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CAPACIOUS

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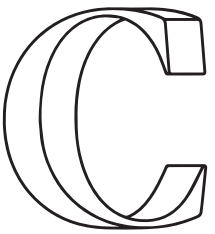

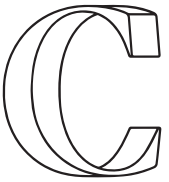

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EDITORIAL TEAM

ca·pa·cious
kəˈpāSHəs/

adjective
having a lot of space inside; roomy.

Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry is an open access, peer-reviewed, international journal that is, first and foremost, dedicated to the publication of writings and similar creative works on affect by degree-seeking students (Masters, PhD, brilliant undergraduates) across any and all academic disciplines. Secondarily, the journal also welcomes contributions from early-career researchers, recent post-graduates, those approaching their study of affect independent of academia (by choice or not), and, on occasion, an established scholar with an 'emerging' idea that opens up new avenues for affect inquiry. The principal aim of *Capacious* is to 'make room' for a wide diversity of approaches and emerging voices to engage with ongoing conversations in and around affect studies.

This journal will champion work that resists:

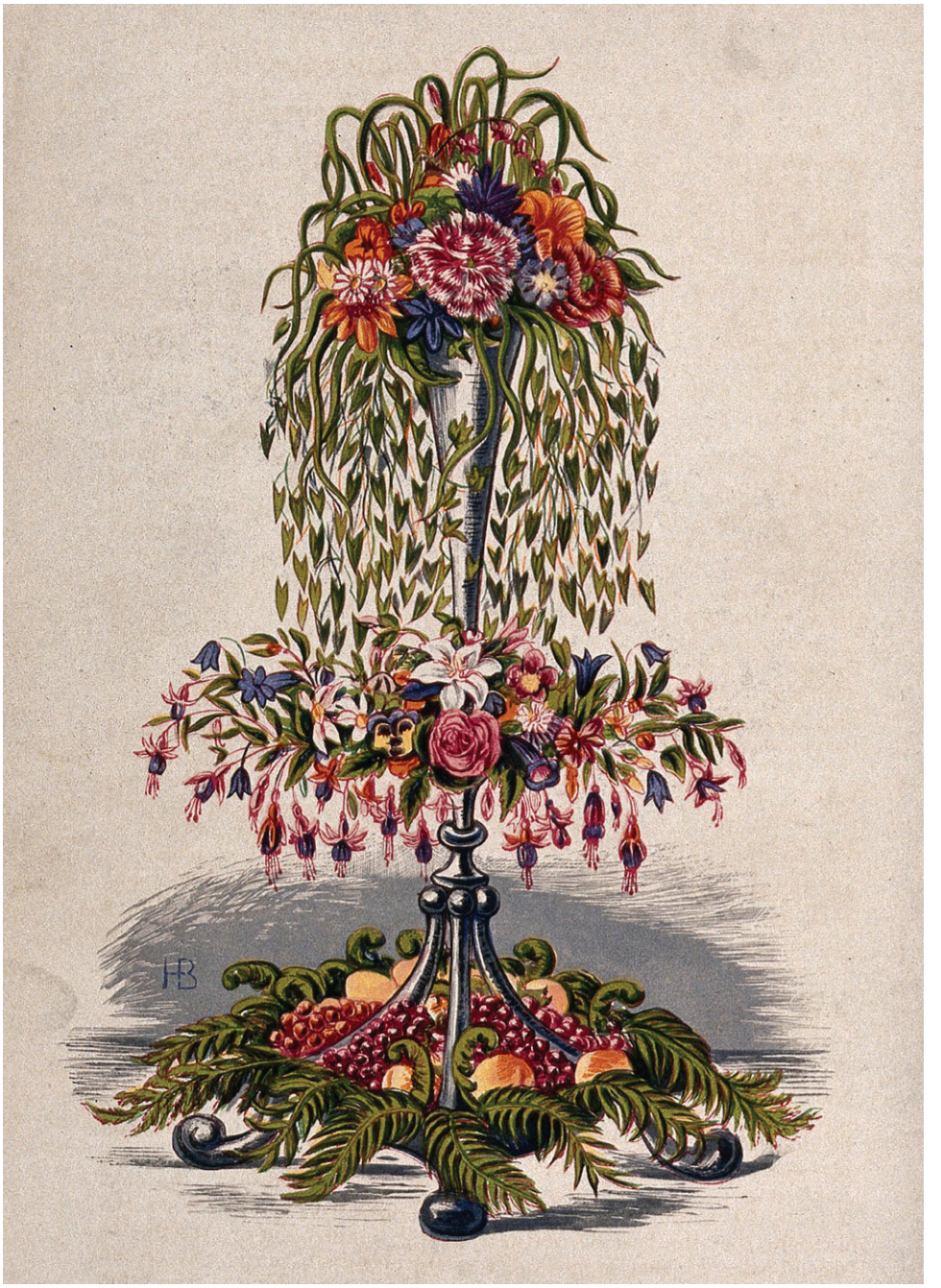
- the critical ossification of affect inquiry into rigid theoretical postures
- the same dreary citational genealogies
- any too assured reiteration of disciplinary orthodoxies

The journal will always encourage the energies and enthusiasms, the fresh perspectives and provocations that younger scholars so often bring to bear on affect within and across unique and sometimes divergent fields of intellectual endeavor. *Capacious* seeks to avoid issuing formal 'calls for papers' and 'special theme issues.' Submissions to this journal are accepted at anytime and are welcome to pursue any and all topic areas or approaches relating to affect.

Our not-so-secret wish is that essays and issues will forever remain capacious and rangy: emerging from various disciplines and conceptual [t]angles. Indeed, our aim for every journal issue would be that its collected essays not really coalesce all that much, but rather rub up against one another unexpectedly or shoot past each other without ever touching on quite the same disciplinary procedures, theoretical presuppositions or subject matter.

Capacious shall always endeavor to promote diverse bloom-spaces for affect's study over the dulling hum of any specific orthodoxy. From our own editorial practices down through the interstices of this journal's contents, the *Capacious* ethos is most thoroughly engaged by those critical-affective undertakings that find ways of 'making room.'

EDITORIAL BOARD



An elaborate floral arrangement, chromolithograph, c. 1870, after H. Briscoe.
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CAPACIOUS

CONTENTS

ROOM TONE

Joey Orr
SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

The sound of someone's breathing has become noticeable. It's not labored or erratic, but we are all standing close together without speaking and have been for more than a minute now, if I'm gauging time correctly. As the sound drifts out of focus, I shift my weight from my right foot to my left. I don't need to do this, but I do. Someone in front of me looks across the studio at something, then abruptly at something else. There's nothing special to notice where she's looking. Just the room where we've all been standing since the interview first started over an hour ago. Although in some ways the glances are connected to my shifting stance after I noticed someone breathing, these subtle gestures do not form a causal chain. They are interchanges of sorts, but not conversations exactly. They are both the conduits and artifacts of our co-presence, the inhabiting of our spatial coincidence. When we disperse, these low-level connections that mostly exist under the surface of consciousness will release, like the gentle untangling of tentacles in a submarine river, lightly touching and sending impulses to others moving into, out of, or otherwise occupying our spaces.

To my right is the artist I've been interviewing. When being recorded, studio visits are less ambulatory and try to get directly at what's critical or central to the work. People can feel very closely connected based on such truncated and impactful exchanges. But I wonder how much time we've actually spent together

if we added up all of the hours we've talked about his practice and the possibilities of working together. Days? Weeks? A month of hours? Is that possible? My colleague, whom I have worked with for years, is bent over the recording equipment. Can it require that degree of focus while we're just recording sound? He seems suddenly unfamiliar to me. I rub my eyes.

Traveling for weeks conducting studio visits and interviews for an upcoming exhibition, we had almost finished shooting the last interview, but there remained one more thing to record. So, my colleague announced, "Just going to get some room tone, now." This is a signal for everyone to be still and quiet so we can record the sound of the room. If we need to add content later or pause a voice-over while rolling video when we edit the interview, we need the same background noise from the original shoot to make every cut in the interview sound seamless. Without the sound of the original location of recording, the cuts and pauses will sound like dead air or a failure of the equipment in the final cut. So, we take a sample of the sound of the room.

It is best to have the microphones exactly where they were during most of the interview, so that the sounds of the space of the interview correspond as closely to the room tone as possible. It is also best if everyone is still present, so it is a great equalizer among the various forms of labor going on. For thirty seconds to a couple of minutes then, we all just stand or sit, more or less where we had been for the last hour or so, without speaking, while room tone is recorded. This can feel awkward, especially if the ritual is unexpected and unknown to anyone present for the shoot. The short recording of silence rarely feels short or silent.

While busily engaged in barely perceptible exchanges, each of us is absorbing a certain amount of the ambient sounds bouncing around the room, whether produced by the world outside or the building itself. Whatever is or is not happening, that moment is filled with relation, and the tone is not possible without the contours that are producing it. Like an aural fingerprint, it is an audio index not only of the room, but of our presence in the room. In fact, 'presence' is another name for it.

Breathing and other elusive signals of our presence, which can also include the emergence and disappearance of thoughts and feelings, are low-level sensations that can be exchanged with other people at varying levels of consciousness. Think

of occupying a small elevator with someone else when no one is speaking. A lot of things happen then. When you drink coffee and read the newspaper or surf the Internet with someone you are close to, you are only intermittently conscious of your behaviors and how they are impacting one another. Yet, when you speak, a context has been established. The ongoing exchange of these vitality affects creates a baseline that subtly maintains a connection with others in the present moment. It establishes a shared continuum around which more emphatic actions or emotions can register at the level of consciousness when they occur. Though largely unnoticed, we generate a kind of white noise when we are with others. It can take the form of a fleeting sound as likely as a fluctuating sensation.

Acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton understands that silence is teeming with information. He says, "Silence is a sound, many, many sounds" (Hempton and Grossman 2010, 2). Psychoanalytic theorist and psychiatrist Daniel N. Stern knew something similar about the now-ness of the present moment. In a series of interviews, he asked people to recount something mundane, like their breakfast that day. Discrete thoughts or events were experienced as seconds-long periods of time before the onset of another string of thoughts or challenges. Stern and his interviewees would graph the sensations, thoughts, memories, and feelings in a present moment, and these ended up looking like "a symphonic musical score with many things going on simultaneously" (Stern 2004, 10). Although our present moments are commonplace and last only several seconds, they can be filled with activity (Stern 2004).

If this all sounds humdrum, it is. But we each have individual styles for dealing with these fluctuating intensities, and our affective dialects are how we establish and negotiate meaning with others. To quote Annie Dillard, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing" (1989, 32). In this instance, however, the comparison is scaled down to its smallest interval. How we exist with each other in the always-emergent-seconds of the present moment is how we build and maintain attachments that enable us to establish mutuality with others. Our lived human experience might be considered an accretion or amplification of these micro-moments.

The recording of room tone is one of the rare instances when such experiences are intentionally and systematically documented. Of course, it was not created for the purpose of making an audio record of something as elusive as the exchange of vitality affects. When editing recordings of people's grunts and stutters and pauses into more coherent articulations, it helps smooth out the editorial cuts. The video might work without it: if you cover with the right music, for example.

But ambient sound, composed or documented, does what vitality affects do. It is a threshold around which all other actions and statements cohere. Even though it takes the form of a brief moment of silence, the expression of background togetherness gives all other interactions their meaning. This recorded present moment, like all present moments, is both fleeting and all that exists, both elusive and pervasive. Although this present moment is mundane and abbreviated, it builds relation and so is finally constitutional (Stern, 2000 and Widlöcher, 2002).

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CONTRIBUTORS

NEESKE ALEXANDER explores her world through art, often working from life and with different techniques such as drawing, painting, and printmaking. Themes in her work include nature, narrative, feminism, and public space. Neeske has benefited from a long term mentorship under artist Ian Tainton and has completed an Honours degree in Illustration and Masters degree in Art Education at Stellenbosch University. Currently she is working on creating a new artwork each week.

JAMES ARNETT is a UC Foundation Associate Professor of English at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. He is at work on a book on contemporary Zimbabwean women's literature, and was the recipient of a Fulbright to Zimbabwe in 2017-2018. He has published on Doris Lessing, Zadie Smith, and contemporary African and transnational literature.

SHANEE BARRACLOUGH (she/her) is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, where she teaches In the Master of Counselling programme. Her PhD in Education explored identity formation with student counsellors and counsellor education pedagogies. Shanee's work draws on a feminist new materialist theoretical orientation, in particular the work of Karen Barad and Donna Haraway. She uses feminist, qualitative, arts-based and critical posthumanist research methodologies to explore the entangled relationships between material, affective and cultural realities and identity and agency. Prior to working at the University of Canterbury, she worked as a Psychologist and Counsellor in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, with women, children and families experiencing domestic violence, trauma, and the effects of the 2010-2012 Canterbury earthquake sequence.

ALICE BUTLER is a London-based interdisciplinary writer and scholar who specializes in the intersections of feminist art and writing to explore questions of sickness, sexuality, and gender via feminist and queer perspectives and experimental approaches to the archive and autotheory. She is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and also teaches in Critical and Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art, London, where she is developing a collaborative project with Professor Gemma Blackshaw on methodologies of sickness and care in feminist art historical writing. Butler presents and publishes her work across art and academic contexts, with recent essays and articles appearing in the anthologies *On Figures* (MA BIBLIOTHÉQUE, 2021), *On Care* (MA BIBLIOTHÉQUE, 2020), and *Fandom as Methodology: A Sourcebook for Artists and Writers* (Goldsmiths University Press, 2019). She is currently working on a number of book projects: a monograph focused on the entangled lives and writings of Kathy Acker and Cookie Mueller, an edited collection on gesture and feminist writing, and a book of essays on textiles, perversions, and feminist art. In November 2021, she will develop this work as The Courtauld Institute of Art's Centre for American Art Postdoctoral Fellow.

E CRAM is an Assistant Professor jointly appointed in the Department of Communication Studies and Gender, Women's & Sexuality Studies at the University of Iowa. They are the author of *Violent Inheritance: Sexuality, Land, and Energy in Making the North American West* (University of California Press, 2022) and Associate Editor of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Queer Studies and Communication*.

ANN CVETKOVICH is Director of the Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University. She was previously Ellen Clayton Garwood Centennial Professor of English, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, and founding Director of LGBTQ Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (Rutgers, 1992); *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Duke, 2003); and *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Duke, 2012). For additional info, see anncvetkovich.com.

MAX JOHNSON DUGAN is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. His dissertation examines contemporary Halal consumption in Philadelphia and Islamic tattooing discourse on social media to understand how things come to feel authentically Islamic. This project combines digital humanities and ethnographic methods to speak to issues of class, gender, ethnicity, and communal authority, while offering insight into non-elite, embodied Islam in the material and digital world.

MARGARYTA GOLOVCHENKO is a Ph.D. student in the History of Art and Architecture department at the University of Oregon. Her current research explores the depiction of human-animal in French art. Her broader work draws from the fields of posthumanism, queer ecology, and object-oriented ontology. She is also a poet and freelance critic.

KAY GORDON is a Brooklyn-based artist working in lithography, etching, mixed media, drawing, installation & sculpture. Her works' fundamental themes are balance of chaos & order, and dependency of one object's juxtaposition to the next to reveal its form or even create its existence. Recent work responds to the violence of current political, religious, and natural/human-created events. She teaches at the City University of New York's Kingsborough campus. kaygordon.com Instagram: @kaygordonbklyn

SEAN GRATTAN is the author of *Hope Isn't Stupid: Utopian Affects and Contemporary American Literature* (University of Iowa Press, 2017). His work has also appeared in various edited collections, most recently *Noir Affect* (Fordham University Press, 2020), along with journals such as *minnesota review*, *Cultural Critique*, *Utopian Studies*, *mediations*, and *GLQ*.

MACK HAGOOD is Robert H. and Nancy J. Blayney Assistant Professor of Comparative Media Studies at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

ERIC S. JENKINS is an associate professor of communication at the University of Cincinnati, the recipient of numerous top paper awards at national and international conferences, and the author of *Surfing the Anthropocene: The Big Tension and Digital Affect* (2020) and *Special Affects: Cinema, Animation, and the Translation of Consumer Culture* (2014).

FREYA JOHNSON (she/her) is a recent PhD in Human Geography from the University of Bristol. Her research investigates sexual trauma and violence as gendered concepts that are mediated through historical, clinical, and cultural registers. By prioritizing affect theory and performative methods, she aims to increase conversation on the complexities of trauma as an embodied and affective experience, and to redefine the critical topics of event, consent, and justice.

RANDALL JOHNSON is a mostly retired psychiatrist in Chapel Hill, NC, who fell in love with philosophy as an undergraduate and has been ceaselessly and queerly addicted to her ever since. He has presented a number of essays at the Merleau-Ponty Circle and several other continental philosophy conferences. His main interest remains thinking the relation between phenomenology, critical theory, and post-structuralist thought.

JOEY ORR is the Andrew W. Mellon Curator for Research at the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas, where he directs the Integrated Arts Research Initiative and is affiliate faculty in Museum Studies and Visual Art. Previously Joey served as the Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where his major project aligned three exhibitions around artistic research. Recent writing has been published in *Art Papers*, *Art Journal Open*, *BOMB*, *Hyperallergic*, *Journal for Artistic Research* (Network Reflections), and *Sculpture*. Juried writing has been published by *Antennae*; *Art & the Public Sphere; Emotion, Space, and Society*; *Images*; *Journal of American Studies*; *QED; Visual*

CONTRIBUTORS

Methodologies; and a chapter in the volume *Rhetoric, Social Value, and the Arts* (Palgrave Macmillan). He holds an MA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a PhD from Emory University and currently serves as a contributing editor for *Art Papers*. joeyorr.com

JASON READ is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern Maine. He is the author of *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present* (SUNY 2003) and *The Politics of Transindividuality* (Brill 2015/Haymarket 2016) and a forthcoming collection of essays, *The Production of Subjectivity: Between Marxism and Post-Structuralism* to be published by Brill and Haymarket. He blogs on popular culture, philosophy, and politics at unemployednegativity.com. He is currently writing a book titled *The Double Shift: Marx and Spinoza on the Politics and Ideology of Work.*

JON READ is an artist and a musician (and Jason's brother). With his band, the Wiggins, he makes the kind of music that they'll play on oldies stations fifty years from now after the plug gets pulled, the blood gets spilled, the power returns, and people get back to partying like they party right now. The Wiggins' music is a loud, hissing mix of idiosyncratic garage and punk, and Blues.

RANDAL ROGERS is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance at the University of Regina. He teaches in the Creative Technologies and Interdisciplinary Studies programs. Randal's recent research focuses on the visual culture of espionage. He is currently editing a volume titled *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy: Histories, Adaptations, Legacies* and researching a monograph titled *Wilderness of Mirrors: Spies and Queer Subjects in Visual Culture*.

KATHRYN (KATIE) STROM is an assistant professor of Educational Leadership at California State University, East Bay, where she teaches critical theory and qualitative inquiry courses in the Educational Leadership for Social Justice EdD program. Her research and teaching interests include critical posthuman/neo-materialist theories, the critical preparation of P-20 educators, culturally/linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogies, and autoethnographic/intimate forms of scholarship. Her research has appeared in multiple peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Teacher Education, Teachers College Record*, and *Equity and Excellence in Education,* and she is the co-author of the book *Becoming-Teacher: A Rhizomatic Look at First Year Teaching.* She received her doctorate in Teacher Education and Teacher Development from Montclair State University. Prior to pursuing her doctorate, Katie was a history teacher and school leader in southern California.

MEGAN SCHOETTLER (MA, Miami University) is a PhD Candidate in Composition and Rhetoric at Miami University. Her research centers on feminist rhetorics and pedagogies, with emphasis on the affective resistance of feminist activists and sexual assault victim advocates. Megan has earned several teaching awards and authored two book chapters.

BENJAMIN SCHULTZ-FIGUEROA is an Assistant Professor in Film Studies at Seattle University. His research focuses on the history of scientific filmmaking, nontheatrical film, and animal studies. His book *The Celluloid Specimen: Moving Image Research into Animal Life* is due to be published by UC Press in 2022.

JONATHAN STERNE is James McGill Professor, Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University, and author of *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* and *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, and is editor of *The Sound Studies Reader*. Jonathan's new book *Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment* will be released by Duke University Press in January 2022. He also makes music and other audio works. Visit his website at sterneworks.org.

MARIE THOMPSON is a Lecturer in Popular Music at The Open University, UK.

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