

The American Society for Aesthetics



75th Anniversary

1942-2017

It is a great honor and a privilege to serve as the President of the American Society for Aesthetics in this, our 75th anniversary year. The occasion of this year's national meeting seems a fitting time to recall the contributions of those who've gone before us, from our founders - Thomas Munro, Katharine Gilbert, C.J. Ducasse, and many others - to more recent leaders in the field. It also offers an opportunity to renew our mission of promoting "study, research, discussion, and publication in aesthetics," broadly construed, and to welcome new participants in these endeavors.

-Kathleen M. Higgins

1939: Felix Gratz organizes "First American Congress for Aesthetics" of the "American Society of Aesthetics" in Scranton, PA.



1940-41: Thomas Munro organizes Informal Conferences on the Arts in New York and California under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation.



1942: The American Society for Aesthetics organizes on April 25 at the close of the "Second American Congress for Aesthetics" in Washington, DC.

1943: A draft Constitution for the new Society is prepared by the Executive Council, including the establishment of three divisions. Initial dues are \$3 per year.



1944: First national ASA meeting held in Cleveland, September 11-13, at Cleveland Museum of Art and Western Reserve University, in conjunction with the American Association for the Advancement of Science.



1944: ASA is incorporated under the laws of the state of Ohio as a non-profit corporation, by trustees Thomas Munro, Van Meter Ames, Max Schoen.

We invited former officers of the American Society for Aesthetics to share their thoughts on the Society, both their memories and their hopes for the future. We hope you enjoy their contributions to the celebration!

Arnold Berleant

Greetings, all! I'm sorry that I could not join you in New Orleans for this celebration, but I'm pleased that the ASA is recognizing some of the people who have guided the Society over the past seventy-five years. I have been a member of the ASA for fifty-five of those years and have seen many changes as the Society has reflected changes in scholarship in aesthetics in the U.S.

I was Secretary-Treasurer from 1978 to 1988, succeeding the long-term Secretary-Treasurer, Jim Johnson, and inaugurating the pattern of five-year terms of service renewable once. In 1978 the ASA had about 800 members and 2000 institutional subscribers. The membership was international and broadly interdisciplinary, and our annual meetings were held on colleges and university campuses, which contributed to their easy, uninstitutional tone. The meetings also reflected a wide range of disciplines concerned with aesthetic issues. It would be fascinating to page through the early volumes of the *JAAC* and see what people talked about then.

The tone of the meetings was friendly, informal, and encouraging. Thomas Munro, one of the founders of the ASA, attended regularly. (He was good enough to write a favorable review of my first book.) Monroe Beardsley was another regular. I remember meeting Monroe for the first time while standing behind him in a cafeteria line and engaging in friendly conversation. Other stalwarts from those days included Rudolf Arnheim, Stephen C. Pepper, Milton Nahm, Virgil Aldrich, Douglas Morgan, Melvin Rader, Herbert Schueller (later editor of the *JAAC*), Jerome Stolnitz, and Max Rieser, many names now largely forgotten. Suzanne Langer even showed up at one meeting. In addition to philosophers, there were art historians, musicologists, literary scholars, and psychologists of art. One of the memorable features of those meetings was the Saturday afternoon tours of historic districts and the local art museum, usually guided by a knowledgeable local faculty volunteer. Another feature of those meetings that seems to have been lost was the guest lecture by a well-known artist or notable representative of a discipline embodying aesthetic values. I remember one by art critic Harold Rosenberg of the *New Yorker* and another by Grace Glueck of the *New York Times*, and lectures by the architect Frank Gehry, the composer Iannis Xenakis, and the artist Adrian Piper. The story of the ASA would make a fascinating contribution to American intellectual history.

So much for reminiscences. During the years I was Secretary-Treasurer, I was able to assist in some important developments. One was inaugurating the *ASA Newsletter*, first edited by Selma Jeanne Cohen, who was succeeded by Hilde Hein with the assistance of the irrepressible young scholar, Tom Leddy. We also supported the formation of the Rocky Mountain Division of the ASA and revived the moribund Eastern Division. It is gratifying that all these have continued to flourish. We promoted interdisciplinary participation in the annual meeting as well as in our membership. Of course things continue to change, but I hope the ASA never loses its open, friendly, interdisciplinary tone, and the stimulating variety of its annual meetings.

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1945: The ASA acquires all rights to *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* from Dagobert D. Runes, the original owner, editor, and publisher of the journal. Thomas Munro is the first editor under ASA ownership.



1947: ASA applies to American Council of Learned Societies for membership. President Katharine E. Gilbert cites annual meetings, regional groups in seven cities, the *Journal*, and membership of 448 members.



1947: At the Annual Meeting at the Baltimore Museum of Art, "tea for wives of members of Society," is served on Friday afternoon, with hostesses Mrs. George Boas and Mrs. Lynn D. Poole

Curtis Carter

It would be impossible to begin a reflection culminating with the 75th Anniversary of the American Society for Aesthetics without recalling the vision of its founding President Thomas Munro, a curator of education at the Cleveland Museum in the era of Post-World War I in the late 1930s-early 1940s. It is interesting to note that the support for this project came from a private corporation, instead of government funding as would have been more customary in Europe. The Carnegie Foundation funded three conference led by Munro: one in New York in 1941 and two in 1941 at the Huntington Library in Pasadena and at University of California Berkeley. ¹ Out of these continuing discussions, and a growing need of scholars from a variety of fields (artists, philosophers, psychologists, and others) interested in such discussions and publication on issues clustered around questions in aesthetics, Munro led the efforts resulting in a two- fold plan: to create a permanent organization to enable meetings for discussion and a vehicle for publications in aesthetics. The result was establishment of the American Society for Aesthetics and the acquisition of the publishing entity that became the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.

¹ Rolf Dieter Herrmann, "How a European Views the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*," Summer 1971, 450.

Using these two principal resources, Munro's aims were to enable closer correspondence among people working in aesthetics, to stimulate research, to foster interdisciplinary participation from scholars working in aesthetics in different areas of arts related research and practices. All of these aims centered on a concern for art and especially the theory of art. Although philosophy was included, it was never intended that philosophy be the sole or even the central focus of aesthetics. There was initially afloat the suggestion that aesthetics might become an empirical science, though it was not specified just how aesthetics might function as a science, perhaps apart from its connections to psychology. From the beginning, Munro actively sought the participation of international scholars, particularly Europeans with expertise and interest in aesthetics. This practice would follow from the fact that western theories of art and aesthetics originated in European cultures, including Greek, Renaissance, and Enlightenment theories and later on the Nineteenth century.

Precisely how these aims for a future American Society for Aesthetics, as envisioned by Munro were to be realized, has mainly resided in the ASA Program Committees charged with the selection of topics and presenters, and with the editors of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* who determine its contents. The Board of Trustees, committees, and officers including president, vice president and secretary-treasurer, who also serves as chief administrator for the Society, provide overall governance and management of the Society's activities. Given that the Society continues to thrive and serve the main tenets of its mission today, is a tribute to the vision of its founders and to those charged with carrying out its mission during its first 75 years.

II. Personal Reflection

My first encounter with the American Society for Aesthetics took place when I attended the Annual Meeting held at the University of Virginia in 1969. Since then ASA has been an important part of my professional development, and a force of enrichment. Perhaps the greatest benefit has been

friendships and contacts with so many who shared their ideas and interests. I would like to pay special tribute especially to ASA members including Hilde Hein, Selma Jeanne Cohen, Rudolf Arnheim, Donald Crawford, Ted Cohen, Nelson Goodman, Arthur Danto, Noël Carroll, Peter Kivy, Stephen Davies, Garry Hagberg, Ivan Gaskell, Eva Kit Wah Man, and Mary Wiseman, to mention a few among the many ASA members, whose ideas and generous personal encouragement and support have enriched my understanding and practice in aesthetics. My ten years as Secretary Treasurer of ASA (1996-2006), and as the host of two Annual Meetings (1980, 2006) provided opportunities for developing leadership skills that extended to other aspects of my work as Haggerty Museum Director and Professor at Marquette University and the Les Aspin Center for Government, and as an international scholar especially in China.

III. Current and Future Concerns

Throughout its 75 years, the American Society for Aesthetics has more or less held a steady course moving forward through a variety of intellectual challenges including: premature pronouncements on the so called "end of art," split alliances in philosophy among traditional, analytic, and continental strains, and the extension of the arts into technology, junk art, and many other variations that challenge existing aesthetics theories. As well, it is necessary to consider how major social changes with respect to race, cultural diversity, and gender equality will affect the future practices in the arts and aesthetics.

ASA is fortunate to benefit from financial resources from contributions, investments, and revenues that enable it to continue and extend its efforts. However, changes call for constant reassessment of mission and allocation of resources in relation to altered conditions of the world. There can be no room for complacency about the future of the American Society for Aesthetics, as the world continues to change exponentially. Hence, we do well to maintain a sharp eye in assessing how the needs for aesthetics are changing, and

how the American Society for Aesthetics might need to alter its strategies in light of new opportunities and needs in contemporary society.

One noteworthy contemporary shift affecting the practice of the arts and aesthetics is the move from nationalist based aesthetics, as a result of the globalization of art practices. Now, more than ever before, there are opportunities for extending involvement of western scholars in aesthetics to explore how aesthetics is understood and practiced in other cultures. What, for example, are the concerns of aesthetics in African, Eastern, and Middle Eastern and Latin American cultures? Currently, aesthetics has a huge following in China with support as its people come to terms with the transition from rural village to urban life, and the intervention of Western aesthetics into China.

While the movement of aesthetics from the West into China and other Eastern cultures is accelerating, mainly through the efforts of Eastern scholars who have been active since the beginning of the Twentieth century in their efforts to transmit Western aesthetic ideas into China and other Eastern cultures, there is it seems still relatively little reciprocity where Western aesthetics actively seeks to acquire greater understanding of Eastern aesthetics. My sense is that the American Society for Aesthetics participates in only limited engagements with non-western cultures. This is perhaps one area where ASA has not kept pace with the possibilities expressed in the mission of our founder.

There are other developing areas of research and inquiry where contemporary cultural and social practices might invite changes in the future plans of ASA. Today's experimental sciences are reaching into the brain to try to determine what in our brains manage activities relating to the arts and cognition. Indeed, some American and other aestheticians, are exploring such possibilities for developing new avenues for research in aesthetics. At the very least, such evolving developments invite examining the possibilities for greater inclusion in the projects of the American Society for

Aesthetics as it charts its future toward a century of explorations.

A more general concern centers on the social relevance assigned to aesthetics in contemporary society. There is still much confusion in the public sphere about the meaning of the concept of aesthetics and its relevance to everyday life. Some efforts to address the connections have resulted in positing theories of aesthetics and everyday life. But even such efforts have not reached beyond the scope of discourse among academic aestheticians. While the pages of the *Journal* and the Presentations at Annual Meetings are not aimed at the general public, there is need for greater attention to just how the practices of aesthetics among scholars and artists can contribute to understanding the role of aesthetics and the arts to the larger world. Perhaps it is time for ASA to assume a more aggressive role of advocacy and planning for the place that aesthetics might have into the future, both in education and in the lives of people in the world at large, for example in the future of city life which will dominate the coming centuries.

There are positive signs as ASA gives greater attention to issues relating to how aesthetics might contribute to understanding, and changing behavior in reference to societal concerns pertaining to diversity, race, gender, peace, social justice and arts education. Still, the pages in our *Journal* and conference papers are mainly concerned with issues that are of interest to a self-selected part of the academic community, which do not obviously serve the needs of the greater community. We are of course entitled to engage in reflecting on issues particular to aesthetics as an academic discipline, but perhaps there is more that aesthetics can contribute to the greater community while also satisfying its own intellectual curiosity and needs for expression. Such concerns may indeed require greater attention as we move forward to celebrate a century of life for the American Society of Aesthetics.

Perhaps a most pressing practical concern for the future of members of the American Society for Aesthetics is this:

where will be its home base in the academic worlds of the future? For the most part, aesthetics has resided in the philosophy departments of universities and colleges. Philosophers, while lending tacit support, do not always see aesthetics as a priority, or even a necessity. And as the academic world places lesser value on the humanities, we may anticipate problems with support for philosophy itself, let alone aesthetics. It will be no surprise as philosophy departments under pressure of declining resources, may not retain the positions currently occupied by aestheticians. Where then might aesthetics seek support? Will it be in the sciences? Individual arts? Or will the future of aesthetics be left adrift, or to independent scholars? In short, the problem of sustaining a home for aesthetics in academic institutions or elsewhere is of concern. Perhaps the role of ASA will be increasingly important in addressing this issue.



Stephen J. Davies

As Vice President, I was to introduce Carolyn Korsmeyer's Presidential lecture. I searched the internet for biographical detail with little success. So I amused myself by inventing a life for her. In that fictional world, she came from a mining family and had a passion for fly-fishing. Carolyn was amused

by the fictional account, which I sent her for fun, but found only one detail in my story that corresponded to reality.

In my tenure as President I was pleased that the Board approved a number of innovations: the annual monograph prize, ASAGE (the graduate e-journal), the Wollheim lectures (in which a member of the British Society of Aesthetics addresses the ASA in one year and a representative of the ASA gives a paper to the BSA the next year), and the biennial dance essay prize. I was very grateful for the support I received from officers of the society — Curtis Carter and Dabney Townsend as Secretary-Treasurer, Susan Feagin as *JAAC* editor, Carolyn Korsmeyer as ex-President, and Jenefer Robinson as Vice President, and the various members of the Board of Trustees. We also established the process by which ASA members could apply for funds to support their projects and conferences. It was a pleasure for me at the Northampton conference to present the first monograph prize to Rachel Zuckert and a lifetime achievement award to Sally Banes.

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Cynthia Freeland

I first attended an ASA meeting sometime in the late 1980s after working primarily in ancient philosophy for ten years. Although I had attended some wonderful Aristotle conferences, I found the ASA especially welcoming. It was exciting to hear talks by such luminaries as Arthur Danto, Francis Sparshott, and Richard Wollheim. And it was no small matter that the ASA met in nice places like Portland, Montreal, San Francisco, and Santa Fe. The inclusion of visits to museums or of sessions in concert halls was always a plus; I especially enjoyed our walking tour of South Beach's Art Deco buildings in Miami on Halloween night of 2004. I believe we owe Curtis Carter a debt for his efforts at international outreach and inclusion on the program—I am thinking of special panels with speakers from China, Poland, and Spain. And similarly, many of us are grateful to Peg Brand for dedicated work on the Feminist Caucus prompting

more inclusion of women on the program along with attention to feminist issues in aesthetics.

Despite the terrible job market now and slashed university funding, the ASA meetings seem to be attracting many excellent younger scholars who are bringing an array of new topics into our field (street art, videogames, comics!). My own work has benefited enormously from the stimulation of talks at various meetings and from the close friendships I have developed over the years with colleagues I met through the ASA. I am very grateful to the many fine scholars who have taken time away from their work to serve the Society in organizing meetings, editing the journal and newsletter, and keeping our finances afloat.

1948: ASA "endorses the work of the Section on Arts and Letters of UNESCO, and in particular its plan for encouraging the arts in general education; also its plan for developing cultural interchange among nations, for the enrichment of world culture and as a means to world understanding. . . the Society express[es] its desire to cooperate actively with American and foreign branches of UNESCO in pursuing these ends."



1950: ASA Trustees approve resolution protesting the actions and policies of the Regents of the University of California, in the affair of compulsory statements by faculty members.

Paul Guyer

When I think about the ASA, I think about a community in which I have always felt at home. That was not to be taken for granted, because from the beginning of my career I have only ever had one foot in aesthetics, being at least as much of a Kant scholar as an aesthetician, if not more. Indeed, while I had some proper training as a Kant scholar, I had none at all as an aesthetician, for in spite of his title, "Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and General Value Theory," my teacher Stanley Cavell never taught a straightforward course on aesthetics the entire time I was an undergraduate and graduate student at Harvard, nor did anyone else. So everything I know about aesthetics beyond Kant I have learned on the job, and so much of it from my colleagues in

the ASA, at our meetings and in our journal, and from their works.

Nevertheless, I was welcome at the ASA from the start. Several of my earliest papers on Kant's aesthetics were given at Asilomar meetings, and even though there was obviously a core group of West Coast aestheticians that had been going there for a long time, they made newcomers (and Easterners) immediately welcome. The commentator on my earliest paper at an APA meeting was Don Crawford, active in the Society for so many years and one of the series of outstanding editors of *JAAC* that has continued unbroken to this day, and the generosity with which he received a newcomer to the field should always have been a model to me, even if has not always been.

I attended the annual meetings somewhat intermittently in the first part of my career, but almost uninterrupted for the last twenty years. So many good friends over those years! Some my seniors, some now gone from our ranks, such as Ted Cohen, Peter Kivy, Arthur Danto, Mary Mothersill, and others, whose absence will tinge my future meetings with a bit of melancholy. Others, still my seniors or more likely my contemporaries, who are happily still with us and still coming to meetings -- there are so many, and you know who you are, so I won't name any more names. And so many younger colleagues, from whom I have so much to learn. Philosophers have been practicing aesthetics since Plato, although we didn't know it until a couple of hundred years ago -- and it is wonderful to see that new blood and new ideas continue to invigorate our field. I look forward to enjoying aesthetics and the ASA for many years to come!

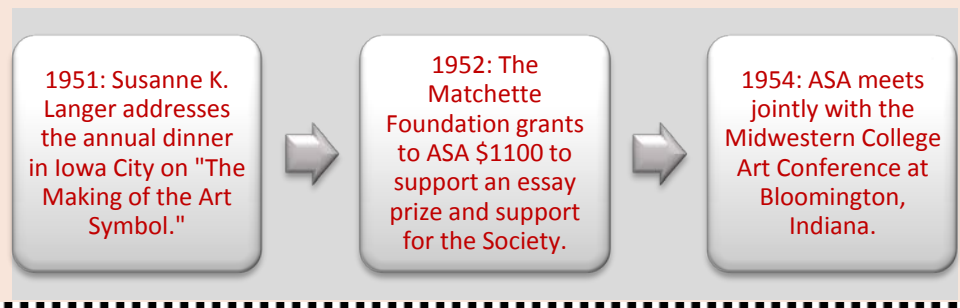
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Carolyn Korsmeyer

When I was a new assistant professor, green and clueless, my department chair suggested that I join the ASA. I didn't know what he was talking about, so he looked up the address for me and did all but stamp the envelope. At the first meetings I

attended, I noticed a certain amount of hair-pulling about the range of topics published in a journal that claimed to cover both "Aesthetics" and "Art Criticism" but in fact was dominated by Philosophers. For a time there were repeated efforts to invite artists and critics from various fields to the annual meetings. I engaged in some of those efforts myself in connection with a newly-formed Feminist Caucus, in the hopes of stimulating fresh directions of research by including an academically more diverse set of voices. While areas of research did expand (doubtless for many reasons), almost none of those invitees came back. Artists, art historians, film critics, English faculty—most of them drifted back to their own favored organizations. (Personally, I found this baffling; my one venture to the College Art Association made the APA look intimate.)

In more recent years, many people in the ASA have been working hard to expand further our active participants and to insure that the organization—its programs, committee membership, published voices—be more inclusive, not so much of academic and practitioner fields but of individuals from diverse social and personal backgrounds. To my mind, this is a more urgent and important endeavor than enlarging academic zones, and I am optimistic that those efforts are bearing fruit and will continue to do so. At some point it might be interesting to chart the sequential efforts of the ASA to renew itself by means of critique, reflection, and action, for it is a sign of health that an organization such as ours seek to recharge periodically, even continually.



Tom Leddy

When I was a graduate student at Boston University my adviser Marx Wartofsky informed me that Hilde Hein, who lived in Waltham, Mass., and taught at Holy Cross, needed some assistance with a newsletter she was working on for the American Society for Aesthetics. This was in 1982. Hilde had inherited the newsletter from Selma Jean Cohen. I was excited about the idea since I had already begun to specialize in aesthetics and had been a member of the ASA since 1974. Hilde and I met at her place and we immediately hit it off. After a while I became co-editor although, until she resigned from the newsletter, Hilde was the one who handled printing and distribution. We passed the newsletter on to the next person (forgot who that was [*editor's note*: Garry Hagberg and Dabney Townsend]) in 1990. At first we used scissors and tape but by the time we finished we were editing everything on word processors and submitting electronic files to the printer.

Being co-editor of the newsletter provided me the opportunity to have contact with many of the major figures of the field. Thinking back, the best thing about it was just getting to work with Hilde Hein. One interesting aspect of the experience was that it gave us a chance to think about the nature and limits of the field: we were both interested in pressing the boundaries a bit. A lot of the work was simply a matter of reformatting information provided by the ASA office and by other members. However, we also wrote up our own reports of meetings, both national and regional. We learned how to summarize papers and discussion in a line or two and tried to give a sense of what really happened. We covered the national meetings (Hilde and I usually co-wrote these) in Tampa (1981), Bannf (1983), Los Angeles (1984), Boston (1986), New York (1989), Kansas City (1987), Vancouver (1988), New York (1989), and maybe some others. After I gained a position at San Jose State (1983) I began to regularly attend the Pacific Division meetings at Asilomar and often wrote up reports on those meetings as

well. We also reviewed APA meetings when they included significant sessions in aesthetics, for example, Oakland in 1989. I wrote reviews of Eastern Division and the Rocky Mountain Division meetings when I was able to attend. We also wrote up the International Congress in Aesthetics in 1984. As part of our effort to travel outside the bounds of our discipline I wrote on the CADRE Conference (Computers in Art and Design, Research and Education), San Jose, 1984, and the International Colloquium on Empirical Aesthetics, Santa Cruz, 1985. Two other features of the newsletter were editorials and reviews of journals, again, outside the mainstream of our discipline. In my case, these included articles on the Getty Center for Education in the Arts (1989), a review of a special issue on Arnheim in *Salmagundi*, a review of *Issue: A Journal for Artists*, a review of *Empirical Studies in the Arts*, and an editorial titled "In Praise of the Pamphlet" (1983).

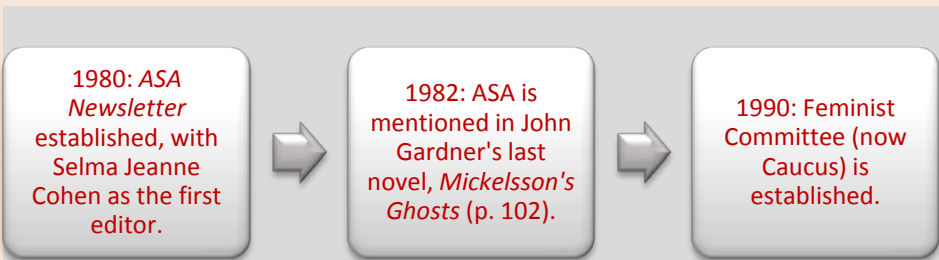
The format of the newsletter has remained basically the same since our time, although each editor or editorial team, has made their own contribution, and the newsletter, over time, has become richer for that. I particularly enjoy reading the substantive articles on issues in the profession. Julie Van Camp has digitized and archived most of the issues of the newsletter on the ASA web site, for which I am thankful, as this does give a sense of the history of the society.

Jerrold Levinson

I've been attending ASA meetings now for about 40 years. Probably the first meeting that I can recall attending took place in 1978 in New York City, a site no longer feasible, it seems, from the cost point of view. I also have vivid memories, not surprisingly, of the ASA meeting at which I first appeared on the program as a brash young commentator, the 1980 meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the ASA meeting for which I was program chair, the 1990 meeting in Austin, Texas; the 2000 meeting in Reno, Nevada,

where I had the pleasure of introducing Noël Carroll's Presidential Address, which Introduction I consider possibly my finest piece of writing to date; and the ASA meeting at which I delivered my own Presidential Address, the 2002 meeting in Miami, Florida.

But the annual meeting I remember with the keenest pleasure and the greatest pride in the Society was the 1995 meeting in St Louis, at which we had stimulating talks by two world-class practitioners of the arts, the poet Robert Pinsky and the architect Frank Gehry, with participation also by the novelist and philosopher William Gass and the cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter of *Godel, Escher, Bach* fame. One wish I have for the Society, as it moves into the last quarter of its hundred-year span, is to somehow pull off more annual meetings like that one!



Dom Lopes

In 1991-92, I landed in the United States, having just written a dissertation on pictorial representation, which I'd conceived as building upon and extending work in the philosophy of perception and the philosophy of language. I was naive enough to be surprised when the reaction to my topic in the U.S. was, "Oh, that's aesthetics." So I thought I better attend an ASA meeting.

My first meeting was Asilomar in 1993, followed by Santa Barbara that same autumn. In those days, Asilomar was extraordinarily intimate, with no more than thirty



philosophers snuggled up in one of those hexagonal buildings right on the dunes, and the rigid pre-read rule ensured that we already knew each other, intellectually, as we pulled up at the gates. I was treated to a generous yet searching, lengthy discussion of what would become my second publication, and it won me over to the society. Santa Barbara I remember very differently, as an eye-opening smorgasbord of what was happening in aesthetics. I quickly realized that I had been served a somewhat idiosyncratic undergrad course in aesthetics – we read one book, Nelson Goodman’s *Languages of Art*. By the early 90s work on theories of art had entered a mature stage, Kendall Walton’s magnum opus was hot off the press, Noël Carroll and Gregory Currie had trained a spotlight on cinema, Jenefer Robinson was bringing the philosophy of emotion to art emotion, Allen Carlson had succeeding in administering CPR to environmental aesthetics, Peg Brand, Hilde Hein, and Carolyn Korsmeyer were editing keystone collections in feminist aesthetics, and the nascent ethicism debate was about to jump start thinking about value in the field. The atmosphere was electric: big things were going to happen in this discipline. As you know, I signed on for life.

It’s true what everybody says: philosophers who work in aesthetics are an exceptionally friendly crowd. On top of that, the ASA gathers us together in attractive places, as befits our academic specialization. I don’t deny the importance of good friends and comfortable amenities, but they don’t drive innovation or lead to progress. Some philosophers are scouts. Scouts venture into the unknown in search of arable

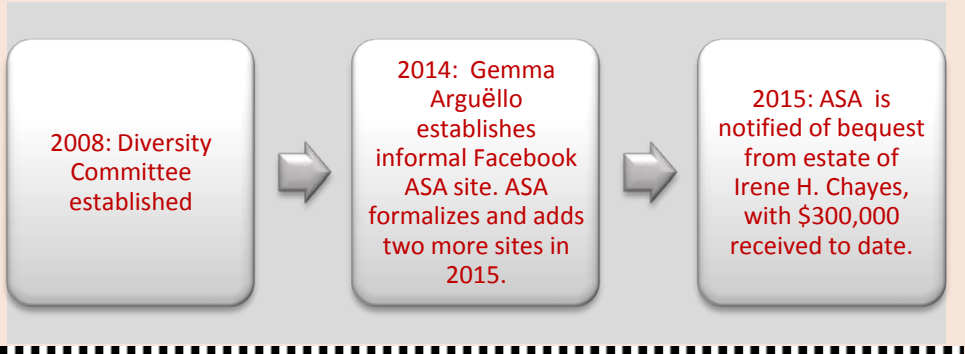
land and spaces for communal habitation. Close upon their heels come the planners, who map out the roads and boundaries that give general shape to future thinking. Developers carry the enterprise to fruition, filling in the details where the truth ultimately lies. All need each other equally, and all are equally important. Still, compared to most other areas of philosophy, opportunities for scouts are especially abundant in aesthetics. Aesthetic and artistic culture occupies a huge chunk of the sphere of human activity, and we've only begun to explore it.

Permit me a little polemic for a moment. In 1984, Derek Parfit described ethics as a new field. He meant that moral philosophy had only just shaken off the distorting influence of religious thinking. I see aesthetics as new field too. While I'm all for the fine arts, their dominion over our field has distorted our understanding of the totality of aesthetic and artistic culture. Consider how we have tended to project our idolatry onto figures such as Hutcheson, Hume, and Kant, who antedate the dominion of the fine arts. Ours is a new field that is only just shaking off the distorting influences of European high culture.

The promise of the early 90s has paid out spectacularly. We work on black aesthetics, rap, *wabi-sabi*, rasa-aesthetics, cultural appropriation, the body, humor, and gardens. We can now joke that *JAAC* should be renamed the *Journal of Video Games and Street Art*. And then we can say what makes that a joke. Artistic and aesthetic value are back on the agenda, having stalled upon the retirement of Monroe Beardsley and Frank Sibley, now ready to take advantage of the explosion of work on value outside aesthetics. We do evolutionary aesthetics and neuro-aesthetics. We think about being awesome. Our history is now more than an essay by Hume and half of a book by Kant.

One last disclosure. I showed up in 1993 as pretty much the only newcomer to American aesthetics – indeed pretty much the only person within ten years of being a newcomer (there

were four of us, to be precise and I am the only one to remain). Look around the New Orleans meeting. It's no accident that aesthetics is now as young as the rest of philosophy. The field's promise for scouts, planners, and developers attracts talent, and fresh minds from diverse intellectual backgrounds pursue ideas that takes us all to new frontiers.



Jenefer Robinson

It's well-known that for a society in which philosophers predominate, the ASA is a particularly friendly bunch. I can count on the fingers of one hand – maybe even the thumb – members of this society who have treated philosophical dialogue at the ASA conference or in the *JAAC* as a kind of lethal confrontation, like some of our colleagues in other sub-disciplines. Looking back on my long association with the Society, I think perhaps what's most remarkable about it is that it has retained that congenial feeling of camaraderie despite its growing size and professionalism.

My first ASA meeting was in 1975. My PhD supervisor, Francis Sparshott, who sadly died two years ago (August 24, 2015), had invited Monroe Beardsley to be the external examiner on my dissertation. I'm sure it was because he knew how very generous Monroe was to everyone and especially to younger scholars. When I arrived at the ASA not knowing anyone but Monroe, he introduced me to the up and

coming young guns of the Society, Peter Kivy and Alan Tormey, both of whom made their mark on our field, especially Peter, who went on to one of the great careers in Aesthetics until his death earlier this year. Although I spent a good deal of my career pointing out the many errors of his ways, he remained a good friend all these years and was unfailingly kind and generous to me, just as Monroe had been before him.

I also remember early meetings of the *JAAC* board. In 1981 I was appointed by the editor, John Fisher, to the board of "editorial consultants" to the journal. At that time there was a group of four associate editors, Rudolf Arnheim, George McFadden, Anita Silvers, and Alan Tormey, a group of ten "editorial consultants" (including Peter Kivy, Herbert Schueller, and Donald Kuspit), and a number of "foreign members," whose status, I believe, was purely honorary. Anita was the only woman among the associate editors, and when I joined the "editorial consultants," I was the only woman in that group. The board meetings were extremely informal. In those days the annual ASA meetings were usually held at a university, and the board would find some room with a desk in it to have our meetings. (It may have even been smoke-filled.) Very few of the board members would attend. I particularly remember one time when there were hardly any chairs in the room, so we either lounged against the wall or sat on the desk. Meetings were typically short and *no food* was officially provided.

Things have changed a great deal since then. It's no longer true that a small cabal of mainly white guys runs everything. There have been many positive efforts to expand the Society's membership and to be more inclusive of members from underrepresented groups and of women via the Diversity Committee and the Feminist Caucus. I think I myself have been very lucky. I've always felt valued and nurtured by the Society, unlike in some other areas of academic life. And I was and am very fortunate to be in a cohort of accomplished women, such as Carolyn Korsmeyer, Susan Feagin, Taffy

Ross, Cynthia Freeland, Peg Brand and others, all of us now of a certain age. White men are still doing very well in the Society, but it gives me particular pleasure to see so many smart young women flourishing in the Society today, as well as an increasing number of men and women of color. I think this gives us all hope for an ASA future even more vibrant than its past, and a Society, which, even as it grows in size and diversity, still deserves its reputation for being friendly and supportive.



Roger Shiner

I attended my first ASA meeting in 1975, and have managed to be at most of them since. I have had the honour to serve as Trustee from 1984 to 1987, and as Secretary-Treasurer from 1988 to 1996. That's a lot of happy memories, and a plausible criterion for selecting any to mention here is hard. I'll try this one. The first paper I presented was at the 1976 meeting in Toronto ... except that I didn't present it. I got sick and could not attend. I found out later that Monroe Beardsley who chaired the session read the paper, though I am sure he must have had to keep a straight face at times. He also sent me afterwards a set of comments on the paper. I mention this incident because it seems to me paradigmatic of the ethos of the ASA. A distinguished senior scholar goes out of his way to help a junior scholar when no one could have blamed him for not doing either of the things he did. The ASA has always had a strong tradition of being there to serve the interests -- the intellectual and social well-being -

- of *all* its members, and not simply the famous ones, or those involved in the governance of the Society. There's too many members to talk of the Society being a family, but in my experience it does seek to respect, to include and to accommodate its members, or anyone with the appropriate kind of concern about art, in the way that nurturing families do. When we think about "Where We Are Going", I hope that we do not forget this history of fellowship. I don't think we will.

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Dabney W. Townsend

I attended my first ASA meeting in 1973. At that time, the great names (to me at least) were Paul Ziff, Morris Weitz, Monroe Beardsley, John Fisher (the Editor of *JAAC*), Melvin Rader, W. F. Kennick, Joe Margolis, and others of the generation who had succeeded the founders of the Society: Thomas Monroe, George Boas, Katherine Gilbert, Van Meter Ames, and Dagobert Runes (the first editor of *JAAC*) and others who were present at the first meeting of the ASA, held in the faculty club at Columbia University in 1942. The style of the Society in 1973 was definitely "philosophical" with the majority concerned with analytical topics and a significant minority interested in continental aesthetics. A few of us at my first meeting had historical and interdisciplinary interests. The "new" generation included George Dickie, whom I found myself sharing the podium with as a commentator in a session on metaphor. I was both a novice, especially in aesthetics, coming in with a humanities degree, and very much in awe, though that did not stop me from commenting in what I took to be the best APA style. After the session, which was chaired by Monroe Beardsley, Beardsley took me aside and complemented me on the points that I had made, but very gently added, "But we do not do it that way at the ASA." I took his advice and, over the years, have tried to curb my combativeness, not always successfully, I fear.

By the time I became Secretary-Treasurer in 2006, the ASA had changed significantly. There were more artists,

musicians, dancers, art historians, and museum administrators and a far wider interest in topics in the contemporary arts and interdisciplinary subjects. My predecessor, Curtis Carter, had transformed the Society's finances, so that we actually had money to spend on projects and programs. When I handed over to Julie Van Camp two years ago, we were awarding prizes in dance aesthetics, outstanding monographs, and outstanding essays. Students were being subsidized to attend the annual meeting, and the annual meeting programs included performances as well as papers. Since I have spent my career at universities without major graduate programs in philosophy, I have always found the ASA a particularly important intellectual and academic "home." It welcomed me as Beardsley implied that it would. I am particularly proud of what it has become.



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