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# Contemporary AESTHETICS

An international, interdisciplinary, peer- and blind-reviewed open-access online journal of contemporary theory, research, and application in aesthetics.

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*Philosophical Perspectives on Ruins, Monuments, and Memorials*, edited by Jeanette Bicknell, Jennifer Judkins, Carolyn Korsmeyer (Routledge, 2019), 304 pp.  
ISBN 9781138504691

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This collection of newly published essays examines our relationship to physical objects that invoke, commemorate, and honor the past. The recent destruction of cultural heritage in war and controversies over Civil War monuments in the US have foregrounded the importance of artifacts that embody history. The book invites us to ask: How do memorials convey their meanings? What is our responsibility for the preservation or reconstruction of historically significant structures? How should we respond when the public display of a monument divides a community? This anthology includes coverage of the destruction of Palmyra and the Bamiyan Buddhas, the loss of cultural heritage through war and natural disasters, the explosive controversies surrounding Confederate-era monuments, and the decay of industry in the U.S. Rust Belt. The authors consider issues of preservation and reconstruction, the nature of ruins, the aesthetic and ethical values of memorials, and the relationship of cultural memory to material artifacts that remain from the past. Written by a group of philosophers, art historians, and archeologists, the 23 chapters cover monuments and

memorials from Dubai to Detroit, from the instant destruction of Hiroshima to the gradual sinking of Venice.

*The Philosophy of Rhythm*, eds. Peter Cheyne, Andy Hamilton & Max Paddison (Oxford University Press, December 2019), 432 pp.

ISBN 9780199347780

Rhythm is the fundamental pulse that animates poetry, music, and dance across all cultures. And yet the recent explosion of scholarly interest across disciplines in the aural dimensions of aesthetic experience—particularly in sociology, cultural and media theory, and literary studies—has yet to explore this category. This book furthers the discussion of rhythm beyond the discrete conceptual domains and technical vocabularies of musicology and prosody. With essays by philosophers, psychologists, musicians, literary theorists, and ethnomusicologists, *The Philosophy of Rhythm* opens up wider-and plural-perspectives, examining formal affinities between the historically interconnected fields of music, dance, and poetry, while addressing concepts such as embodiment, movement, pulse, and performance. Volume editors Peter Cheyne, Andy Hamilton, and Max Paddison bring together a range of questions: What is the distinction between rhythm and pulse? What is the relationship between everyday embodied experience, and the specific experience of music, dance, and poetry? Can aesthetics offer an understanding of rhythm that helps inform our responses to visual and other arts, as well as music, dance, and poetry? And, what is the relation between psychological conceptions of entrainment, and the humane concept of rhythm and meter?

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-philosophy-of-rhythm-9780199347780?q=cheyne&lang=en&cc=jp#>

Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Things: In Touch with the Past* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 232 pp.

ISBN 9780190904876

*Things: In Touch with the Past* explores the value of artifacts that have survived from the past and that can be said to “embody” their histories. Such genuine or “real” things afford a particular kind of aesthetic experience—an encounter with the past—despite the fact that genuineness is not a perceptually detectable property. Although it often goes unnoticed, the sense of touch underlies such encounters, even though one is often not permitted literal touch.

Carolyn Korsmeyer begins her account with the claim that wonder or marvel at old things fits within an “experiential” account of the aesthetic. She then presents her main argument regarding the role of touch—both when literal contact is made and when proximity suffices, for touch is a fundamental sense that registers bodily position and location. Correct understanding of the identity of objects is presumed when one values things just because of what they are, and with discovery that a mistake has been made, admiration is often withdrawn. Far from undermining the importance of the genuine, these errors of identification confirm it. Korsmeyer elaborates this position with a comparison between valuing artifacts and valuing persons. She also considers the ethical issues of genuineness, for artifacts can be harmed in various ways ranging from vandalism to botched restoration. She examines the differences between a real thing and a replica in detail, making it clear that genuineness comes in degrees. Her final chapter reviews the ontology that best suits an account of persistence over time of things that are valued for being the real thing.

Ivan Gaskell, *Paintings and the Past: Philosophy, History, Art* (Routledge, 2019), 246 pp.  
ISBN 978-0367189372

This book is an exploration of how art—specifically paintings in the European manner—can be mobilized to make knowledge claims about the past. No type of human-made tangible thing makes more complex and bewildering demands in this respect than paintings. Ivan Gaskell argues that the search for pictorial meaning in paintings yields limited results and should be replaced by attempts to define the *point* of such things, which is cumulative and ever subject to change. He shows that while it is not possible to define what art is—other than being an open kind—it is possible to define what a painting is, as a species of drawing, regardless of whether that painting is an artwork or not at any given time.

The book demonstrates that things can be artworks on some occasions but not necessarily on others, though it is easier for a thing to acquire artwork status than to lose it. That is, the movement of a thing into and out of the artworld is not symmetrical. All such considerations are properly matters not of ontology—what is and what is not an artwork—but of use; that is, how a thing might or might not function as an artwork under any given circumstances. These considerations necessarily affect the approach to paintings that at any given time might be able to function as an artwork or might not be able to function as

such. Only by taking these factors into account can anyone make viable knowledge about the past.

This discussion ranges over innumerable examples of paintings, from Rembrandt to Rothko, as well as plenty of far less familiar material from contemporary Catholic devotional works to the Chinese avant garde. Its aim is to enhance philosophical acuity in respect of the analysis of paintings, and to increase their amenability to philosophically satisfying historical use. *Paintings and the Past* is a text for all advanced students and scholars concerned with philosophy of art, aesthetics, historical method, and art history.

*On the Ugly: Aesthetic Exchanges*, edited by Jane Forsey and Lars Aagaard-Mogensen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 150 p.  
ISBN 978-1-5275-3523-7

This collection of eight essays offers fresh approaches to the investigation of the concept of ugliness. It is divided into three parts: the idea of ugliness; Kantian conceptions of the ugly; and ugliness and art. The papers in all three sections deal with problems in the way that aesthetics has understood the concept of the ugly, in aesthetic experience, in fine art, and in contrast with the beautiful. These are new papers from a range of scholars from diverse philosophical backgrounds, and use the most recent literature in their areas of expertise. As a collection of the latest research in this field, it will make a contribution to recent and growing theoretical interest in the place of the ugly in aesthetics.

*Paths from the Philosophy of Art to Everyday Aesthetics*, edited by Oiva Kuisma, Sanna Lehtinen and Harri Mäcklin (University of Helsinki, 2019), 232 p.  
ISBN 978-952-94-1878-7

During the past few decades, everyday aesthetics has established itself as a new branch of philosophical aesthetics alongside the more traditional philosophy of art. *Paths from the Philosophy of Art to Everyday Aesthetics* explores the intimate relations between these two branches of contemporary aesthetics. The essays collected in this volume discuss a wide range of topics from aesthetic intimacy to the nature of modernity and the essence of everydayness, which play important roles both in the philosophy of art and everyday aesthetics. The list of authors includes Morten Kyndrup, Ossi Naukkarinen, Francisca Pérez-Carreño and Richard Shusterman. With their essays, the writers and editors of this volume wish to

commemorate Professor Arto Haapala (University of Helsinki, Finland) on his 60th birthday.

The book is downloadable for free at <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/302115>.

Maurizio Lazzarato, *Videophilosophy: the Perception of Time in Post-Fordism*, edited and translated by Jay Hetrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 276 pp.  
ISBN 9780231175395

The Italian philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato has been known for his analysis of contemporary capitalism, in particular his concept of immaterial labor and his writings on debt. In *Videophilosophy*, he reveals the underpinnings of contemporary subjectivity in the aesthetics and politics of mass media. The text was first written in French and published in Italian, it was then later revised but never published in full. This publication discloses the conceptual groundwork of Lazzarato's thought as a whole for a time when his writings have become increasingly relevant.

Drawing on Bergson, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, and the film theory and practice of Dziga Vertov, Lazzarato constructs a new philosophy of media that ties political economy to the politics of aesthetics. Through his concept of "machines that crystallize time," he argues that the proliferation of digital technologies over the past half-century marks the transition to a new mode of capitalist production characterized by unprecedented forms of subjection. This new era of the commodification of the self, Lazzarato declares, demands novel types of political action that challenge the commercialization and exploitation of time. This text offers new perspectives on aesthetics, politics, and media and critical theory.

Wangheng Chen, *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*, translated by Feng Su, edited by Gerald Cipriani (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 212 pp.  
ISBN 9780815364276

China is currently afflicted by enormous environmental problems. This book, drawing on ancient and modern Chinese environmental thinking, considers what it is that makes an environment a desirable place for living. The book emphasizes ideas of beauty and discusses how these ideas can be applied in natural, agricultural, and urban environments in order to produce desirable environments. The book argues that environment is both a product of nature and of human beings, and as such has the potential to be altered by culture. The book explores the three aspects of environmental beauty whereby

such alteration might be beneficial: integrated and holistic; ecological and man-made; and authentic and everyday.

This book addresses environmental issues by suggesting that an aesthetic approach inspired by ancient Chinese tradition could help us overcome the many problems that human beings have created at local and global levels. Although its main focus is the traditional and current contexts of the People's Republic of China, the book transcends national borders. An example of this global context is the ancient Chinese thought system and cultural practice of *Feng Shui* (éç " æ°´) that sought to negotiate how the natural environment and human constructions can cohabit without destructing each other. The author evokes that sought-after harmony through the powerful image of "gardens of life." The environmental beauty of these gardens can be found in traditional Chinese gardens and palaces as well as in historically and culturally preserved cities.

*Visuality from Intercultural Perspectives: Technologies of Imaging in Communication, Art and Social Science*, edited by Michael Flemming and Aleksandra Åłukaszewicz Alcaraz, (Szczecin/London: Puno Press, 2018), 224 pp. ISBN 978-0-9568839-5-7

This collection of essays centers on visual communication. Contributors to the volume investigate how different visual literacies shape communication within and between different communities and the cultural specificities of visual literacy in business practices in different places. The essays offer theoretical insight and provide case studies on visual communication. Public art, new media, and architecture are among the topics discussed.

John M. Carvalho, *Thinking with Images: an Activist Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2018), 160 pp. ISBN 9781138616028

This book advances an enactivist theory of aesthetics through the study of inscrutable artworks that challenge us to think because we do not know what to think about them. John M. Carvalho presents detailed analyses a four artworks that share this unique characteristic: Francis Bacon's *Study After Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953), the photographs of Duane Michals, based on a retrospective of his work, *Storyteller*, at the Carnegie Museum of Art (2014), *Étant donnés* (1968) by Marcel Duchamp, and Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film *Le Mépris* (released in the United States as *Contempt*). Carvalho argues against the application of theory to derive appreciation

or meaning from these artistic works. Rather, each study enacts an embodied cognitive engagement with the specific artworks intended to demonstrate the value of thinking about artworks that might be extended to our engagement with the world in general. This thinking happens, as these studies show, when we trust our embodied skills and their guide to what artworks and the world around us afford for the activation and refinement of those skills. Thinking with Images will be of interest to scholars working in the philosophy of art and philosophical aesthetics, as well as art historians concerned with the meaning and value of contemporary art.

Tanya Whitehouse, *How Ruins Acquire Aesthetic Value: Modern Ruins, Ruin Porn, and the Ruin Tradition* (Palgrave Pivot: 2018), 122 pp.  
ISBN 978-3-030-03065-0

This book provides a philosophical account of how ruins acquire aesthetic value. It draws on a variety of sources to explore modern ruins, the ruin tradition, and the phenomenon of “ruin porn.” It features a combination of philosophical analysis, the author’s photography, and reviews of both new and historically influential case studies, including Richard Haag’s Gas Works Park, the ruins of Detroit, and remnants of the steel industry of Pennsylvania. Tanya Whitehouse shows how the users of ruins can become architects of a new order, transforming derelict sites into aesthetically significant places we should preserve.

Emily Brady, Isis Brook, Jonathan Prior, *Between Nature and Culture: The Aesthetics of Modified Environments* (Rowan & Littlefield International, 2018), 144 pp.  
ISBN 9781786610768

Within philosophy, an interest in aesthetics beyond the arts has encouraged the rapid growth of environmental aesthetics. Within this literature, however, less attention has been given to the spaces and places that emerge from various nature-culture interactions. This has meant the relative neglect of types of environments to which the majority of people have access, and interact with, in a sustained manner. In this respect, these are the environments in which many of us understand and value nature. Through a greater understanding of how humans interact with these environments and the types of relationships that emerge through this interaction, the authors seek to address this gap. *Between Nature and Culture* provides a systematic, philosophical account of the main issues and problems that pertain to the aesthetics of modified environments, as well as insights concerning the generation and appreciation of landscapes and environments that fall between (non-human) nature and (human) culture, including gardens,

agricultural and ecologically restored landscapes, and land and ecological art works.

John Powell, *Dancing with Time: The Garden as Art* (Hachette livre, 2019), 200 pp.  
ISBN 978-1789971415

Gardens provoke thought and engagement in ways that are often overlooked. This book shines new light on long-held assumptions about gardens and proposes novel ways in which we might reconsider them. The author challenges traditional views of how we experience gardens, how we might think of gardens as works of art, and how the everyday materials of gardens – plants, light, water, earth – may become artful.

The author provides a detailed analysis of Tupare, a garden in New Zealand, and uses it as source material for his analysis of the philosophical issues art gardens raise. His new account of gardens highlights the polymodal, multi-sensory, and improvisatory character of the garden experience. It offers an ontological comparison between gardens and humans and other animals, and it explains how identical plants, and arrangements of plants, may be mundane when encountered beyond the garden but artful, meaningful, and aesthetically valuable when experienced within it. The content of Chapter 5 had its beginnings in “What is Temporal Art? A Persistent Question Revisited” published in *Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 13 (2015).

*Stanley Cavell on Aesthetic Understanding*, edited by Gary L. Hagberg (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 356 p.  
ISBN 978-3-319-97465-1

This book investigates the scope and significance of Stanley Cavell’s lifelong and lasting contribution to aesthetic understanding. Focusing on various strands of the rich body of Cavell’s philosophical work, the authors explore connections between his wide-ranging writings on literature, music, film, opera, autobiography, Wittgenstein, and Austin to contemporary currents in aesthetic thinking. Most centrally, the writings brought together here from an international team of scholars explore the illuminating power of Cavell’s work for our deeper and richer comprehension of the intricate relations between aesthetic and ethical understanding. The chapters show what aesthetic understanding consists of, how such understanding might be articulated in the tradition of Cavell following Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin, and why this mode of human understanding is particularly important. At a time of quickening interest in Cavell and the tradition of which he is a central part and present-day leading exponent, this book offers insight into

the contributions of a major American philosopher and the profound role that aesthetic experience can play in the humane understanding of persons, society, and culture.

Stephen Snyder, *End-of-Art Philosophy in Hegel, Nietzsche and Danto* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 301 pp.  
ISBN 978-3-319-94071-7

This book examines the little understood end-of-art theses of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Danto. The end-of-art claim is often associated with the end of a certain standard of taste or skill. However, at a deeper level, it relates to a transformation in how we philosophically understand our relation to the 'world.' Hegel, Nietzsche, and Danto each strive philosophically to overcome Cartesian dualism, redrawing the traditional lines between mind and matter. Hegel sees the overcoming of the material in the ideal, Nietzsche levels the two worlds into one, and Danto divides the world into representing and non-representing material. These attempts to overcome dualism necessitate notions of the self that differ significantly from traditional accounts; the redrawn boundaries show that art and philosophy grasp essential but different aspects of human existence. Neither perspective, however, fully grasps the duality. The appearance of art's end occurs when one aspect is given priority: for Hegel and Danto, it is the essentialist lens of philosophy and, in Nietzsche's case, the transformative power of artistic creativity. Thus, the book makes the case that the end-of-art claim is avoided if a theory of art links the internal practice of artistic creation to all of art's historical forms.

Barry Stocker, *Philosophy of the Novel* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 321 pp.  
ISBN 978-3-319-65891-9

This book explores the aesthetics of the novel from the perspective of Continental European philosophy, presenting a theory on the philosophical definition and importance of the novel as a literary genre. It analyzes a variety of individuals whose work is reflected in both theoretical literary criticism and Continental European aesthetics, including Mikhail Bakhtin, Georg Lukács, Theodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin. Moving through material from eighteenth century and ancient Greek philosophy and aesthetics, the book provides comprehensive coverage of the major positions on the philosophy of the novel. Distinctive features include the importance of Vico's view of the epic to understanding the novel, the importance of Kierkegaard's view of the novel and irony along with his other aesthetic views, the different possibilities associated with seeing the novel as 'mimetic' and the importance of Proust in understanding the genre in all its philosophical aspects. This study relates the philosophical aesthetics of the novel with the

issue of philosophy written as a novel and the interaction between these two alternative positions.

Maryvonne Saison, *La Nature artiste. Mikel Dufrenne de l'esthétique au politique* [in French] (*Nature as Artist: Mikel Dufrenne, from aesthetics to politics*)(Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne, 2018).

ISBN 979-10-351-0098-8

Mikel Dufrenne was preoccupied by the main philosophical issues of the second half of the twentieth century. He considered them with critical interest, concerned to find a unique approach that would be both specific and rigorous, and that could sit comfortably with the tradition of philosophical thought.

The changes in the reception of his work are worth noting. Praised in the 1950s, interest slowly declined in France, especially in the 1970s, but today his work is the subject of renewed interest. This study explains how such variations were the result of a common misunderstanding that regarded Dufrenne as the author of a single book, the *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (*The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*). This book, taken alone, does not enable one to understand the originality of his work as a whole. To read Dufrenne more fully is to discover the importance of his ethical and political thinking. We can recognize the strength of a mind dedicated to the defense of the values of "the human." The reader will also take pleasure in understanding the philosophical fictions proposed by Dufrenne in response to the temptation to rationalize a worldview by a philosophy of Nature supported by *a priori* thinking. The unity of his work resides in the hypothesis of Nature as an artist that Dufrenne developed within the frame of a non-theological philosophy.

Ranjan K. Ghosh, *Essays in Literary Aesthetics* (Springer Singapore, 2018), 82 pp.

ISBN 78-981-13-2459-8

*Essays in Literary Aesthetics* deals with philosophical issues concerning the understanding of the literary text and its distinctive nature, meaning, and relevance to life. It also provides an occasion to revisit many ideas towards these ends by contextualizing them in the current ongoing philosophical discourse on art in general, and literary art in particular. Some of the questions addressed in this book are: What is a literary text? What do we understand by the concept of intention in the context of literary arts? Are the feelings experienced in a literary

text *real*? What, then, is the sense of “truth” in literature which is fictional in character? What relevance do moral concerns and perceptions have in appreciation of the literary text? These are some of the questions that are dealt with by critically responding to views of contemporary thinkers. In short, the book makes an attempt to provide a critical overview of contemporary debates and discussions of literary aesthetics mainly from a Western analytical perspective. The author argues that understanding a literary text is not a *purely* cognitive exercise; on the contrary, we experience aesthetic meaning or truth in terms of valuable insights that play a role in our understanding of life and emotions.

*William Desmond's Philosophy between Metaphysics, Religion, Ethics, and Aesthetics: Thinking Metaxologically*, edited by Dennis Vandeen Auweele (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 343 pp. ISBN 978-3-319-98991-4

This volume collects seventeen new essays by established and junior scholars on the philosophical relevance of metaxological philosophy and its main proponent, William Desmond. The volume mines metaxological thought for its salience in contemporary discussions in Continental philosophy, specifically in the fields of metaphysics, philosophy of religion, ethics, and aesthetics. Among others, topics under discussion include the goodness of being, the existence and nature of God, and the aesthetic dimensions of human becoming. Interest in metaxological philosophy has been on the rise in recent years, and this volume provides both a practical introduction and thorough engagements with it by scholars in the field. The volume concludes with a series of responses by William Desmond on the issues raised by the contributors.

Ellen Winner, *How Art Works: A Psychological Exploration* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 304 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-0863357

*How Art Works* explores puzzles that have preoccupied philosophers as well as the general public: Can art be defined? How do we decide what is good art? Why do we gravitate to sadness in art? Why do we devalue a perfect fake? Could “my kid have done that?” Does reading fiction enhance empathy? Drawing on the methods of social science using careful observations, probing interviews, and clever experiments, Ellen Winner reveals surprising answers to these and other artistic mysteries. We come away with a new understanding of how art works on us.

Max Rynnänen & Zoltan Somhegyi, *Learning from Decay: Essays on the Aesthetics of Architectural Dereliction and Its Consumption* (Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Warszawa, Wien: Peter Lang, 2018), 117 pp.  
ISBN 978-3-631-74404-8

Architectural decay and the reasons, effects, appearance, and representation of ruination have always been important sources of understanding the state of our culture. The essays in this co-written book offer broad perspectives on the potential of ruins, on the use and appropriation of derelict architecture, and on the aesthetics and touristification of places by analyzing a variety of phenomena that range from classical to fake ruins, from historic city centres to hot dog stands, from debris to theme parks. The survey travels from Tallin through Venice and Istanbul to Beirut, discussing, among others, actual spaces, allegorical monuments, and nostalgic aestheticizations of the past in high and popular culture, thus showing numerous inspiring opportunities of learning from decay.

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