



**SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON BEAUTY AND CHANGE**

Aesthetic Experience:
Philosophical, Psychological
and Neuroscientific
Perspectives

TURIN, ITALY, 2-4 NOVEMBER 2023

Book of Abstracts

Second International Conference on Beauty and Change

Turin, Italy, 2-4 November 2023

Book of Abstracts

Edited by:

Jacopo Frascaroli

Scientific Committee:

Carola Barbero (University of Turin)

Alessandro Bertinetto (University of Turin)

Alice Cancer (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

Jacopo Frascaroli (University of Turin)

Irene Ronga (University of Turin)

Maria Luisa Rusconi (University of Bergamo)

Katiuscia Sacco (University of Turin)

Pietro Sarasso (University of Turin)

Sander Van de Cruys (University of Antwerp)

Conference website:



The conference is organised by:



BIP Research Group
University of Turin



Fondazione
Giorgio Amendola

The conference is supported by:



Università degli Studi di Torino
Dipartimento di Psicologia



Fondazione
Compagnia
di San Paolo



CITTA' DI TORINO

Contents

Keynote Talks

Gregory Currie, <i>Artistic Perception and the Science of Vision</i>	6
Bence Nanay, <i>Cross-Cultural Variations in Aesthetic Experiences</i>	7
Johan Wagemans, <i>Visual Rightness on the Bridge Between Beauty and Change: Three Case Studies</i>	8
Ana Clemente, <i>Aesthetic Sensitivity</i>	9
Marcos Nadal, <i>Time to Give Up on Aesthetic Experience</i>	10
Elvira Brattico, Jacopo Frascaroli, and Sander Van de Cruys, <i>Panel - Predictive Processing and Aesthetics: Fundaments, Problems and Prospects</i>	11
Beatriz Calvo-Merino, <i>Expertise and Aesthetic Perception</i>	12

Parallel Sessions

Day 1: The Philosophy of Aesthetic Experience

Alessandro Bertinetto, <i>Habits in Aesthetic Experience</i>	13
Elisabetta Mazzoni, <i>Aesthetic Attention in the Age of Aesthetic Distraction</i>	14
Harry Drummond, <i>Interpersonal Aesthetic Experiences: An Enactive Approach</i>	15
Luca Zanetti, <i>Attending to What Is Real: John Cage and Iris Murdoch on the Discipline of Attention</i>	16
Onerva Kiiainlinna, <i>Aesthesis, Noesis or Both? Enactivist Versus Representationalist Approaches in Aesthetics</i>	17
Pablo Seoane, <i>Mind-Wandering as Aesthetic Experience</i>	18
Jean Lin, <i>Sensation as Internalized Contexts</i>	19
Meng-Shi Chen, <i>The Seductive Allure of the Macabre: Challenging the Hedonistic Approach to the Aesthetic Experience of Negative Emotions</i>	20
Elvira Di Bona & Alberto Voltolini, <i>The Difference Between Environmental Sound and Musical Sound</i>	21
Jerzy Luty, <i>Why Do (Indigenous) Artists Have More Children? Evolutionary Oriented Aesthetics in a Field Study</i>	22
Carola Barbero & Fabrizio Calzavarini, <i>Reading Texts and Musical Scores</i>	23

Fabio Tononi, <i>Worringer, Dewey, Goodman, and the Biology of Aesthetic Experience</i>	24
Remy Martin, <i>Aesthetic Resonances: Senses of Self in Rhythm, Musical Time, and Space</i>	25
Gregorio Tenti, <i>The Role of Aesthetic Experience in Ecology: Refining the Aesthetic Argument for Biophilia</i>	26
Doroteya Belcheva, <i>Aesthetics in the Age of Technology: Exploring the Realm of Technologically Based Aesthetic Experiences</i>	27
Chiara Caiazzo, <i>Can Art Change the World? Proposal for Emergency Aesthetics</i>	28

Day 2: The Psychology of Aesthetic Experience

Eline Van Geert, <i>“Perception Is Artistic”: How Interacting Tendencies in Perceptual Organization Foster Our Aesthetic Experience</i>	30
Abbigail Fleckenstein, <i>Understanding Musical Beauty</i>	31
Robert Pepperell, <i>Can Fundamental Physical Principles Explain Aesthetic Experience?</i>	32
Dana Swarbrick, <i>Exploring the Relationship Between Experiences of Awe, Being Moved, and Social Connectedness in Concert Audiences</i>	33
Francesca Piovesan, <i>The “Stopping For Knowledge” Hypothesis: New Evidence for Motor Inhibition in Aesthetic Experience</i>	34
Gabrielle Kaufman, <i>Performing Amazing Grace: The Function of Time, Genre and Style in Expressive Characteristics and Perception of Beauty</i>	35
Samrawit Ayele, <i>Psychophysiological Differences of Fluent and Disfluent Internet Memes</i>	36
Beatrice Limoncini, <i>Musical Emotion Evaluation in Adolescents with Borderline Personality Disorder Traits</i>	37
Marta Pizzolante, <i>Aesthetic Experiences and Their Transformative Power: A Systematic Review</i>	38
Nicole Ruta, <i>Art Has No Gender, Only Gender Bias</i>	39
Ionela Bara, <i>Art Knowledge Training Shapes Understanding, Inspires Creativity and Stimulates Thinking</i>	40
Tanushree Agrawal, <i>Aesthetic Appreciation Impacts Judgments of Others’ Prosociality and Mental Life</i>	41
Jacob Lang, <i>The “Play of Imagination” in Creative and Reflective Writing</i>	42
Eva Specker, <i>Why Do We Need Real Physical Artworks?</i>	43
Magda Stanová, <i>A Repeated Joke Isn’t Funny, but Looking at the Night Sky Seems to Impress Us Every Time</i>	44

Marina Iosifian & Dennis Bray, <i>Psychological Distance and Religious Art: An Exploratory Empirical Study and Theoretic Account</i>	45
--	----

Day 3: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience

Ryan Joseph Slaby, <i>A Meta-Analysis Investigating Neural Correlates of Negative Emotion in Art and Non-Artistic Stimuli</i>	46
Chiara Cappelletto, <i>Are Images Visual Artifacts? Looking-At, Simulation and Performance</i>	47
Adam Reynolds, <i>Aesthetic Value is Dissociable from Incentive Salience at Both Behavioral and Neural Levels</i>	48
Ancuta Mortu, <i>Art, Prediction, and Cultural Distance</i>	49
Paolo Barbieri, <i>The Aesthetic Valve: Music Appreciation Makes Us Switch from Anxiety to Curiosity</i>	51
Aenne Brielmann, <i>How Learning Shapes Aesthetic Valuation Over Time</i>	52
Veronika Szendro, <i>Contemplative Effect of Religious Art Based on Mandala</i>	53
Pietro Sarasso, <i>The Aesthetics of Absence: The Case of Field-Based Psychotherapy</i>	54

Posters

Tristan Barrière, <i>Studying the Effects of Aesthetic Experiences in a Real-World Environment Using Mobile Eye-Tracking</i>	55
Maximilian Douda, <i>How Do We Understand Artworks? Exploring the Role of Artwork-Inherent Features in Art Processing</i>	56
Jessica Gianni, <i>The Role of Aesthetic Gratification and Creativity in Supporting the Cognitive Functioning of Neurological Patients: A Study Protocol</i>	57
William Hallett, <i>Universalité: Computer Games and/as Philosophy</i>	58
Mohsen Karami, <i>Aesthetic Experience and Moral Spirit: How The Experience of Encountering Artworks Can Cultivate Our Moral Spirit</i>	59
Anna Lena Knoll, <i>Experiencing Beauty in Everyday Life</i>	60
Alok Kumar, <i>Art Criticism and the Phenomenological Fallacy</i>	61
Christina Makri, <i>Examining the Relationship Between Death Anxiety and Abstract Art</i>	62
Lorenz Moises Festin, <i>Aesthetic Pleasure Beyond the Beautiful</i>	63
Malwina Tkacz, <i>Is Law Affective? Affectivity and Legal Aesthetics</i>	64
Nikola Vasilijević, <i>Change of Affairs: Music and Boredom</i>	65

Keynote Talks

Artistic Perception and the Science of Vision

Gregory Currie

University of York

gregory.currie@york.ac.uk

It is sometimes suggested that what matters to the artistic/aesthetic value of a picture is simply how it looks. But what is included in the look of pictures? Philosophers and vision scientists debate this as I write. How should their arguments affect the debate over the value of pictures? I offer some tentative conclusions.

Cross-Cultural Variations in Aesthetic Experiences

Bence Nanay

University of Antwerp

bence.nanay@uantwerpen.be

One old assumption in aesthetics that has gone unchallenged for a long time is some form of universalism about aesthetic experience: no matter where and when you have grown up and what kind of perceptual and cognitive background you have, your aesthetic experience would be the same. This assumption is very much present in recent empirical work on aesthetics as well. My aim is to question this assumption and do so on the basis of empirical findings about a number of ways in which aesthetic experience depends on one's cultural, perceptual and cognitive background.

Visual Rightness on the Bridge Between Beauty and Change: Three Case Studies

Johan Wagemans

KU Leuven

johan.wagemans@kuleuven.be

“Visual rightness” refers to the idea that artists have good intuitions about when an artwork is exactly right in terms of its composition. Making changes to this final result would reduce its perceived beauty. We have tested the empirical validity of this notion in three different cases, which I will briefly describe in this talk. First, we have studied the many different aspects of Kazimir Malevich’s composition of “Black and Red Square” by making small changes to the exact shapes and positions of the two subtly deformed squares, and measuring how sensitive perceivers are to these changes and how this relates to their aesthetic ratings of the composition. Second, we have studied the perceived order and complexity, as well as the rated beauty, pleasure, and interest, of Ernst Haeckel’s 100 illustrations of “Art Forms in Nature” in their original compositions, as well as in subtly or more seriously changed versions. Third, we have studied different versions of 21 high-quality artistic photographs selected for “Life Framer,” an online contemporary photography competition, including the originals and slightly different variants which the photographers had considered but had not selected. All in all, our findings confirm the empirical validity of the notion of visual rightness, although they also point to the role of a subtle interplay between several aspects determining the aesthetic quality of paintings, illustrations, and art photographs.

Aesthetic Sensitivity

Ana Clemente

Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Frankfurt; University of Barcelona;
Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute, Barcelona

a.clemente@ub.edu

We constantly make decisions and behave according to how much we want or like something. Indeed, the ability to value objects, situations, and events based on their features is a fundamental aspect of cognition and crucial for survival. But what makes us want or like something? Why do we like different things and different features in different ways? To investigate these phenomena, we define aesthetic sensitivity as hedonic responsiveness, that is, the extent to which an individual relies on a particular feature when evaluating something hedonically. For example, someone who likes symmetrical designs but not asymmetric ones is deemed aesthetically sensitive to symmetry. Conversely, someone whose liking remains unaffected by this feature is deemed aesthetically insensitive to it. However, this seemingly obvious and intuitive idea of aesthetic sensitivity contrasts radically with traditional, established notions in empirical aesthetics and related fields. Such notions rest upon assumptions contradicting current scientific knowledge and are only useful for assessing adherence to norms. Therefore, the present research constitutes a thorough revision of the idea of aesthetic sensitivity that strengthens an integral renewal of the field of empirical aesthetics. Specifically, it contributes a historical-critical review, a new theoretical approach aligned with current neuroscientific knowledge, novel methodological tools to investigate psychological phenomena, and empirical evidence based on our conception that advances the scientific understanding of evaluative mechanisms. A middle point between us identifying a gap in our knowledge and acting in order to fill that gap, curiosity plays an important role in driving learning in many everyday situations. However, while research into this epistemic state is increasing in intensity across different domains, it remains to be established how, or in fact if, it should be operationalised or studied in the context of music listening. Drawing on theory and empirical data, I will use this talk to argue in support of music as a testbed for studying such human information seeking states. Amongst others, I will present a study that highlights the role of individual differences in trait curiosity – alongside music-induced state curiosity – in explaining how and when reward is derived from musical events. I will argue for the importance of invoking the information seeking framework if we are to better understand complex music listening behaviours in everyday life, and will close with recommendations as to how musical stimuli might, in turn, be of yet further use to the cognitive neurosciences.

Time to Give Up on Aesthetic Experience

Marcos Nadal

University of the Balearic Islands

marcos.nadal@uib.es

Aesthetic experience is one of the central concepts in empirical aesthetics. Much empirical and theoretical work in the field aims to describe and explain aesthetic experiences, focusing on what makes them distinct, different from other sorts of experiences. Implicit in this aim is the notion that there is such a thing as "aesthetic experiences": experiences that are characterized by a set of specific psychological and neurobiological states and processes that endow them with some substantive entity. My argument, in a nutshell, is that the notion of aesthetic experience is one of the major limitations to progress in empirical aesthetics. The origin of this idea, in the 18th century, was not based on any systematic study of human behavior, nor on an understanding of how the brain works. It emerged as a way to elevate the fine arts above crafts, and to elevate the European bourgeois above other people. By the time psychologists began tackling aesthetics, towards the end of the 19th century, the category of aesthetic experiences was firmly established. Categorization is a process of cognitive economy, leading to within-category assimilation (similarities among exemplars of the same category are exaggerated) and between-category contrast (differences among exemplars of different categories are exaggerated). The appearance of clear-cut categories prompts the essentialist heuristic: the assumption that exemplars in a category share a common essence. Thus, creating the category of aesthetic experience heightened the similarities among instances classified as aesthetic experiences and the differences between these and other, non-aesthetic, kinds of experiences. Psychologists fell into the trap of trying to identify the essence of aesthetic experiences, of trying to find the set of features that determine that a given experience is an aesthetic one. Examples of such essential features are: to be elicited by art or beauty, to lack a clear social or biological function, to involve intense emotions (or subtle ones, depending on the theory), to involve contemplative psychological states, or to be related to activity in specific brain regions. There is plenty of evidence to reject each and every one of these proposals. Empirical aesthetics can only look forward to continuing its futile search for the illusory essence of a category that is meaningless out of its historical and sociological context unless we let go of the notion of aesthetic experience.

Panel - Predictive Processing and Aesthetics: Fundamentals, Problems and Prospects

Elvira Brattico
Aarhus University &
University of Bari
elvira.brattico@clin.au.dk

Jacopo Frascaroli
University of Turin
jacopo.frascaroli@unito.it

Sander Van de Cruys
University of Antwerp
sander.vandecruys@gmail.com

In the last few years, a remarkable convergence of interests and results has emerged between scholars interested in the mind and brain on the one hand, and scholars interested in the arts and aesthetics from a variety of perspectives (philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, but also art history and artistic practice) on the other. This convergence has been fostered by Predictive Processing (PP), an ambitious framework in cognitive science that seeks to offer a unifying explanation for a whole host of mental phenomena and that has also proven fruitful in understanding our aesthetic encounters. The result is a vast and fast-growing interdisciplinary research programme that promises to deliver important insights into art and aesthetics as well as a range of related psychological phenomena, including perception, cognition, learning, attention, curiosity, affect, motivation, well-being, and the dynamics of sub-personal and person-level experience.

In this panel, we will present and discuss this research programme. We will do so on the occasion of the completion of an upcoming theme issue for *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* that we are editing, which constitutes the first systematic exploration of this burgeoning stream of research. In our talks, we will try to enucleate the benefits of the framework for our understanding of aesthetic phenomena and our mental lives more broadly, as well as the problems that the framework faces and some directions for future research. We will then open the floor to other contributors to the theme issue present at the conference, who will help us draw a complex and lively picture of this developing research programme.

Expertise and Aesthetic Perception

Beatriz Calvo-Merino
City, University of London
Beatriz.Calvo-Merino.1@city.ac.uk

This talk will describe how observer experience influences mechanisms participating in aesthetic perception. In particular, we will focus on standing expertise in producing art at a sensorimotor level (i.e., dancers) and its influence on dance perception. The expertise effects will be discussed at the behavioral, physiological and neural level. In addition, we discuss whether expertise effects are specific to aesthetic experience and art observation or are generalized to other ways of seeing (i.e., perceiving emotion). Ideas related to domain specificity versus general expertise effects will be discussed.

Parallel Sessions

Day 1: The Philosophy of Aesthetic Experience

Habits in Aesthetic Experience

Alessandro Bertinetto

University of Turin

alessandro.bertinetto@unito.it

In philosophical discourse, the concept of aesthetic experience lacks a clear definition. It can be understood as either an experience of disinterested pleasure, disconnected from functional or cognitive relationships with practice, or as a particularly intense, unusual, and emotionally rewarding engagement with objects and aspects of the world. Furthermore, it can be perceived as a contemplative experience or a participatory experience, or alternatively as a transformative experience, or on the contrary, merely distracting. Yet, regardless of these different conceptions, aesthetic experience is generally considered an event that transcends ordinary practical dimensions, occupations, and concerns. Consequently, it is often assumed that habits are incompatible with such experiences, as becoming accustomed to an experience could seemingly undermine its aesthetic quality.

However, in this talk, I propose an alternative perspective that challenges the conventional notion of habits as obstacles to aesthetic experience. Instead, I argue that there exists a profound and rich connection between habits and the aesthetic dimension of experience. As I will elucidate, the manner in which habits form and organize experience is inherently aesthetic. Furthermore, I contend that aesthetic experiences both in the domain of art and in extra-artistic contexts, rely on and are structured by specific habits, which I refer to as "aesthetic habits," possessing their own normative force.

Moreover, I will explore the idea that habitual practices themselves serve as a source of meaningful everyday aesthetic experiences. Through an examination of the interplay between habits and aesthetic transactions, this talk seeks to shed new light on the role of habits in the aesthetic realm.

Aesthetic Attention in the Age of Aesthetic Distraction

Elisabetta Mazzoni

Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan

elisabettamaria.mazzoni@unicatt.it

Aesthetic attention is at the same time a nebulous concept, yet to be clarified, and a phenomenon that needs to be considered in responding to the challenges of our time. The aim of this contribution is to investigate this particular kind of attention and highlight the relevance of its training in the so-called age of «attention economy» (Citton 2014).

First of all, in order to clarify the expression «aesthetic attention», I will split it down into its component parts: «aesthetic» and «attention». The first term, «aesthetics», will be addressed in a broader sense, as denoting «the science of sensitive knowing» (Baumgarten 1750), but it will also be pointed out that in art the sensitive knowledge exhibits itself in its perfection. The second term, «attention», will be addressed in its complexity, by surfacing its long conceptual history at the crossroads of different research fields – philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, cognitive sciences, etc. – and its several different significations – focused, open, etc.

Second, given the role of art in aesthetics, I will investigate the particular kind of attention paid by artists and, in particular, by David Hockney. The comparison between Hockney's remarks and the philosophical studies devoted to aesthetic attention (Nanay 2014) will highlight some features of this particular kind of attention.

Then, I will illustrate the actual pregnancy of aesthetic attention by analyzing the close relationship between economy, aesthetics, and attention in our society. The «attention economy» we live in affects our health, may the training of aesthetic attention protect us?

Interpersonal Aesthetic Experiences: An Enactive Approach

Harry Drummond
University of Liverpool
harryd21@liverpool.ac.uk

Undertaking aesthetic activity together dominates our aesthetic lives in more ways than analytic aesthetics — which typically focuses on individual, isolated perceivers of paintings — would have us think. This neglect is surprising given that much literature on collective intentionality takes joint aesthetic activities to be paradigmatic examples of coordinative activity, and unfortunate because much empirical literature evidences the positive gains to be made at individual and interpersonal levels from joint aesthetic activity. Here, on enactivist foundations, I argue for two unique kinds of aesthetic experiences we have only insofar as we engage in embodied interaction with others: parallel and shared aesthetic experiences. I hope to foreground the importance of the aesthetics of activity, the aesthetics of joint activity, the effects of such activity, and clarify when we can truly say we share an aesthetic experience. In parallel aesthetic experiences, we are jointly attending to an unfolding aesthetic event — such as listening to music together, or watching a film together — where that joint attention is an enabling condition of our aesthetic experiences. Moreover, our embodied interaction and aesthetic experience begin to co-determine one another in a looping effect, and our aesthetic experiences from here begin to run in parallel. But we are not sharing an aesthetic experience as audiences. Sharing aesthetic experiences requires something more: jointly enacting aesthetic activity, such as dancing or making music together. Employing the notions of participatory sense-making and socially extended cognition, I argue that in some instances of joint aesthetic activity we access entirely new, shared, aesthetic experiences that would be unavailable to us without embodied interaction, such that the interaction is a constitutive element of our aesthetic experience. My case for the existence of, and distinction between, these experiences is supported by philosophical, phenomenological, and empirical work.

Attending to What Is Real: John Cage and Iris Murdoch on the Discipline of Attention

Luca Zanetti

INDIRE, Italy

luca.zanetti10@unibo.it

In this paper I shall compare John Cage and Iris Murdoch's views on art and aesthetics. Although the two artists and philosophers never met and never mention each other in their works, to compare their views is useful for they both have - or so I shall argue - the same conception of the aim of art and the nature of aesthetic experience. Both Murdoch and Cage regard our experience of the world as veiled by our egoic projections. Most of the time we fail to experience what is real, for we project onto the world our expectations, desires, fears, and, especially for Cage, our conceptual schemes. The aim of good art is to help us to transform our minds by purifying them from their egoic fantasies. Murdoch calls this process *unselfing*, and she argues that one of the crucial factors that allows us to experience what is real and beautiful is love. Cage does not insist upon the role of love - and he does not speak of beauty, as the use of this notion is in his view one of the ways in which our mind veils what is real by imposing preferences - but he also provides some suggestions as to how to help the mind to silence its egoic projections. Moreover, they both claim that there is value in transforming one's mind so that one is able to attend to reality. I argue that they both see this purified vision as valuable because of its epistemic import: in selfless vision one sees reality accurately and what one sees teaches something about one's place in the world. As Murdoch says in her well-known example of the selfless experience of the kestrel, when in one's experience there is nothing but the kestrel, one's brooding self disappears, and one's preoccupations appear as less important. The paper as a whole provides a phenomenological description of the experience of selfless vision, and an account of its psychological and philosophical significance for Cage and Murdoch.

References

- Cage, J (1961). *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961.
- Cage, J. (1968). *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968.
- Cage, J. (1976). *For the Birds: In Conversation with Daniel Charles*. London: Marion Boyars, 1976.
- Gomes, A. (2013). Iris Murdoch on Art, Ethics, and Attention. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53 (3):321-337.
- Murdoch, I. (1957) 'The Sublime and the Good'. Reprinted in (Murdoch 1997).
- Murdoch, I. (1959) 'The Sublime and Beautiful Revisited'. Reprinted in (Murdoch 1997).
- Murdoch, I. (1992) *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Murdoch, I. (1997) *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. P. Conradi. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Shultis, C. (1995), *Silencing the Sounded Self: John Cage and the Intentionality of Nonintention*, in *Musical Quarterly*, vol. 79, n.2, pp. 312-350.

Aesthesis, Noesis or Both?

Enactivist Versus Representationalist Approaches in Aesthetics

Onerva Kiianlinna
University of Helsinki
onerva.kiianlinna@helsinki.fi

Two types of systemic models of the mind – enactivist and representationalist – are often depicted as opposite and mutually exclusive. In this presentation, I investigate whether they can meaningfully coexist in describing aesthetic judging.

My aim is to show that empirically informed arguments that build on contrasting enactivist and representationalist models are misguided in an important conceptual aspect. They confuse two possible levels of explanation: that of how an emergent aesthetic subject functions and that of how it is able to function that way.

First, I clarify why the main disagreement causing enactivism and representationalism to divide does not apply when talking about aesthetic judging. Second, I trace how the schools can be merged in aesthetics.

My main argument is that we can choose to pick the best of both worlds, because perceiving aesthetic value does not belong to basic cognition that, in turn, can be seen as either representational or enactive. Namely, perceiving aesthetic value requires subjective, or embodied, metacognitive evidence. This representational enactivism entails that the aesthetic subject can be seen as an emergent functional system, while the functional sub-systems it consists of can be characterized in computational terms.

I start by clarifying the difference between phenomenal properties (such as sharpness) and aesthetic properties (such as beauty). I argue that in this light, representationalism emphasizing information processing and enactivism emphasizing holistic interaction of a bodily organism with its environment are not truly alternatives. They do not explain the same things. I proceed to show how it is theoretically possible these two different levels of explanation could come together when looking at making aesthetic judgments as a cognitive process. Together, this forms a clarification of how to understand the relation between representationalist and enactivist explanations in aesthetics.

Mind-Wandering as Aesthetic Experience

Pablo Seoane

University of Santiago de Compostela

fremin2@yahoo.es

Recent experimental results in cognitive science have shown that mind-wandering is often an intentional mental device (Seli et al. 2016; Arango-Muñoz and Bermúdez 2021), and not just a passive mental state. In that light, the central aim of this paper is to explore mind-wandering as a particular aesthetic experience triggered by a common, if sometimes neglected, intentional procedure of certain creative processes.

Creative mind-wanderers cultivate a sensitivity for the arrival of -so to speak- stealthy, uninvited guests; they develop a readiness to critically host that signals a tension, a sort of sustained mental counterpoint (cf. time-honored Keats' negative capability). I take that tension to be the mark of the free improviser's singular stance: sharply alert to anything though at the same time without paying attention to anything in particular. '[A] waiting for images -as Bergson put it- (...) a mental attitude designed to (...) organize a more or less prolonged game between the images able to come to be inserted in it' (Bergson 1967 [1919]: 101).

To flesh out these claims, I will address certain characteristic moves of the musical improviser's craft, as well as some closely linked procedures of literary creation, such as the one proposed, for instance, by the Cuban poet Lezama Lima (Lezama 1977; Bertinetto 2022). Both practices rest often heavily on that active waiting and hosting, and engage in a distinctive kind of contrapuntal and quasi-inferential thinking within an alternative grammar that I find to be the gist of creative mind-wandering (Forster 2004; Gozli 2022).

Its polyphonic or multivoiced character doesn't mean, however, that mind-wandering should be in contradiction with a single goal-directed thinking. Rather, I will contend that there is usually a relation of non-problematic embeddedness between the exercise of mind-wandering and the broader main aesthetic purpose of the creative agent.

References:

- Arango-Muñoz, S. & Bermúdez, J. P. (2021), Intentional Mind-Wandering as Intentional Omission: The Surrealist Method, *Synthese* 199: 7727-7748.
- Bergson, H. (1967 [1919]), *L'énergie spirituelle*, Paris, PUF.
- Bertinetto, A. (2022), *Aesthetics of Improvisation*. Leiden, Brill.
- Forster, M. (2004), *Wittgenstein on the Arbitrariness of Grammar*, Princeton, PUP.
- Gozli, D. (2022), Extended minds and tools for mind-wandering, in N. Dario and L. Tadeo (eds.), *New Perspectives on Mind-Wandering*, Cham, Springer, 103-122.
- Lezama Lima, J. (1977), *La cantidad hechizada*, México, Aguilar.
- Seli, P., Risko, E. F., Smilek, D., & Schacter, D. L. (2016). Mind-wandering with and without intention, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 20(8), 605–617.

Sensation as Internalized Contexts

Jean Lin

University of Tsukuba

jean.fu@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

The emergence of conceptual art has given rise to conflicts over the notion of art and aesthetics, centering on whether to emphasize artworks' physical or contextual aspects. Formalists and naturalists focus on sensation based on the physical properties of artworks, such as shape or color. They also tend to claim universalism in art and aesthetics based on the assumption that all humans share the common innate perceptual ability to react to such properties. Such a view has also been supported by the empirical research conducted by neuroaesthetics or evolutionary psychology. On the other hand, contextualists claim that the value of art is not limited to the sensation based on its physical properties, as in the case of conceptual art. They also highlight the culturally-specific sensibilities and aesthetic practices developed in different cultural-historical contexts.

However, as preceding studies in aesthetics and other empirical fields pointed out, learning (including context) changes one's sensation, as in the case of appreciating wine or art. Accordingly, I argue that much of our sensation, including those that seem to be the most 'innate' and 'universal,' is constituted by context: (1) if 'sensation' is the reaction without logical thinking or the reaction that seems to occur unconsciously or automatically, and (2) if 'learning' is the process of internalizing particular context to the extent that one gains the ability to react in the context-specific ways without logically thinking, then (3) sensation can be understood as the internalized context through learning. Through the analysis of the examples of humans' universal sensibilities proposed by evolutionary aesthetics as well as one's learning experience in the art of foreign culture, I will demonstrate that sensation in both cases can be perceived as internalization of contexts, the former occurring over generations, and the latter occurring within a lifespan of individuals.

The Seductive Allure of the Macabre: Challenging the Hedonistic Approach to the Aesthetic Experience of Negative Emotions

Meng-Shi Chen
Chinese Culture University, Taipei
icic9327@gmail.com

This paper, in the wake of Nietzsche's discussions of cruel punishment, aims to demystify the paradoxical emotional reactions generated by the spectacle of punishment and suffering. By doing so, it also seeks to provide an alternative approach to the grasp of the perplexing response to art, horror film particularly, with apparently unbearable themes of negative emotions. The initial concern is whether the aesthetic is necessarily linked with pleasure. I first show why there seems to be an inevitable linkage between them, and how it is equally inevitable that the grasp of aesthetic appreciation, in terms of our sensual or emotional responses to works of art as the original meanings of the Greek term *aisthesis* suggests, has been repeatedly confronted with the ambiguity of pleasure especially in the reactions to the works of art that arouse negative emotions. I then question the prevalent hedonistic approach that determines the motive for seeking seemingly unpleasant experiences in the case of the affective reactions to the spectacle of public execution. While there are conspicuous defects in the linkage of cruel punishment with pleasure in Nietzsche's arguments, I show that his articulation of how people may indeed make opposite assessments about suffering and pain nevertheless offers a helpful approach to the appeal of the spectacle of cruel punishment, and hence the appeal of artworks with horrifying themes. The seemingly barbarian or sadomasochistic spectatorship has shown itself as "macabre allure," or a "genuine seductive lure to life" in Nietzsche's terms, that severely challenges the pleasure principle and hedonism—the belief that the ultimate motivation for the behaviors of human beings is pleasure. Nietzsche thus provides us with an alternative example to think of a certain aesthetic experience in which the boundary between pleasure and pain is blurred, and meanwhile challenges the hypothesis of the linkage between the aesthetic and pleasure.

The Difference Between Environmental Sound and Musical Sound

Elvira Di Bona
University of Turin
elvira.dibona@unito.it

Alberto Voltolini
University of Turin
alberto.voltolini@unito.it

At first blush, there is undoubtedly a difference between environmental sounds – the sound of cars in the street, of a door slamming, of keys jiggling – and musical sounds – a classical music composition, a pop song, a jazz standard – the latter being taken as an assemblage of higher order sonic properties (such as rhythm, melody, and harmony), while the former taken as the mere happening of lower order sonic properties (such as pitch, loudness, and timbre). Yet on second thought, it seems that the difference is hard to grasp, especially if we take into account the environmental sounds which might sound “musical” (such as the rhythmic dripping of a faucet), or the musical sounds which might sound “environmental” (such as the sound of a cowbell). In what follows, we will claim that the main difference between the two kinds of sound has to do with the narrative structure of the musical sounds. That is, musical sounds tell us a story – yet not a linguistic story – which develops in time. This story is made by musical themes that are often reprised. Those themes constitute “stories” in which, for example, some notes may count as answers to other notes taken as questions, or other notes might generate either a surprising development or a definitive sense of closure. The perception of the narrative structure of musical sounds is crucial in order for us to undergo the special aesthetic experience that characterizes music experience and which seems to be absent when listening to environmental sounds.

Why Do (Indigenous) Artists Have More Children? Evolutionary Oriented Aesthetics in a Field Study

Jerzy Luty
University of Wrocław
jerzyluty@gmail.com

The human interest in art seems to have deep biological and historical roots. Very young children take to painting, singing, dancing, storytelling, and role-playing with scarcely any explicit training. They delight in these proto-art behaviors. Grown-ups are no less avid in extending such behaviors, either as spectators or participants. We are interested in TV shows and movies, novels, music, dance, and the plastic arts. In fact, almost everyone has quite expert knowledge about some genres of art and a broad understanding of others, and many people participate creatively as amateurs both in high art forms and in more quotidian ones, such as potting, making clothes, adorning their environments, and so on.

One possibility is that art served humans' evolutionary agendas for reproductive success, because evolution often gets creatures to do what is in their genes' interests by making the pertinent activities intrinsically pleasurable. Art behaviors might have been directly adaptive; their adoption was responsible for increased reproductive success and the relevant propensities were passed to future generations. Alternatively, art behaviors might have been incidental by-products of other adaptive capacities, such as intelligence, curiosity, and creativity. Many such theories have been advanced and there is considerable disagreement about what the arts are alleged to have been adaptations for (e.g. Dissanayake, Pinker, Miller, Davies, Dutton, Scalise Sugiyama, among others).

Despite the supposed scientific nature of evolutionary oriented aesthetics, surprisingly, very few of among mentioned hypotheses have been empirically verified. In my talk, I will briefly review some of the current research positions in the field (Prum, Verpooten) and provide an example of the psychological study conducted among indigenous artists that the issue of "art as adaptation" has been addressed and tested.

Reading Texts and Musical Scores

Carola Barbero
University of Turin
carola.barbero@unito.it

Fabrizio Calzavarini
University of Turin
fabrizio.calzavarini@unito.it

In *The Performance of Reading*, Peter Kivy introduces, on a purely phenomenological basis, an innovative analogy between the experience of silent reading literary texts and the experience of silent reading musical scores. In Kivy's view, both mental experiences involve a critical element of auditory mental imagery, consisting of having a performance "in the head" or the mind's ear. This analogy might have significant implications for the ontological status of literary works, as well as for the theoretical relations between music and language. Nevertheless, Kivy's hypothesis has never been investigated and discussed in its empirical merits. In the present paper, we shall claim that neuroscience data support, at least in part, Kivy's phenomenological observations about the relation between reading musical scores and reading texts. Despite being functionally and anatomically dissociated at the cognitive level, the two reading experiences both involve an auditory simulation of the content, which seems to be functionally critical for a deep and rich experience of literary texts and musical scores.

Worringer, Dewey, Goodman, and the Biology of Aesthetic Experience

Fabio Tononi
Nova University of Lisbon
tononifabio@gmail.com

The purpose of this talk is to advocate the ideas of Wilhelm Worringer, John Dewey, and Nelson Goodman on the roles of perception, empathy, and emotion in aesthetic experience. In doing so, it offers a novel interpretation of some of these thinkers' insights from a biological perspective. The possibility of investigating aesthetic experiences from a biological perspective is suggested by clues such as: *(i)* the meaning of the Greek word *aisthesis* (from which the term aesthetics derives), that is, perception and sensation; *(ii)* the way ancient Greek philosophers employed the term *aisthesis*, that is, to explain the physiological processes underlying the perception of objects; *(iii)* the concepts employed by Worringer, Dewey, and Goodman – empathy and emotion – to explain aesthetic experience, both of which have a biological root; and *(iv)* the universalistic character of all these philosophical discussions. In this light, research in the field of contemporary neuroscience allows us to understand the brain-body mechanisms behind the phenomena linked to aesthetic experience – sense perception, empathy, and emotion. In fact, these are the concepts at the base of Worringer's, Dewey's, and Goodman's discussions of aesthetic experience. To this end, I will consider the following questions. What is an aesthetic experience? Is there a correlation between the concept of the aesthetic and perception? Is it possible, then, to find a biological basis for aesthetic experience? My argument is that a fresh analysis of the aesthetics of Worringer, Dewey, and Goodman, in light of some of the discoveries and theories of the cognitive neurosciences – such as the biological correlations of emotions, the “as-if-body-loop” theory, the discovery of mirror neurons, and the phenomenon of embodied simulation – may provide a contribution to longstanding philosophical problems relating to the nature of aesthetic experience.

Aesthetic Resonances: Senses of Self in Rhythm, Musical Time, and Space

Remy Martin
University of Oslo
r.r.martin@imv.uio.no

Resonance is a rich concept that is receiving significant attention in current psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience. In ecologically-oriented literature its usage centres on perceivers' adaptive detection of environmental information (Clarke, 2005; Raja, 2019). This is instructive of the modulating—and *enhancing*—nature of attention, awareness, and action. Distinct from perceptual notions of resonance in ecological psychology, physical understandings, and accounts of neural activity, appear in several related fields. These typically concern the oscillatory interactions of two systems including forms of phase locking, synchronisation, and entrainment. Elsewhere the metaphor of acoustic resonance, as manifest in political contexts, is receiving philosophical attention (James, 2019).

Resonance is also a central metaphor in the context of aesthetic subjectivities. Vernacular uses of the term in response to aesthetic entanglements ('I resonate with this song'; 'that artwork resonates with me') are called to mind. Adopting the ecological approach, this paper foregrounds resonance as a means of understanding the relationship between the phenomenology of music reception and underlying perceptual and affective interactions. Particularly important, *self-luminous* aesthetic resonances – experienced as senses of agency, ownership, affirmation, and affiliation – form the focus of a discussion which draws empirical support from quantitative studies of live music spectatorship and rich reports of 'private' music listening gathered through media-stimulated, phenomenological interviews.

The Role of Aesthetic Experience in Ecology: Refining the Aesthetic Argument for Biophilia

Gregorio Tenti
University of Turin
gregorio.tenti@unito.it

The biophilia hypothesis, as famously formulated by Edward O. Wilson in 1984, relates to the idea of an emotional bond between us and other living beings as well as nature in general. A fundamental aesthetic quality has always been recognized to biophilia, although often in the vague terms of a “fascination” towards nature and almost always as an emotional or affective response with “restorative” effects. After briefly retracing the debate on the aesthetic component in biophilia, this paper singles out three possible meanings of our aesthetic bond with nature: the *pathic* bond, the *morphological* bond, and the *biophilic* bond in the strict sense. Differently from the first one, the latter is not simply an effortless appreciation of natural objects (like, say, a beautiful sunset); differently from the second one, it is not the mere recognition of eidetic structures (biological markers such as movement or morphological symmetry) that trigger a sense of correspondence. I contend that biophilia relies on a more complex experience of shared vitality deriving from entering a common biota, which entails the opening of a partially indeterminate range of possible actions, affections, and relations, and – from the side of the subject – a sense of expansion of one’s “vital energies”. This philic experience can be thought of as aesthetic insofar as it is based on a pre-reflexive participation, that however is not limited to ecstatic contemplation. On the contrary, biophilia sets the ground for creative action, as it plays a generative role in relation to human behavior. This finds confirmation in biophilic and biomorphic design, intended not just as a way to increase well-being and habitability but also as a field for creatively modifying our behaviors.

Aesthetics in the Age of Technology: Exploring the Realm of Technologically Based Aesthetic Experiences

Doroteya Belcheva
University of Exeter
D.Belcheva@exeter.ac.uk

The primary focus of my presentation is to investigate what constitutes a technologically based aesthetic experience. My aim is to detour from the traditional field of aesthetics and its focus on art, in order to explore the role of advanced technological devices as a source of unique aesthetic experiences. By unique aesthetic experience, I mean an experience that can be obtained through interaction with any object, providing new ways to feel, think, and assess the environment. I argue that advanced technology could fundamentally change the way we aesthetically engage with the environment and how we understand and express beauty, ugliness, and pleasure.

Given the distinctive nature of these experiences, the presence of a flexible evaluation framework becomes crucial to accommodate the diverse range of emotions, interactions, and expressions that may emerge, often defying conventional aesthetic criteria. Therefore, the type of aesthetic experience I intend to address is closer to the concepts of everyday aesthetics. It differs from an art-centred one and is stimulated by an object that presents new features. The analysis of tech-based aesthetic experiences I propose considers a few aspects: the context or circumstances in which this experience occurs, the attitude and mental state of the viewer when approaching the aesthetic qualities, and the type of interaction we have with the object of appreciation. I suggest that technologically-based aesthetic experience involves the essential interrelatedness of the observational and interactive aspects of our engagement with advanced technology.

Exploring the realm of aesthetic experiences in human-machine interaction not only opens broader discussions, potentially influencing fields like philosophy and psychology but also holds practical implications for robot design, including the development of believable personalities used in care, therapy, and mental health.

Can Art Change the World?

Proposal for Emergency Aesthetics

Chiara Caiazza
Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona
mchiaracaiazza@gmail.com

This paper aims to explore the transformative power of art through a philosophical reexamination of aesthetic experience in times of crisis. To do so, it is necessary to reframe our traditional understanding of Aesthetics as a discipline starting with a more inclusive, dynamic, and interdisciplinary notion of aisthesis. The term derives from the Ancient Greek αἴσθησις, commonly translated as “sense-perception,” but it also means “manifestation” or “revelation” in Plato, and “impression of the senses” or “effect” in Aristotle. My goal is to rethink *aisthesis* by incorporating these two semantic nuances, which will enable us to outline the future shape that aesthetics should take in order to become a critical tool to interpret contemporary times. Zabala (2017) notes that the greatest emergency we are facing today is the lack of a sense of emergency, and only art can save us by opening spaces that prompt emergent thinking (Polt, 2015). In fact, “aesthetics is critical thinking about the affective, cognitive, moral, political, technological, and other historical conditions constitutive of the production, experience, and judgment of art” (Kelly, 2012, xviii). According to Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy creates concepts, science elaborates prospects, while art produces *percepts et affects*, and the distinctive trait of these three intertwined forms of thought “is always to face chaos, design a plan, draw a plan on chaos” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991, 65). An interdisciplinary study of aesthetics must navigate the chaotic liminal spaces between political and artistic practices, synaesthesia, and intersubjectivity (Dufrenne, 1973). Aesthetics must consider the effect that art has on our brain’s plasticity, as that is where its transformative potential stems from (Malabou, 2022). Artistic practices hollow out and multiply established realities in a polemical way (Ranciere, 2010), presenting themselves as “a polyarchic site of experimentation for living in a damaged world” (Davis, 2018, 64). Furthermore, Montani’s investigations on Material Engagement Theory, imagination and multimodality offer prolific insights into how expressive systems can be reorganized on the basis of the haptic, aural and sensorimotor stimuli deriving from different human interactions with media technology and the forms of perception these produce (Montani 2020). Sociopolitical change is rooted in aesthetic experience in so far as the latter is capable of expanding our horizons of thought, creating alternative images of reality. Thus, Emergency Aesthetics is a project for future interventions intended to explore how artistic practices help us reinterpret our sense, designing cartographies to navigate our fragmented visions without simplifying complexity or homogenizing differences.

References

- Davis, H. (2018). Art in the Anthropocene. In R. Braidotti and M. Hlavajova (eds.), *Posthuman Glossary*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1991) *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Dufrenne, M. (1973). *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Kelly, M. (2012). *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Malabou, C. (2022). *Plasticity: The Promise of Explosion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Rancière, J. (2010). *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, London: Continuum.
- Montani, P. (2020). Materialità del 'virtuale'. *Ágalma* 40, 11-18.
- Polt, R. (2015). Propositions on Emergency. *Philosophy Today*, 59, 587-597.
- Zabala, S. (2017). *Why Only Art Can Save Us: Aesthetics and the Absence of Emergency*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Day 2: The Psychology of Aesthetic Experience

“Perception Is Artistic”: How Interacting Tendencies in Perceptual Organization Foster Our Aesthetic Experience

Eline Van Geert

KU Leuven

eline.vangeert@kuleuven.be

To aesthetically appreciate a stimulus, we first need to perceive it. The principles underlying perceptual organization could therefore play a fundamental role in delineating our aesthetic experiences. From a Gestalt psychological perspective, we aim to perceptually and psychologically organize the incoming stimulation in the best way possible given the prevailing (internal and external) conditions. Two interacting tendencies support the emergence of such a better organization: as we compare the incoming stimulation to a reference (either internally represented or locally present), both downplaying unessential deviations of the input from the reference (i.e., simplification) and intensifying characteristic differences between input and reference (i.e., complication) can increase the clarity and goodness of the experienced organization.

But how exactly does goodness of organization relate to aesthetic appreciation? Whereas some researchers argue for a direct one-on-one relation between the goodness of an experienced organization and its positive aesthetic appreciation, other researchers emphasize how an *increase* in organizational goodness (i.e., experiencing stronger organizational tendencies) may drive aesthetic appreciation. Although this debate is unresolved and requires further empirical investigation, we argue for a nuanced view encompassing both perspectives. Just like artists first need to acquire artistic conventions before they can meaningfully deviate from them, our perceptual systems first need a minimal reference system before they can welcome new levels of intricacy and complexity. On the other hand, increasing complexity can stimulate the development of new reference organizations and ultimately allow for a more organized perceptual world in the long term. As artists apply the mentioned perceptual organizational tendencies of simplification and complication in their artistic practice, one could stipulate that “perception is artistic”. Individual and contextual differences will have a considerable influence on the structure of the reference system for a particular type of stimulation, and therefore also an influence on which organizations are positively aesthetically appreciated.

Understanding Musical Beauty

Abbigail Fleckenstein
University of Oslo
fleckensteinabbi@gmail.com

Background

Art in all its forms can be appraised in several ways, not all of which may include the concept of beauty. However, the concept of beauty exemplified in art has undoubtedly inspired artists, musicians, and philosophers for centuries. The present study is an exploratory research project on the concept of beauty as it is experienced while listening to music. The project aims to qualify existing aesthetic theories and explore the features contributing to everyday listeners' experience of musical beauty.

Methodology

The project followed a within-subject design using a mixed methods approach conducted over three studies. Data collection consisted of a qualitative questionnaire (n= 32) for study one, which collected subjective interpretations of beauty, a piece of music considered to be 'most beautiful', and justification for this recommendation. Written responses were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and musical recommendations were analyzed using aural and computational (MIRtoolbox; Lartillot, Toiviainen, & Eerola, 2008) techniques. Study two was a quantitative listening study (n= 23) in which five pieces selected from participant recommendations in study one were rated for liking, familiarity, and beauty. Study three consisted of music listening case studies (n= 3) in which participants commented on the listening experiences of two pieces: the piece which received the highest mean beauty rating in study two, and the piece each participant recommended as 'most beautiful' in study one.

Results

Results suggested that musical beauty (1) relies on both intrinsic and extrinsic musical features, (2) is significantly positively correlated with liking but not familiarity, and (3) suggested that listeners may conceptualize it in two modes: objective recognition, and subjective experience. Broader applications of this research contribute to ongoing empirical evaluation of aesthetic theories. Future directions for similar research on the topic will also be discussed.

Can Fundamental Physical Principles Explain Aesthetic Experience?

Robert Pepperell
Cardiff Metropolitan University
rpepperell@cardiffmet.ac.uk

We would ideally like to explain the variety and complexity of aesthetic experience using fundamental physical principles. While several proposals of this kind have been made over the last two centuries or so, we still lack a physically grounded theory of aesthetic preference and affect. Here I discuss some general principles that might ultimately explain why we find stimuli attractive or repulsive. Following nineteenth century researchers such as Gustav Fechner and twentieth century pioneers of Gestalt theory, I highlight the role of energy flow in nature and the well-known tendency of physical systems, including living systems, to minimise free energy and maximise entropy. Less well known are the proposals from earlier scientists that energy transfer and entropy production in physical systems is hedonically valenced; that is, it has the property of feeling good or bad for the system at a fundamental level. On this account, energy gain, which increases stress or tension, has a negative valence while energy loss, which reduces tension, has a positive valence. I develop this proposal by suggesting that the property of hedonic valence is harnessed in living systems to drive adaptive behaviour, from approach-avoidance reactions in simple organisms to aesthetic responses in humans. Focusing on these fundamental principles allows us to combine the quantitative methods of physics with the qualitative concerns of psychology to inform a biologically grounded science of aesthetics. The aim is to foster a deeply integrative research programme with profound explanatory potential across art and science.

Exploring the Relationship Between Experiences of Awe, Being Moved, and Social Connectedness in Concert Audiences

Dana Swarbrick
University of Oslo
dana.swarbrick@imv.uio.no

Coauthor:
Jonna K. Vuoskoski (University of Oslo).

Music is able to evoke strong emotions and aesthetic experiences, as well as a sense of social connectedness in audiences – even in the context of streamed concerts and recorded music. Although music-evoked experiences of awe and being moved are often grouped together under the general umbrella of “aesthetic emotions” (cf. Konecni, 2005), recent research from other domains suggests that awe and being moved are distinct experiences with characteristic patterns of associated cues, eliciting scenarios, and subjective experiences. The present study set out to investigate audiences’ experiences of awe, being moved, and social connectedness and amount of movement in a classical string quartet concert, which was attended by both a live (N=91) and a livestreaming (N=32) audience. Audience members’ experiences were surveyed using questionnaires after each musical piece, and their body movements were tracked using the built-in accelerometers of their smartphones. The results revealed that experiences of being moved and awe were only weakly correlated ($r = .19$), and were more strongly influenced by the piece of music than by the listening context (live or livestreamed). Furthermore, being moved was more strongly associated with positive emotions and experiences of social connection, while awe was associated with absorption, experiences of tension, and negative affect. The amount of audience movement was significantly influenced by the piece of music, but was also associated with experiences of awe and the degree of connectedness experienced towards other audience members. Overall, the findings demonstrate that, similarly to findings from other domains, music-evoked experiences of awe and being moved are associated with distinct patterns of affective and social experiences, and depend on the musical piece performed. The implications of the findings will be discussed with respect to theories of being moved and awe, as well as music-evoked aesthetic experiences.

The “Stopping for Knowledge” Hypothesis: New Evidence for Motor Inhibition in Aesthetic Experience

Francesca Piovesan
University of Turin
francesca.piovesan@unito.it

Coauthors:

Paolo Barbieri (University of Turin)
Jacopo Frascaroli (University of Turin)
Maria-Chiara Villa (University of Turin)
Ludovico Bechis (University of Turin)
Pietro Sarasso (University of Turin)
Irene Ronga (University of Turin)

Recent models in empirical aesthetics have highlighted the relationship between aesthetic appreciation and learning. According to these models, we tend to grant our aesthetic preference to those stimuli that maximize our learning—where learning is in turn often conceived in terms of the updating of a multi-layered probabilistic model of the world embodied by our brain. Recently, we proposed that this kind of learning in aesthetic contexts may be accompanied by a transient motor inhibition, as the system allocates more resources towards the processing of exteroceptive stimulations. We called this the “Stopping for Knowledge” hypothesis. We tested this hypothesis with a preliminary behavioural paradigm where we asked whether landscaped images that are deemed more beautiful produce slower motor responses. Subsequently, we repeated the experiment by adding electrophysiological measurements to detect motor-evoked ERPs. We found both slower response times and electrophysiological measurements suggestive of motor inhibition following the observation of images deemed more beautiful. These results provide further evidence for the “Stopping for Knowledge” hypothesis and point once again to the link between learning and aesthetic experience.

Performing Amazing Grace: The Function of Time, Genre and Style in Expressive Characteristics and Perception of Beauty

Gabrielle Kaufman
Autonomous University of Barcelona
gabikaufman@gmail.com

Background

The research on expressive performance characteristics has been considerably deepened during the last decades. Certain questions, such as changes in the expressive qualities of portamento over time in classical music (Leech-Wilkinson, 2006 and others) and the perception of expressivity from a psychological perspective (Sloboda, 2005 and others) have received particular attention. This paper represents a continuation of previous research in the realm of performance expressivity, (Routledge, 2023 etc.), using a research sample that includes performers from non-classical backgrounds and by performing an audience reception study.

Aims

The main aim of the study is to discern how much of the expressive quality of certain performance elements, like portamento, is likely to be derived from time-dependent or stylistic cultural cues and how much might stem from more intrinsic aspects of the performance. Furthermore, the study aims to determine the influence of said performance elements on a modern audience's perception of the aesthetic qualities in the music.

Method

This study analysed clearly defined expressive characteristics (portamento, vibrato, tempo, dynamics and phrasing) in eighteen recorded performances of *Amazing Grace*, ranging 1922-2020 by singers from different musical backgrounds and countries. These results were compared with the survey data from an audience reception study with non-musician adults, which studied the expressivity perception of the performances by asking participants to rate the aesthetic qualities of audio excerpts.

Results

The analysis regarding expressive elements found significant differences between genres and styles but also surprising overlaps. The generational context and technological quality of the recordings had less effect than expected on the audience's perception of aesthetic quality. Instead, the adherence of certain performance parameters to current popular style heavily influenced the ratings of value judgements, such as "beautiful", "balanced" and "emotional".

Psychophysiological Differences of Fluent and Disfluent Internet Memes

Samrawit Ayele

IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca

samrawit.ayele@imtlucca.it

Coauthor:

Luca Cecchetti (IMT School For Advanced Studies Lucca)

This study investigates the psychophysiological differences between fluent and disfluent internet memes, exploring their impact on aesthetic liking and ease of processing. We selected 84 multimodal memes, evenly distributed between the 75th percentile of fluency-inducing and disfluency-inducing memes from a prior research study. Participants ($n=30$, 50% female) rated 10 fluent and 10 disfluent memes while we recorded electrodermal (EDA) and electromyographic (EMG) activity. Using the cvxEDA algorithm, we decomposed the EDA signal into tonic, phasic, and sudomotor nerve activity (SMNA). SMNA peaks were extracted using the neurokit find_peaks algorithm. Similarly, EMG signals from the zygomatic and corrugator muscles were analyzed for mean changes from a baseline of 1000 ms before stimulus onset, with maximum amplitudes identified using the find_peaks algorithm. Paired t-tests revealed significant differences in aesthetic liking ($t(287) = 8.15$, $p < 0.001$) and ease of processing ($t(287) = 12.02$, $p < 0.001$), for fluent memes. Fluent memes also had fewer electrodermal peaks ($t(287) = -3.99$, $p < 0.001$) and earlier peak latency ($t(287) = -3.80$, $p < 0.001$), and participants exhibited faster dwell times for fluent memes ($t(297) = -6.09$, $p < 0.001$). Surprisingly, facial expressions differed only in zygomatic activity, with greater magnitude observed for disfluent memes ($t(297) = 2.17$, $p < 0.05$). No significant differences were found in corrugator activity ($t(297) = 1.03$, $p = 0.30$). These results replicate previous findings that processing fluency impacts aesthetic liking of internet memes. Fluent memes are associated with easier processing, faster dwell times, fewer electrodermal phasic peaks, and shorter latency of maximum skin conductance response. However, facial expressions did not exhibit substantial differences for fluent and disfluent internet memes.

Musical Emotion Evaluation in Adolescents with Borderline Personality Disorder Traits

Beatrice Limoncini

University of Milan

beatrice.limoncini@studenti.unimi.it

Coauthors:

Alice Cancer (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

Barbara Colombo (Champlain College, Burlington)

Alessandro Antonietti (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

One of the most significant functions of music is the expression and induction of emotions. Musical emotion understanding emerges from the interaction between the listener and the musical piece. The relationship between music and the subjective emotional experience felt by the listener is not clear-cut, such that both extrinsic and intrinsic sources of emotion in music have been described. Furthermore, previous research reported differences between musical emotion *perception*, which is the emotional quality expressed by music, and musical emotion *aroused*, namely, the individual's emotional response to music. We suggest that an additional type of musical emotion could be described, namely, the composer's emotion *attribution*, which consists in the emotional state experienced by the composer while he/she was creating the musical piece. The aim of the present study was to investigate the differences between the three types of musical emotion in adolescents, namely, a) emotion perceived, b) emotion felt by the listener, and c) emotion attributed to the composer. Furthermore, we aimed to explore the effect of emotion dysregulation on musical emotion evaluation by comparing musical emotional ratings of adolescents with borderline personality disorder to that of a healthy control group. To do so, participants listened to 10 music pieces varying in terms of basic emotional quality and rated each musical emotion type (i.e., perception, arousal, composer's attribution). Moreover, measures of physiological arousal (i.e., skin conductance level and finger pulse) were collected while listening to each musical excerpt. Results on the differences between different types of musical emotion evaluation and the moderation of emotion dysregulation of the listener will be discussed.

Aesthetic Experiences and Their Transformative Power: A Systematic Review

Marta Pizzolante
Catholic University of Milan
marta.pizzolante@unicatt.it

Coauthors:

Matthew Pelowski (University of Vienna)
Theresa Demmer (University of Vienna),
Eleonora Sarcinella (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
Sabrina Bartolotta (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
Andrea Gaggioli (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
Alice Chirico (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

Aesthetic experiences, encompassing art exhibitions, music concerts, and natural landscapes, have long been regarded as more than ordinary moments in our daily lives. For instance, they could represent a distinct category of experiences that recent scientific literature has defined as transformative experiences (TEs). TEs are often seen as brief yet extraordinary encounters, leading to lasting and sometimes irreversible changes in self-conception, worldviews, and interpersonal perspectives, as well as personal identity and personality.

Despite an extensive body of literature exploring separately transformative experiences and aesthetic experiences, a significant gap in understanding the transformative potential of aesthetic encounters remains. Here, we conducted a systematic review aimed at identifying and evaluating existing works focusing on TEs within the realm of aesthetics. With this regard, we introduced and outlined the novel concept of aesthetic transformative experiences (ATEs) and pinpoint the essential psychological aspects and pivotal elements characterizing them.

By deepening our comprehension of the transformative power of aesthetic encounters, this review seeks to bridge the gap between recognizing aesthetic experiences as transformative and understanding the underlying psychological mechanisms driving this transformation. Consequently, this research may pave the way for further investigations and applications of ATEs in various fields, such as psychology, education, and therapeutic interventions.

Art Has No Gender, Only Gender Bias

Nicole Ruta

KU Leuven

nicole.ruta@kuleuven.be

Coauthors:

Stefanie De Winter (KU Leuven)

Claudia Damiano (KU Leuven)

Johan Wagemans (KU Leuven)

This research explored if it is possible to discern between 160 Abstract Expressionist paintings created by women (Krasner, Frankenthaler, Mitchell, Hartigan) and men artists (Pollock, Louis, Twombly, Kline).

The study comprised three distinct experiments performed by three groups (N = 800). Experiment 1 assessed the artworks' sex authorship (female vs male) and then identified whether participants' judgments were based on the painting's colour, line, or composition. Experiment 2 evaluated the paintings using thirty-two attributes derived from art criticism, typically used to describe works by the artist gender (women and men artists) or by normative standards (good and bad art). Experiment 3 collected aesthetic appreciation for the artworks.

The results indicated that participants tended to attribute the paintings to male artists, irrespective of the actual gender of the artists ($V = 16700$, $p < 0.001$). When guessing that a painting was by a female artist, participants were significantly more influenced by colour (51.1%; $\chi^2(2) = 447.77$, $p < .001$), in line with image feature analysis showing that women artists used more warm colours than men ($F(1,152) = 7.78$, $p < 0.01$). Contrary to the art critics' view in the 1960s, artworks more likely to be associated with male authorship were rated lower on attributes used to describe good art ($\beta = -0.38$, $t(151) = -5.23$, $p < .001$) and higher on the ones used to describe bad art ($\beta = 0.22$, $t(151) = 3.18$, $p = 0.002$). Finally, liking, complexity, pleasure and order ratings of artworks made by women were not systematically different from those by men.

In summary, while there appears to be a bias in assuming paintings are by male artists, the gender of the artist didn't significantly impact the overall appreciation of art. Instead, stylistic elements and the perception of male authorship played a more influential role.

Art Knowledge Training Shapes Understanding, Inspires Creativity and Stimulates Thinking

Ionela Bara
University of Glasgow & ETH Zurich
ionela.bara@gess.ethz.ch

Coauthors:
Richard Ramsey (ETH Zurich)
and Emily S. Cross (University of Glasgow & ETH Zurich)

One of the main tenets of aesthetic cognitivism theory is that art represents a source of knowledge that promotes understanding of the world, creativity and thinking. However, it remains unclear whether art knowledge shapes understanding that subsequently stimulates creative ideas, thinking, and generalises to novel contexts. Given the important role played by the arts in acquiring knowledge and facilitating learning and understanding of human culture, this study aimed to shed light on the transformative power of knowledge acquired through art training. The current pre-registered study investigated whether understanding, creative inspiration, thinking, and intellectual challenge judgements are impacted by distinct types of art knowledge training (e.g., in-depth training, brief training or no training) and whether each kind of training generalises to new contexts. Using a training intervention paradigm and a multi-level Bayesian modelling approach, we found that participants (N = 50 per group) assigned higher ratings of understanding, creativity, and thinking judgements for trained artworks than for untrained artworks as a function of art training type. Particularly, in-depth art knowledge training involving visual and auditory descriptions of artworks, followed by brief visual training rather than no training led to greater ratings for trained rather than untrained artworks. The effects of training generalised to unseen artworks produced by the same artist or another artist with a similar style but not to different art styles. In addition, the generalisation effects were stronger for the in-depth art training followed by brief art training rather than no training on understanding and creativity judgements. These findings suggest that art knowledge training promotes art understanding, creative ideas and thinking, and generalises to new settings. This work shines a light on the type of knowledge needed to shape learning and guide the generalisation effects to novel contexts.

Aesthetic Appreciation Impacts Judgments of Others' Prosociality and Mental Life

Tanushree Agrawal
University of California San Diego
t2agrawa@ucsd.edu

Coauthor:
Adena Schachner (University of California San Diego)

One of the first things people do when they encounter someone new is judge how likely they are to behave prosocially. Here, we test the idea that such fundamental social judgments are shaped by others' aesthetic behaviors (music, painting) and aesthetic motivations (a broader appreciation of beauty, including in everyday activities). Aesthetic activities are universal to human culture; however there are marked individual differences in people's capacity for aesthetic appreciation. Thus, if this factor impacts critical social inferences, it would have broad consequences for everyday social interactions.

We propose and test a particular causal model, hypothesizing that evidence of others' aesthetic motivations should impact judgments of others' prosocial (and antisocial) tendencies by signaling a heightened capacity for emotional experience. In a series of four pre-registered experiments (total N=1440), participants saw pairs of characters (as photos/vignettes), and judged which in each pair showed more of a trait of interest. Distractor items prevented participants from guessing the hypothesis. For one critical pair of characters, both characters performed the same activity (music listening, painting, cooking, exercising, being in nature, doing math), but one was motivated by the activities' aesthetic value, and the other by its functional value. Across all activities, participants robustly chose aesthetically-motivated characters as more likely to behave compassionately (Exp. 1; 3), less likely to behave selfishly/manipulatively (Exp. 1; 3), and as more emotionally sensitive, but not more intelligent (Exp. 2; 3; 4). Emotional sensitivity best predicted compassionate behavior judgements (Exp. 3). Aesthetically-motivated characters were not reliably chosen as more helpful; intelligence best predicted helpfulness judgements (Exp. 4).

Evidence of aesthetic motivation conveys important social information about others, impacting fundamental interpersonal judgments. Our findings also show that people are intuitive moral sentimentalists, who think of emotionality as a key driver of both aesthetic and moral behavior.

The “Play of Imagination” in Creative and Reflective Writing

Jacob Lang

Saint Paul University, Ottawa & University of Toronto

jacob.lang@utoronto.ca

Coauthors:

Francesca Pabale (University of Toronto)

Clara B. Rebello (University of Toronto)

Angelie Ignacio (University of Toronto)

Gerald C. Cupchik (University of Toronto)

Expressive arts modalities including sand-tray and play therapies are designed to concretize the imaginary—to give shapes to feelings, names to thoughts, and faces to names—allowing the child or adult to engage with memories and ideas at the safe “distance” of an artist’s or narrator’s stance. This presentation describes the development and testing of a creative and insight-oriented writing technique in which familiar objects (possessions) were used as a means of loading creative products with accessible, personal meanings. In essence, participants were asked to create a kind of “transitional space” in which four familiar objects would come together in a single narrative. Would the four objects remain independent, concrete, and functional, or would they take on a more abstract and symbolic quality by playing off against each other in a creative juxtaposition? In addition to analysis of written discourse, self-report measures assessed potential psychosocial factors at play. To what extent were mood and emotional state prior to writing, creative interests and behaviours, insight, and ways of coping, associated with differing appraisals of the writing process and insights generated? Questionnaire data were factor analyzed and subjected to bivariate analyses, and a factor drawn from appraisals of writing experiences was used as a grouping variable in qualitative analysis of stories. Based on a Canadian sample, findings heighten our understanding of phenomena related to creativity and insight. The study offers a rich picture of how adults relate to evocative qualities of physical objects around them in daily life. Results and case vignettes are presented in relation to psychotherapeutic and educational contexts.

Why Do We Need Real Physical Artworks?

Eva Specker
University of Vienna
eva.specker@univie.ac.at

Coauthor:
Helmut Leder (University of Vienna)

In this talk I will present the cumulative work (Specker et al., 2021; Specker, & Leder, 2022; Specker et al., 2023) I have done in investigating the genuineness effect: the difference in aesthetic experience between a physical work of art and its (digital) reproduction. Generally, it is assumed that aesthetic experience will be different between these media, however, there is little empirical evidence for this. Specifically, in our meta-analysis (Specker et al., 2021) we found a meta-analytic effect of $g=.32[.16, .47]$, however, most (N=8) studies included a context confound, and when this was entered as a moderator the genuineness effect seemed to disappear. In the following work, we tested two explanations for this: first the facsimile accommodation hypothesis (Specker & Leder, 2022) and second the anchoring effect (Specker et al., under review). In both cases, we failed to find evidence for these alternative explanations. Does this mean there is no genuineness effect? Maybe.

But in this talk I want to reflect on how this set of studies can inform the field as well as how interdisciplinary approaches to this topic may be needed. Specifically, I want to mainly focus on a potential explanation for these null effects: the argument that empirical/psychological research may have focused on the wrong dependent variables (i.e. the operationalization of “aesthetic experience”). As such, I aim to connect to other presentations of the conference discussing what is aesthetic experience (and how to measure this) as well as have a discussion also from an interdisciplinary perspective on future research on genuineness more broadly—as there may be other important aspects about the empirical work so far that may have caused these null effects and may have been overlooked by psychologists.

A Repeated Joke Isn't Funny, but Looking at the Night Sky Seems to Impress Us Every Time

Magda Stanová
Academy of Fine Arts Prague
m@magdastanova.sk

It's not difficult to create something that will look like art; you just need to imitate an already existing genre or style. The challenge is to create something that will be able to trigger an art experience. Jokes, discoveries, gossips, magic tricks—all these experience triggers are contingent upon a sufficient amount of novelty. Therefore, their creators face the same problem: the impact these triggers tends to diminish when heard/seen repeatedly. The brain detects repeating patterns, formulas, schemes, algorithms. Once an algorithm behind a group of triggers is uncovered (prediction error has been minimized), its outcomes do not cause the same level of pleasure any more. To trigger an experience of the same intensity, we need a new trigger.

There are, however, triggers that seem to never stop working. A repeated joke isn't funny, but looking at the night sky seems to impress us every time. A metaphor often turns into a cliché, but sometimes it becomes a regular term. Some experience triggers expire quickly, some slowly, but some might get better and better with time. How does the impact of artworks change over time when someone sees them on a daily basis? To find out, I asked the museum guards from the Moravian Gallery in Brno (unlike museum visitors or even curators, museum guards look at the same artworks repeatedly and for long periods of time) what was their impression of different artworks when they saw them for the first time, and whether it has changed since then and how.

In this drawing-based presentation, I will also briefly touch on the notions of kitsch and retro and the problem of how combinations of experiences of various fade rates may enhance or diminish the overall experience.

Psychological Distance and Religious Art: An Exploratory Empirical Study and Theoretic Account

Marina Iosifian
University of St Andrews
mi59@st-andrews.ac.uk

Dennis Bray
University of St Andrews
db237@st-andrews.ac.uk

Coauthors:

Brendan Wolfe (University of St Andrews)
Lance Green (University of St Andrews)

This talk explores the differences in perception by viewers of certain types of religious art and, more generally, the intersection of psychology and contemporary philosophical aesthetics. Our investigation has two parts, one primarily empirical and the other theoretical.

The first part of the talk (approximately 10 minutes) outlines an initial study of over 150 participants who identified as belonging to either (i) Eastern Christian traditions, (ii) Western Christian traditions, or (iii) as atheists. While viewing images of Eastern Orthodox icons and Roman Catholic paintings, participants were measured for experiences of temporal-spatial distance between themselves and the events depicted, personal communication by each painting, and cognitive-emotional empathy towards the depicted characters. We briefly detail the main results which include, among all participants, greater temporal-spatial distance for icons compared to paintings, and greater empathy for paintings compared to icons.

In the second part of the talk we develop a theoretical account to explain these results (10 minutes). Employing the psychology of art to frame our questions, we ask *How does Western religious art foster a closer cognitive distance between the artwork and beholder?*, and *Why does Eastern iconography affect feelings of greater distance between viewers and artwork?* To address these and other questions, we draw from contemporary aesthetics and cognitive psychology. For instance, the formal properties of icons (abstraction, reverse point of view) fit well with the Construal-Level Theory of Psychological Distance. On this theory, as constructs become more abstract, so too does psychological distance increase. We outline several aesthetic elements key to our explanation. We then conclude with some broader thoughts about our exploratory experiment and theoretical explanation regarding the intersection of psychology and art and aesthetics.

Day 3: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience

A Meta-Analysis Investigating Neural Correlates of Negative Emotion in Art and Non-Artistic Stimuli

Ryan Joseph Slaby
University of Milano-Bicocca
r.slaby@campus.unimib.it

Coauthors:

Maria Arioli (University of Bergamo)
Marco Tettamanti (University of Milano-Bicocca)
Zaira Cattaneo (University of Bergamo & IRCCS Mondino Foundation, Pavia)

Introduction

Aesthetic experience engages neural networks specific to the qualities and evaluation of an artwork. Critically, emotion may be a core construct of aesthetic experience with empathy, a particular social ability, being employed to feel into an artwork. Concerning the visual aesthetic experience (VAE), meta-analyses have focused on the neural correlates of positive VAE; however, neuroscientific literature has explored negative VAE. Therefore, we carried out an activation likelihood estimation (ALE) meta-analysis exploring the neural correlates of negative emotion within the VAE and the visual experience of non-artistic (VE) and social (VSE) stimuli to clarify differences and commonalities between them.

Method

Two literature searches were carried out on PubMed. The VAE search string returned 2872 results post duplicates, while the VE search string returned 7834 results post duplicates. After screening and ensuring study inclusion, 22 studies and 23 experiments were included for the negative VAE, while 97 studies and 98 experiments were included for the VE. Furthermore, the VSE, whose studies were pulled from the VE, included 45 studies and experiments. GingerALE software was utilized to conduct ALE analyses to specify neural correlates associated within and between the VAE, VE, and VSE. At 1,000 permutations, individual and conjunction analyses had a cluster-level family wise error (FWE) threshold of 0.05 and a general cluster threshold of 0.001, while the contrast analyses had a minimum cluster volume of 20m³ and a general cluster threshold of 0.001.

Results and Discussion

Results showed significant clusters within and between the VAE, VE, and VSE. Generally, the VAE seems more associated with cortical activation while the VE and VSE seem more associated subcortical areas. Interestingly, VAE > VE revealed significant clusters, while the VAE > VSE revealed no significant clusters. Results are currently being interpreted within neuroscientific and philosophical contexts and will be appropriately disseminated at the conference in November.

Are Images Visual Artifacts? Looking-At, Simulation and Performance

Chiara Cappelletto
University of Milan
chiara.cappelletto@unimi.it

According to Freedberg and Gallese's 2007 account of the Embodied Simulation Theory (EST) within the aesthetic experience, man-made images not only invite the onlooker to react empathically, but act in their own over her. On one side, images retain the bodily trace of the human gesture that made them and command the human precognitive response to their visual inputs. On the other side, the onlooker involuntarily simulates the original artistic gesture when looking at its material trace, so as to virtually reenact it. A loop is put into action, whereby looking-at is performing. The onlooker is virtually the maker.

I will recount the EST as both an epistemic enterprise to make art history intelligible as a whole, and a heuristic strategy to understand visual artifacts. I will highlight some of its flaws and its main theoretical point as well. Making the most of it, I will challenge the standard understanding of the aesthetic experience as the result of a "willing suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge, 1817) and argue that we adopt the opposite behavior when we interact with visual artifacts as educated people. We believe images for what they do. Finally I will suggest that an embodied understanding of visual artifacts requires us to radically question the oculocentric episteme and the dominance of the eye over the visual.

Aesthetic Value is Dissociable from Incentive Salience at Both Behavioral and Neural Levels

Adam Reynolds
IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca
adam.reynolds@imtlucca.it

Coauthors:
Emiliano Ricciardi (IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca)
Edward Vessel (City College of New York)

Although learned associations contribute to the aesthetic value of an object, positive and negative reinforcement are not the sole determinants of aesthetic value, and previous work with faces suggests that attractiveness can be dissociated from incentive salience (e.g. motivation to view). Using a reinforcement learning paradigm, we gathered behavioural and neuroimaging evidence to investigate whether aesthetic appeal and incentive salience can be independently operationalized, and if changes in incentive salience affect aesthetic appeal. Observers viewed and rated a set of abstract images (e.g. fractals) for their aesthetic appeal. Then, images of low, middle and high aesthetic value were associated with either positive, neutral or negative outcomes (small monetary wins/losses) over repeated trials (9 total conditions). Incentive salience was then assessed through performance on a modified attention cueing task: participants were shown two images on the screen (e.g. a 'positive' and 'neutral' abstract image) and had to identify the presence of a target letter as fast and accurately as possible. Finally, observers again rated aesthetic appeal of the images. Behavioural comparison of pre- and post- aesthetic ratings revealed separable effects of both initial aesthetic value and of reinforcement, with initial aesthetic appeal having a bigger effect on post-aesthetic ratings. Monetary reinforcement was successful at manipulating incentive salience (better performance on attention task for positively reinforced images) but effect sizes were small. fMRI signals from regions of the Default Mode Network (DMN) were sensitive to reinforcement value but not aesthetic value. Incentive salience is thus dissociable from aesthetic value both behaviorally and neurally.

Art, Prediction, and Cultural Distance

Ancuta Mortu
Masaryk University
mortu@mail.muni.cz

In recent years, predictive processing has increasingly been used as a framework for explaining the mechanisms underlying aesthetic experience and art appreciation. In earlier work, I argue that predictive processing best explains the mechanisms involved in cognizing art in categories, positive appraisal, and appreciative failure (Author, forthcoming). To appreciate art aesthetically is to engage our predictive systems so as to correct predictive failure that may arise at different levels in the processing hierarchy of information that we receive from art forms. We do so by relying on internalized art-historical priors, which provide the basis for cognizing art forms in categories. In this paper I aim to extend my proposal to cases of aesthetic appreciation of artifacts from remote cultures, where we lack appropriate categories upon which to build our expectations. One of the objections raised to the prediction processing model and its variants is precisely that it may be applied too widely, failing to explain the specificity of cultural “normativities” (Veissière et al., 2020) and expectations that go along with shared norms. Nevertheless, I aim to show in this paper that the predictive processing model can help us understand differences in appreciation of art forms across cultural domains. I argue that in these situations we cannot build our aesthetic responses on preestablished sets of expectations (or on art categories prescribing these), because in most cases we lack access to “local ontologies” (Ramstead et al., 2016) informing the production of these artifacts. However, we can still retrieve some generic aesthetic values even as outliers; there is something that we might still be getting right due to shared routes to human knowledge. I illustrate my proposal with schematized art forms in what is called the Mimi elementary style (Ucko, 1977), from the Arnhem Land, northern Australia.

References

- Author. forthcoming. “Prediction and Art Appreciation”. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*.
- Currie, Gregory. 2012. “Art and the Anthropologists.” In *Aesthetic Science: Connecting Minds, Brains, and Experience*, edited by Arthur P. Shimamura, Stephen E. Palmer, 107-128. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, Whitney. 2017. *Visuality and Virtuality: Images and Pictures from Prehistory to Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kesner, Ladislav. 2014. “The Predictive Mind and the Experience of Visual Art Work.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, art. 1417, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01417.
- Ramstead, Maxwell J. D., Samuel P. L. Veissière, Laurence J. Kirmayer. 2016. “Cultural Affordances: Scaffolding Local Worlds Through Shared Intentionality and Regimes of Attention.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, art. 1090, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01090.
- Ucko, Peter J. 1977. *Form in Indigenous Art: Schematisation in the Art of Aboriginal Australia and Prehistoric Europe*. New Jersey: Humanities Press.
- Van De Cruys, Sander, Johan Wagemans, 2011. “Putting Reward in Art: A Tentative Prediction Error Account of Visual Art.” *i-Perception* 2: 1035-1062.

- Van De Cruys, Sander, Jo Bervoets, Agnes Moors, 2023. "Preferences Need Inferences: Learning, Valuation, and Curiosity in Aesthetic Experience." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Neuroaesthetics*, edited by M. Nadal, M. Skov, 475-506. London: Routledge.
- Veissière, Samuel P. L., Axel Constant, Maxwell J. D. Ramstead, Karl J. Friston and Laurence J. Kirmayer. 2020. "Thinking through Other Minds: A Variational Approach to Cognition and Culture." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 43, e90: 1-75.

The Aesthetic Valve: Music Appreciation Makes Us Switch from Anxiety to Curiosity

Paolo Barbieri
University of Turin
paolo.barbieri@unito.it

Coauthors:

Pietro Sarasso (University of Turin)
Fabio Lodico (University of Turin)
Francesca Piovesan (University of Turin)
Kou Murayama (University of Tübingen)
Katuscia Sacco (University of Turin)
Irene Ronga (University of Turin)

Facing environmental uncertainty is a costly challenge for agents like us, and one that gives rise to different (and seemingly contradictory) epistemic emotions, such as curiosity (i.e., a drive for knowledge acquisition) and anxiety (i.e., a conservative reaction towards novelty). We recently proposed that aesthetic appreciation might help us shift from anxiety to curiosity in our dealing with environmental uncertainty. According to this idea, aesthetic appreciation and its associated rewarding feeling generate a high-order expectation that we will be able to successfully cope with our sensorium, driving people to engage in further exploratory behaviours. So far, however, the relationship between aesthetic appreciation, curiosity, and anxiety has been still underexamined in the literature. In this talk, I will present three experiments that explore this relationship systematically. In Experiment 1, we examined whether music-induced aesthetic experience would influence curiosity in a gambling task. In Experiments 2a and 2b, we explored the relationship between music-induced aesthetic appreciation and anxiety state by assessing both behavioural and electrophysiological (i.e., skin conductance response) measures. Our results show that, overall, aesthetic appreciation promoted curiosity-driven behavior while it was negatively associated with anxiety. These findings are therefore consistent with the idea that aesthetic pleasure could act as a “valve”, prompting the individual to experience curiosity rather than anxiety in relation to environmental uncertainty.

How Learning Shapes Aesthetic Valuation Over Time

Aenne Brielmann

University of Tübingen

aenne.brielmann@uni-tuebingen.de

People's aesthetic preferences are not stable. Yet, researchers often try to avoid, ignore, or factor such changes that occur with time and intervening experiences. In contrast, we propose a theory and model that regards these changes as an essential feature of the mechanism underlying aesthetic valuation. Our theory posits that aesthetic value is a signal that serves the greater goal of maintaining and adapting the states of the cognitive-sensory system in order to process stimuli effectively now and in the future. Crucially, these states constantly adapt to the features of the current sensory environment, i.e., the observer *learns*. Two interlinked components generate an object's aesthetic value: 1) processing fluency – the likelihood of a stimulus given an observer's state; 2) learning – the change in the average likelihood of expected future stimuli. We show that a simple realization of this model can simulate the mere exposure effect as well as its inversion over prolonged experience as well as other empirical data on joint effects of exposure, symmetry, and complexity. Furthermore, this model outperforms predictions by average when it comes to predicting individual trial-by-trial data and we show that trial order is vital for making accurate predictions. To sum up, we present a model that treats variability in aesthetic value judgments as a feature of a constantly learning sensory-cognitive system rather than a bug and we demonstrate that this model can mimic known empirical findings and predict new data.

Contemplative Effect of Religious Art Based on Mandala

Veronika Szendro
University of Pécs
veronika.szendro@gmail.com

We intend to test the hypothesis of the contemplative effect of sacred art focusing on the visual culture of the Buddhist mandala. We further aim to explore which individual non-representative visual features can play a role in creating the contemplative experience. We will use the following method to achieve our goal: we will create experimental artworks based on mandalas due to their well-known importance in meditative rituals. We highlight mandalas' common visual features based on the main elements of artistic composition (proportions, rhythm, focus, etc.) and integrate the results into experimental artworks. We will present the artworks for the subjects and record the electrical activity of their brains, using EEG technology. We will compare the distinct changes in the alpha wave as earlier EEG results measured during Buddhist meditation, confirm the alpha wave increase during contemplation. Based on our findings, we will conclude which visual elements can contribute to forming a contemplative brain state. These results can be used by contemporary artists, meditators and academic scholars to reveal new connections in theoretical questions of religious studies and contemplative science.

The inspiration for the project is Jung's research on mandala art. He noticed that his patients' paintings contained similar non-representative visual features to Tibetan mandalas. While Jung did not test the assumption, his observations, together with those of other scholars (eg. Bühnemann, 2017) form an intriguing body of anecdotal evidence, which might point to the potential function of this art form. Mandalas, as cultural artifacts, are deeply connected to the specific cultural contexts, beliefs, and practices in which they are created and used. Therefore, most of the research on mandalas deals with their representative and symbolic elements, while there is no systematic study of which non-symbolic compositional elements can contribute to creating a meditative brain state.

The Aesthetics of Absence: The Case of Field-Based Psychotherapy

Pietro Sarasso
University of Turin
pietro.sarasso@unito.it

Aesthetics was originally defined by Baumgarten as “the study of sensory knowledge directed toward beauty”. Beyond art perception, the “study of sensory knowledge” or sensitivity can be applied to a wide variety of human activities involving learning and change including psychotherapy. In the present talk, I suggest that the modulation of the therapist’s attention (i.e. modulation of the energetic exchanges with the environment) can help the sensorily coupled therapist-patient organization to tolerate transient states of increased entropy associated with unprocessed sensory states. The therapist’s aesthetic competencies are thus crucial to assimilate surprising sensory inputs into shared predictive generative models of the environment, to integrate what is not fully present, or present as an absence, in the patient-therapist relational field. In the long run, the paradoxical exploration of surprising states can trigger self-organization allostatic processes and attract the therapeutic couple toward a novel less entropic state in the sensory state-space.

Drawing from neuroimaging data, psychophysiology, and recent neurocognitive accounts of aesthetic perception, we propose a novel interpretation of the sense of beauty as a self-generated reward motivating us to assimilate an ever-greater spectrum of sensory and affective states in our predictive representation of ourselves and the world. Expecting beauty, in the psychotherapeutic encounter, can help therapists tolerate uncertainty, avoid impulsive behaviours and to stay tuned to the process of change.

Posters

Studying the Effects of Aesthetic Experiences in a Real-World Environment Using Mobile Eye-Tracking

Tristan Barrière
University of Vienna
tristan.barriere@univie.ac.at

Coauthors:

Rosalie Weigand ((Helmut Schmidt University/University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg)
Thomas Jacobsen (Helmut Schmidt University/University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg)
Helmut Leder (University of Vienna)
Eva Specker (University of Vienna)

Beauty can be found in every aspect of our lives and is a quintessential part of the human experience. Our study aims to investigate the role that our aesthetic sense plays in our lives. We hypothesize, based on evolutionary theory, that aesthetic experiences are common, influence our perception of the world, have positive impacts on our wellbeing, and can be measured physiologically. In addition, we explore how individual differences and environmental context may influence these effects. Finally, we are also interested in the elicitors of the aesthetic experience, specifically differentiating between man-made (e.g. art) and natural objects.

We employed a multi-method approach where participants equipped with mobile eye-trackers and a heartrate monitor walked along the “Donaukanal” in Vienna, which contains natural elements and street-art. Eye-tracking was used to assess how these aesthetically evaluated objects influence our perception of the world by capturing and directing visual attention. Participants provided continuous beauty ratings of the objects encountered in their walk using their mobile phones. We investigated the effect of aesthetic experiences on wellbeing in terms of positive mood, measured by heartrate variability and the German version of the PANAS (Breyer & Bluemke, 2016). Participants were invited to a lab follow-up one week later and shown the footage from their walk, as recorded by the eye-tracker. Participants again provided continuous beauty ratings and heartrate variability was recorded. After viewing the video, participants completed a measure on nature-relatedness (NR-6, Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013) and art interest (VAIAK, Specker et al., 2018) as additional measures of individual differences. Combining beauty ratings, eye-tracking data and questionnaires allows us to investigate the connection between visual attention, wellbeing, and subjective beauty ratings. Conducting the study in both field and lab allows us to investigate how environmental context influences aesthetic experiences.

How Do We Understand Artworks?

Exploring the Role of Artwork-Inherent Features in Art Processing

Maximilian Douda
University of Vienna
maximilian.douda@univie.ac.at

Coauthors:
Eva Specker (University of Vienna)
Helmut Leder (University of Vienna)

Understanding an artwork is essential for one's aesthetic experience, and failure to do so can even lead to negative feelings. Despite this crucial role, the process of understanding art is still poorly understood itself. But how does one form an understanding of art? What are the factors that help or hinder the success of doing so? In this poster presentation, I will address the rather neglected role of understanding in art and present preliminary findings from two experiments that investigated understanding art from a processing fluency/predictive coding perspective. We hypothesized that the easier a stimulus is processed (i.e., higher fluency), the easier it should be understood, and tested this by focusing on two central dimensions of artworks and their interactions, namely style and content. Utilizing the universal and automatic brightness-positivity association, the overall brightness of paintings (i.e., as a stylistic feature) was manipulated to either match or mismatch their content (positive vs. negative). We further hypothesized that a congruency between style and content would facilitate the processing of paintings, which in turn would lead to better understanding, greater liking, and (exploratively) higher artistic value. While our data did not show congruency effects between brightness and content, it did indicate a strong role of content in art processing. Furthermore, exploratory analyses showed that even in a homogeneous sample of art novices, differences in art interest and knowledge were detectable and influenced art processing.

Overall, I will not only provide first insights into how art is understood, and what factors might contribute to it, but also discuss our findings and their implications in relation to other aspects of the empirical aesthetic research e.g., the negativity bias in the arts, or differences between aesthetic pleasure and liking.

The Role of Aesthetic Gratification and Creativity in Supporting the Cognitive Functioning of Neurological Patients: A Study Protocol

Jessica Gianni
University of Bergamo
jessica.gianni@unibg.it

Coauthors:

Maura Crepaldi (University of Bergamo)
Giulia Fusi (University of Bergamo)
Irene Ronga (University of Turin)
Katuscia Sacco (University of Turin)
Alice Cancer (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
Alessandro Antonietti (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
Maria Luisa Rusconi (University of Bergamo)

Cognitive impairment is an essential factor affecting patients' quality of life, motivation, independence, participation in everyday activities and rehabilitation programs. In particular, post-stroke and degenerative neurological conditions are becoming more common in Italy with an ageing population. Stroke and dementia are two leading causes of lifelong disability due to long-term cognitive and motor sequelae. Previous studies demonstrated that aesthetic gratification increases individuals' intrinsic motivation and improves learning outcomes, thus improving functional rehabilitation programs. Moreover, creativity has been considered a helpful tool for rehabilitation programs, affecting mood and affective states and positively impacting cognitive functions, such as problem-solving, information processing and goal-directed attention. In this study protocol, we present a rehabilitation program matched with a motivation protocol based on aesthetic gratification and creativity enhancement on an online platform; it will be personalized according to each patient's specific impairments and aesthetic preferences. In particular, three different gratification/motivational activities will be provided to exploit the positive effects on individual motivation and learning or attentional/executive processes of (i) subjective aesthetic preferences, (ii) written artistic compositions and (iii) creative ideation. Afterwards, a suite of game exercises designed to rehabilitate cognitive functions such as attention, memory, executive functions and language skills will be submitted. The program will be administered to neurological patients with cognitive impairment and be compared with a control group that will be submitted to a classical rehabilitation program. The effects of such intervention will be tested through neuropsychological testing and electrophysiological values.

Thanks to the motivation protocol, we expect to amplify the effects of cognitive rehabilitation in neurological patients. In fact it will represent a driver of compliance, possibly limiting drop-outs, following the literature that supports the role of aesthetic gratification and creativity in learning processes and motivation.

Universalité: Computer Games and/as Philosophy

William Hallett
Fordham University
whallett@fordham.edu

If one way to define digital technology is via reference to lattice calculation - in which a given space is abstracted from spatial to numerical relations, as was the case with early weather prediction - then several arguments regarding computer art may follow. Computer artworks which work visually with regularized geometries such as grid systems are Constructivist or Modernist, as Alexander Galloway has argued, insofar as they reflect on the conditions of their own possibility. Computer games that involve the human player in such lattice-like geometries - similarly to puzzles - may thus pose a framework for thinking about human creativity and digital rationality within a single space. Because regularized patterns like puzzles are arguably Modernist when situated within the medium of digital computing, the reflective aesthetic experience of a human game player becomes in a sense *computable* within the context of the search space of possible puzzle solutions. Whereas a black-box understanding of computing would claim that human creativity is mostly left out of these simple search behaviors, this presentation will attempt to argue the opposite; that in fact such games may enact a figure-background reversal and thereby produce a very large space for structured reflection or thought. Providing examples from a game project, titled *Universalité*, currently in development by the presenter, we will ask whether such artistic work within the digital medium can be considered as a contribution to philosophy, insofar as the visual details of the puzzle system can potentially re-contextualize a search space. We ask finally also how such detail-oriented re-contextualizations relate to the concepts of historical transformation and narrative.

Aesthetic Experience and Moral Spirit: How The Experience of Encountering Artworks Can Cultivate Our Moral Spirit

Mohsen Karami
IRIB University, Teheran
mohsenekarami@gmail.com

One of the possible relations between the aesthetic realm and the moral realm of human life is that the former can have a positive effect on the latter, i.e. the aesthetic aspect of people's lives can change the moral aspect their lives. Some significant claims have been presented and defended regarding this relation: (1) encountering works of art can give us *propositional knowledge* about ethics, (2) it can give us *knowledge by acquaintance* on ethics, (3) can develop our *moral skills*, and (4) cultivate our *moral imagination*. Now, my claim is that the experience of encountering artworks can, in addition, make another contribution to moral life: develop our *moral spirit*.

If we accept that the moral spirit consists of the mental characteristics (a) that predispose a person to live morally, and (b) that themselves cannot be subject to moral judgment, we can obtain a list of such characteristics, which in the face of works of art and the acquisition of aesthetic experience are acquired and/or cultivated. Among other things, (1) the experience of encountering works of art makes us more accurate in seeing details, and being accurate in seeing details, all things being equal, makes a person more inclined to be moral compared to one who is not: The devil is in the details! (2) Besides, such an experience can develop and/or increase wit, gentleness, and delicacy of feeling. Other things can be added to this list, and it can be shown that aesthetic experience can cultivate moral spirit in people and thereby change their lives.

Experiencing Beauty in Everyday Life

Anna Lena Knoll
University of Vienna
anna.lena.knoll@univie.ac.at

Coauthors:

Tristan Barrière (University of Vienna)
Rosalie Weigand (Helmut Schmidt University/University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg)
Thomas Jacobsen (Helmut Schmidt University/University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg)
Helmut Leder (University of Vienna)
Eva Specker (University of Vienna)

Beauty surrounds us in many forms every day; we may seek it out intentionally or happen upon it by accident. Most studies of aesthetic experiences have been conducted in well-controlled lab settings, failing to capture the impact and embeddedness of encounters with aesthetics, especially beauty, within our daily lives. Thus, in 3 experience sampling (ESM) studies, we investigated frequency, category of eliciting stimuli (natural vs man-made) and, potential moderating role of several individual difference measures of such everyday experiences of beauty in an ecologically valid manner. Further, we explored the impact of such experiences on mood (valence & arousal).

Study 1 re-analysed data from a previous study in line with the current aims. In Studies 2 and 3, participants were asked to report daily experiences of beauty using a mixed random and event-contingent sampling schedule. Mobile notifications (random sampling) prompted participants to take a photo and rate the beauty of their surroundings. Further, current valence and arousal were assessed to give insight into immediate emotional effect of everyday life encounters with beauty. Notification frequency and total days of participation differed between these two studies. Participants were able to report additional experiences outside of the notification windows (event-contingent sampling). Information on demographics, art expertise, nature relatedness, city relatedness, and engagement with beauty were collected in a pre-ESM lab session to explore the influences of individual differences.

Our results indicate that we frequently encounter beauty in everyday life and that we find it in nature, in particular. Our results further suggest a mood-boosting effect of encounters with beauty. Lastly, our results indicate influences of individual differences however, these are inconclusive and require further attention

Art Criticism and the Phenomenological Fallacy

Alok Kumar
IIIT Delhi
alokk@iiitd.ac.in

Art criticism as a discipline has spilled enormous amount of ink in the explication of various aesthetic theories. I argue that all such efforts disregard one fundamental characteristic of art criticism which vitiates all subsequent analyses of a work of art. It is the phenomenological fallacy of evading the distinction between what Heidegger called “The Ready-at-Hand” and “The Present-at-Hand”. I contend that artistic creation is a ready-at-hand, pre-reflective response to internal and external reality and the subsequent analysis of it is always done in a present-at-hand mode. This raises the important question of whether the essence of a text, painting, or musical piece is ever amenable to such analysis, since in the very act of reflection the essence is bound to escape. This is the famous phenomenological conundrum of whether reflection can ever yield subjectivity to us since the very act of reflexion distorts or contaminates the subject. The same is true, I contend, with art and artistic creations. Any psychological or philosophical theory of art must contend with this phenomenological conundrum. I argue that it is impossible to avoid this conundrum, which means that aesthetic criticism, which should be carried out without committing this fallacy, must be re-envisioned. A response to a work of art must be another work of art, not a reflection on it. I claim that there can be a mutual fungibility in art objects; that is to say, a painting or a musical piece or another novel can be an appropriate aesthetic response to a novel but not a book review. I argue that art is the only modality through which true art evaluation is possible.

Examining the Relationship Between Death Anxiety and Abstract Art

Christina Makri
University of Vienna
xristinamakri@gmail.com

Coauthor:
Matthew Pelowski (University of Vienna)

Terror Management Theory suggests that people reject stimuli that they consider meaningless or ambiguous because it triggers their death anxiety (Kesebir & Pyszczynski, 2014). This dislike for meaninglessness also seems to be the driving force behind the general public's distaste for abstract art (Landau et al., 2006). However, research has shown that artists and art experts respond differently to certain visual stimuli compared to lay people (Bhattacharya & Petsche, 2005) and oftentimes display a preference for ambiguity and abstraction, unlike the latter group which tends to avoid it (Landau et al., 2006). It is thus surprising that no studies have yet looked into the potential differences in the death anxiety levels of artists and art experts versus lay people. Additionally, as shown by Furnham & Walker (2001), even individuals who are not formal artists, but who have art training, as well as people who frequently visit museums and art galleries are also more likely to appreciate and, even prefer, abstract art compared to real-world content. Could this preference for ambiguity and abstraction also translate to differences in death anxiety levels compared to individuals who dislike abstract art? Investigating this possibility is the main aim of this study. Additionally, we will look into whether it is solely (i) abstract art interest that could be associated with differing death anxiety levels or if (ii) frequent abstract art exposure is enough or even (iii) general art interest, (iv) art knowledge, (v) art practice or a combination of the above. Overall, if significant relationships between death anxiety levels and certain aspects of (abstract) art are recorded, then evidence from this study will be used towards the development of an art-based intervention aiming to reduce the death anxiety levels of highly death-anxious individuals.

Aesthetic Pleasure Beyond the Beautiful

Lorenz Moises Festin
De La Salle University, Manila
lorenz.festin@dlsu.edu.ph

The aesthetic experience of the beautiful is often described in terms of the pleasure it represents. While such experience is marked by disinterest, beauty has come to be associated with the aesthetic pleasure accompanying the perception of it. How are we to understand the nature of such pleasure? The complexity of this question lies not only in the specificity of experiencing the beautiful in contrast to other aesthetic experiences but also in the distinctness of the pleasure proper to the former. After all, pleasure is a common ingredient of everyday life, which can be found in various human activities, from taking one's favorite dish to chatting with friends, from having sex to doing one's hobby, etc. According to Aristotle, pleasure should be viewed not as some subsistent reality but as something that supervenes on any activity. And key to this experience is the involvement of the mind which allows one to take delight in such activity. What about the pleasure proper to the aesthetic experience of the beautiful? Kant's notion of pleasure afforded by the beautiful is more or less consistent with the Stagirite's overall account, in that, such an aesthetic delight is brought about by the judgment made on it by the mind. Still, environmental aesthetics as proposed by Arnold Berleant as well as the so-called everyday aesthetics as propounded by Yuriko Saito view the aesthetic experience as not exclusively limited to the pleasure afforded by the beautiful. Does this constitute an abandonment of the traditional notion of aesthetics as the science of sensory knowledge directed to beauty? In light of Aristotle's insights, I will argue that notwithstanding the current trend to recognize aesthetic values other than the beautiful, aesthetic experience remains tied to pleasure even though its object of reference goes beyond the beautiful.

Is Law Affective? Affectivity and Legal Aesthetics

Malwina Tkacz

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw

malwina.a.tkacz@gmail.com

Phenomenology regards affect as an encompassing phenomenon connecting body, self and the world. Undoubtedly, the law – as inherently present in our life – affects us. Moreover, it is argued that the affective value of the law – the law's ability to communicate and justify itself as being the law suppresses other, different values (e.g. economic, functional).

From such a perspective, the law proves itself socially relevant, through the notion of affect. Hence, the law deals with the need for legitimation by presenting itself as necessary and vital – which means engaging the recipient in an aesthetic way.

How can the affective and aesthetic dimensions of law be defined? Is there a link between law and aesthetics? What are the consequences of such a link? How should law present itself in order to be accepted as law?

My presentation aims to answer those questions, establish the connection between law and art/aesthetics, and introduce the issue of legal aesthetics and legal affectivity, as well as the consequences of such an approach.

Change of Affairs: Music and Boredom

Nikola Vasiljević
Goethe University Frankfurt
vasiljevich.nikola@gmail.com

Aesthetic and non-aesthetic experiences of music both constitute unique forms of experience that are not easy to disentangle. Since the 19th century, the musicological discourse has often attempted to circumvent this problem by treating music specifically through the concept of the “work” as a rationalized aesthetic object, claiming that when we are listening to a musical piece aesthetically, a whole historical background is affirming itself through its content and form. However, to treat music in such a way is to consider only one type of experience, one already implying an art-object that requires a specific “know-how”. Nonetheless, the nature of any musical experience lies in its unique formal temporal quality. Like any other experience, the fundamental structure of the musical experience lies in the temporal structure of consciousness, something that acquires its materialized formal schemata in any musical activity.

The best example for the experiential exceptionality with regards to music emerges with the phenomenon of boredom, as it ultimately exposes all perceived phenomena as more than just cognitive, but also fundamentally spatiotemporal bodily experiences of emptiness, sometimes even independently of the formal fullness of the musical flow. This is explicated by Martin Heidegger in his categorization of boredom into three distinct types which this paper will reexamine with regards to music. If the common dichotomy of subject-object cannot be disputed or challenged, it may indeed be suspended in boredom which, at the very least, seems to potentially alter any experience of change, as well as the nature of the “changing” musical experience itself. In boredom, even music ceases to be an “art” form, requiring thus a fundamental reformulation of its underlying foundations, as well as re-examination of its underlying premises.