

Art and/as Knowledge in American Contexts

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This special issue asks what American art knows – and how that knowledge is produced.

In recent decades, a range of theoretical and critical approaches – from posthumanism and new materialism to ecocriticism, affect theory, and critical race and gender studies – have profoundly reconfigured our understanding of knowledge. Knowledge is no longer conceived as merely abstract, disembodied, and universal, but also as situated, material, affective, relational, and historically contingent. Considered from this perspective, American intellectual and cultural history has long been shaped by debates over expertise, authority, public reason, and democracy – debates in which artistic practice has played a crucial and often ambivalent role. These shifts invite renewed attention to aesthetic practice not merely as representation but as a site of inquiry and knowledge production in its own right. This special issue proposes to examine art as an epistemic practice while also asking whether artistic *poesis* – understood as making, bringing forth, and giving form – constitutes a distinct mode of knowing, one in which intuition, material process, and formal invention generate forms of insight that exceed purely conceptual or discursive articulation.

How have artistic practices in the United States developed, contested, or reconfigured forms of knowing through acts of making, formal experimentation, and material engagement? In what ways have artists engaged scientific, technological, ecological, and political transformations – sometimes in dialogue with them, sometimes in tension with them, and occasionally in advance of their later stabilization within academic discourse? How might art illuminate the entanglements of matter, affect, race, gender, environment, memory, and power that continue to animate debates within American Studies? In the United States, these dynamics have often assumed particular visibility, shaping the epistemic status of art through recurring negotiations between pragmatism and anti-intellectualism, innovation and suspicion of expertise, aesthetic autonomy and political engagement. From Emerson's reflections on experience and Dewey's account of art as inquiry to modernist defenses of autonomy, Cold War technoscience, environmental art, feminist and queer interventions, Indigenous epistemologies, institutional critique, and contemporary digital and bio-art practices, American art has repeatedly operated alongside – and sometimes against – dominant regimes of knowledge.

The issue welcomes both contemporary and historically grounded analyses, including studies that trace how earlier artistic practices anticipated, prefigured, or complicated theoretical formations that have only recently been named. We invite contributions that explore, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- art as research, experiment, or epistemic practice in American contexts

- poesis, artistic intuition, and forms of knowledge emerging through making
- American pragmatism and aesthetic inquiry
- art and technoscience (cybernetics, AI, biotechnology, media ecologies)
- environmental and ecological art as knowledge production
- race, gender, sexuality, and the politics of situated knowledges
- Indigenous and decolonial epistemologies in American art
- affect, embodiment, and sensory knowledge
- art institutions, expertise, and public debates about knowledge in the U.S.
- historical case studies of artistic practices that anticipate or complicate scientific and intellectual shifts

We welcome interdisciplinary approaches from American Studies, art history, cultural studies, philosophy, environmental humanities, science and technology studies, and related fields.

Important dates:

Deadline for abstract submissions: **31 December 2026**

Deadline for final articles: **30 September 2027**

Publication date: **Autumn 2028**

Please submit an abstract of approximately 300 words together with a short biographical note (100 words) by **31 December 2026**. Authors of selected proposals will be invited to submit full-length articles and will receive detailed submission guidelines at a later stage. All contributions will undergo a peer-review process.

Publication:

Polish Journal for American Studies is a yearbook of the Polish Association for American Studies. PJAS publishes scholarly work in such fields of American Studies as literature, culture, the arts, the media, history, politics, foreign affairs, social sciences and others. PJAS appears in print format as well as a free-access on-line publication. Copyright by the authors. Articles published in PJAS are Open-Access and are distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

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Editors:

Edyta Frelik teaches in the Department of British and American Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. She is the author of articles and books on artists' writings, including *Painter's Word: Thomas Hart Benton, Marsden Hartley, and Ad Reinhardt as Writers* (Peter Lang, 2016) and *Kiedy malarz pisze (jak się patrzy). Wstęp do badań nad pisarstwem artystów* (Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2021). In 2013 she received the Smithsonian Institution's Terra Foundation for American Art International Essay Prize. In 2015 she co-organized, with Prof. Jerzy Kutnik, the international conference *Wordstruck: American Artists as Readers, Writers and Literati*, funded by a grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art. In 2019 she was invited to contribute to the catalogue and symposium accompanying the first European retrospective exhibition of Marsden Hartley's work at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. Her research focuses on the intersections of art, philosophy, and science in American culture.

Jerzy Kutnik is Professor Emeritus of American literature and culture at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. A specialist in experimental American writing and intermedia art, he is the author of *The Novel as Performance: The Fiction of Ronald Sukenick and Raymond Federman* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1986; 2nd, expanded edition, Invisible Starfall Books, 2022) and numerous studies on the work of John Cage, including the books *John Cage. Przypadek paradoksalny* (Folium, 1993) and *Gra słów. Muzyka poezji Johna Cage'a* (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 1997). He co-organized the international Cage 2012 Festival in Lublin and edited. *CAGE100. Sympozjum z okazji setnej rocznicy urodzin Johna Cage'a* („Rozdroża,” 2015) and *CAGE111: A 2012 John Cage Symposium* (Invisible Starfall Books, 2023). His research explores intersections of literature, performance, music, and experimental aesthetics in American culture.