

Umática, special issue: Migration and Contemporary Art in Turbulent Times

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Migration has long been central to contemporary art's theoretical and curatorial discourses, reflecting broader global conditions of mobility, post-colonial legacies, and hybrid cultural identities. Over the past three decades, the representation of diasporic cultures, border crossings, creolization and cultural translation, and cosmopolitan imaginaries has shaped the very contours of what we understand as the contemporary. Yet, the current resurgence of exclusionary nationalism, authoritarian populism, and anti-migrant rhetoric—particularly in Europe and the United States—demands a renewed critical engagement with how migration is visualized, historicized, and theorized in art. It situates the migrant ontologically at a loss in the world, stigmatized by non-belonging. Therefore, the migrant appears as a double displaced being, ousted “temporally no less than spatially” (Ranjit Guha). While cartographies of migration documenting the mobility and the precarious social condition of migrants, including the damnation and zombification of the image of the migrant, have also been present in mainstream curatorial discourses over the years, they have been certainly less explored in art historical scholarship. The present issue intends to explore the representation and critical analysis of migration in contemporary art in the changing conditions of the present day global political turmoil, with competing ideologies clashing in popular media and violent conflicts erupting in many parts of the world. How can visual arts contribute to the visualization of exclusion and at the same time how can they counter the stigmatizing effects of such representational practices? What forms and techniques of artistic production are more suitable for engaging politically with such topics? What role can contemporary art play in our turbulent and increasingly violent cultural and social lives?

This special issue invites scholars, artists, and curators to examine the evolving intersections of migration, contemporary art, and global crisis from the perspective of cultural and human geography. We seek contributions that interrogate how visual arts can contribute to the decolonization of cartographic epistemologies and forms of representation that exclude Eastern Europe and the Global South, how they negotiate and translate the affective regime of being at home in the world, and how contemporary artistic representations respond to and resist the stigmatization of migrants, the violent entrenchment of borders, and the nationalist redefinition of “home” amidst geopolitical conflict and socio-cultural fragmentation.

Topics of interest may include, but are not limited to:

Visual narratives of displacement, exile, and refugee experience

Artistic strategies of resistance to xenophobia and nationalist propaganda

The aesthetics of precarity: migrants as spectral or 'zombified' figures in contemporary art
Curatorial practices engaging migration, statelessness, and border imaginaries
Art and the politics of belonging, citizenship, and identity
Critical reflections on the ethics of representing the migrant other
Intersections of migration with race, gender, and class in contemporary visual practices
The role of visual arts in making visible exclusionary practices and in countering their effects
The intersection of migration studies, curatorial practices, and art historical methodologies

Contributions structured according to the four sections of the journal Umática will be accepted: research articles, visual essays, and creative projects, the details of which can be found here: <https://revistas.uma.es/index.php/umatica/Secciones>. Contributions must comply with the editorial guidelines of the journal Umática, available at: <https://revistas.uma.es/index.php/umatica/about/submissions>. Contributions should be submitted through the Open Journal Systems application (<https://revistas.uma.es/index.php/umatica/user/register>).

If you have any questions, please contact the editorial team of the journal Umática at alo@uma.es.

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