

# UC Santa Cruz

## Refract: An Open Access Visual Studies Journal

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Editor's Letter

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## Letter from the Editor

In *Orwell's Roses*, Rebecca Solnit writes that “in an age of lies and illusions, the garden is one way to ground yourself in the realm of the processes of growth and the passage of time, the rules of physics, meteorology, hydrology, and biology, and the realm of the senses.”<sup>1</sup>

While excerpting this quote does little to illustrate the nuance of Solnit’s approach to both roses and George Orwell, it does gesture toward some of the ideas that have sparked my own interest in the complicated and politically salient theme of “Sensing Place,” which evokes sound, smell, taste, and touch as well as sight. Several contributions to volume 5 engage primarily with senses beyond the visual, and although *Refract*, as a journal of visual studies, remains ocularcentric, “Sensing Place” has given us an opportunity to deepen critical conversations around this dimension of the publication and its relationship to more traditional forms of art history. Our fifth volume has presented several opportunities to experiment and includes our first contribution from an undergraduate scholar, an exhibition review of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History’s *Strange Weather* written by our 2021–22 editorial intern, Angel Chan. We have also invited two “voices of visual studies” in a departure from previous volumes and are excited to feature the work of two scholars approaching the visual from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and professional settings: Amanda M. Maples, whose training in visual studies influences her curatorial work, and Courtney R. Baker, a professor of English who brings a background in literature to the interpretation of visual culture. Along with these scholars, I thank Maria Evangelatou, Maureen Gruben, and Kyra Kordoski for accepting our invitation to contribute to volume 5 and helping us to deepen our engagement with this theme. All our contributors have

brought so much to this project, and we are grateful for their hard work and creativity.

While “Sensing Place” extends our cross-volume inquiry into the potential and limitations of visual studies, we have spent comparatively less time considering our method of dissemination and are excited to include a special supplement to this volume that reflects on digital publishing itself. “Imagining the Future of Digital Publishing,” funded through a collaboration with The Humanities Institute (THI) at UC Santa Cruz, has facilitated many thought-provoking conversations during *Refract* editorial board meetings. We are particularly grateful to Kyle Parry for his feedback on early drafts of a series of questions about digital publishing and scholarship that have subsequently sparked such intriguing and varied contributor responses. It is our hope that future editorial board members might revisit “Imagining the Future of Digital Publishing” as technologies, methodologies, and fields quickly evolve and new questions with novel implications arise.

This volume has been a collaborative effort in every way, and I want to thank the *Refract* editorial board—Spencer Armada, Madalen Claire Benson, Susanna Collinson, Katie Ligmond, Kelsey McFaul, Maureen McGuire, LuLing Osofsky, Catherine Ries, Radhika Prasad, and dani wright—for their dedication and ingenuity during another challenging year. Thank you also to Angel Chan for her creative contributions to both volume 5 and the digital publishing supplement. On behalf of the editorial board, I want to acknowledge our faculty advisory board: Alexis Boylan, Vilashini Cooppan, Tao Leigh Goffe, Derek Murray, Kyle Parry, and Kailani Polzak, who have at various times offered advice and assistance, and The Humanities Institute, the History of Art & Visual Culture Department, the Arts Division, and the Student Fee Advisory Committee at UC Santa Cruz, for their financial support. Thank you also to our Giving Day donors, as well as to our guest reviewers and to the staff at eScholarship for offering their time and expertise. Last but not least, many thanks to Paula Dragosh for her skillful copyediting, and to Ruby Lipsenthal for her ongoing support with so many aspects of the publication process.

Rachel Bonner

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *Orwell's Roses* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2021), 44.