Globalization has brought the world together by creating a new scope for sharing commonalities, but human history has always witnessed conflicts among global communities due to immense cultural differences. An array of global conflicts has created numerous events of diaspora for the last few centuries. Not only these mixed feelings around belonging as well as inherited historical traumas influenced the sociopolitical condition of so many countries, the vastness of diasporic identities have also reshaped the cultural existence of a social life. Mediation between identities, ambivalence regarding the self, conforming to the hybridity, etc. are what diaspora brings to the cultural reality.

In this issue of the Comparative Media Arts journal, we explore these themes in the diaspora arts. For artists who migrated from one part of the world to another, art practices provide an outlet to express their personal experiences of dislocation, rupture as well as freedom. Moreover, being at the frontier of cultural collision also provides these artists with an opportunity to question the boundary of cultural homogeneity and engage with the reshaping of the cultural environment in both the host and the home country.

The initial usage of the term “diaspora” was generally accepted as the Jewish dispersion outside ancient Palestine after the Babylonian exile and then extended to the scattering of people away from their homeland. However, the notion of having one singular identity in terms of attachment with the homeland was challenged. In “Cultural identity and Diaspora,” Stuart Hall proposed an understanding of diaspora experience “not by essence or purity, but by the
recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity” which is “constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall 1994, 235).

Inspired by this dynamic view towards diaspora and its Greek origin speiro meaning “to sow” or “to disperse,” this issue of the CMA Journal has briefly examined the multicultural influence in diaspora artworks as well as the issue of aesthetics of heterogeneity in arts. The authors of this issue have contributed a diversified understanding of this issue’s primary concern by exploring issues like forced migration, materialism, secularism, ecocriticism, nationalism, collective experience, geographic relocation, diasporic feminist identity, hybridity, temporality, and many more. Moreover, the authors have shared their knowledge from different regions — from east to west — meaning this issue itself stands at the crossroads of heterogeneity.

Samirah Tabassum’s ethnographic venture “‘Aaar Naam Arkaani’: Exploring the Formation of Identity and Diasporic Consciousness in Rohingya Songs” strongly suggests how the vernacular act of singing helps a refugee community to recollect and reconfigure their geographical and cultural identity within their diasporic existence. At the same time, this paper also reminds how conflicts are reshaping the cultural existence of many communities. On the other hand, Tanzia Mobarak’s spatial reading of a media artwork of a diasporic artist in “Cultural Identity and Diasporic Women: A Spatial Reading of Be the First to See What You See as You See It by Runa Islam” explores how voluntary geographical relocation and cultural reconfiguration of the self can influence the cultural identity of the artist as well as her artworks. However, Golam Rabbani’s article “Heterogeneity and Baul Spirituality: The Songs of Baul Taskir Ali in Bangladesh” takes a different approach to the issue of heterogeneity by exploring how Bauls of Bangladesh are reacting to a diverse range of social, cultural, political, and historical issues with their spiritual philosophy and thoughts through songs and performance. It is interesting to see how these three papers take on different issues derived from the same geographical space.

Ademakinwa Adebisi connects the past and the present of Ife arts in his essay “Ancient Arts and the heterogeneous Linkage to Contemporary Aesthetics.” Through a careful
examination of artworks and artifacts in Ile-Ife museum and interviews of the artists, Adebisi argues that on the one hand, the aesthetics of artworks in the town shows sign of emanation from ancient artists’ commitment to realism and functionality of arts, but on the other hand, the economic, social, and religious environment in Ife still exert influence in contemporary artworks. Also working in a museum context, Mohammad Zaki Rezwan focuses on one exhibition titled *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia* in his article of a critical response. Although the exhibition made a step going beyond the Western ideology by choosing an aboriginal women narrative, Rezwan points out keenly that the Western discourse is still present even in the title: the use of “Aboriginal Australia” indicates an ideological dominance from the West to the indigenous people, and homogenizes the diverse identities and cultures of Australia communities. As such, the article considers this exhibition as a crossroads of homogeneity and heterogeneity.

Instead of looking at one or several particular type diaspora artworks, Mohammed Mizanur Rashid shares his understanding of what diaspora art is and more importantly, what diaspora art can do, in his article “Diaspora Art and Critical Making: Critical Conversations, Collaborative Affordances, and World-building Possibilities.” In addition to the function of addressing the issues of diaspora experience, cultural resistance, and representational identity, Rashid argues diaspora art can help build a more empathetic social community for healing, bonding and growth. He thus introduces new methods like Critical Making and Makerspace practices to facilitate stronger audience interaction with the art-making process.

The issue includes featured artwork by Vancouver-based artist Odera Igbokwe. In conversation with Yani Kong, their interview “How do I sew together the fractures of the diaspora”, describes Igbokwe’s artistic vision and how their making practice empowers a celebration of racial identity, destabilizing forms of subjugation. In the accompanying series, *Dance of the Summoner*, Igbokwe is informed by fantasy iconography, fictions, mythologies and afro-futurisms to explore what exceeds beyond these frames. Finally, Rose Anza-Burges’s paper “Transforming Identities” challenges the notion of fixed identities and sees the body as the space that destabilizes gender and social normativity. Her analysis brings in her own
affective responses and situates it within Jack Halberstam’s theoretical domain of failure through a critical investigation of Kent Monkman’s *The Daddies* and Isaac Julien’s *Frantz Fanon Black Skin White Mask*.

This issue aims to acknowledge the various ways that artists integrate their own cultural experience into their art creation, no matter if it is a direct expression of traumatic diaspora through dislocation, an exploration into the issue of identities, or a fusion of cross-cultural aesthetics in the artworks. We understand the idea of heterogeneity is in itself “heterogeneous,” unfolded from many different aspects, thus also open to both critical and conflicting debates. While we do not consider our issue a complete study of the concept of heterogeneity, we see it as connecting diverse contemporary dialogues.

**Bibliography**


**About the Authors**

Mohammad Zaki Rezwan is currently researching the Rickshaw art of Bangladesh at the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University, Canada as a graduate student. He has taught cultural studies, film, media, communication, critical theory, and postmodern literature in university for more than three years in Bangladesh. He has also engaged diversely as a fiction writer, graphic designer, photographer, and hobbyist filmmaker. His stories, poem, articles, designs, illustrations, and photographs were published/exhibited in various conferences, newspapers, books, exhibitions, etc., in Bangladesh.

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