

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Harry Drummond & Christopher Earley

We are pleased to introduce Issue 19, Vol. 1., of *Debates in Aesthetics*. This is the first general issue under the co-editorship of Harry Drummond and Christopher Earley, with significant input from our outgoing editor Sarah Kiernan. We would like to thank Sarah for her contributions to this issue, and for all her work over the course of her tenure at *Debates in Aesthetics*. We wish her all the best with future projects.

This general issue is one of the largest the journal has published, containing five original articles, a book symposium, and two interviews. We believe it exemplifies the breadth and depth of innovative work being undertaken by both emerging and established scholars. We begin with articles from Ryan Wittingslow, Alistair Macaulay, and Colette Olive. All three provide novel interventions into canonical debates about the definition, value, and ontology of art. Wittingslow draws upon social epistemology of science to provide a new approach to defining art. Drawing on the work of Helen Longino, Wittingslow proposes that what makes something art is not just the fact that it is of high aesthetic value,

but rather the fact that we engage with it in socially and institutionally mediated settings where we expect the things we engage with to be art objects. Macaulay focuses on an often overlooked category of artworks: jazz improvisations. As he claims, these artworks pose a challenge to the standard understanding of the ontology of musical works. Macaulay puts forward the novel claim that jazz improvisers do not just author the sound organisation of their work – they also create its ‘improvisational space.’ Like Wittingslow, Olive takes a similar interest in drawing connections between science and art. However, Olive’s project is to consider whether empirical studies of learning from literature undermine philosophical defences of literature’s cognitive value. Against critics, Olive argues that much empirical evidence points towards literature’s being able to enhance our understanding.

While Wittingslow, Macaulay, and Olive seek to innovate on longstanding positions in aesthetics, Lauren Stephens and Mélissa Thériault seek to question the ethical legitimacy of our philosophical and curatorial engagement with art. Focussing on the British Museum’s (contested) ownership of the Parthenon marbles, Stephens considers whether moral philosophy might offer any insights into their ethical curation. Aligning cultural internationalist and cultural nationalist positions with consequentialism and deontology respectively, she shows that cultural internationalist’s consequentialist protests for keeping the Parthenon Marbles in the British Museum also serve to undermine their position. Ultimately, Stephens concludes, “when the good and the bad are weighed for the case of the Parthenon marbles, the scales tip more towards their return”. Thériault turns our attention towards Inuit art, asking whether the methods of non-Inuit (Qallunaat) philosophers of art can properly study these objects without misunderstanding and harm. Thériault advocates ‘radical epistemic humility’, showing us that rather than apply existing Western philosophical categories to this work, we should instead strive to meet this work on its own conceptual terms. Nonetheless, Thériault shows us that, for Qallunaat philosophers,

this is not an easy task. Both Stephens and Thériault thus take us right to heart of ethical dilemmas with our field.

We are also pleased to publish a symposium and interview on Thomas E. Wartenberg's *Thoughtful Images: Illustrating Philosophy Through Art* (OUP, 2023). Sam Heffron, in conversation with Wartenberg, introduces us to the book's key arguments, claims, and concepts, before responses from Claire Anscomb and Derek Matravers. The interview and symposium reveal the depths of Wartenberg's work, and the expansive thinking that it provokes.

Finally, we have two interviews with leading philosophers of art and aesthetics: Noël Carroll and Richard Shusterman. Both have, in different ways, reshaped the field and are regular interlocutors for many authors published in *Debates in Aesthetics*. We thank Valery Vino and T. J. Bonnet for their thoughtful, penetrating questions, which bring out many overlooked aspects of both Carroll and Shusterman's philosophical projects.

We thank all our authors for their contributions, and we thank the various referees who have helped us reach editorial decisions. We also thank our proofreader, Olivia Oddofin, and the British Society of Aesthetics for their support of this journal.