

Introduction

The Aesthetics Symposium

In this special issue of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, we feature “The Aesthetics Symposium,” the first comprehensive scholarly forum for discussion of Ayn Rand’s philosophy of art. Inspired by the publication of *What Art Is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000) by Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi, and by the *Journal’s* publication of the authors’ “Critical Neglect of Ayn Rand’s Theory of Art” (Fall 2000), the participants provide diverse interpretations of Rand’s contributions to aesthetics. In some instances, these interpretations emerge from direct engagement with the work of Torres and Kamhi; in other instances, the writers focus greater attention on the central questions of aesthetic theory. Torres and Kamhi will respond to their critics in a forthcoming issue of the journal.

Our forum opens with four critical takes on Torres and Kamhi’s work: the first by philosopher Lester Hunt; the second by arts critic Jeff Riggensbach; the third by the novelist and aesthetician, Gene H. Bell-Villada; and the fourth by musician Roger E. Bissell.

The meaning of art as a concept and its relationship to the philosophical disciplines takes center stage in the next series of essays. Philosopher John Hospers provides a personal view of Objectivist aesthetics derived from his many discussions with Rand. Objectivist philosopher David Kelley replies to Torres and Kamhi’s criticisms of his work with William Thomas, and provides a glimpse of his approach to aesthetics as featured in the forthcoming book, *Logical Structure of Objectivism*. Poet John Enright and cultural theorist Barry Vacker examine critically the definitional boundaries of the concept of art.

Our final two essays deal more specifically with two distinct aesthetic forms: painter Michael Newberry examines the role of “metaphysical value-judgments,” especially in the visual arts; and

philosopher Randall R. Dipert, though critical of Rand's aesthetic practice, finds much to praise in her theory of music.

We are pleased to have brought together so many interesting voices in a provocative discussion of one of the most neglected aspects of Rand's philosophical system.

— The Editors