WHAT’S THE VALUE OF LIVE PERFORMANCE?

April 10, 2015
Friday, April 10, 2015
4 – 5:30 p.m.
Yavapai College, Sedona Center (OLLI)
Facilitated by: Dr. Russ Pryba, NAU Department of Philosophy

AGENDA

4:00 p.m
Welcome and Introduction  
Ms. Andrea Houchard, Director, Philosophy in the Public Interest

4:15 p.m.
Community Discussion  
Dr. Russ Pryba, NAU Department of Philosophy

1) What are some experiences that are aesthetically pleasing and why are they aesthetically pleasing? (3)
2) Is your experience/engagement with live art performances more enriching than those dealing with recorded/digital media? Why or why not? (4-5)
3) How, if at all, do live performances contribute to a well-lived human life and healthy communities? (5-6)

5:20 p.m.
Closing Questions and Recap of Discussion

Community Committee (7)

Special thanks to our partners, supporters and venue hosts!

The Hot Topics Café is grateful for support from the Mckenzie Endowment for Democracy
1) What are some experiences that are aesthetically pleasing and why are they aesthetically pleasing?

This section asks us to think about what makes art and the experience of art pleasing or good. Philosophers have different views of aesthetic value.

**TYPES OF AESTHETIC VALUE**

*Subjectivist view:* aesthetic value is found through a person’s experience of a work of art. The value of a work of art is instrumental in terms of leading to valuable or pleasurable subjective experiences. Common expressions similar to the following are instances of subjective accounts of aesthetic value are:

“There is no disputing about taste.” “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

*Objectivist view:* aesthetic value is in the work of art itself (the art object), and not of the experience of the viewer’s experience.

- *Aesthetic formalism* is the primary example of aesthetic objectivism where the aesthetic value of the work resides in the objective properties of the art work itself.
- Properties include: form, line, color, plot, content, meter, rhythm, timbre, harmony, and etc.

*Cognitivist view:* aesthetic value is a type of knowledge and the value of the art work resides in its educative power. Works of art are valuable insofar as they teach us something about the world.

- Works of art are valuable because they are an important part of our moral education and teach us how to sympathize, empathize or otherwise relate to experiences other than our own.

*Non-Cognitivist view:* aesthetic value is a unique kind of sensuous pleasure afforded by engaging with works of art. This view is compatible with either objective or subjective views about aesthetic value.

- There is no other value or purpose to works of art other than the pleasure that is afforded by them.


2) Is your experience/engagement with live art performances more enriching than those dealing with recorded/digital media? Why or why not?

There is a traditional distinction between the **plastic** and **performing arts**. Plastic arts include sculpture, painting, and other visual arts one might find in a gallery. Performing arts include plays, music concerts, and dance. Our discussion primarily concerns the value of the performing arts.

- However, the work of some artists complicates the distinction between the plastic and performing arts. For example, Joshua Sofaer, an artist concerned with means of collaboration and participation, engages in “live art.” He writes, “Instead of making an object...and leaving it for the audience to encounter in their own time, Live Art comes into being at the actual moment of encounter between artist and spectator.”

**WHY ENGAGE WITH LIVE ART OR ORIGINAL WORKS OF ART?**

One reason to engage with live art or original works of art is to experience the work’s **“aura.”**

- The **“aura”** of a work of art refers to its specific location and presence in space and time, as well as its history and place in an artistic or cultural tradition. Aura is closely tied to the idea of a work’s authenticity.

Walter Benjamin, a German philosopher and cultural critic, argued that **the mechanical or digital reproduction of a work of art robs an artwork of its aura**. The reproduction of a work allows the viewer to encounter the work of art on his or her own terms. Some questions one might ask concerning this view are:

- Is Benjamin correct that the mechanical reproduction of a work of art robs it of its specific aura?
- If so, is the loss of the aura of works of art necessarily a bad thing?
- Is the ease of accessibility of art afforded by mechanical reproduction worth the loss of a unique “presence” of a work?

One might find performing or live art more enriching than on other arts because:

- The audience has a direct connection with the performers. One could argue this is a means of being directly engaged with the art.

However, experiencing art live is not the only factor that determines whether it is valuable. Other factors, such as the skill of the performance, are also relevant.

- For example, experiencing a poor quality, live, opera performance may be less aesthetically enriching than experiencing a high quality, recorded opera performance.
The National Endowment for the Arts reported that in 2012 **71% of American adults accessed art** through TV, radio, handheld devices, mobile devices, the Internet, DVDs, CDs, tapes, or records.

- **50% of adults** used TV or radio to watch or listen to music, while **29%** used the Internet to watch, listen, or download music.

**49% of American adults** attended some type of **visual or performing art. 59%** attended at least **one movie.**

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**3) How, if at all, do live performances contribute to a well-lived human life and healthy communities?**

Below are some quotes from arts enthusiasts about the value of live performances and other arts being available to a community:

*"The Arts communicate and speak to us in ways that teach literacy and enhance our lives. We must continue to find a place for arts programs and partnerships not only for what it teaches students about art, but for what it teaches us all about the world we live in."* — Dr. Terry Bergeson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State, November, 2001.

*“We need new ideas, we need new ways of doing things and we need a whole new way of approaching each other with much more empathy and understanding. This means that the rest of society really needs to focus on the world of art and culture as a vital source for not only solutions, but also ways of finding solutions... and a whole knew concept of what a valuable life really means.”* — Uffe Elbaek, former Danish Minister of Culture, 2013.
“Imagine society without the civilizing influence of the arts and you’ll have to strip out what is most pleasurable in life – and much that is educationally vital. Take the collective memory from our museums; remove the bands from our schools and choirs from our communities; lose the empathetic plays and dance from our theatres or the books from our libraries; expunge our festivals, literature and painting, and you’re left with a society bereft of a national conversation … about its identity or anything else.” — Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of Arts Council England, 2014.

“We believe that our mission is to help students prepare for a rich, meaningful and engaged life that goes well beyond job titles and salary levels. Exposure to and understanding of the arts is key to developing qualities of responsible citizenship.”
—Dr. Mitchell B. Reiss, President of Washington College, 2014.

LOCAL ART ENGAGEMENT: FLAGSTAFF
Flagstaff's Museum of Northern Arizona is one of the many institutions in which there is a place to view and participate in the exchange of cultural perspectives. The museum’s mission is to “inspire a sense of love and responsibility for the beauty and diversity of the Colorado Plateau through collecting, studying, interpreting and preserving the region’s natural and cultural heritage.”

The Museum of Northern Arizona places values on: openness, integrity, excellence, relevance, stability, and respect.

LOCAL ART ENGAGEMENT: SEDONA
The Sedona Performing Arts Alliance is an organization in Sedona “dedicated to the advancement of the performing arts through education, live performance and artist support serving as a catalyst for community development through quality arts programming.”

The program aims to enrich and educate the community through the providing of performing arts.
The “hot topics” in the Hot Topics Cafés are nominated and selected by community members that represent diverse constituencies and viewpoints. We thank our committee for their participation. *Voted on Spring, 2015 “Hot Topics.”

**Flagstaff**

Frankie Beeseley, Program Coordinator, Friends of Flagstaff’s Future

*Joe Boles, Professor Emeritus, NAU College of Arts and Letters

*Jean Malecki-Friedland, MD, MPH; County Director and Chief Medical Professor and Chair, Preventive Medicine and Public Health, Miami Miller School of Medicine; Co-Founder: The Compassion Project

Jacque Gencarelle, Northern Arizona Behavioral Health Association

*Barbara Hickman, Superintendent, Flagstaff Unified School District

Sherman Stephens, Flagstaff Community

Craig Van Slyke, Dean, The W.A. Franke College of Business

*Michael Vincent, Dean, NAU College of Arts and Letters

**Sedona & the Verde Valley**

*Karen Daines, Assistant City Manager, Sedona

Paul Friedman, Sedona Citizens for Civil Dialogue

*Kate Hawkes, Producing Artistic Director, Red Earth Theatre

Darrin Karuzas, Principal, Sedona Red Rock High School

*Sandy Moriarty, Sedona Mayor

Tom O’Halleran, Keep Sedona Beautiful; Board Member, Verde River Basin Partnership

*Judy Reddington, Arts and Letters Advisory Council, NAU; Board Member, Museum of Northern Arizona; Board Director, Sedona International Film Festival

*Steve Segner, Owner, El Portal; Chair, Lodging Council, Sedona Chamber of Commerce

Patricia Lowell, Sedona Public Library, proxy for: Virginia Volkman, Director, Sedona Public Library

Jessica Williamson, Sedona City Council

**Ex officio**

Andrea Houchard, NAU Philosophy in the Public Interest

Jona Vance, NAU Department of Philosophy

Robin Weeks, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Yavapai College, Sedona Center

Randy Wilson, Arizona Daily Sun

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**Sources**

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**NEXT SEDONA HOT TOPICS CAFÉ:**

Setting Personal Environmental Priorities

**Thursday, April 16th**

2:30 - 4 p.m.

Yavapai College, Sedona Center
REMAINING HOT TOPICS CAFÉS THIS SPRING

**FLAGSTAFF**

**Environmental Topics**

**Setting Personal Environmental Priorities**
Thursday, April 23rd, 2015, 2:30 - 4 p.m.
*Museum of Northern Arizona*

**Changing the Climate around Climate Change**
Wednesday, May 6th, 2015, 2 - 3:30 p.m.
*Museum of Northern Arizona*

**SEDONA**

**Environmental Topics**

**Setting Personal Environmental Priorities**
Thursday, April 16th, 2015, 2:30 - 4 p.m.
*Yavapai College, Sedona Center (OLLI)*

**Changing the Climate around Climate Change**
Monday, May 4th, 2015, 3:30 - 5 p.m.
*Sedona Public Library*

**NAU CAMPUS**

**General Topics**

**Gender Inequality: economic disparity and related issues**
Thursday, April 16th, 2015, 5:30 - 7 p.m.
*Gardner Auditorium, The W.A. Franke College of Business, NAU*