Introducing Philosophy of Music

Andrew Kania
Trinity University

One of the fundamental challenges I’ve faced in introducing students to the philosophy of music over the years is that when they think of music, they think of song. Indeed, many English speakers use the word “song” as synonymous with “piece of music.” The main reason for this is not surprising: most of the music that most people listen to—here and now, and across history and the globe—is song, that is, music including words. Why does this present a challenge? Because much of the literature in philosophy of music—notably the literature on emotional expressiveness, musical understanding, and the value of music—takes as its target “pure,” instrumental music, particularly that of the Western classical tradition. And most students are largely unfamiliar with such music and that tradition.

ASA Statement on Racism

The Board of Trustees of the American Society for Aesthetics voted unanimously to issue the following statement, on June 11, 2020

“The American Society for Aesthetics condemns in the strongest possible terms the countless incidents of police brutality and injustice toward Black people both recently and throughout the history of the United States, and we explore the structural and institutional white supremacy that enables these actions. We stand with the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other Black people and people of color whose lives have been cut down or blighted by racism, and we are outraged that many city, state, and federal officials have answered protests with further police repression. As students, practitioners, teachers, and scholars of the arts and the humanities, we have a responsibility and commitment to work to identify and eliminate the structures of racism in our field and in the wider world. Aesthetics has often served as a platform for critiques of oppressive beliefs, structures, and institutions. The ASA is committed to this mission. We call on educational institutions to renew their commitment to actively undo structures that limit the access and hinder the full and equal participation of Black people and other people of color at all levels.”
This challenge was much on my mind as I planned writing a book introducing readers to the philosophy of music. My response, in the book that has recently been published, was to begin with a chapter on song.¹ I open with the puzzlement many people felt on Bob Dylan’s being awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature. Even many Dylan fans thought that there was something odd about awarding a literary prize to someone on the basis of their songs. Indeed, this case raises fundamental questions about the nature of artistic media, understanding, and value.²

But I also use the discussion of song to limit the focus of the rest of the book to the medium of pure music.³ I argue that song (like film, ballet, and so on) is a complex amalgam in which music is just one component. A complete philosophy of song would thus require (at least) a theory of (something like) language and its artistic uses, music and its artistic uses, and what happens when these media are intimately combined in song. Because, first, this is a lot (!); second, the philosophy of song is in its infancy; and, third, my brief was, in part, to introduce readers to extant philosophy of music, I focus throughout the book on pure music.⁴ However, such a focus does not entail that one consider only instrumental music. Once we have some sense of music as a medium, we can cautiously use “hybrid” examples (song, film music, etc.), both to introduce readers to the philosophical questions music raises, and to test the answers philosophers have given to them.

Moreover, to focus on the medium of music does not imply an exclusive concern with classical music. As I put it in the preface,

> It is difficult to deny the connections between classical music, class, and race in the English-speaking world during the flourishing of analytic philosophy of music over the past half-century. For instance, jazz is an equally obvious place to look for pure instrumental music, yet it has received a fraction—albeit, happily, a growing fraction—of the philosophical attention that classical music has. This is surely due in part to jazz being a historically black and popular musical tradition, while analytic philosophy has been dominated by middle-class white men. (xv)

Hence, I strive throughout the book to use non-classical and hybrid musical examples (though I by no means eschew classical examples). (I have also attempted to make the examples accessible to readers by creating publicly accessible Spotify playlists of all the examples discussed in the text.)

Following the first chapter, on song, the next eight chapters fall into two main parts. Chapters 2 through 5 address what I think of as the heart of extant analytic philosophy of music: the attempt to account for music’s value, along with the metaphysical and epistemological issues raised by the most popular theories of that value. Hence, in chapters 2 and 3, I address music’s emotional expressiveness and listeners’ emotional responses to music, respectively. In chapter 4, I address the nature and understanding of non-emotional musical features, such as pitch, rhythm, harmony, and form. With this material under our belt, in chapter 5, I turn to the question of how these various aspects of music might account for its value.

Chapters 6 through 9 turn from the medium of music to various kinds of music-making, and our appreciation of them. In chapter 6, I address the nature of musical performance in general, and the performance of works in particular. In chapter 7, I explore work-performance more deeply, with a focus on classical music and the debate over authentic performance (and a coda on authenticity in popular music). In chapter 8, I consider improvisation, with a focus on jazz. In chapter 9, I turn to recordings, considering how they affect the theories of classical and jazz already covered, before focusing on recording-centered theories of popular music.

Two chapters remain. Chapter 10 is devoted to the intersection of music and morality. There has been relatively little analytic work in this area. Perhaps this is partly because the issues raised seem more generally about the intersection of art and morality; perhaps it is partly because of the supposed abstractness of music. But these seem like assumptions ripe for philosophical interrogation. I briefly cover four issues: (i) whether a moral flaw in a piece of music need be an artistic flaw; (ii) whether singing along to morally flawed songs is itself morally bad; (iii) whether instrumental classical music contributes to the oppression of women; and (iv) whether it is morally acceptable for white musicians to play music that is part of black culture.

The final chapter is devoted to the definition of music. Though some might have expected this chapter to come first, it seems to me that the issue is better addressed having already thought about musical understanding and value. There are doubtless different reasonable concepts of music, and it is very easy for people to talk past one another without having first grappled with what sense of “music” we are attempting to define.

Readers of this newsletter may be interested not only in the content of the book, but also in the process of writing it. The book essentially took three years to write, followed by one year of revision and production. It ended up considerably longer than I expected it to be. I had proposed an eight-chapter, 115,000-word volume; the finished book comprises 11 chapters, and something like 150,000 words. The reasons (and causes) of this change are many and varied.

The expansion was only possible because I had an academic leave in 2017-18—the central writing year—and my partner and I were fortunate enough to be able to spend the year in New Zealand, where we found a wonderful place to live and lots of support (musical, social, and philosophical). Philosophically speaking, where I had proposed one chapter on music and the emotions, and another on music and values (including ethical values), I realized that doing justice to these topics (if the publisher would allow it!) required separate chapters on emotions in the music, emotions in the listener, music’s artistic value, and the intersection of music and morality. Similarly, where I had planned to cover performance, work-performance, and authenticity in a single chapter, I ended up spreading those topics over two.

Following the sage advice I give to my students, I did not begin writing at the beginning, but rather halfway through. In particular, I was inspired to engage with David Davies’s work on the nature of performance.⁵ This led naturally (for me, anyway) into a consideration of work-performance, and hence the debate over classical authenticity, and improvisation. Perhaps because I feel that I have largely said my piece on these topics, the further I got into initially drafting this part of the book the more unhappy I was with my work. However, at the risk of getting too personal, around this time I began taking antidepressants. This was not directly connected to my work on the book. I had long experienced low-level depression. (“Suffered” is too dramatic a word for my condition, though it may aptly describe what my partner had to deal with for many years.) But only at this point was I willing and able to try medication as a solution. This made (and continues to make) a huge difference to my ability to deal with minor setbacks, and played a role, I am sure,
in my productivity during my leave in New Zealand, where I drafted over half the book, starting again at the beginning of the book.

I mention this personal aspect of the process in case it is of help in some small way to others in the profession dealing with mental health conditions.

My productivity while on leave meant that I had only two chapters left to draft (along with plenty of revision) when I returned to teaching in 2018-19. For this situation, I had reserved two topics on which I had done some previous work, but still felt I had something new to contribute: recordings and the definition of music. The following year was devoted to revision (particularly in light of extremely helpful comments from an anonymous reader) and production (e.g., producing the printed musical examples, correcting the proofs, and writing the index). Fortunately, I completed the last of these tasks—supplying the index—the weekend before America woke up to the severity of the coronavirus pandemic and all our lives were thrown into disarray. It will be interesting to see whether and (if so) how the on-going public health situation will affect the reception of the book.

This is not the place to recapitulate the thanks I give in the book to the many individuals and institutions without whose help it would be poorer than it is. But I can’t omit repeating my thanks to the community of the American Society for Aesthetics that has sustained me intellectually since I attended my first meeting in 1998. Like many of us, I’m sure, I am very sorry we will not be able to meet in person this year, though the society is doing a great job of shifting the sessions online.

I hope that my book will be helpful to students and scholars coming to philosophy of music for the first time, but also of interest to those already familiar with the field. While most of the book aims to introduce readers to the extant literature, there are several places where I suggest fruitful avenues for future research, such as the medium of music and its combination in hybrid forms, the intersection of music and morality, and the musical experiences of d/Deaf people. If, for whatever reason, you find yourself with a copy in your hands, I hope you’ll let me know what you think.

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1 Andrew Kania, Philosophy of Western Music: A Contemporary Introduction. New York, Routledge, 2020. All page references are to this book.

2 One problem that I did not foresee with this opening example is that significant numbers of undergraduates are apparently unaware of who Bob Dylan is!

3 As I note in the book, “The term pure music has unfortunate moralistic, perhaps even racist, connotations, but I know of no better alternative. It is more awkward to talk of the ‘absolute’ or ‘instrumental’ music of a song, for instance, since those terms typically refer to the genre of ‘music alone’ in Peter Kivy’s phrase (1990), that is, pieces with no elements or aspects other than the musical” (26, n. 28).

4 Two other ways in which the scope of the book is restricted, which can be justified by little more than the limits of my expertise, are to analytic philosophy of Western music.


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Remembering
Sally Banes: Recipient of the Selma Jeanne Cohen Prize in Dance
Aesthetics 2008

Curtis L. Carter
Marquette University


In recognition of her many contributions to dance scholarship and criticism Dr. Banes has received numerous awards: in 2008 Dr. Banes received the American Society for Aesthetics Selma Jeanne
Cohen Prize in Dance Aesthetics for Lifetime Achievement. In 2003, she received the Lifetime Award for Dance Research from the Congress of Research in Dance. The Society for Dance History Scholars also awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award. Additional Awards include A Betsy Award for Lifetime Contribution to Dance Criticism. The Biennial Sally Banes Publication Prize in her honor is awarded for the publication that best examines intersections of theatre and dance or movement.

As a critic with her eyes focused on avant-garde and urban dance and theatre in New York, Dr. Banes challenged both critics and dance practitioners to explore new approaches to the art of dance. All forms of dance and performance unfolding in the dynamic mid-century art cultures of New York drew scrutiny and challenge from her energetic gaze. This included the avant-garde dance culture taking place in Soho as well as Break Dance happening in the Bronx before it was known or appreciated for its contributions to contemporary dance culture. She was first to position break dancing culture introduced by Black and Latino street dancers in New York with a critical focus. Writing for the Village Voice in 1981, Dr. Banes, called out Break Dance in these words: “Breaking is a public arena for the flamboyant triumph of virility, wit and skills. Breaking is a way of using your body to inscribe your identity on streets and trains, in parks and high school gyms. It is a physical version of two favorite modes of street rhetoric, the taunt and the boast.”

As a contributor to the “Concepts in Performance” page of the Soho Weekly News from 1976 to 1980 and for its last two years—Dr. Banes narrates her own account of the New York dance scene in what was arguably its most exciting period of innovative new dance and theater of the century. She occupied a key role in interpreting innovative developments in dance, and theatre of the Mid Twentieth Century. Dancers Meredith Monk, Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, David Gordon, Steve Paxton, Kenneth King and Simon Forti performing at the Judson Theatre and elsewhere in Soho were among the innovative dancers on Dr. Banes’ critical palette. Also Modern Dance’s Merce Cunningham and New York City Ballet’s 20th century choreographer George Balanchine. Joining the dance figures covered in Dr. Banes’ reviews are major theatre artists: Robert Wilson, Laurie Anderson, and Whoopi Goldberg.

Commenting on Dr. Banes’ dance criticism, Joan Acocella a critic for The New Yorker remarked, “One of the great things about her and the work she wrote about, was just vitality—freshness, excitement, wit, can do….Like a good critic, she brought her imagination to bear on works of the imagination.” (Cited in the Washington Post June 17, 2020). In 1999, the ASA Pacific meeting featured an author-meets-critic session on her pioneering book, Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage (Routledge, 1998), with commentary by Peggy Zeglin Brand and Janice Ross. The exchange, with a response by Dr. Banes, was published in Dance Research Journal 31:2 (Fall 1999), 111ff.

In addition to her roles as dance scholar and dance critic, Dr. Banes took time to explore dance in the role of performer. Her early performance experience took place during her college years and continued in Chicago theatre projects which she helped establish. In 1974 she founded Community Discount Players a company consisting of actors, dancers, film makers and artists who created and performed theatre works. Also, in 1974 Dr. Banes co-founded MoMing Dance and Art Center, a dance theater company featuring avant garde performance. Visiting artists arriving from New York to perform at MoMing enabled Dr. Banes to establish connections with avantgarde performers in New York. MoMing continues to operate today. Dr. Banes met her future husband Noël Carroll at a MoMing event in 1975. They moved to New York together in 1976 and were married in 1985.

A highlight of Dr. Banes’ performing experience took place in 1974 at Oberlin College where she went to observe Meredith Monk who was in residency there with Ping Chong and her performing group, “The House.” Dr. Banes’ aim was to observe and write about Meredith Monk’s choreographing process by becoming engaged as much as possible in the process of the students and the Company. As a result, Meredith Monk invited her to perform with the Company in “Chacon.” Dr. Banes published an account of her experience at Oberlin College with Meredith Monk in Dance Chronicle Vol. 1 No. 1. Among her other performances were A duet with Ellen Mazer called “Sophia Eats Shrimp,” performed in Chicago at Mooing in 1975, and “Sophie Heightens the Contradictions” performed in New York with Amy Taubin and Wendy Perron at P.S. 122 in 1983. She also performed in Simon Forti’s “Planet” (1976) at P.S. 122.

Dr. Banes’ academic training in the arts began at the University of Chicago where she graduated in 1972 with an interdisciplinary degree in criticism, art, and theater. She earned the Ph. D. degree in drama from the Performance Studies Department of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, awarded in 1980. Her doctoral advisor was Michael Kirby. Her dissertation, “Democracy’s Body: The Judson Dance Theater 1962-1964” was reprinted by Duke University Press and has informed young scholars who aspire to enrich contemporary dance with their own contributions. While in New York Dr. Banes took classes in ballet with Ed Parish and Peter Saul, and modern dance at the Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham Studios.

Dr. Banes suffered a life changing stroke in 2002. We can only imagine the contributions that might have flowed from her continuing life engagements had not this tragic event intervened to silence all future gifts.

Sally Rachel Banes was born on October 9, 1950. Her early life was spent in Silver Springs, Maryland where she grew up with her family, attending ballet classes in Washington, D. C. and exploring the arts. Her mother who was an artist no doubt influenced her interest in the arts. Her father was director of pharmaceutical sciences for the Food and Drug Administration. She is survived by her husband Noël Carroll, a Professor of Philosophy at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and leading contributor to philosophy of art, who lives in Philadelphia. Her two surviving sisters are Susan Barnes Harris of Potomac, Maryland and Ruby Bell Sherpa of Mendocino, California.

*Curtis L. Carter is Donald J. Schuenke Chair Professor in the Philosophy Department of Marquette University. He previously served as President of the Dance Perspectives Foundation and Guest Editor of Growth of Dance in America Arts, Society, Arts in Society, Vol. 13, (2), 1976, and author of multiple essays on the philosophy of dance.
News from the National Office

We have been living in a state of emergency for some five months now, forcing dramatic changes in our daily and professional lives. We know many members have had to shift to online classes on short notice and no one is quite sure when higher education will return to “normal,” if ever. Many have been furloughed or laid off. Others have encountered a nearly non-existent job market.

The ASA is not immune from these sudden travails. We expected a decline in revenue from our institutional journal subscriptions before the pandemic hit, but the virus accelerated this decline as colleges and universities scrambled for budget cuts anywhere and everywhere. We have enjoyed very lucrative revenue from the journal for many years, but those days are over, and we are facing sharp declines in anticipated revenues in the coming years. The ASA Finance Committee held an emergency Zoom meeting June 3; the Board of Trustees considered their recommendations and other matters at a Zoom meeting June 11. The final minutes for the meeting of the Board of Trustees on July 11, 2020 are available to current ASA members. Log into the ASA site and look for the red Members tab in the upper right: Members → ASA Records.

Membership rates

The ASA Board of Trustees has approved a reduction in the GREEN membership rates for ASA, effective October 1, 2020. In addition, the Trustees approved a new Unemployed rate for those with no full-time academic or professional employment for the coming year of $25 per year. All GREEN rates will be reduced by $7 per year, regardless of employment status.

The Trustees recognize the serious financial situation of many members, with lay-offs, hiring freezes, and cancellation of research support in higher education. The Trustees hope that these measures will make it easier for members to continue their ASA membership through these difficult times.

• Persons with lapsed memberships who meet the eligibility for the new Unemployed rate may rejoin ASA as early as October 1 at the new rate so they will be able to attend the 78th Annual Meeting, which will be held virtually.

• For brand-new members who have never been a member of ASA, a new membership in October-December 2020 will be extended through December 31, 2021.

• We regret that it is not possible for us to pro-rate existing memberships, but current members can shift to the appropriate green membership category when their current membership comes up for renewal. If you need help doing this on the ASA web site, contact secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org.

In addition, the Trustees addressed the rapidly shifting environment for print journals and sharply escalating costs for printing and postage. Beginning January 1, 2021, membership rates for those who wish to continue receiving the print version of the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism will be increased to cover those costs. To postpone those price increases, members can renew their memberships for up to three years at current rates if they renew no later than December 31, 2020. New members can also join for up to three years at current rates through December 31, 2020. Regular membership rates have not been increased since 2014.

For questions about individual memberships, please contact <secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org>.

To see the new rates for 2021 please see the mail-in form in this newsletter. If you log into the ASA web site, you will be shown the new green rates as of October 1, 2020 and the new regular rates as of January 1, 2021.

Annual and Divisional Meetings

We are continuing to make arrangements for all four divisional meetings and the fall Annual Meeting in 2021 although we are prepared to shift in-person meetings to virtual ones, as we doing in 2020. We will try to give as much advance notice as possible. As we face cancellation charges from hotels when we cancel a meeting, we are eager to avoid this change, but in the past year it has been unavoidable.

Our Virtual Summer Aesthetics Festival enabled many to present their work even after meetings had been cancelled. Varying from 20-80 people, typically from many countries, these have been a great success and we will explore ways to use this format to complement in-person meetings in the future. Elsewhere in this issue, we have memorialized all nine offerings for the historic record.

Budget cuts

The Trustees trimmed our budget for the next year in many categories, in hopes of retaining as many of our existing activities as possible. We have suspended a few things, but the trustees will re-examine those each year as we get a better sense of revenues from the journal, membership, and other sources we will try to cultivate. Most programs are intact, albeit with slightly reduced funding.

After six years of experience with travel grants, the average for almost 200 reimbursement claims is about $1000, so that will become the standard travel grant beginning in 2021 for student presenters, prize winners, editors, and other subsidized travelers to the annual meeting. As the trustees have discussed for several years, they voted unanimously to abandon the print newsletter after this issue due to printing and postage costs, but we will continue to make the ASA Newsletter available on the ASA web site, to the public on the same publication schedule three times a year. We were one of the few remaining print newsletters still being distributed.

The Trustees voted to continue the Dissertation Fellowship and Student Conference grants at current rates. We are honoring all commitments finalized by June 1, 2020, but are suspending for the next year the Major Grants Program and the Postdoctoral Fellowship. The Trustees will review these suspensions each year to see if they can be accommodated in the new budget realities. Most of our prizes are funded with bequests and donations and will continue without change. (If we have any members interested in funding a new prize, either now or in their will, please contact us!)

The Future of the ASA

The Trustees are eager to hear from members with your thoughts about the future of the ASA. What are your priorities for the future of the Society? What role should ASA play in your professional life? Which functions should we discontinue? Are there new initiatives we should pursue within our current budget constraints? You are welcome to contact any officers or trustees directly with your thoughts or to send your ideas to <secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org> for transmittal to them.

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2020 ASA Prize Winners

Peter Kivy Prize

The American Society for Aesthetics is pleased to announce the winners of the Peter Kivy Prize: Garry Hagberg for “Kivy’s Mystery: Absolute Music and What the Formalist Can (or Could) Hear;” Jason Leddington for “Sonic Pictures;” and Bence Nanay for “Looking for Profundity (in all the wrong places).”

Garry Hagberg

Hagberg is the James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Aesthetics and Philosophy at Bard College.

Jason Leddington

Leddington is Associate Professor of Philosophy and NEH Chair in the Humanities at Bucknell University and (from 2019-2021) a Marie Sklodowska-Curie Fellow at the University of Antwerp.

Bence Nanay

Nanay is Professor of Philosophy and BOF Research Professor at the University of Antwerp.

The winning essayists will present their work at a special panel at the ASA Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 14. Jennifer Judkins (UCLA) will provide a commentary. The essays were selected from among twelve nominations by a special review committee appointed by the ASA President in consultation with the Board of Trustees and the Kivy family. The top three essays will each receive a prize of $1000, generously funded by family and friends of Peter Kivy. They also will be published in the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.

The Peter Kivy Prize was unanimously approved in April 2018 by the ASA Board of Trustees. This is a one-time prize intended to encourage new, unpublished work on the philosophy of music of Peter Kivy (1934-2017). Kivy served as an ASA Trustee from 1976-78 and as President from 1991-92.

Irene H. Chayes New Voices Awards

The winners of the 2020 Irene H. Chayes New Voices Awards are Christopher Jenkins and Hannah Kim.

Christopher Jenkins
Jenkins’s paper is “Aesthetics of Classical Music: Assimilation vs. Integration.”

Kim’s paper is “Music, Convention, and Sound Symbolism.”

Both papers will be presented at the Annual Meeting November 11-14, 2020. Both are doctoral students, Jenkins at Oberlin College and Kim at Stanford University.

The awards were established in 2017 by the Board of Trustees of the ASA, at the request of the ASA Diversity Committee, to nourish and sustain an ethos of inclusivity in all aspects of the Society’s activities, and in the discipline of aesthetics more broadly.

Award recipients receive $1,000 prizes. Fourteen papers were submitted for consideration for this award in 2020. Papers were reviewed anonymously with all other papers for the meeting by the ASA program committee, without any information on their request for the New Voices Award or other support. The final selection was made jointly by the Chairs of the Program Committee (Thi Nguyen) and the Diversity Committee (Nils Steer and Paloma Atencia Linares). Applicants for the 2021 awards should apply by March 1, 2021. Guidelines: <https://aesthetics-online.org/page/chayesprize>.

These awards have been made possible by the generosity of a large bequest from Irene H. Chayes to the American Society for Aesthetics. Irene Hendry Chayes (1916-2014) received her B.A. and M.A. from New York University and her Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. She taught literature at the University of Maryland, Hollins College, and SUNY Binghamton.

Committee Essay Prize


Irvin is Presidential Research Professor of Philosophy and Women’s and Gender Studies and Associate Dean of the Graduate College at the University of Oklahoma.

An honorable mention was awarded to Alia Al-Saji, Associate Professor of Philosophy at McGill University, for “Glued to the Image: A Critical Phenomenology of Racialization through Works of Art,” JAAC 77:4 (Fall 2019).

The prize is $1000. The winning essay will be commented upon by scholars at a special panel session at the 2020 Annual Meeting. Essays were judged based on significance of the topic, quality of the research, quality of the writing, originality, and contribution to the feminist literature within aesthetics—broadly construed—that focuses on gender, race, class, ethnicity, and/or sexual preference/identity; the essay may be and is encouraged to be multidisciplinary.
Selection of the winning paper was made by a committee of three ASA members, appointed by the ASA President. Funds for the prize were generously donated to the ASA by Dr. Peg Brand Weiser, long-time member of the ASA and the FCC. She has served as a Trustee (twice), on program committees (chairing Pacific in 1992), and as local organizer, starting RMD in 1985. She was a founding member of the Feminist Caucus in 1990 and the first appointed chair of the Feminist Caucus Committee 2014-2017. With Carolyn Korsmeyer, she co-edited the first feminist special issue of JAAC — “Feminism and Traditional Aesthetics” — in Fall 1990.

Selma Jeanne Cohen Prize in Dance Aesthetics

The winner of the 2020 Selma Jeanne Cohen Prize in Dance Aesthetics is Thomas F. DeFrantz, for his essay “What Is Black Dance? What Can It Do?” in Thinking Through Theatre and Performance, edited by Maike Bleeker, Adrian Kear, Joe Kelleher, Heike Roms (Methuen Drama, 2019).

Dr. DeFrantz is a member of the faculty of Duke University as Professor of African and African American Studies, Professor of Dance, and a member of the Core Graduate Faculty in Computational Media, Arts & Cultures.

The review committee of three senior ASA members specializing in dance said this about the winning essay, selected from sixteen nominations:

This is a timely critical interrogation of the category of Black Dance, exploring the historical formation, social significance and aesthetic features of relevant practices. DeFrantz offers a nuanced, original and accessible treatment of complex issues, grounded in deep knowledge of, and reflection upon, dance practice.

His essay provides a touchstone for future scholarship on Black Dance.

The prize was established in 2008, funded with the proceeds from a generous bequest to the ASA by Selma Jeanne Cohen. The $1000 prize is awarded every year for critical articles or books of distinction in dance aesthetics, dance theory, or the history of dance published in English.

In 2020, the Prize is being awarded for an outstanding article published from May 1, 2018 - April 30, 2020. In 2021, the Prize will be awarded for an outstanding book published from May 1, 2019 - April 30, 2021. For more information: <https://aesthetics-online.org/page/CohenPrize>.

Ted Cohen Prize

Michael R. Fischer, the Janet S. Dicke Professor in Public Humanities, English, of Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, has won the Ted Cohen Prize for 2020. His winning essay is “Ted Cohen on Sharing the World,” published in Philosophy and Literature 2020: 44 (188–198).

The complete article can be read here: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/754518>. The review committee noted:

Michael Fischer elaborates Ted Cohen’s work on the importance of appreciating others, even when they are monsters, and he uses that work to address our current troubled political climate.

The winner was selected from sixteen nominations by a committee of three senior ASA members. The prize for the winning essay is $1000. This is the sixth and final year for the Ted Cohen Prize, which has been supported by his widow, Andy Austin Cohen, and many friends and former students. The prize was established “to
recognize writing that is clear, graceful, and unencumbered by jargon or academic clichés. It should examine serious problems in aesthetics while also giving pleasure to the reader.”

**Outstanding Monograph Prize**

The 2020 Outstanding Monograph Prize has been awarded to Rachel Zuckert, Professor of Philosophy at Northwestern University, for *Herder’s Naturalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge 2019).

![Rachel Zuckert](image1.png)

As stated by the review committee of three senior ASA members:

*Herder’s Naturalist Aesthetics, by Rachel Zuckert, demonstrates the extent to which this relatively neglected thinker engaged in serious aesthetic theorizing, and it establishes his significance in the development of the field. Zuckert offers an impressively comprehensive synthesis from challengingly messy materials, showing that Herder’s wide-ranging reflections build from his basic commitments to aesthetic naturalism. She never makes things too easy either for herself or for Herder; she acknowledges statements in Herder that challenge her interpretation and points at which she is reconstructing or extending his arguments. The book is a model of thoughtful scholarship, and it represents an important contribution to the field of aesthetics.*

The Outstanding Monograph Prize has been awarded annually since 2008. The 2021 prize will be awarded for a monograph published in 2020. The submission deadline is February 1, 2021, with the prize awarded at the 2021 Annual Meeting in November.

**Outstanding Student Paper Prize**

Christian Kronsted, a doctoral student in philosophy at the University of Memphis, has won the Outstanding Student Paper for 2020. His paper, to be presented in November at the Virtual 78th Annual meeting, is entitled “Catching the Ghost – What House Dance Teaches us about Expert Cognition and Creativity.”

Renee Conroy, Purdue University, Northwest, will provide the commentary.

The selection of the Outstanding Student Paper is made each year by the Program Committee, chaired this year by C. Thi Nguyen, University of Utah. All student papers accepted for the program are eligible. The prize is $250.
ASA NEWSLETTER

Aesthetics News

ASA 78th Annual Meeting
November 9-14, 2020

What to Expect from the Virtual 2020 ASA Annual Meeting
C. Thi Nguyen, Program Chair

Due to the pandemic, we will be holding the ASA Annual Meeting virtually - most likely using Zoom. We'll be attempting to keep mostly to the original hours of the in-person meeting: Wednesday to Saturday, Nov 11-14, with sessions from 9 am - 5 pm, and keynotes at 6 pm, all Eastern Standard Time. We're in the process of adjusting the program to meet the time zone and scheduling needs of the participants. We will post the adjusted schedule on the ASA website by mid-August. Committee meetings will be held on Monday and Tuesday, November 9-10. The Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees will meet on Wednesday, November 11. The Annual Business Meeting for all members will be Saturday, November 14.

Registration and current ASA membership will be required to attend and to participate on the program. The ASA Board reduced the registration fee to $10 for regular participants, and $5 for students and unemployed. On the one hand, we'll be missing out on some of the satisfactions of in-person meetings. On the other, we hope the virtual format and lowered fee will make up for this, partially, by opening the meeting to more participants. Elsewhere in this issue is a membership form with the new rates, including reduced GREEN membership rates effective October 1, 2020, and a new unemployed GREEN rate of $25 per year.

This virtual meeting is very much a work in progress, and something of a leap into the unknown. If there's anything we can do to make the meeting more functional, accessible, and useful to you, please let us know. We are also considering different ways to encourage the kind of non-session social interaction that is such a valuable part of conferencing. Please, if you have any ideas, let us know. You can contact us at: <asa-2020washington@gmail.com>.

ASA Announces Election of New Trustees And Vice-President

The American Society for Aesthetics announces an election for three new trustees in December 2020. As provided in the ASA By-laws, Article VII, the current Board of Trustees will nominate six ASA members to stand for election as trustee. The three trustees elected will serve for three-year terms (February 1, 2021 - January 31, 2024). The current Board also will nominate two ASA members to stand for election as Vice-President. The Vice-President will serve from February 1, 2021 - January 31, 2023 and will then become President for a two-year term. The nominations will be announced on the ASA website and via e-mail to all members as soon as available. Bios of the nominees will be available in the December 2020 ASA Newsletter.

Additional nominations can be made by any members of the Society. All such additional nominations, with the signatures of eight supporting members, must be filed with the Secretary-Treasurer no later than the two weeks following the annual meeting (November 28, 2020). These can be sent by e-mail <secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org> or through the US Mail (American Society for Aesthetics, 1550 Larimer Street #644, Denver, CO 80202-1602).

Voting will be conducted on the ASA website from December 1-31, 2020, with an announcement in early January. All members of ASA in 2020 are eligible to vote by logging into the web site, looking for the red “Members” button in the upper-right, and clicking the “Trustee elections” sub-menu. Members unable to vote on-line should notify the Secretary-Treasurer no later than December 1, 2020, and will be sent a mail-in ballot; notification should be sent to the ASA mailing address, above. María José Alcaraz León, John Gibson, and Jonathan Neufeld will complete their terms as trustees on January 31, 2021. For more information on the current trustees and the ASA By-laws, see the ASA Web page <http://aesthetics-online.org>. Look for the “ASA” red button in the upper-right and click the “About the ASA” sub-menu.

ASA Delegates to the IAA

Sandra Shapshay named ASA Delegate to the IAA

The ASA Board of Trustees has appointed Sandra Shapshay as the ASA Delegate to the International Aesthetics Association. Saul Fisher has been named as the Alternate. Four nominations of senior ASA members were received. The ASA Delegate will serve for a three-year term from 2020-2022, and possible reappointment through 2025.

Dr. Shapshay will represent the ASA at these meetings of the IAA: Interim Conference, Bled, Slovenia, July 2021, and Triennial Congress, 2022, Belo Horizon, Brazil. With possible reappointment, upon mutual agreement, she can be reappointed for the Interim conference (2024) and the Triennial Congress (2025).

Dr. Shapshay, Professor of Philosophy at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of CUNY, has been an active member of the ASA since she was a graduate student. She has served on the Annual Meeting program committee, has organized sessions for the ASA at the APA Central meeting, and has served on several review committees for ASA prizes and award. She has also received ASA funding for aesthetics workshops at Indiana University and co-edited a special issue of JAAC on “The Good, the Beautiful, the Green: Environmental Aesthetics and Ethics.”

Dr. Fisher is Associate Provost for Research, Grants, and Academic Initiatives and Visiting Associate Professor of Philosophy at Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, NY. He is Vice-Chair of the ASA Diversity Committee and has served on the Program committee for the ASA Annual Meeting.

For more information on the IAA: <https://iaaesthetics.org/>

A Note from Andy Austin Cohen on The Ted Cohen Prize

Ted Cohen

I want to thank everybody who contributed to the Ted Cohen prize, both monetarily and by submitting essays. I also want to thank the judges who gave their tasks an enormous amount of time and attention. Even with so much generous help, like so many

Sandra Shapshay named ASA Delegate to the IAA
things these days, the prize (at least for now) has to be given up.

Some sentimental background: Ted brought me to the annual ASA meeting in Santa Barbara before we were even engaged. We spent most of our time on the beach though I remember a wonderful talk on men’s underwear. We had been married by the time of the Charleston gathering and I never missed an annual meeting until three years after he died. The people, the papers, the parties, the locations made them my favorite weekend of the year.

When Ted was gone it was obvious a prize should be given to honor him and that the ASA, which he loved, should administer it. It should celebrate good philosophical writing that was clear and humane, “unencumbered by academic jargon,” in other words, writing like Ted’s.

The submissions covered an enormous diversity of topics, and Ted would have loved that. There were papers on tattoos, and jazz, and “rust belt porn,” and cities, and good manners, and naughty aristocrats hiding behind the concept of “Connoisseurship,” on Oedipus and Rembrandt, and on old-fashioned apple-peeler. Just to mention a few. I enjoyed reading them all.

Our prize winners were:

• 2020: Michael Fischer (Trinity University): “Ted Cohen on Sharing the World”

• 2019: Julian Dodd (University of Manchester): “What 4’33’ Is”

• 2018: Terry F. Robinson (University of Toronto): “Eighteenth-Century Connoisseurship and the Female Body”

• 2017: Steven D. Hales (Bloomington University): “Audiophile Aesthetics”

• 2016: Anna Christina Ribeiro (Texas Tech University), “The Spoken and the Written—An Ontology of Poems”

• 2015: Carolyn Korsmeyer (University of Buffalo): “The Triumph of Time: Romanticism Redux”

Salish Sea Aesthetics Workshop II Postponed to 2021

The Salish Sea Aesthetics Workshop II, originally scheduled for November 2020, has been postponed to November 12-14, 2021. The meeting will be held at the Marriott in Victoria, British Columbia in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the Western Canadian Philosophical Association.

The American Society for Aesthetics is providing $2,550 USD in partial support of the meeting. Project directors are David Friedell (University of British Columbia), James O. Young (University of Victoria) and Michel-Antoine Xhignesse (Capilano University).

The Workshop will consist of eleven sessions over the three days of the Meeting. The Workshop builds on the Salish Sea Aesthetics Workshop in 2019 at the University of British Columbia, also supported by the ASA, and furthers the establishment of a regional forum for aestheticians in the Salish Sea. The region (sometimes referred to as the Pacific Northwest) stretches roughly from Portland, Oregon to British Columbia. Salish Sea is the indigenous name for the region.

The updated call for papers and submission deadline will be announced in the near future. All papers will be reviewed anonymously, with final decisions on the aesthetics papers by the three workshop organizers. Commentators will be recruited for each paper, with a special focus on promoting interdisciplinary dialogue with other areas of philosophy.

ASA funding will also support a prize of $250 CDN for the best student essay in aesthetics. ASA membership will not be required for aesthetics papers for the workshop, but will be required for eligibility for the essay prize.

As more information becomes available, it will be posted on the ASA web site, the ASA Newsletter, and other venues.

Debates in Aesthetics

Debates in Aesthetics is about to publish a new issue and we have a new editor joining later this year.

Debates in Aesthetics is pleased to announce the publication of a new special issue. For this edition, Paul C. Taylor wrote a target article to which the philosophical community was invited to respond. Taylor’s article, ‘Black Reconstruction in Aesthetics’, can be seen as an extension of his earlier work, notably Black is Beautiful (2016) which was awarded the ASA monograph prize in 2017. The new issue includes Taylor’s article, responses by Joshua M. Hall, James Haile III, Falguni A. Sheth, and Rossen Ventzislavov, and a reply to these authors by Taylor. The issue is available to read and download on the Debates in Aesthetics website.

The editors of Debates in Aesthetics are also delighted to introduce a new co-editor. Sarah Kiernan will be joining the editorial team later this year. Sarah completed her MA on Kantian aesthetics at the University of Auckland before coming to Birkbeck, University of London where she is currently completing her PhD on Hegel’s aesthetic philosophy and modern art.

To be kept abreast of our CFPs, new issues, and prize announcements, please subscribe to the Debates in Aesthetics newsletter.

<www.debatesinaesthetics.org>

Calls for Papers

ASA Annual Meeting
Montreal, Canada
November 17-20, 2021

Deadline: March 1, 2021

The ASA announces a Preliminary Call for Papers for the 79th Annual Meeting to be held Nov. 17 - 20, 2021, at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Montreal, Canada. Please note the submission deadline: March 1, 2021

We invite papers on any topic in aesthetics and encourage proposals for panels, author-meets-critics, or other special sessions. A more detailed Call for Papers will follow in the fall. Papers and proposals from traditionally underrepresented groups (including women, racial minorities, and persons with disabilities, among others) are encouraged.

Papers should not exceed 3,000 words, should be accompanied by a 100-word abstract, and must be prepared for anonymous review. Panel proposals must include a general description of the topic or theme, the names and affiliations of all proposed participants, and a long abstract (approximately 1000 words) for each of the presentations. The abstract should articulate the thesis and central argument(s) of the talk.

We welcome volunteers to serve as session chairs and commentators.
The 2021 meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Society of Aesthetics will be the division’s second meeting at the Berkeley City Club in Berkeley, CA. After canceling the 2020 meeting due COVID-19, the division is hopeful that it will be able to hold next year’s meeting in person. In this time of great uncertainty, it is possible that it will be necessary to shift to a virtual meeting. It is expected that this decision will be made no later than December 20, 2020 and will be announced in all the ASA communication venues. Whether in-person or virtual, the Pacific Division meeting hopes to bring in-depth, long-form discussion of the best new work in aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

The Division invites paper and panel submissions on any topic in aesthetics, broadly construed. Submissions from traditionally underrepresented groups (including women, racial minorities, and persons with disabilities, among others) are encouraged. If your paper or panel submission is accepted, you must become a member of the ASA and register for the conference. You may submit a paper or be a member of a proposed panel, but not both. If you would like to volunteer to serve as a session chair and/or as a commentator, please fill out and submit this form.

Accepted papers will be presented and discussed in pre-read workshop format. All participants will commit to pre-read all accepted papers. (We do not run concurrent sessions, and the number of accepted papers will be manageable for pre-reading.) The author will have three to five minutes to introduce the paper, followed by a ten-minute presentation by the commentator, with the remaining session time allotted for questions and answer. This format will be strictly followed to facilitate in-depth discussion. Paper submissions must not exceed 3,000 words in length and must be accompanied by 200 to 300-word abstracts. Submissions should be anonymized for review.

Proposals for panels, author-meets-critics sessions, and other special sessions should include a brief description of the topic or theme, the names and affiliations of all proposed participants, and long abstracts of all papers (400-500 words each). These sessions will last an hour and a half with at least half an hour reserved for Q&A, and they will not be part of the pre-read sessions.

$1000 will be available for Irene H. Chayes Travel grants from the American Society for Aesthetics for presenters with no other access to travel funds. To apply, notify meeting organizers when submitting your paper that you wish to be considered and include an estimate of your travel costs. Please do not include this information in your paper.

Please send submissions in PDF, Word, or RTF format to asapacific2021@gmail.com. Please email the conference organizers, E. Hande Tuna & Gemma Argüello, at this address if you have any questions or would like to volunteer to comment on a paper or chair a session.

ASA Policies: Papers presented at ASA Divisional meetings may not be presented at the ASA Annual Meeting. Everyone on an ASA program must be a member of the ASA. Submissions from non-members are welcome, but if you are accepted for the program, you must join the ASA within 30 days or risk being replaced on the program. Everyone must also register for the meeting. This applies to presenters, panelists, commentators, and chairs.

ASA Eastern Division Meeting
Philadelphia, PA
April 16-17, 2021

Deadline: January 10, 2021

We are looking forward to our new venue, the Doubletree by Hilton on Broad Street, Philadelphia (across from the Academy of Music).

Papers on any topic in aesthetics are invited, as well as proposals for panels, author-meets-critics, or other special sessions. Papers and proposals from traditionally underrepresented groups (including women, racial minorities, and persons with disabilities, among others) are encouraged.

We welcome volunteers to serve as session chairs and commentators.

To submit a paper or a panel proposal for consideration you must be a member of the American Society for Aesthetics, and if your paper is accepted you must register for the conference. You can join the ASA online: <http://aesthetics-online.org>.

Papers should not exceed 3,000 words, should be accompanied by a 100-word abstract, and must be prepared for anonymous review. Panel proposals must include a general description of the topic or theme, the names and affiliations of all proposed participants, and a long abstract (approximately 1000 words) for each of the presentations. The abstract should articulate the thesis and central argument(s) of the talk.

$1000 will be available for Irene H. Chayes Travel grants, from the American Society for Aesthetics, for papers presenters with no other access to travel funds. To apply, notify the organizers that you wish to be considered, and estimate your travel costs. Do not include this in your paper.

Please send submission in PDF, Word, or RTF format to Michel-Antoine Xhignesse and Javier Gomez-Lavin at easa.submissions@gmail.com.

Although we are hopeful that we will be able to hold this meeting in person, in this time of great uncertainty it is possible that we will need to shift to a virtual meeting. We expect to make this decision no later than January 15, 2021 and will announce it in all of the ASA’s communication venues.

Please feel free to direct questions to the Program Co-Chairs: Javier Gomez-Lavin (University of Pennsylvania) <jglavin@sas.upenn.edu> and Michel-Antoine Xhignesse (Capilano) <michelxhignesse@capilanou.ca>.

ASA Rocky Mountain Division Meeting
Santa Fe, NM
July 16-18, 2021

Deadline: March 1, 2021

Statement from the organizers:

The next ASA Rocky Mountain Division meeting is scheduled for July 16-18, 2021, in Santa Fe, NM. We will announce the CFA in the December 2020 ASA Newsletter and on the ASA website. We expect the submission deadline for abstracts to be March 1, 2021.

Although we are hopeful that we will be able to hold this meeting in person, in this time of great uncertainty, it is possible that we will need to shift to a virtual meeting. We expect to make this decision no later than April 14, 2021 and will announce it in all the ASA communication venues.

-The Officers of the ASA Rocky Mountain Division
SUMMER 2020

Upcoming Events

ASA 78th Annual Meeting
November 9-14, 2020
See important information on pg. 10 of this issue.
<asa2020washington@gmail.com>

Art, Desire, and God: Phenomenological Perspectives
Notre Dame University
October 2-3, 2020
Registration Opens: August 15, 2020

Art and desire have been perennial objects of philosophical and theological questioning throughout the history of ideas in the West. Phenomenology in particular has proven itself uniquely equipped to explore these topics with its method of examining human experience. Thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Richard Kearney, and David Tracy, as well as those conventionally associated with the so-called theological turn in French phenomenology, such as Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Emmanuel Falgue, frequently treat one or another of these topics. However, the relation between art and desire together in the human experience of the divine or the Absolute broadly construed goes overlooked in contemporary academic discussions. The question remains: what is the role of the desire of/for God in art and aesthetic experience?

The exigency of broaching this question at the intersection of philosophy, theology, and art became all the more apparent in the diverse reactions to the partial burning of the Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris on April 15-16, 2019, which made manifest the multiple identities that religious art bears in our contemporary world. Both secular humanistic and religious discourses were deployed in the articulation of the importance of the restoration and preservation of the cathedral. Notre Dame de Paris was simultaneously cast as a historical and cultural symbol of the French Republic, a religious monument of both Roman Catholicism and global Christianity, as well as a work of art and human genius displaying the rich depths of humanity itself. While these various identities are not in themselves necessarily at odds with one another, the at times incendiary debates that followed the catastrophe frequently presupposed that they were and are incommensurate. Although the same desire for the restoration and preservation of this work of art united the differing positions, the meaning of traditionally religious art in a predominantly secular context came under question. To the central question above, then, is added another: what, if anything, can phenomenological analysis of art, desire, and God shed on the political dimension of the relation between religion and secular culture?

“Art, Desire, and God: Phenomenological Perspectives” will be hosted virtually by the University of Notre Dame on the 2nd and 3rd of October 2020, and will include a diverse selection of papers by an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars. The event’s keynote speakers will include Richard Kearney (Boston College) and J. Aaron Simmons (Furman University), who will speak on “Mystical Eros and Carnal Hermeneutics” and “Of God and Trout Fishing: Phenomenology, Desire, and Faithfulness,” respectively. Theologians, philosophers, artists, and others are invited to contribute to this collaborative reflection on the application of phenomenology to the investigation of its themes. Registration opens August 15, 2020. To register, please visit <www.artdesiregod.com>. More details about the event may be found at the website. Please direct all questions to <artdesiregod@gmail.com>.

Workshop on the Philosophy of Games
October 24-25, 2020

The ASA Board of Trustees in October 2019 approved a grant of $7,000 in support of the Workshop at the University of Central Oklahoma. It was originally hoped that the meeting could be held in April 2020. The Workshop is organized by Christopher Bartel (Appalachian State University) and Mark Silcox (University of Central Oklahoma).

The Workshop, which builds on work at the ASA-funded Workshop on the Philosophy of Games at Utah State University in 2016, aims to ensure that the philosophical study of aesthetics is central to the North American game studies community.

Papers have been selected, following a call for proposals. The schedule for the virtual conference will be announced shortly.

The organizers aim to bring together a diverse range of scholars from fields like Philosophy, Psychology, Media Studies, Communication Studies, Computer Science, and Literary Studies all focused on the aesthetics of games.

Public Space: The Real and the Ideal
5th Biennial Conference of the International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture
Monte Verità, Switzerland
August 2-5, 2020

Organized by Hans Teerds (ETH Zurich), André Patrão (EPFL Lausanne), and Christoph Baumberger (ETH Zurich)

Although public spaces are everywhere, and used extensively, the term itself is a contested notion. Many architects, urban designers, philosophers, and political theorists have emphasized the importance of understanding public space from a humanistic and democratic perspective. This is often inspired by an ideal of social interaction and democratic pluralism that should somehow be tangible in public spaces. The built environment is thus understood as offering more than just a functional space or an aesthetic experience. It is rather seen as a force shaping a world-in-common, which in turn shapes the human experience of this commonness and the understanding of the world itself, both consciously and unconsciously.

However, current developments in cities and societies, from smart-cities and Big Data to gentrification, surveillance and commodification, seem to make it increasingly difficult for public spaces to live up to this ideal. Public spaces are increasingly privatized, commodified, controlled, monitored, and scripted; they are designed to accommodate leisure and tourism, shopping and sporting, or transportation and travelling. Such spaces have, at first sight, little regard for the social and political ideal of encounter and exchange. On the other hand, even in highly controlled spaces, social life and also political protests can occur, as is shown by the ongoing protests in Hong Kong, that even stretch to spaces that are privatized, heavily controlled, monitored, and scripted towards a single purpose. This presses the questions: How important is architecture and urban design for public life after all? Does design still trace concrete outlines for it, or can these be found elsewhere? The 5th Biennial Conference of the International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture examines public space and its architecture in a rapidly changing societal, political, and technological context.
A selection of papers will be published in a special issue of Architecture Philosophy, edited by Hans Teerds, André Patrão, and Christoph Baumberg <ispairchitecture@gmail.com>.

**Conference Reports**

**Virtual Summer Aesthetics Festival**

Although we have all been sorely disappointed at the cancellation of our 2020 divisional meetings due to COVID-19, we are pleased that so many ASA members shared their work with a virtual audience on Zoom in our Virtual Summer Aesthetics Festival. Attendance has been free and open to the public, ranging from 20-80 people worldwide. As the ASA Newsletter is an important part of our archive of the history of the ASA, we report here for the record the presentations to date in chronological order.

**The Spontaneity of Genius: Kantian Genius Reconstructed**

Jonathan Gingerich (King’s College London)  
April 22, 2020

**Abstract:** I develop an interpretation of Kant’s theory of “genius”—a talent that, according to Kant, is required for the production of all beautiful art—that shows how Kantian genius might avoid charges of elitism and individuality that twenty-first-century aestheticians have leveled against the notion of genius. I contend that Kantian genius can be fruitfully understood as the power to act in ways that are not planned out in advance, but that arise “spontaneously.” My interpretation counts a much broader range of activities as expressing “genius” than those activities that are traditionally understood as artistic activities. I further contend that my interpretation of Kantian genius illuminates an underappreciated connection between Kant and Nietzsche: Kant’s genius and Nietzsche’s aesthetic experience both console us to existential suffering by providing us with an opportunity to see ourselves not only in our rational, deliberative faculties, but also in our subconscious drives and dispositions.

**Savouring the Impossible**

**Jason Leddington** (Philosophy, Bucknell; Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Centre for Philosophical Psychology, University of Antwerp)  
May 28, 2020

Co-sponsored with The Aesthetics Research Centre, University of Kent

**Abstract:** It is a puzzling feature of human beings that we are attracted to artworks that provoke negative emotional responses. Why are we drawn to what should, intuitively, repulse us? Tragedy and horror are paradigm cases, but similar questions are raised by works that provoke, say, disgust or moral outrage. This talk introduces and explores a new version of this old puzzle. My question is: why are we attracted to magic tricks? Magic is one our most consistently popular forms of mass entertainment. Consider the recent successes of performers such as Derren Brown, Dynamo, and David Blaine, as well as the ubiquity of magicians on talent shows such as America’s Got Talent (thrice won by magicians). But while philosophers speak fondly of the pleasures of knowing, successful magic performances present apparent impossibilities that provoke potent experiences of ignorance. So, why do people seek them out? I argue that recent work in the philosophy and psychology of so-called “knowledge emotions” can help us to resolve this puzzle. At the same time, in a surprising parallel, I show that it can also illuminate the appeal of a distinctive form of puzzlement especially dear to philosophers. Finally, I conclude by proposing an extension of this account to explain our attraction to another “art of the impossible”: the impossible figures created by artists such as Reutersvård and Escher.

**The Aesthetic Values in the Living Experience: From the House to the City**

Aurosa Alison (Politecnico di Milano, Naples, Italy)  
June 15, 2020

**Abstract:** In order to theorize the architectural practice of the project as an aesthetic opening phase, we must allow ourselves a reflection on our way of living space. In this study we would like to illustrate the aesthetic and phenomenological aspects of living, as the cognition of being in a sensitive world. In the western conception of living there is a correspondence between the outside and the inside. Our study wants to highlight the relationships between the intimate inhabited space that corresponds to the image of the house and the exterior space that corresponds to the image of the city. How do we live an intimate space? How do we live a collective and shared space?

**Aesthetic Life & Why It Matters: Three Views (Panel)**

June 24, 2020

Originally scheduled for the ASA Pacific program, March 20

Presenters:

- **Bence Nanay** (Antwerp): “Aesthetic Experience as Achievement”
- **Nick Riggle** (U of San Diego): “Aesthetic Lives: Individuality, Freedom, Community”
- **Dominic McIver Lopes** (University of British Columbia): “Getting Into It: Ventures in Aesthetic Life”
- **Mary Beth Willard** (Weber State): “Response”

**Abstract:** Aesthetic Life and Why It Matters is a slim book principally intended to fill a need for material in aesthetics suitable for teaching undergraduates in introductory philosophy courses. The book’s premise is that first-year students are especially aware of their own aesthetic interests at a time when they’re in rapid, self-directed flux. Nanay emphasizes how aesthetic life enriches our experience. Riggle emphasizes how aesthetic life allows us to cultivate our individuality in ways that form community. Lopes emphasizes how aesthetic life facilitates explorations of benign value diversity.

**Blackening Aesthetic Experience**

Nicholas Whittaker (CUNY Graduate Center, New York)  
June 25, 2020

 Originally scheduled for the ASA Eastern program, April 17

**Abstract:** Analytic philosophy of aesthetics generally assumes that aesthetic experience is (perhaps necessarily) structured by a “subject/object” dichotomy. I argue that there exists a robust racial critique of this model of aesthetic experience, one found in the work of under-examined (within philosophy) writers on art and Blackness such as Adrian Piper, Fred Moten, and Ashton T.
Crawley. In this paper, I draw out two specific modes of critique - the objectivizing concern and the subjectivizing concern - that articulate the ways in which the subject/object model is bound up in projects of racialization and antiBlackness.

Resist. Persist. Simone de Beauvoir’s Aesthetics of Creativity

Peg Brand Weiser (Arizona; Indiana University Purdue University - Indianapolis)
July 8, 2020

Originally scheduled for the ASA Pacific program, March 20

Abstract: How free—in terms of aesthetic, ethical, and political options—is an artist to create? What might cause an artist to self-censor her creativity in light of conflicting notions of freedom? I look to the existentialist writing of twentieth century novelist and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir for a model of the role of freedom within the realm of artistic creativity that enables an artist to “face the truth” of injustice and oppression that can be adopted within contemporary “Resistance” movements worldwide. Two examples of controversial artists in the U.S. include Joel Peter-Witkin and Illma Gore.

Adrian Piper and the Value of Political Art

James Harold (Mount Holyoke College);
July 14, 2020

Originally scheduled for the ASA Pacific program, March 20

Commentator: Rossen Ventzislavov
(Woodbury University)

Abstract: This paper discusses and evaluates Piper’s arguments about the value of certain kinds of political art. It begins by setting out Piper’s arguments and illustrating them with a discussion of one of Piper’s own artworks, and situating her views in the existentialist tradition. Second, it critically evaluates Piper’s arguments, and raises some doubts about whether they succeed. Piper has two main arguments for the value of political art. First, she argues that art has the power to dislodge morally dangerous ideologies by undermining the cognitive mechanisms that prop them up. Second, she argues that “unconventional” artworks can disrupt stable social norms that serve to perpetuate inequality. Some norms benefit certain social groups while harming others; unconventional political art can destabilize those norms. The first of these mechanisms works by changing the psychology of individuals, the second by changing the status of norms in society. The paper then turns to a problem that Piper notices with one of her own artworks, Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems (1980). After the first exhibition of this work, Piper concluded that it did not have the intended political effect on audiences. If the value of political art lies at least partly in its ability to actually promote self-examination, then a work of art that fails to secure this aim seems to be less valuable as an artwork. The paper concludes that there are a pair of tensions in Piper’s aesthetic theory: first, a tension between Piper’s stated aims for political art, and the possibility that such works might not achieve these aims; and second, a tension between the qualities that a work needs to achieve its political aims and the qualities that it needs to achieve greatness as art.

(University of Auckland)
July 23, 2020

Chair: Stephen Davies (University of Auckland)

Commentators:
- Derek Matravers (Open University), “Stecker on the Aesthetic and the Artistic”
- Julianne Chung (York University), “Stecker on Interacting Values in Art”
- Tom Leddy (San Jose State University), “Talking as Walk with Bob”

Author’s response: Robert Stecker (Central Michigan University)

Abstract: This book is about the universal human need to aesthetically experience the world around us. To this end, it examines three appreciative contexts where aesthetic value plays a central role: art, nature, and the everyday. The book concludes by asking: what is the place of the aesthetic in a good life? An equally important theme explores the way the aesthetic interacts with other values—broadly moral, cognitive, and functional ones. No important appreciative practice is completely centered on a single value and such practices can only be fully understood in terms of a plurality of intersecting values. Complementing the study of aesthetic appreciation are: (1) An analysis of the cognitive and ethical value of art; (2) an attempt to answer fundamental questions in environmental aesthetics, and an investigation of the interface between environmental ethics and aesthetics; and (3) an examination of the extent to which the aesthetic value of everyday artifacts derives from their basic practical functions. The book devotes special attention to art as an appreciative context because it is an especially rich arena where different values interact. Artistic value is complex and pluralistic, a value composed of other values. Aesthetic value is among these, but so are ethical, cognitive, and art-historical values.

Hair Straightening in the Hispanic Caribbean Race, Commodification, Neurosis, and Passing Mestizidad

Kimberly Aimée Alvarado (IDSVA)
July 28

Originally scheduled for the ASA Eastern program, April 17

Abstract: The signifier “straight hair” within the Hispanic Caribbean community can be interpreted through the lenses of four inventions: the invention of race, the invention of a fetish-commodity, the invention of a neurosis, and the invention of passing mestizidad. The artworks of Firelei Baez, Ellen Gallagher, and Lorna Simpson depict ways in which different forms of hair wear and modification have been utilized in order to contend with the phenomenon of pelo malo or “bad hair.” Contextualizing the artwork of these three contemporary artists within Kantian theories of race, Fanonian psychological theories of the psycho-affective predicament of colonized people, and Marxist theories of the political economy of customs, contributes to an understanding of the origins of inferiority complexes, concomitant obsessive neuroses, and social biases experienced by Hispanic Caribbean and Afro-ethnicities with African, or “problematic” hair.

Panel on Josh Robinson’s Adorno’s Poetics of Form (SUNY Press 2018), August 13

Commentators:
- Lillian Hingley (University of Oxford)
- Robert Ryan (University of Illinois at Chicago)
**Author’s response: Josh Robinson** (Cardiff University)

**Abstract:** Adorno’s *Poetics of Form* is the first book-length examination of the elusive deployment of the concept of form in Adorno’s writings on art and literature, and the first monograph to offer a comprehensive account of the relation of these writings to his broader philosophical project. It examines form within the constellation of concepts that exist around it, considering how it appears when seen in conjunction with and in opposition to content, expression, genre, and material. Illuminated from these angles, form is revealed as the site of a complex web of dynamic conceptual interactions. The book thus offers a resolution to a problem in Adorno’s work that has remained unsolved for several decades, and in doing so sets out the consequences of Adorno’s poetics for literary and critical theory today.

We will hear critical comments on the book from Lillian Hingley and Robert Ryan, a response by the author, followed by open discussion—this is likely to touch on questions such as those of aesthetic, literary and poetic form, the concepts of aesthetics, the relationship between aesthetics and poetics, Marxist and Marxian aesthetics, and the relationship between art and society.

**Rutgers University Summer Institute for Diversity in Philosophy**

July 24, 2020

On Friday, July 24th, I participated in the Rutgers University Summer Institute for Diversity in Philosophy. My role was both as a presenter and as a representative of the American Society for Aesthetics. My presentation was allotted 30 minutes to be followed by an hour of Q&A with the SIDP participants. As near as I can recall there were about 20-30 people participating in the Zoom presentation. The title of my presentation was “The Aesthetics of Actor-Character Race Matching in Film Fictions” and was accompanied by a reading of mine by the same name. The focus of my talk was the aesthetic analysis of the phenomenon of the race of the actor not matching the race of the character they portray in the film fiction. I provided them several examples of this both old and new: Katherine Hepburn as Jade in *Dragon Seed* (1942), Charlton Heston as Ramon Vargas in *Touch of Evil* (1958), Chuck Connors as Geronimo in *Geronimo* (1962), Fisher Stevens as Ben Jabityua in *Short Circuit* (1986), Kathy Bates as Alaskan Mother in *North* (1994), Emma Stone as Allison Ng in *Aloha* (2015). The thrust of my talk was that what’s wrong with Race-Mismatching aesthetically is primarily, if not exclusively, an epistemic concern. As such, as long as a Race-Mismatching case could solve for its epistemic worries whilst remaining a Race-Mismatch, then it would be aesthetically equivalent to an otherwise identical Race Matching case, at least qua film fiction. After the talk, the participants asked lots of good, involved questions. I very much enjoyed my time at Rutgers SIDP. Thanks also to Alex Guerrero, Mercedes Diaz, and Derrick Darby.

Christy Mag Uidhir

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**Help Wanted!**

As a small society, the ASA relies heavily on volunteers to carry out its mission. We are very grateful for the volunteer service of our Trustees, program committees, divisional meeting organizers, prize review committees, the leadership of the FCC and the Diversity Committee, and many more. If you are interested in being considered for appointment to any of these activities, please contact the secretary-treasurer and you will be routed to the proper person.

A special need: Organizers for the Divisional meetings

If you have attended any of the ASA divisional meetings in recent years, please consider volunteering to co-organize a future meeting. We are concerned that this work is falling too heavily on very junior members and we need more mid-career and senior members to step up to help. Organizers without institutional travel support are eligible for the Irene H. Chayes Travel funds the ASA provides to each Division, and registration fees are comped for organizers. For the Eastern and Pacific meetings, you will be asked to rotate through as a co-organizer for two years so responsibilities are staggered and we have continuity in planning the meeting. Please contact the current organizer of the division you attend to volunteer.

Alternatively, contact <secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org>
Newsletter’s Final Print Edition

Knowing this is the final printed issue of the Newsletter is bittersweet.

Although the days of paper and ink are winding to a close, we look forward to the new possibilities of a wholly online Newsletter, which we hope will continue to serve the ASA community’s interests.

On behalf of the Newsletter’s current and previous editors, we’d like to thank our readers and contributors for supporting the print publication of the Newsletter three times a year.

We’d also like to extend a special thank you to Jason Zibbell and all of the folks at The Print Shop of Savannah for their peerless service over the years. We’re sorry to go, and we wish you all the best.

Shelby Moser & Michel-Antoine Xhignesse
Planning Ahead? ASA Meetings and Co-Sponsored Conferences

ASA Divisional Meetings

ASA Southern Division: Virtual Workshop: September 17-18, 2020

ASA Pacific Division: Berkeley City Club, Berkeley, CA, March 19-20, 2021

ASA Eastern Division: Doubletree on Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, April 16-17, 2021

ASA Rocky Mountain Division: Drury Plaza Hotel, Santa Fe, NM, July 16-18, 2021

ASA Annual Meetings

2020: Virtual Annual Meeting, November 9-14, 2020

2021: Hyatt Regency, Montréal, November 17-20, 2021

2022: Embassy Suites by Hilton, Portland, OR, November 16-19, 2022

2023: Hilton Crystal City, Washington, DC, November 15-18, 2023

ASA Co-Sponsored Conferences and Workshops

All are open to the public

Virtual Conference: Art, Desire, and God: Phenomenological Perspectives
Notre Dame University, October 2-3, 2020

Virtual Workshop: The Philosophy of Games, October 24-25, 2020

Salish Sea Aesthetics Workshop II: Victoria, BC, November 12-14, 2021

For the complete schedule and more information for all ASA meetings and co-sponsored conferences, see the ASA Website. At the bottom of each page, look for “meetings” and click “more.”
ASA Opportunities in 2021

The American Society for Aesthetics is pleased to welcome submissions for ASA opportunities in 2020 and beyond.

**Dissertation Fellowship**
Deadline: January 1, 2021
<https://aesthetics-online.site-ym.com/page/dissfellowships>

**Irene H. Chayes New Voices Awards**
Deadline: March 1, 2021
<https://aesthetics-online.site-ym.com/page/chayesprize>

**2021 John Fisher Memorial Prize**
Deadline: January 15, 2021
<https://aesthetics-online.org/page/fisherprize>

**Outstanding Monograph Prize**
Deadline: February 1, 2021
<https://aesthetics-online.site-ym.com/page/MonographPrize>

**Selma Jeanne Cohen Prize in Dance Aesthetics**
Deadline: May 1, 2021
<https://aesthetics-online.org/page/CohenPrize>

**Somaesthetics Research Prize**
Deadline: May 1, 2021
<https://aesthetics-online.org/resource/resmgr/files/calls/Somaesthetics_Announcement_a.pdf>

**Arthur Danto/American Society for Aesthetics Prize**
Deadline: May 31, 2021
<https://aesthetics-online.org/page/DantoPrize>

For complete guidelines: ASA website → News → Grants and Prizes
ASA Newsletter
EDITED BY
Shelby Moser
&
Michel-Antoine Xhignesse
ISSN 1089-1668

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ASA, c/o Julie Van Camp, 1550 Larimer St. #644, Denver, CO 80202-1602 Tel. 562-331-4424;
email: <asa@aesthetics-online.org> or <secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org>.

Send calls for papers, event announcements, conference reports, and other items of interest to:
Shelby Moser, Department of Philosophy, Azusa Pacific University, 901 E Alosta Ave, Azusa, CA 91702. <shelby.moser@gmail.com>
or
Michel-Antoine Xhignesse, Department of Philosophy, Capilano University, 2055 Purcell Way, FIR 404, North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V7J 3H5. <michelxhignesse@capilanou.ca>

Deadlines: December 1, April 15, August 1
Mail to: The American Society for Aesthetics - c/o J. Van Camp  
1550 Larimer St. #644 - Denver, CO 80202-1602  
POSTMARK DEADLINE: November 1, 2020

NAME _______________________________________________________________
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Membership Application/Renewal: THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR AESTHETICS

Regular rates effective as of 1/1/2021; Green rates effective as of 10/1/2020

Member Name: ____________________________

Department: ________________________________

University: ________________________________

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<th>Dues and Contributions</th>
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<td>___ $ 100 (North America)</td>
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<td>John Fisher Memorial Prize Fund $__________</td>
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<td>Three Years:</td>
<td>Somaesthetics Research Fund $__________</td>
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<td>___ $ 250 (North America)</td>
<td>International Scholars’ Assistance Fund $__________</td>
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<td><strong>Emeritus Membership</strong></td>
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<td>The ASA membership year is January 1 – December 31 of each calendar year. We regret that it is not possible for us to pro-rate memberships for partial years and encourage you to renew your membership in December for the following year or January for the current year. New members joining in the last three months of the year will be extended through 12/31 of the following year.</td>
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<td><em>Must send proof of current student status</em></td>
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<td><strong>Unemployed-1 Year</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Joint Membership-1 year</strong></td>
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<td>The unemployed rate is available to persons with no full-time academic or professional employment currently or expected for the next year.</td>
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