The Eighth Annual WSU Visual Culture Symposium seeks to explore the visual logics of feminist art, theory, and practice, in all their complexity and multiplicity, and to place such logics in the current political moment. From the #MeToo-movement to the Women's March, feminist activism has drawn national attention in recent years. In some respects, such activism has produced tangible gains: the 116th House of Representatives is the most racially diverse and counts the largest number of women in US history. In other respects, the transformative power of feminist activism has shown its limitations: the dismissal of Christine Blasey-Ford's testimony during the Kavanaugh hearings secured an ultra-conservative, anti-women’s rights Supreme Court for decades to come; local and state legislators in many parts of the country are scrambling to roll back only recently established LGBTQ and other human rights. While the stakes for a specifically feminist politics are high, its role within contemporary practices of resistance remains unclear. What is even more debatable, is the part feminist art, theory, and practice can and must play in furthering an overall politics of equity, equality, and liberation.

Whereas such terms as “choice feminism,” “gender fluidity,” or “postfeminism” are being bandied about as alternatives to the ideas driving second-wave feminism, today’s rallying cries, “I Can’t Believe I Still Have to Protest This Shit” and “I Will Not Go Quietly Back to the 1960s,” attest to the direct lineage between current feminist activism and the Women’s Liberation Movement. This begs several questions: what can we learn from the feminisms of earlier eras? How can reflection on the clashes between white/straight feminists on one hand and women of color/lesbians on the other in the 1970s and 1980s help resolve the tensions wracking 21st-century feminist groups and movements? How might a critical reconsideration of radical feminist art contribute to and inform the questions, priorities, and practices of current generations of feminist artists, critics, theorists, and effectively politicize their audiences? Rather than seeing such questions as addressing dramatically different realms of meaning and being, this symposium seeks to bring them together, in inevitable conversation. Indeed, as Katherine Behar—our keynote speaker—has argued: “Both feminism and art have long engagements with the notion of human subjects.” We invite participants to consider and reflect on this claim in working out their proposals.

We welcome critical investigations/interventions in any medium, form, discipline, or period. Topics may include but are by no means limited to:

- feminist controversies (e.g., debates around Object-Oriented-Feminism, the gender/sex binary, trans-cisgenderism, exclusion/inclusivity) in visual culture
- the power and potential of social media in feminist (political, critical, artistic) practices
- intersectionality and beyond in feminist art and culture
- visuality and feminist politics
- the role of the visual in feminist politics “then and now”

Abstracts (250-300 words) for scholarly papers, artist talks, or film/visual media presentations must be submitted by Friday, March 15, to wsucontext@gmail.com. The symposium will take place at Wayne State University on Friday, April 12, 2019.