



AESTHETICS

A COMPREHENSIVE ANTHOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

EDITED BY STEVEN M. CAHN, STEPHANIE ROSS,
AND SANDRA SHAPSHAY

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Aesthetics

A Comprehensive Anthology

Second Edition

Edited by

**Steven M. Cahn, Stephanie Ross,
and
Sandra Shapshay**

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Preface

The study of aesthetics concerns the arts broadly conceived, as well as the nature of aesthetic experience, which includes our responses to beauty, sublimity, ugliness, and other such qualities found in works of art, nature, the built environment, and the course of everyday life. Although the term “aesthetics” to denote this area of study goes back only to the 18th century with the work of Alexander Baumgarten, the field has had a long and distinguished history dating back to classical antiquity. Aesthetics is currently the scene of provocative philosophical exploration, and one which has become increasingly connected to work in disciplines outside of philosophy such as art history, psychology, neuroscience, evolutionary biology, gender studies, and critical race theory. This comprehensive collection of Western historical and contemporary sources offers instructors the opportunity to construct courses in aesthetics combining as wished classic works along with recent contributions that afford students a sense of the rich history as well as the cutting edge of the discipline. The aim to bring this second edition firmly into the 21st century is evidenced with the introduction to Part I Classic Sources. As in the previous edition, we begin with a selection from Paul Oskar Kristeller’s “The Modern System of the Arts,” which, until recently, had been taken to be the definitive proof that the concept of “fine arts” (the “system” comprised of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry) originated with Batteaux in the 18th century. But this selection is now followed by James O. Young’s 2015 paper, challenging this orthodoxy, and arguing that these “fine arts” really coincide with Plato and Aristotle’s notion of the “imitative arts,” and thus is not truly a “modern” system at all. Students and

instructors are invited to explore Part I with this recent historiological controversy in mind. Other major updates to this edition include: the addition of important 20th century texts by W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke on the intersection of race, politics, and the arts; newer translations of texts by Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, as well as newly excerpted selections from G.W.F. Hegel, Leo Tolstoy, and R.G. Collingwood; the inclusion of additional modern texts on the relationship between art and morality (e.g. J.-J. Rousseau's "Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre"), and on tragedy (e.g. with David Hume's "Of Tragedy"); and a significantly re-edited Part III Contemporary Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art curated and introduced by Stephanie Ross. The contemporary section, with selections from Amie L. Thomasson, Mary Mothersill, Eileen John, Jenefer Robinson, A.W. Eaton, Mary Devereaux, Yuriko Saito, and Carolyn Korsmeyer, presents a more gender-balanced view of the field, and acknowledges the robust contribution women philosophers have made to present-day aesthetics.

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