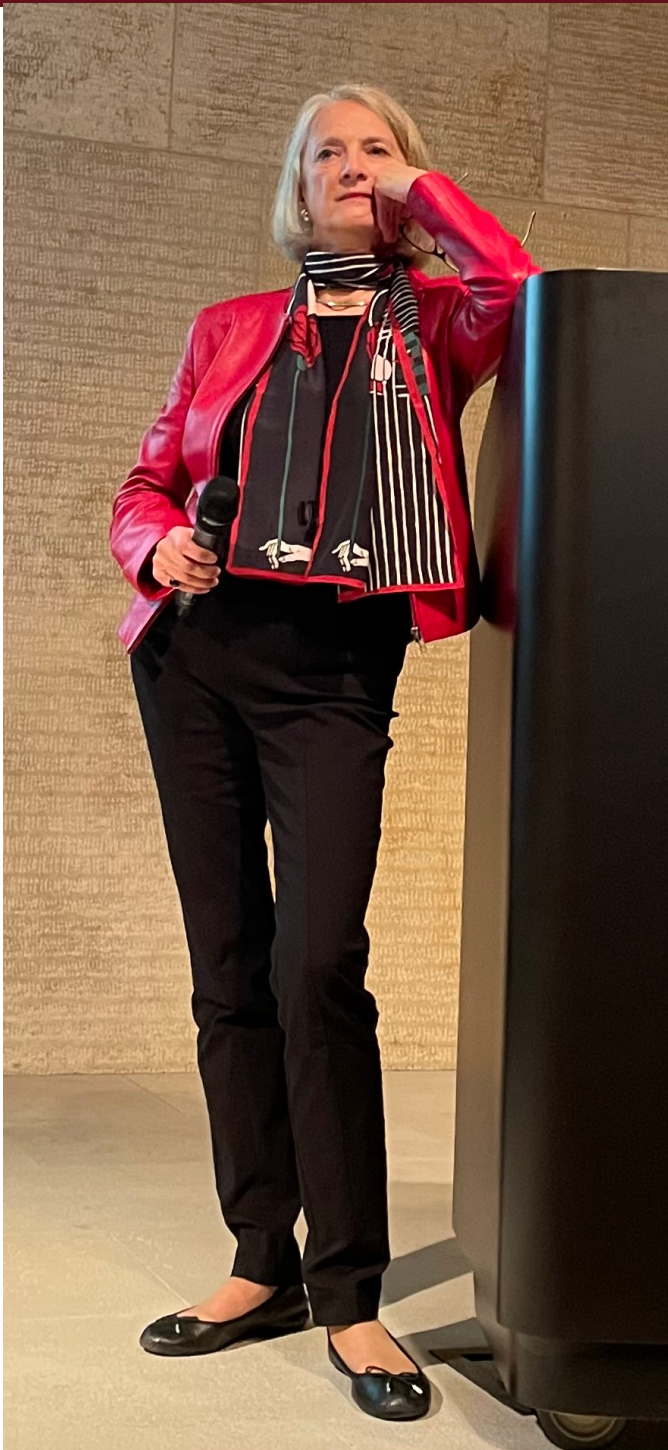


# Susan Feagin Memorial

July 11 1948 - December 12 2024

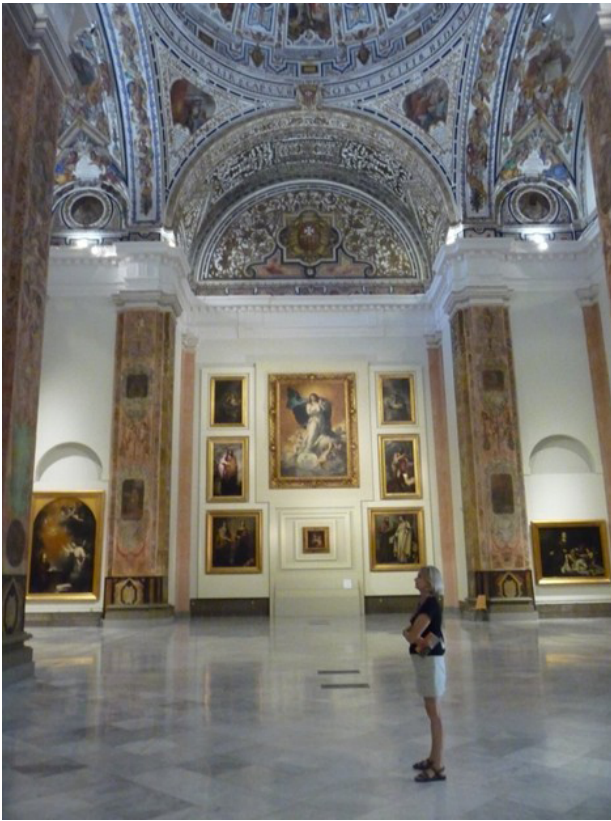


Susan Feagin, Beardsley Lecture  
(Photo: Paula Roberts)

My first recollection of Susan Feagin was from an ASA session on her book *Reading with Feeling* (1996). Jerry Levinson offered what seemed a devastating critique, and I felt fearful for her, but Susan rose with confidence and gave great replies to all his points. Eventually, she and I became friends through a shared love of art, travel, dining, shopping, and cats. We went together to meetings in Ankara (2010), Cartagena (2011), Krakow (2013), and Seoul (2016), as well as to many sites in the US and Canada. An earnest traveler, Susan always studied the history and culture of places she was to visit. In Turkey she was reading Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, and in Korea, Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*.

Although Susan is perhaps best known for her work on literature and theatre, my favorite piece of hers is "Paintings and their Places" (1995). She argues there that visual arts can give us knowledge by transforming the spaces in which they exist. Through direct perceptual experience our bodies are also affected in the realm of action. It was my privilege to share with Susan many experiences of artworks in their places, from the stunning Buddhist ornamentations in Bulguska Temple in Geyongju, Korea, to the historic icons and varied architecture of churches in Lviv, Ukraine—and much more. We especially loved the food, ice cream, and, of course, art in Andalusia: the mosque-cathedral of Córdoba; the gardens, pools, and honeycomb structures of the Alhambra; and the gold-encrusted statues in the baroque cathedral of San Juan de Dios in Granada. I will share a photo of Susan at her birthday dinner in Granada, where we enjoyed a wonderful meal and later watched a full moon rising over the Alhambra.

*Cynthia Freeland*  
*University of Houston (Emerita)*



Susan in Museo de Bellas Artes Sevilla, Murillo Chapel, 2011 (Photo: Cynthia Freeland)



Susan in Granada (Photo: Cynthia Freeland)

---

I met Susan Feagin during a time when both of us were starting our academic careers. At some long-ago meeting, perhaps in Montreal, participants were put up in student dorms, comfortable if stripped-down accommodations that invited convivial hallway conversations. Especially

memorable was a piercing siren in the middle of the night that sent us into the chilly outdoors for an imagined fire drill, before we realized that it was a panic-button alarm for someone stuck in an elevator.

That meeting launched a series of trips that she and I took together, often planned around international academic meetings. Susan was a marvelous traveler, enthusiastic about going just about any place, seeing just about anything, and eating a variety of daring cuisines. One year I had impulsively agreed to give a short course in Finland during the middle of a spring semester, and I sought company to supplement my trip elsewhere. So who better to ask than Susan? And before we even determined where, she said Sure!

Her extensive travels were always informed by curiosity, prior reading, and detailed research. As a consequence of her knowledge, I was introduced to ossuaries, both in the Czech Republic and in Italy. This eventually led to our one collaborative article, which was on bones and their eerie architectural and decorative uses. I wish I had known earlier how much fun it was to write with Susan as a partner; there would have been many more joint projects to come. Alas, the time for that ran out all too soon.

*Carolyn Korsmeyer*  
*University of Buffalo (Emerita)*



Susan Feagin  
(Photo provided by: Carolyn Korsmeyer)

I first met Susan as a new graduate student at Temple University, where she was editor of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. I was lucky enough to land a position as her editorial assistant and had the pleasure of working with her for the first four years of my graduate career, until her retirement. Not only did I learn an immeasurable amount from Susan in the process of editing the journal, but I also got to know a warm, energetic, and intellectually curious figure in aesthetics. Susan's willingness to serve on my dissertation committee – on Nietzsche's theory of tragedy – is a testament to her ability to engage sincerely and creatively with a variety of philosophical traditions. Her work on the paradox of tragedy was essential to the development of my work on tragedy. I will miss Susan's presence at ASA meetings. She was always a friendly face and a warm and welcoming presence. She will always be a cornerstone of my philosophical education and remains a source of fond memories.

Katie Brennan  
Salve Regina University

---



Katie Brennan, Rachel Falkenstern, Susan Feagin, and Noël Carroll

Susan was the best interlocutor I have ever had. She read with accuracy and precision, and then explained her questions with the same levels of care. She read for arguments and was very skillful at detecting and tracing them. She was also generous, but quick to find areas where a passage or a point was under-defended. She told me where that happened and often gave insightful comments about how one might rectify the lacuna. She also listened well. Susan was, and will always be, the gold standard of the ideal philosopher: open to novel ideas, open to the world, and forever opposed to cant in any form. She was serious, a great deal of fun, and a treasured friend.

James Hamilton  
Kansas State University

---

I met Susan soon after she joined the Philosophy Department at the University of Missouri-Kansas City right after she finished graduate school. UMKC was my alma mater, and although I began graduate school elsewhere the semester she arrived, I met her when I came back to town. Already then, she was a gracious and helpful mentor. She arranged for me to meet someone in her graduate cohort whose dissertation was related my own interests. She also introduced me to the ASA when she later served as local organizer.

I continued to find her an inspiring role model when she was editor of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and, subsequently, a fellow officer of the Society. I was extremely impressed that one of her first acts as journal editor was to announce a special issue on Global Aesthetics, which she edited herself. She handled meetings efficiently but with warmth, and she negotiated personality frictions with thoughtfulness and poise. I could always rely on her to provide a voice of good sense and discretion when I sought her advice. She was a class act.

Susan also had a wonderful spirit of fun, tearing around Kansas City in a sports car and always up for an adventure. Many of my happy memories of her are set offshore – walking on Dubrovnik's city

walls, dining in the old city in Krakow, wandering among archeological sites in Albania, having scallion pancakes in Gyeongju, showing me a cool “splat” pig toy that she found in Seoul. I amused her once by saying that I thought that as you get to know someone better, you increasingly realize how eccentric the person is. I’m thankful that I got some sense of this with Susan. I’ll miss laughing with her, but I’m really glad we shared those pigs.

*Kathleen Higgins*  
*University of Texas at Austin*

---

The untimely passing of Susan Feagin is deeply sad news. Susan was a towering figure in analytic aesthetics, part of the golden generation of the field. She made foundational contributions to the philosophy of art and emotions (among several other subfields) and was a pioneer among native Anglophone philosophers in realizing the importance of opening up the field to more global perspectives. She also stewarded *JAAC* in a golden period of the journal. Susan was a deeply serious philosopher (in Susan Haack’s terminology) and an unusually generous and morally upstanding person. I learnt a lot from her through her written work, as well as personally. I cherish each and every one of my wonderful memories of working with her at Temple during a Fulbright-sponsored research year in 2017-18, of taking part in the Aesthetics Reading Group she convened in Philadelphia, as well as of our meals out and educational trips to the theatre and the cinema (often accompanied by another aesthetics giant and one of her most loyally supportive friends, Noël Carroll). I was blessed to see her last in 2023 in Barcelona and to learn from her so much even about the very city I lived in. I still like to go back as often as possible and help all my friends who visit Barcelona discover the very theatrical Plaça del Rei that she first made me discover. I will miss her very much but her work and legacy will continue to be relevant for a very long time.

*Filippo Contesi*  
*University of Cagliari*



Kathleen Higgins and Susan Feagin, Lotus Garden, Gyeongju, South Korea, July 2016 (Photo: Cynthia Freeland)



Eva Man, Kathleen Higgins, and Susan Feagin in Albania, 2019 (Photo: EM)

Susan was a presence and a role model from the beginning of my academic career. I had the privilege of having her as my ASA commentator on the paper that became my first publication (“Intending to Repeat”, *JAAC*, 2007), when she was *JAAC* editor and I was completing my PhD. Her comments were constructive and enlightening and without question improved my work on that and future occasions. Later she wrote for my tenure and promotion, and more recently again for my promotion to full--wonderful, generous letters (dossiers are open at Texas Tech). She was always kind and supportive, and such an example of good scholarship. I draw on her research in both my writing and my teaching.

On a personal level, Susan was a model of elegance and poise without being stuffy; she was always ready with a smile. I am grateful that I got to spend many lunches and dinners in her lovely company at ASA meetings and also at a conference in Cartagena, Spain (with the delightful Cynthia Freeland adding to the fun). I last saw Susan at the Montreal ASA in 2021. I’m so glad that at that conference I gave her a big hug of thanks for her more recent letter. Had I known that was the last time I would see her, I would have hugged her harder! Her loss is sorely felt, but we can take comfort in the fact that she lived a wonderful life and enlightened and inspired many.

*Anna Christina Ribeiro*  
*Texas Tech University*

---



Susan Feagin, Anna Christina Riberio, and María José Alcaraz León, Montreal 2021 (Photo: ACR)



Susan Feagin and Stephanie Ross

Susan Feagin was an eminent aesthetician whom I valued as a friend but also as a trail-blazer. She preceded me in various niches in the profession and proved a shining model of how to flourish as an academic and aesthetician.

Susan was already in place at UM-Kansas City when I arrived at the St. Louis branch of the university. Her experience there offered tips on how to succeed in a state system whose perennially underfunded urban campuses housed philosophy departments constantly seeking to increase enrollments and recruit majors.

Susan’s University of Wisconsin mentor Don Crawford became a friend and resource for me as well, a font of information about garden aesthetics and environmental ethics as well as someone I went to for recommendations when seeking fellowships and grants. While Susan eventually succeeded Phil Alperson as Editor of *JAAC*, I stepped into her previous role as the journal’s Book Review Editor in 2000.

Once again Susan proved the perfect trail blazer, demonstrating how to innovatively and efficiently fulfil the role I inherited. She was always available when I needed advice and counsel. Susan also served as an admirable advance scout within the Society, modelling how to become an effective trustee and also how to take on other important responsibilities.

In addition to benefitting from Susan as a role model in aesthetics, I greatly admired aspects of her non-professional life. Her ability to gracefully inhabit a distinctive Philadelphia row house and appreciate her historic neighborhood was inspiring, as was her thirst for Philadelphia theater. And while I didn't share her insatiable appetite for travel, I was endlessly impressed by her sense of adventure and by the devotion with which she read and studied to prep for her exotic trips.

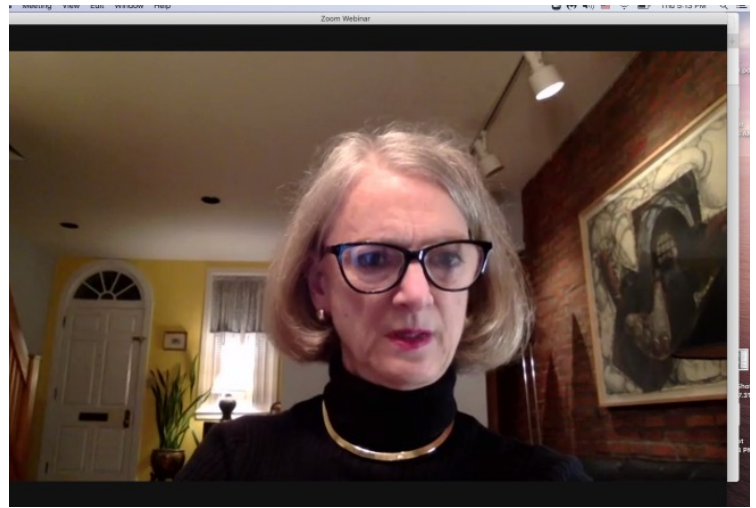
Though we lost Susan way too soon, I hope her friends can find comfort contemplating a life so well lived.

*Stephanie Ross*  
*University of Missouri, St. Louis (Emerita)*

---

I had the great privilege of knowing and working with Susan over many years, in many different capacities for both of us. I especially treasure the two years when she was President of the ASA from 2019-2021 and I was the secretary-treasurer of the Society. We endured the COVID years when meetings were abruptly cancelled, we learned how to use Zoom, and we worried about the stability of the Society and our membership during the pandemic. No matter the challenges, Susan was always helpful and supportive to all in the ASA. Her institutional memory of the Society and the Journal were priceless and helped us countless times in charting a path forward. She will be missed more than she ever could have imagined.

*Julie Van Camp*  
*Cal State, Long Beach (Emerita)*



Susan Feagin Delivering her Presidential Address on Zoom, 2020 (Screenshot: Cynthia Freeland)



Susan Feagin (Photo provided by: Julie Van Camp)