



**In Conversation: Richard Shusterman, D. Phil.
Philosopher Seeks Collaborators, Discusses Similarities with Science**

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Boca Raton, Fla. (Sept. 4, 2018) – We sat down with Richard Shusterman, D. Phil., to learn more about his work and recent international travel. He’s hoping to forge collaboration with FAU faculty in areas such as Human-Computer Interactive Design and expand his work with faculty studying healthy aging. Here’s what we learned.

How would you describe somaesthetics to a layman?

The term somaesthetics derives from combining the Greek-derived words for body (soma) and perception (aesthesia). The field concerns the body’s perception, performance, and appearance. Somaesthetics is an interdisciplinary research field devoted to the study and use of the living body (or soma) as a site of sensory appreciation and creativity. It seeks to enrich our knowledge of the body and improve our experience and performance.

Tell us about your interest in increasing interdisciplinary collaboration with the Center for Body, Mind, and Culture.

In line with the field of somaesthetics, the center is interdisciplinary in its aims. Realizing close interdisciplinary collaborations in an academic world that is increasingly specialized, compartmentalized and driven by particular disciplinary goals, methods, and standards has proven challenging. There is indeed a significant gap between the humanities and the sciences with respect to methods, concepts, styles of writing, and criteria of assessment. But we are often studying the same forms of experience and behavior.

I have been working with FAU faculty interested in healthy aging, but I wish the Center could be more successful with respect to FAU collaborations; we keep trying. My international work in somaesthetics has frequently involved collaboration with scientists working in interactive design and with health issues. For example, this summer I gave an intensive two-day practical workshop on body consciousness at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, sponsored by their faculties of Information Science and Medicine. It would be wonderful to find people at FAU who were interested in somaesthetic research relating to the fields of Human-Computer Interactive Design and healthy aging.

Tell us about your research experience abroad this summer.

Besides the workshop in Norway, my months of May and June were full of research-related events in Europe. In May, I gave the keynote speech at an international somaesthetics conference in Hungary. As William James Scholar of 2018, I lectured in Germany in June. I had the opportunity to take my work in philosophy beyond the ivory tower, as a documentary film about my work was screened in a Berlin cineplex. In Lyon, I assessed the research of a French anthropologist who uses my work on somaesthetics to study contemporary urban life.



How has travelling internationally to teach and lecture impacted your work?

International travel has always been part of my academic life. My most demanding travel is for the practical workshops in somaesthetic body consciousness that I give in Europe and East Asia. There is a form of somatic understanding that cannot be captured or transmitted in words or formulae, but needs to be experienced through one's own body.

International travel has been crucial for my growth as a scholar. Here at FAU, Chinese scholars have frequently been funded by the Chinese government to work with me at the Center for Body, Mind, and Culture. Two professors from Shanghai will be arriving this fall.

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