

Somatic Style

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Richard Shusterman is the Dorothy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar in the Humanities at Florida Atlantic University. Author of *Body Consciousness* (Cambridge, 2008), he has also written *Surface and Depth* (2002); *Performing Live* (2000); *Practicing Philosophy* (1997); and *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (1992, 2000, and translated into thirteen languages). A graduate of Hebrew University of Jerusalem (B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy) and Oxford University (D. Phil), he has held academic appointments in France, Germany, Israel, and Japan, and has been awarded research grants from the NEH, Fulbright, ACLS, Humboldt Foundation, and UNESCO. His exploratory research in somaesthetics is nourished by his professional practice as a somatic educator/therapist in the Feldenkrais Method.

Abstract:

Style is very often contrasted to substance and thus regarded as superficial manner rather than substantive matter. My lecture challenges this view of style as mere surface dressing or external technique by exploring style's deep-rooted expression of both self and society. I focus particularly on somatic style because such style is regarded as especially superficial, as the body is essentially construed in terms of representational surface.

To develop my argument, I first focus on somatic style's role in transmitting philosophical ideas and expressing ethical character. I then examine five logical ambiguities that inhabit and complicate the notion of style (including somatic style), before proceeding to explore the different ways that the body's various elements contribute to creating and expressing somatic style and also the different ways that our multiple somatic senses perceive and critically appreciate it. I conclude by examining the connection between such style and spirit.