

DEDICATION TO OLE SKOVSMOSE

Paul Ernest – The Editor

This issue, no. 42 of the Philosophy of Mathematics Education Journal is dedicated to Ole Skovsmose for his outstanding and continuing contribution to The Philosophy of Mathematics Education and in particular to Critical Mathematics Education.

Dedicating this issue to Ole Skovsmose is to celebrate, appreciate and honour his great contributions to our field of mathematics education, to critical mathematics education, to the philosophy of mathematics education and to the philosophy of mathematics. This dedication does not mean that all papers in this journal issue are about his work. Only this one and the review of his most recent book *Critical Philosophy of Mathematics* (2024) are so focussed, although there are plenty of references to his work, such as in David Kollosche's and Paul Ernest's papers. This journal issue is not a festschrift. Anyway, one has already been edited in his honour in 2010 by Helle Alrø, Ole Ravn and Paola Valero and entitled *Critical Mathematics Education: Past, Present and Future*, published by Sense Publishers in the Netherlands.

In this year of 2024 his great contribution was recognised with the award of the Hans Freudenthal Medal by ICMI, International Committee of Mathematics instruction, part of the International Mathematical Union. It only awarded once every two years or so, to an outstanding contributor, to a researcher in mathematics education whose work is field defining and enlarging. It is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize in our field and it has only been given to 10 individuals of excellence in its history, so far.

Here is the citation that accompanies the award.

The Hans Freudenthal Award, with which ICMI honors innovative, consistent, highly influential and still ongoing programs of research in mathematics education, is awarded in 2024 to Professor Ole Skovsmose, Professor Emeritus of Aalborg University, Denmark, for his outstanding contributions to the very foundations of mathematics education through his career-long explorations of Critical Mathematics Education.

Skovsmose's professional work springs from his experiences as a student and mathematics teacher. From 1968 to 1975, he studied mathematics and philosophy at Copenhagen University, while also working as a teacher at the Copenhagen Day and Evening Teacher Training College. His doctoral work at the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies drew inspiration

from his personal experience that mathematics in classrooms tended to be oppressive for students; but that it was also possible for the teacher to bring alternative ways of working with mathematics that did not reproduce such oppression. His early doctoral writing was not looked on favorably, because it lay too far outside of the disciplinary traditions; but he persevered and earned his Ph.D. in 1982.

A postdoctoral stay at Cambridge University with Alan Bishop in 1990-91 was crucial in shaping Skovsmose's seminal book *Towards a Philosophy of Critical Mathematics Education*. This comprehensive work was submitted to examination at the Faculty of Engineering and Science, Aalborg University, for the degree of Doctor of Science, the highest research degree that exists in Denmark. Skovsmose is the only Danish mathematics educator to have been awarded this academic title.

Towards a Philosophy of Critical Mathematics Education lays out the fundamentals of Critical Mathematics Education – broadly, that mathematics and mathematics education are rooted in the historical, cultural, political and economic structures of society. As such, they cannot be considered value-neutral practices, but rather deeply entangled in the production and reproduction of both goods and evils in past and contemporary inclusions and exclusions.

Skovsmose's life-long contributions, including an extensive series of books beginning in 1994 and continuing to the present (*Critical Mathematics Education* was published in 2023) have shaped this important area of mathematics education in two distinct ways. First, Skovsmose has an extensive, sustained and creative authorship with a strong intellectual contribution in three topics: the possibilities and limits of school mathematics education practices, the functioning of mathematics in action as performative force in science, technology and society, and the philosophy of mathematics. These three topics together provide a comprehensive philosophy of Critical Mathematics Education (CME).

Second, Skovsmose has supported a number of communities around the world through academic exchange, collaborative research projects and doctoral mentorship. This support has been crucial in the development of CME in different contexts. His work has had profound practical and theoretical impact in Denmark; his key work has been produced in Danish and English, and translated mainly into Portuguese and Spanish, but also Greek, Turkish and more recently Persian. His work, originally “against the grain” of contemporary scholarship in mathematics education, is increasingly cited around the globe – and amplified by research partnerships in contexts as diverse as Brazil and South Africa.

Indeed, the very enterprise of mathematics education is fundamentally different now than it was decades ago. It is impossible to conceptualize the field, even when working in classrooms, without attention to the ways in which our work is rooted in the historical, cultural, political and economic structures of society. This significant and ongoing contribution to our collective understanding makes Ole Skovsmose an eminently deserving recipient of the Hans Freudenthal Award for 2024.

This is a magnificent citation. A possible flaw is that it identifies Ole Skovsmose as European through and through, albeit with external influence. In fact, he has made Brazil his home for almost 30 years, so he speaks and writes as a citizen of the world, living, working and writing as a resident in the Global South, not as a European tourist, as so many of us are.

Ole Skovsmose had already earned his place in the mathematics education hall of fame in 2024 before he published his groundbreaking contribution to the philosophy of mathematics in his most recent book *Critical Philosophy of Mathematics*, reviewed separately in this issue.

Ole Skovsmose has been a supporter and contributor to this journal right from the outset. He was one of the original 18 members of the organising group supporting *The Philosophy of Mathematics Education Newsletter* (as it was then) number 1 in 1990, as well as the first group meeting at ICME in Quebec City, 1992. It was renamed Journal from number 9 in 1995.

Founding Organizing Group for The Philosophy of Mathematics Education 1990
Raffaella Borasi (USA), Stephen I. Brown (USA), Leone Burton (UK), Paul Cobb (USA), Jere Confrey (USA), Kathryn Crawford (Australia), Philip J. Davis (USA), Paul Ernest (UK), Reuben Hersh (USA), Christine Keitel (FRG), Stephen Lerman (UK), Marilyn Nickson (UK), David Pimm (UK), Sal Restivo (USA), Leo Rogers (UK), Anna Sfard (Israel), Ole Skovsmose (Denmark), John Volmink (USA).

Additional members of the Organising Group 1991

Ubiratan D'Ambrosio (Brazil), Ernst von Glasersfeld (USA), David Henderson (USA), Francesco Speranza (Italy), Les Steffe (USA), Hans-Georg Steiner (Germany),

Additional members of the Organising Group 1992

Sandy Dawson (Canada), John Mason (UK), Yuxin Zheng (P. R. China).

This group not only supported the newsletter/journal, but also helped to organise group presentations at *International Congress of Mathematical Education* conferences starting in 1992.

Ole Skovsmose was one of the speakers at the first Philosophy of Mathematics Education Topic Group at ICME-7 in Quebec City, 1992.

More up to date, if you search YouTube for Ole Skovsmose you get 15 or 20 hits, with wonderful talks by Ole, as well as a couple of clips of his painting. For he devoted many years to his rather fine abstract expressionist (if I dare to label it so) work, which can be seen on Facebook.

See <https://www.facebook.com/ole.skovsmose>

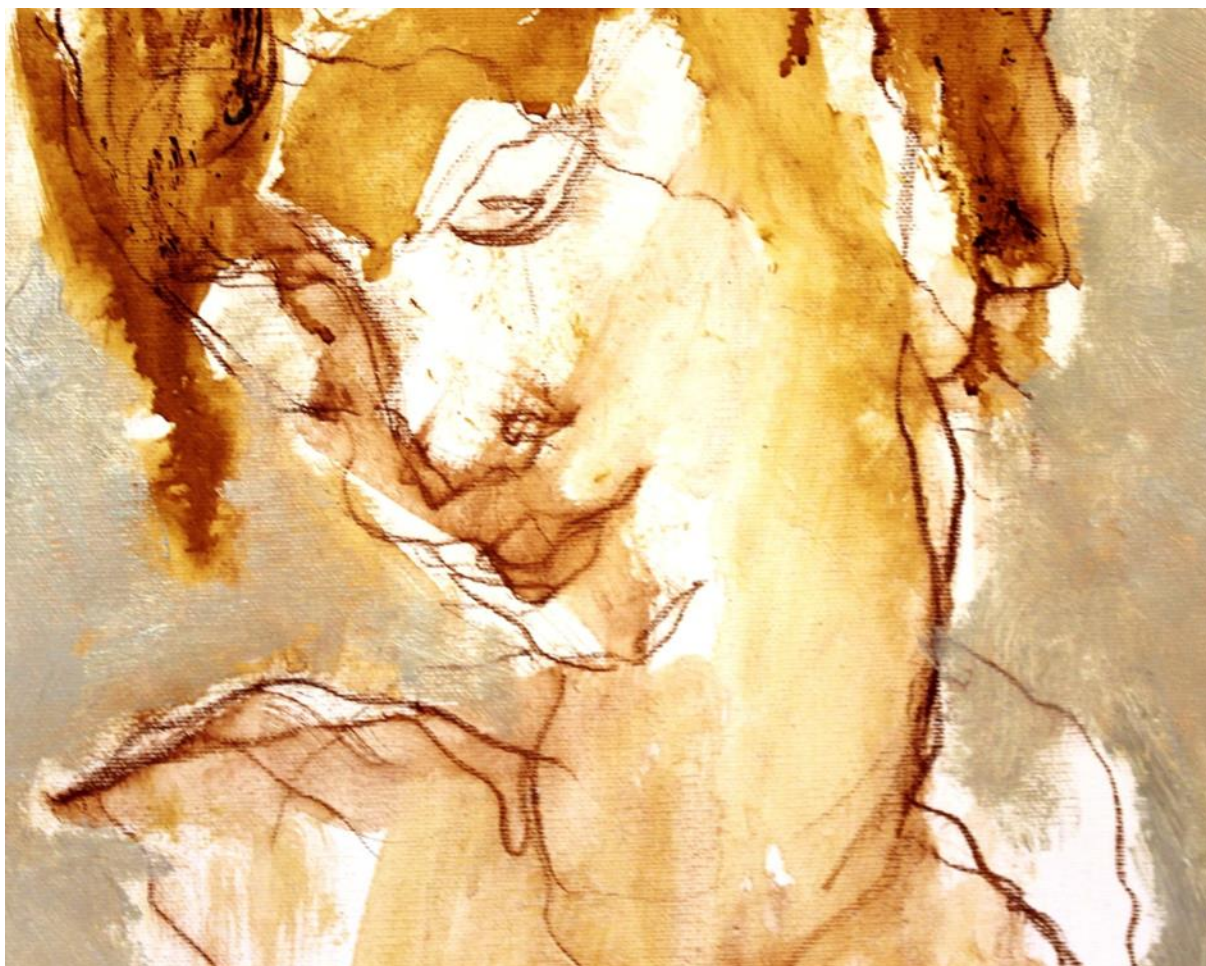
See also <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064902733254>.

This work is also treated more fully on his website

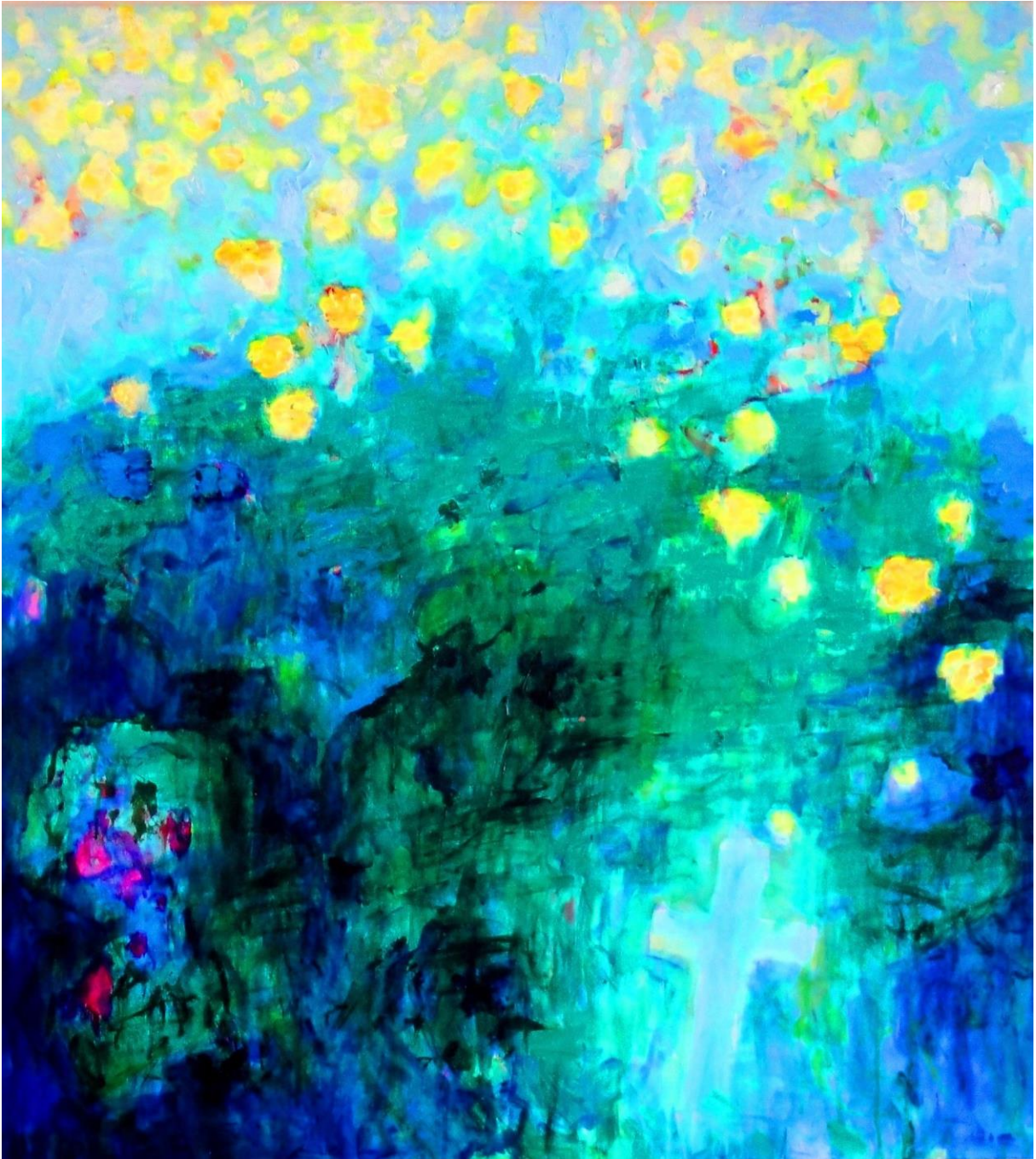
<https://oleskovsmose.com/>



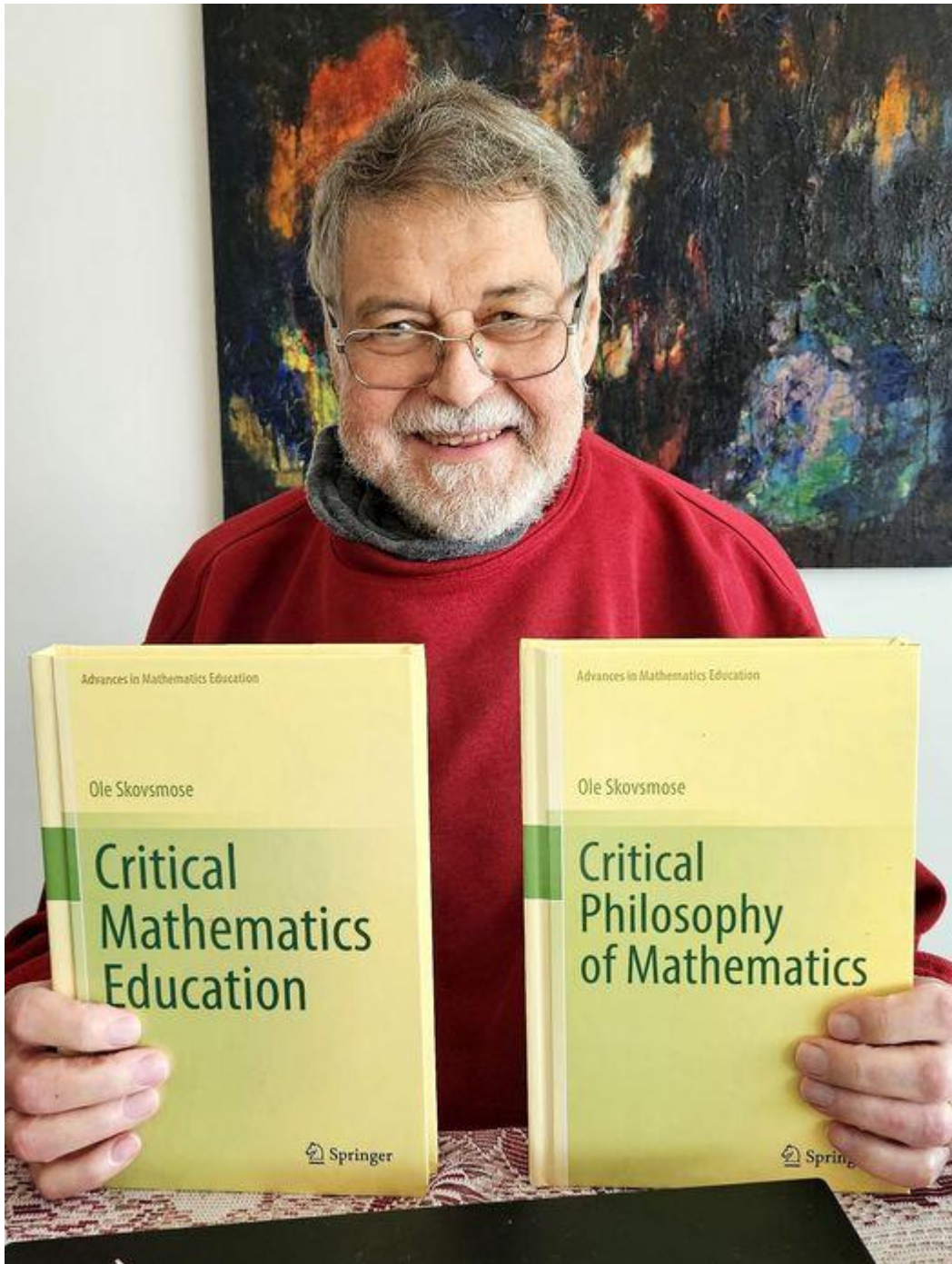
Ole Skovsmose – The thinker with his works



Ole Skovsmose – Untitled portrait of a woman (Detail of a larger work)



Ole Skovsmose – Untitled abstract with cross



Ole Skovsmose in 2024 – with his recent books



Ole Skovsmose with his partner Miriam Godoy Penteado

Ole has had a huge academic output, much is detailed on his site

<https://oleskovsmose.com/academic/>

His most important recent publications (as designated by Ole)

Greer, B., Skovsmose, O. and Kolloosche, D. (Eds.) (2024). *Breaking Images: Iconoclastic Analyses of Mathematics and its Education*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers. Freely available in PDF format to download from <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0407>

- Skovsmose, O. (2024). *Critical philosophy of mathematics*. Springer. (Reviewed in this issue).
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- Skovsmose, O. (2023). A performative interpretation of mathematics. In Bicudo, M. Bronislaw, C., A., Rosa, M. & Marciniak, M. (Eds.), *Ongoing advancements in philosophy of mathematics education* (pp. 269-292). Cham: Springer.
- Skovsmose, O. (2023). *Critical mathematics education*. Springer. (Reviewed in the previous issue, *PoME Jnl* 41)
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- Penteado, M. G. & Skovsmose, O. (Eds.) (2022). *Landscapes of investigation: Contributions to critical mathematics education*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.
- Skovsmose (2021). Mathematics and crises. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 108(1-2), 369-383.
- Skovsmose, O. (2020). Mathematics and ethics. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 8(18), 479-503. Special Edition: Philosophy of Mathematics. Reprinted in [Philosophy of Mathematics Education Journal](#), No. 36 (December 2020) <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/groups/education/pmej/pome36/index.html>
- Skovsmose, O. (2020). Banality of mathematical expertise. *ZDM Mathematics Education*, 52(6), 1187-1197.
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- Skovsmose, O. (2018). Students' foregrounds and politics of meaning in mathematics education. In P. Ernest (Ed.), *The philosophy of mathematics education today* (pp. 115-130). Cham: Springer.

Skovsmose, O. (2018). Critical constructivism: Interpreting mathematics education for social justice. *For the Learning of Mathematics*, 38(1), 38-44.

It is an honour to dedicate this issue of the *Philosophy of Mathematics Education Journal*, no. 42, to Ole Skovsmose. Such an outstanding scientist, painter, teacher and all-round human being who has helped hundreds of students and colleagues, as well as significantly advancing knowledge and practice in our fields.