

Dear Members of the International Merleau-Ponty Circle,

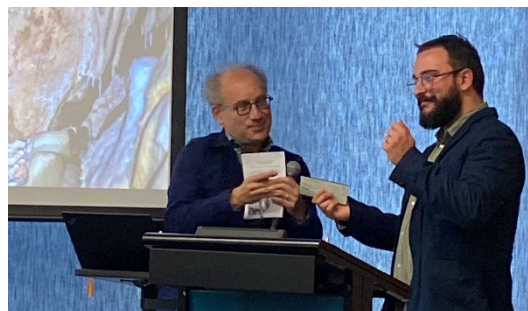
We hope this message finds you well as the year draws to a close and holidays draw near. To those of you who travelled to the very recent meeting of the Circle in Melbourne, we trust your return journey went well.

This was our first conference in Australia, extending the inter-continental reach of the Circle. The conference gathered around 85 attendees, 45 in-person and the remaining online, from around the world, with faculty and students from 30 universities in Australia, Canada, China, Finland, Japan, Kuwait, and the United States.

The conference, which ran from the 4th to the 6th of December, featured keynotes from Shaun Gallaher (University of Memphis, University of Wollongong) and Alia Al-Saji (McGill University), and invited papers from Claude Romano (Sorbonne University, Australian Catholic University), Joel Michael Reynolds (Georgetown University), and Kym Maclaren (Toronto Metropolitan University), with two streams of papers [on the program](#), 18 geared to the main conference topic, *Merleau-Ponty and Embodiment: Between the Cognitive, Aesthetic, and Socio-Political*, and 15 running in a parallel thematic stream on *Rethinking Racism through Embodiment and Place*. The papers provided rich insights for thought and generated great conversations over the course of the conference, which was held in Deakin University's downtown location, in a high rise building in the business district of Melbourne—a quite spectacular location. As well, the conference continued our practice of holding a mentoring session for graduate students, led by Joel Michael Reynolds (Georgetown University), Bryan Mukandi (University of Wollongong), and Ryan Gustafsson (University of Melbourne).

The conference concluded with two prize-winning papers. The first of these was the recipient of the 2024 M. C. Dillon Award for the best graduate student submission, which was awarded to Benjamin Décarie-Daigneault, from Pennsylvania State University, for his paper “The crooked finger of Chauvet-Pont d'Arc: A

Merleau-Pontian account of parietal art.” His paper will also appear in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Chiasmi International* (about which more below). (Donations to the M.C. Dillon Fund to support the work of future Dillon award winners as well as



our other graduate student program participants can be [made directly through our website](#); it is also possible to send a check, contact David.Morris@concordia.ca)

The second prize paper marked the inauguration of the Ron Morstyn Memorial Prize, which is awarded to a graduate student, junior scholar, or independent scholar, for the best interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary submission engaging Merleau-Ponty's work. It was established, through a generous donation by Gaye Morstyn, to honour [Dr. Ron Morstyn \(1955-2020\)](#) an Australian psychiatrist who spent much of his professional career seeking a deeper understanding of the human condition—which led him to existentialism and phenomenology, particularly Merleau-Ponty, whom Ron discovered through the work of [Martin Dillon](#).



We were fortunate to have Gaye attend the conference and present the inaugural prize together with Duane Davis, a longstanding member of the Circle and its board of directors. The prize was awarded to Brian Irwin for his paper “An ecophenomenological lesson from Merleau-Ponty's later ontology, as illustrated through the landscape photography of Robert Adams.”



Our deep thanks go to the conference organizers, Helen Ngo and Jack Reynolds, for offering to hold the conference, for their dedication, and for holding such a well thought out and carefully run conference. Thanks to Ryan Gustafsson for their organizational support and to Beau Kent for onsite support. We would also like to thank Deakin University for its support of the conference.

The business meeting, held on the last day of the conference, took up several important items of business, summarized below for your information—with news about upcoming conferences moved to the top:

Previously Announced Conferences:

IMPC 2024: Villanova University University, Philadelphia PA, co-directed by Martina Ferrari and Whitney Powell: “ART, POLITICS, AND IMAGINATION,” Oct 24th – Oct 26th 2024 In-person with virtual streaming

IMPC 2025: University of Maine, Orono, Maine, co-directed by Kirsten Jacobsen, Don Beith, and Susan Bredlau: “Existential Transitions: Aging, Health, and Environment,” Date TBA

Proposals:

IMPC 2026: University of Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France, directed by Stefan Kristensen with support from a colleague, Benjamin Thomas (a professor in film studies who is heavily inspired by Merleau-Ponty). The working topic is *Body and Landscape / Corps et paysage*. Possible dates are September 17-19 or 24-26 2026. (Endorsed at meeting)

IMPC 2027-2029—expressions of interest:

Emily Lee, California State Fullerton (expression of interest announced last year, still not confirmed)

Arsalan Memon: Lewis University, Romeoville Illinois. (New expression of interest. Romeoville is about 45 min from Chicago O’Hare)

Hayden Kee, Chinese University of Hong Kong proposed a conference in Hong Kong at his university. This is an excellent opportunity for the Circle and its international connections. It was endorsed at the meeting. We are aware that travel is an issue and we try to space out conferences that are farther from the USA & Canada, so, for this proposal we are trying to remain open re the exact year, at this moment, but after US proposals above.

Business Items

Dillon Award: This award was established by the Circle as a monetary award and honour for the best graduate student paper. In addition, Mauro Carbone, founding editor of *Chiasmi International: Trilingual Studies Concerning Merleau-Ponty’s Thought* proposed to publish the prize winning paper in *Chiasmi* (which has recently been renamed *Chiasmi International: Contemporary Phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty Studies*). Recent discussions with *Chiasmi* about this arrangement have led to three changes, proposed and passed at the business meeting: limiting the prize to once per person; inviting paper submissions in French as well as English; and allowing remote presentations for prize recipients who cannot travel to the conference.

Morstyn Prize: This prize was established and passed at the business meeting last year. The process of adjudicating this year led to some clarifications in the prize

wording regarding eligibility for the independent scholar category and clarification that the purpose of the prize is supporting travel to the conference, with latitude for accommodations if needed. At the meeting two further provisos were approved: that the award can be won only once; and, while graduate students can have their papers be considered for the Morsytn and Dillon awards, if they happen to win both prizes, they can accept only one of the two, according to their own choice.

New Conference Registration Fee structure: At last year's business meeting, a committee was struck to look into membership fees for the circle, in response to rising costs of conferences, in particular costs of making conferences accessible through online options and more. The committee that looked into this (David Morris, Kym Maclaren, Joel Michael Reynolds, and Helen Fielding) eventually realized that due to the Circle's decentralized approach (where conference organizers take the lead in running conferences and setting programs) and minimal institutional and financial structure, membership fee collection and disbursal would pose several problems. The committee therefore recommended a flexible scheme wherein conference organizers break the overall conference fees into a fixed attendance fee and an accessibility fee that is charged on a sliding scale by income bracket (as some organizations charge membership fees). This allows organizers who are facing high accessibility costs (which may not be the case at all universities) to offset such costs in ways that keep registration low for graduate students and those with lower income, and collect more from those with higher incomes. For conferences facing higher local costs for accessibility, this will lead to increases in our relatively low registration fees. This proposal was passed and will come into play with next conference, with organizers setting parameters of the scheme as needed for their local needs, and room for adjustments to sliding scales as we see how it works.

IMPC Satellite Session at SPEP 2024, Rochester: We are looking to hold a satellite session at the beginning of SPEP, expressions of interest for topics or papers are welcome, contact David Morris and Kym Maclaren by email.

With our best wishes for the holidays and new year,
David Morris, General Secretary
Kym Maclaren, Associate General Secretary