

For 17 years, *AmeriQuests* has been publishing peer-reviewed articles, thought-provoking commentaries, special issues, and monographs connecting intellectual and geographical quests across borders. At the same time, We have hosted a robust and growing book review section that features overviews of recent books in the broad field of border crossing, written by a range of scholars, academics, and highly-motivated students.

Along the way, we have maintained a consistent devotion to the publication, critique, and review of the arts, especially literature, often in relation to legal questions or issues. Our readers and contributors have found that artistic and literary works bring us to unexpected geographical and mental spaces, beyond the confines of contemporary political realities. In short, we have been committed to all kinds of quests, in the hope that they might help move our readers beyond the party affiliations that so often define the limits within which discussions can occur.

To follow up on this objective, we are now opening up an entirely new digital space called *Contours*, that will be devoted to artistic representations of border crossings. The objective of this journal is to go beyond policy briefs, knowledge syntheses and scoping reviews relating to the flight and plight of displaced persons, and into more creative realms. *Contours* will invite contributors, and those who participate in the experiences it promotes, to explore borders and border-crossing by engaging with artworks, and by participating in interactive aesthetic experiences.

Partnerships, Processes and Collaborations

Contours will partner with several border crossing institutions, and participate in related initiatives around the world. We will work on a new digital open access space for our work, thanks to a new partnership the Media Lab's pubpub group, and the Knowledge Futures Group, at MIT. They will pioneer a new platform that will provide artists and participants with new ways of representing and interacting with artistic materials pertaining to border crossing. This development procedure will emphasize process and performance, and it will be powered by contributing artists and participants who will be invited to present the process whereby they make work, and the experience they hope to represent and convey. Border crossing is itself a process, and exploring its many meanings requires new levels of engagement that move us beyond fixed representations. Creating and discussing artworks is also a process, with no clearly-defined meaning or end.

Contours will be an unfettered open access space that will inspire people to engage rather than admire, to participate rather than view, and to thereby challenge the rigid us-them, foreign-native, home-host dichotomies that have propelled policymakers to emphasize the militarization of borders, the separation of families, and the erection of impermeable physical and legal walls. The *Contours* space will help foster new ideas, new dreams, and new ways of imagining borders and passage. In its very constitution, *Contours* is committed to bringing down the barriers that currently exclude the broad array of people, ideas and voices, particularly those in the Global South, or those without the kinds of institutional support that can handmaiden journeys of protection or creation.

Why focus upon the arts?

The arts operate at many different levels, from pop-culture to high artistic forms. Without imposing a doctrine or demanding allegiance, the arts can work to disrupt the current tendency to attract adherents to one side of an argument, while driving away those who see in that side some kind of a threat to their own cherished values. *Contours* aims to highlight challenging artistic work, rather than fitting it into some pre-existing categories. Our goal is to heighten rather than diminish individual experiences, and augment rather than repressing human senses. It's clear that

technological innovations are changing how art is, or can be, created and consumed, but it is less clear where the boundaries and limits of such transformations lie. We look forward to finding out.

Many initiatives are being undertaken by museums, collectives, NGOs and local organizations to provide forums to promote empathy by showcasing artists and storytellers who have experienced and represented the challenges and obstacles to border crossing. *Contours* will support these efforts by providing an exciting new digital environment that aims to unleash the potential impact of artworks on social, cultural, and political issues, and help move us all beyond the confines of existing policy debates.

Border crossing is inherently interdisciplinary and collaborative, and the journal will reflect this reality. We will connect creators with a newly-constituted international Editorial and Advisory Boards that are peopled with individuals who come from a wide array of backgrounds, disciplines, and spaces. They will help us to build a new realm that foregrounds the subjective, the narrative, the aesthetic, and the performative issues relating to border crossing.

There are also many scholars engaged in related work within the disciplines, such as social anthropology, geography, law, philosophy, participatory action, sociology, and an array of artistic domains. They will be invited to engage in our commentary space, which will be set up to interact directly with a connected virtual artistic space. From gallery events to street performances, we are tapping into efforts aimed at confronting pressing social, political and human issues of the day with deeper aesthetic, historical and ethical reflection.

The array of possibilities for engagement with our new journal will be vast. Academics involved in the importance of telling a “good story” to cross a border, might find inspiration by perusing a photographic essay by an artist depicting desperate refugees confronted with border walls. Choreographers who have filmed dancers depicting movement in the desert might be interested to read the ways in which current flight from Syria can be situated in the historical flight of the Jews depicted in Exodus. Refugees who have found creative ways to document their experiences will find support in *Contours*, and an audience anxious to engage with them. We look forward to this new journey, and to employing art and artistic insights challenging the obstacles that stand in the way of those who wish or need to embark on it.