

Application of
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR AESTHETICS
for admission to
representation in the
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

[Letter from Mrs. Katharine E. Gilbert of Duke University, President of the Aesthetics Society, dated Nov. 17, 1947, to Dr. Krusé, Executive Director.]

I am writing you on behalf of the American Society for Aesthetics to apply for membership in the American Council of Learned Societies.

The American Society for Aesthetics was organized April 25, 1942, on the occasion of the second American Congress for Aesthetics. The Journal of the Society for September, 1945, contains a "Historical Note" describing the formation of the Society and its development through 1945. (See Vol. IV, No. I, pages 60-61 in the file of the Journal which accompanies this application.) The Society's purpose is the advancement of philosophical and scientific studies of the arts and related fields. The places and dates of the regular annual meetings are:

- Cleveland Museum of Art.....September, 1944
- Hunter College.....November, 1945
- Chicago Institute of Art.....September, 1946
- Baltimore Museum of Art.....September, 1947
- Harvard University (~~planned~~)...September, 1948
- Columbia College - October, 1944*

Duke University - 1950

Within the general Society there are seven regional groups with centers in the following cities: Cambridge, Mass.; New York City; Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Piedmont, Calif.; Berkeley, Calif.; and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The present membership is 148, and the number is steadily increasing. A list of members, up to date as of November, 1947, is being forwarded to you. The qualifications for membership are stated in Article II of the Society's constitution, a copy of which accompanies this application. You will observe that the membership includes leaders in several learned fields such as philosophy, psychology, visual arts, music, dance, theater, etc.

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The official organ of the Society is the quarterly Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, edited by Dr. Thomas Munro, Curator of Education, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and Professor of Art at Western Reserve University. This organ was preceded by The Journal of Aesthetics, established in 1941 by Dr. Dagobert Runes, publisher of the Philosophical Library in New York. The earlier Journal was published at irregular intervals until taken over by the American Society for Aesthetics in 1945. Since then, it has had an entirely new editorial staff, and has been printed by the Waverly Press in Baltimore. It has grown steadily in size and scope of articles and correspondence. Unsolicited articles are now being received from a large number of writers in several countries. The existence of the Journal has encouraged research and writing in aesthetics and related fields, through providing a medium for publications of a type which did not previously exist. The existing philosophical periodicals were not able to publish articles with much specific reference to the arts, while periodicals devoted to the particular arts usually avoided articles with much philosophical or theoretical emphasis. In the various numbers of the Journal you will find not only articles dealing with the principles, relations, and methods of study of the various arts, and interpretations of aesthetic experience, but also information concerning the officers and sponsors of the Society, including the names of the Trustees and the Editorial Council of the Journal.

(See attached report on present circulation)

You will note that there are at present fourteen universities, colleges and schools of fine arts which have enrolled themselves as "contributing institutions" to the work of the Journal (See Vol. VI, No. ~~IV~~, September, 1947, last page.).

As is well known, the subject of aesthetics was active in pre-war Europe, both as a branch of philosophy and as a related field in which representatives of various arts came together to discuss general issues of critical theory. In Germany, a Society and Journal of Aesthetics have been active since 1906, under the leadership of the late Max Dessoir. ~~The Society there numbered several thousand members.~~ In spite of excellent books on the subject by Santayana, Dewey, and others in the United States, the subject never received the impetus of concerted scholarly action until 1942. Now it has, for the first time in the United States, a professional Society of national and even international scope, as well as a periodical. The columns of the latter are, of course, open to all qualified writers, whether members of the Society or not. The Journal is now regularly received by most important university and other libraries in the United States, and a large number in Europe. Indeed, it has been one of the aims of the Society to reestablish as soon as possible active and helpful relations with individuals and groups in Europe that had been distinguished in the field of aesthetics before the war. ~~In the~~ ^{more} September, 1947, issue of the Journal there are ~~more~~ than eleven pages of "International News and Correspondence", including material from Max Dessoir, Etienne Souriau, and Richard Müller-Freienfels. Articles by Benedetto Croce and Max Dessoir are scheduled for early publication. Although the Société française d'Esthétique is again holding meetings, the American Society recognizes a peculiar responsibility, because of its favored location, of carrying forward a cultural program that was formerly centered in Europe.

The Associate Editor of the Journal, Dr. Helmet Hungerland, has undertaken not only to supervise the reviewing of books, but to prepare a bi-annual "Selective Current Bibliography" (see Vol. IV, No. II, December, 1945, Vol. IV, No. IV, June, 1946, Vol. V, No. III, March, 1947, and Vol. V, No. IV, June, 1947.) These bibliographies list books and articles in English as well as foreign languages and are, we believe, the only bibliographies of their kind. An effort is made to list not only material that has been published in the field of aesthetics, but also material that has bearing upon work in aesthetics (using the term in the widest sense), e.g., theory of value, psychology, anthropology, etc. Other bibliographies, which are being published and which contain a section on aesthetics or refer to aesthetics, do so from the point of view of a special field, e.g., in the case of the Modern Language Association, from the point of view of literature, etc. The usefulness of such material is generally recognized and the service should be extended in various ways. It is the hope of the Society ultimately to bridge the gap between William A. Hammond's A Bibliography of Aesthetics and Philosophy of the Fine Arts, which ends with 1932, and the Society's, which begins with 1945. The American Council of Learned Societies gave generous financial assistance for the publication of Professor Hammond's Bibliography.

The American Society for Aesthetics has brought together several previously scattered groups of persons, interested in a philosophical and scientific approach to the arts from various points of view. For example, such organizations as the American Psychological Association, the College Art Association, and the Modern Language Association have all held sectional meetings on aesthetics in previous years, as part of their annual conventions. But these groups lacked the mutual contact which is necessary for a broad approach to their problems.

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Many of our members now maintain their membership with more specialized professional groups, while welcoming also the opportunity to meet with persons who approach aesthetics from a different point of view.

I trust that the body of material now put into your hands is an adequate representation of the Society's relation to learning. But I shall be glad to try to answer any further questions that arise in connection with this application.

I enclose the ^{most recent} reports made by Lynn Poole,
Secretary-Treasurer of the Society + Business Manager
of the Journal.

Geo Boas.
President