3 Philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics: resistance and rapprochement

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The philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics are, to all outward appearances, natural bedfellows, disciplines bound together by complementary methodologies and the common goal of explaining a shared subject matter. Philosophers are in the business of sorting out the ontological and normative character of different categories of objects, events and behaviors, squaring up our conception of the nature of things, and clarifying the subject matter of different avenues of intellectual exploration through careful conceptual analyses of often complex conventional practices. Psychologists have developed careful empirical methods for measuring and modeling behavior, methods that are fruitfully used in practice to test and evaluate hypotheses about the nature of our cognitive and emotional engagement with the world. So, for all appearances, philosophy and psychology share in the common task of sorting and testing theories about the nature of art and artistic practices (e.g., what is an artwork, what is the nature of the productive practices involved in creating these kinds of artifacts and what is the nature of a consumer’s artistic engagement with these artifacts). Unfortunately appearances can be deceptive. Despite common calls for rapprochement, the two disciplines rarely meet. There are both methodological and ideological reasons for this rift, and not surprisingly they are related. In what follows, I will explore and evaluate some of the central sources of resistance on both sides of this divide, introduce a model for the possibility of rapprochement, and briefly sketch the promise and pitfalls of current research in two areas, dance and film, where an active attempt at bridging the divide between philosophy and empirical aesthetics is underway.

Resistance

Philosophers of art have rediscovered empirical aesthetics in recent years.1 This movement has been stimulated, in part, by a range of high-profile letters, perspectives and books promoting (and challenging) what has come to be called neuroaesthetics (see Chatterjee, 2010; Livingstone, 2002; Noë, 2011; Ramachandran and Hirstein, 1999; Zeki, 1999). However, neuroaesthetics is only a

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1 This change has also been influenced by a methodological shift toward experimental methods within philosophy (see Knobe and Nichols, 2008).
small part of empirical aesthetics (Konečni, 2012), and arguably only a small part of even the neuroscience of art (Chatterjee, 2010). Empirical aesthetics is as old as psychology itself. Its contemporary roots track back, through Daniel E. Berlyne (1971, 1974), to the development of psychophysical methods by Gustav Fechner in the late nineteenth century (Fechner, 1876). Berlyne, like Fechner, distinguished between an empirical aesthetics from below and a speculative aesthetics from above that included philosophy and art criticism. Theories within speculative aesthetics were putatively built from a priori principles and definitions. A priori principles and definitions were, in turn, derived by individual experts via introspective reflection on their own particular aesthetic intuitions, experiences and judgments using deductive methods. Berlyne argued that speculative aesthetics was, as a result, at best a subjective domain dependent upon consensus and conviction and governed by internal measures of conceptual coherence. At worst, it was just a form of armchair ornithology – the logical exploration of a conceptual framework divorced from concrete facts about the behavior or phenomena it describes, a practice nearly guaranteed to lead to spurious, and often false, conclusions (see also Martindale, 1990).

Berlyne’s new empirical aesthetics replaced interpretive insights and expert judgments about particular artworks with averaged verbal and physiological responses collected from groups of ordinary individuals to sets of aesthetic objects and events (e.g., preference judgments and psychophysical measurements of arousal and interest). The goal? An objectively grounded scientific aesthetics that is not subject to the tastes or subjective judgments of individual critics and theorists. This model was based on the assumption that interactions with artworks are driven by an active exploratory impulse to seek out information about novel stimuli (e.g., to search attentively for some quality of uniformity amidst complexity that would enable a viewer to make sense of a novel stimulus). Arousal and looking time were interpreted as marks of aesthetic interest and success, or how actively an artwork engages a consumer. Or, loosely speaking, psychophysical measures of pleasingness (arousal) and interest (attention) were taken to be objective measures of aesthetic appraisal and cognitive engagement with artworks, respectively.

Berlyne’s views are not the only game in town in empirical aesthetics (see Cupchik, 1986; Silvia, 2012). There are also a range of cognitive and hierarchical models. Prototype-preference theories identify pleasingness and arousal as objective measures of typicality, or fit to the central tendency of a category (Martindale, 1984, 1988; Martindale and Moore, 1988). Processing fluency theories identify these same hedonic measures with ease of processing. Ease of processing is, in turn, associated with the familiarity of a stimulus category, the figural goodness of the stimulus, perceptual contrast and clarity, or etc. (see Reber, 2012). Hierarchical theories combine key aspects of these different theories. They model our engagement with artworks as an integrated multistage process involving a range of basic psychophysiological, affective, emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes (Chatterjee, 2004; Leder et al., 2004; Nadal et al., 2008). Each of these
theories identifies psychophysical measures of arousal and interest, objective measures of aesthetic engagement, as the central measures of our engagement with artworks. Therefore, despite their more articulated cognitive biases, these theories all reflect the deep methodological influence that Berlyne’s motivational psychology has had in the field.

### The methods of speculative aesthetics

Berlyne lumped philosophers and art critics together when he framed the divide between empirical and speculative aesthetics. However, it is not quite fair to either philosophy of art or art criticism to blur their differences with this broad a brush. The practice of art criticism is focused on interpretive activities associated with our engagement with individual artworks, including an understanding of the range of stylistic variables that define the works of different individual artists, eras and schools of art. In contrast, the philosophy of art is focused on general ontological questions about the nature of art and associated behaviors. These include an understanding of the nature of interpretive and appreciative practices, the nature of the aesthetic, and ontological questions about the nature of artworks in particular media (e.g., what is a musical work and how these abstract objects can be used to express emotions). The interpretation of individual artworks may, along with knowledge of stylistic differences among different artists, schools or eras, serve as data for philosophical investigations into the nature of art. But the insights, interpretive activities and aesthetic responses of individuals to particular artworks are not generally their focus of attention. These kinds of practices are rather the subject matter of art criticism.

The real methodological resistance between empirical aesthetics and philosophy of art lies in a dispute about the role of conceptual analysis in scientific inquiry. No one disputes the general value of conceptual analysis. It is often needed to weed spurious conceptual biases out of our best empirically minded theories. This is precisely the role philosophers have played in the development of cognitive science – skeptical moderators whose task is to tease out and evaluate theoretical assumptions in order to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration. The resistance here is not an in principle resistance to conceptual analysis. Rather it is a concern about the a prioristic tone of philosophical method. This is a valid concern. The worry is that, divorced from complementary empirical work, this practice reflects the biases of a conceptual framework, not the actual nature of the objects, events and behaviors it describes. Philosophers are well aware of this problem and have expressed analogous concerns about the limits of conceptual analysis. For instance, Morris Weitz (1956) argued that it was important to keep clear a distinction between evaluative uses of the term “art,” uses that are associated with the tastes and theoretical biases of groups of individuals, and broader descriptive uses. Descriptive uses are just that, descriptions of the range of objects, events and behaviors associated with the valid use of the term in practice. Evaluative uses, in
contrast, are normative. They tell us what counts as good and bad art within some community or group of individuals, or how these individuals think one ought and ought not to engage with artworks.

Weitz believed that descriptive uses of the term “art” could not be characterized by sets of necessary and sufficient conditions traditionally associated with the logical analysis of concepts. He argued that the only thing shared across time and artistic practices was a commitment to revolutionary creativity. Therefore one should not expect to find a set of common universally shared features defining relationships of similarity among members of the class of artworks. He argued instead that one should expect art to be defined by family resemblances, overlapping transitive relationships binding disparate practices across time through local, but non-repeated similarities (see Wittgenstein, 1958). Evaluative uses of the term “art” artificially close the category, falsely identifying the unified subjective tastes of groups of individuals as its boundary conditions. A reflective conceptual analysis of evaluative uses of the term might objectively reveal critical aspects of the particular artistic practices that defined different historical periods, artistic schools and individual styles. But these kinds of analyses are descriptive analyses of some aspect of the tastes and extant practices of a group or time. They are therefore limited in scope and do not get to the heart of the kinds of general ontological question of interest to philosophy of art.

Weitz’s (1956) critical analysis of evaluative uses of the term “art” is consistent with Berlyne’s worries about speculative aesthetics. Conceptual analyses of evaluative uses of the term will yield definitions that reflect the subjective beliefs, intuitions and biases of theorists, not the general nature of art and associated practices. Weitz’s solution was to abandon a prioristic conceptual analysis. He argued that theorists should rather simply look and see if they could find the thread that tied any particular act of artistic expression to prior established cases. The philosopher’s project as Weitz conceptualized it therefore involves an evaluation of the aggregate behavior of large artistic audiences engaged with a wide range of artifacts over stretches of time. Deductive methods are used as objective measures in these contexts, as a tool to determine the ontological commitments of different conceptual frameworks as we observe them in practice. The model retains an element of speculative aesthetics. A capacity to tease out one’s intuitions about particular cases is still part of the evidential basis of judgments about the correct use of the term. But, contemporary philosophers who follow in Weitz’ footsteps often draw upon data culled from any and all relevant empirical results. In fact, some contemporary theorists have argued that philosophers of art are as much anthropologists as they are logicians (see Danto, 2000). I think we might just as well say that philosophers of art are, in a sense, cognitive psychologists. The theoretical interests of philosophers of art lie not only in questions about the social grounds for the content of a work of art, but also in ontological questions about how artworks function as cognitive stimuli to convey their content.
Aesthetics and the philosophy of art

The terms “aesthetics” and “philosophy of art” are used interchangeably in common practice to refer to the subfield of philosophy dedicated to the study of art and related behaviors. However, the terms “art” and “aesthetics” are not synonymous. Rather they denote overlapping, but not coextensive, domains and a division of labor between two separate, but related, sets of research interests. The class of aesthetic objects, events and experiences is broader than its artistic cousin. We refer to sunsets, mountain vistas, stormy seas, teacups, toasters, turbines, automobiles, machine tools and some artworks under the rubric of aesthetics. Likewise we refer to the perceptual-affective experiences through which we identify and evaluate members of this category as aesthetic experiences. The range of artworks and artistic behaviors is similarly broader than the range of aesthetic objects and experiences. Artists often do produce artworks with the intent of inducing an aesthetic experience in consumers; and we do often appreciate these works for their aesthetic qualities. However, an equal (if not larger) number of contemporary artworks (at least over the span of the last 50 years) simply are not, and were not, ever intended to be engaged or appreciated as aesthetic objects (see Lippard, 1973). We engage and appreciate artworks of this sort interpretively, typically by considering how the works function as intentional objects with cognitive content – as reflections of productive formal compositional choices that carry information about the meaning of the work. When we interact with these works we are interested in how they were constructed as artifacts, installlations, performances or events that embody that meaning. Artists may choose to use aesthetic features as part of the array of formal and compositional strategies they employ to convey the meaning of these works. But in these cases the artistic salience of these aesthetic features lies in their semantic salience not their aesthetic character, in how they have been used to convey the content or meaning of the work.

The conceptual distinction between aesthetics and art is theoretically important. First, philosophy of art provides a more representative view of the category “art” as we currently define it in practice than aesthetics – it includes anti-aesthetic conceptual artworks, works designed primarily as objects of aesthetic contemplation, and everything in between. Aesthetic theories of art, in contrast, define artworks as artifacts intentionally designed to produce aesthetic experiences in consumers (Beardsley, 1983, Bell, 1981; Osborne, 1981; Tollhurst, 1984). Their explanatory scope is limited by definition (and design) to aesthetic aspects of artworks and related practices. They do not include any of a range of ontological, functional or interpretive questions about non-aesthetic artworks within their

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2 Conceptual art is replete with canonical examples of this anti-aesthetic movement designed to focus attention on the identity of the work as an ordinary object as opposed to an object of aesthetic regard (e.g., the choreographed works of the Judson Dance Theater and Sol LeWitt’s Paragraphs on Art). See Banes (1994) and Osborne (2011).
Aesthetic theories of art are therefore evaluative theories that intentionally set boundary conditions for the category (see Carroll, 1999; Warburton, 2008). Second, psychophysical and subjective measures of arousal and interest are interpreted as aesthetic measures within empirical aesthetics, measures of aesthetic preferences or appraisals. This entails that the artistically salient features of artworks are understood operationally as stimulus features causally responsible for aesthetic responses. Theoretical positions within empirical aesthetics, therefore, look for all intents and purposes to be aesthetic theories of art.3

Aesthetic theories of art have a long and venerable provenance. Undergraduate courses on the history of the philosophy of art are, largely, courses on the history and origins of aesthetics in this technical philosophical sense. Furthermore, the unreflective folk concept of art shared by individuals outside of academic and art critical communities is likely a tacit aesthetic theory of art. However, this folk use of the term is almost certainly evaluative and not descriptive. If it were purely descriptive, if it marked a folk definition of the broader category “art,” one would expect to find a different kind of uniform perplexity among the vast majority of visitors to major museums of contemporary art than one does in practice. People readily recognize that non-aesthetic conceptual works are intended as artworks and fit coherently into the history of art, even where they steadfastly hold that these kinds of works are not to their taste. They may even in fact be quite good at recognizing (with the help of wall text, catalogs or just common knowledge) how these works have shaped the history of the concept of art. They don’t wonder why these artifacts are in an art museum or gallery, only why so much of the time and capital of the art world are spent on them. And this belies the trouble with aesthetic theories of art. The boundary conditions they set for the artifact category that they putatively define don’t match the ordinary usage of the term “art,” even when that term is being used evaluatively in a way that tracks the unreflective aesthetic tastes and conventions of ordinary non-expert consumers.

When folks readily recognize non-aesthetic objects and events as works of art, they recognize them as artifacts intentionally designed to communicate some kind of content via systematically structured formal and productive practices. How might this go? Well, interpretation is a standard and familiar appreciative practice. It involves reflecting on the kinds of formal, compositional and material choices that the artist has made in constructing the work and interpreting what he or she might have meant in making these choices in a particular, historically defined, art critical context – much as we read the thoughts and emotions of others by interpreting their behaviors in ordinary contexts. We understand an artwork by constructing an intentional etiology for it, by treating it as an extension of the expressive behavior of the artist (Carroll, 1992; Fodor, 1993).

Several critical ideas emerge from this view of art. First, artworks are communicative devices designed to convey something about their content – an artwork can

be thought of as a mode of presentation that says something about a subject matter. Second, artistic salience can be dissociated from aesthetic salience. Artistic salience is a kind of semantic or cognitive salience. The artistically salient formal features of a work are features *diagnostic for* its formal, aesthetic, expressive and semantic artistic content, features that enable us to recognize and categorize this content relative to our knowledge of appropriate categories of art. Third, this entails that the artistic salience of the aesthetic features of a work does not lie in their aesthetic quality alone, but rather in how this aesthetic quality is used as a means to convey the artistic content of the work. Of course, sometimes the point of a work is just to be an object of aesthetic regard. However, works like this reflect theoretical views about the structure and function of aesthetic features and phenomena (see Carroll, 1991, 2002). The interpretive practices appropriate to our engagement with these kinds of works include assessments of how that content was produced, how the work embodies its aesthetic qualities. Therefore, it is the artistic salience of its aesthetic features, their role in communicating the content of the work, that matters – even where this content is merely a reflection of some convention concerning the role of aesthetics in art.

Consider the following familiar set of examples (Danto, 2000). Arthur Danto has argued that what distinguishes Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* from their ordinary cousins is not anything “that the eye can descry” (Danto, 1964, p. 580) – that the categorically salient differences between these classes of objects are visually indiscernible. This does not mean that they are visually identical. It is easy to tell them apart by their size, material and the quality of the printing on their surface. But these differences do not transparently reveal why one as opposed to the other is an artwork. Rather they signal a difference in context and interpretive strategies that gives the works different meanings – that one is to be treated as an artwork and the other as a commercial design object, part of a marketing scheme. Warhol’s is a fairly flat, hard-edged, mechanically produced, art critical reaction to Abstract Expressionism that putatively caused consumers to reflect on the boundary conditions of the category of “art.” The other was intentionally designed as a joyful, dynamic, red, white and blue visual celebration of cleanliness. Danto argues that these differences are not so much seen or experienced as understood (Danto, 2003). The trick is that aesthetic features are canonically perceptible features. The two Brillo boxes are *visibly indiscernible* but *ontologically distinct* in the sense that only one is correctly categorized as an artwork. This entails that what counts toward the artistic salience of one over the other cannot be something associated with our visual experience of its perceptible form. The artistic salience of Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* cannot, therefore, lie in the aesthetic features it shares with ordinary Brillo boxes (even if they are salient features of its original commercial design). It rather lies in what Warhol’s reproductions revealed about the limits of the then dominant *abstract expressionist* conception of art.

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4 See Carroll (2002), Guyer (1996), Stolnitz (1961) and Tatarkiewicz (1972) for a review of the range of positions on the nature of the aesthetic.
Danto’s second example involves two sets of artifacts that are *visibly distinct* but nonetheless treated as *ontologically identical*: Vermeer’s paintings and a group of forgeries painted by Han van Meegeren in Holland during the Second World War. The forgeries do not look much at all like Vermeer’s, even to an untrained eye. However, they caught the attention of an art historian named Martin Bredius and, consequently, the art public. Bredius took the obvious perceptible differences in the “newly discovered” paintings as evidence of an unrecorded trip to Italy where Vermeer encountered Caravaggio’s paintings (a trip Bredius had previously theorized must have occurred). The Van Meegerens are as visibly and aesthetically different from real Vermeers as paintings of the same subject matter could be. The color palette, depth of field and painterliness of the forgeries are a farce compared to the actual Vermeers. Yet they were taken to belong to the same category of art, to resemble one another in artistic salience. The artistic salience of formal aesthetic features cannot therefore lie in their perceptible aesthetic qualities alone. Rather it emerges from the way a consumer contextualizes and interprets them relative to the appropriate art critical/historical categories.

One might argue that Danto’s story about the Brillo boxes, like many of his examples, begs the question of the relevance of aesthetics to art. These are canonically conceptual works. In fact, one could argue that Danto’s goal has been to carve out a place for conceptual art within a broader historical conception of artistic practice. However, his model applies equally to works of pure abstraction. Consider, for instance, Ad Reinhardt’s *Abstract Painting* (1963). The painting consists of a three by three grid of nine equal squares, each a slightly different shade of black. It appears to be a solid black canvas at first. Its formal compositional structure only emerges in prolonged careful looking, as one’s eyes accommodate to the subtle shades of difference among its parts. As an aesthetic object the work is artistically thin – our encounter with it involves perceptually discerning the difference between nine square regions of space painted different shades of black. However, the self-reflective quality of one’s experience of the work is an unavoidably self-conscious example of disinterested aesthetic engagement. The work thereby embodies its content – which can be interpreted as a reflection on the nature of aesthetic engagement itself. This self-reflective interpretive activity is, in turn, the source of the artistic salience of the work.

Danto’s illustrations reveal a second methodological source of resistance to rapprochement between philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics – the disciplines differ in what they take to be the primary subject matter of explanations of art. The philosophical intuition is that when we attribute artistic salience to the aesthetic features of a work, we do so only relative to their semantic salience, only relative to the contribution these features make to the meaning of the work. This bump in the road for empirical aesthetics is exacerbated by the fact that the attribution of one set of aesthetic features or another to a work is dependent on the category of art we use when we identify it. Therefore, those aesthetic features and the associated measures of attention and arousal that putatively differentiate empirical from
speculative aesthetics are dependent on the very kinds of undesirably subjective hermeneutic practices that define speculative aesthetics itself.

Consider Kendall Walton’s (1970) thought experiment comparing Picasso’s *Guernica* to a fictional class of artworks called *Guernicas*. Picasso’s painting is a monochrome black and white Cubo-Modernist painting that depicts the accidental bombing of a Spanish village by Fascist Republican Forces during the Spanish Civil War. It is severe, dynamic and jarring, all aesthetic qualities that are expressive of its content – which is something about the horrors of the fog of war. *Guernicas* are something different. They are bas reliefs with the same formal compositional structure as *Guernica’s*. So here’s the rub. As bas reliefs, the *Guernicas* are not painted. They get their striking, stark, dynamic and jarring aesthetic quality from the way their compositional structure emerges in low relief.

Walton argues that, if we were to show the painting *Guernica* to someone familiar with *Guernicas*, he or she would be struck by how compositionally flat, and therefore calm and serene, it was. Likewise, in the absence of the highly contrastive luminance profile of the original, we are likely to experience the *Guernicas* as dull and lifeless. What is the take-home message? Categorization, meaning and interpretation matter to our understanding of artifacts as artworks independent of any associated aesthetic response (e.g., Danto’s Brillo and Van Meegeren case studies). But, perhaps more importantly, they matter in a way that influences the way we parse the compositional structure of a work, identify its constitutive formal elements and attribute aesthetic qualities to these features and relations – categorization, meaning and interpretation determine the formal aesthetic qualities of a work and shape the content of associated aesthetic responses.

Empirical aesthetics is not insensitive to the semantic and interpretive questions that give rise to this difficulty. Multistage hierarchical theories model measures of arousal and interest in aesthetic appraisals as the combined product of hierarchical networks of cognitive processes. These networks involve sensory processes, perceptual analysis, explicit classifications (employing declarative knowledge of art critically salient categories of art), affective responses and decision making procedures involved in aesthetic judgments and evaluations (i.e., are the aesthetic features of a work appropriate or inappropriate to the content, rendered well or rendered poorly?). The methodological focus on preference ratings and measures of arousal associated with aesthetic appraisals can, in this context, be interpreted as an instrumental strategy, as markers for a range of computational processes involved in our engagement with artworks, not an end in itself. However, the philosophical concern about the putative primacy of aesthetic appraisals remains unresolved. A wide range of the art critical variables and cognitive processes germane to our understanding and appreciation of non-aesthetic artworks remain opaque to the explanatory scope of this model.

One could loosen the definition of an aesthetic response so that it includes the subjective feeling of cognitive resolution (arousal reduction) that accompanies successfully grappling with difficult intellectual problems (i.e., an intellectual counterpart to the perceptual resolution of the unified form of an object or scene
from a replete field of abstract, dynamic sensory information). However, this would not solve the difficulty. Certainly some mathematical proofs are elegant, and we experience them this way where we have the expertise to do so. But fabricating elegant fasteners for complex architectural fixtures can also be a challenging intellectual project. Therefore, although this strategy would significantly broaden the category of aesthetic responses, it would do so in a way that renders them poor measures of artistic salience, poor vehicles for explaining art. Nonetheless, hierarchical models are sensitive to the kinds of non-aesthetic semantic (art critical) variables that play a role in philosophical models of artistic salience, for example knowledge of art historical and art critical facts constitutive of categories of art. Therefore, these theoretical positions point toward the promise of a methodological rapprochement between the philosophy and psychology of art.

Artistic understanding and appreciation

Some philosophers of art have argued that the core questions of interest within the discipline are questions about artistic appreciation, evaluative questions about whether a work has been done well or poorly, whether it is appropriate or inappropriate to a context or whether it is fit to salient aesthetic conventions or not (Dickie, 1962; McFee, 2011; Wittgenstein, 1966). Philosophers who hold this perspective argue that the kinds of explanations provided in experimental psychology are irrelevant to these sorts of normative questions. The grounds for resistance in this case emerge from a view of the limitation of causal explanations of behavior—these explanations apply equally whether or not the target behavior is done well or is contextually appropriate. Therefore, it is argued, they are not sensitive to the appreciative dimension of artistic behavior (Wittgenstein, 1966, pp. 19–21). The Wittgensteinian point is well taken. Appreciative judgments about artworks involve comparisons between those artifacts and the conventions governing artistic expression for a category of art. The success of these evaluations involves both recognizing that an artist intended a work to belong to that category of art and knowing the normative conventions that determine whether it was done well or poorly. The claim then is that philosophical questions germane to art are questions about those conventions (i.e., what are they, how did they emerge from the history of artistic practice, why do we find them valuable, and etc.). These questions can no more be answered by averaging the behavioral responses of ordinary, untrained participants any more than questions about morality and ethics can be answered by polling a community. The latter kinds of studies may reveal how groups of people do behave in a community, but not how they ought to behave (see Moore, 2000). Analogously, empirical aesthetics might reveal what kinds of judgments groups of people do make, but they cannot differentiate between judgments that reflect an appropriate understanding of particular artworks and those that do not. What’s needed instead is a conceptual analysis of the evaluative judgments of experts, the verbal behavior of groups of individuals
who know how to use the appropriate normative conventions correctly. Psychologists therefore, so the argument goes, make a category mistake, a logical error, when they use behavioral methods and results from experimental psychology to address questions about the structure, content, and provenance of artistic conventions.

This view has had a wide following. But it is an unduly narrow view of philosophy of art (see Carroll et al., 2012). A broader, more representative view of the field encompasses any and all questions germane to understanding both the structure of artworks and the behaviors associated with our engagement with them in the full range of possible media. For instance, philosophers are interested in understanding the nature of our emotional responses to fictional characters and events (Goldman, 2006; Kieran, 2002) and the role related psychological processes might play in our understanding of the content of a work (Seeley, 2010). Similarly, philosophers work with computational models of vision to try to understand how the depictive and representational contents of paintings emerge from their abstract formal compositional structure (see Bonnar et al., 2002; Carroll et al., 2012). These interests are not new. They trace their contemporary roots to the modern origins of the field in the eighteenth century and beyond. Aristotle was interested in understanding our emotional ties to fictional characters, and Alexander Baumgarten (1735) and Moses Mendelssohn (1757) were interested in art as part of a model for understanding differences between rational (cognition) and sensuous (perceptual) knowledge. Likewise, appreciative artistic practices do not occur in a vacuum. They involve stereotyped psychological responses to systematically structured artifacts. So, even if one is tempted to give appreciative concerns center stage in the philosophy of art, sorting through ontological and psychological questions about the nature of our engagement with artworks is critical to the field.

The Wittgensteinian view also relies on a narrow view of empirical aesthetics. Cognitive and hierarchical theories are ideally suited to accommodate the influence of art critical conventions in normative judgments. Martindale models both aesthetic appraisals and our cognitive engagement with artworks around the influence of prototypicality, or fit to the conventions that define a category, style or individual artist’s work (Martindale, 1988). Processing fluency theories include familiarity with relevant categories of art as a key variable in aesthetic appraisals (Reber, 2012). Leder differentiates between aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic judgments (Leder et al., 2004). The latter are the product of cognitive mastering and depend on classification processes whereby a viewer interprets a work relative to domain-specific expertise, or explicit declarative knowledge of artistic styles. In support of this claim he reports evidence that naïve viewers tend to respond to the depictive content of visual artworks and evaluate them relative to their depictive success (e.g., as a landscape or a pattern of color patches). Experts, in contrast, are sensitive to artistically salient formal, compositional and semantic features constitutive of the art critical content of a work (e.g., as an expression of art critical views about the structure of painting). This is just what one would expect a Wittgensteinian would predict. Leder’s hierarchical theory is therefore explicitly structured to
model the way knowledge of art critical conventions influences aesthetic appraisals and shapes a consumer’s engagement with artworks. Ignoring worries about a narrow aesthetic focus for the moment, this demonstrates that considerations of the kinds of normative practices at the heart of Wittgensteinian anti-psychologism are in fact central to models within empirical aesthetics.

**First notes for a rapprochement**

What emerges from this discussion is a preliminary observation: philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics are not disciplines bound in practice by complementary approaches to a shared subject matter. In broad stroke, the fields work with different definitions of art that lead to different functional specifications of the behavior that grounds our engagement with artworks. This is most apparent in the distinction between Berlyne’s new experimental aesthetics and the loosely contextualist leanings of contemporary philosophers of art (Danto, 2000). Berlyne’s influence in empirical aesthetics has produced a family of functional theories of art (Davies, 1991). These theories define artworks as artifacts intentionally designed to produce a unified category of aesthetic effects in consumers. Artworks are treated as a natural kind defined by a common function and a taxonomic classification scheme that sorts them relative to observable variance in the way this common function is realized. The study of art is, in turn, pursued as an exploration of these common causes and their effects (e.g., optimal levels of novelty, complexity, typicality or cognitive difficulty that are associated with optimal levels of arousal).

Functional theories of art are contrasted against procedural theories of art (Davies, 1991). Procedural theories categorize artifacts as artworks relative to the social practices that govern their use. Most often some concept of an art world is appealed to (Danto, 1964; Dickie, 1983). But this is a bit misleading. It confuses the market value of artworks with the broader category of art. It reduces art to an arbitrarily constructed concept that reflects the whimsical, self-serving tastes of art aficionados. Procedural theories rather reflect Wittgenstein’s (1958) view that word meanings emerge from linguistic practice, not explicit definitions – that our grasp of concepts is better modeled as procedural as opposed to declarative knowledge. Weitz (1956) is likely right – very few of us can give explicit definitions of the words we use. Rather, our sense of word meaning emerges from contextual factors associated with the history of usage, from a thread that runs through linguistic practice. Likewise, a range of social conventions constrain judgments about whether an artifact bears sufficient resemblance to some prior artistic product or practice to count as an artwork. Our concept of art is, therefore, not defined by any explicit formal compositional features of artworks, nor by any common affective experience, but by strands of historical significance, of art critical salience, stretching back across time (see also Levinson, 1979). We see this clearly reflected in artistic practice. Artists often emulate their predecessors in ways that modulate,
modify or correct the productive and art critical practices of their mentors (Carroll, 1993). This strategy is not unique to an avant-garde, conceptually focused art world. It can be traced back in time and used as a means to taxonomize and understand the development of diverse artistic movements, schools, styles and relationships among them.

Seen through this lens, philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics may look like incompatible positions. However, a closer look reveals that in many cases disagreement emerges from methodological ignorance and old-fashioned views of the other respective discipline. Philosophical theories of art are not speculative in the way identified by Berlyne (1971), they do not emerge from introspective evaluations of individual tastes, preferences and intuitions, but rather from discussions of the way a broadly shared general concept of art emerges in common practice from the perceptual, affective and cognitive behaviors involved in our engagement with artworks. Likewise, the aesthetic measures employed in empirical aesthetics are not divorced from the kinds of cognitive variables important to contextualist positions within the philosophy of art. So, appearances and doctrinal differences aside, the methodologies may well be complementary after all. Philosophers of art are interested in locating and understanding the broad range of cognitively salient features that mark the class of artworks off from other classes of artifacts in contemporary artistic practice. Psychologists of art are interested in understanding how we recognize these kinds of features and assign salience to them in real-world contexts, or how to model the cognitive behaviors associated with our engagement with art. The slip between the philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics may, therefore, simply lie in a disagreement about how to best understand and operationalize the concept of artistic salience.

Rapprochement

There is a real sense in which philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics really are natural bedfellows. We can identify empirical aesthetics as part of a broad spectrum of research included under the umbrella of cognitive science. Cognitive science, in its broadest sense, is the study of how organisms acquire, represent, manipulate and use information in the production of behavior. Works of art are stimuli composed of sets of abstract marks (e.g., color patterns and juxtaposed forms, tonal and rhythmic relationships among sounds, and bodily movements) that are intentionally designed to trigger affective, perceptual and cognitive responses in viewers sufficient to convey their artistically salient expressive, aesthetic and semantic content. Questions about our understanding and appreciation of artworks can, therefore, be modeled within cognitive science as questions about the ways consumers acquire, represent, use and manipulate information carried in the surface grammar of a work, in its formal and compositional structure, in order to recognize and evaluate its content.
A general model for a cognitive science of art emerges in this context from a standard story about artists’ formal productive strategies. The sensory inputs to perceptual systems are replete with information about the structure of objects, their function and the dynamic structure of events and actions in the local environment. However, only a small fraction of this information is salient to the behavioral goals of an organism at any given time. Selectivity is therefore a critical feature of perceptual systems. Evidence suggests that in ordinary behavioral contexts we solve this problem by focusing attention on minimal sets of features diagnostic for, or sufficient to recognize, the identities, locations and affordances of object and events (Hayhoe and Ballard, 2005; Desimone and Duncan, 1995; Pessoa et al., 2002; Schyns, 1998). Perceptual systems can, in this regard, be interpreted as evolved mechanisms for selecting information from the flux of sensory inputs sufficient for object recognition and action. Artists have developed analogous formal strategies for culling sets of diagnostic features from perceptual experience and rendering them in a medium (e.g., storyboards and dailies in film or color studies and sketches in the visual arts). The ensuing formal and compositional strategies work as communicative strategies because they are directed at the fine-tuned relationship between diagnostic features and the operations of perceptual systems. Therefore, we should expect to find a tight coupling between artworks, artists’ productive strategies and the operations of perceptual systems that can be used to explain the structure and function of artistic practices. A significant amount of research in empirical aesthetics has been devoted to teasing out the relationship between the formal attributes of artworks and the aesthetic responses of consumers (see, e.g., Berlyne, 1971; Jacobsen and Höfel, 2003). Likewise, a significant amount of research in neuroaesthetics has been devoted to teasing out fine-tuned relationships between artists’ formal and compositional strategies and the operations of perceptual systems (see Livingstone, 2002; Zeki, 1999).

However, correlations between artists’ productive strategies and the operations of perceptual systems do not alone suffice to explain the artistic salience of either the formal and compositional features of a work or the broader content they support. What one needs is a story that links psychological explanations of how artworks work as ordinary perceptual (or textual) stimuli to explanations of how we recognize and understand the artistic salience of their expressive, aesthetic and semantic features. This kind of tale is forthcoming in a standard story about artists’ methods (Gombrich, 1960). Consider naturalistic depiction in landscape painting. There is no ideal formal solution to the problem of realistic pictorial depiction. A short survey of the history of landscape painting since the eighteenth century demonstrates that any of a range of formal compositional strategies will suffice to render the key features of a landscape realistically (e.g., the painterly styles of Jacob van Ruisdael, John Constable, Thomas Cole and Rackstraw Downes). This entails that artists choose how to render their subject matter relative to a broad range of alternative strategies. What are the constraints that govern these productive choices? The range of artistically salient expressive, aesthetic and semantic effects they intend their works to have on consumers, the content of their works.
What are the constraints on this communicative exchange? The range of artistic conventions governing the appreciative practices of a community. Therefore, we should also expect to find a close coupling among artists’ productive strategies, the psychophysiological processes underwriting our engagement with artworks, and the art critical conventions governing appreciative practices. Artworks can, in this context, be interpreted as attentional engines, stimuli intentionally designed to direct a consumer’s attention to their artistically salient diagnostic features (Carroll and Seeley, 2013a).

A core set of research questions frame the application of this model to the productive and appreciative practices of any particular category of art. What are the general formal compositional strategies constitutive of productive practices within that category? How are these formal compositional strategies used to carry and communicate diagnostic information? What accounts for the artistic salience of this information? Empirical aesthetics has a clear place in this model. The research methods of experimental psychology are its nuts and bolts. Where does philosophy of art fit? Philosophy of art is a tool that can be used to model the appreciative practices of an artistic community, the practices out of which the artistic salience of the expressive, aesthetic and semantic content of a work emerges. Just as valid psychological theories that model the computational processes governing our interactions with artworks are strong constraints on the adequacy of any philosophical theory of art, valid models for art critical and appreciative practices in ordinary interactions with artworks are strong constraints on the adequacy of any psychological theory. This is important. The role of artistically salient semantic variables in ordinary interactions with artworks cannot be ignored and cannot be modeled by aesthetic theories of art as they are usually construed.

The neuroscience of dance and film: two case studies

Dance and film are two areas where, spurred in part by research programs in neuroscience of art, a productive rapprochement between philosophy and empirical aesthetics is already actively engaged. The recent “Watching Dance: Kinesthetic Empathy” project brought neuroscientists and dancers together to explore the nature of audience engagement with dance. Likewise, interdisciplinary research in “Cognitivist Film Theory” has brought philosophers, film theorists, neuroscientists and psychologists together to explore common ground (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996; Shimamura, 2013). These are not the only areas where this kind of collaboration is growing. There is, for instance, also a well-established paradigm for interdisciplinary research in music (see Juslin and Sloboda, 2001). However, they are particularly illustrative of the potential and pitfalls for a rapprochement

5 See retrieved November 12, 2012: www.watchingdance.org/ (see also Blasing et al., 2012).
between philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics in practice. In this section, I explore some aspects of this new research in dance and film

Neuroscience of dance

We express any of a range of goals and emotions when we publicly display them in our movements, poses and postures. Dance audiences likewise read choreographed movements as goal-directed behaviors that express emotions constitutive of the content of a dance. It has been argued that perceivers come to understand this content through a general sensorimotor perceptual capacity referred to as metakinesis or kinetic transfer (Martin, 1933; Smyth, 1984). Kinetic transfer is defined as a form of sympathetic motor resonance, a capacity to perceptually understand the emotions and goal-directed behaviors of others in ordinary contexts by using our own bodies to model, or embody, perceived postures and movements. The diagnostic features that enable us to recognize perceptually the expressive content of choreographed movements via kinetic transfer are, therefore, hypothesized to be the same biological motion cues that enable us to recognize the expressive qualities of everyday actions in stereotyped structured relationships among joint movements. It has therefore been argued that dance communication depends on an embodied gestural semantics built from ordinary biological motion cues.

There has been significant resistance to this model for understanding dance within the philosophy of art. Skeptics argue that kinaesthesis is a contiguous sense, not a projective sense, or that kinetic transfer manifests itself in proprioceptive information about a perceiver’s own bodily states (McFee, 2011). The claim is that this entails there is no objective criteria against which to evaluate the validity of proprioceptive representations of the emotions and intentions of other biological agents. There would, therefore, be no meaningful sense in which a dance could be thought of as a communicative device, no meaningful sense in which we could speak of a shared understanding or appreciation of its expressive content. If sound, this argument would condemn dance appreciation to an untenable subjectivism – there could be no shared normative criteria for evaluating dance works, nor even any meaningful way to frame these kinds of normative questions. Indeed, the expressive content of the work would remain forever inaccessible to anyone but the dancer him or herself. The skeptic’s solution: our understanding of dance works is visual, not kinaesthetic. We visually recognize the expressive qualities of a dancer’s movements relative to artistic conventions governing their productive practices. Vision is a canonically projective sense that supports precisely the kinds of publicly shareable content necessary to understand expressive movements as communicative devices.

The current literature in psychology and neuroscience does not support the skeptical position. Rather, it suggests that an integrated network of cross-modal sensorimotor processes underwrites a projective perceptual capacity for understanding the goal-directed expressive movements of others – a network that includes premotor, motor, skeleto-muscular, somatosensory and visual processes.
Research involving point-light displays of biological motion can be used to illustrate the role this sensorimotor circuit plays in ordinary perception. In these stimuli points of light are attached to the joints of human and non-human biological agents. All other visual information about the appearance of the actors is subtracted out, leaving a stimulus composed of pure visual movement cues. Normal perceivers readily recognize the shapes, movements, actions, gender and emotions of biological agents in point-light displays. In contrast, normal perceivers do not recognize the shapes or movements of complex geometric shapes in point-light displays. Nor do they recognize biological motion if the points of light are placed on the limbs between their joints. These results demonstrate that stereotyped relationships among joint movements are diagnostic cues for the shapes, movements, actions, emotions and identities of biological agents in ordinary perceptual contexts.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) studies demonstrate that premotor, motor and somatosensory areas are involved in the capacity to recognize visually simple actions, goal-directed actions, complex social interactions and the genders and emotions of actors in point-light displays (Sakreida et al., 2005; Saygin et al., 2004). Further, case study evidence demonstrates that visual form agnosia does not disrupt the capacity to recognize visually movements and actions depicted in point-light displays or the identities of familiar individuals from their movements in normal circumstances (Gilaie-Dotan et al., 2011). In contrast, stroke damage to premotor areas disrupts the perception of movements and actions in point-light displays. Likewise, disrupting the same premotor activity with rTMS interferes with the capacity to recognize and perceptually match movements and actions in healthy individuals in both point-light displays and ordinary contexts (Saygin, 2007; Stadler et al., 2012). Finally, the loss of haptic and proprioceptive capacities due to deafferentation of corticospinal-somatosensory projections also disrupts the capacity to recognize and interpret goal-directed actions (Bosbach et al., 2005). These results demonstrate that the kinematics of coordinated joint movements are diagnostic cues for the intentions and emotions of others in goal-directed behavior and that our ability to perceive them depends upon a projective, sensorimotor, kinaesthetic perceptual capacity.

The presence of a kinaesthetic perceptual capacity that underwrites our engagement with dance does not, of course, alone suffice to explain the artistic salience of

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6 On the proposed account, mirror neurons are interpreted as part of the cognitive machinery that contributes to action understanding, empathy and kinetic transfer in these contexts – as opposed to discrete, functionally modular stand-alone mechanisms for detecting the intentions and emotions of con-specifics (see Kilner, 2011; Zentgraf et al., 2011).

7 Visual form agnosia is a syndrome caused by bilateral damage in the lateral occipital cortex that causes patients to lose the capacity to recognize objects by their static visual form despite the fact that they have intact cognitive and sensory abilities, good visual acuity and can recognize the same object through other sensory modalities (e.g., a telephone from the sound of its ring; Farah, 2004). The data described in the text therefore suggest the existence of a functionally distinct visuomotor capacity for perceptual recognition.
expressive choreographed movements. What matters is the artistic salience of these expressive movements. What evidence do we have that our capacity for motor perception is sensitive to the artistic salience of choreographed movements per se? Beatrice Calvo-Merino and her colleagues have demonstrated that expert ballet dancers exhibit heightened activation in somatotopically mapped premotor and parietal areas when viewing clips of ballet as opposed to capoeira movements. Capoeira dancers exhibit heightened activation in these same areas when viewing clips of capoeira as opposed to ballet movements. In contrast, no significant difference was observed between these two conditions in non-dancer controls and the activation levels observed in non-dancer controls were significantly lower than either ballet or capoeira dancers in both the ballet and capoeira conditions (Calvo-Merino et al., 2005). These results demonstrate a clear sensorimotor perceptual sensitivity to the biological motion cues diagnostic for familiar categories of dance. This is a good first step. Retrieving the category of art to which an artwork belongs directs a viewer to a set of interpretive strategies appropriate to that category, instructs them how to assign artistic salience to its formal and compositional features, and thereby guides how they recover its artistically salient affective, aesthetic and semantic content. However, these are motor expertise effects – this perceptual sensitivity is limited to choreographed movement styles that the viewer knows how to perform. This is a problem. It is a safe bet to guess that most members of any dance audience lack this kind of motor expertise. Therefore these studies do not support the claim that a general sensorimotor perceptual sensitivity to biological movement cues underwrites either dance understanding or appreciation in ordinary contexts.

Studies demonstrating that visual familiarity is sufficient to produce embodied kinaesthetic responses to choreographed movements in expert and novice viewers suggest a solution to this problem (Calvo-Merino et al., 2006; Jola et al., 2012). Human biological movements are highly constrained. It would stand to reason that there was some commonality across the range of motor programs employed to stabilize and control effector groups responsible for basic movements. In this context, we might hypothesize that the conjunction of generic motor programs, a visual familiarity with the stylistic conventions governing expressive movements in a category of art, and explicit knowledge of the art critical conventions governing associated interpretive and appreciative practice would suffice to bias perception to sensorimotor cues diagnostic for the artistically salient content of the work (Seeley and Carroll, 2013).

The model I have suggested for the communicative role of kinetic transfer in dance contexts does not constitute a theory of dance in the philosophical sense. But perhaps that is not the goal for a rapprochement between philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics. Perhaps rather than looking to collapse these disciplines into a common methodology, the goal should be to provide data that can productively contribute to the unique research questions that define each. Keeping an open mind to methods and results from each side of the aisle has helped shape research directions and, in some cases, led to models that are sensitive to a broader range
of the phenomenological features and cognitive processes germane to a comprehensive understanding of audience engagement with dance (e.g., Jola et al., 2012; Seeley and Carroll, 2013).

**Cognitivist film theory**

The rapprochement between film theory and empirical aesthetics stretches back to the early days of *Soviet Montage Theory* and *Gestalt Psychology* (see Arnheim, 1957; Eisenstein, 1969; Pudovkin, 1926). This rapprochement is alive and well in *cognitivist film theory*. Cognitivism can be understood in contrast with *semiotic film theory* and *film realism* (see Carroll, 2008). *Semiotic theory* argues that the editing rules and conventions for shot/sequence structure constitute a language of film that must be learned by film viewers. *Film realism* argues that films induce an illusion of reality in spectators at the theater, or that we engage and understand films as if we were present observers of the events they depict. *Cognitivism* denies both of these positions. Cinematic shots and sequences are moving pictures, depictive devices that depend on the *natural perceptual recognition capacities* of a normal perceiver. Recognizing the content of a film therefore requires no more learning than that necessary for perceptual discrimination and object recognition in ordinary contexts. Further, shots and sequences are explicitly structured to deliver just the diagnostic information a viewer needs to stitch together the film narrative. Therefore we do not need to experience the events in a film in our mind’s eye in order to understand them. Rather, we perceptually recognize what is depicted in cinematic sequences just as we do the content of any other picture.

What evidence do we have for Cognitivism over these two other alternatives? Violations of syntactic rules produce nonsense sentences. Not so for violations of editing rules. We are neither stumped nor flummoxed by them. For instance, Goddard uses *jump cuts* in *Breathless* to magnify the improvisatory character of the film and the spontaneity of the characters’ actions, and he uses a *360-degree pan* to enhance the sense that the characters have fallen into a world unglued from the conventions of polite society in *Weekend*. If *semiotic theory* were literally correct, these scenes would make no sense. But in fact the practice of violating editing rules for expressive purpose is a standard and familiar convention. We use our natural perceptual capacities to recognize the depictive content of these scenes and then ask what the most likely narrative or symbolic purpose would be for constructing them that way relative to our global narrative schema for the film.

One strength of film realism is that it offers an intuitively plausible account of the intensity of our engagement with films. However, the spatio-temporally

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8 *Jump cuts* are cuts that violate the *30-degree rule* or the editing convention to shift the camera at least 30 degrees between shots to avoid the appearance that objects have shifted, or jumped, position within the scene. The *180-degree rule* is a convention stating that the camera position and angle should be maintained on one side of the action throughout a shot in order to avoid confusing the viewer by switching the direction of the depicted movements.
discontinuous structure of shot sequences within a scene bears little resemblance to the unified egocentric structure of ordinary conscious experience. Rather, editing strategies can be conceptualized as visual routines analogous to Mary Hayhoe and Dana Ballard’s just-in-time strategies for perception and action – formal devices designed to capture a viewer’s attention and deliver information as it is needed to cognitively reconstruct the unfolding narrative (Carroll and Seeley, 2013a; Hayhoe and Ballard, 2005). On this account, movies are interpreted as attentional engines. The sparse pictorial cues present in sequences of spatio-temporally disjoint shots provide just the information necessary to drive narrative expectations and constrain our interpretations of characters’ defining traits. The intensity of film experience emerges from the way these editing strategies are used to capture and hold a viewer’s attention across the duration of a scene, directing expectations about the outcomes for characters and producing an extended continuous attentional focus that masks the discontinuities between movie-going and ordinary experience.

A range of results supports this view of movies as attentional engines (Smith et al., 2012). The use of match-action cuts to smooth over shifts in perspective across a cut has been shown to reflect the natural structure of attention shifts within an ordinary scene. Similarly, eye-tracking studies reveal high attentional synchrony among different viewers across cuts and within dynamic scenes (i.e., gaze is highly coordinated across viewers). Uri Hasson and his colleagues have likewise demonstrated a high degree of intersubjective correlation in gaze patterns and brain responses during a free viewing of the opening scenes of The Good the Bad and the Ugly (see Hasson et al., 2008). Hasson et al. have also shown that unstructured videos of natural scenes (e.g., a clip from a one-shot video of an impromptu musical performance in a crowded New York City park) yield far less attentional synchrony and intersubjective neural correlation than structured movie clips – synchrony is limited to basic sensory processing areas in unstructured videos. These results demonstrate that structured Hollywood editing routines are powerful, efficient and focused attentional devices.

Cognitivist film theorists and philosophers explicitly model films as stimuli fine-tuned to the operations of human cognitive and perceptual systems. Their claims about the ontological structure of films are derived from psychological models of our interactions with the ordinary environment in perception and action. Likewise, psychologists and neuroscientists working in film are aware of, and make regular reference to, these cognitivist models. Cognitivist models can thereby be used to organize and integrate a range of disparate research programs. There is a clear convergence of interest here – common explanatory goals lead to complementary research programs and a genuine rapprochement across disciplines. Perhaps this points to the single largest impediment to a productive rapprochement between philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics – where there is a sharp distinction between the research interests of the two disciplines, natural methodological differences may obscure what points of convergence could serve as footholds for collaboration. Sorting out the points of convergence among the two disciplines, settling on a common model for artworks and associated artistic practices and making sense of
the salience of research programs across the aisle where there is divergence may therefore be an important propaedeutic to any future rapprochement.

**Conclusion**

Philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics see their shared subject matter through different lenses. In this sense they are not disciplines bound by complementary approaches to a common research goal. Nonetheless, the distance between them may not be quite as large as it sometimes seems. Where there is a clear convergence of interests, collaboration between the fields has flourished (see Bordwell and Carroll, 1996; Juslin and Sloboda, 2001). The friction we find in other cases can often be traced to misconceptions about respective methodological practices and narrow theoretical views about the nature of art. Disentangling these methodological misconceptions and sorting through salient commonalities and differences is a critical first step toward any potential rapprochement among our fields. A good place to start the search for common ground may be hierarchical models within empirical aesthetics. These models have the structure and flexibility to accommodate the full range of semantic, normative and aesthetic variables germane to a broad encompassing view of artistic salience. However, a misconception about the source of artistic salience hampers empirical aesthetics. I don’t think this is a spurious difficulty. Nor do I think it reflects a philosophical bias about the nature of art. Artworks are communicative devices. Aesthetic strategies are among the productive strategies artists have employed to convey the contents of their works. But they are by no means the only strategies employed, and, arguably, the artistic salience of the aesthetic features of an artwork lies in their semantic salience, in the way they have been used as elements of broader productive strategies to convey its content. Therefore, to the degree that theories and models within empirical aesthetics depend upon aesthetic measures, their explanatory scope as a means to understand and explain art and associated behavior is methodologically limited. This is a place where the rapprochement between philosophy of art and empirical aesthetics can most productively be construed as a two-way street. Philosophers of art would do well to pay attention to psychological theories and observations about our engagement with art. But by the same token empirical aesthetics would do well to pay attention to descriptive philosophical theories about the broad range of artifacts, events and associated behaviors that fall under the umbrella of the category “art.”

**References**


