



THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR AESTHETICS:
AN ASSOCIATION FOR AESTHETICS,
CRITICISM, AND THEORY OF THE ARTS
VOLUME 45 NUMBER 2 SUMMER 2025

THE JOURNAL OF AESTHETICS

- 2 Is Beauty Subjective?
James Shelley
6 News from the National
Office
7 Aesthetics News
7 Calls for Papers
10 Active Aestheticians

aesthetics-online.org

Is Beauty Subjective?

James Shelley | Auburn University

My students – undergraduates with little background in philosophy and less in aesthetics – think that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. They think everyone knows this, that it's made obvious by the fact that not everyone likes the same thing. Sometimes they offer these facts to me at the beginning of the semester, as a reason, seemingly, not to have to engage with course material, or as a way of avoiding aesthetic inquiry altogether. I wrote this piece with them in mind, not so much to settle the matter or to convince them that they're wrong, but to suggest that to have reason not to do aesthetics will require doing some pretty serious aesthetics. I teach it as needed and have had good results. My students seem to like it.

Is beauty subjective?

The answer to this question depends on what you mean by "subjective," and there are lots of things you might mean.

Suppose you mean that beauty is subjective in the sense conveyed by the proverb "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Let's call this the eye-of-the-beholder sense. According to it, the subject's beholding something to be beautiful makes it so. If Maya beholds the Taj Mahal to be beautiful, then it is, at least to her.

That eye-of-the beholder subjectivism has the backing of a proverb shows how appealing it is. But it doesn't show that it's true. For that we need an argument. The argument eye-of-the beholder subjectivists tend to reach for is a version of the argument from aesthetic disagreement. In its simplest form this argument holds that beauty must be in the eye of the beholder because people disagree about what is beautiful.

But this argument, as it stands, faces three problems.

The first is that if disagreement about beauty counts in favor of eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism, then agreement about beauty counts against it. And people sometimes do agree. Take the Taj Mahal, Delicate Arch, the Great Mosque of Djenné, Mount Fuji, Speyer Cathedral, or Havasu Falls. It's not often you hear people arguing over their beauty. To the degree the eye-of-the-beholder subjectivist foregrounds aesthetic disagreement and backgrounds aesthetic agreement, she commits the fallacy of cherry-picking the evidence. She cites only the evidence that supports her conclusion, in other words, and overlooks the rest. A better argument for eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism would cite the full mix of aesthetic disagreement and agreement and show that eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism best explains that mix.¹ But it seems unlikely the eye-of-the-beholder subjectivist can deliver on that argument, for reasons we're coming to.

If the first problem is that the eye-of-the-beholder subjectivist cherry-picks the evidence, the second is that even the evidence she cherry-picks—disagreement about beauty—doesn't support her position.

Disagreement does not, generally speaking, support subjectivism. Consider the case of Planet Nine, a planet held to be several times the size of Earth that allegedly orbits the Sun at the outer reaches of the solar system. Some astronomers think Planet Nine exists and others don't. But no one thinks that the existence of Planet Nine is subjective.²

Against this the eye-of-the-beholder subjectivist might point out that scientific disagreement is one thing and aesthetic disagreement another. Scientists have well-known ways of settling their disputes, but there are no known ways of settling aesthetic disputes, which is why engaging in them is pointless, as yet another well-known proverb tells us.

But are aesthetic disputes pointless? I have a hard time believing they are if only because I have lost so many. How do you lose an aesthetic dispute? Suppose Joan and Maya disagree about the middle movement of Beethoven's late A minor quartet. Joan finds it too long, too slow, too unmelodic, and way too boring to be beautiful. Maya concedes that the piece's beauty is not easy to hear, but insists it's there to be heard in the way its glacial pace suggests the suspension of time, in its willingness, for long stretches, to merely hint at melody before suddenly, unambiguously, and thrillingly breaking into it. If Joan is willing to give the piece another listen, or two, or three, she might begin to hear what Maya hears. If she does, she will have lost the dispute, though perhaps by gaining something greater.

If the second problem is that disagreement about beauty doesn't support eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism, the third is that disagreement about beauty actually undercuts it. Consider again the dispute between Joan and Maya. Each initially takes herself to be in disagreement with the other. But they can be in disagreement only if there is some common thing they disagree about and only if at least one of them is wrong about that thing. Now suppose eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism is true. What do Joan and Maya disagree about and who is wrong? No one is wrong, since Maya beholds the piece to be beautiful, which to her it is, whereas Joan doesn't behold it to be beautiful, which to her it isn't. Nor is there anything they disagree about, since Maya's beholding the piece to be beautiful is consistent with Joan's beholding it not to be. If eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism is true, aesthetic disagreement turns out to be impossible. But aesthetic disagreement is not only possible but common. So eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism isn't true.³

If this is right, the eye-of-the-beholder subjectivist must choose one of two paths.

One is to stick to her position even if this means denying the existence of aesthetic disagreement. If Joan and Maya take themselves to be disagreeing about beauty, they are mistaken. The challenge is to explain how Joan and Maya could be mistaken about this.

The other path is to affirm the reality of aesthetic disagreement even if this means giving up on her eye-of-the-beholder subjectivism. If Joan and Maya really do disagree about beauty, there must be some sense in which beauty exists or fails to exist independently of what either of them beholds. Otherwise they would have nothing to disagree about. But to say that there is some sense in which beauty exists or fails to exist independently of what beholders behold is to say that there is some sense in which it is objective.

What sense is that? Beauty is unlikely to be objective in the absolute sense in which the existence or non-existence of Planet Nine is. More likely it is objective in some more moderate sense, a sense consistent with its also being subjective in some sense, a sense more moderate than the eye-of-the-beholder sense. If that's right, maybe the right question is not "Is beauty subjective?" or "Is beauty objective?" but "How is it both?"

James Shelley is a professor of philosophy at Auburn University and the current president of the ASA.

Endnote:

1. I take this response to the argument from aesthetic disagreement to be implicit in Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste." See David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Essays, Moral, Political, Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985).
2. I'm influenced here by James and Stuart Rachels, who make a parallel point about moral disagreement. See their *Elements for Moral Philosophy*, Seventh Edition (McGraw-Hill, 2012) pp. 17-19, for a similar treatment of the argument from moral disagreement.
3. Here again I'm influenced by James and Stuart Rachels, who argue, along parallel lines, that moral disagreement is inconsistent with certain versions of moral subjectivism. See *Elements*, pp. 34-35.



ASA MEETINGS IN 2025

The American Society for Aesthetics is pleased to announce ASA meetings in 2025.

ASA MEETINGS

CONFERENCE ON PHILOSOPHY OF STREET ART

Atlanta, GA, October 9-10, 2025

[Click Here for Details](#)

ASA 83RD ANNUAL MEETING

Baltimore, MD, October 22-25, 2025

[Click Here for Details](#)

SOUTHWESTERN GRADUATE AESTHETICS CONFERENCE

Tucson, AZ, November 22-23, 2025

[Click Here for Details](#)

For the most up-to-date information on all ASA meetings and co-sponsored conferences, look at the bottom of any page on our web site for "Meetings." Click "more" to see the complete list.

<https://aesthetics-online.org>

RENEW YOUR ASA MEMBERSHIP NOW!

Renew your membership online [HERE](#)

- Print members get print copies of JAAC (four per year).
- All members get immediate access to the latest issues of JAAC via the publisher's web site.
- ASA members receive a substantial discount in registration fees for the ASA Annual Meeting.
- ASA members receive a 20% discount on all Oxford University Press hardcover titles.
- Student members are eligible for travel support to the annual meeting if they have a paper accepted.
- Only ASA members are eligible for the fellowships, prizes, travel grants and other opportunities.
- Only ASA members can serve as editors, trustees, or officers of the Society and vote in elections.
- Only ASA members may present at the annual and divisional meetings.

ASA OPPORTUNITIES IN 2026

ASA PRIZES AND FELLOWSHIPS

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS:

Submission deadline: January 10, 2026

[Click Here for Details](#)

OUTSTANDING MONOGRAPH PRIZE:

Submission deadline: February 1, 2026

[Click Here for Details](#)

FEMINIST AESTHETICS RESEARCH PRIZE:

Submission deadline: February 1, 2026

[Click Here for Details](#)

IRENE H. CHAYES NEW VOICES AWARDS (2):

Submission deadline: March 1, 2026

[Click Here for Details](#)

LEGAL AESTHETICS PRIZE:

Submission Deadline: March 1, 2026

[Click Here for Details](#)

SELMA JEANNE COHEN PRIZE IN DANCE AESTHETICS:

Submission deadline: March 1, 2026

[Click Here for Details](#)

OGA PO'GEH ESSAY PRIZE (ROCKY MOUNTAIN DIVISION):

Submission deadline: March 15, 2026

[Click Here for Details](#)

ASA GRANTS

ASA GRANTS:

Proposals accepted at any time

[Click Here for Details](#)

ASA STUDENT CONFERENCES:

Proposals accepted at any time

[Click Here for Details](#)



Murray Smith Announced as 2025 Wollheim Speaker

Murray Smith will be the Richard Wollheim Lecturer at the American Society for Aesthetics Annual Meeting in Baltimore October 22-25, 2025.

Professor Smith is Professor of Philosophy, Art, and Film, and Director of the Aesthetics Research Centre at University of Kent. He was a Leverhulme Research Fellow (2005-06), a Laurence E. Rockefeller Fellow at Princeton University's Centre for Human Values (2017-18), and President of the Society for Cognitive Studies of the Moving Image (2014-17).

He is a member of the editorial boards of the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, *Series*, and *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*. He works primarily in film theory broadly, but especially the 'philosophy of film' – film theory informed by analytic philosophy – and classical film theory; cognitive and evolutionary approaches to cinema, and to art in general; empirical and experimental approaches to the arts.

For more information about Professor Wollheim, [click here](#).

NEWS

FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE

GREETINGS FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE,

As fall arrives and the new academic year begins, the ASA looks forward to hosting its Annual Meeting, which will commence for the 83rd time in Baltimore, Maryland at the [Lord Baltimore Hotel](#) October 22-25, 2025.

This yearly gathering is always a special occasion for the society and its members. It is a regular opportunity for those who love the arts, philosophy, and the many aesthetic sides of life to enjoy being in community. It is also an occasion for attendees to present new work, revisit well-known ideas, discuss the future of the society, and forge long-lasting relationships. The ASA's Annual Meeting, thereby, helps sustain the vibrance of the sub-discipline of philosophy described broadly as "aesthetics," in accordance with [our organizational mission](#).

In addition to its regular program of papers and panels, this year's meeting features several special events, including three receptions, a Welcoming Luncheon, the Feminist Caucus Committee Lunch, and a catered business meeting open to all registrants. This year, the ASA also highlights two honored speakers: [Murray Smith](#) (University of Kent) and [Michael Lamason](#) (Executive Director and a founder of the Black Cherry Puppet Theater). Smith will give the [Richard Wollheim Lecture](#) on Thursday, October 23, while Lamason will share his expertise in puppetry at the [Arthur C. Danto Memorial Lecture](#) on Friday, October 24. For more information about these events and to see the most updated

version of the meeting program, please visit the ASA [83rd Annual Meeting](#) webpage.

At the Annual Meeting, we also honor several prize recipients who, in addition to receiving monetary recognition, will present their award-winning work on the main program. Many congratulations to **Joseph Kassman-Tod** (California State University Fullerton), this year's recipient of the [John Fisher Memorial Prize](#) for his paper entitled "Towards Ideas: A Kantian Aesthetic Virtue." Congratulations, too, to **Juan Carlos Gonzalez** (Colorado College) and **Mary Gregg** (Yonsei University, SUNY Korea) for being the 2025 winners of the [Irene H. Chayes New Voices Award](#). And kudos to **Jacob Blitz** (University of Arizona) for being awarded this year's Outstanding Student Paper Prize. Remember to keep your eyes open for the sessions in which their papers will be presented!

As with the four divisional meetings hosted by the ASA each year, the Annual Meeting is organized by dedicated volunteers from the society who curate the program and work together for twelve months preceding the event to ensure the meeting is a success. Special appreciation for the 83rd Annual Meeting is due to this year's co-chairs, **Adriana Clavel-Vázquez** (Tilburg University) and **Jonathan Weinberg** (University of Arizona), who have assembled a program with 54 original papers, 7 panels, and 2 Author-meets-Critics sessions that represents the wide range of interests and philosophical approaches characteristic of contemporary aesthetics. Additional thanks is owed to their program committee members – **Sondra Bacharach**, **Sergio Gallegos**, **Shen-yi Liao**,

Sheila Lintott, **Derek Matravers**, **Shelby Moser**, **Jeremy Page**, and **Angela Sun** – who helped review an extremely competitive pool of worthy paper and panel submissions this past spring.

At the time of this publication, the organizers are still looking to fill several chair slots. If you see a "TBA" opportunity listed on the current [ASA 83rd Annual Meeting](#) program in a session that interests you, please contact the meeting co-chairs at 83rdannualmeeting@gmail.com to express your desire to serve in this important roles.

This exciting opportunity to convene as a society is less than two months away, so we remind readers to register for the meeting as soon as possible if you are participating on the program as a presenter, commentator, or chair. The ASA's guaranteed room rate at the Lord Baltimore hotel will be available only until **September 27, 2025 or the room block has sold out** (whichever comes first). In the next few weeks, please ensure your membership in the society is up to date, then log in as a member to register for the meeting and any special events you would like to attend. You will receive the hotel booking code in a confirmation email you will be sent after you have registered for the meeting.

The National Office is also pleased to make two new announcements about future Annual Meetings. In 2026, the 84th Annual Meeting will be held November 18-21 in Salt Lake City, Utah at the [Hilton Salt Lake City Center hotel](#). We are delighted to welcome **Shelby Moser** (University of Utah) as the program chair for this event and thank her in advance for volunteering to organize next year's meeting.

We are also happy to announce that in 2027 the 85th Annual Meeting will commence at the [Omni Providence hotel](#) in Providence, Rhode Island October 20-23. Many thanks to those society members who, in recent months, have helped the National Office select and secure this lovely location.

If you are interested in volunteering to help organize or participate on the program committee of the 2027 Annual Meeting, please contact the National Office at secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org to let us know you would like to contribute your talents to this event.

We wish everyone a productive start to fall and look forward to seeing many of you in Baltimore in October.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee M. Conroy
Secretary-Treasurer and Executive
Director
(2025-2030)

Aesthetics News

How Loving Flowers Can Save the Planet

Beauty can feel like a luxury in a difficult world. But Britain's Chelsea Flower Show is proof that it is important, too.

Sonia Sedivy ASA trustee and professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto Scarborough shows us how new ecologically-focused gardening techniques can both help combat climate change and inspire us to do so with their beauty.

Link to the article from The Globe and Mail (with photos from the Chelsea Flower Show) [HERE](#).

Sonia Sedivy, "How Loving Flowers Can Save the Planet", *The Globe and Mail* (July 12, 2025).

Nominees for Trustee

The American Society for Aesthetics announces an election for three new trustees in December 2025. As provided in the ASA By-laws, Article VII, the current Board of Trustees has nominated six ASA members to stand for election as trustee. The trustees

elected will serve for three-year terms (February 1, 2026 - January 31, 2029). Bios of the nominees will be available in the December 2025 edition of the ASA Newsletter, on the ASA Web site, and in a bulk email announcement sent to all ASA members in late fall.

Nominees for Trustee

- Antony Aumann
(Northern Michigan University)
- Garry Hagberg (Bard)
- Shelby Moser (University of Utah)
- Elisabeth Schellekens
(Uppsala Universitet)
- Mary Beth Willard
(Weber State University)
- Nicholas Wiltsher
(University of St. Andrews)

Additional nominations can be made by any eight 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 10, 2025). These can be sent by e-mail (secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org) or through the US Mail (American Society for Aesthetics, c/o Renee M. Conroy, 32650 State Route 20, Ste B-102, PMB 30, Oak Harbor, WA 98277).

Voting will be conducted on the ASA web site from December 1-31, 2025, with an announcement of winners in early January. All members of ASA in 2025 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, 2025, and will be sent a mail-in ballot; notification should be sent to the ASA mailing address, above. Michalle Gal, Brandon Polite, and Sonia Sedivy will complete their terms as trustees on January 31, 2026. 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.

Calls for Papers

CFP for Special Issue of JAAC: "AI and Philosophy of the Arts."

Full Paper Submission Deadline:

October 1, 2025

Notification of Acceptance:

November 15, 2025

Publication Date: Spring 2026

I. Introduction and Rationale

Recent advances in the use of generative AI in the production, study, explanation, and even criticism of the arts have challenged long-standing philosophical conceptions of authorship, aesthetic experience, and the nature of creativity itself. As the penetration of AI into our aesthetic pursuits has increasingly gained in sophistication and opacity, the need for rigorous philosophical analysis of these developments has grown correspondingly urgent. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* has published individual articles on these themes over the past few years, but a broader overview, albeit no doubt only a snapshot of the current moment, seems timely.

This special issue aims to bring together leading theorists of the arts—understood broadly to include design, fashion, architecture, cuisine, and more—to explore questions such as: Can AI genuinely create art, or is it merely a tool for human creativity? How does AI-generated art challenge traditional theories of artistic intention and interpretation? What ethical and epistemological considerations arise from the use of AI in artistic production and reception? Does AI generated art constitute a genre of its own? And, what is the relation between such contemporary concerns and those of much earlier historical moments in which new technologies in the arts, such as photography, came to prominence?

II. Themes and Topics

We invite submissions on a range of topics related to AI and aesthetics, including but not limited to:

The Nature of AI-Generated Art: Philosophical analyses of whether AI can be considered an artist, and if so, in what sense.

Aesthetic Experience and AI: How does AI-generated art affect aesthetic perception, artistic appreciation, categorization, and our expectations of art?

Creativity, Intentionality, and Machine Learning: Can AI exhibit genuine creativity, and how does generative AI relate to human artistic processes?

Ethical and Political Dimensions: The implications of AI-generated art for copyright, artistic labor, and cultural institutions; the philosophical significance of AI-generated fakes, forgeries, derivative works, and “slop”.

AI and the Philosophy of Music, Literature, and Visual Arts: The philosophical implications of how AI is reshaping the training and practice of traditional artistic disciplines.

Recommendation and Content Moderation Algorithms: Philosophical implications of major advances in commercial technologies of media information filtering (suggestions of “you might also like”) and content blocking.

Aesthetic Judgment and Machine Learning: Can AI systems evaluate beauty, meaning, or artistic value?

Historical Perspectives on Computational Creativity: Philosophical and historical insights into algorithmic and generative art.

III. Submission Guidelines and Timeline

We welcome original philosophically sophisticated research articles, review essays, and interdisciplinary contributions that engage with these themes.

Submissions, which may be singly or jointly authored, should be between 3,000 and 8,000 words. They should be concise, direct, and offer an explicit statement of their perspective or argument. Submissions should be prepared according to the journal’s guidelines and will undergo a standard peer-review process.

Please submit manuscripts through the Scholar One system at:

<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jaac>

When you submit your manuscript, please select “Special Issue” from the menu of submission types.

Questions? Please write to Sandra Shapshay at sandyshapshay@gmail.com or Jonathan Gilmore at jgilmore@gc.cuny.edu

CFP for Pacific ASA

Event Date: March 6-7, 2026

Location: Graduate Hotel, Berkeley, CA

Full Paper Submission Deadline: November 1, 2025

Submit to: Eliya Cohen, at asapacific2026@gmail.com

The ASA Pacific Division invites excellent paper and panel submissions on any topic in aesthetics and the philosophy of art. We hope to assemble a vibrant program of diverse topics and speakers, and we especially encourage submissions from students, from early career philosophers, and from members of historically underrepresented groups.

Session Format

All accepted papers will be presented in a workshop format. Participants will commit to reading all accepted papers prior to the session. Authors will have five minutes to introduce their paper. Commentators will then have ten minutes. The remainder of the session will be allotted for audience questions.

There are no concurrent sessions, which promotes engaged participation and in-depth discussion of all accepted papers

and panels. You may submit a paper or participate in a panel, but not both. All presentations and commentaries must be delivered in person at the meeting.

Submission Details

Paper submissions should be no longer than 3,000 words, prepared for anonymous review, and accompanied by anonymized abstracts of no more than 300 words. Panels, author-meets-critics sessions, and other special sessions are not part of the pre-read sessions. Proposals should include a brief description of the topic or theme, the names and affiliations of all participants, and long abstracts of 400-500 words for all papers.

Please send submissions in PDF or Word format to the 2026 Program Chair, Eliya Cohen, at asapacific2026@gmail.com. Please also use this address to contact the program chair if you have any questions or if you would like to volunteer to comment on a paper or chair a session.

\$1,000 in total funds will be available for Irene H. Chayes Travel grants from the American Society for Aesthetics for presenters who have no other access to travel support. To apply, please note in your submission email that you wish to be considered and include an estimate of your travel costs. Please do not include this information in your paper or panel proposal.

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 ASA within 30 days of the conference. Everyone must also register for the meeting. This applies to presenters, panelists, commentators, and chairs.

CFP for Eastern ASA

Date: April 10-11, 2026

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton Center City, Philadelphia, PA

Full Paper Submission Deadline:

November 15, 2025

Submit to: Henry John
Pratt and Antony Aumann, at
esa2026@gmail.com

The ASA Eastern Division invites paper and panel submissions on any topic in aesthetics and the philosophy of art. We especially encourage submissions from graduate students and early career philosophers.

The Katharine Everett Gilbert Memorial Lecture will be given by Elisabeth Camp (Rutgers University). The program will also include the Beardsley Lecture, given by C. Thi Nguyen (University of Utah), sponsored by the Department of Philosophy at Temple University.

Submission Details

Paper submissions should be no longer than 3000 words, prepared for anonymous review, and accompanied by anonymized abstracts of no more than 300 words. 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 participants, and 300-word abstracts for all papers.

You may submit a paper or participate in a panel, but not both. All presentations and commentaries are expected to be delivered in person at the meeting.

Please send submissions in PDF or Word format to the 2026 Program Co-Chairs, Henry John Pratt and Antony Aumann, at esa2026@gmail.com. Please also use this address to contact the program co-chairs if you have any questions, or if you would like to volunteer to comment on a paper or to chair a session.

A total of \$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, please note in your submission email that you wish to be considered and include an estimate of your travel costs. Please do not include this information in your paper or panel proposal.

ASA Policies

Papers presented at the Eastern ASA cannot have been given, or be scheduled to be given, at any other ASA divisional meetings, or at past Annual meetings of the ASA. 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 ASA. Submissions from non-members are welcome, but if you are accepted for the program, you must join ASA within 30 days. Everyone must also register for the meeting. This applies to presenters, panelists, commentators, and chairs.

CFP for Special Volume of *Contemporary Aesthetics*: "Poverty and Aesthetics"

Full Paper Submission Deadline:

December 1, 2025

Submit to: Guest Editor: Dr.
Valery Vino, at valery.arrows@gmail.com

Submission Guidelines: For standard journal essays, please consult submission guidelines for *Contemporary Aesthetics* at <https://contempaesthetics.org/submissions/>.

To face one of the gravest perennial issues, it is necessary to evaluate the roots, modalities, and proportions of poverty experienced by many people in their everyday lives. To take one scholarly example, the Springer book series *Philosophy and Poverty* facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and uncovers the depth and seriousness of the problems at hand. The nexus between aesthetics and poverty, on the other hand, may seem more contentious. However, following a number of recent studies [1], it is safe to say that aesthetics today is essential to connect socio-somatic and cosmopolitical dimensions of poverty research. This special volume of *Contemporary Aesthetics* aims to develop a more nuanced and pointed understanding of this lacuna.

Poverty is the mirror image of social conscience. It has been convincingly established by each major contemporary movement in philosophical aesthetics, from everyday and black to social and somaesthetics, that aesthetic engagement with the world and each other leads to a more intimate understanding of the subject matter, which may in turn spur us to action. Now, it is fair to assume that one's attitude to somebody or something striking them as poor and eyesore-like (abandoned, grimy, disorderly, decaying, fetid, decrepit) would be negative, at least nominally. How come? To what extent such a reaction is guided by dominant normative values (that in their turn encourage us to look up to the rich, successful, and famous)? And if indeed one feels uncomfortable/hopeless/afraid, does that necessarily entail the choice to turn a blind eye, or perhaps this experience marks a conflict in one's worldview that can be thereby modified?

Globally, the issue of poverty comes down to the fact that "World's top 1% own more wealth than 95% of humanity" (Oxfam International, 2024), and that "almost 700 million people (8.5 percent of the global population) live in extreme poverty," leaving "44% of the global population" in a state of general poverty ("Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report" 2024). While extreme or absolute poverty, a growing problem worldwide, implies no access to basic things necessary for subsistence, general poverty is a more complex concept, since it:

... measures poverty according to a broader range of commodity consumption typical of a given society. Thus, someone from a richer country might be considered poor if they are without certain commodities, whereas someone from a poorer country might be expected to go without certain commodities. (McClure 2023: 328)

Interestingly, we can find in the history of philosophy a number of great thinkers who espoused a positive modality of poverty. One striking example is Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Zarathustra*: "Blessed be moderate poverty!" This

creed resonates with the likes of Socrates and Kynics, Kamo no Chōmei, Hrohiry Skovoroda, Henry David Thoreau, and, arguably, even Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others. Moderate poverty is tantamount to a simple life, one that is not characterized by privation of basic human needs, on one hand, and that is not driven by the pursuit of comfort, assets, and opulence, on the other.

In light of the above, this special volume is interested in – but not limited to:

- aesthetic literacy/education: poverty and the dilemma of personal choice
- dire/moderate poverty and aesthetics of existence, e.g. architecture (favela, mudhouse, glass mansion) or gastronomy
- frugality and greed as ethico-aesthetic practices
- “poverty traps” and social violence, e.g. the aesthetics of the prison-industrial-complex, public housing, and orphanages
- aesthetics of houselessness/squatting/nomadism
- pragmatism and engagement with the Other, e.g. migrants, refugees; or as a migrant/refugee with natives/residents
- social aesthetics: poverty and criminality
- ecological aesthetics: poverty, health, and climate emergency
- aesthetics of war and destruction, e.g. Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan
- poverty as invention, i.e. indigenous peoples living in harmony with nature having no concept of money/destitution
- the role of art/ist in addressing poverty, e.g. protest art & hip hop

In addition to standard journal essays, the guest editor will entertain other formats, such as a video essay (limited to 2) and a photo essay (also limited to 2 for the issue). For the latter options, please contact the guest editor in advance.

Endnote

[1] See: Julia McClure (2023) “The Aesthetics of Poverty and the Logic of Racial Capitalism.” In *Aesthetic Literacy Vol II: out of mind* (Melbourne/Sydney: mongrel matter): 327-332. Also two papers by Moniza Rissini Ansari: (2022) “Cartographies of Poverty: Rethinking Statistics, Aesthetics, and the Law.” *Society and Space* Vol. 40 (3): 567-85; and (2020) “Aesthetics of Poverty: Visualizing Territories and Populations.” *Evental Aesthetics* Vol. 9 (1): 69-94.

ASA Newsletter

Deadlines: December 1, April 15, or August 1

Send to:

julia.minarik@mail.utoronto.ca or marybethwillard@weber.edu

The ASA Newsletter is looking for book reviews or short articles (1500-2000 word submissions) to run in the newsletter.

Submission can be on any topic in aesthetics or the philosophy of art.

Active Aestheticians

JANE FORSEY, Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Winnipeg, Canada, has a new monograph coming out, published by Bloomsbury Academic. It is called *The Aesthetic Question: Experience, Judgement, Value* and will be available November 27, 2025.

MARK FRANKO, Laura H. Carnell Professor of Dance in the Boyer College of Music at Temple University, has recently been elected to The British Academy (see details [HERE](#)).

SHELBY MOSER has been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor (Lecturer) at the University of Utah in the Division of Games. Shelby started at U of U as Assistant Professor (Lecturer) in Fall 2023, where she teaches philosophy of games and play.

CHARLES PETERSON has been promoted to full Professor of Africana Studies at Oberlin College and Conservatory. Charles is also currently serving the ASA as our National Ombudsperson.

HENRY PRATT has been promoted to full Professor at Marist University, and is enjoying the liberty it affords to philosophize about most disreputable aspects of popular culture.

NICK WILTSHER currently an Associate Professor at Uppsala, has landed a job as a Lecturer at the University of St. Andrews.

Do you have any good news to share? Please email a brief notice of your latest aesthetic achievements to one of our editors julia.minarik@mail.utoronto.ca or marybethwillard@weber.edu for inclusion





ASA Newsletter

EDITED BY
Julia Minarik
&
Mary Beth Willard
ISSN 1089-1668

The *Newsletter* is published three times a year by the American Society for Aesthetics.

For subscription or membership information:

email: <secretary-treasurer@aesthetics-online.org>.

The American Society for Aesthetics, c/o Renee M. Conroy, 32650 State Route 20, Suite B-102, PMB 30, Oak Harbor, WA 98277

Send calls for papers, event announcements, conference reports, and other items of interest to:

Julia Minarik, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto, Jackman Humanities Building, 4th floor
170 St. George Street, Toronto, ON M5R 2M8. <julia.minarik@mail.utoronto.ca>

or

Mary Beth Willard, Department of Political Science and Philosophy,
Weber State University, Ogden, Utah. <marybethwillard@weber.edu>

Newsletter Illustration by Natalie Martin (<https://natmartin.ca/>)

Deadlines: December 1, April 15, August 1