

**"What Are Artworks and How Do We Experience Them"**  
**Winter Symposium at the Center for Semiotics, Aarhus University**  
**January 26th – 28th, 2012**

**Call for papers**

The Center for Semiotics, Aarhus University announces its annual Winter Symposium, this year on the properties of aesthetic objects and the mechanisms involved in their cognition.

The purpose of this conference is to investigate the multifarious aspects of the relation between an artwork (visual, literary, or musical) and its objective properties, the meaningful experience of it, and the cognitive skills and acts involved in the latter.

From an ontological point of view, artworks differ from plain everyday objects in different respects. From this perspective, follows a number of questions: What properties do artworks possess that plain objects don't? If artworks depict or represent something, then what exactly is depiction or representation? If artworks are intentional objects par excellence, how is this intentionality encoded in them, and how can it be retrieved, if it is to be retrieved in the first place? If artworks are valuable in a sense that plain objects are not, what do we mean by value?

On the other hand, the experience or cognition of artworks and aesthetic objects in general is obviously of another type than experience of plain objects. This lead to another list of research questions, which rather aim at characterizing the subjective correlate of aesthetic experience: If we attend to aesthetic objects differently than to plain everyday objects, what, then, characterizes this intentional attitude or mindset? If there is a difference between the phenomenology of seeing three apples, a photo of three apples or a painting of three apples, what, then, characterizes the phenomenology of aesthetic experience? If artworks affect us perceptually, by virtue of their qualitative (visual, textual or acoustic) layout, what are the phenomenal or qualitative properties, which are particularly significant for us? If artworks affect us by virtue of given properties of our visuo-cognitive system what are, then, the relevant properties exploited to that effect? If there is a specific phenomenology of aesthetic experience, does it follow that there is a general brain state or a neural dynamics that correspond to that phenomenology?

The aim of this conference is to explore the *complementarity* of these domains of investigation and how they may mutually enlighten each other. We have invited eminent philosophers, psychologists, art historians, neuroscientists; including scholars specialized in the crossovers between the above domains. Our hope is thus, first, that the conference will be the scene for state of the art discussions within each of these fields: the ontology of art and the psychology of art, broadly taken. And, next – that these insights will help us better understand the logic and nature of meaning-making in the aesthetic domain.

**Confirmed keynote speakers:**

Anjan Chatterjee (University of Pennsylvania)  
Peter Dixon/Marisa Bortolussi (University of Alberta)  
John M. Kennedy (University of Toronto Scarborough)  
Jerrold Levinson (University of Maryland)  
Paul J. Locher (Montclair State University)  
Dominc Lopes (University of British Columbia)  
Raymond A. Mar (York University)  
Jeff Mitscherling (University of Guelph)  
Jean Petitot (CREA, Ecole Polytechnique)  
Barry Smith (State University of New York at Buffalo)  
Kendall Walton (University of Michigan)  
Peer Bundgaard (Aarhus University)  
Frederik Stjernfelt (Aarhus University)

**Format:**

The conference welcomes a limited number of submitted papers (20 minutes and 10 minutes for discussion).

**Submission of abstracts:**

Abstracts should not exceed 200 words: the bibliography is excluded from this count, but should be kept essential. Please, clearly indicate a title, a thesis, and the line of the argumentation.

Abstracts should be submitted electronically to **semkt@hum.au.dk**

Please include the following information in the main body of you e-mail: author's name, affiliation, e-mail address for correspondence, title of talk, 3-5 keywords.

**Submission deadline:** December 9<sup>th</sup> 2011

For further info, see [www.hum.au.dk/semiotics/](http://www.hum.au.dk/semiotics/)