

The Thomas N. Bonner Book Award Lecture

Barbara M. Stafford, Ph.D.

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Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images

The Thomas N. Bonner Book Award: In the spirit of former WSU President Thomas N. Bonner's career as an educator and renowned historian of medicine and medical education, the prize recognizes the best recent book in English on the theory and practice of the liberal arts. In view of Bonner's own work, special consideration is given to studies bridging the "two cultures" of the sciences and the humanities.

Barbara Maria Stafford is at the forefront of a growing movement that calls for the humanities to confront the brain's material realities. In *Echo Objects*, she argues that humanists should seize upon the exciting neuroscientific discoveries that are illuminating the underpinnings of cultural objects. In turn, she contends, brain scientists could enrich their investigations of mental activity by incorporating phenomenological considerations—particularly the intricate ways that images focus intentional behavior and allow us to feel thought. As a result, *Echo Objects* is a stunningly broad exploration of how complex images—or patterns that compress space and time—make visible the invisible ordering of human consciousness. Stafford demonstrates, for example, how the compound formats of emblems, symbols, collage, and electronic media reveal the brain's grappling to construct mental objects that are redoubled by prior associations. In contrast, she shows that findings in evolutionary biology and the neurosciences are providing profound opportunities for understanding aesthetic conundrums such as the human urge to imitate and the role of narrative and nonnarrative representation. Ultimately, she makes an impassioned plea for a common purpose—for the acknowledgement that, at the most basic level, these separate projects belong to a single investigation.



**Wednesday
November 5, 2008
2- 3:30 pm
Room 2268 Scott Hall**

Reception following in the **Department
of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Conference Room, 4364 Scott Hall**

