

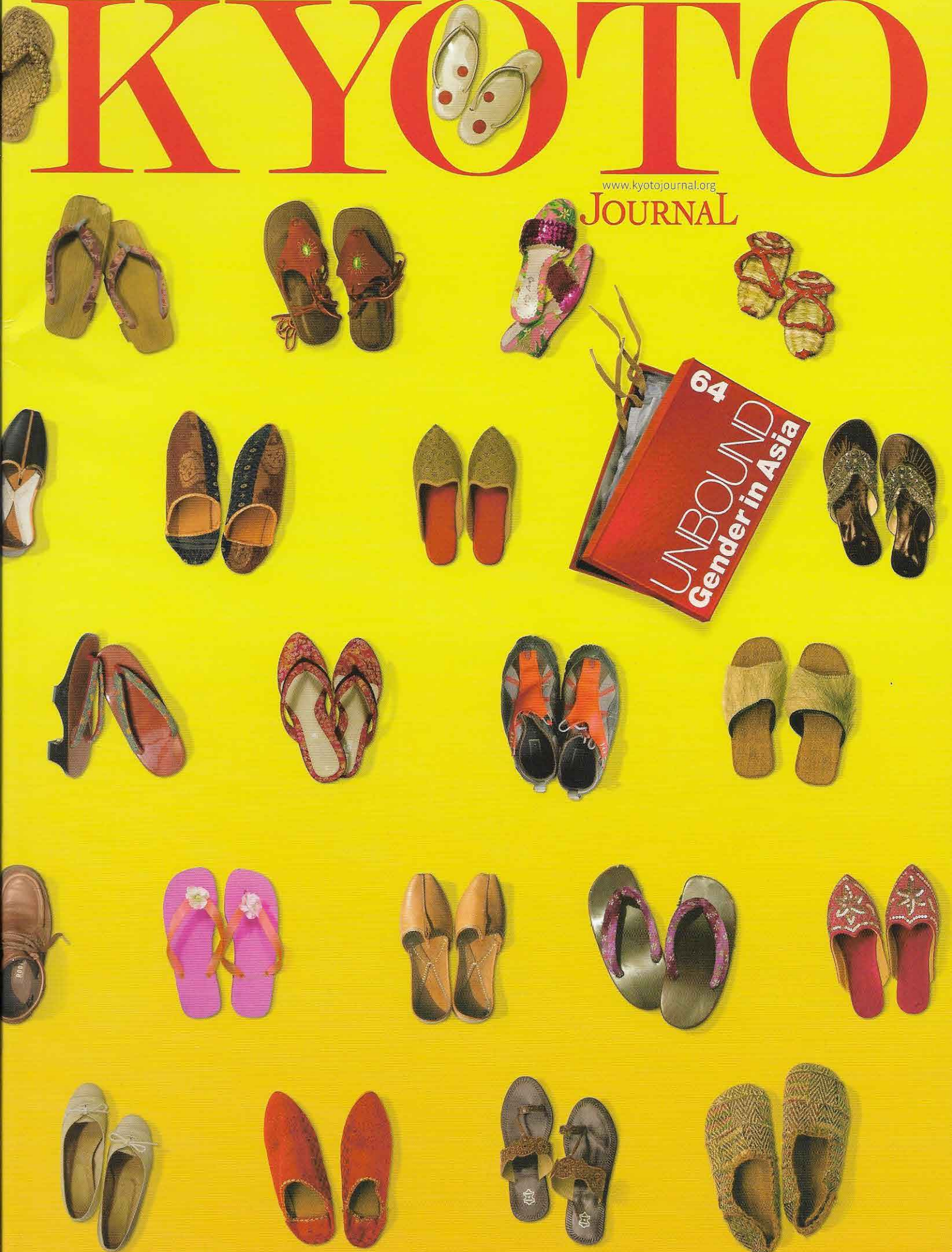
# PERSPECTIVES FROM ASIA

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## JOURNAL





## INTRODUCING 'UNBOUND'

Exploring the concept of gender should be about expansive questions, not tightly bound explanations from only one perspective. In this special issue of *Kyoto Journal*, "Unbound: Gender in Asia," we have sought to bring together an updated and revelatory album of gender identities. Despite enduring traditions and a strongly ingrained patriarchy, here in Asia the concept of gender can be far more ambiguous and fluid than is often assumed. We named this issue 'Unbound' in the hope that it will unfetter fresh ideas and dispel assumptions, introducing perspectives on gender in many societies and leaving readers free to make up their own minds. This exciting edition of *KJ* contains a unique and illuminating array of contributions from Asian and non-Asian writers, poets, translators, photographers and visual artists. The contents speak for themselves.

Taken as a whole, they highlight the many ways in which gender is a social and cultural construction. At the same time, there is currently a debate as to what constitutes biological sex. Crucial to the complex exploration of gender are creativity, freedom of expression, and tolerance. Yet media, too, construct gender. With this in mind, we created 'Unbound' while actively aware of the issues of representation, stereotyping and Orientalism which permeate mainstream media. We also wanted to move beyond the negative focus on gender injustice that is so often found in alternative media. The process of producing 'Unbound' has been just as important as its contents. For more than a year, a diverse and energetic group has met regularly in Kyoto to share and discuss ideas. Through local, regional and international networks we sought contributions that would make the issue celebratory and progressive. Nonetheless, gender is a subject that includes conflict, disruption, resistance

and drama. Making media about gender, we have found, inescapably involves struggles and negotiations. As guest editor I am deeply grateful for the way

in which participants engaged collectively in dialogue and pulled together to ensure that this endeavour closely approached its

potential. The experience has engendered change and growth. Many heartfelt thanks to everyone involved with

'Unbound' who has stuck with this project over the many months, and been so generous with their time, resources and support.

You may be wondering why there are shoes on the cover. In contemporary Asia, traditional shoe forms blend with the modern to sometimes create new decorative meanings. A surprising number of shoes are of uncertain or even indifferent gender. Whether they are delicate, outspoken or ordinary, they have their own personality. Ultimately, it is up to the individual to choose which pair (or pairs) they want to walk in.

—Sally McLaren  
Kyoto, October 2006

