

International Merleau-Ponty Circle

Fall 2009 Newsletter

11 November 2009

The Thirty-Fourth Conference of the International Merleau-Ponty Circle was held at Mississippi State University in Starkville, Mississippi, USA, September 10-12, 2009. The Conference Directors were Rachel McCann (School of Architecture, Mississippi State University) and Patricia Locke (Philosophy Department, St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland).

The conference's title and primary theme was "The Experience and Expression of Space"—most fitting for a conference that was sponsored by MSU's College of Architecture, Art, and Design. There were twenty-one individual papers presented. Keynote Lectures were given by Roy and Ann Marie Decker (Duvall Decker Architects in Jackson, MS), Helen Fielding (University of Western Ontario), Galen A. Johnson (University of Rhode Island), and Alberto Pérez-Gomez (McGill University); an invited paper was given by David Morris (Concordia University). In addition to the individual papers, the conference featured two panels: one devoted to discussion of Lawrence Hass's book, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy* (Indiana University Press, 2008), and the other, an interdisciplinary panel entitled "Intertwining Merleau-Ponty and Architecture." The full program is posted on the International Merleau-Ponty Circle website at www.uri.edu/artsci/phl/impc.

The fourth annual Martin C. Dillon Memorial Lecture was given by Bryan Norwood (Boston University) with the title "Consciousness at the Limits of Phenomenology: Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze." The session was introduced and moderated by Joanne Dillon. The M. C. Dillon lectureship is awarded annually to the best graduate student conference paper submission chosen by the conference directors together with the General Secretary and Associate General Secretary. The honorarium for the lecture is made possible through the generous contributions of members to the M. C. Dillon Endowment Fund.

Rachel McCann and Patricia Locke did a magnificent job organizing this conference. In fact, they were organizing two conferences, because on Wednesday, September 9, they also produced a day-long architecture conference titled "Flesh and Space: Intertwining Merleau-Ponty and Architecture." There were seventy-nine paid registrations for the conference. Despite the extraordinary amount of work in creating both programs and accommodating all the registrants and additional attendees, Rachel and Patricia were wonderful hosts: calm, smooth, and graceful as they attended to all the matters that naturally arise in the course of a conference. The School of Architecture offered a marvelous facility, not only for the talks, but also for the receptions and luncheon that was held there. It was a special pleasure to be surrounded by the work of artists and architects, and to learn from so many such people during the course of the conference. Special mention too must be made of lovely design qualities that informed the print materials, as well as the conference t-shirts and coffee mug! The membership expressed their very deep appreciation to Rachel, Patricia, and their assistants at the Saturday business luncheon and at the conference banquet Saturday evening. Indeed, the International Merleau-Ponty Circle is extremely grateful to them for their hard work to

create this wonderful conference. We are also grateful to the agencies that supported their efforts: MSU's School of Architecture, the College of Architecture, Art, and Design, the Office of Research and Economic Development, the Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems, the Office of the Provost, the Judy and Bobby Shackouls Honors College, and the Department of Philosophy and Religion.

Next year's conference, the Thirty-Fifth Annual Conference of the International Merleau-Ponty Circle, will be held at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville, NC. The dates are September 23-25, 2010, and the theme of the conference is "Depth: Aesthetic, Psychoanalytic, and Historical-Political." Professor Duane Davis (UNC – Asheville) will be the conference director. Essays dealing with the specific theme of the conference will be given priority, but all essays having to do with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy will be considered. At this point one Keynote Speaker has been announced: Richard Simanke (Federal University of Sao Carlos, Brazil). The deadline for paper and panel submissions is **June 4, 2010**. Paper submissions should be about 15 pages long so they can be read in no longer than 30 minutes. For further information, go to the Call for Papers on the Merleau-Ponty Circle website (www.uri.edu/artsci/phl/impc). The 2010 conference website will be going live in the near future (<http://www.unca.edu/Merleau-Ponty2010>).

At the business luncheon in Starkville, the membership approved an amendment to the by-laws that formally constitutes all previous conference directors (and others, as appointed by the General Secretary) as a Board of Directors for the organization. At the time of the business luncheon, the 2011 conference had not yet found a home, but since the conference, the International Merleau-Ponty Circle has received a formal invitation (with pledge of financial and space support) from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota to host the 2011 conference under the directorship of Susan O'Shaughnessy (Philosophy Department). The proposed conference title and theme in Merleau-Ponty studies will be "Flesh, Truth, Sacred Life." The Circle membership will officially vote regarding acceptance of this proposal at the business meeting in September, 2010 at UNC – Asheville, but this is a robust, detailed proposal that promises to offer an exceptional conference for 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Galen A. Johnson, General Secretary

Lawrence Hass, Associate General Secretary