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The Aesthetics of Attention

Annual Conference of the Nordic Society of Aesthetics

20–21 May, 2021
Aarhus University (online)

CONTENTS

1. [Program](#)

2. [Keynotes](#)

- [Ina Blom](#)
- [Yves Citton](#)

3. [Plenary session](#)

- [Art as Forum](#)

4. [Individual papers](#)

- [Claire Anscomb – “#filterdrop”: Attending to Photographic Alterations](#)
- [Carola Barbero – The Attention of Reading](#)
- [Bernardita M. Cubillos – Cinematographic Ellipsis as Device of Attention: Women and Narratives of War](#)
- [Jeannette Ginslov – *Deep Flow*: a return to bodily experience](#)
- [Kristian Handberg – Art in Motion: Catching the attention of the present in the art museum](#)
- [Iris Vidmar Jovanović – Attention, Beauty, and Literary Aesthetics](#)
- [Onerva Kiianlinna – Modularity of Mind and Aesthetic Judgement](#)
- [Oiva Kuisma – Inner Imitation as a Form of Participatory Attention](#)
- [Morten Kyndrup – Attention and Aesthetic Value](#)
- [Sanna Lehtinen – Attention in the Wake of Emerging Urban Technologies](#)
- [Jean Lin – Multiple Identities of Borderline Cases in Art](#)
- [Marta Maliszewsk – Testimony-Images and a Different Kind of Attention](#)

- [Ancuta Mortu – Aesthetic Fatigue and Attentional Overloading](#)
- [Adrian Mróz – The Defaults of Attention. Interest versus Love](#)
- [Francesca Natale – On the performativity of disinterested attention for the experience of contemporary art](#)
- [Henrik Kaare Nielsen – Attention, affect, and aesthetic experience](#)
- [Jaana Okulov – Aesthetic machine attention](#)
- [Marita Rainsborough – Considering the future. Aesthetics of transformation and the conception of attention in Achille Mbembe's philosophy](#)
- [Patrick Van Rossem – Pay attention: Artists and their audience after the 1960](#)
- [Vsevolod Rybakov – Attention to the Other: Aesthetic Synthesis as an Ontological Work](#)
- [Piotr Schollenberger – Distracted examiner. Dialectic of attention and the future of aesthetic judgement](#)
- [Filip Šenk – Attention and Architecture since Modernity](#)
- [Michaela Šimanová – Through the eyes of minor characters: The attentional shift in fanfictions and its influence on canonical works](#)
- [Sue Spaid – Your Tongue Here \(or Not\): The Interplay Between Attention and the Imagination](#)
- [Jakub Stejskal – Formats as Guides of Aesthetic Attention](#)
- [Matti Tainio – What you see when you cannot see anything. Observations in the dark environments](#)
- [Frederik Tygstrup – Kant's "aesthetic idea": toward an aesthetics of non-attention](#)
- [Anette Vandsø – Silence! The background of attention as a battleground](#)

Program

THURSDAY

09.15-09.30	Welcome by the organization committee
09.30-11.00	Keynote by Ina Blom: "Extended Sleep. On New Modes of (Non)Attention"
11.00-11.15	Break
11.15-12.30	<p>Parallel session 1a</p> <p>Filip Šenk: "Attention and Architecture since Modernity"</p> <p>Sanna Lehtinen: "Attention in the Wake of Emerging Urban Technologies"</p> <p>Piotr Schollenberger: "Distracted examiner. Dialectic of attention and the future of aesthetic judgement"</p> <p>Parallel session 1b</p> <p>Morten Kyndrup: "Attention and Aesthetic Value"</p> <p>Patrick Van Rossem: "Pay attention: Artists and their audience after the 1960"</p> <p>Francesca Natale: "On the performativity of disinterested attention for the experience of contemporary art"</p>
12.30-13.30	Lunch break
13.30-14.45	<p>Parallel session 2a</p> <p>Jeannette Ginsloy: "Deep Flow: a tentacular worlding of dance, biosensor technology, lived experience and embodied materials of the human and non-humankind"</p> <p>Sue Spaid: "Your Tongue Here (or Not): The Interplay Between Attention and the Imagination"</p> <p>Anette Vandsø: "Silence! The background of attention as a battleground"</p> <p>Parallel session 2b</p> <p>Matti Tainio: "What you see when you cannot see anything. Observations in the dark environments"</p> <p>Ancuta Mortu: "Aesthetic Fatigue and Attentional Overloading"</p> <p>Adrian Mróz: "The Defaults of Attention. Interest versus Love"</p>
14.45-16.00	Break
16.00-17.30	Keynote by Yves Citton: "Automatizing Attention vs. A Public Right to Hear"

FRIDAY

09.15-11.00

Parallel session 3a

~~Onerva Kiiianlinna~~: "Modularity of Mind and Aesthetic Judgement"
~~Oiva Kuisma~~: "Inner Imitation as a Form of Participatory Attention"
~~Henrik Kaare Nielsen~~: "Attention, affect, and aesthetic experience"
~~Frederik Tygstrup~~: "Kant's 'aesthetic idea': toward an aesthetics of non-attention"

Parallel session 3b

~~Jakub Stejskal~~: "Formats as Guides of Aesthetic Attention"
~~Claire Anscomb~~: "'#filterdrop': Attending to Photographic Alterations"
~~Jaana Okuloy~~: "Aesthetic machine attention"
~~Kristian Handberg~~: "Art in Motion: Catching the attention of the present in the art museum"

11.00-11.15

Break

11.15-13.00

Parallel session 4a

~~Iris Vidmar Jovanović~~: "Attention, Beauty, and Literary Aesthetics"
~~Jean Lin~~: "Multiple Identities of Borderline Cases in Art"
~~Michaela Šimanová~~: "Through the eyes of minor characters: The attentional shift in fanfictions and it's influence on canonical works"
~~Carola Barbero~~: "The Attention of Reading"

Parallel session 4b

~~Marta Maliszewska~~: "Testimony-Images and a Different Kind of Attention"
~~Bernardita M. Cubillos~~: "Cinematographic Ellipsis as Device of Attention: Women and Narratives of War"
~~Vsevolod Rybakov~~: "Attention to the Other: Aesthetic Synthesis as an Ontological Work"
~~Marita Rainsborough~~: "Considering the future. Aesthetics of transformation and the conception of attention in Achille Mbembe's philosophy"

13.00-13.30

Lunch break

13.30-14.30

Plenary session: Art as Forum

14.30-14.45

~~Closing remarks and farewell~~

Ina Blom

Extended Sleep. On New Modes of (Non)Attention

The attention economy and the society 24/7 connectivity has long been critiqued for its undermining of the natural need for sleep; in a curious twist actual sleeping bodies have themselves become objects of attention, put on display for real-time watching in exhibition contexts, or presented as expression of political resistance, as seen in the Occupy movement. In this talk, I will address a very different set of approaches to the question of actual sleep and related valorization of non-attention in contemporary thought and culture. Associated with sensory extension and the significance of the unthought, sleep also becomes a figure for a particular kind of adaptation to contemporary information societies and related modes of governance and administration.

Biography

Ina Blom is a professor at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas at the University of Oslo and Wigeland Visiting Professor in the Department of Art History, University of Chicago. Recent books *include The Autobiography of Video. The Life and Times of a Memory Technology* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2016), *On the Style Site. Art, Sociality and Media Culture* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2007/2009) as well as the edited volumes *Memory in Motion. Archives, Technology and the Social* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016) and *Raoul Hausmann et les avant-gardes* (Paris: Les presses du réel, 2014).

Yves Citton

Automatizing Attention vs. A Public Right to Hear

Complaints about “information overload” are matched by the rise of attentional prosthetics, on the individual as well as on the collective level. What does it mean for our attention to be automatized? This talk will suggest that displacing our conceptions of attention from a visual model to an auditory model can help us reframe such questions. Sound Studies can provide a useful resource to revisit the aesthetic and political dimensions of our collective attention, supporting the call for a ‘Public Right to Hear’.

Biography

Yves Citton is professor in Literature and Media at the Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint Denis and co-editor of the journal *Multitudes*. He recently published *Faire avec. Conflits, coalitions, contagions* (Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2021), *Génération collapsonautes* (Seuil, 2020, in collaboration with Jacopo Rasmi), *Mediarchy* (Polity Press, 2019), *Contre-courants politiques* (Fayard, 2018), *The Ecology of Attention* (Polity Press, 2016). Most of his articles are in open access online at www.yvescitton.net.

“Art as Forum”

Line Ellegaard, Rasmus Holmboe, Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, Solveig Daugaard

University of Copenhagen (Denmark)

Infrastructural Attention

If avoiding attention is crucial to how infrastructures work, how are we to think about artworks, artistic organisations, exhibition projects and interventions that call attention to exactly infrastructure? Confronted with signs of wear, tear and breakage in the critical infrastructure of our societies, in recent years an interest in infrastructural studies has arisen in the humanities and social sciences. With this, our attention is drawn to the mundane, unremarkable and undergirding systems – both material and informational – which are designed to regulate our bindings to the world and to each other thus drawing attention away from themselves in order to function efficiently (Star 1999, Durham Peters 2015, Mattern 2018). Accordingly, infrastructures are no guarantee of equity as they serve different agents differently: the staircase connecting two floors in a building for an able person can be an insurmountable barrier for the user of a wheelchair. If we apply a similar logic to the infrastructures of the art world, it will direct attention to the conditions and organisations of artists and audiences: these structures are designed for and provide privilege to some while producing inaccessibility to others. The infrastructural attention awakened from this friction in the dynamic relation between production, presentation and reception, is the focus of this panel. Departing from cases in literature, exhibition making, artists’ institutions and BIPoC collectives, this panel displaces the analytical focus from the individual work of art as a ‘thing stripped of its use’ to its embeddedness in social, economic and historical ecologies.

Mapping Infrastructural (In)Attention

Line Ellegaard, PhD-student, University of Copenhagen

‘Greatness is something which is connected to the *attention* “officially” given to that person or that piece of work’¹

¹ From the introduction to *Billedet som Kampmiddel* (*The Image as Weapon*, 1977), a book published with the surplus funds generated by ticket sales from ‘Kvindeudstillingen XX’ and ‘Rejsning’ at Charlottenborg exhibition building in 1975. H. Lait Kluge, H. Lassen, H. Matthesen, J. Rex and L. Storm (ed.), *Billedet som Kampmiddel: Kvindebilleder mellem 1968–1977* (København: Informations forlag, 1977), 7 [‘Storheden er noget som hænger sammen med den opmærksomhed “det officielle” tildeler en person eller et stykke arbejde’].

‘The *actual* inequality consists of different conditions and *lack of attention*’²

The women who organised the women’s exhibition ‘XX’ and ‘Rejsning’ at Charlottenborg exhibition building in 1975, were clearly au fait with Linda Nochlin’s seminal analysis of the biased attention afforded the white male artist in Western art history. As is well known, the essay published in 1971 asked: ‘Why have there been no great women artists?’ The answer to this, as both Nochlin and the Danish women artists had understood, was not due to the greatness of individual men, but rather the institutional structures and societal norms favouring these. Thus, to change this, one might look – not for forgotten great women artists – but at how such norms and structures are reproduced and imposed through infrastructural movements and processes, which provide or deny access to resources, distribution channels, and recognition. In the following, I will focus on the collective project ‘Kvindelige Kunstnere over 40 år’ (‘Women Artists over 40’), organised by Else Kallesøe, Hellen Lassen and Hanne-Lise Thomsen as part of ‘Kvindeudstillingen XX’ in 1975. In anachronistic terms, a project I suggest can be described as a mapping of infrastructural (in)attention.

In the book *Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences* (1999), Susan Leigh Star and Geoffrey Bowker show that infrastructure is not only to be understood as a specific installation or a system of substance, but also as a dynamic set of relations working within and across various fields, linking conventions of practice, work procedures and protocols of classification.³ In analysing ‘Women Artists over 40’, I draw on their method of ‘infrastructural inversion’⁴ to foregrounding analytically that which normally disappear into the background; in this case the often-invisible work of reproduction and overlooked negotiations that come to bear on the interrelations between production, presentation, and reception of any work of art. Such infrastructural inversion can foreground not only the social and material conditions of women artists working at that particular historical junction, as will become clear, but also how an attachment to, and an art historical mode of ‘sorting things out’ relying on, supposedly neutral terms of classification, such as quality, value and greatness, risks perpetuating conservative notions of aesthetic quality that are historically and continuously stacked against the favour of those who are not (white) male artists.

² *ibid.*, 7. [‘– den *reelle* ulighed består i forskellige betingelser og *manglende opmærksomhed*’].

³ Susan Leigh Star and Geoffrey Bowker, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1999), 35.

⁴ *ibid.*, 34.

Charged with the task of including a historical dimension to the women exhibition's overall aim of discussing visual art in relation to women's situation in society at the time, Kallesøe, Lassen, and Thomsen decided *against* mounting a display of 'great' art by women, as they had seen it in other women's exhibitions, such as 'Kvinnfolk' shown at Malmö Kunsthall that same year.⁵ Rather, they departed from the observation that 'the [art] academy for around the past 50 years had educated as many women as men, but that they [women] then disappeared', to embark on a research-based endeavour seeking to know more about women artists in the immediate generation above them: what was their situation, background and working conditions?⁶ To garner answers, the group sent out a questionnaire concerning 'both the private and the public situation'⁷ to around 300 artists in the summer of 1975.

Kallesøe, Lassen, and Thomsen received around 50 letters from women artists in return, and further supplemented these responses with interviews. Although these letters include numerous conflating statements, unsurprisingly, there are several levels at which the women recognise that the flow of attention to women artists is blocked – particularly in relation to the gendered value of time. Lydia Nordentoft sums it up as follows: 'A man's time is precious; a woman's time is worth nothing'.⁸ The biased attention of male critics is also often lamented, as is gendered notions of praise, such as 'you paint like a man' or 'if only you were a man'.⁹ In their collaborative work, Kallesøe, Lassen, and Thomsen did not want to manipulate the material to reflect their own opinions but insisted on presenting a cross-generational dialogue as 'an open image'¹⁰ of both shared and conflicting views. Thus, in seeking to expose the biased (in)attention given to women artists in the media, the museum and in society in general, the survey also exposed generational divides and attachments to conservative notions of aesthetic quality held by an elder generation, who insisted on a gender-neutral understanding of art.¹¹

In the exhibition space Kallesøe, Lassen, and Thomsen presented the results of

⁵ From project description and responses to the project kept in Danish Women's Artist Association's archive, (Kvindelige Kunstneres Samfunds arkiv, KSS-arkivet).

⁶ 'Til Kvindelige kunstnere', København 20 juli 1975, *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Letter from Lydia Nordentoft, ['Mandens tid er dyr, kvindens tid er intet værd'], *ibid.*

⁹ 'Kvindelige kunstnere – dengang og nu', 1975, *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ For instance, Karen Margrete Svensson writes: 'I do not mind exhibiting with women, if it is on a fine i.e. high level.' ['jeg vil ikke have noget imod at udstille sammen med kvinder, hvis det er på et fint dvs. højt niveau']. And Jane Muus writes: 'Regarding the exhibition in December, it is important that the female artists show quality. We must show the very best that has been made. If we do not, the exhibition will lose its purpose'. ['Angående udstillingen i december gælder det om, at de kvindelige kunstnere viser kvalitet. Vi må vise det allerbedste der er lavet. Gør vi ikke det mister udstillingen sit formål']. See letters in KSS-arkivet.

their investigation on three collage-boards.¹² On the lower half of the boards selected questions from the survey were handwritten with red paint – the same colour as the letters on the banner with the slogan ‘liberty, equality and sisterhood’ hung in the adjacent room. Above, on a beige background, handwritten excerpts were collaged together with imagery, mainly self-portraits supplied by the women artists over 40.¹³ To compliment the collage-boards, a recording of selected extracts from the letters read out by actor Kirsten Rolffes played in the exhibition space. White linen hung from a washing-line demarcating the space, and in the middle stood a figure with a raised fist surrounded by empty buckets. Both elements presumably exemplified the obstacle domestic work presented to women artists at the time.

To be sure, the uneven handwriting and the irregular layout of images and text, make the boards appear aesthetically amateurish. It was the work of students; Hellen Lassen studied art history and Kallesøe and Thomsen were soon to finish their artistic education. Notwithstanding such DIY aesthetics, the display did allow for the audience to engage with the material at various levels – either by reading the extracts on the collage-boards, listening to the audio, or looking at the objects, drawings and paintings in the space. The experimental display of sound, image and text commanded and received attention, as Birgit Pontoppidan notes in her book commemorating the exhibition ‘there were always many visitors, who stood and listened to the reading of the artists’ letters, while looking at the paintings.’¹⁴

To conclude, by reaching out to a generation of women above them, the young artists created a space for inter-generational dialogue based on solidarity across differences, where attention to greatness (imperative to art historical discourse) was displaced, in favour of an infrastructural attention that made public the social and material conditions of women artists at the time. This project of foregrounding the background of art making, propelled as a mode of exhibition/art making has however, received very little, if any, scholarly attention, presumably judged amateurish and thus without value.¹⁵ Indeed, it might be the lack of attention to aesthetic ‘quality’ in the display of ‘Women

¹² [‘collage-tavlerne’], ‘Kvindelige kunstnere – dengang og nu’, 1975, *op.cit.*

¹³ When sending out the survey Kallesøe, Lassen, and Thomsen had asked for the artists to include a self-portrait as part of their answer, because they wanted not only to see these women artists’ work but also ‘what they looked like’, see letter ‘Til Kvindelige Kunstnerne’, *op.cit.*

¹⁴ Birgit Pontoppidan, *Det skete på Kvindeudstillingen Charlottenborg 1975*, (København: Birgit Pontoppidan Forlag), 113.

¹⁵ For instance, research curator Birgitte Andersberg has noted that ‘the exhibition’s incorporation of artistic amateurs and collective intent quite obviously did not pave the way for new artistic breakthroughs’, see ‘What’s Happening?’ in *What’s Happening* (exhibition catalogue, Statens Museum for Kunst, 2015), 92.

Artists over 40' and the nondescript status of this project – somewhere between a collective artwork, an exhibition project, and an art historical intervention – that has caused it to sink into relative obscurity?¹⁶ In conclusion, I propose that we might retroactively – through the lens of what we have termed infrastructural attention – be able to identify both its critical potential and value: a mode of artistic and curatorial research, which through data collection and interviews produces and presents 'useful' knowledge *about art as art*, seeking to transform rather than represent the here and now.

Biography

Line Ellegaard is a curator, educator, and PhD-fellow at The New Carlsberg Foundation research centre Art as Forum, based at the department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. She is working on the project *Exhibition as Forum: Forms of solidarity in feminist, anti-racist and post-colonial exhibition practises, 1970-2010*, in which she investigates the social, political and aesthetic dimension of the collective process, communal address and public reception of art exhibitions.

TOVES – Between strategic infrastructuralism and idiosyncratic play

Rasmus Holmboe, postdoc., University of Copenhagen

In this paper, I will present my ongoing archival and ethnographic research on the artist organization and exhibition venue TOVES that operated in Copenhagen in the period 2010-2017. It is important to mention that my work is still in an early phase, in which I am trying to process the archival material while also deepening my own understanding of it with interviews and other ethnographic work. The project is both historical in its nature but is also intended to produce content to be exhibited or otherwise presented at Museet for Samtidskunst in Roskilde as part of my ongoing postdoctoral research-collaboration with the museum.

TOVES started out as Toves Galleri (Vesterbro ConTemporary Workout Space) and was founded as a temporary artist-run exhibition space in 2010 in a bankrupt and almost abandoned shopping arcade in Vesterbro in Copenhagen, which was also called Toves Galleri and was named after the famous Danish writer Tove Ditevsen, who used to live in the neighborhood.

¹⁶ The project is mentioned by Hellen Lassen in *Billedet som Kampmiddel* (op.cit, 53), and briefly described in *Det skete på Kvindeudstillingen Charlottenborg 1975* (op.cit.,110–115) and by Sanne Kofoed Olsen in 'Det begyndte i 1970'erne: Dansk Kunst-Feminisme 1970-76', in *100 års øjeblikke: Kvindelige Kunstners Samfund* (København: Saxo, 2014), 255.

The exhibition space was initiated by the artist Pind, who contacted a number of fellow artists, whom he invited to bring along to the gallery space any number of works they would have lying around in their studios or homes. Pind's idea was that Toves Galleri should function as a dynamic training gym and testing ground for contemporary art and that those who accepted his invitation, would bring finished works to the gallery space and enter into dialogue with other artists and their work, curate exhibitions from each other's material and, finally, that bringing together this group of artists would also evolve and generate new and unforeseen initiatives. According to the artist Christian Jeppsson who became part of TOVES, this quite quickly evolved into a collective curatorial practice where the different interests and competencies of the participating artists formed the basis for the future organization of the collective. In Jeppsson's words, it was like stepping into an artwork that Pind had created, and from there expanding that into a collective artistic and curatorial practice.

The initial group of artists that responded to the invitation were mainly people who had just graduated from the Academy in Copenhagen or elsewhere. They were just around the same generation, at this time in their early 30'ies, and just entering the art scene, not yet having had any major solo exhibitions or being represented by galleries etc. In this sense, the story about TOVES starts as a classic case of self-organizing with an equally classic and quite clear dichotomy between the ones organizing themselves and the surrounding market infrastructures, which were found to be lacking, insufficient or otherwise contrary to the collective beliefs and aspirations of the group. We should also bear in mind that this was just after the financial crisis in 2007-2008, where the conditions for emerging artists were perhaps even more precarious than they are today.

Originally, Pind had only borrowed the space in the arcade for a three-month period. However, what seems to be the underlying motivation for TOVES to continue as a collective beyond this period is not so much rooted in the artists' common position on the fringes of the art market. Rather it seems to be a ready and common interest among the group members to explore the boundaries between individual artistic practices and collective curatorial efforts such as this had evolved from the initial experiments.

Yet another strong tendency that was latent in Pind's initial concept was a clear interest in the attention economy of the art world. Before the opening of Toves Galleri, Pind had designed a corporate logo (appropriating the logotype and color of the shopping arcade) and he had made letterhead paper as well as generic business-cards for the other artists to use when working in the context

of TOVES. In this play with the codes of the commercial gallery he had already started setting up an organization concept that somehow mimed the infrastructures of the attention-economy upon which the wider commercial art market relies, and this tendency only became more and more apparent during the following years, in which TOVES established itself on the Copenhagen scene as both a gallery and artist collective.

A recurring problem and topic of debate within TOVES in the following years was how to turn the collective into a profitable organization, while maintaining the playful, uncompromising, and sometimes deliberately pretentious artistic profile that the collective had developed. While the individual members would be able to attract funding because of their involvement with TOVES, the commercial part of turning a collective artist-run gallery into an economically sustainable organization was never solved. Partly, perhaps because the motivations among the participating artists were, in this respect, too different. From my initial archival research and fieldwork, I think it is safe to say that some members were more interested in the conceptual layers of potential conflicts and interplays between artistic autonomy and the infrastructures of the larger art world and society – while others were perhaps more materially and spatially minded and quite content with having a venue in which they could present exhibitions and make collaborative projects.

However, these tensions within the group developed into a strong artistic interest in organizational forms that culminated with the projects *TOVES Annual Report 2014* and *TOVES – THE SALE* (2017), the latter of which literally put the organization up for sale as part of an exhibition at Museet for Samtidskunst. After the exhibition Museet for Samtidskunst acquired *TOVES – THE SALE* for its collection.

TOVES – THE SALE presents itself as a very large transport crate containing left-over equipment from the exhibition space such as chairs, loudspeakers, lamps, spray cans (with the correct blue of the TOVES-logo), publications, exhibition documentation etc. The crate also holds a few individual and collective artworks as well as a 500 Gb hard drive containing the digital archives and Dropbox of TOVES as well as sketches and ideas for future projects and not yet realized exhibition concepts. Part of the work is also a sales prospectus made by Christina Wilson Art Advisory with the assistance of the media agency Bates Y&R that had analyzed TOVES' immaterial assets such as development potentials, brand value, PR strategy etc. as well as material assets (Facebook and Instagram-accounts, mailing lists, website etc.). Most importantly the sale of the organization TOVES as an artwork in this respect

included the acquisition of all copyrights and the full rights to operate and continue the organization.

My research into TOVES is obviously conditioned and determined by the context that it is now the museum that owns what was formerly an independent self-organized and idiosyncratic collective. And that situation begs a number of questions to be discussed under the heading of infrastructural attention. First, it is necessary to ask what the state-sanctioned public institution can learn from the self-organized artist collective in terms of organizational models? Following this, it is important to analyze which infrastructural logics and dispositions cut across the two organizational fields, and which do not? This is especially important in relation to the organization's relation to the public. These questions together form the basis of a third and more complex one, that concerns the modes of address that such different institutions apply and consequently the composition of the publics whose attention they are trying to attract. Here it becomes important for the present owners of TOVES to look at the changing context and ask whether and how the idiosyncratic and collective is being transformed by the curatorial infrastructures of attention that pertains to this new and quite different setting?

On being many

Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, Assistant Professor, University of Copenhagen

“Organisations can be considered as modes of attention,” Sara Ahmed writes (2012). The composition of bodies in organisations mirrors not the representational composition in society, but what matters and is worthwhile in a historical present. Through an analysis of strategic separatist BIPOC collectives in Denmark, I suggest that their organizational performance offers both new modes of attention, but also offers protection in a historical moment of racialized vulnerability and even sheds light into a racial grammar founded in Kantian aesthetic theory.

In recent years, we have seen rich examples across fine arts and performance art of what has been named instituent practices (Raunig 2009) or extra-institutional alliances (Rogoff 2019). The terms cover artist-run institutions which often offer an alternative institution to political institutions. They are NGO-like, but within the arts, and try to criticise governmental policies – often on immigration and asylum – by founding new insitutions and taking direct action. They suggest supplementary or restorative politics by supporting conditions for refugees, changing education or making alternative parliaments. Think of *The Silent University* by Ahmet Öğüt or *Trampoline House* by Morten Goll and Tone Olaf Nielsen. In a recent article, art theorist Véronica Tello

suggested to revise the relations in the production of these institutions (Tello 2021). However, despite commoning, democratizing and collectivising aspirations – and also being perceived as such in the reception - not all artists initiating refugee-integrating art spaces, decolonising summits and temporal institutes have distanced themselves from the idea of artistic authorship and ownership. As Tello has argued, there is an asymmetric division of labour between the ones owning symbolic capital (the artists) and the ones accumulating it (the rest). In other words, the iterations of authorship produce symbolic capital and draw invisible borders within even the anti-authoritarian art institutions.

Speaking into the interest of the conference, we can understand a creditlist as an organization of attention: who matters and who are worthwhile in our historical present, to rephrase Sarah Ahmed? Who is remembered as members – of the art world, in the public discourse - through the performative iteration of names? And do we want to continue supporting the infrastructural symbolic economies of naming?

Distinct from the above-mentioned instituent practices founding alternative institutions in order to supplement politics, other artists' groups and collectives are more explicitly identifying as collectives and working explicitly with an erasure of the artistic signature and the very idea of an in-dependent, single authorship. A canonic example is Guerilla Girls working with anonymous identity since 1985 by wearing the identical gorilla masks in order to draw attention to a structural invisibilisation of women artists. I want to, however, focus on organisations of credits and a blurring or erasing of authorship in a Danish context, particularly looking at the separatist assembly and semi-anonymous crediting the collective Marronage.

Marronage (2016-) is a BIPoC separatist collective of decolonial feminists. As many will know, Marronage politicised the centennial marking the sale of the former Danish West Indian Islands by producing three magazines on Danish colonial legacies. Marronage is formed around lived experiences and affects of being racialised in Denmark. Marronage identifies as a collective, but not one of artists – however, they appear in art institutions and write sometimes about art (Marronage 2019). Beside of publishing books, texts and zines, Marronage has a production practice informed by the differentiated and precarious working conditions of the collective's members, alternating the distribution of money and time: they are paying fees according to needs internally in the collective, redistributing means from the collective to allies, and scheduling working hours attentive to parental care-work (Marronage 2020, Marronage

2021). Thus, the group is founded in a recognition of interdependency and the attention to relationality is woven into the fabric of their ways of producing.¹⁷

Marronage is part of a larger number of BIPOCs organized in collectives across media, activism and art: UFOlab, Feminist Collective With No Name (FCNN), (Un)told Pages, A Seat at the Table, Andromeda 8220, The Union - Cultural Workers Union for BIPOCs in Denmark and Diaspora of Critical Nomads. These collectives have – in performances, readings, zines, self-made media platforms, artist-driven spaces, book stores, festivals or artists' organizations - acted as rewriters, confronters, archivists, caretakers and healers of Danish cultural memory.

Returning to the concrete motif of crediting and authorship, Marronage operates explicitly as collective without creditlist. However, there are pictures of members in group performances by Marronage. They pull attention to the organization of collectivity of BIPOCs by means of representation, always appearing as the many.

One can, as I have argued elsewhere (2019), argue for a specific need amongst BIPOCs to be organized and represented in groups in order to be less vulnerable and structurally isolated as minoritized and racialised non-white individuals in Denmark. A recurring motif in Black aesthetics is how to work against structural loneliness (Rankine 2004, 2020) and organize as many - in *plural* (da Silva 2018) or as *assembly* (Moten, Harney & Sawyer 2021). The organization of bodies in artists' collectives, counteracting the individuation of the artist and (national) lines of demarcation within the infrastructures of the art world, can be seen as a strategy in order to escape what Fred Moten has also termed "the carceral frame of the art work" (Ibid.).

Another, and this is my second and today last suggestion, argument for organizing as many, in plural, in our historical present, is to interrogate the single authorship as a foundational part of racializing grammar in post-enlightenment thinking. The economy and fetishiation of the single authorship haunting even collectivising attempts is imbedded in post-enlightenment thought and, as I will show, is part of a border-drawing onto-epistemology that is foundational in modern racial grammar.

Drawing a border between 'the artist and the rest' by identifying the artist by their exceptional abilities is a founding rationale in aesthetic theory on artistic production. In his *Critique of Judgement* Immanuel Kant concentrates mainly on the aesthetic judgement which means he develops primarily a concept on

¹⁷ See also: <https://marronage.dk/>

the reception of the artwork. Yet as he needs to differentiate artworks from other objects, he develops a short theory on the production of the artwork: that production is only a concern when it comes to distinguish art from other things. It is the production carried out by the artist that makes art exclusive, something other than nature, science and crafts. Kant's definition of the artist as a genius is clear and concise. In four paragraphs from §46 to §50 in *Critique of Judgement*, he promotes – as you will all know - the genius as a natural talent producing original artworks. It is an idealist, not a material condition. It is a conceptualizing capacity, not a conditioned privilege. The Kantian promise of talent is transcendental, ahistorical and knows no political context. It is enhancing genius as an expression of *interiority*, something that is produced by a spirit independent from material, historical and worldly support.

By that, he draws a formalist line of demarcation between *interiority* and *exteriority*. These are two categories that I borrow from Black feminist Denise Ferreira da Silva. She finds this distinction between the inner and the outer, the interiority and the exteriority, a central distinction in the ontological construction of the universal man, a decisive division in what could be described as the *racial grammar* of post-Enlightenment thought. Interiority is an ontological descriptor of 'modern man', preceding any materiality or context (da Silva 2007: 25).

Looking back on the border-drawing rationales through the lens of Black feminist theory, we can align Kantian idealist aesthetics of production with what da Silva has called *interiorized poesis*: a productive force that comes from the rational mind. For da Silva, the production and stressing of interiority – the self-actualizing Spirit - of the subject is central in post-enlightenment onto-epistemology as "the portal to self-determination" of the modern, Western subject (Silva 2007, 25). The praise of interiority is dependent, epistemologically, of an *other*, the *exteriority* of global thought, which da Silva detects as the racial. The transparent 'global' and very white subject was and is thus still, following da Silva, constructed on a logic of exclusion. And as long as the logic of exclusion continues, racialisation and border-drawing reside in modern grammar.

Returning to the instituent practices of artists, there is a discrepancy between the intention (and reception) of commonality and community across refugees and other citizens, and then a border-drawing and exclusionist grammar residing in the credits. How can such political artistic practices attacking the European border regime uphold a grammar of exclusion? My suggestion is that when an artistic work requires more than a single (spontaneous) action, it is dependent on infrastructures of artistic production. The infrastructures of

artistic production require and uphold the soloist signature as well as further border-drawing rationales: when funding is applied, an authorship must be recognizable; the habit of art institutions is to present solo exhibitions of individual artists; next to the artist's name in the exhibition a code of their country is put; the national cultural policies support to the nation state's own citizens. Through da Silva's analysis of raciality in modern grammar we can say that the infrastructures of artistic production uphold and require the interiorized poesis. In other words, lines of demarcation are foundational in the infrastructures of production.

But also, the habits of reception of an artwork are longing for the individual to reincarnate and perform the idealist artist's spirit. Reception is looking for individual artists to blame, honor or understand: an aggressive example of how insistently the public media hunts down the artist is made evident, when recently a bust of a Danish king was thrown into the harbor in Copenhagen by the group, Anonymous Visual Artists, and the journalist Poul Pilgaard started investigating who the artists behind the bust happening might have been, guessing their identity to be BIPOC students and even calling them on private numbers in order to hunt down the 'responsible' artists.

Hence, the infrastructures across artistic production and reception, its actors in cultural policy, circulation and critique, defend both onto-epistemological and national borders and perform a politics of individualized responsibilisation, when they require the continuation of authorship, even when artists suggest interdependent and solidary ways of organizing anonymously and beyond interiorization.

Concluding on this brief paper on being many, I will sum up my how the organizational performance of BIPOC collectives, specifically Marronage, sheds light on both underrepresented and structurally vulnerable, racialized bodies and the colonial amnesia, but also on a racial grammar at the heart of aesthetic theory. The organization of artists' collectives without signatures of the single artist confronts the Kantian borderdrawing rationale between interiority and exteriority, a rationale resonating an onto-epistemological separation and mode of exclusion that is – following da Silva - to be found throughout post-enlightenment thought; a grammar that serves to segregates artists from non-artists, artistic quality from activism, members and non-members of the nation state, racialised white people from racialised black people. Rather than aligning the work of all collectives, across compositions of BIPOCs, of racialised Black or racialised white art workers, and rather than claiming that being many is per se something 'good', I suggest to think with the collective endeavors as a request for revisioning aesthetic theory: how the collective practices stress an urgency

to leave the boarder-drawing and violating assumptions of the single authorship, and instead promote to start from immeasurable interdependency.

Biography

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Paper to come

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“#filterdrop”: Attending to Photographic Alterations

Abstract

It is well-documented that the alteration of portrait photographs can have a negative impact on a viewer's self-esteem. One might think that written disclaimers warning of alteration might help to mitigate this effect, yet empirical studies have shown the opposite. Instead, viewers feel like what they are seeing is real, and thus attainable, despite knowing it is not. What could account for this cognitive dissonance? Importantly, disclaimers fail to show viewers how to look at the contents of a photographic image differently. Consequently, as viewers continue to have the same perceptual experience, I argue that they continue to feel a sense of “epistemic contact” with the subject of the image, which conflicts with their changing sense of warrant. Epistemic contact, I propose, can be described as a feeling of immediacy, where the experience of seeing the content of the image resembles the experience of seeing the subject face-to-face. This is caused by images that appear to have a high degree of visual similarity to the real subject. The degree of perceived similarity may be subject to change however, depending on what a viewer is attentive to during their viewing of an image. Resultantly, epistemic contact may be extinguished or lessened if, upon further inspection, the image, or parts of the image, no longer appear to have a high degree of similarity to the subject. I demonstrate that if shown an analogue photograph that has been subject to alteration, such as the removal or reshaping of its visual features, it is usually easy to see, and for a sense of contact to alter accordingly. I explore whether the same can be said for photographic images that have been altered with advanced post-processing techniques, and what repercussions this might have on the creation of, and our engagement with, digital photographs.

1. Idealised Images

Photographs are frequently altered to idealise the appearance of those who pose for selfies, fashion images, and advertising campaigns. While media photographs have a history of being altered, thanks to the rise of smartphone cameras, apps, and social networks, it is now increasingly common for people to edit their own photographs.¹⁸ This may involve the removal or reshaping of the visual features of the image, or “airbrushing” these with the use of apps,

¹⁸ Emma Hallett, “Instagram photo filters targeted by model's #filterdrop campaign,” *BBC News*, September 7, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-53784938>.

such as Facetune, and filters. A well-documented effect of idealised photographic images is the negative impact that they can have on a viewer's self-esteem – particularly in relation to face and body satisfaction. To mitigate this effect and see “more real skin” on Instagram, makeup artist Sasha Louise Pallari started the #filterdrop movement. In doing so, she successfully convinced the Advertising Standards Agency to advise ‘that influencers, brands and celebrities should not be using filters on social media when promoting beauty products if the filter is likely to exaggerate the effect that the products are capable of achieving’ – even if the filter is referenced in the Instagram story.¹⁹ This final detail is important. One might think that written disclaimers warning of alteration should help to dispel viewers of the impression of reality that images made using photographic means tend to give, yet empirical studies have shown the opposite.

At best, it has been found that written disclaimers, regardless of the size of label, tend to have no significant impact on reducing the negative effects of idealised images.²⁰ A number of studies have actually seen a “boomerang effect”.²¹ In these latter cases, subjects were shown altered images with written disclaimers warning that the images were digitally manipulated to enhance the appearance of the models. Contrary to what was expected, those presented with this intervention reported decreased physical self-esteem and an increased desire to look like the models, despite knowing that these images did not represent a realistic and therefore achievable appearance. One explanation offered for this effect was: ‘If retouching is generally assumed to have occurred, being told that retouching has occurred would have little or no effect compared to simply viewing the retouched photos without the discounting information.’²² However, studies that have examined the effects of generic disclaimers (e.g., “Warning: This image has been digitally altered”) against specific disclaimers (e.g., “Warning: This image has been digitally altered to trim arms and waist”) have, in the latter condition, seen an increase in visual attention to specific

¹⁹ Annie Vischer, “The Way Influencers Use Filters On Instagram Is About To Change In A BIG Way,” *Grazia*, February 3, 2021, <https://graziadaily.co.uk/beauty-hair/makeup/sasha-louise-pallari-filter-drop/>.

²⁰ Amelia C. Couture Bue, and Kristen Harrison, “Visual and cognitive processing of thin-ideal Instagram images containing idealized or disclaimer comments,” *Body Image* 33 (March 2020): 152-163.; Marika Tiggermann, Zoe Brown, Mia Zaccardo, and Nicole Thomas, ““Warning: This image has been digitally altered”: The effect of disclaimer labels added to fashion magazine shoots on women’s body dissatisfaction,” *Body Image* 21 (April 2017):107-113.

²¹ Kimberly L. Bissell, “Skinny Like You: Visual Literacy, Digital Manipulation and Young Women's Drive to be Thin,” *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education* 6, no. 1 (February 2006): 1-14.; Kristen Harrison, and Veronica Hefner, “Virtually Perfect: Image Retouching and Adolescent Body Image,” *Media Psychology* 17, no. 2 (March 2014): 134-153.

²² Harrison, and Hefner, “Virtually Perfect,” 147.

areas of the body, which was associated with increased body dissatisfaction.²³ To this effect, Kristen Harrison has proposed that the disclosure that celebrity and advertising images are retouched can make viewers feel worse about themselves as increased awareness ‘of what others edit may heighten our awareness of our own supposed flaws. That may encourage us to spend longer using digital tools to repair them.’²⁴ Fiona MacCallum and Heather Widdows have likewise proposed that such enhanced attention reinforces conceptions of beauty ideals, which they have argued function as ethical ideals.²⁵

There are then, a number of factors, including norms pertaining to objects of desire and beauty ideals, that feed into the negative effects generated by these idealised images.

But it is notable that these discussions always centre around photographic images. Why is it that photographic, and not other kinds of images have the strongest effect on promoting these norms – to the extent that even when alteration is known about, viewers still *see* these images as representing a realistic and therefore attainable appearance, despite knowing this is patently untrue? I propose that this cognitive dissonance is the result of a divergence between the perceptual and cognitive experiences of viewers. Significantly, photographic images present these desires and ideals with a kind of perceptual immediacy which makes them seem realizable (whether or not this is actually the case).

2. Epistemic Contact

To make an image by photographic means entails registering patterns of light, reflected from objects, on photosensitive surfaces. Photography, as standardly practiced, is an easy and efficient way to produce images that cast patterns that are similar to those cast by the real subject.²⁶ Photographs can thus, function as valuable sources of “spatially undemanding” visual information.²⁷ This is reflected by our cognitive responses to photographs – as Dan Cavedon-Taylor notes, we tend to automatically assent to the contents of photographic

²³ Belinda Bury, Marika Tiggemann, and Amy Slater, “Disclaimer labels on fashion magazine advertisements: Impact on visual attention and relationship with body dissatisfaction,” *Body Image* 16 (October 2015): 1-9.; Fiona MacCallum, and Heather Widdows, “Altered Images: Understanding the Influence of Unrealistic Images and Beauty Aspirations,” *Health Care Analysis* 26 (July 2016): 235-245.

²⁴ Amy Odell, “Read my lips: the rise and rise of photo-editing,” *The Economist*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/1843/2018/07/02/read-my-lips-the-rise-and-rise-of-photo-editing?fsrc=scn/fb/te/bl/ed/beautyreadmylipstheriseandriseofphotoediting1843&fbclid=IwAR3xXUuYWrek6POWdH3QenA8oL9050Jx54ezwrLRaQMxW4CWbpz7X8GShrM>

²⁵ MacCallum, and Widdows, “Altered Images.”

²⁶ Scott Walden, “Transparency and Two-Factor Photographic Appreciation,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 56, no. 1 (January 2016): 33-51.

²⁷ Jonathan Cohen, and Aaron Meskin, “On the Epistemic Value of Photographs,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62, no. 2 (May 2004): 197-210.

images,²⁸ and only withhold this if we ‘possess reasons *against* thinking the photograph creditworthy’.²⁹ This sense of warrant, in the beliefs formed on the basis of the described pictorial experience, is not the only response that tends to be triggered by photographs – they are also highly likely to trigger a feeling of what I refer to as “epistemic contact” or a feeling of immediacy, where the experience of seeing the subject of the image is similar to the visual experience one would have seeing this face-to-face. This phenomenon is caused by the arrangement of marks on the surface of figurative pictures ‘which, when presented to our visual systems, cause those visual systems to operate in more or less the same ways as they have been caused to operate had they been exposed [...] to the things of which they are pictures’.³⁰ Images produced by photographic means are particularly powerful triggers of our visual systems in this respect, due to extra surface and texture detail.³¹

Although photographic images may exhibit grain or display their subjects in monochromatic tones only, we are still familiar with the perceptual experiences that viewing such images generate, Scott Walden has argued, given that the appearance of grain and monochromatic tones resemble the visual experiences we have in low-light settings.³² Nonetheless, the high-contrast of many historic black and white photographs for instance, does not resemble our experiences of encountering subjects in low-light settings very well. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the experience of epistemic contact can vary in degree: one is likely to experience a stronger sense of epistemic contact if the picture appears more realistic. For example, digital colourist Marina Amaral has meticulously restored and colourized a great number of historic photographs, including those taken of prisoners in Auschwitz. In transforming the degrading black and white photographs, Amaral has said of the results ‘you can feel that it was real’ and that ‘when you see a photo in colour I think you instantly feel more connected to what you are seeing.’³³ While this evidence may be anecdotal, the increasing feeling of connection with the subject, which corresponds with the increased perceived realism of the image, serves to support the thesis that the

²⁸ Dan Cavedon-Taylor, “Photographic Phenomenology as Cognitive Phenomenology,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 55, no. 1 (April 2015): 71-89.

²⁹ Dan Cavedon-Taylor, “Photographically Based Knowledge,” *Episteme*, 10, no. 3 (August 2013): 283-297, 294.

³⁰ Walden, “Transparency,” 39.

³¹ Joshua P. Salmon, Heath E. Matheson, and Patricia A. McMullen, “Photographs of Manipulable Objects Are Named More Quickly Than the Same Objects Depicted in Line Drawings,” *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5 (October 2014): 1187.

³² Walden, “Transparency,” 43.

³³ BBC, “The Colourist Changing the Appearance of Historical Photos,” *BBC News*, July 10, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/entertainment-arts-40523826/the-colourist-changing-the-appearance-of-historical-photos>; Marina Amaral, “Meet Marina Amaral a Historical Colourist,” *History*, 2019, <https://www.history.co.uk/article/meet-colourist-marina-amaral-history>.

more realistic an image appears to be, the stronger a sense of contact this is likely to trigger. This has big ramifications for the reception of photographs in the digital age: while black and white photographs might be still be experienced as very realistic with respect to the configuration of the features of the subject, they are less likely to trigger as strong a sense of epistemic contact as contemporary digital photographic images, which can be produced with extremely high fidelity, especially with regards to the tonal and chromatic properties of the subject.

The foregoing reveals two important facts that bear upon viewer interactions with altered photographs. First, given that the experience of epistemic contact is contingent upon, and triggered by, the viewer's perceptual experience of the image, it follows that, as per Amaral's testimony, this may be subject to change. Importantly however, I propose that it is not only the act of making changes to an image that can alter the degree of perceived realism but, given that our perceptual experiences are subject to 'all kinds of top-down influences from non-perceptual processes'³⁴, how a viewer attends to an image upon receiving further information about it may also alter their sense of epistemic contact with the subject. For instance, upon first glance at the photograph *Adolf Hitler with Leni Riefenstahl*, one gets the impression of "seeing" a moment in which Hitler, Riefenstahl, and their company are conversing. When it is pointed out however, that a figure, namely Joseph Goebbels, has been removed from the right-hand side of the photograph, the slightly blurred area which is lighter in tone, next to the woman on the far right becomes obvious and results in a less visually compelling impression of the event. That is, upon further inspection, the image, or at least this part of the image, no longer appears to have a high degree of similarity to the subject and so, accordingly, the viewer's sense of epistemic contact decreases. Prior to this omission being highlighted however, it is likely that the viewer has suffered from inattentional blindness - the phenomenon where salient stimuli right in front of an observer's eyes pass unnoticed - and failed to spot anything amiss in the picture.

The potential for a sense of contact to alter shows that, contra some of the most recent work on this topic³⁵, it is not only the cognitive aspects of a viewer's experience that can change, but that the perceptual and cognitive aspects of a viewer's experience may change independently of one another. Moreover, the cognitive and perceptual aspects of the viewer's experience may potentially come into conflict, as we have seen in the case of the digitally altered photographs. As viewers continue to have the same perceptual experience, they

³⁴ Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7.

³⁵ Cavedon-Taylor, "Photographic Phenomenology."; Walden, "Transparency."

continue to feel a sense of epistemic contact with the subject of the image, which conflicts with their changing sense of warrant. We have just seen that if told or shown that an analogue photograph has been subject to alteration, such as the removal or reshaping of its visual features, it can be easy to see, and for a sense of contact to alter accordingly, but is it possible to attend to altered digital photographs so that they cease to appear as realistic as they initially seem?

3. Attending to Photographic Alterations

It no longer takes a huge amount of training and equipment to convincingly alter a photograph. Not all digital alterations are convincing of course, and interestingly, professional retouchers have spoken of finding alterations produced by amateur retouchers as being highly unconvincing.³⁶ Indeed, if you know where to look and what signs to look out for, it is possible to see less-than-realistic marks of certain kinds of image alteration. For instance, it is often possible to spot deviations from the laws of linear perspective in objects in the background of photographs of impossibly slim-waisted individuals (just search for #facetunefails). Once this becomes obvious, the degree of experienced realism (i.e., of the physics of the scene) decreases and so, as per the proposed account, reduces a sense of contact.

Spotting these giveaways is not however, something that comes naturally to most of us – studies have shown that people frequently neglect information, such as whether shadows and reflections in a scene are consistent or inconsistent, that could aid them in detecting whether an image has been subject to alteration.³⁷ This helps to further explain the inefficacy of generic disclaimers - they fail to show viewers how to look at the contents of a photographic image differently. I propose that the same is likely true of specific disclaimers – being told that an image has been altered to “trim” a waist might direct attention to that area, but does not necessarily help viewers to see less-than realistic signs of alteration and reduce their sense of epistemic contact.³⁸ As with the analogue case earlier, it may be that viewers suffer from inattentional blindness if they miss signs of alteration that it is possible to spot through visual inspection. Accordingly, I think that teaching viewers how to attend to photographic images, to spot signs of alteration, on social networks and media outlets could prove helpful as part of a broader visual literacy

³⁶ Odell, “Read my lips.”

³⁷ Sophie J. Nightingale, Kimberley A. Wade, Hany Farid, and Derrick G. Watson, “Can people detect errors in shadows and reflections?” *Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics*, 81 (June 2019): 2917-2943.

³⁸ Amelia C. Couture Bue, and Kristen Harrison, “Visual and cognitive processing of thin-ideal Instagram images containing idealized or disclaimer comments,” *Body Image*, 33 (March 2020): 152-163.

education. In particular, it would potentially help to align the perceptual and cognitive experiences of viewers.

Nevertheless, it is possible to forecast limitations to this approach - the alteration that is most difficult for viewers to detect is airbrushing.³⁹ Airbrushing, and earlier versions of this kind of alteration, are difficult to visually detect. While it would often take days to airbrush an image using analogue means⁴⁰, with digital techniques, all one needs to do is apply a filter to a photograph - means that are available to any smartphone user - which can be sufficient to make alterations that are virtually imperceptible. For example, the “Paris” filter, available to Instagram users, is said to be the ‘most dangerous filter of them all. If the person using it is wearing a lot of makeup or demonstrating skincare it’s almost impossible to tell what’s what.’⁴¹ “Before” and “after” images can help to show the unreality of airbrushed photographs. One study for instance, demonstrated that viewing both “natural” and idealised images reduced the negative impact of the idealised images on women’s facial appearance satisfaction.⁴² Other studies have demonstrated that interventions involving videos demonstrating the alteration process in relation to thin-ideal images, may be effective in the short term to successfully prevent reductions in body satisfaction.⁴³ However, as Harrison and Hefner have highlighted, it is ‘not feasible to locate unretouched versions of all retouched imagery in commercial visual media to provide real-time before-after comparisons’.⁴⁴

Ultimately, challenging the underlying norms that contribute to the drive to alter photographs in this way would be the most effective means of combating the negative effects of this practice.⁴⁵ In wait of such widespread change however, teaching viewers how to attend to images differently could lessen the

³⁹ Sophie J. Nightingale, Kimberley A. Wade, and Derrick G. Watson, “Can people identify original and manipulated photos of real-world scenes?” *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 2 (July 17): 30.

⁴⁰ Michael Zhang, “Beauty Retouching from the Early 1900s: A Portrait of Actress Joan Crawford That’s ‘Photoshopped’,” *PetaPixel*, October 17, 2014, <https://petapixel.com/2014/10/17/beauty-retouching-early-1900s-portrait-actress-joan-crawford-thats-photoshopped/>

⁴¹ Vischer, “Influencers.”

⁴² Jasmine Fardouly, and Ronald M. Rapee, “The impact of no-makeup selfies on young women’s body image,” *Body Image*, 28 (January 2019):128-134.

⁴³ Emma Halliwell, Alice Easun, and Diana Harcourt, “Body Dissatisfaction: Can a Short Media Literacy Message Reduce Negative Media Exposure Effects Amongst Adolescent Girls?” *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 16 (March 2011): 396-403.

⁴⁴ Harrison, and Hefner, “Virtually Perfect,” 149.

⁴⁵ Rachel Cohen, Jasmine Fardouly, Toby Newton-John, and Amy Slater, “#BoPo on Instagram: An experimental investigation of the effects of viewing body positive content on young women’s mood and body image,” *New Media and Society*, 21, no. 7 (February 2019):1546-1564.

sense of epistemic contact formed with the subjects of altered photographs and reduce the need to have the “before” image at hand in certain cases.

Biography

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The Attention of Reading

Abstract

When we read attentively literature we fill out what is ontologically incomplete by conceiving it *as if* it were complete. Sure enough literary objects – as Roman Ingarden underlines in *The literary work of Art* (1931/1973) –, differently from real ones, are characterized by *spots of indeterminacy*, i.e. are not determined under every aspect, hence are nothing but schemas, full of gaps (independently of any additional epistemological incompleteness which may derive from inaccurate readings) that need to be concretized by our acts of reading. This peculiar feature of literature makes clear why in comparison with being engaged with books, being engaged with films is imaginatively impoverished: because there are less elements of indeterminacy, i.e. less gaps in the work to be filled up. The point here is, as Wolfgang Iser in *The implied reader* (1978) remarks, that the reader is able to visualize the main character for himself and when the character is offered, concretized by a complete and immutable picture, then the work of imagination is out of action.

The intrinsic incompleteness of literature also makes clear why projects as the one of Brian Davis (<http://thecomposites.tumblr.com>), based on the idea of doing with literary characters what the police does with composite portraits of criminals somehow is more effort than it's worth: our imagination is able to fill up the gaps, whereas the software, reproducing nothing but incomplete objects, isn't. No software can make Madame Bovary come alive, our help is needed.

I.

What means *reading* a literary work, and reading it well? The first spontaneous answer is that the best way of reading is from left to right (for left-to-right languages, of course) and from the top to the bottom – but this reply does not seem to be particularly enlightening.

In any case, what is important to keep in mind is that reading starts with an act of perception, i.e. in order to be able to read we need be able to perceive (to see or touch – but here I will just take into consideration the act of reading with eyes) some elements and the connections subsisting between them. Reading starts in our brain like any other visual stimulation, i.e. in the general visual areas of the occipital pole of the brain, but rapidly moves into an area concerning the recognition of written words. The cognitive neuroscientist Dehaene [2007] explains how the functioning of reading is based on some specificities of the eye, the organ receiving the visual input. The retina – thanks

to its central part named *fovea* containing high resolution cells – elaborates visual information, first by recognizing letters and the way they combine into written word, and second by connecting them to the brain systems for coding of speech sounds and for meaning. And all this happens in a very short time: we recognize sixteen letters in less than a quarter of a second and identify and understand something like three-hundred words in a minute. Hence, when our eyes perceive those black marks on the page, we first identify letters and their combinations as known elements that can potentially carry meaning – and here the information processed is purely visual: we do not *understand* the meaning of the word, we just recognize it as an object –, then we get an access to the meaning, and finally the written word is translated into phonemes, the linguistic sounds that make up the same word in oral language. These three different stages, even if closely connected, are functionally independent.

Reading is related to the simultaneous processes of *decoding* and *encoding*. When processing written input, apparently we are not disturbed by varying letter shapes or sizes, we recognize what does not change by grasping the letter common traits (invariants). According to his view people naturally focus on morphemes during the word recognition process and move through different levels of representation to get to meaning. The input of the visual form is then encoded and gradually recoded in connection to a mental lexicon. Concerning word recognition Dehaene specifically focuses on two aspects, functioning simultaneously and working in parallel: the *phonological* – converting groups of letters into sounds – and the *lexical* one – giving access to a mental dictionary of the meaning of words. Dehaene insists on the fact ([2007] 2009: 202) that we “do not fully understand the causal chain that links visual and linguistic acquisition. Must a child first analyze speech inputs into phonemes in order to figure out the meaning of letters? Alternatively, does the child understand the nature of the letter code before he discovers that speech is made up of phonemes? This is probably just another ‘chicken and egg’ problem”.

II.

So neuropsychological research tries to explain the basis of reading and its development, precisely starting from the eyes. But what does the act of reading consist in? According to Peter Kivy (2006 and 2010) – who sees literary works as performances – there is a parallel between reading texts and reading scores. He bases his theory of reading on the metaphysical type-token distinction (even if intended differently from the way most philosophers have considered it) and sees literary work types as instantiated by their readings and those readings as performances even when they are silent. The main thesis of reading as performance is defended on the one hand by appealing to the history of literature and on the other by working on the parallel between silent reading of literary works and silent reading of musical scores. From this Kivy goes on

pointing out that silent readers too both perform what they read and interpret it as they go along. But when a reader's silent activity is just interested in grasping meanings or in what the text is about, would that reading count as a performance as well? He would say these expressionless readings somehow fail to be performance readings because they wouldn't imply a deep understanding and interpretation of the work. But what about the silent reading of *Anna Karenina* made by a nine years old child? However inspired it might be, it would of course lack both profound understanding and literary. And think also about all those readers non particularly literary well-trained, their silent readings wouldn't count properly as performances since they couldn't be considered as interpreting the work both in the sense of performing and in the sense of deeply understanding and interpreting its meaning. Here the difference between reading a literary text and reading a score becomes evident: whereas one can read a score without being able to perform it silently but exactly knowing the notes they are, one cannot read silently "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" without in the meantime knowing how it does sound because in reading grapheme and phoneme arise together and develop always in parallel, even when the meaning of those marks on the page is not sure at all.

III.

But *why do we read?* When we read we are interested in understanding what those signs stand for, we want to know the meaning of the sequence of sentences together with their specific discourse context. These sentences can be about the real world or about an imaginary, they refer to a state, event or action and often have a truth value with respect to the real or the invented world. When reading we also activate memory, perception, problem solving, and reasoning (Graesser, Millis and Zwaan 1997) and our attention is devoted in identifying those characteristics of texts which are standard, contra-standard and variable and that would help categorizing them as works of a specific genre (Cfr. Walton 1970 and Friend 2012).

In the experience of reading, readers play a central role: without them and their attentive activity, there wouldn't be anything more than a page full of black spots. As they read and understand, they propositionally imagine (Stock 2017: 20-29 and 187-191) what they read by representing to themselves that something is the case: for example, I might imagine that Anna is arriving at the railway station. Imagining propositionally (which does not require mental imagery, as Kendall Walton underlines: "imagining can occur without imagery" Walton 1990: 13) therefore means to stand in some mental relation to a particular proposition, i.e. literary works – fictional and non-fictional ones – call for propositional imagining. When reading and being involved with literary texts at a further and not at a basic level, one can as well *imagine objectually* –

representing to oneself a real or make-believe entity or situation (Yablo 1993) – and *imagine simulatively* – representing to oneself some sort of experience (Walton 1990). But whereas propositional imagining can take place without the former ones, neither objectual nor simulative imaginings can occur independently of propositional imagining: when one objectually imagines Anna Karenina also propositionally imagines that there is Anna Karenina – but not the reverse, in fact one can imagine that there is Anna Karenina without imagining her such and such. Nevertheless, even if objectual imagining implies imagining an object with some specific properties, that very same object will never be fully determinate (Yablo 1993: 28), the author has inevitably left some parts or characteristics *empty*.

Hence those objects that come into being thanks to words and that we imagine are not complete ones, but are more similar to what Roman Ingarden sees as a schema or a skeleton, needing the attention of reading to be appropriately concretized. The schema need to be concretized because in actual fact, when writers describe characters, they do so with a few linguistic brush strokes, and readers have the task of filling in the gaps, not only by trying to complete what is ontologically incomplete (cfr. also Smith 1979), but also by enriching the experience of reading with their own expectations, culture, personal memories, and desires. Stories are often made richer by what they do not tell: omissions invite imagination to be active and fertile.

So the activity of reading results from the cooperation between reader and writer: while completing what is written down the first recreates that world the second has just sketched on the page. Readers fill out what is ontologically incomplete by conceiving (imagining, understanding) it *as if* it were complete (Ingarden [1965] 1973: 252). This explains why from a single schematized object we can derive different concretizations and why, even if we can have many concretizations of a literary work, none of them can be considered as *being/consisting in* the work itself: because the ontology of the literary work is such that it can always be determinate further on.

Insisting on the distinction between literary work and its concretizations does not mean to deny the possibility of a genuine access to the work in itself, but rather to defend the peculiar ontological structure of literary objects which are essentially *schematic*: even if their constitutive spots of indeterminacy may be fulfilled time after time, their very identity is never threatened. This also explains why such objects fail to satisfy the law of the excluded middle, i.e. why it is true both that they have *p* and that they have non-*p*, when they are not determined for what concerns *p*.

Specifically insisting on this qualification/determination activity in which lies part of the interaction between text and reader, Wolfgang Iser [1972] presents his phenomenological theory of reader-response. Following Ingarden, he describes the act of reading as consisting in the reader's concretization of

textual features, a gap-filling activity stimulated by the structural indeterminacies of the text. The *implied reader* therefore is a text-based reader and the reading process entails the generation of meanings already inscribed in the text.

As Iser himself remarks when reading novels the reader has to imaginatively work in order to visualize what he has read, whereas when watching films his experience starts with the physical perception of the concretization of someone's else (the film's director). That is why, in comparison with being engaged with books, being engaged with films is imaginatively less demanding: there are less elements of indeterminacy, i.e. less gaps our imagination is required to fill.

IV.

Another quite natural question, is the one concerning the practice of reading and the way it is carried out: does the speed at which we read affect our appreciation? In order to vividly and richly imagine what the text says as well as what it does not, do we need more time? If so, this would explain why, especially for literary masterpieces, slow reading or even re-reading often does help. And why quite often rereadings are *better* readings? This last question sounds even more odd. Nabokov (1980) has an answer for it: once the physical and hard job on the text is over, artistic appreciation can start thanks to memory (we need remember the different parts of the novel in order to grasp it as a whole), imagination (*propositional* as well as *recreative* imagination, as Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) call it, consisting in the ability to have experiences from a perspective different from the one experience usually presents) and aesthetic distance (or, as Kant [1790] would say, the disinterested approach).

Needless to say, rereading, while helping for aesthetic appreciation, also supports literary evaluation. Bortolussi and Dixon in *Psychonarratology* (2003) explain how the activity of reading takes place and also what happens during rereading by analysing data experiments. This conveys them to realize how those texts characterised by high complexity, rich vocabulary and refined literary style, require more time and effort to be processed, and also how this major deal of concentration induces more pleasure in readers during their second reading.

V.

The first reading is the one making people grasp text-meaning, the second (or rereading) is the one thanks to which one reflects on formal linguistic construction starting in the meanwhile the process of imagination and interpretation. Is it reasonable to practice imagining (as we practice, for instance, drawing) in order to imagine better? And how to contextualize this

question in our lives characterized by a continuum of image-bombing? Are our imaginations somehow impoverished or threatened? Italo Calvino notoriously displays a similar worry in the fourth of his *Six Memos for the Next Millenium* [1988], *Visibility*.

In spite of Calvino's fear, we still imagine what we read and printed words are a sort of a playing field for our imaginative activity. What is interesting indeed is also that our imagination, however dynamic, will never be able to complete what is essentially incomplete (that's why even rereading many times the same text we will always add something or we will imagine it differently from previous times). Pace Brian Davis whose project *The Composites* (<http://thecomposites.tumblr.com>) is based on the idea of doing with literary characters what the police does with composite portraits of criminals – an idea doomed to failure because whereas our imagination tries to fill up the gaps, the software works differently, reproducing nothing but incomplete objects. Hence no software can give Madame Bovary a face, our help is needed. Always and forever. We need imagine by ourselves and in the meanwhile also interpret what we read trying to grasp author's descriptive intentions.

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Biography

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Cinematographic Ellipsis as Device of Attention: Women and Narratives of War

Abstract

Cinematographic ellipsis can constitute a device of attention or distraction. In his postwar filmography, Ozu used it to stress the memory of violence and trauma produced by the war. The omission of violence is relevant to understand the structure of his last film, *Sanma no aji* (1962). The opposite attitude is present in Greta Gerwig's adaptation of *Little Women* (2019) where the distraction of war leads to a new focus of attention: women's independent world and its free organization of memory and images.

Ellipsis is a strategic rhetorical procedure in texts. Its function can be amplified to the technical construction of images, where it also plays an aesthetic part. It has been noted that cinema is the "art of ellipsis"⁴⁶. Cinematographic time and space are built through framing and montage. These operations remove the materials from their physical systems of reference and configure them as pieces that are juxtaposed in a new surface⁴⁷. The uprooting procedure makes the filmic synthesis essentially discontinuous and fragmentary.

Nevertheless, film's elliptical nature has been assumed with ambivalence. It has been hidden or manifestly shown, it has been used to attenuate or to emphasize contents. It can constitute a device of attention or distraction. I will expose two cases in which ellipsis has been used with diverse orientations to build an argument about the relation of war and the position of women in a determinate social context.

1. Ozu's *Sanma no aji*

In his postwar filmography, Ozu used an elliptical construction to stress the memory of violence of the II World War. From a contemporary and always present display of time, he directed the attention to a past that cannot be manifested through images.

⁴⁶ Martin, Marcel. *El lenguaje del cine*. (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2002), 83.

⁴⁷ Déotte, Jean-Louis. *La época de los aparatos*. (Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2013), 36.

Ozu's films are staged in contemporary cities (in the 1950's and early 60's), flashbacks are strictly forbidden, and violence is not visually exposed. But, even if not shown, Ozu's late filmography is about postwar society and the way in which a traumatic event has changed traditional structures, particularly family.

This traumatic experience is presumed to be known by everyone, inside and outside the film. The spectator needs to acknowledge the unspoken hypothesis- with the impossibility of openly referring to it- to interpret the story and aesthetics of the film.

Ozu's use of ellipsis and silence are rooted in his cinematographic style. In his late films the urban space is shown with unbreakable self-imposed restrictions that rule the operations of framing and montage. His cinema is one of limitations and modular style. The theme is also persistent⁴⁸. A typical conflict is the situation of daughters that have reached the age of marriage and must leave their parental home. With this theme, Ozu links the implicit war to the resetting of women's social role in modern sensibility⁴⁹.

The relation between women and war is relevant in Ozu's last film *Sanma no aji* (1962). Ozu presents the story of Michiko and his father, Mr. Hirayama. Michiko has reached the proper age for marriage. The father is troubled, because when Michiko marries, he will be alone. After the death of his wife, Michiko has taken her place as feminine figure and domestic center of Hirayama's home. Evidently, this can be just a provisional position, but Michiko does not want to abandon her father and manifests that she is not yet ready to marry. The father supports her, but he secretly knows that if he does not push her to marry soon, she will eventually become a spinster and remain unhappily bounded to him.

Ozu's film has a twofold structure. The first part presents father and daughter in an attitude of denial. Their relatives and friends warn them about the consequences of not solving Michiko's situation soon. It is possible to consider this first part as the exposure of encounters with "mirror" characters, through which Hirayama is confronted with the costs that his negligence might carry in the future.

⁴⁸ Donald Richie. "Yasujiro Ozu: The Syntax of His Films." *Film Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1963): 11-16.

⁴⁹ Cfr. Castro, Mauricio. "Vanished Men, Complex Women. Gender, Remembrance and Reform in Ozu's Postwar Films", in *Ozu International*, ed. W. Stein and M. Di Paolo, 29-51 (New York-London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

In the second part of the film, there is a change of attitude: father and daughter accept that it is time to separate. Michiko finds a proper suitor; her marriage is finally arranged and the conflict solved. The father remains alone, but his destiny has already been consciously embraced. Human life is cyclic. Its course must be recognized and followed with grace. Trying to stop the natural sequence of time can just produce unhappiness.

In the center of this twofold structure runs a parallel argument that is determinant for the twist that marks the main narrative partition. Hirayama encounters Sakamoto, a man that fought with him during the War. They go to a bar, recall the past with nostalgia, and fantasize about how the present would be if Japan had won: the Japanese would be in New York- they say with humor- and the Americans would be using *chignon* and chewing gum while they play the *shamisen*. Instead, reality is that the age that ended with the War can only be happily revived by two drunk men. Japan was defeated and endured hard times, an economic crisis, hunger, cultural colonization and the destruction of homes.

Suddenly, the bar attender- a woman that the widower Hirayama seems to admire- offers to play a military song. The hymn transports the three characters to the past. Sakamoto marches and performs the martial salute with joy. The woman imitates the gestures of Sakamoto and Hirayama moving like an automatic doll. The moment is secluded in the space of the bar where the figures of the past are not objectively remembered, but have become a playful illusion that rises from shared memories. The feeling of suspended time and space is produced by Ozu's restrictive framing and his stationary camera. The scenario is nocturne and the bar atmosphere is dyed in red and intermittent lighting. There is not movement inside the frame or openness of the space. Ozu is meaningfully using the partiality of cinema.

The experience of the bar relates with Hirayama's change of mind. After drinking with Sakamoto, he returns home and meets his children. He talks about the woman of the bar, and likens her to his late wife. It is the last "mirror" of the first section of the film that indirectly applies to Michiko who has actually occupied the mother's place in the family. But this last "mirror" is outside the parallel world of the bar.

The children ask their father about the woman, but during Hirayama's depiction, the coincidences with the mother seem to fade. There is no a clear image of the mother, so it is impossible to rebuild her countenance

with the vague description. She is as sunk in the past as the war. According to Hirayama, she always dressed with kimono. Michiko corrects him: during the war and evacuation she wore Hirayama's pants. This brief and meaningful comment is enough to abandon Hirayama's romantic point of view of the past and break the "mirror".

With these elements, Ozu is able to build a discourse about the experience of war in his time, without showing it and barely naming it. The characters are as controlled as the fixed scenario and the succession of an ever-present time. Their dialogues are scarce and their words, well chosen. Their movements and emotions are constrained by the spatial limitations of the frame and the social rules of conduct. And it is through these restrictions and because of the impossibility of completely uncovering what is behind, that the trauma is enhanced. It is known that the war was received in very different manner by the old and new generation. Hirayama belongs to the past and is attached to it. Michiko represents the future. In the middle of these figures, Mrs. Hirayama becomes a symbol of transition. According to Hirayama's perspective, she is a traditional feminine icon with kimono and related to the phantasmagoric woman of the bar. But Michiko interrupts the chain of likenesses pointing out that during the war the mother changed and had to adapt to a new role. Michiko is heir of this new womanhood. She cannot be a mirror of her mother before the war, because the war is a breaking point that changed everything.

In *Sanma no aji*, modern women appear not submissive, obedient and domestic, but in the middle of a social process of reconfiguration that compromises their life decisions. They are oriented to marriage and bound to their parents, while, at the same time, act independent, professional and bossy. There are internally conflicted because their position is not decided by mirroring a traditional social part. And this, is the result of a new society that begins with the war. In that way, war becomes the "elephant in the room" that moves the film. Its influence is not openly said, but shown through the lens of women that evolve.

2. Greta Gerwig's *Little Women*

Ellipsis is in service of other purpose in Greta Gerwig's adaptation of *Little Women* (2019). The film departs from central aspects of the original story, which were included- with variable orientations- in other filmic realizations of the book. One of the most noteworthy absences is the American Civil War that has claimed the presence of the March's father. War is present, though, actively omitted, because it is a masculine issue.

The ellipsis applied to the armed conflict and the father does not emphasize the loss and its influence in the sisters view of the world and of themselves. Instead, the distraction from the war transfers the focus of attention to women's independent world, with its particular free way of organizing memory and images.

This approach is not found in the 1994 version of *Little Women* that begins with Jo's voice describing the "coldest winter of their childhood" and the poverty and lack of fuel caused by the war. The first look of the March women is the scene in which they reunite to read a letter from their father describing the adversities of life on the war front. A recent series produced by the BBC (2017) opens with actual frames of the father in the war front. Gerwig's, alternately, distracts the receptor from the trigger of the plot that causes the early conflicts of the family, to speak about women in a new imaginary system.

The mechanism of distraction and main manifestation of the new perspective is the rupture of the chronological parameters of action. If Ozu never introduces a flashback, Gerwig's film is a dialogue of temporalities shown in parallel montage. The film begins *in media res*, with Jo presenting her writings to an editor in New York. After that, it introduces the lives of the March sister's in an apparently disordered manner. The sisters' youth- the time of the war- is dyed in soft and warm colors. There is not a sense of tragedy, but of power, freedom and joy, in women who speak their minds and create an autonomous domain at home, distant from foreign judgement. Life is hard, but the girls are not complaining or at least they confront their ordinary troubles with wit and a practical approach. They are more focused in the development of their identity, future and talents, than in mourning their absent father. There are no men in the family, and when men appear is as secondary characters, observant admirers of women's creativity and strength. The sense of misfortune is almost fully on the shoulders of the mother, who has dealt with the rigors of her social environment and has learned to live constantly angry without showing it.

Tragedy reaches the sisters when they grow and must confront society trying to hold to the ideals forged in their precious solitude. The *mise en scène* of adulthood is blue and cold. It is not the war what brings women suffering and violence, but the need to respond to schemes in which feminine value systems are not considered relevant or are interpreted as weakness.

Without chronology as structuring criteria, the question of the principle that rules the assembly of Gerwig's work is unavoidable. The spectator learns that the organization of the story is an identification between the operation of montage and the memory of Jo. Because the film is essentially her perspective, we have access to her internal associations, that produce a new configuration and a particular selection of phenomena that relies in aesthetic and meaningful relations between events, instead of chronology. What appears is a feminine mind that does not spin around what is important to men. History and Literature are officially written by men, but because the film is granting the author's pen to Jo, the resulting product is her point of view that is in conflict with her editor's.

The film differs from the book. Jo negotiates and renounces to her original story to get the acceptance and publication of her novel. Nevertheless, Gerwig's film is not mirroring the book, but the author's mind. It shows the process of validation instead of the validated product. Jo owns the story and, while producing it, she materially displays the written pages in the attic's floor, as a puzzle that can be reorganized in open configurations. It is in this open montage that war can be discarded and replaced by the "little stories about domestic struggles and joys" that, according to Jo "are not important" for most readers. The film authentically vindicates feminine perspective, because artworks are not *mimesis* of historic conditions. They are creative of new imaginary values. As Amy states, writing these little stories "will make them more important".

Conclusion

I have exposed two cases of cinematographic ellipsis to show how this can be used as a device of distraction or attention. Ozu omits the war to speak about the changes in a society affected by trauma. Gerwig detaches her little women of society and war to create a peculiar feminine organization that is distanced from the established rules and forms, and avoids or judge them critically. We have, then, seen two uses of ellipsis: Ozu's omission of war is directed to focus the receptor's attention on it; Gerwig's ellipsis distracts the receptor to emphasize a new perspective that develops out of the eye of History.

Biography

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Deep Flow: a return to bodily experience

Abstract

How to change modes of *looking outwardly* to *looking inwardly*? This paper presents an embodied dance practice *Deep Flow* to disrupt ecologies of attention, in which neoliberal subjects find themselves measured and shaped by numbers, through interactions with online and self-tracking technologies. These ocular centric interactions require one to *look outwardly* that neglects the storehouse of felt and bodily experience that online and self-tracking technologies, used instrumentally, cannot capture nor share.

This study challenges *looking outwardly* by exploring strategies of *looking inwardly*, to change ecologies of attention to ones of experiencing. To do this, *Deep Flow* is presented, a practice as research methodology, using phenomenological methods to; explore whole body experiences; investigate embodied biosensor technology; and to explore human relations with non-human materials. It proposes; *a return* to bodily experience, through states of *flow*, to construct knowledge from a first-person perspective, and to expand an understanding of our bodily experiences in relation to technology, human and nonhuman materials.

Introduction

The *Attention Economy* is framed within *Metric Culture*,⁵⁰ *Surveillance Capitalism*,⁵¹ and the *Quantified Self*,⁵² where humans are increasingly being measured and shaped by numbers. This is the result of an accelerated growth of networked informational technologies, social media platforms, cloud computing, mobile software, robotics, artificial intelligence, and self-tracking technologies. We live in an increasingly sensor-based and surveillance society, where our movements, choices and behaviour are monitored and controlled by algorithms based on previous choices, movements, emotions, purchases, likes or dislikes, the addictive *Attention Economy*. This uses addictive persuasive technologies requiring ocular centric behaviour based on causality and control, that shapes the user.

⁵⁰ Btihaj Ajana, *Metric Culture: Ontologies of Self-Tracking Practices* ed. (United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2018), 1-9.

⁵¹ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019).

⁵² Gary Wolf and Kevin Kelly (2009).

To disrupt these addictive tendencies, *Deep Flow*,⁵³ is a way to *look inwardly*⁵⁴ at embodied practice *as experience*.⁵⁵ It is framed by a methodological praxis, *Tentacular Worlding*⁵⁶ to explore bodily experience using an embodied meditative practice, and phenomenological methods. It is an *experiential turn* changing ecologies of attention to ones of experiencing, using two concepts: *relational embodiment*⁵⁷ and an *embodied materiality*.⁵⁸

Bodies in Metric Culture is discussed first to uncover issues about the *Attention Economy* and secondly *Bodies in Embodied Practice* is presented, to challenge those concerns.

Bodies in Metric Culture

Metric Culture escalated through the “accelerated globalisation [and] the concomitant influence of information technologies,”⁵⁹ such as networked social media platforms, cloud computing, mobile software, robotics, AI, self-tracking technologies and data generating software. These systems form what Benjamin Bratton calls *The Black Stack*,⁶⁰ a human and nonhuman interconnected informational pervasive megastructure, where humans are shaped and “over determined by self-quantification.” This has fostered a “culture of measurement [that] is currently on the rise”⁶¹ with self-tracking devices to measure our activity, sleep, health, and performance. Known as the *Quantified Self* (QS), a movement first coined in 2009 by Gary Wolf and Kevin Kelly, it uses the motto, *self-knowledge through numbers*. The QS affords the user ways to optimise their well-being, productivity, and fitness. However, these technologies use biometric⁶² processes that are increasingly shaping our

⁵³ Jeannette Ginslov, “*Deep Flow: a tentacular worlding of dance, biosensor technology, lived experience and embodied materials of the human and non-humankind*” (PhD diss., London South Bank University, 2021)

⁵⁴ Ginslov, “*Deep Flow*”

⁵⁵ Sondra Fraleigh, *Back to the Dance Itself: Phenomenologies of the body in performance* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018), Chap 1, 2, 6.

⁵⁶ Ginslov, “*Deep Flow*”

⁵⁷ Ginslov, “*Deep Flow*”

⁵⁸ Ginslov, “*Deep Flow*”

⁵⁹ Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund, *The Contemporary Condition: Introductory thoughts on contemporaneity and contemporary art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 10, <https://www.sternberg-press.com/product/the-contemporary-condition-introductory-thoughts-on-contemporaneity-and-contemporary-art/>

⁶⁰ Benjamin Bratton, “The Black Stack,” *e-flux*, no. 53, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59883/the-black-stack/> (March 2014): 1.

⁶¹ Btihaj Ajana, “Digital Health and the biopolitics of the Quantified Self,” *Digital Health*, no. 3 (2017): 1, DOI: 10.1177/2055207616689509.

⁶² Biometrics is about measuring life, measuring the uniqueness of the body and defined as a technology of identification that relies on physical characteristics or behavioural traits to identify or verify the identity of a person. (Ajana, 2014, p.1)

identities and our social interactions that are becoming “more and more perceived in quantitative terms, framed and ranked within a reputation economy (eg. Facebook ‘likes’).”⁶³

Don Ihde describes the QS as reflecting the self, situated in data that reveals micro and macro perceptual experiences of our embodied relations with technology.⁶⁴ Yoni Van Den Eede argues that these relations produce a *data double*, an “othering of self.”⁶⁵ For Lorna Moore, this *digital-Other*,⁶⁶ is a syncretic self, that is a real self, entwined with a digital self. Consequently, “users become reliant on self-tracking technologies to build a sense of self, based on the digital version that is being shown to them by the tracking device.”⁶⁷ Martin Berg⁶⁸ believes that we have lost trust in our experiential selves as there is an increasing need for reflexivity and guidance, that is found in biosensors as *temporary authorities*. However, Deborah Lupton suggests that in recent years there is “evidence of a growing cynicism in some popular outlets concerning the value of the data that are gained from quantifying the self.”⁶⁹ Knowing your data or numbers may not be enough to change a person’s behaviour as numbers alone tell us nothing.

However, this self-reflexivity raises concerns of privacy and enables forms of prediction. Btihaj Ajana asks why we need to “‘predict’ in the first place? Isn’t prediction a form of control and isn’t control one of the problems.”⁷⁰ we are currently experiencing. This reflects *Surveillance Capitalism*, that Shoshana Zuboff believes is a new form of capitalism that commodifies personal data generated through self-optimisation. It erodes the processes of individual autonomy, where the “message is simple: Once I was mine. *Now I am theirs....*”⁷¹

⁶³ Ajana, *Metric Culture*, 2.

⁶⁴ Don Ihde, *Bodies in technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 47.

⁶⁵ Btihaj Ajana, *Metric Culture*, 145

⁶⁶ Lorna Moore, “Be[ing] You: In[bodi]mental a Real-Time Body Swapping Video Performance,” In *Handbook of Research on Digital Media and Creative Technologies*, edited by Dew Harrison, 18-32. Hershey PA: IGI Global, 2015.

⁶⁷ Dorthe Brogård Kristensen and Carolin Prigge, “Human/Technology Associations in Self-Tracking Practices” in *Metric Culture: Ontologies of Self-Tracking Practices* ed. Btihaj Ajana (United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2018), 49.

⁶⁸ Martin Berg, “Making sense with biosensors: self-tracking and the temporalities of well-being” filmed June

2017 at The AIAS CONFERENCE - Metric Culture: The Quantified Self and Beyond 7-9 June 2017 (Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies) Organised by Btihaj Ajana, video, 1:20,

https://youtu.be/hZ-oyfBE_5Y

⁶⁹ Deborah Lupton, *You are Your Data: Self-tracking Practices and Concepts of Data*, 6.

⁷⁰ Beer, interview, 6.

⁷¹ Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, 12.

These systems of self-measurement require ocular centric behaviour in an age that is obsessed and trapped in its “own present spectacle.”⁷² The *Digital Other* has become the purveyor *truth* operating on binary systems. However, no amount of AI and computer programming research, can account for the bodily experiences of an individual. How may it be re-addressed? The *Deep* method of embodied practice attempts to do.

Bodies in Embodied dance practice

Deep Flow is a method of embodied dance practice that entwines two practices: phenomenological research practice and artistic research practice, that includes the practice of *Deep Flow* and reflective methods such as verbal description, drawings, paintings, and documentary video. These methods enable the researcher to access and interpret the pre-reflective experience through their own *felt-sense*, visual imagery and verbal feedback. A HRM is also used in the practice to measure heart rate variability (HRV) in relation to lower levels of stress induced by the meditative state of *Deep Flow*.

This is framed within a *tentacular worlding*, a phenomenological methodology that is centred on relational bodily experiences as the basis for the creation of knowledge. *Tentacular Worlding* is a unique PaR methodology to *look inwardly*. The term *tentacular* is derived from the Latin *tentaculum*, means ‘feeler’, or *tentare*, ‘to try’ whereas *worlding* describes a way experience *being-in-the-world* or *Dasein*.⁷³ Together they are used metaphorically in this research to *try out* new practices, to *world* and interlace different states of feeling, thinking and *Being*. This *worlding* is a sympoietic system,⁷⁴ where both the human and non-human engage in processes of *becoming with* a world. To do this, *doing a phenomenology*⁷⁵ becomes necessary.

Phenomenological research practice: *doing a phenomenology*

Phenomenology according to Kozel is centered on the validity of first-person lived experience and may be used for the construction of knowledge. She suggests *doing a phenomenology*, sliding across the words, method and methodology, as the method refers to *how to* do research and phenomenology

⁷² Joanna Zylińska, *Nonhuman Photography*. (Cambridge: Mass.: MIT Press, 2017), 17.

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1962).

⁷⁴ Sympoietic systems are characterized by cooperative, amorphous qualities. They recurrently produce a self-similar pattern of relations through continued complex interactions among their many different components. From: Beth Dempster, “Sympoietic and autopoietic systems: A new distinction for self-organizing systems,” *International Society for Systems Studies Annual Conference*, Toronto: ISSS, 2000 (July 2000).

⁷⁵ Susan Kozel, “Lecture: Phenomenology – for the course Practice Based Research in the Arts, Stanford University,” last modified March 15, 2013
<http://medea.mah.se/2013/12/susan-kozel-phenomenology-practice-based-research-arts/>.

is a methodology that has at its root: phenomenon, which means something that happens.

It is one of the subjective, experience-based methodologies that is used to anchor practice within research, to overcome unhelpful divides between theory and practice, between the mind and the body and between my solitary experience and shared experiences.⁷⁶

Doing a phenomenology, is a way to conduct research as something one experiences on a practical level. It is not a prescriptive as practitioners should set up their own methodology based on the project that they are developing. One starts by *doing*, then one becomes aware of *doing* and finally one selects “a line of thought, or a line of questioning.”⁷⁷ that uses a process of “describing, not of explaining or analysing.”⁷⁸ In this sense, it is different from normal analytic thought and operates “through resonance rather than truth.”⁷⁹ This orientates pre-reflective experience as being unrestricted by universal and abstract rationalist notions of *truth*. It enables the researcher to practice *looking inwardly* and *doing* a phenomenology, to explore phenomenal presences, going back to the body and bodily knowing, the *lived experience* of embodied consciousness, or *the mind in the body*.⁸⁰ This includes exploring the *felt-sense*⁸¹ that is a “bodily knowing [that] is not an immediately identifiable specific emotion or sensation, but something ‘fuzzy’ and difficult to pin down, yet also clearly ‘there’ inside you, telling you about your situation.”⁸²

Methods of artistic research practice

Deep Flow is an artistic research practice that explores bodily experiences, the *felt-sense*, phenomenal and embodied states of *flow*. It is inspired by the embodied method of dance practice, the *Full Drop* created by Margret Sara Guðjónsdóttir, that requires an “intensive deep inner listening and

⁷⁶ Susan Kozel, “Lecture: Phenomenology – for the course Practice Based Research in the Arts, Stanford University,” 4-5.

⁷⁷ Susan Kozel, *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology*, 50-51.

⁷⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, (1945) *Phenomenology of Perception*. English edition first published 1962, (London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 1945) e-Library, 2005, viii.

⁷⁹ Susan Kozel, “Lecture: Phenomenology – for the course Practice Based Research in the Arts, Stanford University,” 7.

⁸⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

⁸¹ Eugene Gendlin, “Beyond postmodernism: From concepts through experiencing,” in *Understanding Experience: Psychotherapy and Postmodernism*, ed. Roger Frie (London: Routledge, 2003), 100-115.

⁸² Zoë Boden and Virginia Eatough, “Understanding more fully: A multimodal hermeneutic-phenomenological approach” in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11, no. 2 (April 2014): 160-177. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.853854>.

surrendering to inner body systems and rhythms,”⁸³ as well as other known methods such as *dwelling*,⁸⁴ *listening*,⁸⁵ *direct experiencing*⁸⁶, and *flow*.⁸⁷ This paper will only address the *Full Drop*. Reading the data from the HRM is also part of the practice and is read and interpreted after the practice.

The Deep Flow Practice

Deep Flow is an embodied meditative practice that synchronises states of *flow*, physiological, implicit and affective states of awareness. By *looking inwardly* directing one’s attention to the bodily senses, sensations, feelings, internal visualisations, and thoughts begin to materialise. It should be practiced in a quiet warm room, with comfortable clothing, an eye mask, and a yoga mat. The HRM is started. One begins by deep slow breathing, then a body scan focuses the mind on every part of the body. Then one thinks of *melting the bones* and one feels gravity changing. Time is slowed down by *dwelling* on bodily experiencing. One releases the fascia which relaxes the entire body and suddenly the body is experienced as a whole-body phenomenon, without tension and stress. Sometimes the arms start to float up by themselves, without any effort or control by the conscious mind. This is recognised as being in a state of the *Deep Flow*. When this occurs, one steps onto the yoga mat to further experience and deepen states of *Deep Flow*.

You move extremely slowly, with a minimal amount of effort, feeling connected, lighter, and expansive. This equalises the spatio-temporal dimensions in your body and you are no longer aware of the sensorimotor and proprioceptive systems. Internal visualisations of colour, memories and emotions emerge in your mind’s eye; your body sometimes feels like it is melting into the world around you, and you are moving in a thick viscous environment. This fosters a state of calm and flowing relations between subjectivity, the *felt-sense*, the sensorimotor system, the autonomic nervous system (ANS), the fascia, the kinaesthetic, proprioceptive and sensorimotor systems. Attending to every shift of experiencing the body and mind are experienced as a unified whole. The slow deep breathing stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system which lowers heart rate and increases HRV. This implies that *Deep Flow* has activated the “rest and digest” response via the

⁸³ Margret Sara Guðjónsdóttir, in Kozel, S., Guðjónsdóttir, M. S., Ginslov, J. and Lim, K. *Conspiracy Archives a process archive of an archival process*, 2019. <https://nivel.teak.fi/adie/conspiracy-archives/>.

⁸⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1962).

⁸⁵ Jean Luc Nancy, *Listening* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

⁸⁶ Eugene Gendlin, *Beyond postmodernism: From concepts through experiencing*, (2003).

⁸⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 1990).

vagus nerve, the body's major parasympathetic nerve.⁸⁸ This leads to an increase of HRV, making you feel relaxed, focused, calm and in a state of *flow* (Figure 1).



Fig 1. Spikol, D. (2019) Dancer Jeannette Ginslov in *Deep Flow* at the Symposium on Digital Urbanism, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Karlshamn, November, 14, 2019 [Photograph]

Movement Hieroglyphs

Movement hieroglyphs are drawn after *Deep Flow* as a form of *writing from the body* to visualise one's internal "body's voices."⁸⁹ They are created by connecting one's body to the pen and allowing "a bit of body energy to move on the page" to draw the "energy you feel in your body."⁹⁰ These are single line drawings or glyphs drawn spontaneously without reflection using a pen as an extension of one's body (Figure 3). After drawing you the "read" and reflect on how it was drawn and resonates in your body (Figure 2).

⁸⁸ Rollin McCraty, (2016) "Science of the Heart", in *Exploring the Role of the Heart in Human Performance: An Overview of Research Conducted by the Heart Math Institute*, 2 <https://search.datacite.org/works/10.13140/rg.2.1.3873.5128>

⁸⁹ Louise Steinman, (1986) *The Knowing Body: Elements of Contemporary Performance and Dance* (Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc., 1986), 16.

⁹⁰ Nancy Stark Smith "Teaches "Hieroglyphs"- Embodied Activity #1 for Meta-academy(at)bates," n.p.

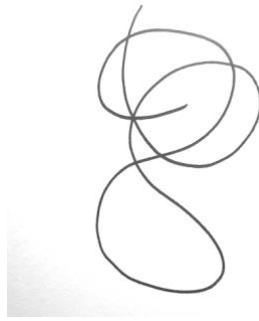


Figure 2. Ginslov, J. (2020) *Movement Hieroglyph* [Photograph]

Figuring-Figures

Figuring, according to Gansterer et al., (Figure. 3) starts in the body by paying attention to the experiential shifts, intensities, sensations or feelings beneath the register of external visibility. Sensitivity to *figuring* gives rise to *figures*, spontaneous drawings-paintings not controlled by a drawer's cognitive abilities but through their body-mind awareness. *Figuring-figures* may be seen as symbiotic and reciprocal, like a *Möbius strip* as “*figuring* gives rise to *figures*, whilst they attempt to activate the *figures*, create the conditions for (further) *figuring*.”⁹¹

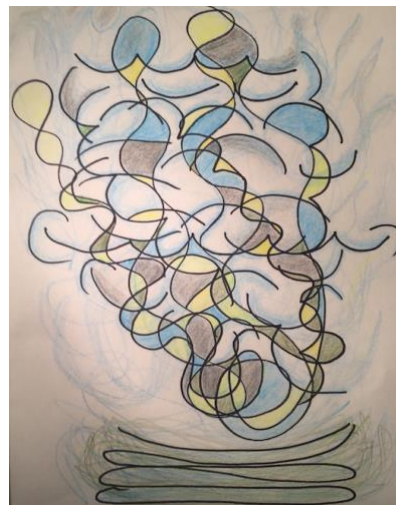


Figure 3. Ginslov, J. (2020) *Figure-Figuring* [Photograph].

Verbal description

Verbal feedback may be directed to a documentary camera immediately after the hieroglyph, to “express something fundamental about one’s *Lifeworld*”⁹² and what you have experienced through your *felt-sense*. It moves the

⁹¹ Nikolaus Gansterer, et.al., *Choreo-graphic figures: deviations from the line*, 75

⁹² Zoë Boden and Virginia Eatough, *Understanding more fully: A multimodal hermeneutic phenomenological approach*, 173.

exploration of lived experience beyond the “reflected upon and languaged dimensions of experience” to additionally exploring the “pre-reflective, bodily, felt experience through various means.”⁹³

Reading of biometric data

During the practice of *Deep Flow*, the HRM is not looked at as one is blindfolded. This is used as a strategy to subvert *looking outwardly* replacing ocular centric behaviour with experiencing. The biometric data is read after *Deep Flow*, is not treated scientifically and is another strand of description that feeds back into the experience of self as “the perception and interpretation of the biometric data feeds back to one’s embodied being.”⁹⁴ The experiential self is realised through this relational self-reflexive praxis.

The verbal descriptions, drawings and biometric data are analysed using phenomenological methods from Social Science. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this.

Deep Flow: relational embodiment

Deep Flow is about embodied phenomenological *morphic intentionalities*,⁹⁵ and may be understood as a *relational embodiment*. This is a concept of synthesis, unifying the material body, the phenomenological, the technological, the imagined, the drawn, the languaged and the practice. The HRV data, bio-mediations, HRM and the experiential are considered as being co-equal and indissociable “complementarities” set in a “perspective of relationism.”⁹⁶ In *Deep Flow*, these entities flow into each other through “relational thinking.”⁹⁷ Here the body and mind exist in relation to each other and the *worlding* in which they exist. This entwinement could be seen as a *chiasmus*,⁹⁸ entangling body-self-world. This collapses Cartesian binaries defining the inner and outer to find relations between self, world and technologies.

⁹³ Zoë Boden and Virginia Eatough, *Understanding more fully*, 160.

⁹⁴ Yoni Van Den Eede, *Tracing the Tracker: A Postphenomenological Inquiry into Self-Tracking Technologies*, 151.

⁹⁵ Sondra Fraleigh, *Back to the Dance Itself*, 2018.

⁹⁶ Willis F. Overton, “Embodiment from a Relational Perspective”, in *Developmental Perspectives on Embodiment and Consciousness*, eds. Willis F Overton, Ulrich Mueller, Judith L. Newman, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 1-18. DOI: 10.4324/9780203809778-5.

⁹⁷ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*, (London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000), 295.

⁹⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, (1964) “Eye and Mind”, in: *The Primacy of Perception*, (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1964), 121-149.

Deep Flow: an *embodied materiality*

Deep Flow is also an *embodied materiality*, a *worlding* of visible and invisible, tangible and intangible, human and non-human materials, technologies, and embodied practices. This *dance of agency*⁹⁹ is reliant on *embodied interactions*¹⁰⁰ that entangle the human and non-human through a spectrum of sense modalities situated in the body. This writer adopts the definition of *materiality* as being the quality of the experience of materials that are both tangible and intangible, experienced in our material, phenomenal and embodied world that leave remarkable effects on our embodied states of being.

The experience of tangible materials arises through our physical engagements and our *embodied interactions* with them. A potter for example working with his hands, clay and wheel, may be described using Material Engagement Theory,¹⁰¹ a synergistic process where bodies, agentic actions and materials merge. This is reflected in the actions of HCI designers who work with digital and analogue materials where the materials “talk back to their hands and thoughts,”¹⁰² shaping their designs. In arts practice materiality also encompasses studio practice.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ciano Aydin, et. al., (2018) “Technological environmentality: Conceptualizing technology as a mediating milieu,” *Journal of Philosophy and Technology* 32, (April 2018): 321-338.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-018-0309-3>.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Dourish, *Where the Action Is: The Foundations of Embodied Interaction*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

¹⁰¹ Ciano Aydin, et. al., (2018) “Technological environmentality: Conceptualizing technology as a mediating milieu,” *Journal of Philosophy and Technology* 32, (April 2018): 321-338.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-018-0309-3>.

¹⁰² Susan Kozel, *Re-Embodiment: new strategies for teaching Embodied Interaction*. (Denmark: Cumulus International Association of Universities and Colleges of Art, Design and Media, 2017), 109.

¹⁰³ Christina, M. Mills, *Materiality as the Basis for the Aesthetic Experience in Contemporary Art*. (MA Thesis, University of Montana, 2009), <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/1289>.

Deep Flow reveals an admixture of materials that are visible and invisible, tangible and intangible. For example, the HRM becomes perceptually transparent when embodied into the *Body Schema*. The HRM becomes materially tangible again after *Deep Flow* and when the biometric data is printed out. However, after its interpretation, the data becomes embodied and intangible again, as the interpretation of the data feeds back into one's embodied being and into the next session of *Deep Flow*.

Embodied materiality challenges the use of visualising and self-tracking technologies that mediate invisible events such as HRV in the body outwardly, making them visible for the user to interact with. *Deep Flow* rather, allows a practitioner to *look inwardly*, to experience *embodied materialities* of the human and non-humankind as a way to get closer to the *felt-sense* and bodily experiences.

Conclusion

Deep Flow focuses on experiential lived experience by removing the need for ocular centric behaviour. *Deep Flow* unearths the Chthulucene, that is the earthy experiential side of ourselves. This could, in an ethico-political sense, reorientate a person's visual mastery over things as being the purveyor of unequivocal *truths*. By relinquishing ocular-centric behaviour a practitioner may begin to trust their *felt-senses*. This may lead to a better understanding of our relations with the non-human, that de-emphasises human exceptionalism and visual mastery. By extension *Deep Flow* disrupts actions of *looking outwardly* and addictive tendencies found in the *Attention Economy* and *Metric Culture*. Through the practice one may find new ways of experiencing interiority in relation to materials, technology and the world, embracing the human and non-human, in states of *Deep Flow*, by *looking inwardly*.

Biography

Jeannette Ginslov is an artist, researcher, scholar and freelance lecturer exploring embodied dance, Screendance and embodied technologies. She has an MA in Dance and Choreography, an MSc in Screendance (Distinction) and is currently a final year PhD Creative Technologies candidate at London South Bank University with a Full Scholarship from the Arts & Creative Industries Film and Media Department. Her PhD research explores *Deep Flow: a tentacular worlding of dance, biosensor technology, lived experience, and embodied materials of the human and nonhumankind*. Ginslov is also an independent Screendance maker, producer, workshop facilitator and is the co-founder, co-curator and co-director of *Screendance Africa* (Pty) Ltd. She collaborates with Susan Kozel, Margrét Sara Guðjónsdóttir, Keith Lim and

Daniel Spikol on the Screendance and Augmented Reality projects: *Somatic Archiving* (2018), and *Conspiracy Archives* (2018-ongoing) a somatic archiving project in affiliation with Malmö University. Website: <http://www.jginslov.com/>

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Art in Motion: Catching the attention of the present in the art museum

Abstract

Departing from the case of the exhibition *Art in Motion* (1961), I will present an analysis of a new aesthetic of attention in the art museum and discuss its implication for the relationship between the museum and its present.

The idea of the art museum went through radical changes in the period between 1945 and 1968 with a zenith in the years at the threshold of the Sixties. New institutions like Moderna Museet and Louisiana (both inaugurated in 1958) pioneered a new audience-oriented and present-focused ideal, described as the “open museum” or “new museum”. The crucial factor was the interplay between the emergence of the curated, temporary exhibition of contemporary art and a new institutional frame. An obvious case would be the exhibition *Rörelse i konsten/Bewogen Bewegen/Bevægelse i kunsten* [Art in Motion], touring three of the vanguard museums, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Moderna Museet, Stockholm and Louisiana, Humlebæk, in 1961. As a combined historical survey and contemporary presentation the exhibition presented artworks connected to physical movement from Marcel Duchamp to Jean Tinguely and Robert Rauschenberg. Engaging its audience in the interactive works and the whole public as a sensational event in the contexts of its three stagings, *Art in Motion* would indeed imply an aesthetic of attention – not least for the art museum itself.

Art in Motion is the commonly used English title of the exhibition shown as *Bewogen Beweging* at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam March 10th-April 17th 1961, *Rörelse i konsten* at Moderna Museet, Stockholm May 17th-September 3rd 1961, and as *Bevægelse i kunsten* at Louisiana Museum in Humlebæk September 22nd-October 22nd 1961.¹⁰⁴ This tour of three museums dedicated to modern art points directly towards the interplay between the exhibition event and the museal setting and, I will argue, to the ambition to put the museum into motion and catching attention with this new, notorious show in town. Long before the opening in September, Danish press reported the events in Amsterdam and Stockholm as “the sensation of the moment” and the “hitherto

¹⁰⁴ “Art in Motion” appeared as the English title already in the correspondence before the exhibition.

funniest exhibition”¹⁰⁵ soon coming to Louisiana. Nearly twenty years on, and in the context of an anthology aptly titled *Museum in motion? The modern art museum at issue* (1979), Willem Sandberg (1897-1984) of Stedelijk would still see the exhibition as a touchstone, not just of the museum’s activities, but of Sixties culture and its movements:

“in the visual arts we don’t observe the enthusiastic mass reaction / As we could watch / towards beatle music: / complete involvement / But yes/when I think of kinetic art – calder tinguely / young and old reacted with something / of beatle flavor / I witnessed this /
in our big movement show in the stedelijk 1961 / and again with the tinguely exhibition at the Stedelijk /: the participation of the visitors in the movement”¹⁰⁶

The immediate success and scandal of the event led to an instant entry into history in the local contexts, where it was remembered as a respectively Stedelijk/Moderna/Louisiana event with its own lore and key details.

Sandberg would years later refer to “our big movement show in the Stedelijk” and saw it fitting into the Dutch Sixties. In Sweden, the Stockholm version of the exhibition has been hailed as the “starting point for what has been described as the Museum’s dynamic, progressive and international 1960s”¹⁰⁷, and in its Danish setting seen together with *Værker fra Documenta* and *Vitalitet i kunsten* as the entry of “provocative international art into the country through three quick strikes” consolidating Louisiana as the go-to place for new art.¹⁰⁸ We can thus see an retrospective attention surrounding the exhibition making it a “survivor” among the countless exhibitions organized at the time.

Sources agree on tying the exhibition together with the conceptualizing and organizing work of three individuals: Pontus Hultén of Moderna Museet, Sandberg of Stedelijk and artist Daniel Spoerri. According to Spoerri, he had confronted Sandberg with the absence of movement as an important theme in contemporary art at Stedelijk, where Sandberg then had encouraged *him* to do that exhibition, which was the origin of the idea (seemingly in the spring 1960).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Such coverage included Information 20.4. 1961, Ekstra Bladet 16.5., Information, 10.6. 1961, B.T. 5.6. 1961, and Aktuelt 14.7 1961.

¹⁰⁶ Sandberg 1979, 322.

¹⁰⁷ Lundström 2017, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Steensgaard 2008, 98.

¹⁰⁹ In an interview from 1972. Referred from Gedin 2016, 106.

Hultén, for his part, had previously worked on motion as a key theme in modern art and puzzled the idea of really testing the limits of his new, but still precarious Moderna Museet. The resulting exhibition could be seen as a co-creation counting no less than 83 artists and over 200 works. The aim was not just to put the artists together in a new grouping for an audience of a few art world insiders, but to reenergize the experience of the art exhibition to the same level of excitement and popularity as a car exhibition – the very first lines of Hultén’s catalogue text stated that “art exhibitions of the 19th century were visited by the same curious and interested crowds now attending car exhibitions”, which *Art and Motion* should obviously do again.¹¹⁰ This reunion of art and the masses with the museum as intermediary, fitted with the ambition of Sandberg’s Stedelijk to be as open as a department store.¹¹¹

Besides the motion-focused art history, Hultén’s plans also seem to have involved various non-art objects and machines. An early draft mentions Tinguely, Calder, Duchamp *and a car* together with concepts such as “randomness, repetition, intention, growth, balance, rotation”.¹¹² For a long time, it was also the intention to show art works together with a considerable representation of art’s “peripheries” concerned with movement such as racing cars, mechanical toys, clockworks, and gymnastic equipment. This would add to the public appeal, but in the end, the only non-art exhibit was a Bugatti racing car, ironically the most guarded, least hands-on element of the exhibition. The actual placement of the car in the exhibition is unclear – at Louisiana it seems to have been placed in the park somewhat retracted from the rest of the exhibition. The reason seems to be that Spoerri, who acted as the contact person to the Parisian art scene and was especially involved in the Dutch staging of the exhibition, opposed the idea of “letting toys, dolls, old cars and fairground effects burden it” and overshadow the artworks.¹¹³

The exhibition had quite different spatial settings in the three museum contexts. At Stedelijk it could be accommodated to the section for special exhibitions in the new wing in 11 rooms, while it took over more or less the total museum space in Stockholm and Humlebæk. In Stockholm, it was installed in the large old drill hall divided into three sections, which gave a spacious yet concentrated appearance with many works in the same room. The display of

¹¹⁰ *Rörelse i konsten*, exhibition catalogue, Moderna Museet 1961 [“1800-talets konstutställningar besöktes av samma nyfikna och intresserade åskådarmassor som nu går på bilutställningarna.”].

¹¹¹ Willem Sandberg: “Vision 67” (speech from 1967, later printed in *Design Issues* Vol. 3, No. 1, 1986). [“museums should be open like department stores/where you are invited to enter/because you can see what is going on inside”].

¹¹² Sketch ca. 1960-61. Quoted from Lundström 2017, 83.

¹¹³ Letter from Spoerri to Sandberg, 5.10. 1960, 0 Institute Archive/Stedelijk Museum Archives (<https://www.0-archive.info/bewogen-beweging-1961.html> accessed September 2020).

Art in Motion in all three museums did generally not follow a strict art historical succession through a chronological plan or a thematic grouping and instead played out the works as a flow of playful experiences – again, creating attention. The exhibition “had no definite beginning or proper end. The works were installed in an open architecture through which viewers could move freely”, as observed by museum inspector Ylva Hillström, and some works of course invited physical interaction. Louisiana’s succession of very varied galleries, passages and outdoor spaces must have given a quite different experience, where the individual artists often were given their own smaller space. In any case, the exhibition made the museum appear as something else than usual. This was formulated by artist and writer Öyvind Fahlström writing on the exhibition in Stockholm that “It has the character of factory, children’s room, laboratory, asylum, greenhouse, amusement park, anything else than museum”.¹¹⁴

The exhibition was also accompanied by varying programs of affiliated events and activities. Among the more curious were a record of sounds of the history of kinetic art, where the disc itself imitated the form of one of Duchamp’s *rotor reliefs*. Duchamp (by Fahlström called the “holy spirit” to the exhibition’s father and son of Calder and Tinguely¹¹⁵) did also participate in the Amsterdam exhibition through a chess match with Dutch schoolchildren by correspondence from his US residence – one move a day by telegraphed messages!¹¹⁶ The Stockholm opening was ignited by “anti-fireworks” constructed by Tinguely and Ultvedt (who was nearly killed by the homemade explosives), which appeared together with a concert by jazz musician Thelonius Monk and performances by Allan Kaprow and Robert Rauschenberg – all happening in a crowded and chaotic atmosphere.¹¹⁷ This event, marketed as a “Kolossalkalas”[“giant party”], and followed by a series of film screenings and concerts by the experimental music association Fylkingen as part of the program of Stockholm Festspel, shows the effort set in to make the exhibition visible and the museum a place where “artists and public meet”, which was further developed in Hultén’s later work.

At the scenic location of Louisiana outside of town, the exhibition also got a spectacular set-off. Not least through Tinguely, who had here developed one of

¹¹⁴ Fahlström 1961 [Den har karakter av fabrik, barmkammare, laboratorium, dårhus, växthus, nöjesfält, allt utom museum”].

¹¹⁵ Fahlström 1961.

¹¹⁶ [https://www.chess.com/article/view/marcel-duchamp-and-chess#:~:text=In%20March%2C%201961%2C%20Duchamp%2C.Bewogen%20Beweging%20\(Moving%20Motion\).&text=Duchamp%20eventually%20won%20in%2031,He%20was%2074](https://www.chess.com/article/view/marcel-duchamp-and-chess#:~:text=In%20March%2C%201961%2C%20Duchamp%2C.Bewogen%20Beweging%20(Moving%20Motion).&text=Duchamp%20eventually%20won%20in%2031,He%20was%2074) (accessed September 2020).

¹¹⁷ Ikegami 2010, 109.

his metamechanic sculptures in a special autodestructive design with fireworks and locally assembled scrap to be ignited at the opening. The process was enthusiastically followed by the press writing about “junk-artists on junk-hunting in Copenhagen”¹¹⁸ and Tinguely planning to blow Louisiana into pieces¹¹⁹, and on the opening day an article even announced that something special would happen at 6 o’clock.

Study for the end of the World No. 1, as the doom-ridden yet dynamic title of the work sounded, ran for four minutes in front of the opening audience in the museum park as an act of symbolic destruction and destructive fun. It was not so much the injury of several people in the audience as the accidental killing of a dove, which should have flown off the mechanized “world destruction”, that created a media storm of protest against the museum. In this context, it seems relevant to recall the characteristic given by Billy Klüver in the catalogue of Tinguely’s machine: “The free and chaotic circumstances under which it had been built were a necessity, and in a way an enormous luxury. Jean provided the energy that created the freedom and was the ruler of chaos. Once the energy was released, everything that happened was a result of Jean’s decision.”¹²⁰ It would be plausible also to include the museum organizers in this position, as conductors of chaos and spectacular experience.

The exhibition was definitely read this way as an attempt to move the museum experience towards the contemporary. As stated by the Danish critic Gunnar Jespersen in his review: “*Bevægelse i kunsten* is revolutionary and likes to put dynamite under established values. The exhibition takes art down from the pedestals and expresses no interest in creating something of eternal value. It is all about creating something that interests us NOW.”¹²¹ I would argue that we can see this condensed experience of the contemporary as being both site-specific (being right here now and physically be confronted with a spectacular event) and simultaneously omnipresent (reflecting general tendencies in its idea and the most advanced international inputs in its composition) – a central property of the aesthetics of attention of the museum and related cultural institutions.

¹¹⁸ ”To skrammel-kunstnere på skrammel-jagt i København”, Ekstra-Bladet 12.9.

¹¹⁹ Ekstra-Bladet 14.9.

¹²⁰ *Rörelse i konsten catalogue*, 14. [”De fria och kaotiska omständigheter under vilka den hade byggts var en nödvändighet, och på ett sätt en enormt lyx. Jean tillhandahöll energien som skapade friheten och var härskara över kaoset. När energien hade släppts lös var allt som hände en följd av Jeans beslut.”]

¹²¹ Gunnar Jespersen, ”Maskinen uden mening”, B.T. 16.9. 1961 [”’Bevægelse i kunsten’ er revolutionær og holder af at lægge dynamit under de sikre værdier. Udstillingen tager kunsten ned fra soklerne og siger, at man ikke har spor lyst til at skabe noget af evighedsværdi. Man vil blot skabe noget, som interesserer os NU.”]

This observation of *Art and motion* as concerned with the contemporary in a both site-specific and general mode can be seen against a backdrop on how the museum itself was seen as being in movement in the era – with its host institutions and the exhibition itself in central positions.

Retrospectively looking back upon *Art in Motion*, participating artist Robert Rauschenberg subsumed that its moment represented a unique situation of collaboration and participation – “I don’t think art neither before or after have been so truly democratic – or at least tried to be so”.¹²² To get this kind of participatory interaction working, a new kind of institutional setting was crucial to facilitate the meeting between artist and audience and we can see the three stagings of *Art in Motion* as attempts to realize this.

As I have argued here, it was largely a successful experiment, which brought the institutions together – almost as a teambuilding event – and marked an important new step for reassuring the museum in motion, much-debated in the era. However, I think it is also important to realize improvised nature of the exhibition and fragility of the museum context it happened in – and the ambivalences in the exhibition itself. The “new museum” was absolutely not an established category, but rather in its absolute testing state. This is felt in Hultén’s concerns about ever being able to do such a big show again and being on a time-limited contract.¹²³ Would the head institution at any time pull the plug and close the Moderna Museet or turn it into something more traditional? Louisiana as a private initiative would even have to operate with the emergency plan in the desk of turning the museum into a hotel.¹²⁴ It should also be taken into account that if the new museums were realized within the postwar boom, the “violent dynamic of the time” was also the shadow of nuclear war, which Tinguely’s apocalyptic machines was a reminder of.

Hultén had presented the exhibition as an alternative to the pessimistic, defeatist and passive side of modern art. As critics and audience agreed on, *Art in motion* was *fun*, which to a certain extent camouflaged its more critical edge and the ambition to propose a new art history based on motion and, potentially, breaking with art’s institutionalized categories by setting a topically motivated theme instead of conventional organization by style, chronology or geography. While the exhibition immediately fitted into the frames of the new museum, it

¹²² Klüver and Rauschenberg 1983, 145 [”Jag tror inte att konsten varken för eller senare har varit så sant demokratisk – eller åtminstone försökt vara det”].

¹²³ Letter from Hultén to Sandberg, 14.10. 1960. Institute Archive/Stedelijk Museum Archives. (<https://www.o-archief.info/bewogen-beweging-1961.html> accessed September 2020).

¹²⁴ Steensgaard 2008, 71.

did also contain a sabotage of its harmonious architecture, most directly staged by Tinguely's explosion in the idyllic Louisiana park, and brought the art event into a more anarchistic territory, which would prove difficult for the museums to navigate, as tensions between revolt and institutions rose in the sixties. As such, it stands in its "almost violent dynamic" both as a confirmation of the new museum type and as an explosive questioning of it.

I think we can see *Art in motion* and the aim of putting the museum into motion as a reconfiguration of the museum, highly relevant when we talk about the aesthetics of attention – maybe one of the singular events most directly crystalizing attention out in a Danish cultural institution. I am curious to hear your reactions, both regarding the reading of *Art in Motion* in the context of its time 70 years ago and in relation to contemporary culture and the aesthetics of attention today, not least in the museum.

Biography

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Attention, Beauty, and Literary Aesthetics

Abstract

Aestheticians across the board have been urging art-lovers to pay attention in order to get the most rewarding aesthetic experience and discover artwork's artistic value. Within literary aesthetics, the pay attention norm was most dominantly developed by Lamarque and Olsen, who argued that one should approach a literary work with the expectation of its value, and proceed in exploration of the work by adopting a literary stance; i.e. searching for those of its elements that reward such expectations.

My aim in this paper is not to argue against such views or to deny the relevance of paying attention for the richness of one's experience of a work of art. Rather, I want to explore the possibility in which we pay attention to a work not because such a directive is heteronomously imposed upon us but because the work itself invites us to attend to it in light of the sense of beauty it invokes in us. In such cases, I argue, one is autonomously motivated to pay attention and this in turn enables one to grasp those of its features that trigger the sense of beauty and to discover artistic value of the work.

I start by analysing different accounts of attention, to show why attention-based approach to art fails to explain some of the central aspects of our artistic experiences. I then develop my account by relying on contemporary research into beauty and by reworking some of Kant's views on fine art which, in conclusion, I bring in support of my claim regarding the centrality of beauty for the aesthetic experience. I end by providing a modified account of the role of attention in aesthetic experience of literary art and in grasping the work's artistic value.

Introduction

Aestheticians across the board have been urging art-lovers to *pay attention* to get the most rewarding aesthetic experience and discover artwork's artistic value.¹²⁵ Within literary aesthetics, the *pay attention norm* was most dominantly developed by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, in their joint and in their individual work.¹²⁶ Claiming that literature, including poetry,

¹²⁵ See Cuccuru (2018); Mortu (2018) for a discussion on the notion of aesthetic attention.

¹²⁶ Lamarque (2009; 2010); Olsen (1978, 1987); Lamarque and Olsen (1994;).

is a cultural practice governed by rules and conventions, the two authors have insisted on the importance of one's familiarity with these conventions, if one is to experience any work's literary value. As Olsen puts it, recognizing the aesthetic features of a literary work can only be achieved within the literary practice, when one approaches a work as a work of literature. Following on this, Lamarque's work has been primarily concerned with explicating how one is to do so with respect to literary works and poetry.¹²⁷ The central claim within this approach is that literary value is only available for those who approach a given literary work with the *expectation* of its value, and proceed in exploration of the work by adopting a *literary stance*; i.e. *searching for* those of its elements that reward such expectations.

My aim here is not to deny the numerous benefits of this approach for our artistic engagements, art appreciation and for the art-related knowledge and understanding. However, I want to suggest that this attitude does not explain the gripping power that certain works have on us, which, on my view, is fundamental to the sense of pleasure we feel when we engage with certain works. As I will argue, such a power, related primarily to the works' beauty, has an important motivational component which may be absent from the literary experiences which are motivated and guided solely by the 'pay attention attitude'. On my view, the sense of beauty which pervades our literary experiences makes us inquire into the work in a more authentic manner than we do when we simply 'pay attention'.

Paying attention: the literary stance

As Lamarque and Olsen argue, one aspect of the literary stance relates to recognizing and appreciating a work's mimetic dimension; i.e. the subject-theme nexus that the work is about. Paying attention to this element of a work demands one to recognize which thematic concerns are at the centre of work's aboutness, and how is the subject organized around that theme. This aspect of literary value is derived from the interest that literature has for human beings, from its 'humanly interesting content'. In that sense, paying attention to a work includes paying attention to the thematic concerns developed by the work and to appreciating how this dimension relates to intellectual concerns we generally have.¹²⁸ Another element of literary value available to one who adopts literary stance relates to the creative-imaginative dimension: literary works are important products of human creativity and imagination, and they are a

¹²⁷ See Lamarque (2009; 2010)

¹²⁸ Interestingly, Lamarque and Olsen do not want to tie this aspect to a work's cognitive value or to its capacity to reveal something about the world; trying to decipher some such message or lesson is a wrong way to approach literary work, and one who does so is not attending to the work as a work of literature.

manifestation of distinctively human ability to create worlds imaginatively. Thus, a proper appreciation of this segment requires one to pay attention to what is new and original in one's work, to how different issues are solved, which new themes introduced and via which aesthetic/artistic means. The point here is not only to attend to a literary work 'for its own sake', but to recognize and appreciate the creative capacities necessary for its production and its representative, expressive and formal features. For one to be able to do so, one needs to have a substantial experience with literature and developed habits of reading and attending to works.

Literary stance implies adopting an interrogative attitude: one needs to search for the elements in a work which are value-inducing and rewarding. Important here is the functionality principle: in literary experience one is demanded to repeatedly wonder about the artistic function that each particular item fulfils in the story, where by an item I have in mind characters and their idiosyncrasies, their actions, events depicted, as well as particular linguistic choices. For example, while in non literary narratives the names of characters usually have no particular moral or symbolic meaning, names in literary fiction are imbued with all sorts of such meaning. Proper appreciation of a work is inclusive of a reader's recognizing such symbolism and the contribution it makes for the work.

There is much to recommend in this kind of approach to literature: the fullness of experience, the recognition of elements that may otherwise remain hidden, the profound understanding of the mimetic aspect of the work itself. Arguably, learning how to approach a work in such a manner – learning to interrogate the work, to wonder about the functionality of each of its elements and mastering the interpretative dimension of putting all those elements back together in the imaginative-interpretative process of reading – is a long process, demanding much practice, much background knowledge, lots of patience and dedication to the practice itself. I suggest (in the wider version of this paper) that it is this kind of education that is needed for one to develop one's aesthetic sense which, in turn, enables one to come up with autonomous aesthetic taste (in the Kantian sense of the word).

That being said however, I want to suggest that there may be a different route to the richness of aesthetic experience and literary value of a work. The route I suggest starts from the first hand recognition of the captivating power of certain works – their beauty – which, I argue, operates as an autonomous incentive to explore the source of that beauty. One advantage of this approach is that it makes one's interest in a work internal to the reading experience itself, rather than being externally imposed upon the reader who heteronomously advances

the 'pay attention attitude'. In other words, there is a sense in which the 'pay attention attitude' does not vouch for the authentic aesthetic enjoyment that works can provide, which ultimately explains why we like those works. Such enjoyment, I argue, is what ultimately dictates our aesthetic preferences and grounds our artistic appreciation, while also giving rise to and maintaining our overall aesthetic commitments.

Aesthetic experience of literature

Let me start by elaborating on the aesthetic pleasure and satisfaction and by explaining why I take it to be fundamental and primary in our artistic experiences. I want to suggest that certain literary works and certain particular parts of some works, individual sentences or paragraphs, descriptions or dialogues, are beautiful. Ignoring for the moment that this is a translation, consider an immensely powerful paragraph from Flaubert's *Madam Bovary*:

At bottom of her heart, however, she was waiting for something to happen. Like shipwrecked sailors, she turned despairing eyes upon the solitude of her life, seeking afar off some white sail in the mists of the horizon. She did not know what this chance would be, what wind would bring it her, towards what shore it would drive her, if it would be a shallop or a threedecker, laden with anguish or full of bliss to the port-holes. But each morning, as she awoke, she hoped it would come; that day she listened to ever sound, sprang with a start, wondered that it did not come; then at sunset, always more saddened, she longed for the morrow.

Few would deny the gripping power of this description of Emma's solitude, even though it might be hard to point precisely to those of its features that give rise to this power. Certainly, this paragraph can easily be subject to Olsen/Lamarque-inspired analysis. One who reads this by adopting the interrogative attitude would quickly recognize its aesthetic, symbolic and metaphorical aspects – for example, the two ships symbolizing Emma's two lovers physically and character-wise or the flowing rhythm of the long sentences sustained by frequent asymmetries and oppositions ("laden with anguish or full of bliss"). However, I want to suggest that the sense of the gripping power of this paragraph, the sense of beauty that emerges from it, is fundamental to our experience of this novel, and available to us even if we do not adopt the literary stance or the pay attention attitude. On the contrary, it is because we experience this gripping power, that we will be motivated to adopt the interrogative stance and seek to understand where it comes from. My suggestion is that our responses to beauty do not depend on assuming an inquisitive attitude, rather, they give rise to it. In other words, the sense of

beauty we experience with respect to some works has an intrinsically motivating power in adducing us to adopt the literary stance. In the next part I elaborate on why that is the case.

Beauty and its gripping power

Scientists exploring beauty argue that noticing beauty is an automatic, instinctive reaction and not a carefully worked-out response dependent upon taking the proper attitude or attention. Beauty is more readily available to us, which is why it is, as Nick Zangwill argues, a “pre-eminent judgment among other aesthetic properties” (Zangwill, 2003:326). Responding to beauty does not presuppose a highly concentrated attention or stance, because, as Roddy Cowie puts it, it is “felt, not calculated” (Cowie 2011: 89). ’

Part of the reason why beauty, unlike originality and other artistic achievements, can be spontaneously felt is the fact that aesthetic experience of beauty, although generated by, and focused on, a particular object, includes an aspect of self-awareness and self-directedness: it is an experience in which a subject finds herself deeply moved by the object she is attending to, independently of why she is attending to it. This isn’t to suggest that one can readily explain why one finds certain objects beautiful or that cognitive and emotional mechanism responsible for the emerging sense of beauty are simple; it is only to point to the fact that, when one experiences beauty, one is aware of it, primarily via the sense of pleasure that accompanies such experiences. According to the scientists, the pleasure we feel when observing things we find beautiful has to do with the neurophysiological basis of our appreciation of beauty: we see beauty in those objects which have some particular significance for us, in things we care for, which in turn depends on the affective memories we have.¹²⁹ This means that things we find beautiful have a deep, personal meaning and significance for us, which is why we find them valuable and why we take our aesthetic experiences so personally. Things that we like are inherently connected to who we are.¹³⁰ Furthermore, pleasure we experience in beauty is the result of the reward systems firing off in our brains when we experience beauty. Taking these two claims together, it is easy to understand why we sense such a gripping power in beautiful descriptions: they speak to us on things that we deeply care for, and they do so all the while maintaining the affection of pleasure and satisfaction. And since emotions are by their very nature motivational, our pleasurable aesthetic experience will induce to us to act in certain way: for one, to attend to the work in an interrogative way. Here I am presupposing that beauty can be visual as well as intelligible – this is the

¹²⁹ Hogan (2015).

¹³⁰ Fingerhut et al (2021).

sense in which scientific theories or conceptual art is beautiful. Angela Breitenbach and Elisabeth Schellekens have independently developed this notion on beauty, showing that there is certain sense of intellectual satisfaction we feel when certain of our questions are answered, when solutions are provided and our desire to know and understand is answered.¹³¹

In relation to literature, let me suggest, this sort of curiosity is addressed in two ways: when we follow the story and relate to its subject/theme nexus, and when we realize how the story ‘works’ as an artistic creation. In the first sense, we are attending to the mimetic (humanistic) aspect identified by Lamarque: stories we find beautiful are stories which unite subject/theme nexus which we recognize as somehow important to us. Because we too care for deep and meaningful life and do not want to feel like shipwrecked sailors, we respond to Flaubert’s description. In the second sense, recognizing how the novel works as a literary work, relates to another important aspect of sensing beauty: the one which depends on recognizing how certain patterns are instantiated in a given work, on acknowledging a particular prototype that the object instantiates and on appreciating how it is unique in its manifestation while also being sufficiently similar to things we are familiar with.¹³² In the longer version of this paper, I show how this aspect is more readily related to the interrogative attitude identified before, where we attend to the work in a manner prescribed by Lamarque and Olsen.

Conclusion

On the account I am suggesting, artistic appreciation does not collide with aesthetic satisfaction and the two can come asunder. Furthermore, it may happen that one experiences great pleasure from works which are not artistic achievements, or that one does not take pleasure in works praised for their artistic achievements. Since I am primarily concerned with explaining the phenomenology of those literary experiences one finds particularly moving and beautiful, not with accounting for the recognition of artistic achievements, this is a lesser concern. However, in the wider version, I show how one progresses in one’s aesthetic experiences by feeling invited to explore literature via the sense of beauty. Such a sense motivates us to pay attention, and paying attention enables us to develop modes of recognizing artistic achievements.

¹³¹ Breitenbach (2015), Schellekens (2007).

¹³² Hogan (2015).

Biography

Iris Vidmar Jovanović is an assistant professor and a chair in aesthetics at the Department of philosophy, University of Rijeka. Her research interests include philosophy of art and aesthetics, primarily with respect to narrative art. She is also interested in metaphilosophy, modern philosophy and Kant's aesthetics. She is currently a lead investigator of two research projects, the Croatian Scientific Foundation project entitled Aesthetic Education through Narrative Art and its Value for the Humanities, and the UNIRI project entitled Social and Technological Aspects of Art: Challenges of the 'New Normal'. She is the secretary of the European Society for Aesthetics and one of the course directors of Philosophy of Art, Dubrovnik. She was a visiting scholar at the University of York, UK, and at Columbia University in New York. She spent a year teaching ethics at Auburn University. She is the editor of *Narrative Art, Knowledge and Ethics* (Rijeka, Filozofski fakultet, 2019). She is currently finalizing her book on philosophy of poetry.

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Modularity of Mind and Aesthetic Judgement

Coevolutionary aesthetics has been forming since the early 2010s. Its contribution of great value has been including cultural evolution into Darwinian theories of the origins of art and aesthetic judgement. Coevolutionary aesthetics – or non-modular evolutionary aesthetics, as it is sometimes called – emphasizes that aesthetic behavior, no matter how innate, develops in a specific social environment. Coevolutionary aesthetics suggests that traditional evolutionary aesthetics drawing from evolutionary psychology, which explains our adaptive emotions has ignored this. The critical position stems from the widely accepted notions that humans adapt plastically to changing conditions, and that there is no innate aesthetic module in the mind. What has not been examined is that modularity itself is often considered condition for plasticity of mind. This paper shows that coevolutionary and evolutionary psychological aesthetics are more complimentary than contradictory. Thus, combining modular and coevolutionary thinking is the most consilient way forward in evolutionary aesthetics.

Modularity

With ‘modularity’ I do not refer to Jerry Fodor’s original thoughts from 1983, but to massive modularity. In the latter, modularity means functional specialization instead of a more automatic and rigid system.¹³³ In comparison, the concept of module in massive modularity is much weaker and at the same time mind is seen as more thoroughly modular.¹³⁴

Module means a functional mechanism – such as an anatomical or behavioral trait – with the ability to process certain input in certain environments. Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber list that it can consist of sub-modules, it can be a sub-module itself, and it can be a part of a group of modules that, in turn, forms a module. According to Mercier and Sperber, alongside with many others, modularity of complex organisms is a necessary condition for adaptive flexibility, because modularity allows organisms to actualize different modules

¹³³ H. Clark Barrett and Robert Kurzban, “Modularity in Cognition: Framing the Debate,” *Psychological review* 113, no. 3 (July 2006): 629-630.

¹³⁴ Philip Robbins, “Modularity of Mind”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

and their combinations plastically in different environments.¹³⁵ This is so even if the mentioned flexibility was not a sufficient evolutionary explanation for why modularity evolves.¹³⁶

I claim that modularity itself remains as the foundation of evolutionary aesthetics despite of some recent endeavors to move past it.

Unmodular evolutionary aesthetics is an oxymoron

I fully endorse the update to incorporate more factors into evolutionary aesthetics by coevolutionary aesthetics. Coevolutionary aesthetics adopts a plea for epistemic modesty as it broadens the explanatory frameworks from adaptationist thinking. At the same time, I remain reserved towards the rhetoric that this would or should be a turn *away* from evolutionary psychology, as coevolutionary aesthetics often positions itself.

The turn is validated by explaining that the human mind, when it comes to aesthetic activities, is most likely *not* modular the way evolutionary psychologists claim.¹³⁷ However, these claims may be based on different uses of the concept of module on each side. Critics of evolutionary psychology often oppose that there would be a determined art (form) module in the human mind; mind is not constructed as a Swiss army knife, where artistic activity would be but one more corkscrew to the overall package. What is interesting is that the other side seems to agree. Many contemporary scholars using evolutionary psychology in their research on art actually advocate for the plastic mind prone to adapting to changing environmental conditions – rather than consisting of cognitive modules fit for only some singular activity like artmaking.¹³⁸

Omission to acknowledge the wide and contemporary definition of module leads to puzzling theoretical positions. For Mariagrazia Portera – who positions herself in the same group with Fabrizio Desideri, for non-modular evolutionary aesthetics – there seems to exist an aesthetic sense or disposition, no matter

¹³⁵ Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, *The Enigma of Reason : a New Theory of Human Understanding* (London: Penguin Books, 2018, original 2017), 73-74.

¹³⁶ Jeff Clune, Jean-Baptiste Mouret, and Hod Lipson, "The Evolutionary Origins of Modularity," *Proceedings of the Royal Society. B, Biological sciences* 280, no. 1755 (March 2013): 1.

¹³⁷ Jonathan Kramnick, "Against Literary Darwinism," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 2 (2011): 332, 347; Mariagrazia Portera and Mauro Mandrioli, "Tastes of the Parents: Epigenetics and its Role in Evolutionary Aesthetics," *Evental Aesthetics* 4 (2015): 59.

¹³⁸ Joseph Carroll, "An Open Letter to Jonathan Kramnick," *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 2 (2012): 407-408.

how diverse and unique its ontogenesis is.¹³⁹ Although she positions herself against modularity, it is modularity she builds her thesis upon. This results from claiming that there is an aesthetic behavioral disposition and arguing for plasticity of this tendency. Desideri in turn, uses the notion of “aesthetic device” and speaks about “unitary core of our aesthetic experience”.¹⁴⁰ Is there, after all, an aesthetic module?

Forming aesthetic judgements as a metarepresentational module

According to Mercier and Sperber, representations of certain regularities in the world provide information about facts or goals.¹⁴¹ Modules that function for providing representations of representations are, in turn, called metarepresentational modules. Metarepresentational modules are virtually domain-general because inferences can be about anything. This fits well the case of aesthetics where judgements vary from artefacts to nature, from the sense of the everyday to tact in human communications. Most often, inferences are about ontology – here, such as aesthetic categories.

Another notion about metarepresentational modules that fits well with aesthetics is that metarepresentational modules are not about the world in general but they have smaller real domains: in the case of aesthetics, aesthetic value. Aesthetic judgement feeds on aesthetic values that can be seen as types of representations, by definition, containing meaning.¹⁴² Aesthetic values are often linked to art, which also is a common theme in evolutionary aesthetics. I hold that aesthetic value of an artwork is different from its artistic value that depends on also other than aesthetic values.

I suggest aesthetic judgements can be seen as a way of intuitive inference the same way as Mercier and Sperber see reasoning, another metarepresentational module.¹⁴³ Their argumentation describes the metarepresentational module at work by clarifying the relationship between intuitions of explanations and things explained:

1. Our intuitions about good and bad explanations are not the same as our intuitions about the things explained.

¹³⁹ Mariagrazia Portera, “Babies Rule! Niches, Scaffoldings, and the Development of an Aesthetic Capacity in Humans.” *The British journal of aesthetics* 60, no. 3 (August 6, 2020): 299–314.

¹⁴⁰ Fabrizio Desideri, “On The Epigenesis of the Aesthetic Mind: The Sense of Beauty from Survival to Supervenience,” *Rivista di estetica* 54, no. 3 (2013): 63-82.

¹⁴¹ Mercier and Sperber, *Enigma*, 81.

¹⁴² For representations, see Mercier and Sperber, *Enigma*, 92-93.

¹⁴³ Mercier and Sperber, *Enigma*, 90.

2. Our intuitions about explanations exploit properties such as cogency, generality, or coherence that are properties of the explanations themselves and not of things explained.
3. Our intuitions about explanations (which make us prefer good explanations) is nevertheless a major source of insight about the things explained.¹⁴⁴

I analogically combine this model that illustrates metarepresentational modules performing inferences with Jerrold Levinson's theory on aesthetic value.¹⁴⁵ It is important that appealing to Levinson's thinking here does not require adopting aesthetic realism. Seeing forming aesthetic judgements as a metarepresentational module does not mean that there necessarily were predetermined correct aesthetic judgements to be derived from the object's properties. I only acknowledge the way the aesthetic mechanism, or module, functions with which also the critics of Levinsonian aesthetic realism can agree. John Bender does not talk about lower-aesthetic properties and aesthetic properties of objects but the subject's sensitivities to "react to certain properties or magnitudes" and sensibilities to "identify certain features, properties, or relations of a work as being aesthetically significant, i.e., as either being value-making or value-lowering."¹⁴⁶ Both agree with the way aesthetic judging works although they do not agree with whether the aesthetic judgements are always the same if only the nonaesthetic or lower-aesthetic properties of the object have been perceived in the same manner. Treating forming aesthetic judgements as a metarepresentational module is not saying that aesthetic judgements go back to specific preconditions of the object but only that they – as perceived by the individual at a certain place and time – are used as ground for aesthetic judgements. In other words, I am talking about aesthetic sensibility, as Bender defines it, as a metarepresentational module. Finally, relating this philosophical argumentation to forming a representation of a representation proceeds as follows:

1. Our intuitions about the aesthetic value are not the same as our proto-aesthetic intuitions about the lower-level aesthetic properties.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Mercier and Sperber, *Enigma*, 103.

¹⁴⁵ Jerrold Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 6.

¹⁴⁶ John W. Bender, "Sensitivity, Sensibility, and Aesthetic Realism." *The Journal of aesthetics and art criticism* 59, no. 1 (2001): 77, 74.

¹⁴⁷ In contrast with Levinson, Robert Stecker thinks that sometimes, for example in the case of appreciating a sunset, aesthetic value stems from lower-level aesthetic properties directly. Robert Stecker, *Intersections of Value: Art, Nature, and the Everyday* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 24. This need not to be a problem here, because even when "low-level perceptual features" constitute aesthetic qualities, aesthetic inference is at play. We don't merely compute and register the features but process them as indications for aesthetic value,

2. Our intuitions about aesthetic value exploit lower-level aesthetic properties – and in the case of aesthetic appreciation of systems, knowledge – that need not match aesthetic properties indicating aesthetic value: depending on the instance, the same lower-level aesthetic property may indicate either aesthetic value or the lack of it.
3. Our intuitions about the lower-level aesthetic properties are nevertheless a major source of insight about aesthetic value.

To recap, capacity for aesthetic judgement may be or consist of metarepresentational modules with large virtual domains whose real domains are smaller than what has been anticipated in evolutionary aesthetics. Thus, it is possible to maintain the idea of a domain-general “aesthetic mechanism” producing multi-modal and elastic aesthetic schemes without direct fitness increasing functions *and* base this understanding on evolutionary psychology; to combine modularity with cultural evolution.

As might be the case with reasoning where the module only explains and justifies intuitions,¹⁴⁸ the aesthetic module might not work for making us experience aesthetically but only for constructing aesthetic judgements. There is a further analogy to reading as modular but not an evolutionary adaptation: aesthetic judgement, too, could have developed either so that practice makes it appear to have specialized from for example reasoning, or so that this specialization into different modules takes place phenotypically although it still utilizes the same evolved system.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

This paper is part of the ongoing paradigm shift in evolutionary aesthetics: moving away from the traditional research questions, such as has aesthetic sensibility preserved in natural selection, or what function what we see as artistic behavior served in Pleistocene. As answers to these questions have become more and more agnostic, new research questions bud. Evolutionary aesthetics should not ask whether we make aesthetic judgements because of evolution but what evolutionary factors influence aesthetic inference, judgements we make about aesthetic value and aesthetic qualities. It does not matter for some behavioral trait to evolve whether it is genetically inherited or not. Perceiving something aesthetically entails both our cognitive systems at work and them working in a certain kind of an environment, including that of the body itself and our previous experiences.

as aesthetic qualities although they could also be treated as mere classificatory perceptual qualities. This is why I rather speak about lower-level aesthetic properties than nonaesthetic properties.

¹⁴⁸ Mercier and Sperber, *Enigma*, 112.

¹⁴⁹ For reading capability, see Barrett and Kurzban, “Modularity,” 639.

In a nutshell, contrary to what David Fishelov among others claims, the common ground of all evolutionary approaches to art research is not an assumption that art or certain art form would be adaptive.¹⁵⁰ I propose the common ground is, as surprising it might seem considering the impending partition between evolutionary psychology and coevolutionary aesthetics, modularity. Acknowledging that modularity of mind and cultural evolution are complementary brings evolutionary aesthetics closer to both contemporary evolutionary psychology *and* humanities.

Biography

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¹⁵⁰ David Fishelov, "Evolution and Literary Studies: Time to Evolve," *Philosophy and Literature* 41, no. 2 (2017): 247.

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Inner Imitation as a Form of Attention

In her book *Homo Aestheticus. Where Art Comes From and Why* (1992), Ellen Dissanayake reassesses positively a type of aesthetic theory popular in the late 19th century through to early 20th century, namely the theory of *Einfühlung*; in English, the theory of *empathy*. In her brief historical sketch (pp. 142–148), Dissanayake names as well-known representatives of this theory Robert Vischer, Theodor Lipps, Vernon Lee, and even Freud. In later 20th century, traces of empathy theory can be seen in various thinkers but Dissanayake's general conclusion is that "In contemporary books on aesthetics or art criticism, empathy theory, if mentioned at all, is included only as a dismissible curiosity of marginal historical interest" (p. 147).

Dissanayake is a well-known representative of the evolutionary view to aesthetics, and from this standpoint it is worth noting that her historical sketch of empathy theory does not include an early Nordic representative of evolutionary aesthetics: Yrjö Hirn. Nowadays Hirn is practically remembered only in Nordic countries, but in the early 20th century his book *The Origins of Art – A Psychological & Sociological Inquiry* (1900) was widely known all over the academic world. It was translated into German (1904) and Russian (1923). Hirn himself also published a Swedish version of it.

Hirn's theory of the origins and development of art is largely based on Darwin's notion of evolution, even if he in fact did not accept Darwin's view that there is aesthetic life beyond the domain of human life; for example, in Darwin's view the songs, dances and aerial display of birds do have aesthetic value in the life of birds. Discussion of this point continues, but I leave it aside to take up another notion arising from biological considerations, namely the notion of mimesis or imitation. Already ancient Greek philosophers noted that imitation has its basis in animal behaviour and that in the case of humans the capacity to imitate is a vital factor in learning, acculturation, and artistic activities.

Plato's and Aristotle's writings show that in the sphere of human life and activities, the notion of mimesis can be used for explaining different kinds of activities from children's plays to artistic production. Here I will focus on one specific feature of imitative behaviour, namely imitation from the standpoint of audience reception. Usually, theories of imitation emphasize that artistic activity is imitation in the sense that art represents things and phenomena present in the real world. Something similar, however, seems to take place in the case of attending to artistic representations. Plato, e.g., criticizes people for reacting to theatrical performances by crying (tragedies) and laughing

(comedies) publicly in theatres. But what it is that gets people to cry and laugh? A preliminary answer, to be found in Plato and Aristotle, is that the acts and events presented on the scene causally effect such outbursts in the audience. This explanation has the problem of claiming that fictive acts and words performed on the scene cause real consequences. Real reactions would be understandable if people would believe to be seeing real things on the stage but people, with rare exceptions, do not mistake artistic performances for real things. This is one side of the problem called the paradox of fiction. From the late 19th century aesthetics, from Hirn in particular, we can deduce a suggestion for a solution: fictive acts and events affect the behaviour of audiences through a psychological phenomenon called *inner imitation*.

Hirn, agreeing with *Einfühlung* theories, argued that in attending works of art human beings experience especially the emotional content of art through inner imitation. Hirn took it as granted that the notion of imitation cannot be passed by in the explanation of aesthetic activities and experiences, claiming e.g. that "it is incontestable that the aesthetic activities can be understood and explained only by reference to universal tendency to imitate." (Hirn, *Origins of Art*, 75.) Up to the turn of the 19th century, theatre offered the simplest illustration of inner imitation: when people attend to what happens on the stage, they do not merely comprehend what the actors say and do; they also participate in the acts and events presented through inner imitation. Hirn asks his readers to pay attention to this fact: "we believe that every attentive playgoer has occasional opportunities of observing, in himself if not in his neighbours, faint traces of an unconscious and involuntary imitation which follows all the movements of the performers." (Hirn, *Origins of Art*, 95–96.) While attending to the acts of performers people do not only see them; they also feel more or less physically what the represented persons do and undergo on the stage. And when people participate in the expression of comic or tragic emotions through inner imitation, it is not so surprising that they may also visibly express laugh or cry in the auditorium. The important point of this explanation is that laughing and crying are not directly caused by fictional phenomena but by inner imitation which does not belong in the sphere of fiction but in the real world. Inner imitation is a fact of human psychology.

We may ask whether Hirn and others are right and that some sort of inner imitation indeed is a feature of the (aesthetic) audience experience. Without doubt we can say that this explanation points to a fact which can easily be observed in the outward behaviour of people attending to artistic and other comparable objects and phenomena.

Let us bring in mind what takes place in football stadia, rock concerts and opera houses. Though the code of behaviour may differ greatly between football matches, rock concerts, opera performances and other similar events, the audiences of these events show the common feature that people indeed seem

to some extent imitate the behaviour of performers: when a footballer succeeds in scoring a goal he/she shouts and raises hands, and half of the people in the stadium makes the same; in rock concerts, people imitate performers by singing along, shouting and clapping their hands; in opera performances people do not so overtly reveal what they are experiencing but nonetheless through inner imitation they participate in the great emotions performed on the stage. It is a difference of code, that in football stadia and rock arenas emotions realized through inner imitation can be shown overtly while in opera houses not so overtly. In any case, the basic fact is the same: people participate through inner imitation in the performed acts as well as the concomitant emotions with or without overt behaviour.

Hirn's notion of inner imitation can be compared with a certain notion familiar from contemporary aesthetics: Arnold Berleant's view of aesthetic engagement. Berleant wants to stress that aesthetic experience is not necessarily a function of subject's cool rational observation of perceptible or imaginary objects but rather a function of imaginative and bodily engagement with a given set of objects and their relations; in one word, with an environment. Especially in the case of aesthetic perception, the subject and the objects of perception do not belong to categorically different worlds but in one and the same world. This holds also of artworks. For example, in *Art and Engagement* (1991, 69) Berleant describes what happens when we examine properly a landscape painting: "Whatever the physical distance between the viewer and the canvas, the participatory landscape requires that we look into the space, that we enter it, so to speak, and become a part of it." Berleant's idea is that aesthetic experience is not made possible by the fact that we are in front of a work of art (even if this may be a necessary condition of an experience); aesthetic experience is made possible by the fact that we imaginatively feel to be parts of the same world as the world presented in a given work of art.

Turning back to Hirn, we may ask to what extent can Berleant's engagement theory be translated into Hirn's terminology of inner imitation. Except for one candidate for a major difference, to which I will come back later, a tentative answer to this question is that most, or perhaps all, of Berleant's principal ideas in terms of engagement theory can be understood in the light of inner imitation. For example, both the notion of 'engagement' as well as 'inner imitation' emphasize the participatory nature of aesthetic perception. More particularly, in regard to Berleant's explanation of the participatory way of experiencing landscape painting, it can be said that there is nothing against Hirn's intentions in it. Both thinkers emphasize that pictorial art does not concern only visual phenomena but also matters belonging in the spheres of physiological feeling and psychological emotion. When we attend, e.g., to a painting representing summer wind on a lake side, we do not only see that trees

and bushes are bending in the wind; we may also get in touch with the feel of the breeze and other similar matters.

A difference in emphasis is that Hirn puts stress on the notion of emotion whereas for Berleant that would be reminiscent of outdated faculty psychology (cf. *Re-thinking Aesthetics*, 17). The central point, however, is that Berleant does not underrate the value of emotions: he simply does not want to build an aesthetic theory relying on the notion of emotion. But in contradistinction to this, emotion is one of the key concepts of Hirn's theory, and this explains why he wants to be definitely clear in determining where the feelings and emotions realized through inner imitation come from: they originate from the creator of the artwork, from the artist. When a recipient attends to a work of art, he/she repeats imaginatively the steps the artist-creator has gone through and in this way he/she gets in touch with the emotions the artwork expresses.

Thus far we have found in the principle of participation an important similarity between Hirn's and Berleant's theories; then we have found a minor difference in their evaluation of the role of emotion in aesthetic theory; and finally, there is one candidate for a major difference to be discussed next. This difference concerns the proper way of attending to aesthetic phenomena. Berleant's project of aesthetics criticises strongly traditional theories of aesthetics based on the notion of disinterested contemplation. According to this theory, the proper way to attend to works of art is to contemplate them in themselves without any further aims. In other words, works of art are made for art's sake, and therefore they should be contemplated as objects having no ulterior ends. In contrast to this, Berleant's project aims for "a shift away from the conventional attitude associated with the contemplative model." (*Art and Engagement*, 70.)

It is no surprise that Hirn followed the contemplative model in his theory. (Here it is inessential to note that he stressed that art can be dissociated from practical life only in theory.) So, it seems that in this particular point there is indeed a great difference between Hirn and Berleant. But before affirming the magnitude of this difference, it might be worthwhile to bring in mind Berleant's intention in his criticism of the contemplative model. A crucial feature of Berleant's criticism is the allegation that the contemplative attitude in conjunction with the principle of disinterestedness is committed to a needless separation of the subject of perception from the object of perception. In Berleant's view, aesthetic perception is not based on distance taking but on participatory engagement. Here we must, however, ask whether the contemplative model is necessarily committed to a radical separation of subjects of perception from their objects. What is Hirn's stance in this issue? Here we can delineate only briefly Hirn's views concerning disinterestedness and contemplation.

Although Hirn saw the principle of disinterestedness as a common denominator of all aesthetic theories, he emphasized that absolute disinterestedness would amount to an estrangement from real life (*Esteettinen elämä*, 204–204). And if some kind of art would promote estrangement, it would not be worth much. Thus, at least in Hirn's case the function of the principle of disinterestedness is not to promote any kind of distance taking or separation (art from life, or people from art). Admittedly, however, it promotes contemplative attitude to aesthetic phenomena. But does contemplation amount to distance taking or some kind of isolation, as Berleant would have it?

In regard to the notion of contemplation, we may straightforwardly ask, why on earth does Berleant see contemplation as a cognitive phenomenon separating subjects from objects. As against Berleant, we might claim that contemplative attitude does not dissociate subjects from the objects of contemplation but rather draws them nearer each other. It is an old doctrine of Platonism that deep contemplation leads to a *henosis*, to the unity of meditating subject with the object of meditation. Hirn, of course, was not a Platonist and in this sense not committed to the henotic view of contemplation but, what is crucial, he was neither committed to the view that the contemplative attitude distances subjects from objects. On this account, we can conclude that Berleant's project of aesthetic engagement does not differ so much from Hirn's idea of participation by inner imitation. And where there seems to be a great difference, in the theoretical role given to the notion of contemplation, the great difference seems to rely on Berleant's dubious understanding of the function of contemplation.

Biography

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Attention and Aesthetic Value

Abstract

We are capable of engaging into different kinds of relations with objects and situations we meet. Any relation is in principle singular and thus *einmalig*, unique. Still, certain general types of relationality do exist, and increasingly so within Modernity's historical universe of institutionalized distinctions. Relations may be established with focus ("attention") on usability, truth, ethics, power, authenticity... – and of course on "beauty", on aesthetic value. On top of that obviously all kinds of mixed, hybrid forms do occur.

A relational dispositive, in other words, is what we meet in our daily life when dealing with objects and situations. This differentiation is an invention of the Modern world and as such, it is in itself subject to historical change. In terms of "discursive areas", it has been theorized and discussed in varying keys – in the traditions of aesthetic theory also including quite many universalist ones.

On the one hand, we are free to choose our modes of attention. On the other, institutionalized discourses in practice pre-configures these modes.

Especially when it comes to art and the historical Modern "great divide" between poesis and aesthesis (Rancière), the conditions for attentional approaches appear largely pre-figured.

The paper will describe and discuss this pre-configuration and the institutionalized "freedoms" of art and its audience, respectively – including current calls for trying to abolish such differentiations, to transgress the discursive boundaries of art.

Attention and Aesthetic Value

1.

The title of this paper should have been rather "Attentions and Aesthetic Value", i.e. in the plural. The same may be true of the title of this conference. "Attentions" would have been more adequate.

Why so? Because attention is not just attention. There are different kinds of attention, which we all know about, make use of and meet every single day. We may expect one kind of attention, for instance admiration for our work, and get another, for instance one of sexual desire. We experience ourselves the ways we, perhaps even involuntarily, alter the kind of attention, we do pay in a specific situation or towards certain objects.

All real occurrences of attention are of course singular and situated. Still, different general types and specific kinds of attention do exist.

2.

On the one hand, we do believe that we ourselves decide and produce the kind of attention we wish to pay to whatever. On the other hand, a choice of different kinds of attention seemingly is available, in the shape of conventions, established language games and discursive rules. So who is actually choosing, and what do the choices depend on?

On the face of it, it is the objects, the things and situations, to which our attention is directed, that decides. Some things are worth attention, others not. Some situations calls for curiosity, interest, or disgust, others do not. Nevertheless, in reality not least our own situation decides. Are we up for paying attention today? Is this or that in our current line of interest? Are we afraid of attracting unwanted attention if we pay attention to this and that?

Still, certain objects invite us to distinctive kinds of attention, according to their discursive belongings. Artworks are good examples of this.

3.

In the case of artworks as well, we are free to choose which kind of attention we want to pay, if any. Artworks nowadays are, as we know, not necessarily identifiable as artworks based on their objectual qualities exclusively. A so-called readymade in the shape of for example a snow shovel may be paid attention to as just a snow shovel. Even traditional artworks, such as canvases may be approached with attention to primarily the possible themes of what they depict, novels may be approached with attention to what they can learn us about daily life here and there, etc. We are free not to pay attention to artworks as art, in other words. If we do so anyhow, we are furthermore free to choose whether we wish to establish “aesthetic”, judgment-based, relations to the artworks in question or not. We may choose rather to prioritize paying attention to cognitive, political, or sociological questions, raised by the artworks.

However, although we may choose for ourselves, our choices of modes of attention will in practice take place along the lines of already existing, conventional modes. We are free to choose, but we will most probably choose between what is conventionally at hand.

4.

Free to choose, and still inclined to choose certain conventional modes of attention. Just, by the way, as we are free to act and react in general, all the while we still act very much in concordance with average conduct as prescribed by our cultural encyclopedia.

Where do these conventions come from, who invented or created them? The answer is that they are products of our history. This also implies that their validity is historically concrete. What seems natural right now may be entirely un-understandable in another historical context. Immanuel Kant in the 18th century could in no possible way have understood a canned artist's shit as a work of art. The entire phenomenon of "objectual de-differentiation" concerning artworks in our time would be considered senseless, and individuals appreciating that kind of artworks accordingly would be deemed insane back then. Conversely, much of what was considered fine art on Kant's time is still appreciated as art today. Consequently, conventions are not, as it seems, solely about the artifacts as such.

5

Although all this may appear as common knowledge, tendencies to simplifying the complex interplay between individual freedom and societal conventions are quite frequent. We may influence, elaborate on, even individually evade conventional discourses, but we cannot deny their existence nor their impact also, where our individual choices are concerned. The historically engendered reality cannot be ruled out by decision. On the other hand, these conventions are not universally, i.e. trans-historically valid.

This fragile and complicated balance is true not least when it comes to art in our Modern sense. Art in our kind of society is characterized by a distinct non-symmetry between the conditions for producing and those for receiving art. The "great divide" between *poiesis* and *aesthesis* takes place historically when the artist no longer produces his or her work to well-known requestors, but to an anonymous audience, to a market. This on the one hand creates the space for art's unlimited freedom, its so-called autonomy, to do or say or act after its own rules exclusively, i.e. to work on behalf of above all art itself. On the other hand, the divide creates a free space for the audience, also individually, to pay attention to artworks "aesthetically" (as it eventually was named in the process), i.e. asking what's in this for me, conceptualized as-if this for-me were related to a more universal for-us. It is important to understand that this falling apart is the mutual precondition to the conventional freedoms of both *poiesis* and *aesthesis* within the Modern. Art is no longer committed directly to its audience, and the audience is no longer obliged to appreciate artworks according to their intentions as art.

6

Poiesis and *aesthesis* separated, set "free", detached from each other in terms of discursive spaces including rules for conduct, criteria for validity and legitimacy, sociological conditions. But of course still intimately interconnected above all through their joint "object": Art, works of art.

Not least conceptually, this detachedness has not been easy to accept. As we know, the separation in itself produced a longing for coherence, for a reconciliation. This became the agenda of the Jena Romanticism movement, giving birth to a strong tradition in aesthetics that has been alive ever since. The “marriage” (as I have called it elsewhere) between art and aesthetics, established a bridge between the two primarily through a general emphasis on art’s cognitive potentials, turning aesthetics in this “speculative” tradition into a kind of more or less normative master of art.

7

The speculative tradition, for all its valuable contributions in its own context, however never really managed to alter the fact of the original “great divide” – and thus did not really manage to understand the specificity of aesthetic experience, relationality – aesthetic *attention*, as it is.

This specificity had initially been analyzed and described back in the 18th century above all by Immanuel Kant (after Baumgarten’s invention of the discipline). Why there and then, one might ask? Simply because it as a phenomenon had been brought into existence. During the Renaissance and the formation of the Modern, the “great divide” had created an audience including the individual experience or feeling of belonging to an audience.

Kant’s analysis of the mechanisms of aesthetic relationality, of the judgment of taste, is part of an extended reflection over how to deal with the new conditions of *differentiation* in the Modern. His analysis is thus quite evidently historically based. To Kant himself, however, his observations and reflections had universal validity, i.e. were transhistorically true. This is obviously not the case: Kant must be historicized, i.e. understood according to the historical conditions, under and into which he developed his analyses. Kant’s universalism is thus false. That however, does not prevent these analyses from being *grosso modo* still historically adequate where the fundamental condition of differentiation within the Modern is concerned.

8

On the other “side” of the great divide, we have art’s “autonomy”. Autonomy has remained art’s basic condition so far within the Modern. Often the concept of autonomy has been conceptually misinterpreted as if it were about art being detached or isolated from society, thus not being capable or allowed to deal with society’s running problems. This is not the case: Art’s autonomy above all means that it is free to act according to its proper rules (and thus not committed to ordinary rules of for instance purpose rationality in society). Art’s autonomy means that whatever art does or says it does so *as art*.

This distinctive “freedom”, of course, is art’s blessing and its curse at the same time. Therefore, art’s autonomy has been under attack from art itself, almost

constantly, during the Modern times, not least under furious attacks from the historical avant-garde movements, and later from their heritors, situationists, neo- and transavantgardes, including all kinds of politically “woke” artforms up to today.

So far, however, these attacks have never really changed art’s condition of autonomy, of being “intransitive”. Art has not been set free from acting as art with its own rules. Art’s autonomy has apparently not even become weaker, to the contrary.

9

The concept of art itself, however, has changed dramatically during the latest two hundred years. Art is no longer necessarily identifiable as such in terms of discernible objects. All kinds of situations, ready-mades, actions, even absence or nothingness may be “art”. Everything whatsoever may be “art”. Nevertheless, that does not mean that everything is art. Art indeed still has its boundaries, but these boundaries have changed dramatically, and they are under permanent change. Not just in their position, but also in their conceptual form – and not least today.

This calls for thorough investigations into these boundaries and their current condition. Stringent knowledge about the nature and position of the boundaries of art no doubt will qualify the practical activities, taking place along and around these boundaries. For example, curatorial work in the widest sense.

10

Today we, once again, meet insisting calls for criticizing art’s institutionalized boundaries, the autonomy of art, the existence of any peculiar “aesthetic” relationality (including its pretensions about equal access and rights). We hear calls for fighting against any division in modus between self-defined tasks of art, and the serious (political) problems of everyday life, be it concerning race, gender, climate, colonialism or whatever. All art, it is stated, should contribute directly to creating attention(s) to these problems, to solving them.

In principle, art is thus encouraged to make use of its freedom to tear down the separation that is the very precondition of its freedom and symbolic authority, by which it is able to act in the name of art.

11

Is this a paradox? Is it surprising? Is it a threat to art’s institutionalized “autonomy” and thus its freedom? Or to a distinct aesthetic attention?

That depends. Any beholder is of course free to prefer his or her kind of art. Nevertheless, more generally, seen from outside art’s own boundaries, these calls for denigrating, for cancelling its boundaries is actually something of a

paradox. If such endeavors came through, art would become “transitive”, become the platform of specific political interests, i.e. become politics. However, the price for that would be the loss of art’s symbolic authority to act in the name of just art, thereby addressing exactly me, as if I were representing anyone.

On the other hand, from the point of view of art itself, seen from the inside, endeavors like these are by no means paradoxical. Such endeavors are sanctioned exactly by art’s freedom, thus granted by the fact that they are realized in the name of art, i.e. as art.

Concordantly, on behalf of art itself there is no surprise about endeavors like that. Art is entitled to have agendas concerning any societal area, including opinions, strong or weak, controversial or conventional.

When it comes to professional approaches to art of today from outside art’s boundaries, such endeavors may appear slightly surprising, however. Of course, the dream of a reconciliation of the good, the true and the beautiful is still alive, also in our hyper-differentiated modern society. The development of our discipline, of aesthetics, however has in fact pointed in the opposite direction during the last forty years. There is a marked tendency to again emphasizing aesthetic value, aesthetic relationality as something distinctive, connected to experience, to reception – and thus not seamlessly interwoven with for example what artworks want us to do or to believe. This development has taken place within most parts of the established theoretical traditions, even in the strong, continental German one, to which Romanticism’s reconciliation was the historical background.

12

In general, there is a growing acknowledgment in aesthetics that actually “Kant got it right” in his original approach to and analysis of aesthetic relationality as something distinctive. Immanuel Kant of course was not right in his claims for universal, trans-historical validity of his analysis. His work was historically rooted and its strengths and weaknesses are clearly connected to its specific historical context. This context was the historical birth of a fundamental societal differentiation into spheres, fields, discourses, with separate rules and possibilities – and in particular including an ever-developing division of labor concordantly. Moreover, to come back to our agenda: producing different kinds of attention, including “aesthetic” ones. If I may end this little talk on a personal note: This diversity, these differences, separations, boundaries, are not problems that should be solved or overcome. They are parts of Modernity’s privileged offer to us, and the reason why art matters.

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Biography

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Attention in the Wake of Emerging Urban Technologies

Abstract

Technology in one form or another has always been a part of urban life and the different types of environments where it takes place. What types of technologies have been taken into use and developed in the first place has traditionally been dictated by the very practical needs of the urbanized community. However, these technologies have also a significant impact on how a city looks and feels to its users, inhabitants and visitors alike. Some technologies are marked by a clearly perceivable presence in the urban environment whereas others are more invisibly embedded into the material structures of the city. Urban aesthetics as a branch of environmental aesthetics focuses on studying the very specific aesthetic values and qualities present in contemporary urbanized areas. It can be used also to explain, how different types of aesthetic values manifest in urban environments and whether and how conflicts in values are resolved. As we move further into the 21st century, the aesthetic identity of different types of cities is changing due to new development in the form of large-scale adoption of technologies such as 5G network and self-driving vehicles (SDVs). The planned and unplanned aesthetic consequences of new and emerging technologies are thus of special interest in this paper. The aim is to show how concepts such as aesthetic attitude and attention are relevant for understanding the new type of sensibility that new and emerging technologies require or make possible for their users. There is also focus on how technological development might reduce the range of possibilities for aesthetic choices and thus create more inequality between urban dwellers. Emphasis is made on the distinction between the everyday urban experience and more transitory ways of using the city, since this is significant for preconditions of the experience such as attention and attitude.

Keywords: Urban aesthetics, philosophy of technology, emerging technologies, attention

In contemporary cities globally, different types of new and emerging technologies are increasingly present and in widespread use. Also, the infrastructure and implementation of entirely new types of technologies are being increasingly prepared for. From the perspective of aesthetics, this creates an interesting chance to observe and analyse how the urban lifeworld is

changing.¹⁵¹ Contemporary digital technologies, such as information and computing technologies are being adopted to everyday urban use. This change does not consist merely of accepting the new, but also more traditional forms of technology such as mobility and data communication solutions are being re-envisioned and recreated with hyperconnectivity as one main aim. Technology is thus playing an increasingly central role in the human everyday experience, yet the extent of this is not entirely acknowledged in philosophical literature. The goal of this paper is first to analyse the perceptual characteristics of urban technologies by dividing them roughly into 3 categories and, secondly, based on this characterization, to explore the aesthetic potentiality of urban technologies of varying attention-grasping perceptual qualities. The case examples include selected technologies with both unintended and intended aesthetic impacts.

Postphenomenological philosophy of technology points to approaching contemporary urban technologies in their use through the idea of technological mediation.¹⁵² Contemporary philosophical aesthetic theory, on the other hand, is only now preparing to recognize the full effects of technological change in cities. In philosophical everyday aesthetics in general, there is a tendency to overlook technology as a topic for a variety of reasons, for which space is too short here.¹⁵³ It seems, however, clear “how computers and computational approaches are changing our everyday aesthetics”¹⁵⁴. Most of these technologies are based on earlier forms of technologies in the use of human collective life. The incremental development hides the behavioural and experiential impacts to the extent that they do not become recognized in the first place.

Particularly urban forms of new and emerging technologies provide for a broad group of very different types of human-technology and human-environment mediations. According to the tentative definitions, this group includes anything from infrastructural technologies to the most personalized forms of ubiquitous computing.¹⁵⁵ Another defining use for urban technologies comes from the urban environments themselves, whether we are describing a global metropolis or a smaller form of human habitation, of discussing the particular challenges of globally recognized affluent cities or the developing cities which have their own take on the smart city paradigm. The scale is also something that most

¹⁵¹ Lehtinen & Vihanninjoki 2021; for further discussion on philosophy of urban technologies, see Nagenborg & al. 2021.

¹⁵² Verbeek, 2005; Lehtinen and Vihanninjoki, 2021.

¹⁵³ Naukkarinen, 2019; Lehtinen, 2020.

¹⁵⁴ Naukkarinen, 2019, p. 181.

¹⁵⁵ Nagenborg & al. 2021.

clearly permeates the experiential, sensorial layer, which the more affective, evaluative dimension of aesthetics is based on. For navigation purposes, for example, the physical features of the city are linked to their virtual representations and also contingent factors such as traffic flows and weather phenomena.¹⁵⁶

With focus on the particularly urban lifeworld makes it possible to group contemporary urban technologies to three categories according to their aesthetic qualities and impacts.¹⁵⁷ The first category consists of those technologies that are recognized mainly through their perceivable qualities in the cityscape. They have, for example, a distinct look or produce sounds which affect the experience of the city space. These aesthetically potential qualities mark them as technological objects with a more or less clear functional reason for existing in the cityscape. An example of this could be traffic lights, which beckon the attention of street dwellers with their lights, sounds and the placement next to the street crossings. Besides these clear perceptual qualities each individual traffic light is also part of a broader, interconnected traffic control network which is not directly deducible from its appearance. Conscious attention is drawn to this type of technology by its noticeable perceptual features which are interpreted according to our best knowledge of the symbol functions of the lights and sounds.

In addition to this first, “easy to perceive” category of urban technologies, the second category of technologies consists of those that are either entirely invisible or their functioning is hidden from the surface of city. Contemporary urban everyday life relies increasingly on these types of hidden technologies, which govern the daily range of action possibilities of the citizens. The use and perception of this type of technologies is defined by know-how. The experience of these sort of technologies is also characterised by a familiarity, which is an important dimension also in most everyday aesthetic experiences.¹⁵⁸ Electricity is an example of a technological system which is in some contemporary cities mostly hidden from plain sight whereas in others, very visible overhead cables are used to keep costs low, for easy access, or safety in case of earthquakes, just to name a few possible reasons. Our daily lives depend on actions which require electricity that in itself is invisible.¹⁵⁹ We do not necessarily pay any attention to our use and reliance of the electrical grid unless it breaks down.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Lehtinen & Vihanninjoki 2019.

¹⁵⁷ Lehtinen, 2020.

¹⁵⁸ Saito 2017.

¹⁵⁹ Stone 2021.

¹⁶⁰ This break-down most famously described by Heidegger 2010.

Electricity provided by a complex infrastructural system is considered to be a basal level necessity for contemporary urban life. Overall, the number of intentionally invisible urban technologies is on the rise. Safety reasons, such as designs against extreme weather phenomena and vandalism lead to digging electricity lines underground or retrofitting them into the built structures instead of outside of buildings. It seems very likely, that safety and maintenance reasons for hiding technologies are also accompanied by assessing them as aesthetically displeasing and causing unwanted negative attention. Overhead electric cables are an interesting example of this, as in some cities the aesthetic appearance of their formations is also appreciated precisely for their extravagance.

The third characterization is the least clear one, concerning new and about-to-be-implemented technologies. Networked technologies combining perceptual and non-perceptual arrangements would fall most clearly into this category. The perceptual presence in the cityscape is not by far their only aesthetic effect, yet technologies such as the 5G network are to a large extent invisible to their users but are based on highly visible constructs implemented into close proximity to each other. The functioning of the technology is in no way deducible from the appearance of the required antennas and cell towers. 5G enables a vast array of other types of technologies and its full potentiality is not even explored yet. It is clear, that this type of technological mediation of human-world relations has interesting implications to urban aesthetics, even though it is largely perceptually undetected.

Even though many of the infrastructural networks of today are hidden from plain sight, the structures that enable them can have highly visible consequences in the cityscape. As an example, 5G networks require antennae towers that have been disguised as palm trees and flagpoles or converged with new types of lampposts that have replaced the older, simpler models. These impacts alter the most obvious aesthetic qualities and affordances of the places in which they are installed. These very visible and even glaring reminders of the technological landscape do not necessarily suit the already existing urban landscape: the adoption of new and emerging urban technologies requires often new models for evaluating change in the cityscape.

Interpreting the complex constructs of the new technological solutions requires moments of sustained attention. Even places which we would not normally glance when passing by, such as rooftops of lampposts can gain distinctly new forms and shapes that catch the eye in the process of evaluating the environment. Especially when one learns to recognize the ubiquitous installations of 5G antennae, one simply cannot unsee them in various

locations anymore. Conceptually, they are reminders of opportunities yet to come and aesthetically often in stark contrast with the place in which they have been installed. However, the contrasts do not need to be even that stark to have an effect: a usefully nuanced characterization of aesthetic attention in the everyday environments describes it as the “unreflecting response to the sensuous surface”¹⁶¹. This broadened scope of perceptual selectivity takes into consideration the multiplicity and variety of stimuli in the contemporary urban environments. Stimuli might also go undetected due to the ubiquity of the aesthetically potential directions. To some extent, this discussion relates to the core of the difference between the expansionist and restrictivist views in everyday aesthetics. According to the so-called restrictivist view, there are aesthetic properties already existing in the urban environment and we can either attend or not to those properties.¹⁶² The broader Dewey-originating pragmatist stance understands properties as neither fully objective nor subjective but something that actualizes in the interactive human-environment relation.¹⁶³ Without going deeper here into this discussion between the two positions, I content to mention that a further exploration of these concerns is also useful to analyzing the role of aesthetic attention in interaction with different types of urban technologies.

Instead of a detached, contemplative approach to the aesthetic qualities of the urban environment, new urban technologies are experienced most often through an active engagement in using them for specific purposes. This is a significant aspect of how their aesthetic scope is determined. In philosophical aesthetics, disinterestedness as a type of distanced appreciation without ulterior motives has been defining aesthetic experiences to a significant degree. Digital technologies provide a tool and are utilized to reach certain goals. Most often these goals are predetermined, even though new ideas might stem from their use as well. Spontaneous new uses are, however, relatively rare in the case of many new types of technologies. When they exist, they usually form significant examples of urban activism, tactical urbanism, and other types of bottom-up movements which aim at strategically shaking the established socio-technological systems.

Technologies have a significant impact on how a city looks, sounds, and feels to its users, inhabitants and visitors alike. The urban lifeworld is already highly technologized, at same time as many of the technologies in use are not explicitly recognizable and using them does not require even recognizing them. Whether technological development increases or reduces the range of possibilities for

¹⁶¹ Saito 2007, 55.

¹⁶² Saito 2017.

¹⁶³ Leddy 2015. For further analysis, see Puolakka 2018.

aesthetic choices is yet another question that stems out of recognition of its presence in the urban sphere. We tend to take for granted the promise that an increase in technologies equals with more opportunities. However, this is not necessarily always the case. Wireless, portable and connected technologies are changing the urban experience through “inevitable” improvements of the environment itself. Thus, increasing inequalities within the urbanized population is a topic area which would need to be critically examined also from the perspective of aesthetics of technology. The perceptual features of technologies can be used to precise purposes to accentuate the sensorial realm. Art, as usual, is an important category in this regard, but intentional techno-sensorial exploration and expansion of the urban lifeworld goes beyond art as a phenomenon. An interesting case example is the idea, technical execution, and implementation of the so-called *sound beacons*, which aim at increasing the legibility of spaces for the visually-impaired simultaneously altering the acoustic environment for all users of the urban space.¹⁶⁴ Sound beacons have an artistic soundscape quality to them, but the main motivation derives from increasing accessibility with technological solutions.

With the direction and development of urban aesthetics as a top concern here, the growing presence of technological solutions and their visuo-audio-spatial representations might not seem to have the biggest impact. However, the different affordances interpreted to these technologies might read very differently depending on one’s possibilities of actualizing them. The distinction between the familiarity- and repetition oriented stance to the everyday urban experience and more transitory ways of using the city is significant for attention and attitude as preconditions of the experience.

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¹⁶⁴ “Oodi’s sound beacon 2.0”, <https://www.oodihelsinki.fi/en/oodis-sound-beacon-2-0>. In the Helsinki Central Library Oodi’s case, the sound beacon directs people to the main entrance and marks a spatial location through sound.

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Biography

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Multiple Identities of Borderline Cases in Art

Abstract

When the 'hard cases' of art occur outside the art institution, the debate of artistic status arises not only toward the individual cases but also toward the category to which they belong. That is to say, the identity of the individual case tends to be defined in link with the category it belongs to. There tends to be the formulation that if the individual case is art, then the entire category is also art, and if the category is not art, then the individual case is also not art. Such a formulation inevitably hampers the artistic status of many hard cases arising from the non-art (non-fine art) categories, such as applied arts, decorative arts, and non-Western arts. This paper takes the position that the individual cases and their belonging categories need not be strictly interlocking upon debating the artistic status. It argues that the hard cases occurring outside of the art institution could possess both identities of art and non-art, depending on the context or institution they are present. Thus the point shifts from whether the case is or is not art in its absolute sense to 'when' is it art.

1. Interlocking Identities of Category and Individual Cases

1.1 Cuisine and Ikebana

The artistic status of food has been denied in the long history since Plato until recent. The stance was supported by the views that taste and smell are inferior to sight and hearing, that food as the object of physical desire cannot be the object of beauty, and that cuisine is no more than a technique and not an art.¹⁶⁵ It was not until in the 1990s that the tendency to defend food/cuisine's artistic status has emerged, as Elizabeth Telfer and Carolyn Korsmeyer argued that food can be a 'minor art form'¹⁶⁶ or the 'applied arts'.¹⁶⁷ However, they still concluded that food/cuisine cannot be fine art or art in full sense.

¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth Telfer, *Food for Thought: Philosophy of Food* (Routledge, 1996); Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Cornell University Press, 1999); Kevin Sweeney, *The Aesthetics of Food: The Philosophy Debate About What We Eat and Drink* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).

¹⁶⁶ Telfer, *Food for Thought*, 1996.

¹⁶⁷ Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, 1999.

Ikebana is one of the traditional Japanese *geido* that is on par with tea ceremony and martial arts. While the term is often translated and considered as ‘art,’ there is a significant difference compared to the notion of art in the West. It is more of a discipline centered on training, morality, and manner. The weight is put on attaining the established technique or style particular to each school. The practice is connected to daily life, thus can be useful and functional. And importantly, it has an identity rooted in the traditional culture of Japan. With these backgrounds, ikebana does not correspond to the notion of art in the West, such as not having practical functions, having reference to the historical context of Western art, or having included within the art institution.¹⁶⁸

1.2 Molecular Gastronomy and Avant-Garde Ikebana

The progress in the debate of food/cuisine’s artistic status was progressed by molecular gastronomy, the new cooking style that attracted attention since the 1990s. It employs innovative science and technology to modify ingredients into unexpected tastes and forms. It is also unique in its concept and presentation. For example, British chef Heston Blumenthal’s dish *Sound of the Sea* makes the diners eat the seafood dish while listening to the ‘sound of the sea’ on an iPod in a shell. Molecular gastronomy contains many elements that are familiar to contemporary art, such as multi-sensory experiences, emotional and thought-stimulating concepts, deconstruction and reconstruction of tradition, and emphasis on innovation. Such characteristics have been used as evidence to support the artistic status of cuisine. Jean-Paul Jouary supports cuisine’s artistic status by pointing out how molecular gastronomy succeeds in creating the intellectual ‘distance’ necessary for aesthetic appreciation by presenting food in an unfamiliar form. He also mentions how Adrià has been invited to Documenta 12 as an artist and asserts that molecular gastronomy has fulfilled the requirement of the institutional definition of art.¹⁶⁹

For ikebana, the wave of innovation came in the early to mid 20th century, when the avant-garde climate of art in the West influenced many aesthetic practices in Japan. The new ikebana that appeared mainly in the early 1950s emphasizes creativity as sculptural works that are not bound by tradition. It was called *zen-ei* (avant-garde) ikebana and became a social phenomenon that attracted the attention of the public. The ikebana works created by the avant-garde ikebana promoters were much like the works of fine art as they were in the form of collage, sculpture, performance, and installation. It is not

¹⁶⁸ 三頭谷鷹史,『複眼的美術論—前衛いけばなの時代』(美学出版,2003);古川久,「芸道」,『美学事典』竹内敏雄編(弘文堂;増補版,1974),487.

¹⁶⁹ Jean-Paul Jouary, *Ferran Adria and elBulli: The Art, The Philosophy, The Gastronomy* (Andre Deutsch Ltd, 2013).

surprising that this new style of ikebana was criticized by many traditional ikebana schools that valued conserving the convention. It was also not welcomed by the fine art community in Japan which viewed it as attributed to the outdated practice of geido separated from the notion of fine art, which had just been imported from the West. For such, many Japanese art critics at the time denied that avant-garde ikebana is art (三頭谷 2003).

As demonstrated, the interlocking of identity occurs between category and individual work or creator, as well as between upper category and lower category. However, it is questionable whether such interlocking of identities functions as appropriate evidence in an argument, as it could be used to support both sides of the argument; it could be said that 'X is art because it belongs to non-art category A,' and also that 'non-art category A is art because X belonging to A is art.' In the next chapter, it will be argued that the identity of the category and the individuals attributed to the category should be considered separately.

2. Identity of Category and Individuals

2.1 Identity of Category

To have an identity is to be in a state of belonging to a certain category. In order to belong to a category, one must meet the particular condition of attribution. Kendall Walton defines the property that qualifies the artwork's belonging to a category as *standard property*, the property that disqualifies the artwork's belonging to a category as *contra-standard property*, and the property that does not affect the artwork's belonging to a category as *variable property*.¹⁷⁰ Based on these terms, the condition of attribution to a category is to have a standard property while not having the contra-standard property of the category. In other words, the notion of a category can be considered as a set of conditions, and the individual cases attributing to the category are the cases that fulfill the set of conditions.

There are two ways that category A is category B. The first is that category A and category B have the same set of standard properties. Another is that category B has all the standard properties of category A. In the case of the former, it can be said that category A and category B are identical. In the case of the latter, B it can be said that B contains A; in other words, A and B are in the relationship of subset and superset. If we consider art and non-art, neither of the above patterns applies. For that cuisine and ikebana having practical function and convention different from art as the standard property, they are neither identical to art nor contained in art. If the entire category's identity is

¹⁷⁰ Kendall Walton, "Categories of Art," *Philosophical Review* 79, no. 3 (1970): 334-367.

to be applied to the individual cases, the case X belonging to non-art category A will never be art unless the standard property of category A is to be modified.

2.2 Identity of Individuals

Even if category A cannot be category B, there is a possibility that the individual case X belonging to category A can also belong to category B. In that case, there would be a premise that the standard property of category A must not be the contra-standard of category B. When the standard property of category A happens to be the contra-standard property of category B, then the formulation that 'case X belonging to category A cannot belong to category B' would be true.

Then, is the standard property of cuisine or ikebana the contra-standard property of art? The practical aspect, commonly possessed by non-art categories as one of the standard properties, tends to be recognized as the contra-standard of art. It is a crucial point supporting the view that non-art categories such as cuisine or ikebana cannot be art. Indeed, having a practical function is not the standard property of art, which makes the non-art categories not identical to or included in art. However, practical function not being the standard property of art does not mean that art cannot have any practical function. Art can have practical functions. For example, painting can be used to hide the hole on the wall, and obviously, the snow shovel used in readymade can function as a snow shovel. Moreover, the artworks that employ food or cuisine do have properties like smell and taste, and many artworks appropriate properties of non-Western culture. All these properties tend to be recognized as the contra-standard of art, are possessed by art in many cases. The difference with the non-art is that when these properties are employed in art, they are considered as secondary, or do not affect the artwork's value fundamentally. This means that these properties are neither standard property nor contra-standard property, but are the variable property of art. Therefore, the individual case X possessing properties such as practical function, smell or taste, or non-Western culture does not exclude the possibility for X being art.

3. Types of Identities

3.1 Types of Cultural Identities

If one meets the condition of attribution, one belongs to the category. However, the problem of who determines the condition of attribution and how the judgment of whether one meets the condition or not is made complicate the discourse. We can get a hint to consider this question by examining the different levels of one's cultural identity.

When one makes a judgment about one's own cultural identity, in many cases it is the culture that one feels deeply connected in some way, such as the culture of one's ethnic background, the place where one grew up, or the place of birth. For example, someone from a Japanese family who grew up in the U.S. may recognize oneself as both Japanese and American. The judgment of cultural identity depends on self-identification, or how one recognizes one's own cultural background. This type of identity is *subjective identity*.

The situation could be different at the level of *objective identity*. Since Japanese law does not allow multiple nationalities, one cannot be both Japanese and American citizen in principle. Thus, one's nationality can only be either one. By following the clear and objective set of conditions for nationality stated in the laws of each country, basically any third person can make an objective judgment about one's nationality.

The judgment for *relatively objective identity* has certain objectivity to the extent of the norms shared within the particular group or community. For example, while any Asian-looking person may be judged as the cultural insider of Asian culture in the Western communities, Chinese is recognized as the cultural outsider in Japan, and Japanese is recognized as the cultural outsider in Korea. This signifies that one's identity as an insider or outsider of culture is relative to the cultural background of the community one is being judged.

3.2 Types of Artistic Identities

X is art when it fulfills the condition of attribution for art—in other words when the standard property of art is recognized while contra-standard is not. This could occur on two different levels.

First is when the individual appreciator recognizes the standard property of art in X and appreciates X as art. This judgment occurs at the subjective level. It is associable with the aesthetic attitude theory, which supports something's being an aesthetic object as long as the appreciator is in the state of aesthetic attitude to appreciate the subject as such. At this level, anything could be art as long as the individual appreciator subjectively recognizes X as art.

The second is when X is evaluated within the institution of art, according to the norms of the institution. This judgment occurs at the relatively objective level and is related to the conventional definition of art. While there are views that the perception of aesthetic value is universal and objective, the expanding notion of artistic value today clearly suggests that there are values with access limited to a particular community, I will disregard the option of the objective identity of art here.

It could be said that one of the most significant merits for the borderline cases to be considered as art is that the artistic aspect not evaluated fully in the original category gets highlighted upon the evaluation criteria of art. Taking significance on this point, this paper takes the stance that artistic identity at a relatively objective level is more crucial of a matter. Accordingly, the borderline cases of art like molecular gastronomy and avant-garde ikebana are art when the work is evaluated by the art institution. However, it does not mean that this would make the entire category of cuisine or ikebana also art; since the individual cases can possess multiple identities, the identity of the category and individual cases need not be interlocking, as demonstrated in 2.

Biography

Jean Lin is a Ph.D. student at the University of Tokyo, majoring in aesthetics. Her fields of interest include cultural appropriation, category of art, the borderline of art and non-art, and appreciation of artwork in the transcultural context. She has recently written, “On Appreciating Artworks Involving Cultural Properties” (*Aesthetics* 24: 76-87, 2021).

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Testimony-Images and a Different Kind of Attention

In the paper I analyze the status of photographs depicting victims of violence and the reaction they demand from spectators. I claim that because of the features of photography the images create ethical responsibility on the part of spectators to the photographed person and that this responsibility is actualized in an act of interpretation that is both aesthetic and political. In light of the proposed thesis, I analyze photographs from Abu Ghraib.

Ever since Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*¹⁷¹ it seems to be commonly acknowledged that photographs of others' pain cannot change spectators' behaviors or political views. In light of modern-day fleet of images, her thesis may seem even more accurate. Every day we see thousands of photographs showing other people suffer. Nevertheless, these photographs or at least the majority of them do not bring us out to the streets. Mistrusting photography is understandable. However, some political events make this way of conceptualizing photography seem too narrow. On occasion photographs are placed in the middle of social struggle. These are images that demand our attention, shock us and pose questions about our attitude toward (in)justice. They are not – as Sontag writes¹⁷² – speechless, on the contrary, they render spectators speechless. A recent example of that is Darnella Frazier's video of George Floyd being murdered, that made thousands of people protest against racial injustice.

In this paper I analyze the status of photographs depicting victims of violence – I call them “testimony-images” – and the type of reaction they demand from spectators. I claim that (T1) because of the features of photography testimony-images create ethical responsibility on the part of spectators to a photographed person and that (T2) this responsibility is actualized in an act of interpretation that is both aesthetic and political. In the first section the term “testimony-images” is defined. The second section is devoted to analyzing the shock provoked by testimony-images and how it results from the features of photography. In the next section I analyze how the spectator-photographed relationship can be described in terms of the spectator's ethical responsibility to interpret. I also characterize the political nature of this interpretation. Last section applies the proposed theory to photographs from Abu Ghraib.

¹⁷¹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003).

¹⁷² Susan Sontag, *The Heroism of Vision in: On Photography* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2005), 65-87.

The definition of “testimony-images”

I propose the term “testimony-images”: (a) documentary photographs showing (b) human victims of (c) structural violence. By describing testimony-images as (a) documentary I use common understanding of documentary as opposed to staged photography. I refer to (b) human victims as the intentionality of the first-person testimony could, at least potentially, be ascribed to them. Focusing on (c) structural violence allows me to show the political aspects of testimony-images and their interpretation.

Every photograph that meets (a), (b) and (c) is a testimony-image or a testimony-image *in potentia*. It does not mean that all of them *de facto* function as such. Testimony-images can be used or misused in different discourses, e.g. as visual evidence or pornography of violence. Actualizing their potential as testimonies denies a spectator’s response that I analyze in upcoming sections.

Testimony-images’ ability to shock

Images of violence have the power to shock. We empathize with the photographed person, pity her and at the same time feel thankful for our privilege of safety. But those simple psychological mechanisms do not make photography influential as a mean for social struggle. In fact, in an era of shocking media news, they make it even more inconvenient. Our attention easily jumps from one “shocking” photograph to another and another. I call this kind of shock epidermal, as it focuses only for a moment and only on the surface of a photograph; it has already been broadly questioned in the theory of photography. I contrast it with a different kind of shock, that I call spinal, which comes from understanding the testimonial character of images.

The testimonial character of photography is rooted in the features of this medium. It results from: (I) its ontological status and (II) the character of photographic technology. Roland Barthes¹⁷³ underlines that a photographic image, unlike many others, is a reflection of a captured moment. He writes about light that goes from the photographed object to the photographic emulsion and creates an image. Photography not only represents the photographed object but also confirms “It-was”¹⁷⁴. “It”, the photographic image, is created at the intersection of a past reality that cannot be denied and its present reception (I). Another classical theorist Villém Flusser describes a photo camera as a “black box”¹⁷⁵. A photographer does not have any control

¹⁷³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 76-77.

¹⁷⁵ Villém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 1984), 21-32.

over what is happening *in* a camera. She can only control the *input*, what she photographs. But the *output*, the image itself, is a result of both *input* and the camera's software, which is not subject to the photographer's will (II). Thus, a photographic image is not fully controlled by its author.

Photography, after Barthes, is described as taking place in a triangle between a photographer (i)-the photographed (ii)-a spectator (iii). While relations between (i)-(ii) and (i)-(iii) have been broadly analyzed, (ii)-(iii) seems to have been overlooked. Meanwhile, as Ariella Azoulay¹⁷⁶ and Ulrich Baer¹⁷⁷ highlight (I) and (II) cause the (ii)-(iii) relation to be described as an ethical responsibility that (iii) has to (ii). Because of (I), (iii) cannot deny that "It-was" but she also has to position herself toward (ii). On the other hand (II) allows (iii) to interpret photography "against the grain" – to look for what (ii) could have wanted to say against (i)'s intention. Thus (I) and (II) are necessary conditions for photography to be a testimony-image, however, they are not sufficient. For a photography-image to become a testimony it has to be framed as such by (iii). Only realizing that lets (iii) experience a spinal shock – not only because what is shown on the photograph is horrifying but because she comes to understand the responsibility to (ii) (T1).

Spectator's ethical responsibility

Experiencing a spinal shock is a starting point for a spectator to take responsibility for a testimony – to let it be heard. A testimony-image does not need a caption, but instead it needs the spectator's activity. That makes testimony-images parallel to the concept of "open work" by Umberto Eco¹⁷⁸. Both testimony-images and open works are pieces in a constant process – they are fulfilled by spectators in acts of interpretation. In the case of testimony-images this activity takes the form of looking further and deeper. Trying to understand the context of a photographed event, the structural conditions that made the depicted violence possible. Asking what is behind a frame, but also closely examining what is in it. Looking at the photographed person and imagining what she might have wanted to express. Making an effort not to overlook gestures of micro resistance that might be performed by her. In this process a spectator becomes a link between the photographed and the rest of society. It is an act of giving back voices to those who were silenced by a photographer. As such this act refers to the concept of politics by Jacques

¹⁷⁶ Ariella Azoulay, *Civili Imagination. A Political Ontology of Photography*, trans. Louise Bethlehem (London, New York: Verso, 2015).

¹⁷⁷ Ulrich Baer, *Spectra Evidence. The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2002).

¹⁷⁸ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Rancière¹⁷⁹. He defines politics as deciding who can be heard and who is presented as uncappable of speaking. A dominant discourse presents a photographer as an active subject expressing her intentions via photography and a photographed as a speechless, passive object. In an act of interpretation the spectator changes this division. Thus, an interpretation of testimony-image can be characterized by its double ontology. It is an aesthetic practice and at the same time it is also a political act (T2).

I propose to understand the political nature of interpreting the testimony-images as giving justice to the dead, in reference to Walter Benjamin's messianic mission of a historian¹⁸⁰. He understands it not only as a symbolic act but also as a social struggle rooted in the suffering of those who are gone. After experiencing a spinal shock and understanding, through the act of interpretation, the structural causes of violence, a spectator takes steps to change them. Otherwise, ignoring the testimony, she reperforms the violence by silencing photographed victims.

The case of Abu Ghraib photographs

The photographs taken in the Abu Ghraib prison, depicting prisoners tortured by US soldiers are a well-known and broadly analyzed case of testimony-images. George W. Bush addressed the Abu Ghraib photographs saying that he is "sorry" for the people who have been abused but: "[...] I was equally sorry that the people that have been seeing those pictures did not understand the true nature and the heart of America, [...] that Americans like me didn't appreciate what we saw, and it made us sick to our stomachs"¹⁸¹. Bush's reaction is an example of epidermal shock. It sees the photographed violence as accidental, as an off the rails incident of a system that in itself is just. Contrary to that, some commentators pointed to the structural nature of Abu Ghraib tortures. Jean Baudrillard writes: "The bad conscience of the entire West is crystalized in these images"¹⁸². The epidermal shock masks this, by expressing an unphilosophical amazement with the fact that this kind of violence is still possible and at the end of the day letting everything remain the same.

A spinal shock in reaction to Abu Ghraib photographs is expressed by those who describe it as a phenomenon mirroring broad power relations. Taking this

¹⁷⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible* (London, New York: Continuum, 2004).

¹⁸⁰ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, trans. Dennis Redmond, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>.

¹⁸¹ "Bush 'sorry' for abuse of Iraqi prisoners", *CNN*, May 7, 2004, <https://edition.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/05/07/bush.apology/index.html>.

¹⁸² Jean Baudrillard, „War Porn“, trans. Paul A. Taylor, *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2006), 87.

perspective, we as spectators shall ask ourselves about our place in the dominant structure. Judith Butler writes “[...] in seeing a photo we see ourselves seeing, that we are those photographers to the extent that we share those norms that provide those frames in which those lives are rendered destitute and abject, sometimes clearly beaten to death”¹⁸³. Contrary to what Bush wants to convince us of, we – the “good citizens” – are not as far away from those sadistic torturers as we would like to think. Their crimes are also ours. And that is why it is our, the spectators’ responsibility to reframe those photographs and see those lives as grievable.

To do so we have to take upon ourselves the burden of interpretation. Looking at Abu Ghraib photographs we should not forget that they were taken as another form of torture. Thus, we have to read them against the photographers’ intention as testimonies. See not what the torturer wanted to show us, but what the tortured might have wanted to express. Realize not what is humiliating about being tortured, but what is humiliating about torturing. Understand that it is not these photographs that are disgusting, but rather the structure that has created them.

Despite the reactions that I have recalled, one should not overestimate the influence that Abu Ghraib photographs have had on power structures. The responsibility for them was put on a small group of individuals, not on the US army. They did not change this or any other army. Peggy Phelan writes: “It would be a mistake to suggest that the Abu Ghraib photographs inspired actions that helped change the world. [...] Nonetheless, I do want to contend that at the level of the individual viewer [...] something noteworthy happen”¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸³ Judith Butler, “Torture and the Ethics of Photography”, *Environment and Planning D. Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007), 965.

¹⁸⁴ Peggy Phelan, *Atrocity and Action. The Performative Force of Abu Ghraib Photographs* in: *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen et al (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 60.

As I agree with her on some level, I do believe that the importance of testimony-images' is greater than just changing the spectator's consciousness. They call for changing the structures of injustice and as such the Abu Ghraib testimony still needs to be fulfilled.

Conclusion

The first section presented the definition of "testimony-images" as documentary photographs showing human victims of structural violence. In the second section I proposed a division between epidermal and spinal shock that these images provoke. Spinal shock was analyzed, referring to Barthes and Flusser, as emerging from the features of the photographic medium. Based on that I described the relation between the photographer, the photographed and the spectator and claimed that because of the features of photography, testimony-images create a spectator's ethical responsibility to the photographed person (T1). In the third section I developed (T1), recalling Rancière and Eco, by analyzing how this responsibility is actualized in an act of interpretation that is both aesthetic and political (T2). Last section was devoted to analyzing Abu Ghraib photographs as unfulfilled testimony.

Biography

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Aesthetic Fatigue and Attentional Overloading

Abstract

This paper addresses the concept of aesthetic fatigue, which is a topic emerging in traditional art history, being originally meant to explain stylistic evolution. I argue that this phenomenon can be explained both in terms of perception and that attention. I distinguish between two layers of exhaustion, namely i) full cognitive mastery or the acquirement of a far too clear sense of form and ii) attention overload or the inability to admit for processing too much sensory information at once (Wu, 2014). Elaborating on this second understanding of exhaustion, I draw on recent models of philosophical aesthetics (Schaeffer, 2015; Citton, 2017) to develop an account of aesthetic fatigue in terms of impossibility of cognitive and perceptual apprehension. I argue that exhaustion, in the aesthetic context, can occur at the level of attention and thus lead to attentional overloading.

I. What Is Aesthetic Fatigue?

The context in which the topic of aesthetic fatigue emerges is late nineteenth century art history, which was highly preoccupied with perceptual psychology. For instance, in Adolf Göller's "What Is the Cause of Perpetual Style Change in Architecture?"¹⁸⁵, aesthetic fatigue points to a mental phenomenon of indifference to pure forms, that is, to forms that are inherently pleasurable, irrespective of their semantic content. On Göller's view, one becomes fatigued with (pleasure in) pure form, rather than with conceptual content, which can hardly ever be exhausted. More specifically, the notion is meant to capture the fluctuating "sensibility to the beauty of the decorative forms of architectural styles"¹⁸⁶, resulting ultimately in style change. Although it is originally aimed at architecture, the notion applies equally to all art forms. The jading or fatigue that affects the evaluation of form is here considered at the scale of stylistic periods; it is a generational affair, recurring every several decades¹⁸⁷. On this

¹⁸⁵ Adolf Göller, 'What Is the Cause of Perpetual Style Change in Architecture?' (1887), in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave, Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica, CA : The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 193-225.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 194-195, 207.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

view, for instance, modern art might be considered to having displaced old values out of aesthetic fatigue¹⁸⁸.

The notion as such has received little attention on the part of aestheticians (if any); nonetheless, as I will suggest, it is implied in some contemporary models of aesthetic experience that touch upon the question of attention overload. I will first elaborate on Göller's original understanding of aesthetic fatigue.

According to Göller, aesthetic fatigue can be described in terms of the activity of one's perceptual systems, obeying to a psychological law according to which high familiarity with beautiful forms is associated with pleasure exhaustion or jading, where pleasure is understood mostly as visual pleasure. The psychological law of fatigue is stated as follows: "*delight in form ceases as soon as the [memory] image is complete*, for then no more work can be accomplished. [...] Thus, we have a law governing our attitude toward pure form that says: *Our pleasure in the beauty of a meaningless form diminishes when its image becomes too clear and complete in our memory*. This is the far-reaching psychological law of the *jading [Ermüdung] of the sense of form*, which imposes perpetual style change on architecture"¹⁸⁹. Here memory images act as cognitive residues, they are unconscious remnants of sensations left by exposure to pure forms, providing the basis for our knowledge. Moreover, it is the acquisition of memory images and the mental effort of recalling them that is the source of pleasure, not the attunement to the perceptual world per se¹⁹⁰.

One can see that, according to this law, which is meant to be universally valid, aesthetic fatigue is based on prior associations and art historical memory; it is not arising from the experience of immediate sensations¹⁹¹. Only that the limitations of our memory are such that this absolute clarity of forms and their absolute recollection are hardly ever achieved. Thus, for Göller, the concept of aesthetic fatigue is not really instantiated in the layperson's experience, being rather reserved only to specialists, experts (e.g., 'masters of the greatest ages of architecture'¹⁹²) who have acquired art historical understanding, who are able

¹⁸⁸ Pamela M. Lee, 'Ultramoderne: Or How George Kubler Stole the Time in the Sixties Art', in *Chronophobia. On Time in the Art of the 1960s*, ed. Pamela M. Lee (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2004), 229.

¹⁸⁹ Göller, 'What Is the Cause', 204.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 201-202; see also George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 74.

¹⁹¹ Mitchell Schwarzer, 'Visual Historicism in the Aesthetics of Adolf Goller', *Art History* 18, no.4 (1995): 570, 574; Christian Parreno, 'Boredom and Space: Blunting and Jading as Causes of Change in Architecture', *The Journal of Architecture* 20, no. 5 (2015): 835.

¹⁹² Göller, 'What Is the Cause', 206.

to bring to mind forms of art from the past¹⁹³. Which is consistent with Göller's idea that the sense of beauty is a lasting achievement, something we form gradually, in time, through the development of one's perceptual faculties¹⁹⁴. An objection would be that one can think of repertoires of forms that never really wear out (i.e., Gombrich, on the Egyptians' decorative repertory¹⁹⁵).

II. Layers of Exhaustion

Göller's law of exhaustion or jading invites a reflection on several questions. What is the locus for aesthetic fatigue: is it perception or memory, or attention or...? Where does exhaustion occur, at what level etc.? What exactly becomes fatigued: is it a sense of form, or knowledge of form¹⁹⁶ or some other type of receptiveness? For Göller, exhaustion is induced by forms that become too obvious, no longer communicating any information or knowledge¹⁹⁷. On this view, styles become exhausted when there occurs a disengagement with visual forms. But there is yet another layer of exhaustion. The negative counterpart of deficiency of information is information overload. If exhaustion arises from void, from valueless stimulation, it can equally arise from a great inflow of information, or information excess. One may of course ask against what norm is information excessive. A possible answer is the scarcity of our attentional resources. If Göller has laid down the principles of fatigue in terms of perception and memory, I would like to pursue the analysis of this concept in terms of attention. I argue that aesthetic fatigue is equally connected to a fundamental problem of attention, which is that of overloading. To this end, I distinguish between two layers of exhaustion, related to two oppositional concepts, namely:

- i) full cognitive mastery or the acquirement of a far too clear sense of form, leading eventually to discarding and displacing old values and
- ii) attention overload or the inability to admit for processing too much sensory information at once¹⁹⁸.

i) Full cognitive mastery, which, as we have seen, would be followed by total recollection of forms, is the result of an over-practiced memory for form¹⁹⁹, the content of which can no longer be enriched: "Why examine a form that one already knows by heart? This is the state of indifference or jading. In this state

¹⁹³ Schwarzer, 'Visual Historicism', 573.

¹⁹⁴ Göller, 'What Is the Cause', 202.

¹⁹⁵ E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, "The Wrightsman Lectures delivered under the auspices of the New York Institute of Fine Arts (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), 212.

¹⁹⁶ Göller, 'What Is the Cause', 217-218.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 205; see also Kubler, *Shape of Time*, 73-74.

¹⁹⁸ Wayne Wu, *Attention* (London, Routledge, 2014).

¹⁹⁹ Göller, 'What Is the Cause', 202-203, 205.

the form is not at all considered ugly or judged less favorably than before. Yet the viewing lacks its old incentive because the form seems obvious and lacking in charm, like an ingenious but long-solved puzzle”²⁰⁰. Cognitive mastery triggers a sanded-down sensibility close to boredom, that we may also call jaded familiarity or *trop vu*.

ii) Attention overload occurs when aesthetic apprehension is impaired because the selection process itself is hindered; information retrieval can no longer function properly because stimulation is overabundant, overflowing our attentional capacity. In this case, aesthetic fatigue is no longer a matter of exhaustion with the same formal motives but of exhaustion with too many new discoveries, in an environment with overabundant aesthetic supply²⁰¹, that exceeds the capacity of the mind to assimilate it²⁰². Hence the idea of competition for attention. Overload can also occur below the attentional threshold, and then aesthetic fatigue takes the form of nervous exhaustion. We can think here of several perceptual errors triggered by op art, the flicker effect etc.²⁰³. On this account, as opposed to Göller’s conception of aesthetic fatigue, pressure is put on working memory, rather than on long-term memory. Moreover, if for Göller aesthetic fatigue elicited by cognitive mastery is essential for the development of form²⁰⁴, when it is due to attention overload, aesthetic fatigue impedes such development. Aesthetic fatigue understood in this second sense speaks to the situation of many contemporary artistic phenomena. It is more and more predicated upon new technological art forms, which are in constant flow²⁰⁵.

III. Aesthetic Experience and Attention Overload

So far, I have analyzed aesthetic fatigue along a continuum between inattention and attention overload. I would like now to draw on some recent models of philosophical aesthetics²⁰⁶ that might further illuminate this mental phenomenon. I elaborate on the thesis that exhaustion, in the aesthetic context, can occur at the level of attention and thus lead to attentional overloading.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

²⁰¹ Yves Citton, *The Ecology of Attention*, transl. by Barnaby Norman (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2017), 15.

²⁰² Schwarzer, ‘Visual Historicism’, 575-576.

²⁰³ Gombrich, *The Sense of Order*, 134.

²⁰⁴ Göller, ‘What Is the Cause’, 217.

²⁰⁵ Yang Li, Changjun Hu, Leandro L. Minku, Haolei Zuo, “Learning Aesthetic Judgments in Evolutionary Art Systems”, *Genetic Programming and Evolvable Machines*, 14 (2013): 335.

²⁰⁶ Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *L’Expérience esthétique* (Paris, Gallimard, 2015) ; Citton, *Ecology of Attention*.

Aesthetic fatigue is a possible consequence of the generic model of aesthetic experience proposed by Jean-Marie Schaeffer in his book *L'Expérience esthétique*. Schaeffer's thesis is that what distinguishes aesthetic attention from other modes of attention is what he calls "maximized attentional investment"²⁰⁷, which he connects to a divergent attentional style, that is, to a disposition to adopt a more costly information processing strategy, that exploits and explores the complexity of information in all its richness; this strategy favors low selectivity of information and delayed categorization of whatever is thus processed. Unlike the psychophysical economy of stimulation which follows the law of maximum of stimulation with minimum of fatigue, the cognitive economy of aesthetic stimulation is a costly one, and this cost is understood both in terms of attention and emotion²⁰⁸. The explanation of aesthetic experience in terms of cognitive divergence counters some recent psychological accounts in terms of fluency²⁰⁹, a concept regarding the quality of processing that is very close to Göller's jaded familiarity, which stress that when stimulation is facilitated, either at a perceptual or at a conceptual level, it causes positive affect. As Schaeffer rightly remarks, fluency is operative only below a certain threshold; above it, it no longer elicits hedonic valence but boredom²¹⁰. Or fatigue, in Göller's sense.

Part of the difficulty with the thesis regarding the maximized attentional investment arises from the fact that, as Schaeffer himself acknowledges, this cognitive strategy is often operating at the limit of attentional overload²¹¹. What could be preventing attentional resources from being exhausted in the aesthetic act? How can we be sure that the distributed attention that we engage in aesthetic experience results in value creation²¹² rather than in overload and exhaustion? Thus, an experience (i.e., aesthetic experience) that originally promised to "establish vacuoles of silence capable of protecting us from the incessant communication that overloads us with crushing information", and allow us to construct and individuate the world²¹³, would in fact elicit the very same effect of cognitive overloading.

A convincing answer provided by Schaeffer to these questions is that the costly cognitive process of aesthetic attention is regulated by an internal reward; more

²⁰⁷ Schaeffer, *L'Expérience esthétique*, 62-63, 76-77.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 212-213, 230-237.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 235-237.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 101-104, 319, 326.

²¹² Citton, *Ecology of Attention*, 201-203, 211.

²¹³ Schaeffer, *L'Expérience esthétique*, 179, 203; Citton, *Ecology of Attention*, 34.

specifically, there is an unconscious hedonic reinforcement²¹⁴ that acts as a filter for incoming information and serves to calibrate the stimuli, thus counterbalancing overload. Attention is thus tied to a hedonic reaction, and a balance between the two keeps the aesthetic experience going²¹⁵. The appeal of Schaeffer's explanation notwithstanding, the question remains open as to whether such internal reward that is supposed to be elicited by our subpersonal systems suffices to eliminate all possibility of aesthetic fatigue.

To conclude, with this reframing of aesthetic fatigue in terms of attentional overloading, I aimed to throw some light on a negative counterpart of aesthetic appreciation that hasn't received so far that much attention. Whereas from the original context of late nineteenth century art history aesthetic fatigue comes out as the result of a judgment of comparison based on art historical memory and knowledge of the succession of art forms in time, from contemporary models of attention economy it appears to be arising from immediate, ongoing experience, being the result of overabundant aesthetic stimulation. It would be worthwhile to see whether there were other antecedents of aesthetic exhaustion in art historical and, possibly, aesthetic discourse, as well as to look at specific examples of such a forsaken form of aesthetic reception.

Biography

Ancuta Mortu received her PhD in Aesthetics from the EHESS (Centre de Recherches sur les Arts et le Langage, Paris), with a thesis on the genealogy of psychological aesthetics. She was Global Humanities Junior Research Fellow at Freie Universität Berlin within the Thematic Network *Principles of Cultural Dynamics* and fellow of the Research Institute of the University of Bucharest (ICUB). Currently, she is research fellow at the New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study (NEC). Ancuta has published research papers in academic journals such as *Estetika*, *Nouvelle revue d'esthétique*, *Marges*, *Phenomenology and Mind*, etc. Her research interests include mental

²¹⁴ "aesthetic experience could be defined as a bidirectional feedback loop established between the attention paid to the object (artwork or whatever) and an online hedonic calculus evaluating the positive or negative valence of the attentional process as it unfolds in time. Several points must be stressed: it is the attentional process which is evaluated by the hedonic calculator and not directly the object (although the appreciation will generally be projected on the processed object); this implies that the processing is meta-cognitive and reflective in important ways; the feedback goes both directions; the hedonic evaluation is done online, which means that it regulates and is affected by the attentional processing". Jean-Marie, Schaeffer, 'Aesthetic Relationship, Cognition, and the Pleasures of Art', in *Investigations Into the Phenomenology and the Ontology of the Work of Art: What are Artworks and How Do We Experience Them?*, ed. Peer F. Bundgaard, Frederik Stjernfelt (Heidelberg: Springer, *Contributions to Phenomenology*, vol. 81, 2015), 160.

²¹⁵ Schaeffer, *L'Expérience esthétique*, 180-181, 201, 211.

processes underpinning aesthetic appreciation and cognitive developments in philosophical aesthetics, art theory and art history.

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The Defaults of Attention. Interest versus Love.

Abstract

In this paper, I develop the ideas posed in *Filtration Failure: On Selection for Societal Sanity*. I consider the *defaults* of attention in *paying* attention by following the emotions of interest and love. Interest is explored via algorithmic governmentability, while love is interpreted through aesthetic experimentation by the avant-garde and amateurs. As distinguished from a lack of information, the question of information overload, or Annie Le Brun's reality overload, is problematized in terms of filtration failure. Filtration failure and hyper-industrialization produce deindividuation, i.e., attentional and symbolic privation. At variance with censorship, attention behaviors are affected by calculated contexts, optimization algorithms judging excessive attention space based on past choices. Such privations mentioned above disrupt care and allow for probabilistic, prefabricated, default attention behavior. I consider Bernard Stiegler's concept of *default* through Augustine of Hippo's interpretation of Evil [*Malus*] as the diminution of Being. I transcribe Evil from his theodicy to Stiegler's notions of *mal-être* and *malaise* (ill-being), which are questions of symbolic misery in attention's aesthetic conditioning. The symbolic *defaults* as the diabolic, mandating pharmacological care.

Keywords: Attention, Bernard Stiegler, Neganthropocene, Aesthetic Conditioning, Aesthetic Experience, Evil, Information Overload, Annie le Brun, Mania, Pharmakon.

I will expand on ideas posed in *Filtration Failure*, where I adopted the notion of *Selection for Societal Sanity* (S3) from *Metal Gear Solid 2*,²¹⁶ in which I related selection to the maintenance of public reason, communal order, and symbolic well-being. I claim that attentional infrastructure is cosmetic [*κόσμος*], and it necessitates time [*σχολή*] for both synchronic and diachronic activities (the symbolic and diabolic)²¹⁷ in exchanging and sharing beliefs, including art. The S3 plan weaponizes noise: censorship has been privatized

²¹⁶ Adrian Mróz, "Filtration Failure: On Selection for Societal Sanity," *Kultura i Historia* 34, no. 2 (2018): 72–89.

²¹⁷ Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, trans. David Barison, Patrick Crogan, and Daniel Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

and pragmatized as information overload.²¹⁸ Instead of controlling content, contexts are created. Everyone is their own censor, and users exhibiting predictable, exploitable behaviors are instrumentally replicated by measurements of interest.

We could say that the main challenges of post-truth lie in the proletarianization of attention practices and the loss of love. Transformations of attention are practiced by learning how to cultivate, i.e., *love*; attention is not reducible to functions of “interestingness.”²¹⁹ Proletarianization is the loss of belief, technical knowledge, and aesthetic affectivity characteristic of art amateurs’ attention behaviors towards the objects of their practices of care, artworks: “Art amateurs love works of art. And insofar as they love them, these artworks *work on* them—that is to say, the amateur is trans-*formed* by them: *individuated* by them.”²²⁰ However, “[...] it often becomes more and more difficult to say that one *loves* a work: one finds this or that ‘interesting.’ [... The] average judgment of the average person, subjected to the averages of modern mass society. [...]: in these cases, *loving no longer has any meaning*. In this case, one is tempted to give the assessment that I called mediocre: ‘it’s interesting’ or ‘it’s not interesting.’”²²¹ This reduction characterizes what Daniel Kahneman describes as thinking *fast*, automatic, heuristic perception.²²²

Bernard Stiegler develops primary retention and secondary retention with spatialized time, i.e., *tertiary retention*, the technics that organize judgment: the perception and memory²²³ constitutive of the interplay amongst living, living well, and living better.²²⁴ Living better, what Stiegler calls *consistence*, aims at that which does not exist, like the future or art itself.²²⁵ I view selection [κρίνω] and sanity [σῶς] as means to reflect on the defaults of paying

²¹⁸ Annie Le Brun, *The Reality Overload: The Modern World’s Assault on the Imaginal Realm*, trans. Jon E. Graham, 1st U.S. ed (Rochester, Vt: Inner Traditions, 2008).

²¹⁹ Bernard Stiegler, “The Proletarianization of Sensibility,” trans. Arne De Boever, *Boundary 2* 44, no. 1 (February 2017): 5–18, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-3725833>; Bernard Stiegler, “The Quarrel of the Amateurs,” trans. Robert Hughes, *Boundary 2* 44, no. 1 (February 2017): 35–52, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-3725857>.

²²⁰ Stiegler, “The Proletarianization of Sensibility,” 7.

²²¹ Stiegler, 10, 12.

²²² Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

²²³ Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, Vol. 2. Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²²⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929).

²²⁵ Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2013).

attention²²⁶, by which I mean practicing sound judgment²²⁷ and being attentive. I view *attention* as a perceived²²⁸ and acquired organological behavior with reciprocating economies of initiation and consistency.²²⁹ I interpret paying attention as investing the *senses* care-fully, i.e., socially sensing and thinking *with* a desired intentional object.

The attentional modes of interest and love engage and disengage the senses differently and vary in degrees of affect, such as intimacy. Interestingness differs from care qua love, *mania* [μᾶνία]²³⁰. In addition, the inspired judgments of mania result from *pharmaka*—such as magic, paints, cosmetics, or wine. A *pharmakon* is composed of dual tendencies, i.e., living the mystery of love, a mystagogy in which we celebrate and pro-claim a mystery, a belief, and interest's fall towards mystification, a loss of belief²³¹. Art objects are pharmacologically charged with the power to reinforce *and* weaken attention: to invest and divest the attachments of perception.²³² Simultaneously, *disciplined* interest in artistic *technique* directs perceptive behavior and its idiosyncratic attention practices.

²²⁶ In various languages, select idiomatic linguistic expressions focus and direct intentionality to various actions. Other English expressions could include: lending an ear, keeping an eye out, or peeled, or aphorisms like the devil is in the details

²²⁷ In Polish “zdrowy rozsądek”, translated as common-sense, word-for-word *healthy reason* or *healthy sense*, means the ability to act and make decisions well. Compare with: G. S. Kirk, “Sense and Common-Sense in the Development of Greek Philosophy,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 81 (November 1961): 105–17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/628080>.

²²⁸ We could ask, “How do we come to access attention?”. Life, as auto-affective negentropy, has a phenomenological meaning. Compare with: Michel Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. G.J. Etzkorn (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1975).

²²⁹ Derek Melser, *The Act of Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Stiegler, “The Proletarianization of Sensibility,” 10–11.

²³⁰ Fábio Alexandre Matilde Serranito, “Lovers and Madmen: The Μᾶνία-Φρονεῖν Opposition in Plato’s Phaedrus” (Lisbon, NOVA University, 2015), <https://run.unl.pt/handle/10362/16256>.

²³¹ Bernard Stiegler, “The Tongue of the Eye: What ‘Art History’ Means,” in *Releasing the Image: From Literature to New Media* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 222–35; Ed Cohen, “Dare to Care: Between Stiegler’s Mystagogy and Foucault’s Aesthetics of Existence,” *Boundary 2* 44, no. 1 (February 2017): 149–66, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-3725917>; Stiegler, “The Proletarianization of Sensibility,” 7.

²³² Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology*; Aesthetics Seminar Group et al., “In Response to Bernard Stiegler: A Pharmacological Avant-Garde,” *InPrint* 3, no. 1 (December 2, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.21427/D7G992>; Bernard Stiegler et al., “A Rational Theory of Miracles: On Pharmacology and Transindividuation,” *New Formations*, no. 77 (December 1, 2012): 164–84, <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF.77.10.2012>; Gerald Moore, “The Pharmacology of Addiction,” *Parrhesia* 29 (2018): 190–211.

Thus far, Data Behaviorism²³³ has been disrupting careful social selection processes. The Kantian faculties of judgment are being outsourced to algorithms that operate faster than the speed of thought.²³⁴ With the deterioration of authority, such disorientation is being reified complexly since collective filtration practices are exteriorized via psychoinformatics.²³⁵ Attention practices are captured and recorded in industrial data assortments of particularized traces of behaviors. Users prefabricate their future selves. In other words, hyper-synchronization with the selfsame results in deindividuation; a user's subjection to cognitive computing's convergence with Big Data²³⁶ reinforces a tendency to eliminate statistical outliers. In turn, the privatized attention economies of post-truth call for socialized post-fiction.²³⁷ Slow intergenerational exchanges of singularities over time inspire trans-individuation, leading to the collective transformation of knowledge through deliberate arborizations, which come from the elevation of accidental discoveries thanks to the "expectation of the unexpected."²³⁸

The love-interest bond leads us to the questions of *paying* attention and its *defaults*²³⁹ such as the aesthetic economies of care and gift-giving, the artworld, pre-selections or prefabrications, and the entanglement of autonomy and automatization. Likewise, the aesthetic axiom is "the object of a *judgment by de-fault*."²⁴⁰ Interest wants objective analysis, whereas love synthesizes and universalizes. It is a belief, idealization, and fiction. With that said, attention can now be conceptualized through Augustine of Hippo's interpretation of Evil [*Malus*], a *default* of Being. A corruption of reciprocity in an aesthetic

²³³ Antoinette Rouvroy, "The End(s) of Critique : Data-Behaviourism vs. Due-Process," in *Privacy, Due Process and the Computational Turn. Philosophers of Law Meet Philosophers of Technology*, ed. Mireille Hildebrandt and Ekatarina De Vries (London: Routledge, 2013).

²³⁴ Bernard Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption: Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2019).

²³⁵ Christian Montag, Éilish Duke, and Alexander Markowetz, "Toward Psychoinformatics: Computer Science Meets Psychology," *Computational and Mathematical Methods in Medicine* 2016 (2016): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/2983685>.

²³⁶ Shivam Gupta et al., "Big Data with Cognitive Computing: A Review for the Future," *International Journal of Information Management* 42 (October 2018): 78–89, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.06.005>.

²³⁷ Paul Muhlhauser and Daniel Schafer, "POOC Yourself: The University Beyond the Classroom," *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* 22, no. 2 (2018), <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/22.2/disputatio/muhlhauser-schafer/index.html>.

²³⁸ Bernard Stiegler, "The New Conflict of the Faculties and Functions: Quasi-Causality and Serendipity in the Anthropocene," trans. Daniel Ross, *Qui Parle* 26, no. 1 (2017): 89–90, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10418385-3822421>.

²³⁹ Credit [*crédō*] expresses an *eidos* attached to a future. It involves shared faith, imagination, recognition, and contribution. As an *eidos*, it substantially evokes attention. Paying attention, i.e., being attentive, is valuable, especially in knowledge production and the arts. We could say attention *default* occurs when attention is not reciprocated nor transformed.

²⁴⁰ Stiegler, "The Proletarianization of Sensibility," 7.

attentional economy, i.e., symbolic misery, results in ill-being (*mal-être*), a *malaise* of spirit (demotivation), and mind (senselessness). Loveless attention and symbolic privation result from mystagogy passing to mystification: reducing the *infinite* to *finite* calculations. Comparably, there is an asymmetry in that Evil is dependent upon Being, i.e., Good, and not the reverse. Hence, asymmetry and enantiosemy mandate taking care of the composition and decomposition of attention's filtration practices and systems of care, art's political economies.

Default attentional modes are reinforced with industrial aesthetic conditioning in which interest is quantified by measuring the time a user interacts with stimuli through algorithmic governmentability.²⁴¹ What is at stake is infinitely loving the *work* of art by intimately transforming art [*τέχνη*] and individuating oneself through aesthetic experimentation, as pursued by the avant-garde and amateurs.²⁴² Nonetheless, we should note that being interested but not in love (i.e., mediocre judgment)²⁴³ does not equate with disinterested love. The distinction, not opposition, between love – a general feeling – and interest – an analytical feeling – poses a problem in the philosophy of art, especially the notion of *disinterestedness*, which denotes distance and the repression of one emotion. For instance, although both love and fear are associated, love represses fear and expresses love-relevant stimuli, whereas fear represses love and expresses the tendency to dwell on fear-relevant stimuli.²⁴⁴ Similarly, disinterestedness can collapse into deindividuation, a repression of the interest needed for love to over-take it (sur-prise.)²⁴⁵

Modern disinterestedness, as outsourcing and deindividuating aesthetic judgment, is a variation of *alienation*. According to what Annie Le Brun calls *globalist realism*, the financialized artworld exploits the protocols of attention with a reality overload, interestingness protocols that repress the *revolutionary* potential of beauty. The primal emotion of interest overtaken by

²⁴¹ Antoinette Rouvroy, Thomas Berns, and Elizabeth Libbrecht, "Algorithmic Governmentality and Prospects of Emancipation," *Reseaux* No 177, no. 1 (October 14, 2013): 163–96; Rouvroy, "The End(s) of Critique : Data-Behaviourism vs. Due-Process."

²⁴² Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery, Vol.1. The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2014); Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Vol. 2. The Catastrophe of the Sensible*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2015); Stiegler, "The Quarrel of the Amateurs."

²⁴³ Teodora Prelipcean, "Saint Augustine – The Apologist of Love," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 149 (September 2014): 765–71, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.08.309>.

²⁴⁴ George Georgiou et al., "Focusing on Fear: Attentional Disengagement from Emotional Faces," *Visual Cognition* 12, no. 1 (January 2005): 145–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13506280444000076>.

²⁴⁵ Stiegler, "The Proletarianization of Sensibility," 14.

art's transformational mania is precluded.²⁴⁶ Such alienated financial interest corrupts attending to innumerable, priceless, Goods such as boredom, sleep, or daydreaming. Art judged as merely “interesting” corrupts love. The artworld suffers from a loss of technical, aesthetic knowledge, typical of “cultivated philistines.”²⁴⁷ In other words, the most probable judgment, neither hot nor cold, is manifested, which is entropic, depriving transformative energy needed to change, work, and care. Judgments that are reduced to interestingness become inabilities to love, to judge, and transform taste.

Globalist realism and hyper-industrialization produce deindividuation, i.e., attentional and symbolic poverty—*defaults*. Instead of censorship, program industries influence attention behaviors via the surplus production²⁴⁸ of calculated contexts, and the deprivation mentioned above disrupts care and allows for the engineering default attention behavior. This privation is also a problem of transitional objects, which emerge from the economy of attention and care that Donald Winnicott described²⁴⁹, especially since parenting is increasingly becoming proletarianized. Such excess inattention results in the ill-being of symbolic poverty. Attentive behavior's composition of symbolic and diabolic mechanisms regress into patterns that are mechanically exploited through a calculation that eliminates love's rhythms and singularity, i.e., risk. Filtration failure makes censorship redundant and interestingness imperative.

Biography

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²⁴⁶ Annie Le Brun, *Ce Qui n'a Pas de Prix: Beauté, Laideur et Politique*, Les Essais (Paris: Stock, 2018); Le Brun, *The Reality Overload*.

²⁴⁷ Stiegler, “The Proletarianization of Sensibility,” 14.

²⁴⁸ Andrew Abbott, “The Problem of Excess,” *Sociological Theory* 32, no. 1 (March 2014): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275114523419>.

²⁴⁹ Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, Reprint, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2010).

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On the performativity of disinterested attention for the experience of contemporary art.

Abstract

Contemplation and disinterestedness are declining concepts, if we relate them to contemporary art, which is increasingly directed towards interactive and participatory practices. The aim of this paper is to bring them back into the game, in relation to disinterested attention (borrowing as a work in progress definition the one formulated by Bence Nanay), to point out that attentional practices are heterogeneous and they do not simply overlap with notions of control and action/reaction; actually, they cannot be thought without the concepts of non-productivity, non-instrumentality, following Jonathan Crary's theories, and contemplation as performative inactivity. A more nuanced understanding of attention is necessary: a standard definition like “focused” attention needs to be more flexible.

I would like to use disinterested and free-floating attention as tools to better understand the dynamics of the transition from spectator to participant/agent of an artwork, and therefore to underline the porosity between activity and passivity, often presented as an unavoidable and insuperable polarity. If considering attention in relation to executive functions (planning and organizing our experience in the world we live in; experiencing art is in several respects an “organized activity”, quoting Alva Noë) could be persuasive, a self-evident definition of attention strictly considered as “selection for action” is less convincing. The weakness of this connection becomes clear when goal-oriented attitude is pushed into the background: that is, when we experience artworks. Attention is often researched into to improve our performances (even when we “zone out”, when our minds wanders, we should make something out of it) and to overcome the inevitable “blind spots”, taking into account the inescapable selectivity of our attentional practices. Experiencing art, though, is about a different way of paying attention, that is fluctuating, “suspended”, fragmented.

Aesthetic attention: contemplation, action, productivity.

The concept of contemplation is traditionally opposed to action and participation. Immanuel Kant defined contemplation as the disregard towards the object's existence: in contrast to popular interpretations of the Third Critique, this does not rule out performativity; it is a circular, self-reinforcing gaze, which does not produce any profit except for the perception of the activity in itself. The “loop” of aesthetic attention is not rewarding in the short term:

these are repetitive processes, and they require time, space and precise conditions (more often than not hard to carve out in our day-to-day life) to unfold. Emilio Garroni, an Italian philosopher and acute interpreter of Kantian philosophy, highlights how aesthetically contemplating an object, or a representation, does not amount to experience it in a “original void, through a pure sentiment of astonishment”.²⁵⁰ This analysis is part of a wider consideration, according to which the ability to make sense of our experience of the world never results in an impeccable synthesis: the necessary incompleteness of the data we filter from our surroundings is actually productive, as well as an “undeniable adaptive benefit”;²⁵¹ in terms of attentional practices, there is a perpetual overlap of determinacy and vagueness. “Staring” (if we intend it as a completely still gaze), pure contemplation, are not only unobtainable conditions, but also unprofitable, in so far as we cannot trust (as it happens instead for non-human animals) unambiguous signals from our senses: to that extent it is possible to talk about disinterested experience (or mediated, second-degree, not tied to immediate survival needs, interest).²⁵² In *The Burnout Society*, Byung-chul Han ascribes to wild animals the ability, out of necessity, to multitask at all times; this is why an animal would be “incapable of contemplative immersion (...) because it must also process background events”; the author describes this mode of attention as “broad but flat”. Multitasking, according to this view, “does not represent civilizational progress”;²⁵³ without questioning the outcomes of this theory, the overabundance of stimuli and impulses is a peculiarity of our time, and this affects without a doubt the structures of our attentional practices, and consequently the way we act in the world (as spectators as well as participants). Attention is often described as capable of shaping the subject’s agency: following the model of the so-called “Many-Many Problem”,²⁵⁴ the subject can act only if she selects one of the many external inputs, associated with a coherent behavioral output. This can only be done through the exercise of attention; otherwise, proper action would be inhibited. Interestingly, according to this kind of theories, action is intended exclusively as an efficient performance with a clear and specific goal; the question is if selective attention is necessarily tied to action. In the terms of the Many-Many Problem: is it true that every action requires a reduction of the many-many set of options to a one-one relation?

²⁵⁰ Emilio Garroni, *Estetica ed Epistemologia: riflessioni sulla Critica del Giudizio* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1967), 97.

²⁵¹ Emilio Garroni, *Immagine Linguaggio Figura* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2005), 22.

²⁵² Garroni, *Immagine Linguaggio Figura*, 23.

²⁵³ Byung-chul Han, *The Burnout Society* (California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 25.

²⁵⁴ Wayne Wu, *Attention as Selection for Action*, in *Attention: Philosophical and Psychological Essays*, edited by Christopher Mole, Declan Smithies & Wayne Wu, 97-116. Oxford University Press, 2011.

A condition of totally focused concentration is not always forthcoming; even when it is achievable, is it really able to unfailingly lead to the ability of unifying the totality of experience in a path full of meaning? Is there a chance to find a way to navigate our experience of the world so confidently, or would it be best to leave room for inevitable vagueness? Many studies on attention are made to show that, if we are able to direct our “interior experience”, there is the possibility to make sense of our experience of the world, automatically and easily, to control it and so to be happy:²⁵⁵ in short, to live in a “custom-tailored reality”.²⁵⁶ Most of contemporary literature on attention is focused on how we can improve our performances through attentional practices: Cathy Davidson claims that we need to overcome our structural attentional blindness, which appears to be “a tremendous opportunity”²⁵⁷ that should be exploited, to discover what we are missing and include it in a pattern we can keep track of. “Now you see it”, because if you strive to make your distraction productive, to overcome the “imperfect way”²⁵⁸ in which your brain works, you’ll see it. But how about when it is not required to act “effectively”? How attention works outside dynamics of productivity?

My take here is that there is a space between pure reflex and the resolution of a hypothetical Many-Many Problem, in which takes place what Jonathan Crary defined the “adaptive performance of the body to a milieu, involving connectedness and decision, and not simply reaction”.²⁵⁹ It is precisely in this space that artistic experience is located; as Alva Noë claims, “artworks are not response trigger, and aesthetic experiences are nothing like events switched on the brain”.²⁶⁰

Disinterested attention, free-floating attention.

According to George Dickie, there are no “special actions” to carry out in front of the artistic object: there is only one way to experience it, and that is, paying attention, or don’t.²⁶¹ The point here is to question the alleged straightforwardness of the attentional practices at stake in aesthetic, and artistic, experience.

²⁵⁵ “Your ability to focus on *this* and suppress *that* is the key to controlling your experience and, ultimately, your well-being”. Winifred Gallagher, *Rapt. Attention and the Focused Life* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 7.

²⁵⁶ Gallagher, *Rapt*, 14.

²⁵⁷ Cathy N. Davidson, *Now You See It. How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work and Learn* (New York: Viking, 2011), 12.

²⁵⁸ Cathy N. Davidson, *Now You See It*, 14.

²⁵⁹ Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (MIT Press, 1999), 348-349.

²⁶⁰ Alva Noë, *Strange Tools. Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), 124.

²⁶¹ George Dickie, “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude”, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (January 1964).

Aesthetic experience is so frowned upon because it is assumed to be essentially disinterested, as Immanuel Kant describes it in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*: it is not wholly explainable on the basis of utility, and it is also separate from idiosyncratic, private, subjective interests. We are used to think about contemplation as a passive pleasure: instead, it is not completely detached from practice and everything related to it, in so far as the meaning of “practice” is misunderstood, if reduced merely to an action undertaken in order to accomplish a specific goal. The dialectic between attention and disinterestedness is self-contradictory at first glance, the first being traditionally connected with selection and the act of discriminating: that is why the majority of attention’s definitions are conceived outside aesthetic experience. An exception is Bence Nanay’s theory: the author proposes a re-interpretation of the Kantian notion of disinterestedness in the sense of “disinterested attention”, as a peculiar trait of a specific kind of aesthetic experience. According to Nanay, it is “just a false claim”²⁶² that there is only one type of attention: the author elaborates on four different ways we can exercise our attention, mixing the traditional definitions. For the sake of brevity, I will focus on just two of them: “distributed with regards to objects and distributed with regards to properties” and “focused with regards to objects and distributed with regards to properties”.²⁶³ According to the latter, which is the “disinterested attention” in question, we are not interested in the object from a practical point of view: we distribute our attention between different properties (while remaining perceptually conscient of the object itself), without focusing on just one of them, which could allow us to exploit the (art) object instrumentally.

When our attention is distributed with regards both to the object and its properties instead, we are exercising our attention, according to the author, during meaningless and often alienating experiences (for example when we are in a waiting room and we have forgotten to bring something to read). On the contrary, free-floating attention (as Crary defines it) can be a very rich notion to explore, especially when approaching the question of artistic experience: according to the original Freudian definition, “critical” attention is identified with selective attention, intentional and classificatory, a process of radical control and censorship; free-floating attention, on the other hand, is “evenly-suspended”,²⁶⁴ to resist any kind of selection. Freud advised both the psychoanalyst and the patient to adopt a method of acritical self-observation, to proceed without any resolutions or aims in mind, to give to everything the

²⁶² Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 21.

²⁶³ Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception*, 24.

²⁶⁴ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 367.

same amount of attention.²⁶⁵ This is not an attentional pattern “characterized by no interest at all”:²⁶⁶ as part of an “economic” framework in which the total amount of attention available is limited, in this way it is possible to emancipate attentional trajectories, allowing the discovery of original patterns.

Aesthetic experience appears to be located on the threshold between strictly selective and evenly-suspended attention. This raises a question about normativity: is free-floating attention merely a fallible, faulty, intermittent way of being attentive, or can it be a different way of paying attention during non-productive and aimless experiences located beyond the resolution of the Many-Many Problem? The contrast between hyper and deep attention, as described by Katherine Hayles, is a “shift in cognitive styles”: deep attention is executive, engaged, capable of “tune out distractions and pay attention only to relevant information”;²⁶⁷ hyper attention, on the other hand, is adaptive, quick and in continuous need for ever-changing stimuli. The traditional definition of attention by William James, according to which “attention is (...) the taking possession of the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought. Focalization, concentration of consciousness are of its essence. It implies a withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others”²⁶⁸ seems to be limited to deep attention, but other ways of paying attention are at stake. It is impossible to pull back from critically analyzing these different attentional patterns, as they are “increasingly drawn into the matrix by engaging with works that instantiate the cognitive shift in their aesthetic strategies. Whether inclined toward deep or hyper attention (...) we cannot afford to ignore the frustrating, zesty, and intriguing ways in which the two cognitive modes interact”.²⁶⁹

See me, if you can! The attentional dynamics of artistic experience.

Given the ever-changing aesthetic strategies implemented by works of art, how can we relate to an object (or an experience, as performances or interactive/immersive installations are) with which we cannot do anything? Everything we encounter on our path is, most of the time, user-friendly. Works of art, on the other hand, are often placed in artificial environments (galleries, museums, exhibitions) which do not provide or explain the terms of use. Art doesn't seem to follow the rules we already know when we play along in experiencing the world; according to Alva Noë we must “stop demanding

²⁶⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psychoanalysis* (1912).

²⁶⁶ Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception*, 25.

²⁶⁷ Katherine Hayles, “Hyper and Deep Attention. The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes”, in *Profession* (2007), 193.

²⁶⁸ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890).

²⁶⁹ Hayles, “Hyper and Deep Attention”, 197-198.

application, and even pertinence”,²⁷⁰ and in this sense artistic objects are “strange tools”. The transactions we have with this kind of objects are not action-centered: it is a different kind of performance (Richard Schechner defined it as “the release of undoing”²⁷¹). Some works of art sure could afford some kind of action: I see a burglar ready to attack me, I frantically look around in search of a defense weapon and I spot a sculpture; but for sure I am not seeing the object as it is meant to be seen.²⁷² In this sense, artistic experience is not only devoid of the necessity of acting, but also of any practical interest. If we don’t act or accomplish something, as gallery-goers we are at risk of being passive viewers, inactive participants. This was precisely one of the challenges met by most of contemporary art: how can the spectator become an agent?

Attentional patterns modify in unison with the transition from the condition of spectator to participant, which reflects the perpetual oscillation between contemplation and action, mostly due to the fact that art is increasingly interactive, immersive, participatory, and also as a consequence of the well-established impossibility to engage in one experience as a continuous flow (hence the “parceling” of our attention, which is always scarce, as taught by the economy of attention). The notion of disinterested attention is a theoretical tool useful to understand the transition from a passive spectator to an active participant: when it comes to experience works of art, there aren’t clear boundaries between activity and passivity. The dichotomies questioned, with good reason, by Jacques Rancière (seeing/doing, looking/knowing, activity/passivity),²⁷³ as well as the distinction made by Walter Benjamin between “tactile” and “optical”, distraction and absorption,²⁷⁴ are way too rigid to give an account of the experience of contemporary art. Artistic experience seems to develop between these two poles: where can we locate the tipping point where our attitude as viewers changes? According to Crary, “attention and distraction cannot be thought outside a continuum in which the two ceaselessly flow into one another”²⁷⁵; following this claim, Claire Bishop observes that the spectator is always, at least partly, distracted; uninterrupted focused attention and complete perceptive unity are myths: the spectator’s condition is made up through a continuous overlapping of focused, internal attention, and communication through clearly externalized attentional

²⁷⁰ Noë, *Strange Tools*, 111.

²⁷¹ Richard Schechner, “Selective Inattention: A Traditional Way of Spectating Now Part of the Avant-Garde”, in *Performing Arts Journal* 1, No. 1 (1976), 8-19.

²⁷² This example is made by Nanay in *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception*, 29.

²⁷³ Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé* (La Fabrique éditions, 2008).

²⁷⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2008), 40.

²⁷⁵ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 47.

practices.²⁷⁶ It is interesting to point out that the spectator often expects to play the role of the agent and then go back to her original condition of viewer, giving herself the chance to retrace, archive and even show others all the operations performed in the participative interlude. Relational, participative, interactive, immersive art requires an “intermittent” succession of attention and distraction: this can be an unfulfillable task, but it is, no doubt, an only human balancing (a computer wouldn’t be able to accomplish it). Contemporary art often requires to constantly calibrate socialization and participation, to pull back and then move forward; Schechner proposed the model of “selective inattention”, which requires to drop in and out of a performance, making us feel “involved and separate, celebratory and critical simultaneously”.²⁷⁷

Artistic experience and the attentional patterns which characterize it show that our knowledge, and our access to the world, are never infallible, and never to be taken for granted: as Noë claims, “Every work of art (whether dance, song, poetry, film, whatever) challenges you to *see* it, or to *get* it. The work of art (...) says, *Bring me into focus, if you can!* Crucially, you usually can’t, at least not right away”.²⁷⁸ According to Garroni, our knowledge is necessarily fragmented and partial, and this can be source of concern and anxiety: aesthetic experience (and exercising aesthetic attention) steps in as a reassuring adaptational practice, integrating our understanding of the world through new trajectories.²⁷⁹

Biography

Francesca Natale (francesca.natale@uniroma1.it) is a PhD Student in Aesthetics from “La Sapienza” Università di Roma (Department of Philosophy). The aim of her research project (titled *Attention, disinterestedness and contemplation in aesthetic and artistic experience*) is to investigate the concept of attention as a structural notion of aesthetic experience, in connection with contemplation, action, critical distance, participation and disinterestedness, and contemporary artistic experience, increasingly influenced by an interactive and collective kind of art. For her Master’s Degree she has worked on a critical reflection about living images, starting from the works of David Freedberg; for her Bachelor’s Degree she analyzed the problem of aesthetic judgement as presented in *Other Criteria* by Leo Steinberg.

²⁷⁶ Claire Bishop, “Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone: Dance Exhibitions and Audience Attention”, in *The Drama Review* Volume 62, No. 2 (Summer 2018), 22-42.

²⁷⁷ Schechner, “Selective Inattention”, 17.

²⁷⁸ Noë, *Strange Tools*, 100.

²⁷⁹ Garroni, *Estetica ed Epistemologia*, 97.

Her research interests at large start from the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* by Immanuel Kant, with focus on the matters of aesthetic judgement and the concept of “criticism”, on disinterestedness as a crucial aspect of aesthetic experience, and on the nature and fruition of the work of art. She also studies art criticism in its theoretical aspects (appreciation, evaluation and judgement formulation).

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Attention, affect, and aesthetic experience

Abstract

The paper suggests a conceptualization of the interrelationship between attention, affect, and aesthetic experience. It supplements classical aesthetic theory by integrating knowledge from neurophysiology, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis. Furthermore, the paper proposes a distinction between a variety of types of affect that are discussed with a view to their potential contribution to elaborating the concept of aesthetic experience in the Kantian tradition and to reflecting different qualities of attention.

1.

Attention is a necessary, but not sufficient precondition for the formation of aesthetic experience. As a start, aesthetic experience can be conceptualized as a dialogical process in which the experiencing subject by way of reflective judgement combines its sensuous, emotional, and intellectual capacities in processing experiential encounters with artefacts, aestheticized spaces, and social relations under the universalist perspective of *sensus communis*.²⁸⁰ In this scenario, attention can be defined as an initial, perceptually shaped impetus that may (or may not) bring the reflective process into motion. As will be outlined in the following, the emergence of attention is in itself a complex, multilayered process, and there is no guarantee that attention actually leads to the formation of aesthetic experience.

2.

The following brief theoretical outline of the ‘infrastructure’ of human experience formation supplements aesthetic theory with knowledge from neurophysiology, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis. It is a basic argument that sensory stimuli undergo a comprehensive and complex processing conducted by the nervous system and the sensory apparatus in interaction with non-conscious, somatic memory traces, before they are made accessible to conscious attention and thus put at the disposal of the reflecting subject for potential attentional agency.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Immanuel Kant: *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1963 (1790)).

This non-conscious processing of sensory stimuli prior to the emergence of conscious attention is sequential: As a first step, sensory stimuli are registered in the sensory center of the brain and processed by the nervous system creating a rough representation of the sensed object in terms of shape, size, colour, movement etc. The second step is the perceptual processing in which the representation in question is analyzed thoroughly and precisely, thereby enabling the sensory apparatus to move on to the third step: the identification of the sensed object on the basis of comparison with the generalized object structures that are stored in the long-term memory of the brain. In the course of these sequences, a sensed object is investigated, identified, and categorized on the basis of bodily experience, and if the result appears to be sufficiently relevant and important in the given context of practice, it is selected and brought to the conscious attention of the subject for reflection, decision-making, and action.²⁸¹

Or put differently, the prerequisite for the emergence of the conscious attention of the subject is the establishment of non-conscious bodily attention that reduces the complexity of sensory stimuli and provides the subject with an ongoing, experience-based estimation of which sensory data are contextually and socio-culturally relevant for competent orientation and thus for conscious agency and meaning formation. This autonomous attentional work of the body is *affective* by nature. It performs by continually mediating and adjusting the exchange between the individual organism and its natural and socio-cultural environment. As the general energy resource for this task, affective dynamic is produced by the arousal system in the brain stem as a response to the various challenges that the organism meets in specific contexts and situations of practice.²⁸² Both in terms of force and categorial orientation, the production of affective dynamic is calibrated to match the concrete challenge in question, and depending on the situation the affective dynamic accordingly expresses itself as an adequate level of e.g. aggression, pain, sexual desire, fear, hunger, need for attachment etc. These immediate affective urges are processed and shaped in interaction with the multilayered somatic fund of bodily experiences originating in the given person's individual, socio-culturally embedded life history.²⁸³

3.

²⁸¹ Cf. Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm: *Sinnesarbeit. Nachdenken über Wahrnehmung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1984).

²⁸² Cf. Daniel N. Stern: *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Experiences in Psychology and the Arts* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

²⁸³ Ibid.; Alfred Lorenzer: *Die Sprache, der Sinn, das Unbewußte* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002).

Affective dynamic assumes various forms: as more or less intensive *bodily reactions* to physical stimuli; as *emotions* (i.e. an unconscious, somatic reservoir of potential subjective states), as *feelings* (conscious, reflective subjective states related to specific objects or specific imaginations), as *moods* (consciously experienced, pre-reflective subjective states; a mood is without distinct object, yet integrates all sensed phenomena in a subjective experience of totality).²⁸⁴ As a collective phenomenon, moods constitute *atmospheres* (i.e. common, pre-reflective experiences of totality that represent both subjective states of mind and objective conditions of practice).²⁸⁵ Other types of collective moods are *zeitgeist*, *popular mood*, and *mass affect*, whereas the term *collective feelings* addresses shared, reflective affective experiences.²⁸⁶

In other words, affective dynamic can be organized in the shape of non-conscious bodily experience, in the shape of conscious, non-reflective experience, and in the shape of conscious, reflective experience. It is hardly a controversial assessment that these distinctions also indicate different qualities of attention and different potentials in terms of facilitating aesthetic experience formation. To be sure, these shapes of affective organization should be regarded as potentially changeable positions in a continuum. But affective dynamic that *remains* confined to bodily reactions and non-conscious emotions is able to play only a role as a somatic framing condition for the dialogical process of aesthetic experience. Likewise, conscious, yet non-reflective, affects create only a diffuse, unfocused level of attention that is valuable material for manipulative interventions of any kind, but insufficient for developing competent attentional agency on the subject's own terms. The productive perspectives for attentional agency and potential aesthetic experience formation are in this conceptualization to be found in the affective shape of conscious, reflective subjective states, i.e. feelings. This quality of attention enables the subject to process sensory stimuli in interaction with the collective categorizations of language and thereby to establish a reflective distance to immediate affective impulses and gain the option of conscious choice.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Distinctions inspired by among others Simo K ppe et al.: "Vitality Affects", *International Forum for Psychoanalysis*, nr. 17 (2008); Tone Roald: *Cognition in Emotion: An Investigation through Experiences with Art* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007); David E. Wellbery: "Stimmung", in Karlheinz Barck et al. (eds.): * sthetische Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2010).

²⁸⁵ Cf. Gernot B hme: *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen  sthetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995); Reinhard Knodt: * sthetische Korrespondenzen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994).

²⁸⁶ Cf. Henrik Kaare Nielsen: *I affekt. Studier i senmoderne politik og kultur* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2021).

²⁸⁷ Cf. Alfred Lorenzer: op.cit.

4.

What constitutes *aesthetic attention* as opposed to other types of attention, is either a specific form of perception or a specific form of reflection – or a combination of both.²⁸⁸ An aesthetic form of perception is characterized by being affectively potentiated. Due to the physical encounter with e.g. challenging movements or shapes, the process of perception is charged with a corresponding level of affective dynamic that interacts with affective qualities of related somatic memory traces and unconscious, repressed forms of experience.²⁸⁹ As a central feature of many artistic practices, a variety of aesthetic techniques are utilized in order to establish and maintain a potentiated form of perception – or the aesthetic production works with an interplay between establishing, breaking down, and rebuilding affective dynamic in the appeal to the audience.

An aesthetic form of reflection, conversely, represents a distinct intellectual sensibility to form, composition, structure etc. that has emerged as an integral part of the differentiating process of modernization and that is, in principle, applicable to any object, practice, relation, and imagination. Aesthetic reflection bears its purpose in itself and operates as a specific, non-directed type of intellectual appropriation of – and meaning ascription to – the object of conscious attention. An aesthetic form of perception may trigger – and may itself be triggered by – aesthetic reflection, but both may also occur independently.

5.

Aesthetic experience emerges when aesthetic attention is processed in the mode of reflective judgement. In contrast to the determinative mode of judgement that mediates between sensory object and theoretical understanding by subsuming the specific object under an existing universal concept, reflective judgement takes its point of departure in the specific object of attention and grants its unique qualities precedence over existing universal concepts.²⁹⁰ On the basis of intuition, imagination, and feelings, reflective judgement unfolds as an unceasing movement of investigation between an object of attention that cannot be fully determined and a universal concept that cannot be found.²⁹¹ Put differently: in the mode of determinative judgement we merely affirm what we believe to know already, whereas in the mode of

²⁸⁸ Cf. Henrik Kaare Nielsen: *Æstetik, kultur og politik* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1996).

²⁸⁹ Cf. Alfred Lorenzer: "Tiefenhermeneutische Kulturanalyse" in Alfred Lorenzer (ed.): *Kultur-Analysen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Wissenschaft, 1986).

²⁹⁰ Cf. Immanuel Kant: *op.cit.*

²⁹¹ Cf. Rüdiger Bubner: *Ästhetische Erfahrung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989).

reflective judgement we potentially gain new insight into both our outer and inner world of experience.

Basically, the investigative movement of reflective judgement is propelled by affective dynamic in the shape of feelings, but its unfolding involves both sensuous, emotional, and intellectual capacities of the individual, and it potentially interacts with the person's full spectrum of both conscious and non-conscious life historical experiences. In this sense, reflective judgement operates in the border region between conscious and non-conscious attention, potentially expanding the scope for conscious attention and agency. Herein lies the specific emancipatory perspective of aesthetic experience: it sets us free without determining what for.²⁹²

As pointed out earlier, it is a central characteristic of aesthetic experience in the Kantian sense of the term that the investigative movement continually strives to mediate between the perspectives of the specific and the universal. In the case of the aesthetic judgement of taste, this mediation is organized as a combination of 'disinterested pleasure' as experiential quality of feeling in relation to the beauty of the sensory object and the overall reference to the notion of *sensus communis*. The judgement of taste, in other words, transgresses the level of immediate affective responses to sensory stimuli by submitting them to a reflective distance and the universalizing perspective of reason. In the case of the sublime feeling, any experience of normality, control, and common sense is initially disrupted by an overwhelming encounter with the superior forces of nature, a social event, or an artwork. But the subject's subsequent process of dealing with a chaotic multiplicity of triggered affects, of reestablishing general orientation, and of developing a renewed, reflective sense of self on changed terms relies extensively on the universal perspective of reason.²⁹³

6.

This mediation between the specific and the universal that characterizes aesthetic experience formation is a precondition for establishing competent agency on contemporary socio-cultural premises, but it is not automatically associated with the emergence of aesthetic attention. This requires a genuinely dialogical exchange between the sensuous and intellectual capacities and feelings of the experiencing subject and the specific invitation to aesthetic attention issued by the object. The aesthetic features of the object do not in a strict sense determine the exchange, but they represent a dynamic framing

²⁹² Ibid., p. 92

²⁹³ Immanuel Kant: op.cit.

condition for the subject's process of experience formation and for developing reflectively qualified agency.

In contemporary society's public space, including the highly affect-charged social media, a multiplicity of commercial, political, institutional, and civil agents struggle to obtain attention in its capacity as both scarce resource and gateway to wealth and power. Aesthetic appeals are to a vast degree designed in order to be competitive on the premises of this power struggle, and instead of inviting a dialogue in the mode of reflective judgement, they address the public as bearer of non-reflective affects: impressionable moods and immediate urges to consume. The type of attention created by such appeals remains foreign to aesthetic experience.

Biography

Professor of cultural theory and cultural analysis at the section Aesthetics and Culture, School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University. Originally trained as a Germanist in Aarhus and Freiburg. PhD from the German Department, Aarhus University 1984. In the late 1980s fellow at the Centre for Cultural Research, Aarhus University. Habilitation 1991. Since 1990 assistant, associate and full professor at the section Aesthetics and Culture, Aarhus University.

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Aesthetic machine attention

Abstract

The etymology of bias links to a prehistoric game, boules, where a ball is balanced so that it tends towards one side. Bias as the one-sided tendency of a mind changes perception so that an object can be categorized fast and with confidence. In machine learning, this characteristic is desired, as it enables the mapping of the world into detectable categories. However, the risk is in how the categories are used – whether for example mapped facial features are used to detect sexual orientation or queer identity is positively recognized as data among other normalized categories. More fundamental question is if the social risks arise from the categorical knowledge production itself.

This paper aims to deconstruct how human attention emerges and compares it with visual strategies different machine learning models exhibit. Machine learning techniques are addressed especially from their linkage to categorical knowledge. This paper proposes an alternative model: aesthetic machine attention that is stimulus-driven and functions as an interventional method for categorical thought. The word aesthetic refers in this paper to low-level features that are subjective in their qualia and differ from the physically measurable properties. The paper asks: What could aesthetic mode of attention provide to modern machine perception?

Aesthetic Machine Attention

There is nothing. Nothing for a mind to grasp in a turmoil humming equally around and within. Full nothingness dedicated for potentiality, existing still as a multitude.

Abruptly,
something appears. Sometimes a signal is obtrusive enough to wake up the senses and sensitize them for instreaming information. Attention attaches them to this information and makes one aware of the percept. The moment of transition from nothing into something is crucial for cognition as it has the capacity to influence everything that follows; it catalyzes a chain of reactions and signifies that there is no

objective perception. All perception is biased in order there to be perception at all. According to studies simply attending to something impacts how it gets perceived²⁹⁴.

Attention functions as an amplifier, it alters perceptual experience by strengthening the stimuli²⁹⁵. Especially low-level features, such as contrast sensitivity or motion processing have been studied to be enhanced by attention²⁹⁶. It might seem innocent if features get altered in low-level, but their aesthetics have consequences. Distance, apart from being an exact physical measurement, can simultaneously occur as a mental construct: for example, “us” versus “them” -attitude induces overestimation of physical distance between “us” and the perceived out-group²⁹⁷. Amplified distance might enhance an exclusive attitude towards the other. Therefore, subjective qualia is not just a surplus of perception, but an attribute directly connected to behavior. The dynamics of amplifications articulate concrete knowledge in an aesthetic form about the psychological phenomena hiding behind perception. Consequently, attention functioning as an amplifier connects it inherently to aesthetics.

The second mechanism of attention is filtering; attention decreases variance and uncertainty of perception by repressing irrelevant signals²⁹⁸. Filtering biases information as only one perspective at a time is accessible for consciousness. The process usually happens without awareness, but it is also measurable in how eyes move in perception²⁹⁹. Bistable, or multistable³⁰⁰ visual percepts start to fluctuate while viewing, hinting that different interpretations of perceptual information are simultaneously present. An example of this is the Necker cube, a static image of a minimalistic translucent cube missing its depth information that changes its

²⁹⁴ Carrasco, Marisa. “Visual Attention: The Past 25 Years.” *Vision Research* 51, no. 13: 1484–1525, 2011.

²⁹⁵ Galbraith, Gary C, Darlene M Olfman, and Todd M Huffman. “Selective Attention Affects Human Brain Stem Frequency-Following Response.” *Neuroreport* 14, no. 5: 735–38, 2003; Carrasco, Marisa, and Antoine Barbot. “Spatial Attention Alters Visual Appearance.” *Current Opinion in Psychology* 29: 56–64, 2019; Carrasco, Marisa, Sam Ling, and Sarah Read. “Attention Alters Appearance.” *Nature Neuroscience*, 2004.

²⁹⁶ Anton-Erxleben, Katharina, Christian Henrich, and Stefan Treue. “Attention Changes Perceived Size of Moving Visual Patterns.” *Journal of Vision* 7, no. 11: 5–5, 2007; Carrasco, *Visual Attention*.

²⁹⁷ Schnall, Simone. “Embodiment in Affective Space: Social Influences on Spatial Perception.” *Spatial Dimensions of Social Thought* 18: 129, 2011.

²⁹⁸ Carrasco, Marisa, and Antoine Barbot. “Spatial Attention Alters Visual Appearance.” *Current Opinion in Psychology* 29: 56–64, 2019; Carrasco, Marisa, Sam Ling, and Sarah Read. “Attention Alters Appearance.” *Nature Neuroscience*, 2004; Carrasco, *Visual Attention*.

²⁹⁹ Psychologist Alfred L. Yarbus showed in his experiments that different modes of perceiving influence how eyes move while gazing. Yarbus, Alfred L. *Eye Movements and Vision*. Springer-Verlag US, 1967.

³⁰⁰ Ihde calls this phenomenon multistable visual perception as phenomenological way of perceiving can give birth to numberless ways to perceive the same image not just two differentiating options as in bistable vision. Ihde, Don. *Experimental Phenomenology: Multistabilities*. Suny Press, 2012.

interpreted orientation spontaneously, making the viewer think they are watching it from a different angle. In this perceptual inconsistency the directional change and a fixation to another location (an outward pointing edge in this example) makes perception change its firsthand interpretation, slow rhythmic eye movements predict the change³⁰¹.

Also, covert attention, i.e., attention that is deployed to relevant areas without movements of the eyes, catalyzes new insights³⁰², implying that both gaze patterns and attentional shifts play a key role in how new insights are gained. It seems possible to train the gaze to gather more versatile knowledge from the stimuli. In a study of Vogt and Magnussen³⁰³ research participants more trained in art showed global attention and scanned the stimulus images more broadly compared to naïve observers, whose saccades concentrated locally to the semantic objects in the images. Also, mood influences attention; people in positive mood attend peripheral stimuli more often and their attentional field is broadened³⁰⁴, making their experience less exact but more absorbent. This is how perceiving carries ethics in how it is deployed; a plastic mode of perceiving generates possibilities for interpretations away from the most immediate.

Instead of perception just working for detection, recognition or classification, the initial condition of perception could be characterized as investigatory; it enables the study of sensory information and accumulation of new knowledge. Therefore, perception and perceptual identification should be differentiated from each other. When perceptual identification leads to categorical knowledge, perception functions as following: 1) It is always subjective as even low-level percepts differ in their qualia from the physically measurable properties; 2) it is deterministic, as consciousness keeps only one perspective alive at a time, although through different modes of attention experience can become explicit in its multitude. Therefore, 3) through adopting different perceptual strategies the experience itself can be altered.

³⁰¹ Choi, Woochul, Hyeonsu Lee, and Se-Bum Paik. "Slow Rhythmic Eye Motion Predicts Periodic Alternation of Bistable Perception." *bioRxiv*, 2020; Murakami, Ikuya, Akiyoshi Kitaoka, and Hiroshi Ashida. "A Positive Correlation between Fixation Instability and the Strength of Illusory Motion in a Static Display." *Vision Research* 46, no. 15: 2421–31, 2006.

³⁰² In the research experiment those participants who were forced to keep their eyes still but cued to attend a pattern consistent with the experiment solution were more likely to solve the task than the participants who kept both their eyes and their attention fixed in the center of the problem diagram. Thomas, Laura E, and Alejandro Lleras. "Covert Shifts of Attention Function as an Implicit Aid to Insight." *Cognition* 111, no. 2: 168–74, 2009.

³⁰³ Vogt, Stine, and Svein Magnussen. "Expertise in Pictorial Perception: Eye-Movement Patterns and Visual Memory in Artists and Laymen." *Perception* 36, no. 1: 91–100, 2007.

³⁰⁴ Kaspar, Kai, and Peter König. "Emotions and Personality Traits as High-Level Factors in Visual Attention: A Review." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 6: 321, 2012.

In machine learning majority of the current models use perceptual strategies that accumulate towards semantic meanings. For example, in every convolutional layer of a neural network an object becomes more established; from features in the networks first layers into a high-level representations of an object in the later layers³⁰⁵. This process is called object-based³⁰⁶, category-based³⁰⁷, or language-based³⁰⁸ attention in humans and object detection, recognition or classification in machines³⁰⁹. It is a categorical process where perceptual features are bind into a single unit usually multimodally through common spatial or temporal location, or with semantic meaning guiding the binding. Object detection is usually built to operate on either low-level or high-level features, or to put it in another way: on either information saliency or its meaning³¹⁰. Meaning guiding the process through categorized objects, salient features standing out naturally and attracting automatic attention as they are the most dynamic, striking or intensive properties for perception³¹¹.

Saliency models were traditionally manually coded to detect contrast values and to attend those parts of the image most differentiating in their contrast³¹². Modern saliency models are trained with human gaze patterns. Surprisingly, both models, even trained for low-level features, are simultaneously attending semantically important parts of the images. It is because contrast usually separates objects from their backgrounds³¹³ and as mentioned above, human gaze generally fixates to the locations of the semantic objects³¹⁴. It has been even argued that the modern models function solely based on high-level features bypassing the importance of low-level perception³¹⁵.

³⁰⁵ Zeiler, Matthew D, and Rob Fergus. "Visualizing and Understanding Convolutional Networks." In *European Conference on Computer Vision*, 818–33, 2013.

³⁰⁶ Lee, KangWoo, and Hyunseung Choo. "A Critical Review of Selective Attention: An Interdisciplinary Perspective." *Artificial Intelligence Review* 40, no. 1: 27–50, 2013.

³⁰⁷ Stein, Timo, and Marius V Peelen. "Object Detection in Natural Scenes: Independent Effects of Spatial and Category-Based Attention." *Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics* 79, no. 3: 738–52, 2017.

³⁰⁸ Lupyan, Gary, and Emily J Ward. "Language Can Boost Otherwise Unseen Objects into Visual Awareness." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110, no. 35: 14196–201, 2013.

³⁰⁹ Abiodun, Oludare Isaac, Aman Jantan, Abiodun Esther Omolara, Kemi Victoria Dada, Nachaat AbdElatif Mohamed, and Humaira Arshad. "State-of-the-Art in Artificial Neural Network Applications: A Survey." *Heliyon* 4, no. 11: e00938, 2018.

³¹⁰ Henderson, John M, and Taylor R Hayes. "Meaning-Based Guidance of Attention in Scenes as Revealed by Meaning Maps." *Nature Human Behaviour* 1, no. 10, 743–47, 2017.

³¹¹ Lindsay, Grace W. "Attention in Psychology, Neuroscience, and Machine Learning." *Frontiers in Computational Neuroscience* 14: 29, 2020.

³¹² Itti, Laurent, and Christof Koch. "Computational Modelling of Visual Attention." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 2, no. 3: 194–203, 2001.

³¹³ Kummerer, Matthias, Thomas SA Wallis, Leon A Gatys, and Matthias Bethge. "Understanding Low-and High-Level Contributions to Fixation Prediction." In *Proceedings of the IEEE International Conference on Computer Vision*, 4789–98, 2017.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Kummerer et al., *Understanding Low-and High-Level*.

When an algorithm groups image features and linguistic classes, attaches a label to an object to follow it, it creates a compressive, or even oppressive, mode of attending that neglects other modes of perceiving that humans exhibit. Humans gather perceptual knowledge also with space-based and feature-based attention³¹⁶, the latter resembling aesthetic perception the most. Feature-based attention is obtained covertly and can spread globally across the receptive field reaching the relevant features regardless of their location³¹⁷. It can be directed to aesthetic features such as colors, shapes, directions of motion or particular orientations³¹⁸. When the strikingness of information matters in current machine learning models what could covert attention mean in relation to them? Could there be novel mode for artificial attention that unfolds slowly from features, into affordances and affects bypassing all attempts of determination? This mode of attention could be given a name, aesthetic machine attention, echoing the Baumgartian definition of Aesthetics as *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*³¹⁹ i.e., the science of sensitive knowing³²⁰ or the study of sense perception³²¹. It could refer to perception as an interventional method for propositional though; the first explanation of the percept could be questioned by studying its multimodal characteristics. For example, when a leaf is perceived, its categorical name is forgotten, instead its aesthetics is studied; how its texture, color, reflectance, warmth, shape etc., participates to its presence. These noted features signify the percept but do not lead to any conclusions, such as “this is beautiful”. When often in common language aesthetics functions as a synonym to beauty, here it refers to the subjective qualities of percepts that reveal something about their observer in their aesthetics. Aesthetic attention is a manner of perceiving in which the world becomes explicit in its multitude and not just a reduction. Aesthetic machine attention can provide a way to deconstruct biases in machine learning when the immediate semantics of the perceptual objects are questioned.

Biography

Jaana Okulov is an interdisciplinary artist and a doctoral student in Aalto University's Department of Art. Okulov received their MFA in the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2016 and completed basic and intermediate studies in Psychology in 2017. Their

³¹⁶ Carrasco, *Visual Attention*.

³¹⁷ Scolari, Miranda, Katharina N Seidl-Rathkopf, and Sabine Kastner. “Functions of the Human Frontoparietal Attention Network: Evidence from Neuroimaging.” *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 1: 32–39, 2015; Carrasco, *Visual Attention*.

³¹⁸ Carrasco, *Visual Attention*; Kurniawan, Veldri. “The Neural Basis of Multisensory Spatial and Feature-Based Attention in Vision and Somatosensation,” 2012.

³¹⁹ Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb. *Aesthetica/Ästhetik*. Edited by Dagmar Mirbach. 2 vols. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag. A partial translation of A. G. Baumgarten and H. R. Schweizer, 1973. Basel: Schwabe., 2007.

³²⁰ Davies, Stephen, Kathleen Marie Higgins, Robert Hopkins, Robert Stecker, and David E Cooper. *A Companion to Aesthetics*. Vol. 68. John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

³²¹ Nanay, Bence. *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

research concentrates on multimodal attention in humans and in machines, and combines theoretical and empirical approaches from Perceptual Psychology, Aesthetics and Machine Learning.

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Considering the future. Aesthetics of transformation and the conception of attention in Achille Mbembe's philosophy

„I would of course have liked to give an exhaustive answer to all these questions. But here it must be sufficient to point out that the coming thinking will necessarily be a thinking of transition, of crossing and of traffic. It will be a thinking of fluent life.“³²²

Abstract

Inter- and transcultural dimensions of contemporary African art are of great significance for the current transformations of aesthetic norms and cultural hierarchies in the global art scene. The cultural dialogue between euro-american and African art shows implications regarding concepts such as hybridity, alienation, discrepancy, cultural memory etc. In this context the role(s) of media/technology in the changing ecologies of attention is/are important and also affective aspects of attention are involved. This process most definitely also has ethical and political implications and thus goes beyond the purely cultural field. Achille Mbembe's blueprint for aesthetics is based on a theory of 'Afropolitanism' rooted in the political theory of cosmopolitanism and focuses on hybridity and creolization in an intercultural and/or transcultural dialogue in a concept of pluriversality. Art is of important significance concerning the future of Africa. Mbembe develops an aesthetics of transformation in which destruction becomes re/construction. What kind of relationship between aesthetics and attention can be observed in his philosophy? What are the visions for the future which can be identified in the theory of the African philosopher and what picture of Africa's future does he paint?

Introduction

Inter- and transcultural dimensions of contemporary African art are of great significance for the current transformations of aesthetic norms and cultural hierarchies in global art. The cultural dialogue between Euro-American and African art reveals implications regarding concepts such as hybridity,

³²² Mbembe 2017: 233 [own translation].

alienation, discrepancy, cultural memory etc. In this context the role(s) of media/technology in the changing ecologies of attention is/are important and also affective aspects of attention are involved. This process most definitely also has ethical and political implications and thus goes beyond the purely cultural field. Achille Mbembe's blueprint for aesthetics is based on a theory of 'Afropolitanism' rooted in the political theory of cosmopolitanism and focuses on hybridity and creolization in an intercultural and/or transcultural dialogue in a concept of pluriversality. Art is of important significance concerning the future of Africa. Mbembe develops an aesthetics of transformation in which destruction becomes re/construction. What kind of relationship between aesthetics and attention can be observed in his philosophy? What are the visions for the future which can be identified in the theory of the African philosopher and what picture of Africa's future does he paint?

Considering the future. Achille Mbembe's Afropolitanism and contemporary African art

In his philosophy, Mbembe develops an African, international and at the same time global project that is linked to the process of decolonisation of thought and action. The concept of Afropolitanism is a future project for Africa and the world. In today's world, Mbembe states that there are geographical changes with regard to the worldwide creation of art and culture. Today, African art is no longer just a source of inspiration for a modern Western art in crisis, but expresses the very essence of contemporary artistic creation through its tendency towards dematerialisation:

"The idea of art as an attempt to capture the forces of the infinite; an attempt to put the infinite in sensible form, but a forming that consists in constantly doing, undoing, and redoing; assembling, dis-assembling and reassembling – this idea is typically 'African'. It fully resonates with *the digital spirit of our times*. This is why there is a good chance that *the art of the twenty-first century will be Afropolitan*."³²³

Mbembe aims to create a new, transnational 'Afropolitan' culture: "Thus, we need to move on to something else if we want to revive intellectual life in Africa and, at the same time, the possibilities of an art, a philosophy, an aesthetics that can say something new and meaningful to the world in general."³²⁴ This culture is characterised by openness and vision: "Such 'broad-mindedness' is found more deeply still among a great number of artists, musicians and composers, writers, poets, painters— workers of the mind who have been aware

³²³ Mbembe 2016a: 322.

³²⁴ Mbembe, Achille: "Afropolitanism". In: *Journal of Contemporary African Art*. No. 46, May 2020b, p. 60.

since the beginning of the postcolonial era.”³²⁵ Mbembe describes the project of Afropolitanism in more detail in the following words: “Afropolitanism is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity—which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world.”³²⁶ He continues: “It is also a political and cultural stance in relation to the nation, to race, and to the issue of difference in general.”³²⁷ In this process, Africa is in permanent exchange in the process of immersion and dispersion.³²⁸ And further: “The cultural history of the continent cannot be understood outside of the paradigm of roaming, mobility, and displacement.”³²⁹ Mbembe criticises in this context: “When it comes to aesthetic creativity in contemporary Africa and the question of knowing who and what is ‘African’, political and cultural critique is often silent on this historical phenomenon of the circulation of worlds in silence. Seen from Africa, this phenomenon of the circulation of worlds has at least two aspects: the dispersion I have just mentioned, and immersion.”³³⁰ He continues: “The capacity of Africans to inhabit several worlds at once and situate themselves simultaneously on both sides of an image.”³³¹

Aesthetics and the conception of attention in Achille Mbembe’s philosophy

With regard to the aspects of instability and volatility in dispersion, attention is primarily related to the interstices that appear. These make it possible to overcome the “discipline of attention through culture”,³³² e.g. through cultural

³²⁵ Mbembe 2020b: 60-61.

³²⁶ Mbembe 2020b: 60.

³²⁷ Mbembe 2020b: 60.

³²⁸ “In the age of dispersion and circulation, this same creation is more concerned with the relation to an interval than to oneself or another. Africa itself is now imagined as an immense interval, an inexhaustible citation open to many forms of combination and composition. The reference is no longer to an essential singularity, but rather to a renewed capacity for bifurcation.” In: Mbembe, Achille: *Out of the dark Night: Essays on Decolonization*. New York (Columbia University Press), 2020a, p. 232.

³²⁹ Mbembe 2020a: 234. Mbembe further states: “It was, moreover, this culture of mobility that colonization in its time attempted to freeze via the modern institution of the border. To recall this history of roaming and mobilities is to speak of mixtures, amalgamations, superpositions—an aesthetics of intertwining [entrelacement]. Nothing—not Islam, Christianity, ways of dressing, doing business, speaking, or even eating habits—escaped the steamroller of métissage and vernacularization. This was the case well before colonization. There is indeed a precolonial African modernity that has not yet been sufficiently accounted for in contemporary creativity.” (Mbembe 2020a: 234)

³³⁰ Mbembe 2020a: 234.

³³¹ Mbembe, Achille: *Critique of Black Reason*. Durham, London (Duke University Press), 2017, p. 102.

³³² Rötzer, Florian: “Inszenierung von Aufmerksamkeitsfallen: Ästhetik in der Informationsgesellschaft”. In: *Kunstforum: Ressource Aufmerksamkeit: Ästhetik der Informationsgesellschaft*. Bd. 148, Dec. 1999 - Jan. 2000, p. 63 [own translation].

homogenisation and standardisation, and create openness for combinations, quotations and circulations in the spaces in between—for a space for cultural innovation. Mbembe speaks here of an „aesthetics of intertwining [entrelacement]“.³³³ This in-between space enables encounters between different continental African, Afro-diasporic and/or Extra-African cultures. It is evident in these intercultural dialogues that the "selection of what is significant [is] a function of attention". In the process, different orders of knowledge and power become visible, because "attention is a competitive system."³³⁴ Concerning the question of attention, valuations and hierarchisations are important. Thus, experiences with African and Afro-diasporic art are linked to concepts such as exoticism, orientalism, creolisation and hybridisation, and at the same time to the idea of liberation, as, for example, in the art of Yinka Shonibare, who visualises the hybrid character of culture in his art.³³⁵

Furthermore, attention requires *looking closely* or *intimacy*, as Mbembe and Nuttall explain in their considerations on the work of Marlene Dumas, a South African artist. "If a painting doesn't change as you get closer, it is not a good painting.' Intimacy, for her, is about seeing as such, it is the ground of perception, its condition. Contrary to a language of critical distance, so often invoked as a condition of knowing, she suggests that knowledge is to be found in closeness, can be articulated only in terms of *close-up*."³³⁶ Mbembe and Nuttall state: "Intimacy, then, is as much a thematic preoccupation as it is a *method*."³³⁷ This method can be further refined or sharpened: "This is the method of the zoom."³³⁸ And they continue: "And so the work of defamiliarization, of the close-up, begins again. As we look, we see differences that we had not noticed before. We are compelled by the painting to look closely."³³⁹ The authors recognise a political dimension in this: Through *looking closely*, stereotyping is questioned and we open ourselves to the other

³³³ Mbembe 2020a: 234.

³³⁴ Singer in: Rötzer, Florian; Singer, Wolf: "Zur Neurowissenschaft der Aufmerksamkeit: Florian Rötzer im Gespräch mit Wolf Singer, dem Direktor des Max-Planck-Instituts für Hirnforschung in Frankfurt/M.". In: *Kunstforum: Ressource Aufmerksamkeit: Ästhetik der Informationsgesellschaft*. Bd. 148, Dec. 1999 - Jan. 2000, p. 109 [own translation].

³³⁵ Cf. Rainsborough, Marita: "Fremderfahrungen in der Kunst. Vom Exotismus und Orientalismus zur Kreolisierung und Hybridisierung". In: Fitzner, Werner (ed.): *Kunst und Fremderfahrung: Verfremdungen, Affekte, Entdeckungen*. Bielefeld (Transcript Verlag), 2016, pp. 77–96.

³³⁶ Mbembe, Achille; Nuttall, Sarah: "The Human Face". In: Dumas, Marlene; Bedford, Emma: *Intimate Relations*. Johannesburg, Amsterdam (Jacana Media; Roma Publications), 2007, p. 127.

³³⁷ Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 127.

³³⁸ Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 128.

³³⁹ Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 128. "The tension between closeness and distance creates uncertainty. Who are they?" (Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 129)

and the possible. “But there is much more, or at least Dumas takes it much further, encodes in the painting things we only can begin to know, to open ourselves to, as constituting the possible; gradations of intimacy, of knowing, that we might only suspect.”³⁴⁰ Art thus opens up the space of possibilities, of the not-yet.

The intimacy of closeness is also evident in the gaze, which brings the Other to life in its mysteriousness. The Other means danger, fear and possible death³⁴¹ and at the same time he is my neighbour who evokes my moral responsibility. “What makes them human and thus something for which we are responsible, towards which we have a duty?”³⁴² This social dimension of attention is equally found in Fanon's theory of the gaze, which addresses the question of recognition or lack of recognition, especially with regard to racist devaluations. According to Mbembe/Nuttall, for Dumas “[...] the eyes [are] really the main features of the faces she paints.”³⁴³ And further: “What if, ultimately, intimacy was the unconstrained explosion of the very core of our being human.”³⁴⁴ Attention, or lack of attention, to the Other touches on the questions of being human and of human interactions in a fundamental way, especially in processes of granting or refusing respect. The South African artist Dumas seems to visually embody Lévinas' theory of the Other, to which Mbembe refers in his philosophy. This social dimension of attention in Afropolitan art is particularly significant in political terms. In Mbembe's philosophy, these political implications—especially with regard to the question of racism - are extensively examined and reflected upon.

Attention, according to Mbembe, is also associated with the alienation of the ordinary and can be characterised by the difference from the usual with a tendency towards the extreme. Thus, Mbembe emphasises with regard to the art of Meschac Gaba:

“Art is inseparable from a kind of theatre, from the spectacle of life. The artist is no longer someone concerned with forms and their superficial harmonies. He is a master of exaggerations, disproportions, distortions and caricatures.

³⁴⁰ Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 128.

³⁴¹ “This question presents itself because there is, at the same time, an element of impenetrability to them. It is because the other is a mystery for himself just as he is an enigma for me, or is it because of the fear they inspire in us, gripped as we are by the chilly thought that some of them might be our real enemies – the worry about my death, the anguish for my death?” (Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 129) And further: “The face of the other is the original locus of the meaningful. At the same time, there is no better metaphor for fear than the face.” (Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 129)

³⁴² Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 129.

³⁴³ Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 128.

³⁴⁴ Mbembe; Nuttall 2007: 129.

Art fulfils its unrestricted functions through exaggeration, as it were, when a face becomes its own caricature.“³⁴⁵

Evoking an "urge to laugh"³⁴⁶ that at the same time comes close to "the truth of tears"³⁴⁷, Gaba's art embraces Africa's sense of comedy, which is related to the "social madness" and the "flexibility and elasticity" needed to cope with everyday African life. Through spectacle, art becomes an "art of extensions, of awakening and imagination."³⁴⁸ Art can trigger a shock that involves being completely overwhelmed. Shock is related to the sudden, the surprising and sometimes also the painful and has a proximity to terror: "Especially the explosive and the unique explosion stand for shock."³⁴⁹ For Achille Mbembe in his theory of necropolitics, terror represents an essential moment of contemporary power strategies, at the centre of which is necropower, which in its reliance on media dissemination and in its sinister alliance with medial shock effects to gain attention in order to be able to unfold its effectiveness. This also involves a competition for attention. The concept of an aesthetics of shock, in which destruction is a tested means of breaking up the familiar and provoking excitement, combines with the aesthetics of terror. Here, too, attention gains political significance.

Starting from the international architectural style of Brutalism, Mbembe describes the current time globally as the epoch of Brutalism³⁵⁰ and speaks of the world turning black³⁵¹. Here he combines architectural forms with a social diagnosis.³⁵² Brutalism is linked to the emergence of new forms of knowledge, power and subjectivity and new forms of corporeality and sexuality, and also concerns the self-understanding of the human being. In the architectural phenomena as elements of spatial culture historical and social conditions overlap and reveal themselves. According to Mbembe, the destructive nature of brutalism must be counterbalanced by a new politics of repair and healing that incorporate the fragility and vulnerability of the human being and the planet. In this context, there is a connection between the aspect of attention and the

³⁴⁵ Mbembe, Achille: "Meschac Gaba und der Drang zu lachen". In: Greenberg, Kerry (Ed.): *Meschac Gaba*. Hamburg (Hatje Cantz), 2014, p. 30 [own translation].

³⁴⁶ Mbembe 2014: 29 [own translation].

³⁴⁷ Mbembe 2014: 29 [own translation].

³⁴⁸ Mbembe 2014: 30 [own translation].

³⁴⁹ Rötzer, Florian: "Inszenierung von Aufmerksamkeitsfallen: Ästhetik in der Informationsgesellschaft". In: *Kunstforum: Ressource Aufmerksamkeit: Ästhetik der Informationsgesellschaft*. Bd. 148, Dec. 1999 - Jan. 2000, p. 71 [own translation].

³⁵⁰ Cf. Mbembe, Achille: *Brutalisme*. Paris (La Découverte), 2020.

³⁵¹ Cf. Mbembe Achille: *Critique of Black reason*. Durham, London (Duke University Press), 2017.

³⁵² Something similar can be found in the work of Foucault, for example, with regard to Bentham's panopticon and discipline as a form of power. Cf. Foucault, Michel: *Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*. Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp), 1994, p. 265.

emergence and overcoming of trauma, which Mbembe illustrates in his conception of psychological strategies for dealing with the experiences of slavery, genocide and racial segregation, for example, by means of truth and reconciliation commissions. Attention is a prerequisite for personal and cultural memory: “Only that on which attention focuses can also be consciously and then remembered.”³⁵³ Memory is thus a prerequisite for processing and overcoming experiences of regret. Visual, sung, painted and narrated texts are of particular importance as a component of memory³⁵⁴ and are part of projecting the future, a future that requires forgiveness and pardoning.

Conclusion

According to Mbembe, Africa's future is linked to the future of the world. Humans must always reflect on their integration into the cosmos and overcome the prevailing anthropocentrism. He calls for a new way of thinking the future, without neglecting the examination of the past and the present. Mbembe tries to overcome closure, delimitation and exclusion and to make global thinking strong. “However, only a thinking that turns its back on theoretical segregation and relies on the archives of what Édouard Glissant called the ‘all-world’ can be considered ‘global’.”³⁵⁵ In this context, he trusts in the unifying character of the vulnerability that is equally inherent in all human beings. His ethical conception—based on this basic anthropological definition of the human being—presupposes “mutual recognition of this vulnerability”.³⁵⁶ In his *Aesthetics of Transgression*,³⁵⁷ aesthetic questions have anthropological, ethical and political dimensions. This requires attention in social, aesthetic, cultural and political terms, which is also reflected in Mbembe’s aesthetics and his considerations on art.

Biography

Marita Rainsborough holds a PhD from the University of Hamburg and teaches at the Leuphana University Lüneburg. Since 2018 she is an associate member of the Center of Philosophy University of Lisbon (CFUL) and invited professor at several Universities in Brazil. Her research focuses on French philosophy,

³⁵³ Rötzer in: Rötzer, Florian; Singer, Wolf: “Zur Neurowissenschaft der Aufmerksamkeit: Florian Rötzer im Gespräch mit Wolf Singer, dem Direktor des Max-Planck-Instituts für Hirnforschung in Frankfurt/M.“. In: *Kunstforum: Ressource Aufmerksamkeit: Ästhetik der Informationsgesellschaft*. Bd. 148, Dec. 1999 - Jan. 2000, p. 108 [own translation].

³⁵⁴ Cf. Mbembe, Achille: “Experience, Uncertainty, and the Power of the False, to Double Dutch - Yinka Shonibare”. In: *Yinka Shonibare: Double Dutch*. Rotterdam (NAi Publishers), 2004, p. 127.

³⁵⁵ Mbembe 2017: 23 [own translation].

³⁵⁶ Mbembe 2017: 214 [own translation].

³⁵⁷ Mbembe speaks of “aesthetics of transgression” (Mbembe 2020a: 231)

the actuality of classical German philosophy, and intercultural philosophy with a focus on African philosophy. Her professorial dissertation is published under the title *Foucault heute. Neue Perspektiven in Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaft*, Bielefeld 2018.

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Pay attention. Artists and their audience after the 1960s

Abstract

Art historical research has shown that artists, especially since the 1960s progressive rise in museum and art gallery attendance, are not always confident of the audience's ability to deal with their art. Historically, Pop Art's choice for a more popular iconography can be seen in correlation with the rise of a mass audience for art. But other artistic tendencies seem to have opted for an aesthetic that could guarantee them a more satisfying reception. The choice for a performative aesthetic for example, has often been a method for reasserting rather than – as is often thought – relinquishing artistic control. Our presentation considers aesthetic strategies developed by artists who desire(d) a more attentive look from their audiences. We consider work made by American artists Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham in the early 1970s. It is a historical fact that the rise of a mass audience in the 1960s and 70s goes hand in hand with the creation of artworks that have 'attention' as their subject. We consider the performative nature of these works and focus on how paying attention is conceptualized and aimed at. Secondly, we take a look at more contemporary work. Faced with contemporary spectators that spend about 28 seconds looking at artworks and reading the accompanying, artists are developing aesthetic strategies that slow spectators down, thus hoping to direct their attention more specifically.

In 1964, artist Allan Kaprow asked how artists could effectively position their art in 'the contemporary department-store milieu'.³⁵⁸ The audience, he observed, was now a large group comprised of 'readers of the weeklies, viewers of television, charitable organisations, political campaigners, schools and universities, collectors and the average person'.³⁵⁹ The desire to encounter art seemed to be artificially created. He wrote: 'Aunt May and Uncle Jim do not always fit the philistine costume history has assigned them. Attracted to art by its promotion in mass media, they come to an artist enthusiastically but with little grasp of what that artist is doing.'³⁶⁰ The 60s and 70s saw a sharp increase in museum and gallery attendance. In 1965, the Museum of Modern Art in New

³⁵⁸ Allan Kaprow, 'The Artist as a Man of the World' (1964), in *The Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996), 52.

³⁵⁹ Kaprow, *The Artist as a Man of the World*, 54.

³⁶⁰ Kaprow, *The Artist as a Man of the World*, 49.

York announced that attendance had reached a record high of 1,058,700.³⁶¹ The increase was the result of a prosperous economy, better education and more leisure time. It was stimulated by a growing mediatization of the arts. Not everybody was delighted however. An education officer at MoMA was quoted saying: 'On weekends it can get so crowded it's miserable'.³⁶² And, as we will see, quite a few artists viewed the development with suspicion.³⁶³

In a questionnaire looking back on the 70s some American artists gave us an insight in their thoughts on the growing audience.³⁶⁴ Vito Acconci stated that he thought of it as 'a viewer on a jet, in the air, maybe not a person at all but a line, a wiz, part of the general "television" atmosphere that is the '70s'.³⁶⁵ Laurie Anderson found it 'hard to tell who's coming to these things'.³⁶⁶ Peter Hutchinson did not varnish his opinion when he described it as an amorphous and less dedicated audience informed by the popular press.³⁶⁷ It echoes artist and critic Brian O'Doherty's statement that 'we seem to have ended up with the wrong audience'.³⁶⁸

Artists always have had to find new ways to relate to changing societies and audiences. But the above quoted comments seem to suggest that at the time artists had a heightened sense of its presence. Many considered it a victim of television culture. They worried about its ability to deal with their work. At the time, the performative turn really took off. It marks a moment wherein audiences were no longer seen - as Duchamp would have it -, as posterior to the creative act, but as central to it. It moved an artist to ask, even beg for the audience's attention.³⁶⁹ In 1973 Bruce Nauman made the works PLEASE/PAY/ATTENTION/ PLEASE (Fig 1) and Pay Attention (Fig. 2). In the first one he mounted Letraset words on a cellophane support. The second work is a lithograph picturing the words PAY ATTENTION MOTHERFUCKERS in mirror image.

³⁶¹ Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) (1965) 'Press release', New York, No. 50, Friday 28 May.

³⁶² John McCandlish Phillips, "Attendance soars at museums here", *The New York Times*, 27 November, 1961, 1.

³⁶³ For an extensive analysis of this issue in the work of Bruce Nauman and Allan Kaprow see: Patrick Van Rossem, "Getting Up-close and Personal with Aunt May and Uncle Jim. Some thoughts on how to deal with your audience in the 1960s," *Performance Research*, 22 (3), (2017), 69 – 76. We will be looking at some aspects of the work of Bruce Nauman further below.

³⁶⁴ Nancy Foote, "[Situation esthetics: impermanent art and the seventies audience](#)," *Artforum*, vol. 18, no. 5 (1980), 22 – 29.

³⁶⁵ Foote, "Situation esthetics", 22.

³⁶⁶ Foote, "Situation esthetics", 22 – 23.

³⁶⁷ Foote, "Situation esthetics", 26.

³⁶⁸ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The ideology of the gallery space*, (Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 82.

³⁶⁹ Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act." (1957) In *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp. Edited by Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson*, (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 140.



Fig 1. Bruce Nauman.
Please/Pay/Attention/Please, 1973, collage
and Letraset, 70 x 70 cm.



Fig. 2. Bruce Nauman. *Pay Attention*,
1973, lithograph, 96,8 x 71,4 cm.

PLEASE/PAY/ATTENTION/PLEASE seems to strive for a perlocutionary effect: the audience paying attention. But why? Are we not paying enough attention? Or, is the sign a beacon for himself? A reminder that he has to take care as to what and how he presents it and this because of the expanded audience. He stated about the audience: “I didn’t want to present situations where people could have too much freedom to invent what they thought was going on ... I wanted it to be my idea.”³⁷⁰ The artist clearly was not keen on interpretations that carried meaning far off. He said: “It is difficult to address yourself to an anonymous public.”³⁷¹ He also stated: ‘ [...] I mistrust audience participation. That is why I try to make these works as limiting as possible.’³⁷² The immediacy and the call for attention are in other words intentional. It shows his distrust of the audience and its meaning giving activity. At the time Nauman developed art installations – narrow corridors (fig. 3) – that allowed him to control the aesthetic experience of his audience in a very precise way. He explained, ‘I think that if you can control the situation physically, then you can have ..., a similar kind of experience.’³⁷³ Again the artist was narrowing down the experience of his art in order to grab the attention of his audience and control their experience. Control, immediacy, directness, claiming attention can also be related to the expanding media and advertising

³⁷⁰ Bruce Nauman quoted in: Coosje Van Bruggen, *Bruce Nauman* (New York: Rizzoli 1988), 19.

³⁷¹ Christopher Cordes, “Talking with Bruce Nauman: An Interview.” (1989) In: *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman’s Words – Writings and Interviews*. Edited by Janet Kraynak (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2003), 350.

³⁷² Willoughby Sharp, “Nauman Interview.” (1970) in: Kraynak (ed.), *Please Pay Attention Please*, 113.

³⁷³ Jean Butterfield, “Bruce Nauman: The center of yourself.” (1975) In: Kraynak (ed.), *Please Pay Attention Please*, 182.

culture of the period. Can we consider the works as a reaction to, or an acting out of the attention demanding changes this brought about? The composite ground of the work *PLEASE/PAY/ATTENTION/PLEASE* is a collage of different transparent pages. Does it reference the many pleas for attention within a fragmented capitalist screen culture? And is the more crude 'Motherfucker' version a raw evocation of the intrusiveness – aggressiveness – embedded within the attention economy's angling for the consumer's attention? Or is the mirroring a downplaying of his own desire to make the audience pay attention?



Fig. 3. Bruce Nauman, *Corridor Installation (Nick Wilder Installation)*, 1970, wooden wallboards, water-based paint, three video cameras, scanner, frame, five monitors, video recorder. Photo: Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin.

American artist Dan Graham also was wary of television society. He considered its information flow as an asymmetrical imposition by capital.³⁷⁴ Attention became a topic in the work *Past Future Split Attention* (1972) (Fig. 4).

³⁷⁴ Dan Graham, "Essay on video, television, architecture." (1979) In *Two-way Mirror Power. Selected writings by Dan Graham on his art*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 1999), 52.



Fig. 4. Dan Graham. Video still from *Past Future Split Attention*. 1972.
Video, black and white, 17:03 min.

Two performers were asked to walk in a room. The first performer had to predict the other's future behaviour while the second performer had to recount by memory the other's past behaviour. The performers had to divide their attention while at the same time being in a position of controlling the others memories or predictions as well as play with the other's attention. Both had to try and keep their own self-awareness while being the object of attention of someone else. The work seems to be about resilience and trying not to be controlled and lose oneself. In another work entitled *PERFORMANCE / AUDIENCE / MIRROR* (1977) (Fig. 5) Graham placed himself in front of the audience with a large mirror behind his back. He paced up and down while alternately looking at the audience or at himself and the audience in the mirror. He described the behaviour of the audience as well as his own. The artist explained that he wanted to make the visitors aware of their own perceptual process as spectator.³⁷⁵ It seems that mirroring and describing the audience finds its origin in Graham's desire to make the audience more self-conscious of its own role as audience. As such, it was necessary for him to guide and redirect their attention to themselves, to their role and behaviour as spectator. During the performance he described people's carriage, sounds, facial expressions. He pointed out that someone was standing rather than sitting and thus not really part of the group, or he described whether the front row was any different from the back row and so on. The mirror reinforced the artist's descriptions and people's attention to it as well as their self-awareness of that particular moment. The performance somehow reflects television's attempts to control people's attention. Graham however uses it to make them more self-aware. He

³⁷⁵ Dan Graham quoted in: Robert Enright and Meeka Walsh, "Dan Graham: Mirror Complexities," *Border Crossings*, Issue 12, 2010.
<https://bordercrossingsmag.com/article/dan-graham-mirror-complexities>. Accessed March 5, 2021.

realized that people come to art from different backgrounds. He desired however that all of them bring with them ‘an interest in self-improvement’.³⁷⁶ Questioning one’s assumptions was no luxury. He was convinced that mass media bombarded people with distorted realities. He stated: “TV might be metaphorically visualized as a mirror in which the viewing family sees an idealized ideologically distorted reflection of itself represented in the typical TV genres: the situation comedy or the soap opera.”³⁷⁷

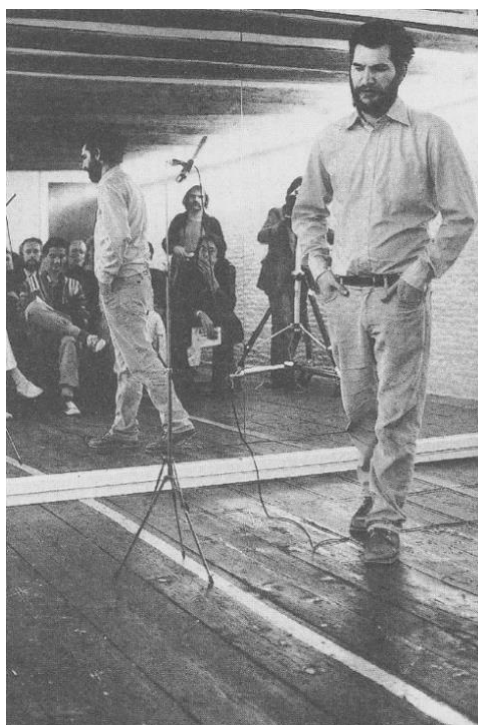


Fig. 5. Dan Graham, *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, 1977, performance.
De Appel Arts Center, Amsterdam.

Audiences keep growing. They do so because of the mediatisation of the arts, the global art world expansion, the professionalization of art institutions, better education globally and an increased valorisation of the creative.³⁷⁸ People desire art and come to it for various reasons. Research however informs us that people spend an average of 28 seconds watching an artwork and reading the associated label.³⁷⁹ How can artists capture their attention? How do contemporary artists relate to it?

³⁷⁶ Dan Graham interviewed by Ludger Gerdes (1991).’ In: Alberro (ed.), *Dan Graham*, 83.

³⁷⁷ Dan Graham, “Video as Architectural Mirror and Window”. In: *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, eds. Doug Hall, Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 168.

³⁷⁸ Just think of the popular concept ‘creative industries’.

³⁷⁹ Lisa F. Smith, Jeffrey K. Smith, and Pablo T.L. Tinio, “Time spent viewing art and reading labels,” *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts* 11, no. 1 (Febr. 2016): 77 – 85.

Belgian painter Luc Tuymans dedicates his career to painting's actualisation in an age dominated by modern visual technologies. With his paintings he aims at capturing our attention and slow our looking down. Via a carefully build up image he wants to reveal something about the potential of painted images. He uses it to reflect back upon the stories and related images that make up history, social life, visual culture... Therefore he paints from existing referential images. The artist too knows that he faces an audience that not necessarily understands what he is doing. Painting he says is "convincing the viewer to drop the luggage and look, especially in museum settings, where, unlike at a gallery, people who are not totally knowledgeable about the work will come to the museum and look at the paintings."³⁸⁰ He however does not share the distrust of the audience as seen above. He states that "Doing a show for a mainstream public is extremely important."³⁸¹ Art needs to be seen by people and the artist realises that they are the "last stop"³⁸². Hence the need to concentrate, be able to pay attention as an artist in the process of creation and this in order to reach as he says a 'precision' that could possibly have his desired, intentional effect on the audience.³⁸³ Another motivation comes from his belief that art can actually make us see and that it is necessary to learn to look attentively. He stated: "there is a lot to discover once you are prepared to actually look and dare to question things. It is incredibly important today. It is an exercise against stupidity."³⁸⁴ The quote seems hard for it suggests that people are stupid. Historically it is however a statement by an artist who is politically outspoken and at times provocative. It comes at a time when media culture and fake news have met and (extreme) right wing politics and conservative nationalism is on the rise. In order to get his message across, the artist has always talked and written openly about his inspiration, his intentions, the context of his work. He has not shun the media. It is both part of the work and the work that needs to be done.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁰ Luc Tuymans speaking about the audience, in: Lauren Viera, „An intense Intension," *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 2010.

³⁸¹ Viera, *Intense Intension*, 2010.

³⁸² Viera, *Intense Intension*, 2010.

³⁸³ The artist has frequently explained his act of creation. He often explains that the the creation of a painting only takes a day because of his short span of attention and also because it helps him to keep the intensity and precision he so desires. Viera, *Intense Intension*, 2010. Or: David Coggins, "Takeover artist," *artnet*, Sept. 2009. See:

<http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/coggins/luc-tuymans9-16-09.asp>. The artist has also stated that „art only has value because of the intention of the artist". See: Els Maas, Nieuwe expo van Luc Tuymans bestaat uit één kunstwerk: 'Dit is een gevecht tegen de dommigheid', *De Morgen*, April 3, 2021. See: <https://www.demorgen.be/tv-cultuur/nieuwe-expo-van-tuymans-bestaat-uit-een-kunstwerk-dit-is-een-gevecht-tegen-dommigheid~b63c0c9b/>

³⁸⁴ Maas, *Nieuwe expo*, 2021.

³⁸⁵ It also motivates him to be intensively involved in the exhibiting and arrangement of his work. He states: . "I've been generous with information because I thought it was part of the service, and also to demythologise things because I don't like the type of art that stands in a

The project he is currently involved in is entitled *Secrets*.³⁸⁶ The educational exhibition is the outcome of a project wherein the artist has agreed to have artificial intelligence (AI) look at his work. The exhibition consists out of the painting *Secrets* (1990) (Fig. 6), several explicatory texts, an informative website, video's with interviews of the artist and the scientist Luc Steels as well as projections that show some of the outcomes of the project. The painting is based on a photograph of Albert Speer, chief architect of the Nazi party who after his capture always maintained that he did not have any knowledge of the concentration camps. It was pictorially interpreted and deliberately changed by the artist. He has often engaged with difficult subject matter, such as colonialism, Nazism, violence, death ... One of the questions that was asked to the AI was "where a person's first attention would go?".³⁸⁷ The AI found out that it was not the eyes, which is usually a focal point in a portrait, but the zone in the middle (Fig. 7). By closing the eyes, an alteration made by the artist, our attention is drawn to the zone under the eyes, around the nose, as if directed to it by the closed downward position of the eyelids. It closes the face and makes it more ambivalent. The artist has stated that this is intentional. The idea to create an ambiguous image, an image that is not rapidly interpretable ties in with the title *Secrets* and the idea of hiding something. The artist also used subdued colours and a rather sombre tonality. He also left out a lot of the original photograph by cropping it – such as the swastika on the arm – in order to suggest rather than obviously represent a military uniform. The AI then created an expanding web of potential meanings based upon the different signifiers (closed eyes, sombre tonality, uniform, the title, ambiguity ...) in the painting. The project *Secrets* demonstrated that notwithstanding the many associations one can have with a painting, that there is an intentional element at play that indeed succeeds in capturing our attention upon our encounter with the painting. We are looking where the artist wants us to look. While the painting succeeds in capturing our attention and triggers associations; the mediation and information that encircles it, provide a context for the nourishment of our attention and interest. In a world wherein speed, the 28 second reality, the overly explicit and quick consumption of images rules, the artist decided to "work with belatedness" and choose to make his painted

corner and then once in a while says something intelligent. Most of the things should be communicated, then you can actually look." Martin Herbert, "Luc Tuymans," *Art Review*, 18 July 2014. <https://artreview.com/luc-tuymans-oct-2012/>.

³⁸⁶ Exhibition at BOZAR art centre Brussels, Belgium from April 3 to May 2, 2021. See: <https://readymag.com/u3083945729/secrets-guide/>. The project is one of the outcomes of a project wherein the artist and AI expert Luc Steels (Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, VUB) explore what AI can mean for, or bring to, art and creativity and painting in particular as well as what AI can learn about itself in the process.

³⁸⁷ Luc Tuymans in a video interview, 2021. See: <https://readymag.com/u3083945729/secrets-guide/>.

images “burn on our retina”, but to let them do it, “over time”.³⁸⁸ Slowing our perception down, by pictorially manipulating photographic images, disrupting and altering them, using faded colours, sometimes painting intentionally unsharp and so on are ways in which the artist tries to capture and hold our attention. That the growing audience for art may be less knowledgeable about what you are doing as an artist is something, we feel, no artist can neglect. Art is infrangibly connected to context; discursive, institutional or other. Providing your audience with ‘tools’ to explore it is consequently a strategic decision that can help people deepen their experience.



Fig. 6 Luc Tuymans, *Secrets*, 1990, oil on canvas, 52.0 x 37.0 cm, Private Collection, Courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp



Fig. 7 AI marking the zone where the viewers first attention goes to in the painting *Secret* by Luc Tuymans. Image from the exhibition *Secrets*. Curated by Luc Tuymans at Bozar Brussels. Project cooperation between Luc Tuymans, AI expert Luc Steels, Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, VUB. © Luc Tuymans; VUB AI lab.

Rather than mistrust the audience or see it as a victim of society or media culture, contemporary artists have altered their perception of the audience. Many have accepted that the attribution of meaning and the experience of art can differ from their own intentions and ideas. The linguistic and performative turn have made that an undeniable fact. And although there is an openness to what others bring to their work, it does however not mean that they have given up trying to make the audience pay attention to whatever they find important. Dutch photographer Rineke Dijkstra leaves out visual noise in order to achieve

³⁸⁸ Stijn Meuris, “Stijn Meuris interviewt Luc Tuymans in Bokrijk,” *Het Belang van Limburg*, July 1, 2008. <https://www.hbvl.be/cnt/aid730975/stijn-meuris-interviewt-luc-tuymans-in-bokrijk/>.

a more iconic and monumental image wherein the detailed representation of a person can – without distraction - enter our perception at a glance. Swiss installation artist Thomas Hirschhorn engages viewers in environments full of stuff. They are landscapes plunging audiences in a repetitive abundance of material, visual and textual signifiers that trigger associations with our world of plenty and capitalist limitless production of stuff. The artist states: “In today’s society meaning is diluted by an overload of information”.³⁸⁹ The artist uses the overload but rearranges it in such a way that the never ending flow of goods, here represented by more messy and poor materials, acquires a comprehensible look (Fig. 8). The environments and sculptures do not invite us to zoom in or pay much attention to details. What they do is have us ‘scan’ them while they impregnate our attention with an overall insightful impression of the messy economic and political realities that surround us. The repetition of objects and signifiers makes a continuous change of focus – in contrast to our daily lives - unnecessary, giving us the chance to engage with a more durational and explorative kind of attention.



Fig. Thomas Hirschhorn, *TOO TOO – MUCH MUCH*, project, 2010, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium, © 2010, courtesy of Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris and the artist, photo: Romain Lopez

³⁸⁹ Thomas Hirschhorn quoted in: “Quality, No! Energy, Yes!”: Thomas Hirschhorn on Why Confrontation Is Key When Making Art for the Public,” Artspace, Nov. 18, 2016. https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/book_report/phaidon-thomas-hirschhorn-interview-54368.

Confronted with their '28 second audiences' who have matured and are formed by the attention economy, artists so it seems are strikingly good at finding a balance between capturing the attention, even engaging our attention in terms of duration as well as (partially) grounding their intention in our experience and leave things open enough so audiences can freely engage in the production and attribution of meaning and become, as Tuymans would have it, 'the last stop'.

Biography

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Attention to the Other: Aesthetic Synthesis as an Ontological Work

Abstract

In a number of modern aesthetic theories, the possibility of aesthetic experience is associated with a special mode of attention, the specificity of which is connected with a unique combination of concentration and emancipation. For instance, Martin Seel argues that aesthetic perception allows the qualities of aesthetic object to freely interact with each other, and Bence Nanay, pointing to the “distributed” character of attention in aesthetic perception, believes the latter to “include in the game” not only features of the perceived object, but also the quality of the aesthetic experience itself, as well as the relationship between them. Aesthetic experience is thus conceptualized as arising from a special mode of attention that triggers a free synthesis of the multiplicity of elements. We hold necessary to emphasize, however, that aesthetic experience at its highest points presupposes not only liberated attention to aesthetic object, but also the latter’s active transcending, as a result of which the Other – each time concrete and unique, but never given in advance and foreseen – may appear to be included in the aesthetic synthesis. This means that attention in aesthetic experience can be distributed not only between the qualities of aesthetic object, but also between something that it does not initially contain. Such a synthesis should be thought of as an ontological work, since various elements-meanings of the world (from nearby material things to soul movements and invisible senses), which are synthesized into combinations that are unexpected from the point of view of a familiar, “cooled down” life, become its material. Thus understood aesthetic experience is poetry, which returns us to the “hot” universe, in which ultimately all the elements of the world rhyme, interact and resonate with each other.

What is aesthetic experience and what is the essence of aesthetic attitude to reality? How does aesthetic perception differ from simple sensory perception of something? How does the contemplation of a picture depicting any objects differ from the direct perception of these objects in reality? Why does not every work of art give rise to an aesthetic response in us, while a simple sensual contemplation of some non-artistic object sometimes develops into an aesthetic experience, making us feel *something else* here and now? These and other questions mark the problematic field of aesthetics, in which the question of aesthetic experience is always one of the central ones.

Despite the doubt that man has a special ability to aesthetic attitude expressed by a number of researchers of the second half of the XX century (a paradigmatic example in this context is the position of George Dickie, presented in his work “The Myth of Aesthetic Attitude”),³⁹⁰ in a number of modern aesthetic theories an attempt is made to connect the possibility of aesthetic experience with a special mode of perception and attention. Among the researchers who adhere to this approach are Martin Seel and Bence Nanay. They both describe aesthetic experience as a derivative of a particular aesthetic attitude of attention to the perceived object, which allows the contents of the experience to be synthesized in a special way – indeterminately and unpredictably. Drawing upon the ideas of Seel and Nanay, we would like to take one more step in figuring out the logic of aesthetic experience and to comprehend the full realization of its potential not only as a matter of subjectivity, but as an ontological work, the poetry of being itself.

According to Seel, modern man has the ability for a special aesthetic perception, tuned in “to apprehend something in the process of its appearing for the sake of its appearing.”³⁹¹ In the course of the performance of aesthetic perception, a person proves to be sensitive to the phenomenon of appearance, which “is a constitutive element of all forms of aesthetic production and perception.”³⁹² It follows that “in principle, anything that can be perceived sensuously can also be perceived aesthetically.”³⁹³ Thus, Seel explains why not only works of art, but also any material objects, as well as non-material phenomena – events, states, atmosphere, spaces, etc. – and their combinations can become objects of aesthetic perception.

What is the difference between aesthetic attention to an object and unaesthetic attention? According to Seel, the specificity of aesthetic attention consists in a unique combination of concentration and liberation. Concentrating on any object, aesthetic perception does not cling to something specific, allowing the qualities and properties of the object to play freely and interact with each other: “The aesthetic appearing of an object is a play of its appearances.”³⁹⁴ Openness, indeterminacy, unpredictability and novelty, which attract us so much in aesthetic experience, stem from this.

³⁹⁰ See George Dickie, “The Myth of Aesthetic Attitude”, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1964): 56-65.

³⁹¹ Martin Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 15.

³⁹² Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing*, 22.

³⁹³ Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing*, 21.

³⁹⁴ Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing*, 37.

The usual perception of things is not motivated by the perception of this unpredictable play of contents, the staging of their unique synthesis. In aesthetic perception, there is no external goal that in any way directs or limits perception; equally, no one obliges the recipient to include in his experience all the characteristics of the object and to be meticulous in detecting them. Modern aesthetic experience is a space of freedom.

Nanay offers a similar understanding of aesthetic attention and aesthetic experience. Doubting the possibility of creating an absolutely universal theory of aesthetic experience, Nanay nevertheless insists that a significant number of different aesthetic experiences have a single basis, rooted, again, in a special mode of perception. As Nanay explains, in the case of aesthetic perception, “we attend in a distributed and at the same time focused manner: our attention is focused on one perceptual object, but it is distributed among a large number of this object’s properties.”³⁹⁵ The recognition of the mode of “distributed attention” explains the fact that “we can experience works of art in a non-aesthetic manner and we can experience objects other than works of art in an aesthetic manner.”³⁹⁶ Describing the synthetic essence of aesthetic experience, Nanay notes that not only the qualities of the perceived object are synthesized in aesthetic experience, but also the very sensations from our experience: “When we have an aesthetic experience, we don’t just attend to the object we see. We also attend to the quality of our experience. Importantly, we attend to the relation between the two.”³⁹⁷ On the whole, in his understanding of aesthetic attitude, Nanay is very close to Seel: it is the special setting of attention, where concentration on the object is combined with the utmost emancipation, openness of perception, that triggers the aesthetic experience.

Thus, aesthetic experience appears as a space for the perception of free, unexpected combinations and their effects. Aesthetic perception is characterized by openness, as a result of which it is not known in advance what the content and quality of aesthetic experience will be. And yet, on the face of it, the source of this content is in the contemplated object (be it a work of art or something else). It is difficult to dispute that aesthetic experience is provoked by some specific contemplated object. But is the possible content of aesthetic experience reduced to a synthesis of the qualities of the subject and the object, albeit extremely free?

³⁹⁵ Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016), 13.

³⁹⁶ Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception*, 19.

³⁹⁷ Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019), 38.

To answer this question, it is necessary to comprehend the logic of aesthetic experience traced so far. In general terms, it is as follows: aesthetic experience is a striving for something unforeseen and indeterminate, embodied in the liberated contemplation of an aesthetic object (this contemplation turns out to be at the same time its synthesis). We step out of our familiar world to have “the experience of being moved or carried away, as well as the putative experience of subject-object fusion.”³⁹⁸ In aesthetic experience, we are looking for the unforeseen, something Other than what we could program ourselves. Simply put, we seek to go beyond ourselves and meet the Other.

Using the terminology of E. Levinas, we can say that the logic of aesthetic experience is in the movement from the Same to the Other, and the whole question is how fully it manages to unroll in each specific case. This question is by no means identical with the question of how far a person can progress in its implementation – after all, not everything here depends on the subject. As Levinas puts it, the subject “is left to be torn apart by himself, gets stuck in himself,”³⁹⁹ so that the Other itself must enter his life in order to declare itself. In this regard, the aesthetic attitude of attention, which man is able to occupy, is only a manifestation of his desire, a call to the Other, only the starting point in the deployment of the logic of aesthetic experience. And the more aesthetic experience is revealed, the more the Other declares itself, and the less remains at the mercy of the person himself.

In this case, the revelation of the free interaction of the elements contained in the contemplated object, described by Seel and Nanay, does not yet express the maximum power of aesthetic synthesis. Using the example of interaction with a work of art, it is true to say that “when sufficiently open to aesthetic experience, the work of art and the self becomes a sort of a dynamic field where emotions, thoughts, memories and hopes are activated, brought forth, or enacted by the system of spectator-artwork-museum.”⁴⁰⁰ At a certain level of the power of aesthetic synthesis, a “dynamic field” is formed, in which everything starts to synthesize, whimsically combine and rhyme – the contemplated object and its characteristics, on the one hand, and the subject with its cultural background, emotions, thoughts, memories, on the other. But this dynamic field, being formed, is capable of causing an unexpected response

³⁹⁸ Simon Høffding, Tone Roald, “Passivity in Aesthetic Experience: Husserlian and Enactive Perspectives”, *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*, 6(1) (2019): 2.

³⁹⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and Other. Humanism of Another Person* (Saint Petersburg, Higher religious and philosophical school, 1998), 64.

⁴⁰⁰ Høffding, Roald, “Passivity in Aesthetic Experience: Husserlian and Enactive Perspectives”, 16.

from other elements and phenomena of the world that were not initially contained in it.

This is how resonance works, and this is how poetry works: starting in a specific place, with a couple of lines describing a certain situation, it is able in several leaps to activate elements from different parts of the universe, different registers of being, including them in a unique constellation of rhymed contents. Such a synthesis should be thought of as an ontological work, producing combinations that are unexpected and unforeseen from the point of view of the familiar, “cooled down” life. That is why poetry is valuable: through a specific poem, which may consist of just a few lines, it throws us into a “hot” universe, in which, in the limit, all the elements of the world rhyme, interact and resonate with each other. However, each aesthetic object always turns out to be a certain sample, a few drops of lava taken from the general mass.

These reflections lead us to the necessity of the consideration of aesthetic experience in its dynamics and development. The general basis for launching an aesthetic experience is attention to the Other, the image of which is not predetermined in any way (which distinguishes the sphere of aesthetics, for example, from religion, in which the image of God as the Other, as a rule, is nevertheless accompanied by certain ideas about Him). A person can take a step towards the Other on his own, turning on the mode of aesthetic perception. The opposite is not excluded: elements of the world itself or works of art can capture a person in an aesthetic experience, even if he was not tuned in to it. However, in any case, as the aesthetic experience unfolds, the aesthetic object also develops. If at first it is the object from which we begin our perception, then further the boundaries between a specific object and a subject become blurred. Ultimately, the entire system, including certain objects that have entered into resonance, as well as the initial subject, turns out to be a single vibrating aesthetic field that experiences itself. This continues until the aesthetic experience fades away.

Here we are involved in a process that is no longer our subjective activity, but is objective in nature. It is not that we allow ourselves to “add or multiply stars and plums,”⁴⁰¹ but rather the elements-meanings of the world themselves – for example, the landscape depicted in the painting, the colors of the painting, love and longing, the light of a distant star, the memories of fifteen years ago, as well as the person standing in front of the painting – resonate, rhyme with each other, sometimes in the most unexpected way. Does this happen only at the

⁴⁰¹ Alexander Sekackiy, *Philosophy of Possible Worlds* (Saint Petersburg, Limbus Press, K. Tublin Publishers, 2017), 202.

level of imagination, at the level of language, in the human soul? Or is a person able to write poetry only because aesthetic experience is in fact not only human experience, but at the same time an ontological experience that reveals the poetry of being itself? This question is reminiscent of the old question about ideas that Plato had to work with: does a person formulate ideas himself, or is he able to do this because ideas exist objectively? Whatever answer we give, it is obvious that through the question of aesthetic experience we have come close to the riddle of the structure of the world and the relationship of man with it. This allows us to think of aesthetic experience as the ontological one.

Biography

Vsevolod Rybakov graduated from Saint Petersburg State University in 2008. In 2012 he defended his PhD thesis. Worked at ITMO University (2012-2020). Since 2020 he has been working at Saint Petersburg Mining University. Research interests: philosophy, aesthetics.

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Distracted examiner. Dialectic of attention and the future of aesthetic judgement

Abstract

In the end of his essay *'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility'* Walter Benjamin remarked that "The audience is an examiner, but a distracted one". The concept of *zerstreuter Examiner* – the examiner who is "distracted", "inattentive", but also "dispersed", "scattered" – suggests that plural, diasporic (it's also one of the meanings of the German *Zertsreuung*) subjectivity will be able to make a judgement. Benjamin believed that messianic destruction of traditional modes of attention and concentration (*Sammlung*) by the new technologies would allow to experience and judge independently of any pre-established rule (e.g. tradition). This creates peculiar dialectic which oscillates between distracted attention – attention that has been destroyed by "shock" – and attentive distraction – distraction that announces the "new tasks of apperception" and evolves into "heightened attention". The very idea of distraction as a cultural conditioning of modern mass audience was taken from Siegfried Kracauer's essays: *'Cult of Distraction: On Berlin's Picture Palaces'* and *'The Mass Ornament'*. For Kracauer, as for Benjamin, cinema is the most progressive and most destructive modern medium, when it comes to traditional modes of reception. For both of them distraction is attention in transgression: to become distracted is to pay attention somewhere else. Benjamin and Kracauer point at the architecture as a specific environment and a condition of social life. "Tactile perception" of buildings – casual noticing rather than attentive observation – creates alternative form of distractive attention. If it's true, then architecture would create the space for plural judgement to happen, by constituting conditions to look elsewhere. Distraction is thus aimed at tracing new ways of judgement, new possibilities of moving in a disseminated (*zerstreut*) space, to make us become attentive to what is unexpected.

I would like to reflect upon the future of such judgment with reference to Forensic Architecture project (nominated in 2018 for the Turner Prize). This multidisciplinary research, founded by Eyal Weizman is focused on the attentive study of data diffused in the Internet to find proofs of crimes against human rights. According to Weizman, forensics assumes two sets of relations: event-object and object-forum. But since the objects that register events are mostly buildings, it requires the ability to focus on what presents itself

tactilely/tactically. In other words, one has to learn to look elsewhere. Moreover, as Weizman continues: “the forums (...) they are often contingent, diffused and networked...”. We can ask then: what kind of forum, what kind of examiner such attentive distraction awaits?

Walter Benjamin’s 1939 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* apart from introducing the famous idea of “destruction of the aura”⁴⁰² – a socio-historical phenomenon which decisively detaches works of art from cult value – also includes less prominent eulogy of distraction. Just as the loss of aura, performed by modern technologies, has liberated works of art from „parasitic subservience to ritual”⁴⁰³, even secularized one, the ability to perceive distractively opens new possibilities of collective modes of being. It shows that subjects that are discarded by economic and political processes of capitalism find their exact way of subjectification in a distracted apperception which enables them to evaluate independently what is presented. In the final sentence of his essay Benjamin remarks that: “The audience is an examiner, but a distracted one”. The concept of *zerstreuter Examiner* – the examiner who is “distracted”, “inattentive” but also “dispersed”, “scattered” – suggests that certain plural, diasporic (it’s also one of the meanings of the German *Zertsreuung*) subjectivity is (or will be able) to make a judgement. This redemption of mass reception is performed not by subjective powers of disseminated social subject, but by technics. According to Benjamin material conditions of reproducible artworks – such as photography and film – affect also subjective ways of reception. The world viewed in cinematic representation is perceived collectively, in the shared diaspora. Such “free floating” group attention, provoked by the chain of constantly interrupted pictorial associations, liberates physical shock effect. It agitates “heightened attention”⁴⁰⁴, attention that has its source in distraction, rather than in contemplative watchfulness, and allows to perceive phenomena that previously have been out of human scope. In a way, artwork becomes a weapon of “mass distraction” in a battle against petrified division of social roles which is conserved by reactionary processes. Benjamin wasn’t alone in such thinking. Although optimistic attitude towards mass entertainment became a bone of contention between him and Theodor Adorno, for a brief moment he shared this view with Siegfried Kracauer. They both believed in an emancipatory

⁴⁰² Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* in: *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938-1940, H.Eiland, M.W. Jennings eds. (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 256.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 267.

power of distraction that has its place especially in cinemas, but also creates certain environment for human conduct in architecture. The very idea of distraction as a cultural conditioning of modern mass audience was taken from Siegfried Kracauer's essays: '*Cult of Distraction: On Berlin's Picture Palaces*' (1926) and '*The Mass Ornament*' (1927). For Kracauer, as for Benjamin, cinema is the most progressive and most destructive modern medium, when it comes to traditional modes of reception. Cinemas are "palaces of distraction" where the source of emancipatory power hides. This reminds us that we should "aim radically toward a kind of distraction that exposes disintegration instead of masking it"⁴⁰⁵. Kracauer emphasizes that distraction is attention in transgression: to become distracted is to pay attention somewhere else; to change the relation between the figure and the ground, the centre and periphery (history of such changes in XIX and XX Century has been described by Jonathan Crary⁴⁰⁶). Hence, the study of dialectic of attention should also lead to "the rehabilitation of objectives and modes of being which still lack the name and hence are overlooked and misjudged" as Kracauer puts it in his last work⁴⁰⁷. Kracauer was soon disillusioned and for him the distractive/destructive potential of film as mass work of art rapidly transformed into an abstract and artificial ornament performed by rhythmic gymnastics in the sport stadiums.

It would be worth to put their ideas together to check if we can extract from those texts some general theory of emancipatory distraction for today. Putting aside the whole political background of Benjamin's text, with its remarks on fascist aestheticisation of politics and communist politicization of art, I think it would be useful to try to draw a line that would link the question concerning possible shape of community of judgement and the idea of aesthetic distraction concerned as a dialectical tool to open possibilities for heightened attention. What are the stakes? Our ability to grasp what is hidden in depths of our reality but not by nature, but by forces that guide our attention in order to rule and to restrain imagination: the power to build images, that are, as we know from Kant's lesson, indispensable for free thinking.

Before we move to the core of Benjamin's argumentation it is worth noticing that the final version of an essay on the work of art is predated by a short note

⁴⁰⁵ Siegfried Kracauer, *Cult of Distraction* in: *The Mass Ornament. Weimar Essays*, T.Y. Levin ed., transl. (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 328.

⁴⁰⁶ See Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001).

⁴⁰⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, *History. The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995), 4.

entitled *Theory of Distraction*⁴⁰⁸, written in 1936. Reproducible works of art, as we read, have no power to consecrate reality and enter truly profane mode of existence. Moreover, they can “worn out”, they can become dilapidated, ramshackle, since they are not produced to last, as Greek art, but are reproduced to be used, just as fashion. But even in such disadvantageous times works of art keep something special: their adaptability. They strive to save something of themselves, no matter what, showing, as Benjamin writes, “their true humanity”. One of the poles is a fashion, commodified and alienated version of former creation, the other is film which is a new form of art that proves its vital powers of refunctioning in modern times. And film is the art that has been transfigured into politics. “Distraction and destruction are the subjective and objective sides, respectively, of one and the same process”⁴⁰⁹, writes Benjamin. Old art has been destroyed by technical reproducibility, but this process makes possible subjective distraction which is no lesser than classical catharsis, as they both are, according to Benjamin, physiological phenomena. We have lost stability provided by artistic visions of eternity but we have gained elasticity and movability brought by moving pictures. When one is distracted, one learns to act and react differently, which is a skill indispensable for the new ways of political conduct. Because of that assumption Benjamin could write that: “The work of art undertakes to produce entertainment in a responsible manner”⁴¹⁰. It is as if distraction burned all the receptive limitations that would withhold truly emancipatory politics. Distracted by film images one becomes sensitive to previously unnoticed aspects of commodified reality and this brings a hope that one would learn to see the details and how they connect to judge them according to rules that are yet to be found. Benjamin believes in the messianic destruction of traditional modes of attention and concentration (*Sammlung*) through the means of new technologies. This should lead to redemption of ability to experience and judge independently of any pre-established rule (e.g. tradition). Because of that Benjamin can write in 1939 essay that distraction (*Ablenkung*) is a proof of social behavior whereas contemplation is antisocial. Cinema audience forms a mass of participants and as such “a different kind of participation”⁴¹¹. This positions us within peculiar dialectic which oscillates between, what we may call it, distracted attention – attention that has been destroyed by “shock” experiences – and attentive distraction – distraction that announces the “new tasks of apperception” and as such: “heightened attention”. Because of that: “Distraction and concentration (*Zerstreuung und*

⁴⁰⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Theory of Destruction* in: *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, 1935-1938, H. Eiland, M.W. Jennings, eds. (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 141-143.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 141.

⁴¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), 678.

⁴¹¹ Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, 267.

Sammlung) form an antithesis...”⁴¹². Attentive concentration transports us into the image, while distracted dispersion teleports multitude of images between us. Images no longer hang on distanced walls, but form a sort of puzzle that can be assembled and reassembled in order to show us the actual historical state of reality. This leads us to the rather surprising conclusion of the text. Distractive cinematic reception has its forebear in architecture: “Architecture has always offered the prototype of an artwork that is received in a state of distraction and through a collective”⁴¹³. How is that? Short remark from Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* may shed some light on this strange parallel. Benjamin quotes Swiss historian and critic of architecture Siegfried Giedion the author of *Bauen in Frankreich*, book on XIX century French modern architecture. He writes: “Attempt to develop Giedion’s thesis. ‘In the nineteenth century’; he writes, ‘construction plays the role of the subconscious’. Wouldn’t it be better to say ‘the role of bodily processes’ - around which ‘artistic’ architectures gather, like dreams around the framework of physiological processes?”⁴¹⁴. Iron architectonic constructions, hidden from view, are for Giedion similar to unconscious processes that influence consciousness of its users. For Benjamin, they are more like skeleton, muscles and viscera whilst everything that belongs to the sphere of drives and desires is outside, in the realm of great architectonic and artistic dreams and people who move around them. And just as Dadaists tactically used tactile (*taktisch*) qualities of the new media to break the contemplative distance and “touch” the beholder so architecture serves as the paradigm of an artwork “that is received in a state of distraction and through a collective”⁴¹⁵. When used, buildings are not in front of us, rather around us, they are “absorbed” in human actions, they are at our fingertips. Collective architectonic experience assumes no distance but material presence of multitude of bodies in space. Buildings are surfaces that gather together, record and mold immediate contact of bodies and objects. To move around them is to form a “habit” – certain pattern or a manner – that is, to act spontaneously in self-regulating, constantly transforming, unconscious or at least dream-like and fluid environment. “Tactile perception” of buildings – casual noticing rather than attentive observation – creates alternative form of distractive attention. If it’s true, architecture would then create the space for plural judgement to happen, by constituting conditions to look elsewhere. As Kracauer observes: “In the streets of Berlin, one is often struck by the momentary insight that someday all this will suddenly burst apart. The

⁴¹² Ibid., 268.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, H. Eiland, K. McLaughlin, transl. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 391.

⁴¹⁵ Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, 268.

entertainment to which the general public throngs ought to produce the same effect”⁴¹⁶. Distraction is thus aimed at tracing new ways of judgement, new possibilities of moving in a disseminated (*zerstreut*) space, to make us become attentive to what is unexpected. Benjamin deeply believed that habitual modes of being provoked by architectural space could be transposed to the new, technologically reproducible artworks. This would mean that ability to choose right course, to orient oneself and to accept or reject everything that happens, in other words, the ability to evaluate collectively, in transition would be given also to spectators of modern images. And so, their gaze would be just as the one of Constantin Guy’s courtesans described by Baudelaire: “(...) a gaze directed toward the horizon, one in which rigid attentiveness and profound distraction are united”⁴¹⁷.

But if it’s true that today there is no “Us”, that is, there is no some kind of community of speculative nature with which everyone could identify and whose the very speculative nature would enable to transform what is “other” into what is “mine”, as Jean-François Lyotard arguments (“death in combat is a ‘beautiful death’; a beautiful death implies a ‘fine’ life; Athenian life is fine; the Athenian living this life is fine; you are fine”⁴¹⁸) because it has been ridiculed by Auschwitz (“ ‘Auschwitz’ is the forbiddance of the beautiful death. The content of the command, the death of its (supposed) addressee, is not sufficient to shatter the we”⁴¹⁹) what shall we do with such idea of distracted redemption of life’s multiplicity? Is it possible today to defend the idea of attentive distraction that would enable to look elsewhere in order to judge collectively? What would be the status of such collective judgement?

At the end, just to signalize the problems that are multiplying when it comes to reflect upon such possible communal judgement, I would like to reflect upon the future of such judgment with reference to Forensic Architecture project (nominated in 2018 for the Turner Prize). This multidisciplinary research project founded by Eyal Weizman can be seen as the attentive study of data diffused in the Internet that can be used as a proof of crimes committed against human rights. As Weizman puts it: “The principle of forensics assumes two interrelated sets of spatial relations. The first is a relation between an event and the object in which it is registered. The second is a relation between the object and the construction or the assembly of the forum to which it is addressed, or

⁴¹⁶ Kracauer, *Cult of Distraction*, 327.

⁴¹⁷ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 369.

⁴¹⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*, G. Van Den Abbeele, transl. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 20.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 100.

within which it resonates”⁴²⁰. But since the objects that register events are usually buildings, the ability to focus on what presents itself tacitly (and also “tactically”, as we may say) is required. In other words, one has to learn to look elsewhere. Moreover, as Weizman continues: “the forums to which contemporary forensics are addressed are not only the actual spaces of the court; they are often contingent, diffused and networked, created through and by the media, assembled around forensic evidence, and operate across a multiplicity of international institutions”⁴²¹. Of course there are many examples and many cases of successive investigations performed within Forensic Architecture program, just check it here: <https://forensic-architecture.org/>, and of course the main theoretical framework of such venture is “material turn” and “object-oriented ontology”. But I just want to narrow the whole analysis to one question: what does it mean to create “forum” today, if ultimately, when it comes to presenting the outcome of investigation, it is formed by images created out of informational dispersion? Will we be able to acknowledge that the world we are living in is formed by plurality of events? And in order to follow them, in order to bear witness, one has to learn how to disperse oneself, to learn how to distract oneself; to spot the ephemeral matter of things touching us?

Biography

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⁴²⁰ Eyal Weizman, „Forensic Architecture. Only the criminal can solve the crime”, in: *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 164, 12.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

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Machines for distancing and machines for embedding

Abstract

In this paper, I will focus on the way how modern architecture deals with the task of framing the world experience. The term modern architecture used in this particular way suggests there is a coherent group of works of architecture that share some fundamental qualities. These are mostly understood as formal qualities that express certain architectural style. I seriously doubt there are such unifying qualities. The term can still be used in a sensible way if it simply means time definition: modern architecture here means 20th century and contemporary architecture. For my argument in this paper, I put aside all variations in style⁴²² and use different descriptions of modern architecture. This different view and vocabulary allow capturing arguably the key moments. Focus on form-evolution is valid in architectural history as a way of genealogy description. However, I want to discuss the question of modern architecture as a frame of the world experience and not as an autonomous form.

Therefore, I will not pay much attention to questions of ornament for instance but instead, I will look more closely on the environmental qualities of modern architecture. To be more precise I am suggesting here that we turn attention to how modern architecture builds relationships with the environment and what these relationships are like. At the same time reflect on how such relationships frame the world experience or in other words where does the modern architecture place the inhabitant. With such a specific view I can identify two fundamentally opposite positions and reveal crucial ambiguities of modern architecture and thus also help to understand the consequences we are facing today.

Steady background

Even though it is always tricky to use dichotomies to describe any history because reality tends to be rather nuanced one such a dichotomy may be useful in this case as orientation poles (scale limits). These two positions in modern architecture manifest different understandings of architecture but also of human beings and their situation in the world. Let me start by stating that

⁴²² Although what I am about to describe in the end has also formalistic expressions and formalistic consequences.

architecture is sometimes understood as a tool that creates or at least is supposed to create a steady background of human life. The reason why architecture is given such a task is mostly existential: our lives are constantly changing and architecture should represent the stable element and therefore balance the common experience of the world with the fundamental idea of lasting. The general idea of the frame is studied under different terms. For instance, Christian Norberg-Schulz⁴²³ used the terms *microcosmos* or *imago mundi*⁴²⁴ to capture the specific situation we find ourselves in. My aim here is to focus on the praxis of creating modern microcosmos.

A common narrative in the history of 20th-century architecture claims there is a gap between the Modern Movement and the traditional or historical architecture.⁴²⁵ Although it would be foolish to claim there is no shift at all, the difference should not be overstated as some of the key ideas were conceived in the midst of historical architecture. For instance, it is a well-known fact that modern architecture explored the connection of function and beauty. Bruno Taut, one of the avant-garde movement protagonists expressed it explicitly: “Everything that functions well, looks well.”⁴²⁶ However, the idea of a function as a determinant of form was already discussed in the middle of the 19th century by Henry Labrouste⁴²⁷ and later made famous by Louis Sullivan. Still, the function is a key concept of modern architecture, yet the application of the idea changes. What we can observe in modern architecture is how the idea of function materializes and how in the same process architecture dematerializes. It dematerializes itself both with extensive use of transparent materials but also with the emphasis on abstract concepts such as space and spatial speculation.

It is important to stress that a critical view of such an approach is part of modern architecture as well. In general terms, such a critical stance in architecture does not put abstractions such as function or architectural space in the heart of its effort. Such architectural thinking in contrast takes human experience into account and cares to understand and articulate the specific situation in which human beings always finds themselves. Such architectural thinking does not see architecture as a totality based on abstraction that may lead man into a more rational and therefore better future. It is not in nature projective (time relation to future) but articulative (time relation to the present).

⁴²³ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci*

⁴²⁴ Also Juhani Pallasmaa shares some of these ideas

⁴²⁵ N. Pevsner

⁴²⁶ Bruno Taut

⁴²⁷ Labrouste, MoMA, p. 26.

Case Studies

Peter Sloterdijk suggested architects can think with (I would add through) material.⁴²⁸ The best thing now is to look at the works of architecture. For clarity of my argument, I will use just a few comparisons.

Arguably there is a great chance to capture critical moments if I focus on “materialized ideals”. To reveal the ideals of avant-garde living one can study for instance the examples of two villas: villa Tugendhat (Brno, Czech Republic) by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and villa Mairea (Noormarku, Finland) by Alvar Aalto. Both villas were designed basically with an unlimited budget in mind and both are built as oppositions to previous ideals of elite living – villa Tugendhat in opposition to villa Löw-Beer and villa Mairea to Havulinna. Although the villa Tugendhat (1928-30) is a few years older than villa Mairea (1937-39), this fact does not matter for my argument as both villas serve as models of certain types of modern thinking.⁴²⁹

Villa Tugendhat: Space

Mies’ Villa Tugendhat is famous especially for the open space on the first floor. Sometimes terms open, continuous, or flowing space⁴³⁰ are used to describe the unique spatial design. It must be noted that Mies did not publish any specific explanation or comment on his intention. That leaves us only partly in the dark because the architecture is simply present.⁴³¹

Mies van der Rohe applied in the villa Tugendhat the same idea he explored in the famous Barcelona pavilion (1929) where the frame construction holds the roof and thus all the walls are not bearing any load. Therefore, the wall can basically disappear or transform itself into a spatial barrier and an architectural ornament.⁴³² There are (both in pavilion and villa) two distinct balancing

⁴²⁸ Sloterdijk, *Architects do Nothing But “Inside Theory”*

⁴²⁹ To be fair, the two curators Philip Johnson and Henry Russell-Hitchcock who prepared the exhibition *The International Style* in 1932 later said (it was Russell-Hitchcock in the preface of the second edition in 196X) that should they know back then works built just a few years later by Aalto and F.L. Wright they would have to adjust the core idea. The International Style is still a relic of modernist optimism and manifest of will to find (and possibly support the idea of) unifying global culture. However, I do not care about linearity here because both models are practiced in modern architecture in a parallel way.

⁴³⁰ Šváchá, *The Tugendhat House’s Space*, p. 82.

⁴³¹ I have to clarify the methodology a little bit here: I don’t believe the task of an art historian is to interpret the work of art or architecture just with and through the artist’s intention. The task is to as fully as possible explain and reveal all sides of the work. To explore also these one must use all kinds of approaches including positivist, structuralist, phenomenological to name just a few.

⁴³² Very precisely orchestrated ornament in the Barcelona pavilion case: as the colors were to represent colors of the German flag.

motives: one of lightness and one of heaviness. The motive of lightness is manifested through a subtle steel frame and open flow of space with a specific rhythm and clear grid-based structure. Subtle columns are partly dematerialized with polished surface, their materiality is deliberately suppressed as much as possible.⁴³³

Where does this leave the inhabitant? What sort of microcosmos is created? How it frames the world experience? Especially the experience of the fluid living area open space situates the inhabitant into space that does not end with the glass wall. And not just in potentiality – literally as parts of the glass wall can slide down into the wall and interconnect the interior space with vast exterior space fully. How can we best understand this free flow of interior to exterior and vice versa? Does this mean architecture emphasizes the experience of boundless space? With such a sophisticated architect such as Mies, the situation is never simple: the architect builds a balance between the openness and the closedness – there are moments of full closure such as the windowless back wall (it is underground). Also, the famous Onyx wall brings a moment of settlement with its heavy materiality. However, to actually understand the villa's key architectural motive – the open space - one must contemplate the idea of architectural space. In other words, the villa forms such a microcosmos which tends to frames us both in a distinct place (house) that seeks to distance the inhabitant from the immediate experience of architecture. Only in such a reflective act can we grasp the revolutionary architectural motive. Thus, the villa is a place where the function has a new meaning: the architectural space is a function of this place.

Vila Mairea: Place

Alvar Aalto also designed large open living area in villa Mairea. Immediately we recognize the different situation as the architect for his spatial rhythm follows the pattern of the immediate forest exterior: Aalto also builds a tight connection between interior and exterior space. Even though Mies designed the possibility of literal unity of interior and exterior, he still holds a contrast between the strictly organised (grid-based) interior and boundless (groundless) exterior. In Aalto's villa, we see continuity based on a loose "forest-geometry" which is manifested in random-like positioned columns in the interior. The open space of villa Mairea's ground floor is similarly fluid but not so strictly united as Mies who even used a white linoleum on all the floor there. Mies designed in the pavilion and the villa Tugendhat's main living room an abstract spatial container in which he placed barriers dividing the open space without actually breaking it into series of rooms or places. In villa Mairea

⁴³³ As much as the most advanced building technology allows.

Alvar Aalto used the opposite perspective: he used several different types of tiles and other material combinations (and thus brings forth edges) to form series places that co-form the fluid space as a system of demarked and at the same time tightly interconnected places. In this sense, Mies' space is a form of abstraction that is made specific through the grid system and specific objects inserted in the space – in potentiality the space is still present even if completely empty (Newtonian vision of Absolute Space). Aalto on the other hand starts with the specific and with addition and blending of places creates the open fluid space experience (Machian Relative Space).

We are not looking at two different styles of architecture, we are looking at two distinctly different ways how to design the modern microcosmos. With a little exaggeration, it can be formulated as follows: Mies designed a machine for distancing and Aalto designed a machine for embedding. Villa Tugendhat is a continuation of rationalization of the world experience in which the bodily experience is suppressed in favour of the inhabitant's intellect. In the case of villa Mairea, the bodily experience of being situated is the fundamental starting point and thus the villa seeks ways of articulating it.

Although I just focused on two rare and unique modern villas, the specific view I used can be applied further. Observing the history of modern and contemporary architecture it seems possible to develop the dichotomy of space and place. For instance, looking at the works of later Mies, SOM, Norman Foster, Renzo Piano on one hand and works of Carlo Scarpa, Luis Barragán, Peter Zumthor, Steven Holl on the other, the opposite notions of distancing and embedding seem as relevant concepts describing ambiguities that are forming modern and contemporary architecture. What lies at stake is whether we find the proper way to describe where do find ourselves.

Biography

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Through the eyes of minor characters: The attentional shift in fanfictions and its influence on canonical works.

Abstract

Transformative literary works, also known as fanfictions, have been often and for long viewed as texts with debatable or infinitesimal level of quality and as such, they have not been in the centre of academics' attention. However, the ever increasing role of digital media in popular culture and popular culture studies helped to change that attitude: Fanfictions, their authors and readers have gained power to change some aspects of „canonical“ stories – whether it is in a rather psychological sense of the word (like, for example, our understanding and perception of given character), or more concrete (e. g. the final unravelling of the whole plot, with which are the fans unhappy and wish to have it rewritten their way). In this paper I would like to address one specific facet of these fan created works – the attentional shift. Fanfictions, as opposed to canonical works, offer significantly more space to minor characters and, also, allocate more attention to women. What does this attentional shift mean for popular culture and how does it affect literature and our perception of literary works? Together with answering these questions, I would like to outline reasons why we should not underestimate fan created works and why they should no longer escape our attention.

Fanfictions, short or longer stories written by fans as their own take on their favourite media texts, may seem as something brought to life thanks to the internet not so long ago, however, origins of fanfiction can be found in science fiction magazines (or fanzines) already in the 1920s and 1930s⁴³⁴. And while tracking back its roots, we can go even further – to oral tradition and myths⁴³⁵. In 2007, when the *Organisation for Transformative Works* (OTW) was established, it was something quite unheard of: Entirely fan-run, nonprofit organisation, the purpose of which is to provide a safe space for various works of fans (*fanworks*, also known as fanart, fan videos, podfic, and fanfiction) and

⁴³⁴ Thomas Bronwen, “What Is Fanfiction and Why Are People Saying Such Nice Things about It?” *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3 (2011): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/storyworlds.3.2011.0001>.

⁴³⁵ Abigail Derecho, “Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction,” in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, eds. K. Hellekson, K. Busse (McFarland, 2006), 62.

to defend them from commerce and legal challenge⁴³⁶. The most well-known project of OTW is *Archive of Our Own (AO3)*, that came to life out of the need to preserve and protect “*online-published and amateur-authored stories*”⁴³⁷, fanfictions. Up until the foundation of *Archive*, fanfictions have had the position of “*fairly underground and marginalized activity*”⁴³⁸. Why even was there such view of fanfictions and how exactly did *Archive* manage to change it? To better understand that, let us have a bit closer look on this phenomenon. Fanfictions are written mostly by women⁴³⁹. This could be caused by, as many scholars and reader-response theory followers argue, their different approach to texts. As Jenkins⁴⁴⁰ summarizes, from an early age is our reading gender specific. Little girls are invited to different stories than boys – not because they like them better, but because we *think* they will like them better. With every purchased book about princesses or with every bought-as-a-gift superhero comic, we contribute to this dichotomy in which not just the content differs, its narrative accents and offered reading style demand a different handling. This way male readers “*sometimes react to disturbing stories by rejecting them or by dominating them*”⁴⁴¹ or simply have more “respect” for the author and therefore are more detached from the world created in a book⁴⁴². Female readers, on the other hand, are found to have more empathy with portrayed characters, are more attentive to relationships between them and, finally, “*they more frequently break free of the submissive entanglement in a text*”⁴⁴³. Female readers do not perceive the boundary separating them from the text as so noteworthy and impenetrable like their male counterparts do. But, living in the world “run” by men, masculine interpretative strategies are supported, rewarded, and institutionalized (movie industry is dominated by men, majority of movies is male-oriented, etc.)⁴⁴⁴, whereas feminine approaches are belittled and rejected.

⁴³⁶ „About the OTW,” *Archive of Our Own*, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://archiveofourown.org/about>.

⁴³⁷ Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, “A Truth Universally Acknowledged? Pride and Prejudice and Mind-Reading Fans,” *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 93, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/storyworlds.7.2.0093>.

⁴³⁸ Bronwen, “What Is Fanfiction,” 2.

⁴³⁹ Camille Bacon-Smith, “Spock Among the Women,” *New York Times Book Review* (Nov 16, 1986): 1, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/16/books/spock-among-the-women.html?pagewanted=1>.

⁴⁴⁰ Henry Jenkins, *Pytláci textů: Televizní fanoušci a participativní kultura*, trans. Josef Šebek (Praha: Akropolis, 2019), 184.

⁴⁴¹ Elizabeth A. Flynn, “Gender and Reading,” *College English* 45, no. 3 (Mar. 1983): 251, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/377105>.

⁴⁴² Jenkins, *Pytláci textů*, 178.

⁴⁴³ Flynn, “Gender and Reading,” 251.

⁴⁴⁴ Kristina Busse, “Fandom and Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Fan Production,” *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2009): 105.

Fanfiction is therefore able to provide a platform where women (and others who could not find their voice in mainstream media) can freely discover and play with a fictional world, its characters and relationships, and create an alternative to the “institutionalized reading” at the same time. However, it is still an “institutionalized text” with which are they playing and so some changes are needed for them to feel more comfortable in the story and to make it their own. And that is when the aforementioned “attentional shift” come into focus: Milli & Bamman proved by using computational analysis that “*fanfiction authors may delve deeper into characters that receive less attention in the canon*”⁴⁴⁵. This means not just that fanfiction authors are more interested in characters and situations standing on the periphery of the canonical story⁴⁴⁶, this also means that in fan-created worlds, there are significantly more women⁴⁴⁷. As Handley points out, “[t]raditional gender inequalities are thereby inverted”⁴⁴⁸: while in male-dominated commercial media production is the focus on male heroes and values advocated mostly by men, female-dominated fanfictions, derived from the same media, are strongly more feminine.

This, consequently, resulted in mockery of fanfictions and the inability of female fans to reach to the original authors and have any kind of influence on the canonical stories. Recently, this seems to change a bit. The establishing of *Archive of Our Own* was important on several counts: it has brought many fanfiction authors together (until then scattered around the internet) and by giving them opportunity to stand for themselves and build themselves a website which, contrary to other profiting sites, would be protecting their works and interests, it empowered them⁴⁴⁹. This is also something that deeply resonated within the social media, also rising to power at that time. And with winning the *Hugo Award for Best Related Work*⁴⁵⁰, *Archive of Our Own* gained not only even more influence but also critical recognition for various works of fans it gathers. This, combined with current political and social movements promoting equity and diversity, helps to slowly but surely change and enrich the popular culture: there were some attempts at superhero movies with female

⁴⁴⁵ Smitha Milli & David Bamman, “Beyond Canonical Texts: A Computational Analysis of Fanfiction,” in *Proceedings of the 2016 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (Austin: Texas, 2016), 2050.

⁴⁴⁶ Jenkins, *Pytláci textů*, 185.

⁴⁴⁷ Milli & Bamman, “Beyond Canonical Texts,” 2050.

⁴⁴⁸ Christine Handley, “‘Distressing Damsels’: Narrative Critique and Reinterpretation in *Star Wars* Fanfiction,” in *Fan Culture: Theory/Practice*, eds. K. Larsen, L. Zubernis (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 102.

⁴⁴⁹ Aja Romano, “The Archive of Our Own Just Won a Hugo. That’s Huge for Fanfiction,” *Vox*, Aug 19, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/4/11/18292419/archive-of-our-own-wins-hugo-award-best-related-work>.

⁴⁵⁰ Romano, “The Archive of Our Own Just Won a Hugo.”

as a leading character, emphasis on strong female characters in general, and rising awareness of lesser number of female directors.

It all still stands on shaky ground, though. The awaited trailer to *Ghostbusters* (2016), modern all-female remake of well-loved original movie, single-handedly became “*the most disliked movie trailer in YouTube history*”⁴⁵¹. It seems like we are standing on a brink of not only attentional but paradigm shift, but there is still long way to go.

Biography

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⁴⁵¹ Natalie Stone, “‘Ghostbusters’ Is the Most Disliked Movie Trailer in YouTube History,” *Hollywood Reporter*, April 30, 2016, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/ghostbusters-is-disliked-movie-trailer-889114>.

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Your Tongue Here (or Not)

Abstract

Inspired by recent visits to the Disgusting Food Museum (DFM) in Malmö, SE and “FOOD: Bigger than Your Plate” (2019) at the Victoria & Albert in London, UK, this paper explores the saliency of “disgust” in terms of its: role in the “attention economy,” capacity to lure hipsters and emotional encoding. Given food’s importance for demarcating and preserving cultural identities, I was initially appalled by the DFM’s demonizing national delicacies as “disgusting.” I worried that doing so risks encouraging the “othering” of communities, “exoticism,” and negative stereotypes, already in play due to Europe’s colonial past and anti-immigrant present. As we shall see, framing food as “disgusting” has a “silver lining” in terms of attention. One aspect that remains under-explored is the connection between imagination and attention. The relationship between taste and disgust grants us a vehicle for working this out, since human beings are wired for disgust, yet what disgusts is learnt. Unlike sadness, happiness, fear, surprise, or anger for which we have salience and/or memories; one anticipates disgust by deploying the imagination. I imagine “food adventurers” blocking the imagination in order to defeat disgusting food’s alarmist ploys. “Disgusting food” not only grabs people’s attention, but it can protect us from eating things that might otherwise make us sick, yet it can also deceive.

Disgust as Attention Grabber

Inspired by edible exhibitions, such as the Disgusting Food Museum (DFM) in Malmö, SE; “FOOD: Bigger than Your Plate” (2019) at the Victoria & Albert in London, UK and “Amuse-Bouche: The Taste of Art” (2020) at Museum Tinguely in Basel, CH, this paper explores the saliency of repellent smells that grab our attentions. One aspect that remains under-explored is the connection between imagination and attention. The relationship between taste and disgust grants us a vehicle for working this out, since human beings are wired for disgust, yet what disgusts is learnt. In other words, negative reactions to stinky delicacies are *dispositional*. Identification tends to render disagreeable food smells, whether curries, canned tuna or fromage de Herve, tolerable. But as Barry Smith notes, “We do not just smell odours, we learn them in a context where we experience the properties of their sources.”⁴⁵² Out of context, we not

⁴⁵² Barry Smith 2017: 794. 2017, “Human Olfaction, Crossmodal Perception and Consciousness,” *Chemical Senses*, 42, no. 9 (September 2017): 794, <https://doi.org/10.1093/chemse/bjx061>.

only perceive smells differently, but familiar ones suddenly seem unrecognisable. I thus suspect that disgust functions more like an alarm that sounds when our noses detect unidentifiable smells. Contrary to Immanuel Kant's downplaying smell, olfactory perception is a rather complex process whose judgements are subject to cognitive processing, and thus depend on the imagination's capacity to assign the appropriate linguistic tag to enrich our understanding.

The DFM displays 80 dishes from around the world. Being a museum, sight plays a partial role in eliciting feelings of disgust, yet unidentifiable malodours predominate.⁴⁵³ In fact, the signboard directing visitors to the entrance reflects smell's omnipresence: "So Close You can (Almost) Smell It." While reading it, one suddenly gets a whiff of a ghastly scent that likely detracts potential visitors. In retrospect, this encounter serves as a litmus test to demarcate the merely curious who flee immediately from the truly adventurous who venture forth despite fair warning.

DFM co-founder Samuel West considers disgust a universal emotion, yet:

"The foods that we find disgusting are not. What is delicious to one person can be revolting to another. [The] Disgusting Food Museum invites visitors to explore the world of food and challenge their notions of what is and what isn't edible. Could changing our ideas of disgust help us embrace the environmentally sustainable foods of the future?... Adventurous visitors will appreciate the opportunity to smell and taste some of these notorious foods."⁴⁵⁴

Hardly "gross-out" theatre, the DFM draws our attention to foreign food smells. I imagined such a museum fanning the flames of Denmark and Sweden's already explosive far-right political parties, such as the Nordic Resistance Movement, which since 2015 has also been a Swedish political party. My concern was not so farfetched. Describing things as disgusting has been shown to trigger biases against certain people, including immigrants, gays and liberal politicians; actions deemed illegal/illicit; or purchases deemed unwarranted.

As it turns out, however, the DFM has a "silver lining." Evidently, pumping out smells that prompt racist tropes stops people in their tracks and dissuades them from entering. Even its name conveys a core racist belief: "other people (though not me) eat disgusting foods." People who hold such views are unlikely to consider the DFM remarkable. According to perception research, people

⁴⁵³ Smells are so strong that the "admission ticket" is printed on a vomit bag, in case of need.

⁴⁵⁴ Sam West, <https://disgustingfoodmuseum.com/>.

tend to over-estimate soft sounds and dim lights,⁴⁵⁵ so I imagine even the slightest odd smell overwhelming those for whom strange odours both confirm and aggravate said biases. This means that unfamiliar smells likely deter haters from venturing forth. Feeling repulsed, they would surely rebuff the requisite SEK185 (€18) entry fee. Alarming aromas simultaneously dissuade racists, yet lure hipsters through the door.

It is well known that negative information “draws and holds our attention,”⁴⁵⁶ so framing its displays as disgusting achieves what the Awesome Sustenance Museum, Memorable Bites Museum or Astonishing Dishes Museum (fictional museums exhibiting identical displays, yet marketed positively) could not. In fact, the DFM ensures that surprise trumps disappointment. I imagine people arriving with a short list of foods they expect to find, such as Stilton cheese; so its line-up of even stinkier cheeses surprise. Unfortunately, the smells all blend together as one overarching stink bomb, making it impossible to parse scents. Fortunately, a tasting bar awaits the especially curious.

Herz remarks that it’s “easier to make someone feel noticeably anxious than to make them feel particularly good....the imbalance of bad over good is adaptive. Avoiding bad things gives us much more of a survival advantage than approaching good things does.”⁴⁵⁷ Disgust quiets our anxieties by drawing our attention to potential danger. “When we are more emotionally involved our attention is piqued and when we pay attention to scents we become more psychologically sensitive to them. For example, a potent way to make odours emotionally salient and make us pay more attention to them is to advise us that they are dangerous.”⁴⁵⁸

One issue that remains under-explored is the connection between emotional encoding for disgust and our imagination, which facilitates scent and/or source identification, yet proves vulnerable to priming, as the invigorating “smell of money” experiment showed. Participants who counted actual cash (not images of money) not only ate way more chocolate, but they endured pains for significantly longer and were less likely to help others, as if money’s aroma arouses self-absorption. According to Adrian Furnham, “Primes have an effect on beliefs and behaviours because they activate powerful associations.”⁴⁵⁹ As compared to other emotions for which we have salience and/or concrete

⁴⁵⁵ Bobby Duffy, *The Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything*, (London, Atlantic Books, 2019), p. 14.

⁴⁵⁶ Duffy, *Perils of Perception*, 117.

⁴⁵⁷ Rachel Herz, *That's Disgusting: Unraveling the Mysteries of Repulsion* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2012), 109.

⁴⁵⁸ Herz, *That's Disgusting*, 91.

⁴⁵⁹ Adrian Furnham, *The New Psychology of Money* (East Sussex: Routledge, 2014), 251.

references, we grant our imaginations an out-sized role when we use it to conjure up the appropriate linguistic tag.⁴⁶⁰ The repellent smell wafting outside the DFM is real, but until we read the signboard, we erroneously associate it with the restaurant next door.

With its slow, deliberating reasoned approach, the DFM demonstrates stinky delicacy's alarmist ploys and poses good reasons to mistrust disgust. Not only do our imaginations both spark and disarm reactions of disgust, but malodours facilitate retrieval and retention, thus rendering stench a potential learning tool. Apparently, putting a pencil between people's teeth prevents them from making snarled-lip faces, which reduces their feelings of disgust when shown revolting images. This "grin and bare it" approach may lessen visual transgressions, but unsavory smells are comparatively omnipresent. I next describe experiments that indicate that: unfamiliar smells attract our attention, certain scents boost concentration and feelings of disgust prime people to dispose of potentially disgusting objects.

Some Related Experiments

Attention/Distraction An 1897 experiment indicates that people have long suspected scents to attract our attention, lead us adrift and inevitably alter our plans, thus anticipating current olfactory research. It demonstrated scent's capacity to distract listeners from attending to two ivory balls being dropped on an ebony plate at five-second intervals. In between drops, listeners sniffed a scent and then listened to determine whether the second ball was dropped from a higher or lower height. The researcher ranked each scent according to its having caused participants to get so wrapped up in smelling that they reported *wrong* answers. Initially, the researcher hypothesized that "an odour would distract when it was either (1) familiar, but [could] not be named, or 2) so familiar as to set up a vivid train of associated ideas"⁴⁶¹ (a form of priming). Varying wildly from nose to nose, four sniffers (O, B, S and Dr. P) ranked nitro-wurtzite, rye whiskey, tincture of arnica and oil of turpentine, respectively, the most distracting, earning them a distraction value of 1 (most distracting out of 50 samples).

Stimulation. This experiment found that "least distraction or stimulation can be set up in two ways: by very familiar scents (attention on the sound) and by

⁴⁶⁰ Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 14.

⁴⁶¹ L. G. Birch, "A Study of Certain Methods of Distracting the Attention: II. Distraction by Odors," *The American Journal of Psychology*, 9, no. 1 (October 1897): 49
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1411473>

uncertainly familiar scents (attention tending away from the experiment and now held upon it).⁴⁶² Stimulating scents led “subjects to work better under distraction than under standard conditions.”⁴⁶³ Although garlic was not among the 50 samples, it likely has a high distraction value if it stimulates babies to nurse longer. Researchers have since found that disgusting smells, such as perspiration, *arouse* concentration, which could explain OCD sufferers’ heightened attention to danger and pregnant women’s smell sensitivities.

Olfactory Memory. While easily retrieved scents tend to distract less, repellent scents not only distract us, which grabs our attention, but their retention rates are comparable to sight.⁴⁶⁴ Consider nosewitnesses, whose sniffing of body odours (BO) to identify suspects is akin to eyewitnesses and sniffing dogs. Like eyewitnesses and earwitnesses, nosewitness accuracy decreases as lineup sizes increase, but it far exceeds chance rates.⁴⁶⁵ They found that “[o]dours that are unfamiliar (and non-identifiable by name as is the case with BOs) are typically more difficult to retrieve, but are forgotten at the same rate as familiar and identifiable odours.”⁴⁶⁶

Context Dependence As noted earlier, smell is special since both perception and detection is context dependent. As Alison George points out, “With smell the meaning is based on context much more so than with vision...A vomit smell in an alley beside a bar will immediately conjure up a mental picture of a disgusting source, but exactly the same aroma would evoke deliciousness in a fine restaurant.”⁴⁶⁷ As Herz details, “[T]he scent of feces is only revolting once you’ve learned that feces means waste and it varies in pleasantness depending upon whose you think it is.....The context in which we encounter an odour is a further influence.”⁴⁶⁸

Priming A 2013 experiment showed that neutral odours initially perceived as neutral were later perceived as aversive and took longer to detect, following subjects’ exposure to anxiety-provoking images chosen from the International

⁴⁶² Birch, “A Study,” 54-55.

⁴⁶³ Birch, “A Study,” 53.

⁴⁶⁴ Laura Alho *et. al.*, “Nosewitness Identification: Effects of Lineup Size and Retention Interval,” *Frontiers of Psychology*, 7(2016): 35 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00713>.

⁴⁶⁵ Alho, “Nosewitness,” 20.

⁴⁶⁶ Stina Kærnekull *et. al.*, “Long-Term Memory for Odors: Influences of Familiarity and Identification Across 64 Days,” *Chemical Senses*, 40, no. 4 (May 2015) <https://doi.org/10.1093/chemse/bjv003>.

⁴⁶⁷ Alison George, “The Yuck Factor: The Surprising Power of Disgust,” *New Scientist* (14 July).

⁴⁶⁸ Herz, *That’s Disgusting*, 54-55.

Affective Picture Set.⁴⁶⁹ The researchers found that “human olfactory processing is affectively charged long before an odourous molecule makes contact with the nose.”⁴⁷⁰ Depending on the odour, smells tend to dissipate rather rapidly (within twenty minutes). When an otherwise benign balsam, woody odours was *categorized* as hazardous, healthful, or an experimental standard, its intensity varied significantly. Participants reported that the dangerous scent actually got stronger with time, yet the latter two cases weakened after twenty minutes. When given a physical test, it turned out that those who reported it stronger no longer actually smelled it, though thoughts of it lingered. “This shows how our emotions, especially anxiety, can amplify our perceived sensation of odours, even though in reality we are no more and perhaps even less, sensitive to them than we were before the ‘threat’.”⁴⁷¹ To discern disgusting aromas from those that provoke disgust, we learn to smell-in, as Korsmeyer terms it, lest we risk self-deception.⁴⁷²

Concluding Remarks

Clearly, disgusting smells are powerful tools of manipulation (they prime, distract, accelerate, encode, defer to context and deceive), sometimes prompting oppositional dispositions. Such findings contradict centuries of philosophical work that considered smell a “stimulus-produced pleasure,” and thus inferior to sight and sound. Herz adds, “Though we learn to turn off our outward zeal for these fascinations, the questions, temptations and fears never go away. This is why we remain lured by disgust throughout our lives.”⁴⁷³ Only life’s rich experiences can teach us when to trust disgust.

Biography

Associate Editor of *Aesthetic Investigations*, Sue Spaid’s latest monograph is *The Philosophy of Curatorial Practice: Between Work and World* (2020). Her philosophical work is included in *The State of Art Criticism* (2008), *The Philosophy of Arthur Danto* (2013), *Arte y Filosofía en Arthur Danto* (2016), *Advancements in the Philosophy of Design* (2017), and journals such as *Popular Inquiry*, *Art Inquiry: Recherche sur les art*, *Philosophica*, *The Journal of Somaesthetics*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, and *Rivista di Estetica*. An art critic for 35 years, Sue Spaid has published well over 100 reviews in *Art issues.*, *Art Papers*, *Art in America*, *LA Weekly*, *Art/Text*,

⁴⁶⁹ E.A. Krusemark *et. al.*, “When the Sense of Smell Meets Emotion: Anxiety-State-Dependent Olfactory Processing and Neural Circuitry Adaption,” *Journal of Neuroscience*, 33, no. 39 (2013), 15325.

⁴⁷⁰ Krusemark, “When the Sense of Smell,” 15331.

⁴⁷¹ Herz, *That’s Disgusting*, 92.

⁴⁷² Herz, *That’s Disgusting*, 55.

⁴⁷³ Herz, *That’s Disgusting*, 52.

The Village Voice, *artUS*, and *HArt*; and 70 exhibitions essays for museums and galleries. Since 2002, she has published five books on art and ecology, including *Ecovention Europe: Art to Transform Ecologies, 1957-2017*, which accompanied exhibitions presented at De Domijnen Hedendaagse Kunst in Sittard, NL and the Internationalen Waldkunstzentrum Galerie in Darmstadt, DE.

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Art Formats as Attention Guides

Abstract

I build a case for the relevance of the concept of format for aesthetics. First, I introduce the notion of image format as a means of making the image vehicle commensurate with local conditions of accessing the image's figurative content. Second, I argue that this concept is essential in order to understand how images acquire visual authority, understood as their ability to command visual attention. Third, I build an analogy between image formats and art formats that is motivated by the demand in the anthropology of art and global art studies for a theory that would explain the visual authority of artworks. Fourth, I consider the question of whether there is such a thing as aesthetic formats, and I outline the idea's potentially radical consequences for philosophical aesthetics, namely, the result that aesthetic knowledge can be divorced from the exercise of aesthetic judgement.

Introduction

This paper's aim is to argue for the relevance of the concept of format for aesthetics. It comes in four parts:

- I. What is an image format?
- II. Why is image format relevant?
- III. Constructing the analogy between image format and art format
- IV. Are there aesthetic formats?

I. What is an image format?

Traditionally, image formats have been understood as means of delimiting images' figurative content by shaping their material support. So, for example, according to Erle Loran, 'picture format' refers to 'the shape or proportions of the picture plane' (fig. 1).⁴⁷⁴

Why do images come in formats? Images have different formats to correspond to different conditions of viewing their figurative content. A statuette like that of Venus (fig. 2) requires one to stand closer to it than one would when confronted with a life-size sculpture; it allows one to hold it in one's hands, but also puts limits on what and in how much detail can be depicted.

⁴⁷⁴ Erle Loran, *Cézanne's Composition: Analysis of His Form, with Diagrams and Photos of His Motifs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 17.

It follows that:

- (i) to format an image is to make its material support, the image vehicle, commensurate with local conditions of accessing its figurative content;
- (ii) anything that affects visibly the appearance of the image vehicle to make it comply with a standard of viewing images belongs to its format.

So, for example, a shift from polychrome to monochrome wooden retables c.1500 in what is today southern Germany ought to be considered as a shift in formatting (figs 3 and 4); the monochrome retables are not to be viewed under the same conditions (e.g., they do not represent 'brown people in brown clothes').

Finally, (iii) the fact that image formats visibly shape image vehicles increases the probability that they will be visible to uninitiated observers as well.

II. Why is image format relevant?

Let me present two premises, which I consider to be fairly uncontroversial:

- (1) Images are means of drawing visual attention, and they draw attention by showing their figurative content.

Whatever images are or do, they are there to attract attention to their figurative content. And they attract the attention by making the figurative content manifest.⁴⁷⁵

- (2) Images are good at channelling social authority into visual authority.

I take this premise to be implied in the vast literature in art history and anthropology devoted to the topic of 'iconic power', 'power of images', or *Bildakte*: images are effective in standing in for an absent agent – typically a deity or a person of power.⁴⁷⁶

Let me explain how these two premises require something like the concept of image format to make sense of them:

⁴⁷⁵ See, e.g., Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), chap. 3.

⁴⁷⁶ See, e.g., David Summers, 'Real Metaphor: Towards a Redefinition of the "Conceptual" Image', in *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation*, ed. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 231–259; Hans Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie* (Munich: Fink, 2001); Horst Bredekamp, *Der Bildakt*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2015).

(3) What I mean by visual authority is the ability to command visual attention.

(4) As we already know, to format an image is to make its material support, the image vehicle, commensurate with local conditions of accessing its figurative content.

(5) In order to draw visual attention to figurative content in a prescribed manner, the image needs to be appropriately formatted, that is, its image vehicle needs to comply with local norms of spectatorship.

(6) It follows that formatting is essential for commanding visual attention to images because it prescribes publicly a mode of visual attention by visibly configuring the image vehicle.

III. Constructing the analogy between image format and art format

Is there such a thing as an art format? And does it also play an essential role in securing visual authority for art? The most straightforward way to test this is to build an analogy between image formats and art formats. I will do this by taking the six points laid out in Section II and substitute ‘visual artworks’ for ‘images’:

(1) ~~Images~~ **Visual artworks** are means of drawing visual attention, ~~and they draw attention by showing their figurative content.~~

The premise strikes me as equally uncontroversial, and I will only add that we cannot use the explanation for images’ ability to draw visual attention, namely, that they show figurative content, to make sense of visual artworks’ assumed ability to do the same, as not all artworks are images.

(2) ~~Images~~ **Visual artworks** are good at channelling social authority into visual authority.

I will have more to say on this in the next section.

I will let the following points (3–6) stand without any further comment, as their plausibility depends on the plausibility of the premises (1) and (2).

(3) Visual authority is the ability to command visual attention.

(4) To format an ~~image~~ **visual artwork** is to make its material support, ~~the image vehicle,~~ commensurate with local conditions of accessing its figurative content.

(5) In order to draw visual attention to ~~figurative~~ content in a prescribed manner, the ~~image~~ **visual artwork** needs to be appropriately formatted.

(6) → formatting is essential for commanding visual attention to ~~images~~ **visual artworks**.

The crucial question is: Is the analogy informative? The answer will be ‘yes’, if it could be demonstrated that there exists a demand for an art theory that treats visual artworks as good at channelling social authority into visual authority because they are effective means of commanding visual attention. Such a theory would want to claim that at least on some occasions, to format a visual artwork is to make its material support commensurate with local conditions of *commanding visual attention*.

Luckily, there is such a demand:

Take the example of the Asmat worrier shield (fig. 5). Its purpose is to frighten the enemy. In my terminology, it translates a claim to social authority into visual terms and is meant to command attention. Now, according to one of the main strands of thinking about arthood in global art studies, this is already enough to proclaim its visual authority artistic.⁴⁷⁷

Here is a non-exhaustive set of good candidates for what would constitute the Asmat worrier shields’ art formatting (figs 5–7):

- their height (130–190 cm), proportions, and shape;
- colour patterns (usually red-white);
- vertical bilateral symmetry;
- vertical serialization of patterns.

Why do these formatting features help make the shields command visual attention? The simple answer is that they implement ‘primary sensory attractors’ which makes it hard for the intended audience not to pay them visual attention.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁷ E.g., Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (London: Phaidon, 2003); Jakub Stejskal, ‘Art’s Visual Efficacy: The Case of Anthony Forge’s Abelam Corpus’, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 67/68 (2016/17): 78–93.

⁴⁷⁸ On primary sensory attractors, see Mohan Matthen, ‘Play, Skill, and the Origins of Perceptual Art’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 55 (2015): 173–197.

IV. Are there aesthetic formats?

The more intriguing question is whether there are not just art formats, but aesthetic formats. This would mean that, at least on some occasions, to format a visual artwork would be to make its material support commensurate with local conditions of commanding *aesthetic* attention.

What do I mean by ‘aesthetic attention’? To come back to the Asmat shield, while it is meant to command visual attention, it may not necessarily command attention to its mode of delivery, even if this mode plays a crucial role in channelling social authority. Its visual authority would then not be aesthetic, at least according to certain theorizations of the concept of the aesthetic in archaeology and anthropology, according to which ascertaining the aesthetic status of an artefact is to inquire into how, why, and to whom it was meant to be attractive.⁴⁷⁹ To command aesthetic attention would thus mean to command attention to artwork’s mode of delivery.

Consider this sculpture of Shalmaneser III (fig. 8). To claim that it has an aesthetic format amounts to claiming that its public status depends on its successfully commanding attention to the merits of its mode of delivery.

Now, recall point (iii) from Section I where I claimed that the fact that image formats visibly shape image vehicles increases the probability that they will be visible to uninitiated observers as well. In other words, image formats are potentially visible even to those who do not see the figurative content under the right aspectivity. So, while seeing monochrome retable figures as ‘brown’ is to fail to see the format, to recognize the format does not mean one sees the retables under the right aspect. Indeed, art historians argue to this day about what the monochromy tried to communicate to the viewer.⁴⁸⁰

If there are such things as aesthetic formats, then, by analogy, the fact that they visibly shape artworks’ material support increases the probability that they will be visible to uninitiated observers as well. To put it differently, aesthetic formats would be potentially visible to those who are not aesthetic experts, that is, who lack the acquired skill to aesthetically appreciate the artworks.

479 Howard Morphy, ‘Aesthetics across Time and Space: An Anthropological Perspective,’ *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 4 (1994): 258; Raymond Corbey, Robert Layton, and Jeremy Tanner, ‘Archaeology and Art’, in *A Companion to Archaeology*, ed. John Bintliff (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 361; Jakub Stejskal, ‘Aesthetic Archaeology’, *Critical Inquiry*, forthcoming.

480 See, e.g., Georg Habenicht, *Das ungefasste Altarretabel: Programm oder Provisorium* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2016).

Could we put together a non-exhaustive set of good candidates for what would indicate an aesthetic format? Here is a couple:

- redundancy of primary attractors;
- deliberate distortion of instrumental function;
- great variations in technical detail;
- little signs of wear.

Notice that identifying none of these requires anything like aesthetic appreciation or the exercise of one's honed aesthetic sensibilities. The consequences of this line of argument for aesthetics are non-negligent. The analysis of aesthetic formats could be plausibly divorced from aesthetic criticism understood as the competent exercise of aesthetic judging. This would in turn mean that acquiring aesthetic knowledge is not necessarily a matter of aesthetic judgement. While philosophers have entertained the idea that one may acquire justifiable aesthetic beliefs by relying on the aesthetic judgement of experts (say, by reading a film review),⁴⁸¹ the analysis of aesthetic formats would be a case of acquiring justifiable aesthetic beliefs by direct acquaintance and without any involvement of aesthetic judgement whatsoever!

⁴⁸¹ For an overview (although already dated), see Jon Robson, 'Aesthetic Testimony', *Philosophy Compass* 7 (2012): 1–10.

Figures:

Fig. 1:

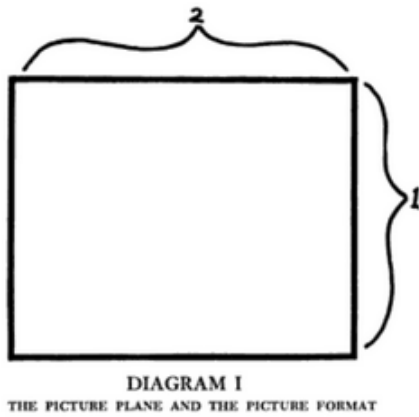


Fig. 2: Statuette of Venus, 20 cm, 100–250 CE, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu



Fig. 3: Friedrich Herlin, Twelve Apostles Altar, 1466, Rothenburg



Fig. 4: Tilman Riemenschneider, Holy Blood Altar, c.1500, Rothenburg



Figs 5–7: Shields, Asmat, Papua, Indonesia, 20th century, Brooklyn Museum



Fig. 8: Statue of Shalmaneser III, Kurba'il, 9th-century BCE, Iraq Museum, Baghdad



Biography

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**Where to pay attention when there is just this nothingness?
Observations in the dark environments.**

Abstract

A cloudy November evening deep in an old forest, more than a kilometre from the road, twenty from the nearest streetlights. It is really dark, and I try to observe my close environment. I can see the difference between the treetops and the dark sky as well as the snow-covered ground from the trunks. Everything else is formless. The ground is a shapeless mass and the dense forest a black abyss. What is it possible to discern here when the visual stimulus is minimized?

My vision is quite useless, and the other senses are weak in these circumstances. I can barely hear a background hum and the freezing temperature erases most aromas. A thick outfit prevents me from feeling anything but the movement of the air on my face. Yet, this is not sensory deprivation, there are things to observe.

Focusing on the dark expanse in between the tree trunks is hard and often I glimpse upwards where some contrast is visible. In an environment where only tiny cues exist, the desire to perceive something surpasses my interest of darkness. In this blackness, I am still connected to the surrounding space, I am in the world, isolated by the fabric of darkness, while this darkness is not nothingness

Being and moving in the dark differs from closing the eyes. When you close your eyes, you do not see, but it is not real darkness. Closed eyes make you turn inwards, into your thoughts and visions. Exploring dark environments provide an opportunity to develop aesthetic sensitivity and attention to extreme sensing. One just needs to be open to darkness, willing to embrace the shadows and allows the special condition to be meaningful.

Where to pay attention when there is just this nothingness? Observations in the dark environments.

A cloudy evening of November 25th, deep in an old forest, I am more than a kilometer from the road, twenty from the nearest streetlights. It is really dark, and I try to observe my close environment. I can see the difference between the treetops and the dark sky as well as the snow-covered ground from the trees. Everything else is formless. The ground is a shapeless mass and the dense

forest a black abyss. What is it possible to discern here when the sensory stimulus is minimal

Darkness makes my vision quite useless, and the other senses are weak in the wintry circumstances. I can barely hear a background hum in the silent forest and the freezing temperature erases most aromas. Thick winter garments prevent me from feeling anything but the movement of the air on my face. Yet, this is not sensory deprivation, there are things to observe. My notion is that despite the minimal visual cues, the experience in a dark environment is predominantly a visual experience. However, its distinct visuality and the role of other senses is not immediately clear.

Experiences of darkness

My excursion into the dark forest is comparable to Tim Edensor's visit to Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park in an attempt to obtain understanding about the experience of natural darkness. There are differences in these explorations of dark environment but also significant similarities.

Edensor's outing took place in a place organized for experiencing darkness and starry skies. There was some infrastructures like a route marked light colored material. The night was clear and the temperatures were milder while I spent the night out under the clouds and in freezing temperature. He observes the darkness while moving through previously unknown landscape and surfaces, while I had familiarized with the area during daylight.

Furthermore, it was his first intentional visit to a naturally dark environment, and he and his company were not alone exploring Galloway Forest and I had previous experience about natural darkness and knew that me and my companion were alone in the forest.

The different climate made Edensor's observations more multisensory. He emphasizes the visual analogous to my observations, but hears and smells much more than I do. The mobile observations had effect on the tactile as well as the proprioceptive experience. In addition, moving opened various vistas along his route, while I spend more time observing the same featureless spot in dense woods. In spite of the dark environment, we both find that the visual still dominates the observations. Because of the clear weather and different terrain Edensor sees more in his surroundings. For me, the clouds make the minimal illumination flat and the snow covers the nearby features, so I saw sizable masses - probably fallen trees and stones.

Unlike Edensor, I had familiarized myself with the area. Before this visit in the forest, I had spent almost three weeks in Mustarinda artist residency, just a kilometer away my observation spot. The Mustarinda house is surrounded by forest and some of it is virtually untouched. The night is dark immediately outside the house. In the first nights at Mustarinda, the dark forest felt overwhelming and intimidating. I could barely force myself to enter to the woods after the dark. Gradual evening outings in the vicinity of the house assisted in adapting to the deep darkness. Eventually, the dark environment became part of my time at Mustarinda. I cannot say that the darkness normalized, but it did not feel as extreme as in the first nights.

For Edensor, exploring the dark night was a unique event, which becomes apparent in his description about the overwhelmingly dynamic sky and wonderment, which I did not have to emphasize. This is probably the most significant difference between our experiences. My stretch of time in this remote area with truly dark nights had made the darkness part of my everyday. Encountering darkness was not a unique experience like in Tim Edensor's analysis. Edensor's account is solid, but limited to just one situation, while I had become aware most qualities dark environment before this particular visit. Acquainting with darkness provided me with some benefits, but also weaknesses. On the other hand, being used to darkness allowed me to focus on less obvious details of my experience, but on the other hand, taking the dark environment as granted made me ignore other significant qualities.

However, we both noticed the special quality of sensing in the dark that directed our observations. The specific characteristics of the observations resulted partially from the human sensory system and partially the circumstances that both had an effect on our attention.

Sensing in the dark

The human visual ability is not very efficient in the dark, so the perception differs from daylight conditions. When entering a dark environment my vision is limited, because it is not adapted to the low-light situation. The adaptation starts immediately, but becoming fully accustomed to dark environment takes half an hour, even more. Adaptation enhances my seeing in the dark, but it has effects. Firstly, the colors are seen muffled if not converted to gray-scale, because the rod cells that are not color sensitive dominate observation in darkness, and secondly, all the defects in vision are accentuated, because in the dark my irises are dilated to the maximum, thus making the depth of the field, the distance where objects are seen in focus, much shorter. Accordingly, my already shortsighted eyes become much worse in low light. Even the eyeglasses

correcting my vision do not correct the detriments of the dark environment. The little I see is less colorful and less accurate than during the daytime.

Because of the freezing weather, I wear several layers of clothing that further isolate my senses from the surrounding world. In wintertime the forest is normally very quiet, animals stay covered to save energy and birds are less active. The only sounds to my spot originated from the snow and wind. Hard-packed snow made crunching sounds when moving. There was some hum of the wind itself and a creak from trees touching each other. The last one could have sound scary without earlier daytime visit to the same place. All the sounds are somewhat muffled as the woolen cap covers my ears.

Freezing temperatures make a forest quite odorless. I cannot recollect smelling anything, just having a recognizable sensation of cold inside my nose.

I am wearing thick mittens and snowshoes, so both my touch and proprioceptive sense were restrained. Snowshoes changed my movement as well as balance and I removed the mittens only to operate my camera. Darkness forced me to move with caution and stay in the small area I was familiar with. There was no horizon visible to assist my balance and other usually helpful visual cues were hidden by the darkness. Despite the situation, I did not feel insecure, just different. My sense of touch was limited to man-made materials, but that is not unusual. Unless one is especially looking for tactile experiences, the materials touched are normally either artificial or fabricated. Taken together, my sensuous connection with the environment was partially muted, but not especially unusual.

Paying attention in darkness

Even though both Edensor and I were using the whole array of senses to feel the night, our visual observations – and lack of them – emphasized in the experience.

In my experience, I found that even in a low, almost nonexistent light, focusing on the dark expanse in between the tree trunks was hard and often I glimpsed unintentionally upwards where some contrast against the sky is visible. I could identify only some obscure entities as different tones: the pale ground covered with snow, the trees as a dark mass and the cloudy sky above the treetops.

Yet, being and moving in a dark environment differs from closing the eyes. When you close your eyes, you do not see, but it is not real darkness. Closed eyes make you turn inwards, into your thoughts and visions.

I am still connected to the surrounding space, I am in the world, visually isolated by the fabric of darkness, but I do not feel the darkness as nothingness. The darkness is not an impenetrable veil, but allows me to detect something in it. Edensor experiences that his boundaries of body becoming obscure as they are not visible. Unlike him, I still feel the perimeter of my body, the contact between my skin and the thick garments and the clothing feels like a barrier. Thinner clothing and milder temperatures might have made a difference. I think about Finnish artist Antti Laitinen, who's early performance consisted of staying four days in a forest without any garments and supplies. Staying a prolonged time naked in a summery nature would certainly advance the feeling of being merged with the environment. However, the Finnish winter limits my skin contact to operating the camera that I used to document the darkness.

While my attention focused on the minimal visibility of a northern forest in a winter night, Edensor's observations in darkness happened in a more unrestricted manner and in milder temperature. Thus, he is able to describe the scents and sounds in a detailed level and considers the somatic experience profoundly. In addition, he makes active observations about different approaches in moving over terrain.

Comparing the manner Edensor and I focused attention to the dark environment brings forth two approaches with differing foundations. Edensor took an active stance in exploring Galloway Forest, whereas I adopted a passive role. He wanted to cover larger area when my interest was in focusing on one place. Comparing these approaches both expands the scope of possible methods of examining dark environment and highlights the significant features we both found in darkness.

Experiencing darkness aesthetically

The reason for my visit to the lightless forest, is my interest in experiencing darkness and thinking its aesthetic qualities. However, the earlier studies in aesthetics give hardly any advice to perceiving darkness. Habitually darkness is seen as a background highlighting starry sky, the Milky Way and other celestial events, that are seen aesthetically significant. Even in the context of the sublime mountains and open seas are more common examples than darkness. Edmund Burke is the only one to touch darkness and blackness in a context of terror, painful experiences and the sublime. The contemporary research in aesthetics provide some assistance. Some studies in everyday experience and weather deal with conditions relevant to the study of darkness.

Even though darkness as a physical phenomenon is always the same, I am willing to think that the darknesses differ aesthetically according to the

environment and other conditions affecting the atmosphere. Both what you see (or do not see) and know about the location and environment of a particular darkness have an effect on its aesthetics.

An attempt to see in darkness forces one to pay special attention in her environment. In my experience, one simultaneously makes an effort to observe the environment through darkness and fails in it. Despite any effort, darkness blocks the observation at the edges of the sensory system. In my case, I noticed that when an attempt to see something in between the trees turned out impossible, my eyes searched something less challenging and turned upwards where I could see the difference in between the treetops and the cloudy sky. Eventually, I was able to discern only three entities: the snow-covered ground, the mass of trees and the formless cloudy sky. In this environment where only tiny cues exist, the desire to perceive something surpasses my interest of darkness and I found myself taking glimpses towards the sky just to detect anything at all.

Although the moment in the woods was special, it did not feel sublime to me. I did not think that this darkness was out of ordinary. The general understanding is that the sublime and novelty are connected and my prolonged and my prolonged stay in the area had worn out the freshness. The touch of awe I felt during this excursion resulted from a combination of the night, the ancient forest and knowing that this would be my last time in these woods.

Instead of focusing on the aesthetic ranking of the situation, I would think about the distinct aesthetic qualities of sensing in the dark. If this is central, the excursion and the analysis of the experience developed my understanding about dark environment and how darkness changes the perception of the place. Although we had visited this same spot in the daylight, it was almost impossible to recognize it in the dark. Only the slight traces our snowshoes left proved that we had been there before.

One can find even denser darkness in windowless room, but the natural environment provides an opportunity to encounter darkness that creates a distinct atmosphere as close to historical night as possible. Exploring dark environments provide an opportunity to develop aesthetic sensitivity and attention to extreme sensing. One just needs to be open to darkness, willing to embrace the shadows and allows the special condition to be meaningful.

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Biography

Matti Tainio is a visual artist and researcher, currently a visiting researcher at University of Turku. Tainio's current research interest deal with the aesthetic experience in various settings. His approach to aesthetics can be described as applied aesthetics with a pragmatist perspective. At the moment, his work deals with the significance of aesthetics in contemporary physical activities and the aesthetic experience of darkness. Tainio's work with the aesthetics of physical activities continues his doctoral research that focused on the connections between art and sport in contemporary culture. Tainio's work as an artist takes place in an interdisciplinary setting where the themes of the work often intertwine with his research practice.

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Kant's "aesthetic idea": toward an aesthetics of non-attention

In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant expounds what has become a foundational theme in modern aesthetics by identifying the judgment of taste as a particular mode of attention. In distinction to the mode of attention in mundane experience that works by determining how an intuition can be subsumed under a concept, aesthetic attention celebrates the pleasure associated with the "unison in the play of the powers of the mind" confronted with "the manifold in a thing." Aesthetic attention, in other words, is an aesthetic subject's attention to itself and to the pleasures derived from flexing the powers of imagination. Henceforth, aesthetics is longer be concerned with the qualities that pertain to the object of aesthetic judgment, but to the reaction it entails—and consequently to the communal sharing of this reaction. This theoretical shift coincides with what Jacques Rancière has identified as the transformation from a classical to a modern regime of art, the first being based on a "poietic" principle of the correctly manufactured work of art and the latter on an "aesthetic" principle of sensibility and imagination. Kant's bold gesture incidentally turned aesthetics upside-down by shifting the focus from that which is judged upon to judgment itself, from object to subject, and thus manifests an aesthetic Copernican turn that has eventually become thoroughly engrained in the modern mode of existence of art.

From object to subject, then. Kant insists on the epistemic import of this manoeuvre and allows no distinction when it comes to what arouses aesthetic pleasure, be it nature, art, or something third: it all comes back to the singular way a sensual impression is processed by the mind. Up to a point, anyhow. This point appears after he has developed the notion of reflective judgment and the unconditional sociality of sharing and exchanging this judgment, and before he delves into the dialectics and teleological underpinning of the judgment. Or, more precisely, when he—earlier (and later) disclaimers notwithstanding—attempts to pinpoint the particularities of the work of art, an attempt he needs to make, it seems, to be able to produce the systematic overview of art forms, with which he closes the first part of the *Critique*.

He starts out with a simple distinction that poses no hindrance to maintain the indifference of the object of aesthetic judgment: "A beauty of nature is a *beautiful thing*; the beauty of art is a *beautiful representation* (*Vorstellung*) of

a thing.”⁴⁸² This representation, however, is *produced*: it is not a mere copy (*Nachmachung*), but an imitation (*Nachahmung*), a result of a creative effort. The art object comes with a producer. This does not, at this point, seem to worry Kant too much, and as if already looking ahead to the dissertation on teleology to come, he identifies the ability to make aesthetically satisfying imitations as that of the genius. And genius, after all, still goes quite well together with nature; genius is a nature-like force because it can provide rules of expression that do not stem from the realm of reason: “it cannot itself describe or indicate scientifically how it brings its product into being, but rather that it gives the rule as *nature*.” (187) But once the genius-maker has been introduced, Kant of course cannot resist to delve more into the particulars of the genealogy of the work of art.

To elicit the beautiful representation, the artwork must present the beholder with a form. But this form cannot be tracked down analytically, it is spontaneously given. And even though the judgment as to whether this form is beautiful or not still resides solely and solidly in the mental faculties of the beholder, it nonetheless needs to acknowledge the irruption of a something that cannot be totally ignored, something that comes with the mark of the genius. To further gauge this something, Kant opens §49 with these words:

“One says of certain products, of which it is expected that they ought, at least in part, to reveal themselves as beautiful art, that they are without *spirit*, even though one finds nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned.” (191)

Surprisingly, beauty here suddenly seems to come in degrees. From the outset, the *Critique of Judgment* insists that the beautiful is beautiful as per the judgment “this is beautiful”, with no further qualifications needed and no further qualifications allowed. But now an artwork can be beautiful and nonetheless somewhat wanting. There is more to beauty than that which is bestowed on it by the apodictic judgment that however still defines it. Together with the genius, spirit leaps in as a kind of supplement to the beautiful, adding something to that which was already beautiful. If Kant doesn’t seem to have too many scruples about the notion of genius, because it is somehow reassuringly vouched for as per its analogy to the principle of nature, the presence of the maker nonetheless challenges the analogy because it leaves behind a sensible imprint of spirit. Kant:

⁴⁸² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer, Cambridge University Press 2000, p. 189. Further references are given in the text.

What is it then that is meant here by “spirit”?

“*Spirit*, in an aesthetic significance, means the animating principle in the mind. That, however, by which this principle animates the soul, the material which it uses for this purpose, is that which purposively sets the mental powers into motion, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end.”

Spirit, as an “animating principle in the mind” (*belebende Prinzip im Gemüte*), is infused into the artwork by the genius artist. The presence of spirit is however not manifest, only derivative, oblique; it is manifested only by its traces, that is, in “the material which it uses” in order to set “the mental powers into motion”. The genius is the purveyor of spontaneous, nature-like form; moreover, this form might be not only beautiful, but beautiful *cum laude*, if it witnesses that spirit has been in play in the confection of form. Spirit is a vital and vitalizing principle that leaves traces, a spectral being of sorts.

The very fact that there are beautiful things, and beautiful things *with spirit*, cannot avoid casting a shadow back on ground Kant’s aesthetics stands on, that the judgment of taste is subjective and only subjective. The potential presence of spirit, or the traces of the agency of spirit, inevitably takes us back toward the aesthetic object and directs our interest to *how* the principle of spirit has left an imprint. It might be that our first judgment is purely subjective, but if we find the work not only beautiful, but beautiful in a spirited way, we are led onto a path that will eventually bring us in an interpretive mode, scrutinizing formal peculiarities that might reveal the intervention of spirit. Artworks, or some artworks, have something particular to them that conveys us to find them beautiful. It is almost as if a bit of causality makes its way back here, even though it has been vehemently banned earlier on, because it would make the aesthetic judgment into an analytical one: “this is why this is beautiful”...

But this does not prevent Kant from staying with the animating principle. The citation above goes on like this:

“Now I maintain that this principle is nothing other than the faculty for the presentation of *aesthetic ideas*; by an aesthetic idea, however, I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., *concept*, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible. – One readily sees that it is the counterpart (pendant) of an *idea of reason*, which is, conversely, a concept to which no *intuition* (representation of the imagination) can be adequate.” (192)

Here the spectral agency of spirit gets a name: it is the presentation, or production—*Darstellung*—of aesthetic ideas. What we admire in the formal confection of the spirited work of art is the way in which form puts a particular kind of idea in front of us. This idea is itself, as Michel Chaouli has argued, an “oxymoronic monster” in Kant’s conceptual landscape;⁴⁸³ it might be that a representation (*Vorstellung*) without concept is somehow a counterpart (*Gegenstück*) to a concept with no intuition (*Anschauung*), but that would expectedly make it into the opposite of an idea rather than into another kind of idea. But then again, Kant was never afraid of inventing new concepts when in need (in his lectures on *Critique of Pure Reason*, Adorno took note of Kant’s propensity for “emergency concepts” (*Notbegriffe*)), and the notion of the aesthetic idea does indeed prove fertile for theorizing the artwork.

With the notion of the aesthetic idea, the derivative presence of spirit—or the trace of an “animating principle”—is positively designated as a *Vorstellung* that emerges from the formal arrangement of the work. And this aesthetic idea can be recognized by the fact that it “occasions much thinking without it being possible for any determinate thought (...) to be adequate to it”. Chaouli has pointed to a subtle distinction at work in this passage, namely that between thinking and thought: thinking is a process that cannot come to a halt, that perpetually reiterates and transcends itself by bifurcating and reassessing, in contrast to the already thought, which can be repeated and confirmed. A thought can be attributed to someone who has thought it, whereas thinking is a process through which the one who is thinking is constantly going beyond herself as the instrument of a thought in motion.

The aesthetic idea takes us back to the artwork and the formal particularities that reveal the machinations of spirit. But it does so in a way that makes sure not to break off too conspicuously from the aesthetic Copernican turn, as the reception of the aesthetic idea is still an appreciation that hinges on the celebration of the capacities of the mind it sets in motion. If the attention of aesthetic theory here momentarily slips back to the object, it can still claim the methodological credo of having moved the focus of aesthetics from the object to the subject.

This is a delicate balance, and the “emergency concept” of esthetic ideas actually does the job of binding together the focus on the aesthetic judgment on the one hand, and the temptation to take the particular form of the artwork into consideration on the other. The aesthetic idea, in other words, functions

⁴⁸³ Michel Chaouli, “A Surfeit in Thinking: Kant’s Aesthetic Ideas”, *The Yearbook of Comparative Literature* 57, 2011, p. 56.

as a point of transition between an aesthetics of production and an aesthetics of reception. At the same time, however, it also discreetly subverts the premise of Kant's Copernican turn, the turn from object to subject. When installing the aesthetic idea as a transmission point between them, Kant also enters a territory where the absoluteness of the two comes to vacillate.

On the object side, the aesthetic idea is indeed to be identified in the formal articulation of the work. But this articulation is somehow negative, it is a trace of something, namely the arcane agency of spirit. And spirit, again, as a kind of spectral élan, is incarnated in the somewhat vague character of the genius and his (her?) complicity with nature. There is, in other words, a problem of location when it comes to the aesthetic object, as pointed out by Jacques Derrida:

"The beautiful would always be the work (as much the act as the object), the art whose signature remains marked at the limit of the work, neither in nor out, out and in, in the parergonal thickness of the frame. If the beautiful is never ascribed simply to the product or to the producing act, but to a certain passage to the limit between them, then it depends, provided with another elaboration, on some parergonal effect: the Fine-Arts are always of the frame and the signature."⁴⁸⁴

The object does not hold: its objectality is one of institutionalized practices, a "parergonal effect". If we consider the aesthetic idea as a point of transition, we find, on the object side, a form that refers to an act and an act that has no other manifest existence than that of the form. When we encounter an idea, what we see is an instance of social and expressive practice that has the "thickness of the frame" as its element.

When inversely we gauge the subject side, the aesthetic idea indeed mobilizes the individual mental capacities and the pleasures their agitation entails. But then again, we might have trouble recognizing subjectivity in the hypertrophied thinking that never relays through a finished thought. Within the subject, subjectivity itself is deterritorialized in processes of ramified thinking. Confronted with aesthetic ideas, the subject as well ceases to hold:

"When my actions are driven by what "seems to have no intention," when I can no longer explain to myself my own outbursts or the monstrous growth within me, then I have become a stranger to myself and thus also an observer of myself. At the same time, the observer, even if this is a philosopher or scientist,

⁴⁸⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Economimesis", *Diacritics* 11, 2, 1981, p. 7.

has no greater explanatory purchase on this alien presence than does the one inhabited by the monster.”⁴⁸⁵

The aesthetic idea crops up quite late in *Critique of Judgment* when Kant moves from the general theory of the aesthetic judgment to considering artworks. It is a notion designated to bridge the theoretical grounding of aesthetics in the subjective judgment with the forms encountered in art (and their differing from natural forms). The fecundity of the notion should not, however, be judged only in terms of how Kant succeeds in making this bridge—and the philosophical chores it entails. The relevance of aesthetic ideas, not least in a contemporary context, I would argue, stems from the way this bridge might be reassessed, no longer as a conceptual passageway between the objective and the subjective aspects of the aesthetic encounter, but rather as a platform for rethinking aesthetic experience beyond the confinement to the notions of the objective and the subjective. This raises a question about the *theoretical attention* of aesthetics: Kant navigates a—historically paradigmatic—conversion from paying attention to the object to conferring it to the subject of aesthetic experience. The aesthetic idea appears as an intermediary and transitional compromise; but it also foreshadows a legacy of theoretical *non-attention*: not paying attention to the traditional epistemological nuclei of aesthetics, the work and the beholder, but considering art as a social institution, a parergonal devise, that facilitates the encounter of uncertain practices of expression and transformational individual sensibilities—a social infrastructure inhabited and animated by ideas, carved out in sensual forms, or, in the words Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as a certain variety of “circumscribed absences (...) that we do not possess; they possess us.”⁴⁸⁶

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⁴⁸⁵ Chaouli, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

⁴⁸⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern University Press 1968, p. 151.

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Silence! The background of attention as a battleground

Abstract

Via the debates concerning background music in the 1950es in US, this paper seeks to nuance the current typical approach to silence, which sees it as a scarcity in an attention economy. The complex interplay between aesthetics, attention and intention at play in our relation to our background environment is suggested as a model for thinking and doing.

"What would our world look and sound like today if the 'freedom of attention' was a right?"

- Russo, 2009.

I. Introduction

Silence has become a costly commodity in the midst of the battle to capture our attention played out by commercials and the dark patterns of persuasive technology so characteristic of our growing attention economy. The scarcity of stimuli free environments is the driver of a rising market for noise cancelling headphones, apps that monitor and restrict our use of digital devices, mindfulness courses, books and retreats inviting us to 'turn off our devices' [fig. 1], as well as various silent spaces we can buy access to at cafés and designated train carriages.

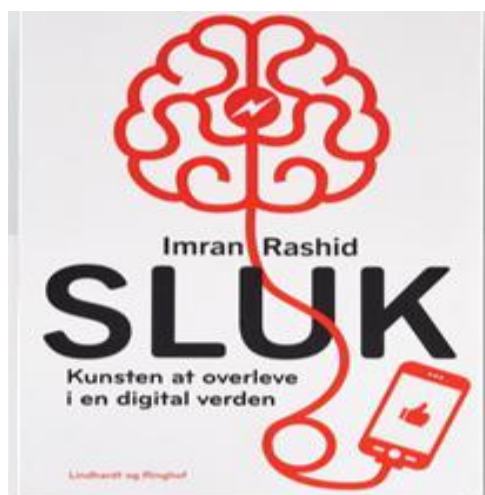


Fig. 1. *SLUK – Kunsten at overleve i en digital verden*, Imran Rashid.

TURN IT OFF - the Art of Surviving in a digital World, by author Imran Rashid.

These products aim at creating silence, which in this context means: a reduction of stimuli, either as *fewer* or as *less disturbing interactions*. The latter we see in the constant development of the smartphone interface towards an easier, more pleasant user experience, where the most promising development at the moment is voice controlled, sonic interfaces. This commodification of silence is in line with the essential concept of attention economy, namely that the recipient or consumer only has so much attention to give,⁴⁸⁷ which affords a quantitative measure of attention.⁴⁸⁸ The push back formulated within this discourse is then also quantitative, e.g. fewer or less disturbing interactions, but also individualized.⁴⁸⁹

In line with Yves Citton's concept of *attention ecology*, this paper suggests an alternative model for talking about, and 'doing', silence and the freedom of attention than in these individualized, quantitative measures. And it does so though an analysis of a historical situation where the right to the freedom of attention of was tried at court.

The Right to the Freedom of attention.

In 1949, in Washington D.C., Capital Transits' new radio-equipped busses, with their Muzak-programmed content, agitated a lively debate in the city newspapers. In the first year *The Washington Post* printed hundreds of letters, all protesting the proliferation of *transitcasting*, the broadcasting of radio in public transport to a "captive audience"⁴⁹⁰, specific segments, near selling points. The content being a mix of music, from the company Muzak and commercials. "I think I'll buy myself some ear stoppers, so I don't hear anything", one Mr. Osten conclude in a public letter.⁴⁹¹ The protesters advocated for the "right to an unannoyed journey"⁴⁹², as well as "freedom of attention".⁴⁹³ On a broader scope they debated the status of the public sphere, with the fear of totalitarianism via the mass media as a general context. These protests led to dramatic row of hearings and lawsuits. At first, in 1951, the Supreme Court ruled that the constitutional guarantee of liberty "embraces not only the right of a person to be free from physical restraint, but the right to be

⁴⁸⁷ See for instance, Davenport, Thomas; Beck, John: "The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business". Cambridge: MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2001.

⁴⁸⁸ Citton, Yves: *The Ecology of Attention*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017, p. 75, and the general introduction to attention economy p. 1-23.

⁴⁸⁹ Citton, 2017, p. 15.

⁴⁹⁰ Jordan, Matthew, F: "Canned Music and Captive audiences. The Battle Over Public Soundspace at Grand Central Terminal and the Emergence of the New Sound", *The Communication Review*, 17:286-310, 2014

⁴⁹¹ As quoted in Russo, Alexander: "An American Right to an 'Unannoyed Journey'? Transit Radio as a Contested Site of Public Space and Private Attention, 1949-1952", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 29:1 (2009):1-25.

⁴⁹² Russo, 2009.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

free in the enjoyment of all his faculties ...”, and one who is subjected to forced listening is not free in the enjoyment of all his faculties.⁴⁹⁴ But in 1952, the Supreme Court’s decision was, however, to uphold the right to broadcast in buses and streetcars. Even though opinions were aired that “the right to be let alone is indeed the beginning of all freedom”⁴⁹⁵ the court decided that broadcasting music was “not inconsistent with public convenience, comfort and safety”⁴⁹⁶. Other similar cases were made. For instance, in 1949 there was a fight over the public soundscape at Grand Central Terminal after management began using Muzak to manage and monetize the soundscape, and this fight was also lost.⁴⁹⁷

Around this time, in 1948, at the National Inter-Collegiate Arts Conference, where the key subject was “The Creative Arts in Contemporary Society”, the American composer John Cage (1912-1992) said he would like to “compose a piece of uninterrupted silence and sell it to Muzak Co. It will be 3 or 4½ minutes long—those being the standard lengths of “canned” music—and its title will be *Silent Prayer*”.⁴⁹⁸ Cage’s comment can be read as a sign of how much the question of muzak occupied the minds of the US citizen at that time. It also exemplifies a – albeit artistic and tongue-in-cheek – strategy of *silencing*⁴⁹⁹ and anticipates the later monetizing of silence, as a response to a situation where the freedom of attention is, as the court ruled, *not* a right! Silence is here a preferred, but not obtainable goal, as a constant wish to reduce noise.

The background as a battleground.

However, there is another figure at play here, namely: that that which used to be a mere backdrop to our everyday perception, namely the *background*, stood out as a public concern and a juridical phenomenon, as a battleground where stakeholders struggle to pursue their different interests.⁵⁰⁰ This is also the case in the general concern over city noise in general, which in the late 1960es led to the first *Noise Control Acts* in Europe and in 1970es in US.⁵⁰¹ The background soundings even became the topic of an academic study, when Murray R. Schafer conducted his *World Soundscape Project* inspired by Cage, which in 1977 led to the seminal soundscape theory.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Jordan, 2014.

⁴⁹⁸ Cage, John “A Composer’s confession”, *Musicworks*, vol. 52 (1992):6-15.

⁴⁹⁹ Bijsterveld, Karin: *Mechanical Sound Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century*, MIT press, 2008.

⁵⁰⁰ E.g. Bijsterveld, 2008.

⁵⁰¹ Bijsterveld, 2009.

As a first conclusion, instead of talking about silence in quantifiable measures this quest for silence draws out a more suited model for thinking about silence, namely our dynamic relation to our background, our environment, as an acoustic ecology, *and* an attention ecology.

In the sound studies scholarship, the quest for silence is, however, still a key figure as seen in for instance Schafer's plaidoyer for sound designers to *reduce* noise, and bring the world closer to the HI-FI, not-noisy soundscape of the pre-industrialized world.⁵⁰² In contrast, I wish to carve out this foreground-background figure by pursuing Cage's aesthetics of silence as a resistance to muzak.

The background-figure is even more outspoken in Cage's later infamous silent piece, commonly known as *4'33"* from 1952, in which the instrumentalist enters the stage, but simply refrains from playing. Cage said, he wanted the audience to listen to everyday soundings *as if* they were music: "You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement [in the premiere]. During the second, raindrops bean pattering the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out"⁵⁰³



Fig. 3. John Cage *4'33"* (1952). Tacet edition, 1960 version.

In this manner Cage wanted to bring the audience's attention to that which is normally a backdrop to their everyday perceptions and thus give them an aesthetic experience of it, *as if* the accidental sounds were music.⁵⁰⁴

This kind of aesthetics has an embedded paradox in it: The background environment is per definition that which we hardly notice. Our brain – and

⁵⁰² Schafer, R. Murray: *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, 1997 (2nd Ed.) Rochester: Destiny Books

⁵⁰³ As quoted in Kostelanetz, Richard: "In his own words", *Perspectives on New Music*, Vol, 25, nr.1-2, 1987, p. 97.

⁵⁰⁴ Seel, Martin: *Aesthetics of Appearing*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 96.

when we talk about sound, the auditory cortex – simply filters out that which needs no focus. The moment we start listening to the background, we foreground it, and thus it loses its withdrawn quality, and the moment we stop listening to it, it will again evade our attention, although it is possible to perceive the background *as* a background, for instance as a distant noise, something that never fully appears, as Martin Seel describes it in his aesthetics of appearing,⁵⁰⁵ or as we do it when we listen to background music, e.g. the kind of music one should *not* pay attention.

This is an aesthetic where background and foreground are at play, not as stable, fixed entities, but as products of *where we place our attention*, and how different media and technologies afford specific acts of attention.

Silence is here not a quantifiable measure, but an act of listening, an act of attention directed towards the background, that which we normally do not pay attention to, that which happens while we are listening to something else. Cage himself repeatedly reminded us that “there’s no such thing as silence”⁵⁰⁶, because there is noise where-ever there is a listening subject.

Non-intentionality and the production of the subject category.

The Cagean art of noticing has a huge legacy, a bit undeserved as there were many at that time who focused on the infra-ordinary in a practice that anyone could repeat.⁵⁰⁷ However, Cage’s silence also has a *negating* or critical aspect, namely to create a non-intentional art freed from the composer’s likes and dislikes.⁵⁰⁸ His piece was, in that sense, a gesture *against* the expressive paradigm of classical music and instead work with the situation, the event, in line with many other neo-avantgarde artists.⁵⁰⁹

With this desire for a *non-intentional music* one could imagine that Cage would love background music, that, if anything, was non-expressive, the way he loved for instance Erik Satie and his *Musique d’ameublement* (1917-1923), written with the intend that it should *not* be listened to, but just be part of the environment, as the rest of the interior.

However, even though Muzak was as background music, it was not non-intentional per se. The common nick-name “muzak” derived from the name of the company *Muzak*, that streamed easy listening music to hotels, super markets, elevators, public transport, factories, and so forth. This company was founded by George O. Squier who perfected his method for transmitting music across electrical wires in the early 1920es, and re-named the company Muzak

⁵⁰⁵ Seel, 2005, p. 90-98.

⁵⁰⁶ As quoted in Kostelanetz, 1987, p. 97.

⁵⁰⁷ I am here using Perec’s concept of the infra ordinary: Perec, George. *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* [1973], London: Penguin Book, 1997.

⁵⁰⁸ Kostelanetz, 1987.

⁵⁰⁹ See for instance description in Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real*, MIT press, 1996.

in 1934. The music that was streamed was newly-produced of the genres one with overall, and a bit unprecise terms calls easy listening, exotica, cocktail or beautiful music. These headings subsume a broad variety of genres, where the common denominator is not the genres characteristics themselves, but the ability to serve as *functional background music*: The music is repetitive, without any surprising chord progressions or formal movements and it has a very soft sound, with lots of reverberation and often a thick doubling of strings. Even though this music is intentionally non-expressive, it is in its larger context not non-intentional. As the market for background music, or functional music, grew in the 1940es, it was coupled with a scientific branding.⁵¹⁰ Muzak was coupled with a trademark called *Stimulus progression* that released a series of records, that provenly could enhance workers' production and happiness at the factories, reduce tensions and fatigue, as well as promote impulse buying at the stores – as it can be read on this cover.



Fig. 3. Muzak cover, Muzak inc. 1958. “Music by Muzak is good business, for offices, for stores, shops, promotes impulse buying [...] for factories – reduces work tensions, fatigue, fosters on-the-job concentration [...] cuts wasted time, idle talk [...] for banks, for restaurant

In many ways this sonic example serves well as a metaphor for later attention economy: the music functions as a persuasive, but backgrounded technology – a “hidden persuasion in the air” as one contemporary journalist described it,⁵¹¹ – that manages the consumer or worker’s attention on the product or the work. There is a doubling not merely of *perception* as Paul Virilio describes it,⁵¹² but of attention: the music is directed at the recipient while her attention is directed

⁵¹⁰ Lanza, Joseph: *Elevator Music. A Surreal History of Muzak© Easy- listening, and Other Moodsong©* (2004), Michigan: Michigan Press, 2007.

⁵¹¹ As quoted in Lanza, 2009.

⁵¹² Virilio, Paul, *The Vision Machine*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

elsewhere, the same way our attention is drawn towards the media object, while the algorithms are attentive of our behavior. This specific distribution of attention that I have just described is characteristic of *specific* aesthetic practices such as background music, avantgarde art, and later modern Instagram selfies. However, these phenomenon cannot be understood without also addressing the matter of *intentions*: Muzak was not merely background music, nor noise, but a way to stimulate, control, and thus *produce* specific kinds of subject positions; of citizens essential to the capitalistic society, in particular workers and consumers.

We can with the French thinker Bernard Stiegler pursue the thought that sound can be a *pre-configured milieu* for acts of individuation; an act by which the subject is *produced*, the same way language can produce subjectivity.⁵¹³ In the case of background music, the act is not a speech act, and furthermore it is not an act in which the receivers are paying attention as to how, or even *that*, they are being produced as specific subject categories. It happens as they barely listen while paying attention to something else. In other words: *We* are produced, not merely as subjects, but as citizens in this messy interplay of aesthetics and attention, foreground and background, individual acts of attention versus laws and regulations, that

Sonic citizenship as a model for thinking and doing.

What I suggest is that this historical situation allows us to produce a better model for thinking *and* doing.

While the sound scape metaphor we know from acoustic ecology, allows us to understand the background as a landscape of sorts, that we can walk into and to some degree design,⁵¹⁴ the story accounted for above seems to make way for a different metaphor: one where the background *produces* us as citizens, in line with David Murakami Wood's idea of an ambient government.⁵¹⁵ A more suited metaphor to understand our case would be that of a sonic citizenship⁵¹⁶ that focuses on the habituating practices of everyday life, the messy, fragile, relation to our attentive background.

It is a better model for *thinking* about silence in an attention economy, because it allows us to see those doubling of attention and intention, but also

⁵¹³ Stiegler, Bernard. "Teleologics of the Snail: The Errant Self Wired to a WiMax Network." *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, vol. 2–3 (2009): 33–45. doi: 10.1177/026327640910310. Lund, Jacob: "Artistic Re-Appropriation and Reconfiguration of the Medium's Milieu", the Nordic Journal of Aesthetics, 23 (44–45, 2014)

⁵¹⁴ In line with Ingold, Tim's critique of the soundscape concept, Ingold, Tim: *Being Alive : Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011.

⁵¹⁵ Wood, David Murakami: "Vanishing Surveillance: Securiscapes and Ambient Government", lecture at the Pacific Centre for Technology and Culture, 2014.

⁵¹⁶ Phelan, Helen. "Sonic Citizenship-Right and rites of belonging in Ireland", in *Making Congregational Music Local in Christian Communities Worldwide*, Routledge, 2018.

the subject categories they produce. It is in line with Yves Citton's idea of an attention ecology, and in his two models of attention ecology this story invites us not to develop a method for mapping (counting interactions, Db-levels etc), but one of "rooted attention"⁵¹⁷ – although the model we can deduct from my case is hardly in line with Naess' *deep ecology*, but would rather be a method for a Latourian ecologizing⁵¹⁸.

It is also a better push back, a better model for doing, than merely pursuing *fewer or less disturbing* interactions. Instead of aiming a turning *off* the digital devises that are anyhow embedded in our everyday lives and bodies, a better quest would be to turn *our* attention towards our background environment, and start paying attention to how we are being produced by said background, with what intend. This seems to be even more important now that we move towards non-tactile sonic interface, which means that our background environment is now eavesdropping in on us, as we are paying attention to, and talking about, something else. With a slight rewrite of David Murakami Wood, it is matters to listen to that which is listening to us.⁵¹⁹

Biography

Anette Vandsø is an associate professor at the School of Communication and Culture, where she studies the intersection of aesthetics, culture and technology. Her main research area are sound studies and environmental aesthetics, and the Cagelan act of noticing as a practice for radical transformations.

⁵¹⁷ Citton, 2017, p 109.

⁵¹⁸ Latour, Bruno: "To modernize or to Ecologize? That's the question" in N Castree and B Willems-Braun (editors) *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millenium* (London and New York: Routledge) 1998, pp. 221-242.

⁵¹⁹ Wood, David Murakami: "Vanishing Surveillance: Why Seeing What is Watching us Matters", Paper published online at Queen's University, Office of the Privacy Commisioner of Canada, 2011.