



EDITORIAL

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of *Estetika* in 1964. During the first half of its existence, the journal was, for various political and editorial reasons, largely focused on readers from Czechoslovakia. But, in more recent times, it has turned into an internationally well-established and appreciated journal which publishes articles by scholars from many different countries in Europe and beyond. On the occasion of my assumption of the role of Editor-in-Chief, I already described some of the reasons for this turn in fortunes, many of which are due to changes in policy already initiated by my predecessor, Professor Tomáš Hlobil, and his editorial staff (see the editorial in *Estetika* 49, no. 1, 2012).

This time, I should like to turn to what lies ahead. The present issue of *Estetika* is meant to celebrate the jubilee by exhibiting how the current editorial staff envisages the future of the journal. The selection of the invited contributions was primarily guided by our views on what excellent philosophy ought to look like, and we believe that the articles represent different promising avenues of research and give a good idea of how philosophical aesthetics could, and should, develop in the years to come.

As with aesthetic merit, it is often very difficult to determine what excellence in philosophy consists in, and it is rather demanding to ensure that it is achieved. None the less, there is a continual need for asking the question and making the effort, not least by the editors of academic journals with the same high ambitions as *Estetika*. And one way of doing so is – again as with aesthetics – by providing outstanding exemplars of academic work that display the significance, depth, and originality, as well as the clarity and rigour, which are characteristic of high-quality research, whether in philosophy or other humanities or sciences.

Of course, since this anniversary issue provides room only for a limited number of essays, it is by no means able to display the full variety of themes and approaches that we would like to see published in future editions of *Estetika*. In particular, we intend to continue our tradition of promoting specifically historically minded research and of course also to welcome contributions that strongly disagree with the positions and perspectives adopted by the authors of this issue (for example, Budd's or Seel's conceptions of the value of art, or Gardner's pro-metaphysical stance). None the less, we hope that the issue provides the reader with a good idea of what we take to be contemporary examples of excellent and exciting research in aesthetics.



Malcolm Budd's essay is generally concerned with the question of what justifies our love of, and engagement with, art. He critically discusses and rejects the idea that this justification is due to art's distinctive social, moral, or ethical value. Instead, Budd argues that we are right in taking art to be worthy of our attention because it enhances our lives in its own special way, by offering us intrinsically valuable experiences that we would not be able to have independently of art.

The essay by Jason Gaiger questions the feasibility and significance of a universal *Bildwissenschaft* (science of images), which is defined by its openness towards its subject matter (for example, by including non-artistic, non-visual, and non-physical images) and its methodology (for example, by combining conceptual inquiries with empirical and historical approaches), and thus presents itself as an alternative to traditionally more confined disciplines, especially philosophy and art history. While he acknowledges that *Bildwissenschaft*, thus understood, may ultimately be unable to provide a unified body of knowledge or identify the shared essence of images, its attention to individual artworks (and groups of artworks) and its inclusion of theoretical considerations still promise that it can – in ways yet to be clarified – contribute to the philosophical project of determining the nature of images.

In his contribution, Sebastian Gardner traces, and provides a detailed criticism of, the history of the widespread inclination in analytic aesthetics to assume substantial metaphysical questions and views to be irrelevant (or even detrimental to) philosophical reflections on art and the aesthetic. Central to his argument is the observation that proponents of analytic aesthetics tend to dismiss the possibility of (essentialist) truths about art that are neither empirical nor commonsensical or otherwise conceptual, without realizing that their dismissal already constitutes a substantial metaphysical commitment and, indeed, arguably overlooks the fact that our ordinary understanding of art and the aesthetic – even when supplemented by empirical investigation or conceptual analysis – cannot adequately capture its subject matter.

Eileen John has contributed an essay that develops a novel conception of artistic value, according to which artistic achievement is a matter not of producing good art or a good instance of a particular art form, but rather of deliberately and reflectively producing something that has some value or other. Her main case in point is meals, which, for her, can possess artistic value without counting as art. Hence, by turning our attention to a rather neglected aspect of everyday aesthetics, John makes a strong case against art-centred accounts of artistic production and artistic value.

Finally, Martin Seel uses his programmatic essay to outline a theory of aesthetic freedom and to locate it in its historical context, particularly with reference to

the writings of Kant, Hegel, and Adorno. What Seel takes to be central to freedom, understood as self-determination, is the idea of 'active passivity'; that is, our ability deliberately to let ourselves be determined by something else – in this case, artworks or other aesthetic objects. The distinctively aesthetic variety of self-determination is said to be special and valuable because its considerable disconnection from our daily life allows us to become aware of, test out, and take pleasure in our potential both for shaping the world and for being shaped by it, without having to face the practical consequences of making real use of this potential. In particular, by momentarily 'losing ourselves' in our receptive or productive engagement with art and thereby confronting the possible and unaccustomed, we are able to 'find ourselves' – especially as ethical agents – in the sense of reminding and reassuring ourselves of our capacity for questioning and defining our own normative attitudes and commitments.

Our choice of authors is meant to reflect the future of *Estetika* not only thematically but also in another sense. *Estetika* is still in a period of transition from a regional to an international journal. As part of this development, we are in the process of appointing a new editorial board and also enlarging our current advisory board. All five contributors to the anniversary issue have kindly agreed to join one of the two boards and will thus help us to shape the future of *Estetika*, for which we are very grateful. Especially the new members of the small editorial board will closely accompany and attend to the important stages in the further evolution of the journal, whether they concern matters of editorial policy or institutional setting.

In conclusion, it only remains for the editorial staff and me to thank the very many people and institutions that have enabled the journal to flourish over the last decades. Both the intellectual input of authors, referees, and advisers and the infrastructural and financial contributions of the organizations involved – namely, the Department of Aesthetics and the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, Prague, the Institute of Art History at the Czech Academy of Sciences, and the International Visegrad Fund – have been indispensable for the continuous existence of *Estetika*, and vital to its continuing development.

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