

DOSSIER CAIANA #30

Call for submissions

Abstract Art in The Plural: Contemporary Perspectives



Olga de Amaral, *White Light*, 1969, woven polyethylene.

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In her book *On Abstract Art* (1997), the British art historian Briony Fer already drew attention to the variety of works and theories gathered under the umbrella of abstract art, arguing that the term refers to experiences that share nothing in common except the refusal to depict the appearances of the world. The idea that forms and colors alone are capable of either expressing invisible realities — whether philosophical speculations, spiritual knowledge, microscopic structures, mathematical concepts, or emotions — or standing as good art on their own, constituted one of the most influential beliefs of modern art. Since the earliest abstract manifestations in the early twentieth century, however, there have been critiques of the belief in the autonomy of art and of the notion that abstract art could function as a universal language capable of transcending cultural and historical specificities. Significantly, in her book, Fer sought to expose “how systematic is a pattern of repression within an abstract tradition” and “to draw attention to the disturbances, the counter-drifts, which can be seen to mark the same body of work.”¹ Especially from the 1960s onward, artists and theorists aligned with social and/or feminist perspectives began to systematically challenge the belief in the autonomous and universal character of art. Following Fer’s early challenges to abstraction and seeking to redress historical injustices and broaden analytical criteria, recent scholarship has paved the way for an extensive historiographical revision of the aesthetic, spiritual, theoretical, and social motivations that have shaped — and continue to shape — the production of abstract works.

This dossier aims to bring together texts that reflect the current state of research on abstract art in different regions of the world and across a wide chronological scope. Acknowledging the obsolescence of modernist narratives, we welcome new approaches and theoretical proposals that focus on histories of abstract art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We are particularly interested in studies grounded in gender perspectives, analyses of racial and ethnic tensions, the expansion of research sources, media and creative outcomes, and examinations of the transnational character of abstract art, including research on artists previously neglected by art history, as well as recent reassessments of the sociocultural implications of abstraction. The dossier seeks to discuss both modern and contemporary productions, as well as the very relevance of the idea of abstract art in the present context.

We therefore invite submissions that engage with, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Abstract art and spirituality;
- Abstraction and coloniality;
- Afro-diasporic perspectives on abstract art;
- Abstract art and Indigenous contexts;
- Women abstract artists;

¹ Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 5.

- Abstraction and decoration;
- Abstraction in design and the applied arts;
- Critical reassessments of modernist abstraction;
- Abstract art and Primitivism;
- Materialities of abstract works;
- Abstract art in exhibitions;
- Transnational dimensions of abstraction;
- Abstract art and nature;
- Abstraction and reality.

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How to submit your article

Articles must be original and not being simultaneously evaluated for other publications during the evaluation process period.

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