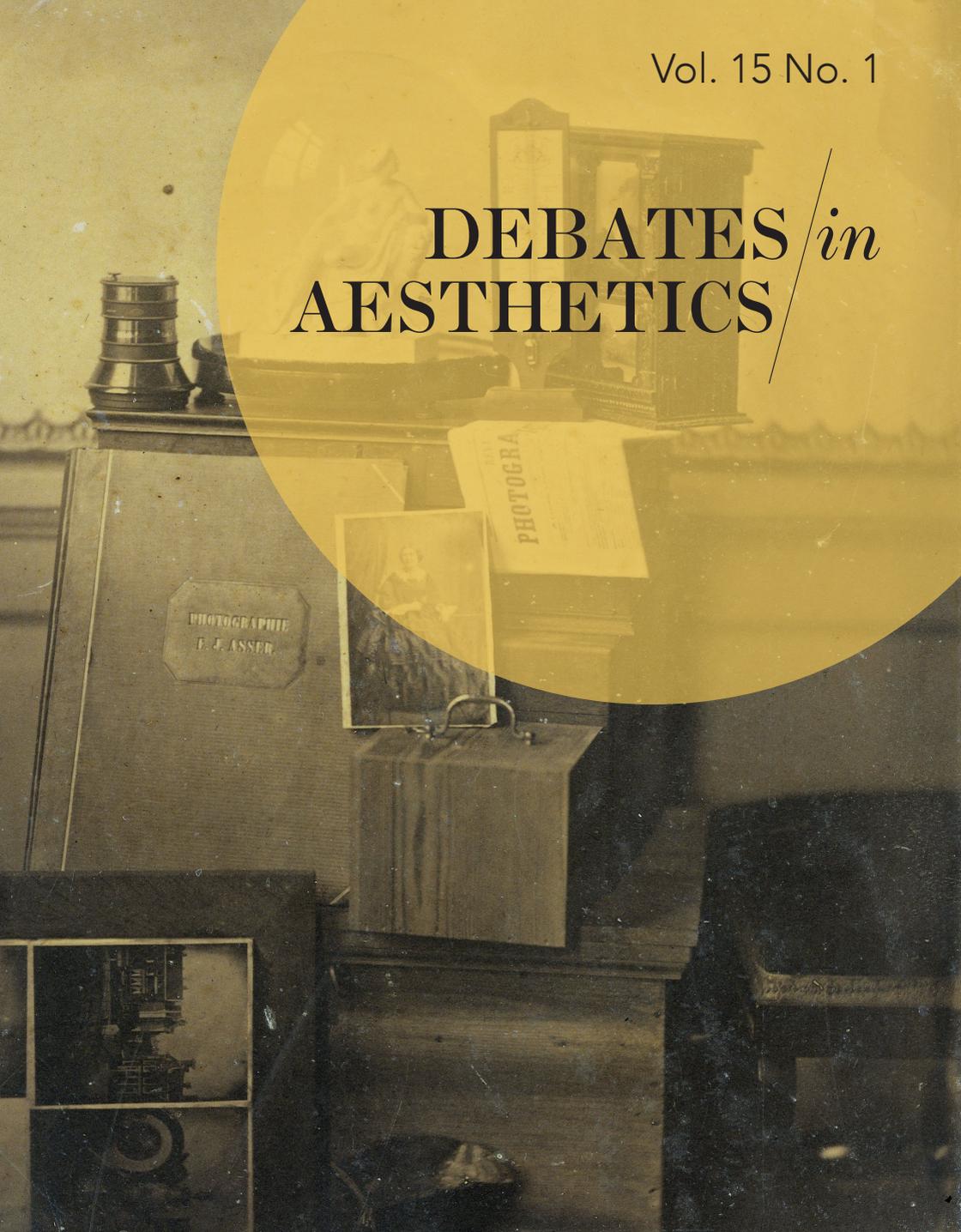


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INTRODUCTION

Claire Anscomb & Eleen M Deprez

It is our great pleasure to introduce our first issue as editors of *Debates in Aesthetics (DiA)*. In this general issue there are three original articles that range in topic from the use of technology to facilitate sublime experiences, the static-dynamic puzzle of still life works, to the role of authenticity in aesthetic appreciation. We are also happy to present an interview with Terry Diffey, emeritus professor at the University of Sussex and long-standing member of the British Society of Aesthetics.

Berta, in his article, explores technological devices that exploit the tactile sense to, via vibrations on the subject's skin, make distant events, like faraway earthquakes, or digital information, like the Stock Market, perceptible. Through his discussion of Moon Ribas' "Seismic Sense" and David Eagleman's "Versatile Extra-Sensory Transducer" (VEST) Berta distinguishes this kind of sensory alteration, which he terms "sensory augmentation", from three other kinds. He proposes that sensory augmentation enhances our sensory apparatus, making something formerly imperceptible appreciable. Technological devices, such as Seismic

Sense and VEST, are able to enhance our tactile sensory apparatus by the neuroplasticity of the brain and qualities of the skin. Berta argues that this process can alter or facilitate aesthetic experiences. Berta discusses the emotional experiences afforded by these devices (eg. feeling the closeness and immediacy of dangerous events with Seismic Sense) with the Kantian concepts of the mathematical and the dynamical sublime. He also bears on the accounts of the tactile sublime, as promulgated by Alan McNea and Carolyn Korsmeyer. Finally, Berta highlights a potential limitation to his account by noting that devices, such as the Seismic Sense and VEST, aim at sensual comprehension and so stand in contrast to the sublime as an aesthetic of failed comprehension. Berta accordingly modifies his account to conclude that sublime experiences are only possible in the early stages of using these devices, given that attention given to the sensation will likely fade with constant use of tactile sensory augmentation devices.

Berta's article offers a much-needed philosophical enquiry into the aesthetic possibilities of new and evolving digital technologies whilst relying on already existing work on the importance of touch in the arts. Berta's account remains modest in its aim as he suggests that there is a limited timeframe through which sublime experiences may be possible using these devices. Yet, one might wonder whether Berta need concede quite so much in his account. Consider for instance, the fact that, when used in an art context, audiences who encounter these devices in a gallery are not likely to have the opportunity to use these devices to the extent that they become accustomed to the sensations that they cause. Moreover, different kinds of information and different variants of these devices, beyond bracelets and VESTs for instance, will cause different kinds of outputs, and accordingly different kinds of tactile sensory augmentation. The context in which these devices are used is thus likely to shed further light on the exact nature of the sublime experiences that tactile sensory augmentation devices may foster, and as the development and use of such devices progresses, it will be intriguing to exam-

ine these in light of Berta's account in this article.

In her article, Brassey examines the "static-dynamic puzzle" whereby the representational content of still life works can be seen as expressive of emotions, despite the fact that, as paintings, still lifes are static objects that depict inanimate content. Brassey outlines several respects in which emotions are dynamic and examines one disjunct of Mitchell Green's "Expressiveness as Showing Theory", namely 'showing how E feels', which can seemingly be used to account for this puzzling phenomenon. According to Green, visual stimuli can elicit experienced resemblances to sounds, smells, and feelings, which is to say that their qualitative profiles are congruent. Qualitative profiles, as Brassey explains, refer 'to where a percept will be located along three intersecting spectrums that respectively run from (i) intense-mild to (ii) pleasant-unpleasant, and (iii) dynamic-static.' So, a yellow may be 'intense, pleasant and dynamic'. As Brassey outlines, yellow could be mapped to vanilla, the harp, or serenity. While she suggests that Green's account seems initially plausible, Brassey proceeds to highlight several concerns about Green's approach. For instance, how can Green's third disjunct cope with the fact that the painting *Sunflowers* is taken to represent joy and not vanilla? Brassey suggests that the depictive content of the work may be doing more fundamental expressive work here, which is problematic for Green. She suggests that congruency may partly describe how still lifes come to have dynamic properties, but not why particular emotions are realized. Green, she demonstrates, tries to overcome this problem by proposing that viewers empathetically attend 'to the qualitative profile of the perceptual material.' Yet, as Brassey highlights, given the distinction between expressing emotion and being expressive of emotion, Green cannot make this move, for empathy targets mental states, rather than three-space. At best, Brassey concludes, Green could say that it is moods, not emotions that are conveyed through this perceptual material.

Brassey raises some helpful concerns about Green's theory of expressiveness, framed by the question of how the representational content of still life works, which are fundamentally static, may be expressive of emotions, which are dynamic. Indeed, this focus brings to the fore, the worry that it is difficult to motivate the idea that the depictive content of the work is doing the more fundamental expressive work in a piece. Brassey indicates several possible directions that Green could go following these concerns by, for example, insisting that viewers engage in inconsistent experiences when eliciting resemblances or that 'Still Lifes convey moods not emotions.' One interesting route that follows from this, is examining whether the distinction between moods and emotions will help to address the situation. For instance, what could it mean to say that when 'reading' a still life painting, flowing brushstrokes of bright colours can call up a mood of exuberance? How does contagion work in this context? Brassey's proposed alternatives raise some intriguing avenues for future research.

In her article, Giombini questions whether our preference, which is exemplified by the restoration of destroyed artworks such as Cimabue's Assisi frescos, for original artefacts is reasonable. To this end, Giombini examines the debate between, in Jaworski's terms, "originalists" and "anti-originalists". The former group take the status of an object as authentic, or of undisputed origin or authorship, as a necessary condition for aesthetic experience because such objects are the embodiment of the artist's creative act, while the latter group propose that an artefact's status as an authentic object pertains to the law of contagion, that is, the special significance that is attached to originals has less to do with aesthetics and more to do with rarity or emotional attachment for example. Positioning herself between these opposing sides, Giombini argues that there are some instances in which the status of an artefact as an authentic object is aesthetically relevant: 'namely when style recognition is involved.' Drawing upon Alois Reigl's notion of *Kunstwollen*, Giombini argues that style exemplifies historical/cultural/artistic

will. Consequently, Giombini proposes that style properties, which are contextually-dependent but perceptually manifested, provide viewers, who are suitably informed, with information about how the work is to be evaluated and so are aesthetic properties. Giombini thus affirms that our preference for originals is, to an extent, reasonable.

Giombini's article paves a new way for thinking about the relation between authenticity and aesthetic appreciation and, in relation to this, it is intriguing to consider the potential scope of the account. For instance, what could it mean to appreciate a work of installation art as an authentic artefact when it may have different manifestations due to the various ways in which the installation instructions may be legitimately interpreted by a curator or conservator? Moreover, one might question whether it is possible to appreciate contemporary artworks more broadly as authentic objects given the plurality of style in contemporary art? One potential way to address these questions might come from further contemplation of Giombini's conjecture that there are "particular instances" in which an artwork's authenticity is aesthetically relevant.

In the interview conducted by Jeffrey Petts, Terry Diffey reflects on how he came to a career in aesthetics and to the beginnings of the British Society of Aesthetics and the British Journal of Aesthetics (BJA). Diffey's association with the society started in the early 1960s, shortly after the society was founded and he took over as editor of the BJA in the late 1970s. What is particularly striking about Diffey's editorial approach is his highly inclusive attitude, both in terms of the scope of topics on offer in the journal and also the readership, which is a mission that we hope to continue with our work here at DiA.