

Neil De Marchi: Distinguished Fellow of the HES, 2016

The DF committee, comprised of Margaret Schabas, Bob Dimand and myself, received several well-supported proposals for the honour of Distinguished Fellow. After some deliberation, we chose to make the award to Professor Neil De Marchi, the colleague we are honouring this evening.

Those writing in support of De Marchi's nomination spoke eloquently of both his achievements and his character, as a scholar and a teacher in our field.

In one letter, an early PhD student wrote that his advisor had led the way on two fronts: in developing an approach to our field that blended history, methodology and sociology; and in his study of the history of econometrics.

Growing out of his seminal work on Popper and Lakatos, De Marchi paid special attention to the importation into economics of styles, metaphors and ways of reasoning from other disciplines, emphasizing that this importation carried "baggage" with it. Today, this has become so accepted as to be regarded as normal by every young scholar in our field.

In econometrics, through his work with Chris Gilbert and his organization of scholarly meetings, De Marchi directly influenced the research interests of several now well-known specialists, with the result that the history of econometrics is no longer the lacuna it was in the 1980's.

In a jointly-written letter, two supporters of the nomination stressed De Marchi's pathbreaking work on the early HOPE conferences: for example, on Mirowski's *More Heat Than Light*; on higgling; on economists and the arts; and on economies in the age of Newton. Amongst other things, these conferences allowed a widening of the net, bringing into our field scholars from outside and significantly enriching the discourse. De Marchi, these two supporters write, "emerges as one of the most important and unrecognized entrepreneurs in our field".

De Marchi's "philosophical commentaries on the 19th century greats", such as Ricardo, Cairnes and the Mills, have had a lasting influence in the philosophy of science, including in the work of Daniel Hausman and Nancy Cartwright. Given his work on Smith and Mandeville, and his interest in the 18th century debate on luxury, it was entirely plausible, if not inevitable, that he would develop an abiding interest in art markets. This, they say, is the display of the versatility of a mind that "has pointed many of us in new and unexpected directions, in thought and in life". They might have added that it is the sign of a *courageous* mind, not content to rest on its laurels, pursuing what interests it.

Another supporting letter spoke of De Marchi's ability to "push out the boundaries of our discipline . . . with substantial positive effect". "A scholar who is at once creative and meticulous, whose writings evidence a depth of insight and reflection

that is rare in our field. Equally important, he has maintained this quality across a wide range of historical topics”.

Finally, all the supporters pointed to De Marchi’s role at Duke, as Associate Editor of HOPE and more recently as fellow of the HOPE Centre, where for over forty years, he has been a cherished interlocutor, providing what is most valued by colleagues and visitors – and, indeed, probably by every person in this room – namely constructive, critical attention.

Neil De Marchi can be proud of a lifetime’s scholarly achievement, and, even if he will never read it, he can also be proud of the detailed, compelling and affectionate encomium written in his support. We, in turn, in the HES are delighted to have someone of Neil’s stature on whom to bestow this year the honour of Distinguished Fellow.

Would you please join with me in congratulating Neil de Marchi.