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## Recent Publications

*Contemporary Aesthetics* does not publish book reviews. However, to inform our readers of new publications of interest, we do publish brief descriptions from information provided by the publishers. Readers are invited to send us such information about books they think will interest other readers of *CA*.

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*American Visual Cultures*, edited by David Holloway and John Beck (New York: Continuum, 2005).

*American Visual Cultures* analyzes the role of painting, photography, film, television, advertising, journalism and other visual media in the historical development of the United States from the Civil War to the present day. It offers a chronology of major debates and developments in modern US history and traces the social, political and economic factors that have shaped the development of visual forms and practices across time.

A general introduction, in which the editors discuss the theoretical and pedagogical approaches shaping the contemporary study of visual culture, with particular reference to the United States, is followed by four sections, each covering a defined chronological period: 1861-1929; 1929-1963; 1963-1980; 1980 to the present. Each section opens with an introduction by the editors, giving historical and cultural context and highlighting thematic and pedagogical links between essays. An annotated bibliography of suggested further reading completes this invaluable and unique resource for the student and teacher of modern American art, media and culture. Illustrated.

*Architecture Theory: A Reader in Philosophy and Culture*, edited by Andrew Ballantyne (New York: Continuum, 2005).

In bringing critical theory and Continental philosophy to bear upon architecture, *Architecture Theory* provides a solid framework for a fully up-to-date theory of architecture, one that reflects the latest developments and concerns.

The book is divided into four sections-groundwork; constructing the "individual"; pluralities; instrumentality-each covering a core theme in contemporary architecture theory. Each section begins with an introductory essay by Andrew Ballantyne, followed by a selection of writings on architecture and other related cultural concerns from major contemporary thinkers, including Zizek, Irigaray, Lefebvre, Lyotard, Kristeva, Nancy, Virilio, Deleuze and Negri.

Madalina Diaconu, *Touch, Smell, Taste, An Aesthetics of the Anesthetized Senses* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005).

(Published in German as *Tasten, Riechen, Schmecken, Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne*)

Philosophy has relied on the traditional primacy of the visual (and partially acoustic) experience in Western metaphysics and considered the senses of touch, smell, and taste inferior, mere

bodily and therefore "secondary." These senses were twice "anesthetized" in the modern West: They were considered unable to produce art forms; and the process of civilization was not interested in their education, which led to their physical underdevelopment. The academic "silence" on touch, smell, and taste is due to the absence of a specific sensory education, to the terminological imprecision concerning their experience, as well as to culturally deep rooted preconceptions. The scientific investigation of these senses began recently and still lacks a general theoretical foundation.

The present work attempts to undertake a comprehensive philosophical analysis of the haptic, olfactory, and gustatory experiences and to work out an aesthetics of their artistic forms, guided mainly by phenomenological theories, but taking also into account recent studies scattered in disciplines like biology, psychology, psychoanalysis, urbanism, cultural and historical anthropology, art history, etc., The research sets forth the idea of grounding the art theory on "aesthetics" and on the anthropology of the senses, and argues the necessity to extend the realm of aesthetics to configurations addressed to all senses, including design, urbanism, perfumery, and gastronomy. To summarize, aesthetics should perform a "cultural turn" and become cultural and environmental.

The present research carries out phenomenological analyses of the experiences of touch, smell, and taste, partly in contrast with sight. Particularly they stress on the contribution of these senses to the constitution of the personal identity, on their social functions (to ground communities, but also as means of social distinction), and on their ethical implications (tactfulness, flair, sagacitas and sapientia referred initially to touch, smell, and taste). Also discussed is the usual association of the "secondary senses" with women, children, non-Western "primitives" and with the fascination of exotic places. Despite various difficulties in working out an aesthetics of touch, smell, and taste (due to their affective, subjective, ephemeral, and synesthetic character, etc.), upon closer inspection the distinction de jure between "aesthetic" and "non-aesthetic" senses proves to be untenable, and the demarcation line between art and non-art (the aesthetic border) to be relative to the cultural field in which our experience is embedded.

Extended analyses deal with the suggestion of haptic qualities in the fine arts, with tattoo, dance and with the artistic experience of the blind people. Smells are either indirectly evoked in painting or are present as such in contemporary installations, in synaesthetic art forms (garden, architecture, urban "smellscapes", avant-garde experiments, etc.). The objections of the philosophers against an olfactory aesthetics were invalidated by perfumers in their writings, while the gastronomical styles and the various manifestations of Eat-Art actualize in two most different manners the aesthetic potential of the sense of taste.

Patina, atmosphere and aroma were related originally with the experience of touch, smell, and taste, but they turn out to be relevant also as general aesthetic values. Since their subject is partly pre-reflexive, pre-intentional and collective, such phenomena represent a challenge to the classical

phenomenological theory. The specificity of touch, smell, and taste impacts also the theoretical discourse: their tendency to synaesthesia makes inevitable the use of metaphors, while their essential temporality is most accurately reproduced in a narrative manner. Moreover, the experience of these three senses rehabilitates non-semantic criteria of the aesthetic experience, particularly sensibility. Sensitiveness refers not only to receptivity and vulnerability, but also to sharpness and tactfulness, designating generally the aptitude to apprehend fine differences in the realm of perception, feeling, and interpretation. Finally, sensibility is emphasized as a basic condition of the aesthetic experience and even as the primary foundation of an aesthetics of the "secondary" senses.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, trans. Oliver Davis (Routledge, 2005).

In 1948 Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote and delivered on French radio a series of seven lectures on the theme of perception. Translated here into English for the first time, they offer a lucid and concise insight into one of the great philosophical minds of the twentieth-century.

The lectures explore themes central not only to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy but phenomenology as a whole. He begins by rejecting the idea, inherited from Descartes and influential within science, that perception is unreliable, prone to distort the world around us. Merleau-Ponty instead argues that perception is inseparable from our senses and it is how we make sense of the world. Merleau-Ponty explores this guiding theme through a series of reflections on science, space, our relationships with others, animal life and art. Throughout, he argues that perception is never something learned and then applied to the world. As creatures with embodied minds, he reminds us that we are born perceiving and share with other animals and infants a state of constant, raw, unpredictable contact with the world. He provides vivid examples with the help of Kafka, animal behaviour and above all modern art, particularly the work of Cezanne.

Robert Yanal, *Hitchcock as Philosopher* (McFarland, 2005).

This book looks at 12 Hitchcock films and the positions they put forth on three problem areas of epistemology: deception, knowledge of mind, and problematic knowledge of the external world. These philosophical concepts are explained and woven into the author's thorough and thought-provoking discussion of each film. Descartes and Wittengenstein star; Plato, Locke, Hume, Kant and Kierkegaard also make appearances in this new "philosopher's cut" of the master's works.

Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

The companion volume to Berleant's recent *Re-thinking Aesthetics*, the essays collected in *Aesthetics and Environment* comprise a set of variations on art and culture guided by the theme of environment. The essays deal with the physical reality of environment such as the city, the shore, the water and the garden, but also with the virtual environment and the social one. Environmental aesthetics is a theme whose variations are as endless as the possibilities of the human

performers and conditions

from which it is fashioned.

This enticing set of essays testifies to Berleant's special talent in moving between both natural and human environments and opens out the contemporary discussion beyond that of the wilderness to the cultural and social environment. Berleant argues that neither the natural nor

human environment stands alone and both are best understood as distinctions that are in experience coextensive, that one can only speak of environment in relation to human experience. The theme of this book is that such experience suffuses the so-called natural world and shapes the human world. It maintains the idea that in as much as people are embedded in these worlds, relationships, including human relationships, are part of them. The melding of these two worlds leads Berleant to defend ultimately what he has termed "social aesthetics."

Thomas Heyd and John Clegg, eds., *Aesthetics and Rock Art* (Ashgate, Oxon, UK, 2005).

*Aesthetics and Rock Art* analyzes rock art research, which is the study of painting and drawing on rock surfaces made by peoples from long ago through to the present. The editors have collected sixteen essays that illustrate how an approach stemming from aesthetics adds to the understanding of rock art, and how a focus on rock art can contribute to new perspectives in aesthetics.

*Aesthetics and Rock Art* is divided into three parts: The Role of Aesthetics in Rock Art Research, Aesthetic Appreciation of Rock Art: Constitutive Factors, and Case Studies: Opportunities and Tensions in Cross-Cultural Appreciation. Included among the essays are: "Paleolithic Cave Painting: a Test Case for Trans-Cultural Aesthetics," by Peter Lamarque; "Illuminations and Reflections: Looking at Scandinavian Rock Carvings," by John Coles; "Aesthetics across Time and Place: An Anthropological Perspective on Archaeology," by Howard Morphy; and "Seeing is Deceiving: Rock Art and the Non-Visual," by Sven Ouzman. *Aesthetics and Rock Art* is the first treatment of the subject of rock art research that analyzes it from an aesthetic perspective.

*The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, edited by Peter Kivy (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

These essays develop the themes, discuss the problems of, and evaluate the arguments on central issues in contemporary aesthetics, with eighteen new papers on the evaluation of art, the interpretation of art, and other forms of art such as literature, movies, and music.

*Difference and Excess in Contemporary Art: The Visibility of Women's Practice*, edited by Gill Perry (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

Exploring the increasing visibility of women's art in Britain, Europe and America, this book locates contemporary women's art within overlapping historical, cultural and post-colonial frameworks.

*Art: History: Visual: Culture*, edited by Deborah Cherry (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

This collection of essays contributes to the debate on visual culture and its relationship to art history by exploring the ways in which art history exceeds the visual.

*Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, edited by Zoya Kocur & Simon Leung (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

An anthology that focuses on key theoretical and aesthetic issues in contemporary art in cultural, historical, and socio-political contexts --such as cultural/multicultural theory, identity politics, AIDS, post-colonialism, globalization, and spectatorship -- the selections map out the role that critical theory has played in contemporary art.

Matthew Kieran, *Revealing Art* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Kieran explores questions we can ask ourselves about art: How can it inspire us or disgust us? Is artistic judgement simply a matter of taste? Can art be immoral or obscene and should it be censored? Discussions of individual paintings, photographs and sculptures, such as Michelangelo's *Pieta*, Andre Serrano's *Piss Christ*, and Francis Bacon's paintings of the Pope, illustrate these issues and help to suggest answers to the following: What is a beautiful work of art? Can art reveal something true about our own nature?

Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, 2d edition (New York: Routledge, April 2005).

Sixty-two chapters covering all aspects of aesthetics, the volume is structured in four parts: History, Aesthetic Theory, Issues and Challenges, and Individual Arts. The second edition includes eight new entries: Creativity; Schopenhauer, Schiller and Schelling; Nelson Goodman; Style; Feminism; Ontology; Heidegger; Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, as well as revisions to existing entries and an updating of further reading.

Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes, eds., *Imagination, Philosophy and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Contributors are: Berys Gaut, Stacie Friend, Peter Goldie, James Shelley, Saam Trivedi, Matthew Kieran, Derek Matravers, Kathleen Stock, Eileen John, Roman Bonzon, Dominic McIver Lopes, David Davies, Christopher Williams, Tamar Szabo Gendler, Robert Hopkins and Gregory Curry.

Stephen Zepke, *Art as Abstract Machine: Ontology and Aesthetics in Deleuze and Guattari*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).

The aim of this book is to understand what Deleuze and Guattari mean by 'art.' For them, understanding what art 'is' means understanding how it works, what it does, how it 'becomes' and how it lives. Zepke argues that art, in their account, is an ontological term and an ontological practice that results in a new understanding of aesthetics.

Crispin Sartwell, *Six Names of Beauty*, (New York: Routledge,

2004).

Sartwell begins with six words from six different cultures: ancient Greek's 'to kalon,' the Japanese idea of 'wabi-sabi,' Hebrew's 'yapha,' the Navajo concept 'hozho,' Sanskrit 'sundara,' and English-language 'beauty,' and uses them a way to examine what is beautiful in the world and in our lives.

James Kirwan, *Sublimity: The Non-Rational and the Rational in the History of Aesthetics*, (New York: Routledge, May 2005).

Analyzes the concept of the sublime as it developed from the eighteenth century ideas of Burke and his contemporaries through Kant and the Romantics up to Lyotard and other postmodern thinkers.

Sylvère Lotringer and Paul Virilio, *The Accident of Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

In this dialogue with Sylvère Lotringer, Paul Virilio argues that "the art of the motor" (electronics, computer, Internet, etc.) has surpassed the static nature of the visual arts. Digital technology has replaced the analogical, and art has become extra-retinal. This critique is not a condemnation; an accident is always positive and reveals something that otherwise would not have been perceived. Such acknowledgment is a sign of hope.

Irving Singer, *Three Philosophical Filmmakers: Hitchcock, Wells, Renoir* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

Each of these filmmakers expresses, through his work, his particular vision of reality. Here, Singer examines the ways in which meaning and technique interact within their different visions.

Lorraine Daston, ed., *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science*

Each of these essays singles out one object for close attention: a Bosch drawing, the freestanding column, a Prussian island, soap bubbles, early photographs, glass flowers, Rorschach blots, newspaper clippings, paintings by Jackson Pollock. Neither the pure texts of semiotics nor the brute objects of positivism, these things are saturated with cultural significance. Here, historians of art and of science seek to understand how objects become charged with significance without losing their materiality.

Caroline van Eck and Edward Winters, eds., *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, April 2005).

Can paintings, buildings or installations be "read" in the way texts are read or deciphered, or do works of visual art ask for their own kind of appreciation? *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture* approaches this question from the angles of three disciplines: aesthetics, visual culture and art history. Including both painting and architecture, it investigates historical ways of defining and appreciating the visual in their own, contemporary terms.

M.W. Rowe, *Philosophy and Literature: A Book of Essays*

(Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

Bringing together eight previously published essays and a substantial new study of Larki, M. W. Rowe emphasizes the profound affinities between philosophy and literature. Topics include Goethe and Wittgenstein; the definition of "art"; criticism without theory; and poetry and abstraction.

François Julien, *In Praise of Blandness: Proceeding from Chinese Thought and Aesthetics*, trans. By Paula M. Varsano (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

This work of philosophy, anthropology, aesthetics and sinology traces the elusive appearance and crucial value of blandness from its beginnings in Daoist and Confucian traditions to its integration into literary and visual aesthetics in the late-medieval period and beyond. Using the richness of bland sound, a bland meaning, a bland painting, and a bland poem, the value of blandness is presented through many concrete examples and original texts.

Katherine Norman, *Sounding Art: Eight Literary Excursions through Electronic Music* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

*Sounding Art* traverses a variety of aesthetic approaches to making electronic music. Writing from a personal perspective, this is a book about what sound might mean -- the essays are literary compositions whose structure, language and visual appearance are carefully constructed to amplify their theme.

Babette E. Babich, *Hermeneutic Philosophy of Science, Van Gogh's Eyes, and God: Essays in Honor of Patrick A. Heelan, S.J.* (The Netherlands: Kluwer, 2002).

This volume bridges analytic and hermeneutic and phenomenological philosophy of science and serves as a resource for students of the history and philosophy of art. Of special interest is the new technology of variational graphic representations with the insights (and mathematical apparatus) of Patrick Heelan's work on the perception of space and the history of art, particularly the work of Cézanne and Van Gogh.

Jonathan Friday, *Aesthetics and Photography* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

Philip Pothen, *Nietzsche and the Fate of Art* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2004).

Reviewers found this book to be an "interesting and challenging book that casts new light on Nietzsche's conception and evaluation of art," and "clearly written, well argued and supported by excellent scholarship."

Kirk Pillow, *Sublime Understanding: Aesthetic Reflection in Kant and Hegel* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

In *Sublime Understanding*, Kirk Pillow makes sublimity the center of an alternative conception of aesthetic response and interpretation. He draws on aesthetics of sublimity from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, bolsters it with help from Hegel, and establishes its place in a broadened conception of human understanding. He argues that sublime reflection provides a



model for an interpretive response to the uncanny Other outside our conceptual grasp; it advances our sense-making pursuits but eschews unified, conceptual determination. Thus "sublime understanding" is the always partial, indeterminate grasping of contextual wholes through which we make sense of the uncanny particular in both art and the lived world.

Georges Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture* (Zone Books 2005, dist. By MIT Press).

Collects essays and lectures by Georges Bataille spanning 30 years of research in anthropology, comparative religion, aesthetics, and philosophy. Bataille reaches beyond disciplinary specializations to imagine a moment when thought was universal. His work provides a model for interdisciplinary, speaking to philosophers and historians of thought, to anthropologists interested in the history of their discipline and in new methodologies, to theologians and religious comparatists interested in the origins and nature of man's encounter with the sacred, and to art historians and aestheticians grappling with the place of prehistory in the canons of art.

James J. Winchester, *Aesthetics Across the Color Line: Why Nietzsche (Sometimes) Can't Sing the Blues* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2002).

"A critical encounter between continental philosophical aesthetics and some key works from 20th-century black Americans."

Robert Stecker, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, March 2005).

Provides a concise, readable introduction to the key questions and concerns of aesthetics and the philosophy of art, including the nature, ontology, interpretation, representation, and expression of art, artistic value, and the interaction of aesthetic and ethical values in art.