

Editorial

The three articles opening this issue of *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* deal with the theme of “Interpretation and Evaluation of Art” and stem from the 2012 conference of The Nordic Society of Aesthetics in Uppsala, Sweden. Nicholas Davey, who gave one of the keynotes at the conference, asks whether it is the case within the arts and humanities that anything can be said about anything? He proposes in his article “Aesthetic Reasoning: A Hermeneutic Approach” that an ontological conception of the relational being of an artwork defends the cognate value of art and, furthermore, that this ontological conception promises a response to the charge that in aesthetics no reasoning and evaluation is possible. This proposal, Davey argues, promises the possibility of discursive evaluation and thereby justifies claims concerning the cognitive value of art while also revealing the ways in which “interpretation” might add to the cognitive content of art. Thus, Davey shows that the being of an artwork and the activity of interpretation are interdependent. In her article “Lessing’s Laocoon: Aesthetics, Affects and Embodiment”, Cecilia Sjöholm investigates Lessing’s indirect characterization of the work of art through the sense perception of the reader or viewer and how his *Laocoon* can be rethought from the perspective of affect. In Lessing’s text, Sjöholm observes, the human body has a central place, and Lessing’s investigation into the signification of the Laocoon can be formulated as the question: How does the embodied mind respond to the image of a human body? Departing from this concern, Sjöholm proceeds by arguing that Lessing’s text not only looks at the object of aesthetics, but that it also constructs an aesthetic subject in which the embodied conditioning of sense perception and the question of affect is central. The thesis of Bente Larsen’s article “Eye, Matter and Interpretation” is that Ad Reinhardt in his *Abstract Paintings*, through a ‘painting away’ of what traditionally constitutes painting, i.e. color, pictorial space and gesture, leads our attention towards visuality. In arguing for this thesis Larsen discusses two different approaches to visual sensing as aesthetic experience. The first, represented by Gottfried Boehm, prefaces a hermeneutical/phenomenological approach claiming sensuousness to unfold through the gesture

of chiasm and ‘intertwining’, while the other, represented by Jean-Luc Nancy, is a post-phenomenological approach that accentuates aesthetic experience as a gesture of distance. This discussion qualifies Larsen’s analysis of how an implementation of a phenomenological chiasm and a hermeneutical claim for meaning in contrast to an epistemological and ontological focus on absence and the picture as *Le distinct*, leads to fundamental differences concerning the question of meaning and of interpretation. Severin Schroeder also takes up the theme of evaluation in his article “Art, Value, and Function”, where he questions the concept of a work of art and asks whether its application implies a positive evaluation. He discusses this question by considering two opposing attempts at defining art, namely the Institutional Theory and the view that art is a functional concept. The concept of art, he argues, does not imply an unconditionally positive evaluation, but art is a prestige concept. Moreover, he shows that functional definitions of art are flawed.

In the article “The Art to End All Arts”, Claes Entzenberg analyses and discusses Arthur C. Danto’s philosophy of art and his claim that the final end of art means that a certain theory of art ends, and that the development of the theory of art as a sensuous object cannot be developed further. Entzenberg agrees with Danto that something important happened during the 60s, but argues that what happened was that the old systems evaporated and pluralism entered the art scene. To understand this new scene, he contends, we must give up old grand systems, and see the theory-boundedness of the practices of art we meet today, i.e. the death concerns grand theories, but by no means art as theory.

Aaron Smuts’ more analytically inclined article on the “Cinematic” continues the theme of artistic value and asks whether cinematicity is a virtue in film, and whether the lack of cinematicity is a defect? Disagreeing with Berys Gaut’s claim that cinematicity is a pro tanto virtue in film Smuts argues that the term “cinematic” principally refers to some cluster of characteristics found in films featuring expansive scenery, extreme depth of field, high camera positioning, and elaborate tracking shots. We often use the word as a term of praise. And we are likely right to do so, Smuts maintains, if we mean that the film does well what movies often do well, but we are wrong if we mean that the film is good for doing what is merely distinctive of film. Smuts shows that this issue has important implications for understanding the role of the medium in artistic evaluation and argues that we should reject Gaut’s claim because it entails an implausibly strong medium specificity thesis. The last article “On Musical Performance as Play” by Gabor Csepregi focuses on the link

between music and play. Remarking that because of their impulse value and appealing character, tones and other elements of the performance can generate a playful attitude in the musicians, Csepregi sees play as a reciprocal interaction with something that plays with the player: Tones play with the musicians and the musicians play with the tones. While engaging in a musical play, Csepregi argues, the musicians draw on the remarkable creative abilities of their body, namely its spontaneity, sensibility, and “imaginative” anticipation. The satisfaction provided by the playful activity, Csepregi explains, comes, in part, from the possibility of experiencing the body as a source of creative power and original performance.

The review section rounding off this issue comprises a review essay by Anders Troelsen on Anders V. Munch’s doctoral thesis *From Bayreuth to Bauhaus: The Gesamtkunstwerk and the Modern Art Forms* followed by Jukka Mikkonen’s review of *Why Literary Studies?* edited by Stein Haugom Olsen and Anders Pettersson, and Zoltán Somhegyi’s review of *Facing Mental Landscapes* edited by Manfred Milz.

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