

# IN VISIBLE CULTURE

## Issue 34: “InVisible Memes for Cultural Teens”

For our 34th issue, *Invisible Culture* seeks both scholarly and creative works that approach internet memes as aesthetic, cultural, and political objects of study. Memes have been discussed largely in their communicative and participatory capacities, particularly in the fields of communications, political science, and other social sciences. However, there are few examples of humanistic work approaching memes and memetics as world-building practices and as cultural objects that foreground meaningful sense-making. Since the last major journal issue devoted to the topic—a 2014 special issue of *The Journal of Visual Culture*—memes have moved from niche to mainstream, from diversion to discourse, from formally simplistic to kaleidoscopically complex.<sup>1</sup>

Memes draw endlessly from the ever-growing dustbin of popular visual culture, returning modified images that are, in turn, instantly modifiable. Memes are as much, if not more, part of most people’s daily cultural exposure as television, film, or radio. Savvy creators of “legacy” media anticipate memification (one need only think of Lil Nas X sliding down the stripper pole to Hell) and marketing professionals “in on the joke” leverage the authorless form for free advertising.

The bulk of anglophone meme research since 2015 has focused on the role of memes in the spread of extremist ideologies as a means of “[weaponizing] irony to attract and radicalize potential supporters, challenge progressive ideologies and institutions, redpill normies, and create a toxic counterpublic.”<sup>2</sup> This attention is both necessary and appropriate. However, we hope to address memetics more broadly and to emphasize areas that haven’t received the same attention. Memes are hardly unique to any one age group, race, class, or indeed any region of the world; nor do they exclusively reside in the domain of humor.

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<sup>1</sup> Laine Nooney and Laura Portwood-Stacer, “One Does Not Simply: An Introduction to the Special Issue on Internet Memes,” *Journal for Visual Culture* 13, no 3. (2014): 248-252.

<sup>2</sup> Viveca S. Greene, “‘Deplorable’ Satire: Alt-Right Memes, White Genocide Tweets, and Redpilling Normies.” *Studies in American Humor* 5, no. 1 (2019): 31-69.

Memes spread and develop online and can never be fully untethered from the exigencies of platform, algorithm, location, and law. Yet vernacular meme cultures are as varied as the panoply of human experience. Memes move across and within ethnic and national identifications, expressions of gender and sexuality, political ideology, and language family. In this issue we seek work that speaks to that capacious view of memes, from part to elusive whole, whether focusing on the deeply contextual particularities of a specific meme or community, the subversive or revolutionary potential of particular imagery, discussing the practice of meme artist or reckoning with memetics as a worldwide phenomenon. We hope for submissions of scholarly and creative work across disciplines, methodologies, communities, and positionalities.

Contributions to this issue may address (but are by no means limited to) the following topics and themes:

- Global platforms, networks, and communities: mainstream social media, photo and video sharing, social aggregation, image boards, live streaming, blogs, the “dark web”
- Vernacular meme cultures, hyper-specific communities and identities in niche groups and networks
- Far Right networks and platforms including Parler, Gab, 8chan, Voat, Clouthub, Pilled.net, Patriots.win, Greatawakening.win, Pilled.net
- African American and Black meme cultures, Queer meme imaginaries, diasporic meme publics and other online channels of identification and solidarity for people(s) whose identities have been marginalized
- Meme Formats; Image Macros; Reaction GIFs; Shitposting; Copy Pasta and Creepy Pasta; Generational Memes (Gen Z, Boomers, etc.); Prank links such as Rickrolling and shock and gore links; Codewords and codified imagery; Deep Fried Memes, Meme Art
- Tik Tok and other moving image memes and the role of sound, repetition, and performance therein
- The transnational use of memes (e.g. the very different contexts surrounding the Joker, Pepe, and Guy Fawkes in different countries and cultures)
- Non-US platforms such as Weibo, Tencent, Renren, WeChat, VK, and OK.ru
- Authorship; “Meme lords”; “Blue checks”; licensed imagery
- Commodification and Decommodification; Ownership and NFTs
- Media archaeology; dead platforms; nostalgia

Please send completed papers (with references following the guidelines from the Chicago Manual of Style) of between 4,000 and 10,000 words to [invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu) by **June 30, 2021**. Inquiries should be sent to the same address.

### **Creative/Artistic Works**

In addition to written materials, *InVisible Culture* is accepting works in other media (video, photography, drawing, code) that reflect upon the theme as it is outlined above. Please submit creative or artistic works along with an artist statement of no more than two pages

to [invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu). For questions or more details concerning acceptable formats, go to <http://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/contribute> or contact the same address.

### Reviews

*InVisible Culture* is also currently seeking submissions for book, exhibition, and film reviews (600-1,000 words). For this issue we particularly encourage authors to submit reviews of games or other forms of interactive media. To submit a review proposal, go to <http://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/contribute> or contact [invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu).

### Dialogues

The journal also invites submissions to its Dialogues page, which will accommodate more immediate responses to the topic of the current issue. For further details, please contact us at [invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:invisible.culture@ur.rochester.edu) with the subject heading "Dialogues submission."

\**InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture (IVC)* is a student-run interdisciplinary journal published online twice a year in an open access format. Through peer reviewed articles, creative works, and reviews of books, films, and exhibitions, our issues explore changing themes in visual culture. Fostering a global and current dialog across fields, IVC investigates the power and limits of vision.

