

Intergenerational Aesthetics: A Future-Oriented Approach to Aesthetic Theory and Practice

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Presenting Intergenerational Aesthetics 1/2

- A relatively new philosophical sub-specialty
- Centers in the study of aesthetic values and aesthetic choices taking into account the aesthetic appreciation of future generations
- Stems from a pressing concern regarding our present situation in terms of environment and sustainability, as our current exploitation, building, and living practices seem clearly unsustainable in the long run
- Acknowledges a temporal dependency between the present and future in aesthetics



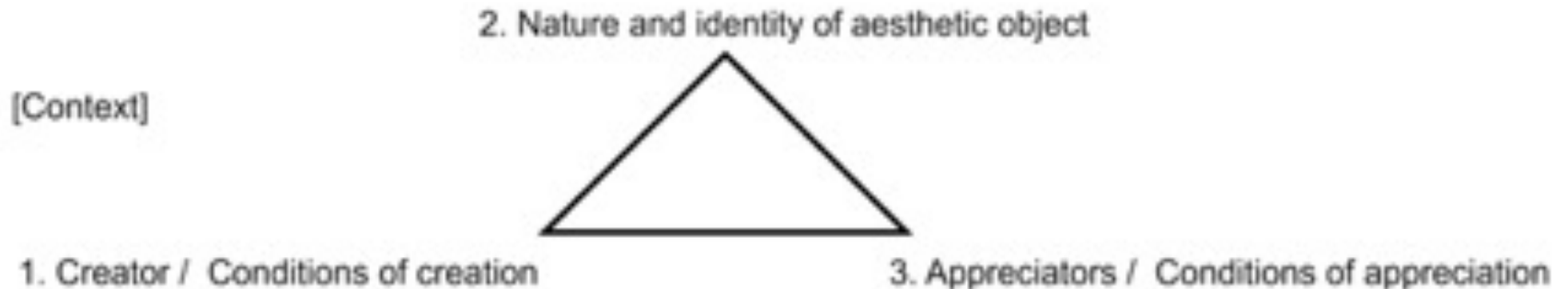
Presenting Intergenerational Aesthetics 2/2

- Offers a new perspective to explore aesthetic values, perception, and judgments as well as practical decisions
- Our aim with this talk is to discuss the main concerns of intergenerational aesthetics (IA): 1) its theoretical stakes 2) its normative aspect 3) the role of intergenerational thinking in theory and practice, and 4) to present an example to illustrate the pressing importance of introducing intergenerational considerations to our current aesthetic practices
- We are looking forward to discuss with the audience potential avenues of research for further investigations in the field



IA: Theoretical Stakes 1/4

- Include potential aesthetic appreciations, experience, and judgments of future generations
- Rethink aesthetic triad by including temporality

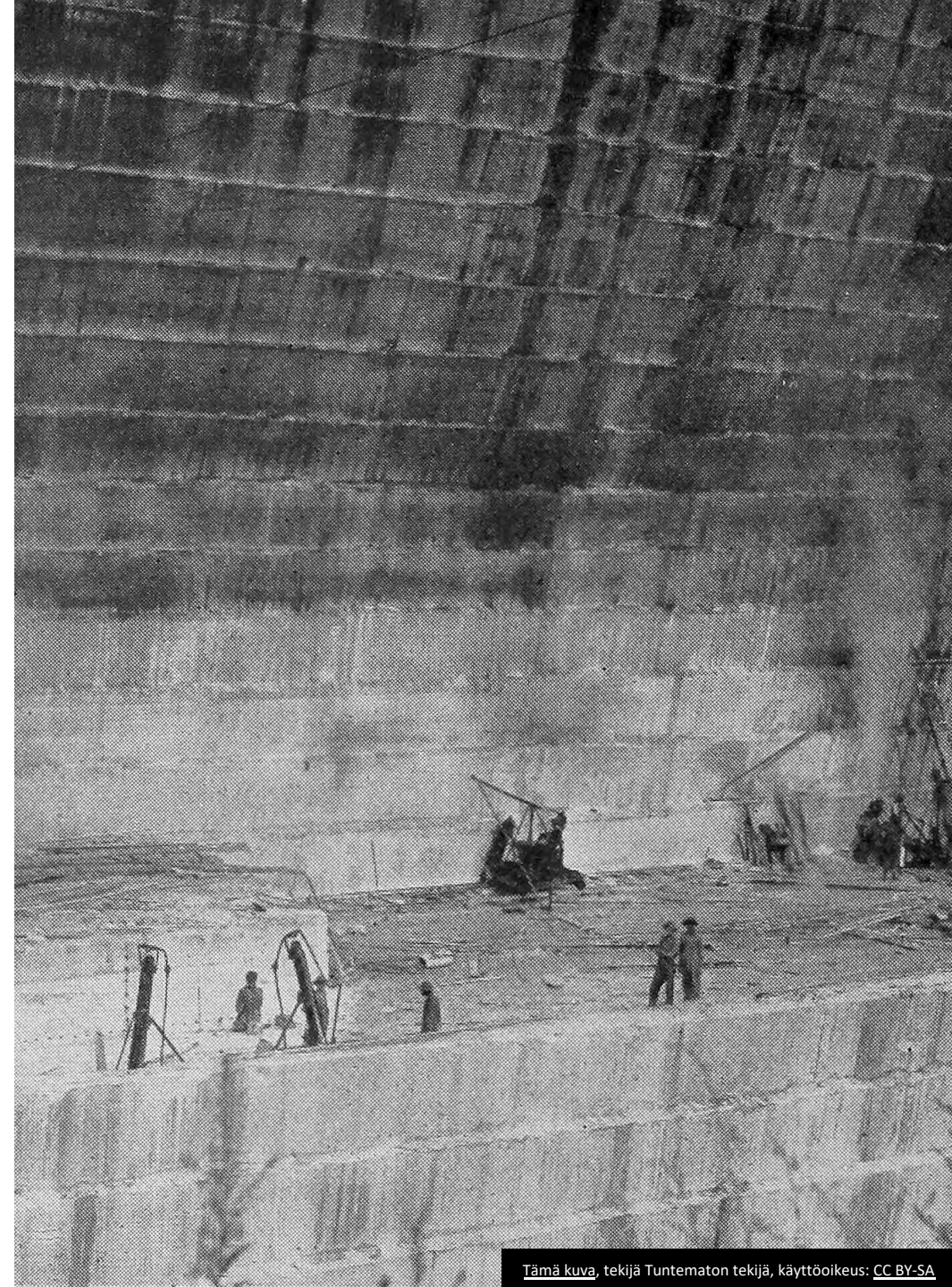


IA: Theoretical Stakes 2/4

Object of study

- Aesthetic aspects of our surroundings, lived environment
- Beyond distinction art/nature
- Focus on architecture, urbanism, public art, design, everyday interactions
- Public discussion, democratic process

Cognitive role of aesthetics: aesthetic experience as a cognitive endeavor that includes emotions and feelings (Goodman, Elgin)

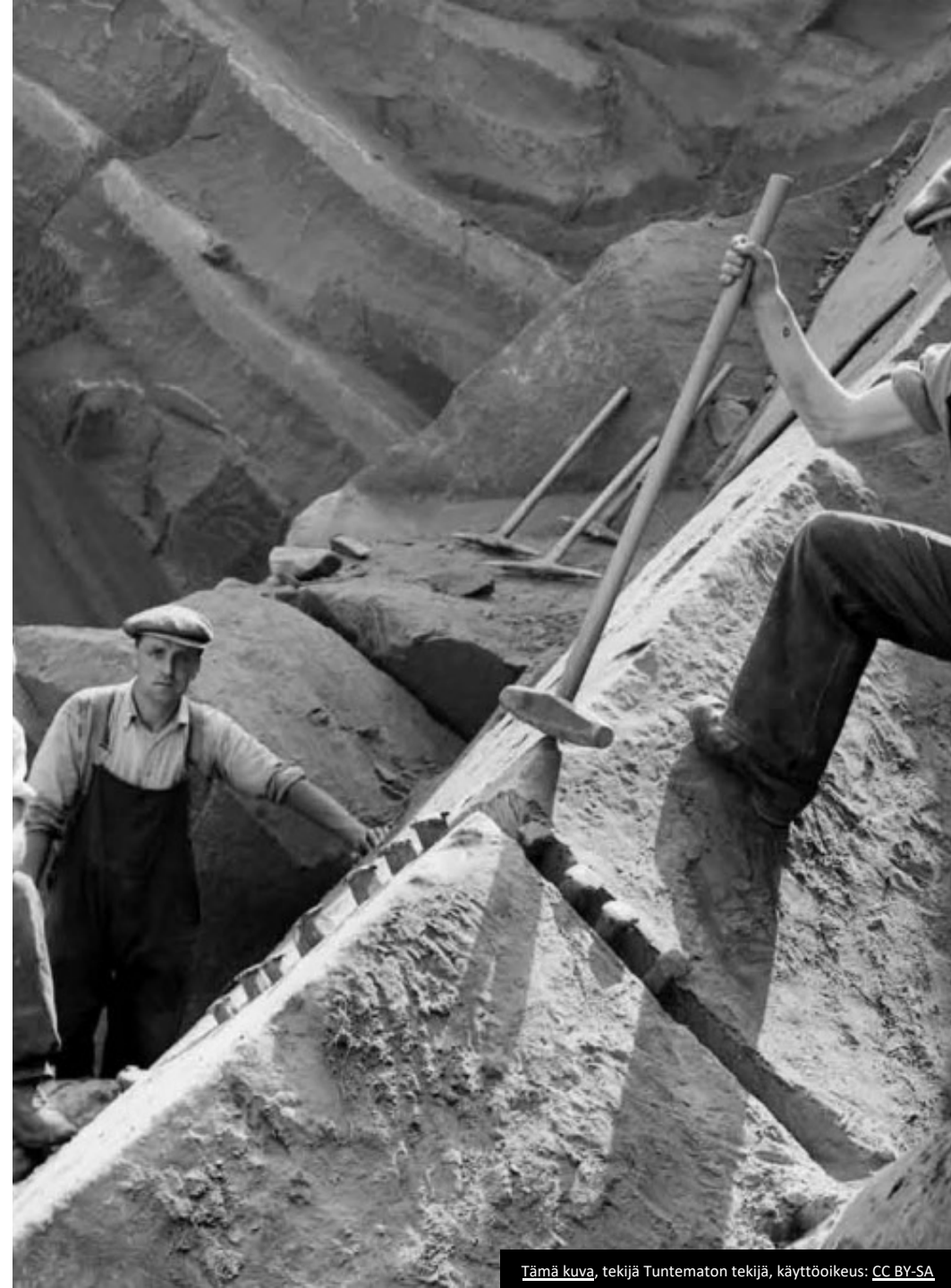


IA: Theoretical Stakes 3/4

Disciplinary context

- Environmental aesthetics
- Aesthetics of everyday life
- Applied aesthetics
- Urban aesthetics and philosophy of the city
- Aesthetics of preservation practices
- Environmental ethics and intergenerational justice

Other disciplines: sustainability studies, climate change ethics, heritage studies, historic preservation, landscape preservation



IA: Theoretical Stakes 4/4

Unique contribution of intergenerational aesthetics:

Putting aesthetic concerns at the center of theoretical and practical debates



IA: Normative Aspect 1/2

General open-ended principles or guidelines:

- Aesthetic decision made in the present should not foreclose future aesthetic judgment, experience, attribution of values, nor limit the possibilities of interpretation and meaning
- Aesthetic decisions should maintain access to existing aesthetic values and taste, but not impose one's aesthetic worldview to future generations
- Aesthetic decisions should also aim at non-deception and at seeking truthfulness whenever possible



IA: Normative Aspect 2/2

Specific issues

Consider potential future appearance

- Creative imagination: garden preservation and rewilding projects
- Passing of time: Premios Década
- Challenges universality of aesthetic values

Aesthetic sustainability

- Adaptability and modular constructions: longer-lasting structures
- Accounting for the potential change in taste: different aesthetic preferences possible

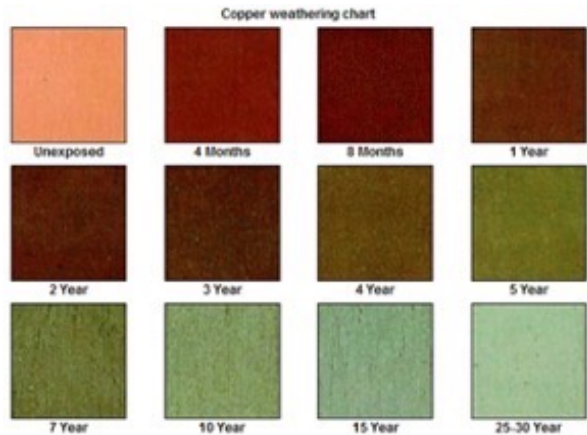
IA: Normative Aspect: Historic Preservation

Cleaning and maintenance



IA: Normative Aspect: Historic Preservation

Cleaning and maintenance



IA: Normative Aspect: Historic Preservation

Archaeological restoration. Integral restoration



IA: Normative Aspect: Historic Preservation

Palimpsestic Interventions



IA: Normative Aspect: Historic Preservation

Total Reconstructions



The Role of Intergenerational Thinking in Theory

- Environmental ethics and social philosophy explicitly formulate intergenerational thinking through concepts such as
 - Intergenerational ethics
 - Intergenerational justice
- IA bridges ethics and aesthetics: shared concerns in terms of sustainability, the exploration of values and obligations towards future generations, and hopes to enact changes in practice
- Environmental aesthetics brings together intergenerational thinking with aesthetic values by discussing temporality and future aesthetics in the context of climate change (Brady 2014)



The Role of Intergenerational Thinking in Practice

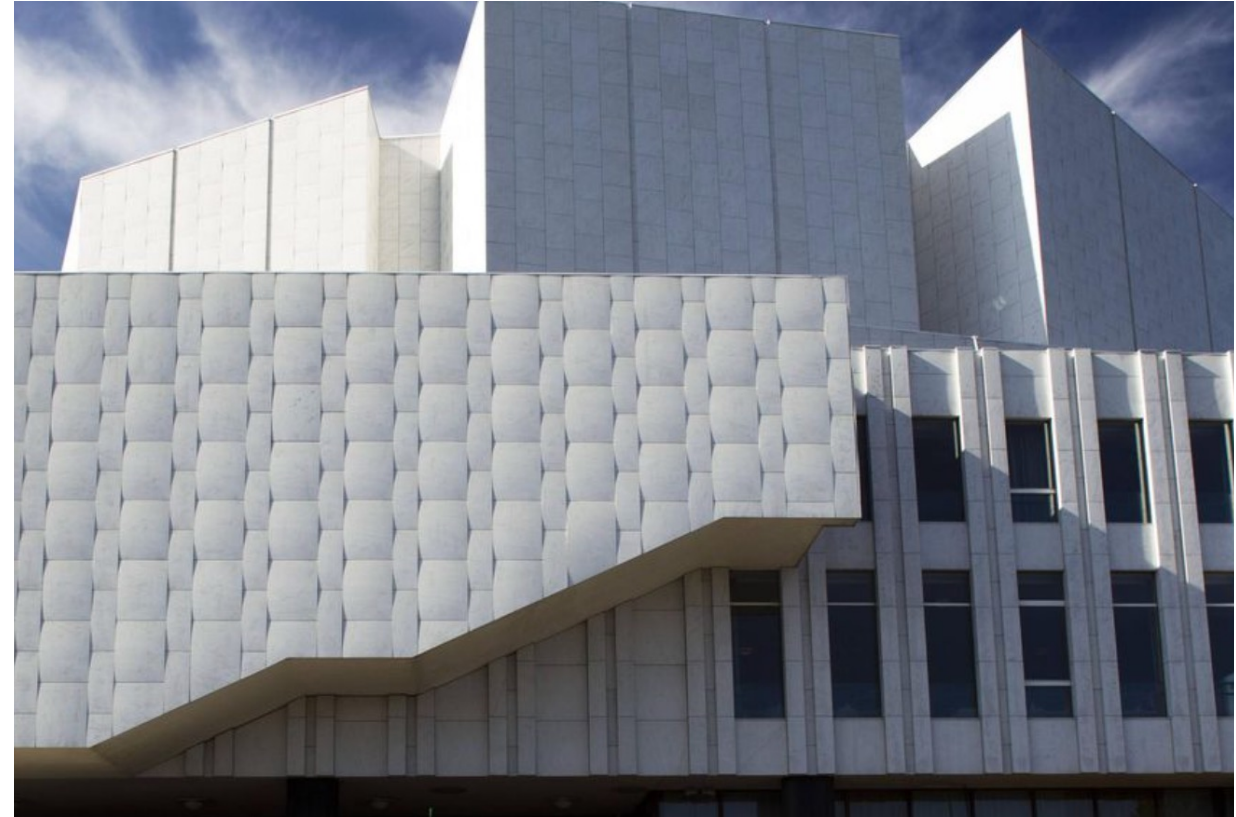
- The sustainability framework and its future-directed approach to intergenerational relations first formulated by the Brundtland Report in 1987
 - General aim to cultivate such practices that do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
 - Intersection of aesthetics, sustainability, and care?
- Durability of materials or structures is not sufficient to warrant sustainability of the design itself, unless the aesthetic features have either a long-lasting or an adaptable quality



Case Example: The Finlandia Hall



Case Example: The Finlandia Hall



Conclusions 1/2

- IA brings about a shift in the discussion, from intentionality and creator-centered arguments to emphasize reception, experience, and interpretation by future generations
- IA also offers a normative component as current aesthetic choices can be assessed considering intergenerational criteria, such as not foreclosing nor limiting the range of aesthetic judgment and experience of future generations and aiming at non-deception
- IA aims at influencing actual practices and pushes for the inclusion of intergenerational thinking when making aesthetic choices in design and preservationist interventions



Conclusions 2/2

Further research avenues:

- discussions on the universality and relativity of aesthetic values
- aesthetic choices given our contemporary situation in terms of environment and sustainability
- specific case analyses of intergenerational interest
- further interdisciplinary work
- promoting the connections between academic aesthetics and the practical dimensions of intergenerational work
- research on non-human centered aesthetics and cross-species considerations.



Thank You!

Capdevila-Werning, Remei and Lehtinen, Sanna, 2021 (forthcoming).
Intergenerational Aesthetics: A Future-Oriented Approach to Aesthetic Theory and Practice. *Philosophical Inquiries* 2021, Vol. 9, No. 1.

Further Reading:

- Capdevila-Werning, Remei, 2020, “Preserving Destruction: Philosophical Issues of Urban Geosites”, in *Open Philosophy*, 3, 1: 550–565. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2020-0137>
- Capdevila-Werning, Remei, Spaid, Sue (eds.), 2019, *Aesthetic Investigations: Special Issue on Restoration* 2:2, <https://www.aestheticinvestigations.eu/index.php/journal/issue/view/7>
- Lehtinen, Sanna, 2020, “An Intergenerational approach to urban futures: Introducing the concept of aesthetic sustainability”, in Haapala, Arto, Frydryczak, Beata, Salwa, Mateusz (eds). *Moving from Landscapes to Cityscapes and Back: Theoretical and Applied Approaches to Human Environments*, Przypis¹, Lodz: 111–119.
- Lehtinen, Sanna, 2021 (forthcoming), “Aesthetic Sustainability”, in Toivanen, Reetta and Krieg, Parker (eds.). *Situating Sustainability: A Handbook of Contexts and Concepts*, Helsinki University Press, Helsinki.