



To tell the truth, I didn't want to work on this special issue on representations of murdered and missing women.

The idea terrified me.

To take such a sustained look, in a Vancouver-based publication, at an issue that is—especially in this city—so raw, so present, so painful, seemed like a terribly fraught, even dangerous, undertaking.

And maybe it remains so.

But as I read the draft of the call for papers that Anne Stone had prepared, her questions drew me in. I couldn't help but add some of my own. I felt at once a strong pull to turn away and a pressing need to respond. So much of my writing about women who've been murdered goes like this: I'd rather *not* think, read or write about it, rather not try to fathom or confront the enormity of these losses, but I can't seem not to, either.

My biggest worry about working on this special issue stems from my far-from-resolved concerns about the ethics of critiquing memorials or other personal and well-intentioned artistic responses to murdered and missing women. There is a way in which *any* critique of a memorial in particular seems almost unethical, since they are so often created by or hold special meaning for those in close proximity to the losses they mark. A handful of challenging and at times intensely painful conversations with friends and family of murdered women about the merits—or lack thereof—of my own critiques of some of the memorials discussed in this issue have left me with many unanswered questions about the ethics of such critical practice. But I am also uncomfortable with an easy equation of critique with betrayal, for it seems to me that critique *can* be a way of caring for, or enriching, or expressing concern for our subject.<sup>1</sup> This is certainly the spirit in which

Kara Granzow and I offer our critique in this issue of Femke van Delft's *Missing: A Guerrilla Mapping Project*, an artistic response to the disappearances of women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. It is a recognition of this project's importance and a desire to support Van Delft's political aims for the piece that drive our critical response (an approach to critique which Van Delft, with her characteristic generosity, appears to support).

After reading the numerous submissions we received for this issue, I am no closer to having definitive answers for any of the questions I started with. But the authors who submitted their work have engaged me in deep reflection on them. And this, I think, is far more satisfying, far more appropriate, far more ethical an outcome than attempts to offer any definite answers. More than anything, I hope that the work collected here will spark dialogue and debate—and leave you with more questions.

—Amber Dean

<sup>1</sup> For more on the notion of critique as “caring for,” see Wendy Brown's *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.)