of the geographical region. With no compromise in international standards of peer review, the journal boasts an Editorial Board, an Advisory Board and a Review Team drawn from reputable academic institutions, regionally and worldwide.

CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES

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