

Report on the *Art and Imagination* Workshop, San Francisco, April 2-3

The *Art and Imagination* workshop, funded by the Australian Research Council and sponsored by the American Society for Aesthetics, officially ran over two days (from April 2-3) to coincide with the conference of the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division. However, the workshop began unofficially at 2.00 pm on Friday April 1st in the Wendi Norris Gallery in San Francisco where two Australian artists, **Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro** who are part of the Wendi Norris Gallery's stable of artists, facilitated a critique of the work on show, work by Ana Teresa Fernandez.

The more formal part of the Workshop began with an invited Symposium in the main program of the APA conference on Saturday morning April 2nd. The topic was 'Contemporary Perspectives on Aesthetic Judgment' and attracted a large audience of philosophers of art and Kant scholars. **Jane Kneller** discussed the mind frame promoted or cultivated by aesthetic reflective judgment while **Jennifer A. McMahon** commented on the difficulty of communicating aesthetic ideas to those with significantly different background experiences. **Ivan Gaskell** analysed the processes engaged when we attempt to adopt another perspective while **Elizabeth Burns Coleman** commented on the implications of Ivan's account for appreciation of cultural artefacts. Discussions arising from both papers assumed a deep motivation in cultivating aesthetic reflective judgment which led to **Mohan Matthen's** paper on the pleasure of art. **Cynthia Freeland** commented on assumptions long held in philosophical aesthetics including the unity of aesthetic experience.

On Saturday afternoon we moved to the San Francisco Ballet School Board Room where an opportunity for non-philosophers to participate in the audience was encouraged. The Australian visual artist **Daniel von Sturmer** discussed and demonstrated with visual examples the role of critique in developing as an artist. Art historian **Leanne Carroll**, who won the ASA travel grant for this workshop, demonstrated how Kendall Walton's theory of imagination as make-believe had explanatory power for understanding the arts, both modern and contemporary. Professor of Ethics at Georgetown University, **Nancy Sherman**, considered the expressive nature of dance in the context of its military, ritual and stoic origins. The papers in total were a testament to the diverse perspectives available to us, each capable of illuminating the nature of our experience of the arts. It also provided an excellent opportunity for communication between practising artists, art historians, ethicists, aestheticians and Kant scholars, an achievement in itself.

On Sunday we prepared for a day of papers back at the Westin St. Francis. Coffee break supplies were abundant and fuelled a lively and stimulating day. **Bence Nanay** argued that imagery is retained unconsciously and can influence our responses and perceptions, followed by **Keith Lehrer** who drew the audience on their responses to the examples he presented. Next up **Robert Sinnerbrink** argued that certain films could be said to engage us

in distinctively cinematic forms of ‘moral argument’ that may contribute not only to philosophical reflection but to shared moral-cultural understanding. Robert was followed by visual artists **Claire Healey and Sean Cordeiro** who discussed the formation and reception of their artworks. After a very enjoyable and timely lunch in the Oaks Room, back in our conference room, **Paul Guyer** argued that an account of artistic representation should include not only the experience of the representation and the thought of what is represented but also the reflection that this experience and thought evokes, hence a threefoldness account. **Cynthia Freeland** argued in the following presentation, with many engaging examples, that color in art plays a role that goes well beyond spatial representation; for example, by evoking non-visual qualities such as texture, solidity, temperature, and even taste. The Chair **Jennifer A. McMahon** changed hats at this point to present a paper on Imagination. She argued that if we are to assume that art can be insightful in virtue of the imaginative engagement it occasions, then this implied that imagination satisfied certain conditions, which Jenny outlined.

The Workshop drew to an end with a discussion of the most pressing point of contention over the course of the workshop: the fraught nature of cross-cultural exchange. Many papers had addressed universals of perception, imagination and appreciation but the problem remained concerning whether we are able to understand the objects of their particular cultural manifestations, even were they to be grounded in such universals.

All in all, we received very positive feedback on the workshop including positive comments on the diversity of perspectives represented and in addition, and perhaps most notably, the fact that for many participants, this was the first aesthetics workshop they had attended which included professionally practising artists as speakers. I would like to thank all speakers, commentators and audience for making the event a memorable success.

Finally, I give special thanks to the ASA Treasury-Secretary, Emeritus Professor **Julie Van Camp**, for her encouraging support and valuable advice in the lead up and during the event.

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