

Aesthetics, ethics and relational being

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List of abstracts

Art program in the Nordic House

Title: *Listening to Glaciers*

Garrison Gerrard (University of Iceland, Hornafjörður Research Centre)

Sounds of the Arctic: Music composition for Clarinet and Fixed Media and Acoustic Surveys of Iceland's National Parks

The national parks of Iceland are in a state of rapid change and flux. As the impact of climate change is accentuated in the arctic, precipitating glacial retreat, the sounds of the parks and their ecosystems are also changing at an elevated pace. This change is made all the more apparent with the increased tourist activity in Iceland. In order to study the changing soundscapes of the park, I have used acoustic surveys over the course of nine months to examine the ecosystems from an acoustic perspective.

This piece examines the impact of climate change on the national parks through a musical lens, highlighting the sounds of the environment and its changing states. Preceding the piece will be a short discussion exploring the sounds used in the piece and the aesthetic considerations and implications involved in the composition of the work. This project provides a window into ways that creative pursuits and aesthetics can inform scientific study and enhance our understanding of our environment.

Mariana Ungureanu and Stefan Schneider (University Paris 8 and University of Vienna)

Fostering embodied aesthetic experience and increased sense of responsibility in "The Ice Life",

The Ice Life project connects its components (music, images) and scientific knowledge within a socially engaged practice in the field of environmental concerns, namely the life and the receding of glaciers. Through this practice we are re-thinking the values of the artistic work, in order get critically engaged with the environmental aspects that nourish our artistic practice (Barrett 2016). We see the artwork as a connection with the world, in the continuity of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 1998, 2002) and socially engaged art (Bishop 2004).

Considering glaciers as “the other” requires openness to understanding their distinctiveness and enacting “love” and mutual dignity. Music and art, with their immersive nature, can facilitate this process of enactive listening and perception, bridging differences and approximating time scales. Making the past, present, and future of glaciers perceptible within a human time span may be able to enhance engagement and love for these natural entities. We will create an audio-visual staging based on field recordings of the Vatnajökull Ice Cap (Iceland), which offers an immersive experience of the metamorphosis of ice that transcends human and natural timescales, fostering an experience of mutual dignity. The project's approach is rooted in the belief that assigning blame to individuals is ineffective; instead, it advocates the motto "touch them, don't try to convince." By encouraging enactive listening, fostering loving sense-making, and inspiring agency in the face of climate change and glacier disappearance, the project seeks a more impactful connection with its audience.

Þorvarður Árnason (Hornafjörður Research Centre)

Blámi

Blámi could be described as follows:

The exhibition is a filmic animation that opens and expands into three-dimensional space. The work is based on rhythm on three levels: the interaction of image-projection and exhibition space, the inner stillness or movement within the various images themselves, and the interactions of the material in individual media streams on the different surfaces of the exhibition, relative to the position of a mobile viewer. The exhibition is, furthermore, directed connected to communication about climate issues

and the (potential) radical, forward-looking role of museums and art galleries in the fight against catastrophic climate change.

Konstantine Vlasis (Hornafjörður Research Centre and New York University)

Listening-With: An Aural Aesthetics for Glacial Soundscapes and Other Ecologies

Glaciers have emerged across news and media outlets, popular culture, and scientific domains as leading markers for global warming today. Time-lapse photography, satellite imagery, and new modes of modelling and animation have revealed the unprecedented rate at which glaciers are melting worldwide, and enable us to experience explicit, visual evidence of ecological degradation.

And yet, glaciers are also sonic landscapes, which means that every glacial sound reveals something about a glacier's morphology, how it flows, and how it is changing over time. Moreover, to experience glacial soundscapes requires an act of listening—a mode of perception and relationality that has been under theorized within environmental humanities, and that lacks a specific ecological focus within the domains of sounds studies and ecomusicology.

This paper examines my concept of “listening-with”—a form of shared aurality between humanity and the ecologies they constitute. Drawing from Steven Feld's notion of “acoustemology”; Julie Cruikshank's seminal work, *Do Glacier's Listen?*; and Deborah Kapchan's idea of “listening as witness,” I aim to show how an act of listening-with can help mediate experiences of ecological change and inform environmental sentiments and aesthetics. My primary case study centers on glacial soundscapes in Iceland, and the audio-based ethnographic work I have conducted with scholars, tour guides, glaciologists, musicians, composers, and sound-artists over the past year. Each one of these communities values, perceives, understands, and thereby, listens to glacial sounds in different ways. In the face of our planet's disappearing cryosphere, these inter- and crossdisciplinary voices resonant alongside the landscapes for which they share concern, and help frame a “listening-with” glacial soundscapes and other ecologies

Title: *Relational Being*

Helene Nymann (Aarhus University)

Mapping Relational Memories: Navigating Continuonus for Collective Futures

In the lineage of the 1654 Carte de Tendre – a map of the land of tenderness – by French writer Madeleine De Scudery and her group of friends, the Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting (EER) project introduced the interdisciplinary artwork Carte De Continuonus in the autumn of 2023. Continuonus, a linguistic blend of ‘continuous’ and ‘onus’, challenges the Western understanding of onus as a negative obligation. Instead, it proposes a nuanced perspective, intertwining the future with the past's responsibilities, drawing inspiration from cultural frameworks that perceive freedom as interdependence. Carte De Continuonus is a call to action within the aesthetic realm: a sculptural interactive website (www.continuon.us), this work urges attendees to consider how their recollections can contribute to transforming values, fostering ethical perspectives, and creating a sustainable and interconnected future. In this presentation, already collected data from the ContinuOnus website will be discussed, and methodologies of radical listening will be presented. Simultaneously, all conference participants are invited to contribute and to engage in the future development of this work, adding their own memories for the future and considering why and how this collective landscape might best be contained and cared for. The collective mapping of emotions and memories becomes a platform for dialogue in times of uncertainty and change, challenging individuals to reflect not only on personal experiences but also on the broader societal implications of navigating the memories of others thereby fostering more relational futures.

Elizabeth McTernan

‘Cosa Bella Mortal: A Work of Friction’

‘Cosa Bella Mortal: A Work of Friction’ (2023) was developed within the art-science research project Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting (EER) and published as an essay-artwork bringing together method and form. It comprises 20 sections that jump across times and spaces, each marked with a date and geographical coordinates to

emphasize links to memory and situated experience. All examining friction from different angles, the sections themselves rub up against each other with their own narrative frictions and life-rhymes. The themes of the essay braid reflections and experiments about: friction-driven world-building, resistance, mortality, grief, twinning temporalities, shifting material identities, and more-than human (re)compositions. The narratives toggle back and forth between the science of friction, studio experiments with materials, intimate recollections, multilayered ecologies, and 'cold' encounters with measurements at science laboratories in Paris and Berlin. For this conference, I would present the research behind the project and the interdisciplinary group experiment I developed from it, titled 'Works of Friction: A Reading and Heap Experiment'. In EER, we hold regular workshops to test relational methods. Soon after the publication, I was invited to develop an experiment, which ran as follows: After reading excerpts from my essay to the group, participants joined me outside for the pouring of heaps. In a quasi-ceremonial way, I poured various materials onto different spots, gave participants time to record their observations, and measured the heaps with makeshift tools. During the experiment and the larger workshop, friction within a heap became a form to describe the social and creative dynamics of the group when thinking and doing together: how participants from myriad fields come together, get caught on each other, re-individuate, and come together again in different configurations.

Link to the project:

<https://www.eer.info/artworks/cosa-bella-mortal-a-work-of-friction/work/>

Sophie Erland

Nature is an event that never stops

Nature is an event that never stops (2023) is a film work developed in 2022-23 within the art-science research project EER (Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting). The film is set in virtual reality, with interactive elements on colour perception. A narrator leads the visitor through the interactions in the film, which is 15-40 minutes long, depending on visitor interaction and attention. The design of the film is centered around five different colour-matching scenarios, which the visitor to the film encounters as they navigate through a sequence of digitally built worlds. Each colour-matching scenario is

designed to study a specific aspect of either colour perception from a top-down cultural perception perspective or from a bottom-up neuro-scientific perspective. While the film narrates six scenes from different perspectives – for example, of a microorganism in a large ecosystem, or floating in outer space – users can actively engage with the film through their own navigation choices. Each scene in the film is designed as a so-called ‘world’, which lets the visitor travel through different more-than-human perspectives in different environments.

Conference papers in Lögberg and Háskólatorg, University of Iceland.

Session: Ethics of Nature

Nick Wiltscher

Individual Aesthetics, Collective Ethics

Many philosophers of natural aesthetics emphasise the importance of direct engagement with the natural environment as a condition of appropriate appreciation (e.g. Carlson (1979), Carroll (1993), Budd (2002), and Berleant (2005)). This engagement is typically characterised as an individual, personal matter. But the emphasis of environmentalism is firmly on the collective: on what we, together, can do to ameliorate the damage we do to the world. So there seems to be a divide between the individualistic aesthetic appreciation of the natural world, and the collective effort to treat it properly. To the extent that moral regard for the natural world is predicated on aesthetic regard, this is undesirable; and it is often supposed that aesthetic considerations indeed form part of the motivation and justification for ethical action with respect to nature (e.g. Rolston (1988), Hargrove (1989), Godlovitch (1994), and Firth (2008)). The present paper offers a way of reconciling these two modes of action by emphasising the social dimension

inherent in the individual's appreciation of nature. I argue that (1) an aesthetic appreciation of nature is a necessary element of engagement to act in its favour; (2) that such aesthetic appreciation is properly predicated on inter-subjective grounds; (3) that the inter-subjective grounds of aesthetic appreciation provide sufficient cohesion to motivate collective action, while preserving within the collective the variety of individual experience that personal engagement provides.

Sue Spaid (Northern Kentucky University)

Environmental Wellbeing: From Care Aesthetics to Environmental Protection

This paper explores the benefits of environmental wellbeing, as well as the metrics currently in use to gauge it. Although environmental wellbeing is sometimes described as the relationship between individuals and their physical environment (aka habitat), such that positive interactions with nature generate feelings of gratitude and admiration (Bon and Berg 2023), my focus here is articulating a notion of environmental wellbeing on par with human wellbeing, such that the sole beneficiary is the environment. Absent a robust concept of environmental wellbeing, human beings fail to take seriously their role as both inhabitants of a particular environment, as well as protectors/destroyers of their habitat.

Gauging environmental wellbeing on par with that of human wellbeing is not easy. For one, environmental wellbeing is collective, whereas human wellbeing is typically singular. Environmental wellbeing necessitates space allocations. That is, human beings both determine the environment's scale (an ocean, an island or an inlet) and develop the metrics, such as ecosystem functioning, to monitor environmental wellbeing. Ecosystem functioning refers to "the joint effects of all processes (fluxes of energy and matter) that sustain an ecosystem' over time and space through biological activities" (Truchy et al., 2015). To evaluate ecosystem functioning, scientists measure biodiversity, entropy levels, soil fertility/organic life, sustainability/growth, and habitat/food. Elsewhere, I've developed notions of biodiverse beauty, care aesthetics, and hydrological justice, but I've yet to show how merging these practices protects habitat and promotes environmental wellbeing.

Attributing flourishing to the environment requires that we accord “agency” to the environment’s myriad members’ capacity to flourish as they are “designed,” independent of human notions of “will,” intentionality, or introspection (planning, etc.). By design, I have in mind environmentally-specific attributes and qualities that have evolved over time. So long as the members are entangled, everything is interconnected, which naturally constrains growth limits.

Ólafur Páll Jónsson (University of Iceland)

Thoreau on the value of mountains

On May 10th, 1853, Henry David Thoreau wrote a lengthy entry in his journal ending with an extended reflection on mountains. In my talk I will reflect on these texts and consider whether such aesthetic appreciation of mountains might still be relevant. I organize my talk around three short entries in the diary:

[1] “You see, not the domes only, but the body, the facade, of these terrene temples. You see that the foundation answers to the superstructure. Moral structures.”

[2] “They are stepping-stones to heaven, — as the rider has a horse-block at his gate, — by which to mount when we would commence our pilgrimage to heaven; by which we gradually take our departure from earth, from the time when our youthful eyes first rested on them, — from this bare actual earth, which has so little of the hue of heaven.”

[3] “They make it easier to die and easier to live. They let us off.”

Inspired by Thoreau I discuss mountains as a metaphor for certain existential facts about life and as means for aesthetic appreciation of real value, knowledge and moral commitments. The mountains mark the horizon and they connect heaven and earth, spirit and matter. At the same time, a mountain is a *condition* for life. This is why Aldo Leopold coined the phrase “think like a mountain”. Thinking like a mountain in the sense of Thoreau has a more expansive meaning; it includes a spiritual dimension. By being stepping-stones to heaven they help us lift our spirits, though not as a trivial diversion but as firmly grounded in the material earth to which we belong. Reflecting on Thoreau and recent literature in the intersection of ethics and aesthetics, I hope to contribute to a critical understanding of man-nature relationship and the relevance of perception for moral integrity.

Stephanie Schuster (University of Basel)

Realization and Relation in Aesthetic Experiences of Nature

My presentation addresses a question central to the aesthetics of nature: What is the content of particular meaningful aesthetic experiences of nature? After outlining characteristics of aesthetic experiences and specifying the concept of 'nature' as referring to those elements of the world not made by humans, thus, encompassing entities that (at least to a certain degree) arise, evolve, and cease independently, I draw on an important insight of Ronald Hepburn. According to him, the act of 'realization', by which he understands a 'coming-to-be-aware experience', is a chief activity in particular meaningful aesthetic experiences of nature. While Hepburn's own examples merely refer to realizations concerning nature's dimensions and forces, I further elaborate his thought. I argue that particular meaningful aesthetic experiences of nature typically (yet not exclusively) include entangled realizations concerning the following three aspects:

(a) the outer (environing) nature, e.g., realizations concerning nature's complexity and diversity, including nature's dimensions and forces;

(b) humans' own inner nature, e.g., realizations concerning natural processes that humans are subject to, such as transience, aging, and death;

(c) humans' relationship with nature, e.g., realizations concerning humanity's origin in nature and humans' various relationships with natural entities.

I conclude my presentation by pointing out the eudaimonic value of particular meaningful aesthetic experiences of nature. It lies, among others, in evoking feelings of wonder and awe

(a), consolation and serenity (b), and, maybe most profoundly, the feeling of being at home in the (natural) world (c).

Session: Sensing, Experiencing and Experimenting

Karsten Olsen (Aarhus University)

Experimenting through art: Investigating the social mind in museums, artworks and in the lab

The social mind has been addressed from a broad range of approaches, and is perhaps best understood in the context of its social, material, aesthetic, and embodied environment, as argued e.g. by 4EA approaches to social cognition. While much of the empirical research that has served as the basis for such approaches has been conducted in the lab, less research exists from more applied settings outside the lab, such as in art museums and art exhibitions. In this talk, I will firstly present the results of a systematic review (i.e. PRISMA method) which addresses the scope of museum- and artwork-based research on social interaction and cognition. The review highlights several research domains which typically have been investigated, e.g. verbal and physical meaning-making, participant behaviour, social influence and beneficial effects of art, etc. Interestingly, however, it also reveals the more understudied and overlooked research domains, e.g. joint action, social decision-making, collaboration, shared intentionality, social learning, and others, which typically are key notions in social cognition. The talk will relate these findings to a more general discussion about the variability and flexibility of art-science approaches, and invite reflections on the role of aesthetic experience as an important factor and interface between art and science in such interdisciplinary collaborations. Using examples of experimental investigations from the Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting project (EER) project, I will also outline methodologies and research questions which may help unpack the more understudied research domains, and the nature of social minds

Katrin Heimann (Aarhus University)

Becoming aware in the museum – micro-phenomenology as a tool to engage with privilege and oppression in aesthetic experience

It is no secret that privilege, and oppression are systemically embedded in the ways we perceive, structure, and evaluate our world (James 2013). It has even been argued that aesthetics was the primary medium in which both are experienced, privilege is hold up and oppression withstood (Rancière 2004; Roelof 2009). This does not only refer to the norms that are determining which color and shapes of bodies (real or portrayed) we find beautiful. Scholars of the arts have provided an endless number fine-grained analyses

illustrating how content and form of art works are built upon and employ cultural categories of difference such as gender and race (see for example Mulvey 1975 and McClary 1995 analyzing narrative construction in film). Also, it has consistently been pointed out how art institution due to their historical as well as current setup in society support existing divisions. Still, in 2022, ICOM's definition of a museum was significantly updated to contain the announcement "Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability."

This presentation suggests that such ambitious agenda (see Sternfeld, 2018) might be helped by integrating in current curating and dissemination practices new methods that are able to reveal and communicate the subjective experience of visitors. Relying on two case studies out of the art science collaboration EER, it introduces the research tool of micro-phenomenology as such a gadget. Precisely, it portrays how micro-phenomenological interviews with visitors and employees of two established art institutions in Denmark and Switzerland (concerning works the Columbian artist Doris Salcedo and the Danish artist Erik A. Frandsen) allowed for the detection of unexpected intersectional differences in the art experiences explored. It shows how such differences effectively reveal privilege related blind spots of our experience and outlines the institutional reflections and processes initiated by this exposure.

Elizabeth McTernan, Andreas Roepstorff, Katrin Heimann, Sophie Erlund, et al.:

Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting: Relational Forms of Being and Doing in Art-Science Collaboration

This paper seeks to articulate the aesthetic forms that have emerged from five years of Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting (EER), a collaboration between science and art that has been running since 2018. The project comprises multiple levels of contributors from across diverse disciplines and many countries. It is centered on a core group who meet weekly and expands out to another layer of contributors who come together for multi-day workshops in different locations about 1–2 times per year. During the stretches between workshops, contributors produce artworks and scholarship that feed

back into the project as modalities to think along with. When EER was initiated, we thought knowledge-making would be the main project interface. However, over time, we have discovered other forms to be more primary: relational and ethical structures that open, hold, and define spaces for interactions. If the conventional forms of science are papers and of art are artifacts, then something quite different has emerged from the design-thinking of EER's interdisciplinary collaboration: a distinct aesthetic as an attention to particular forms – of interaction and cocreation – that allow for certain relations to unfold in a shared working ontology of relationality. From the organizational scale of planning workshops, choosing themes, and establishing shared ethics, to the interpersonal scale of trust within the group, translation across disciplinary lines, and care for varying expectations in creative processes, emergent forms erupt from, contribute to, and really define this space of relational sense-making. This project format presents challenges in terms of traditional academic publication and artistic presentation, but, as it has come to propel our interdisciplinary work towards distinct structures of being and doing, it may, perhaps, be considered one candidate for an aesthetics that inform practices of relational being and unfold distinct ethics of co-creation.

Lise Amy Hansen & Janne-Camilla Lyster (Oslo School of Architecture and Design Oslo National Academy of the Arts)

Sensate and sensed – configuring conditions for a relational movement potential

A perceived potential of how one may move can be altered and augmented by prefiguring and materialising conditions, such as poetry, scores and visuals. Nöe points to perception as enactive in acknowledging the sensate body in a 'skilful mastery of sensimotor dependencies' (Nöe 2004: 231). Gallagher expand on this approach as 'the body sets the stage for action [...] your body is already acting "before you know it"'. (2006: 237). And this expansion hints towards an articulation of the role of aesthetic perception (e.g. Gower & Gallagher 2013) as a critical practice that may play out in a unique instantiation – of performed, relational movements as they emerge.

Our approach to creating a movement potential, focuses on initiating a kinaesthetic

imagination (Coessens 2012), as there is a possibility to shift and shape how one can build this perceived movement potential. We propose that this is essential to strengthen a critical view on the ethical aspects in this potential, and we explore the conditions for how a sensory configuration in making a performance, may take place. Our work also acknowledges that to initiate movement require 'a type of cognition anchored in the body' (Ribeiro & Fonseca, 2011: 72). We see this with the acknowledgement that movement is a continuously recursive element, as movement is in itself imaginative, conceptual, and metaphorical (Farnell 2012).

In our project, we foreground the experience of how movement is created as prefigured and configured, including our proprioception or kinaesthetic sense that is conditioned through experience (Noland 2009). We will show two cases whereby this practice is explored as a transfer of conditions in part by making available what is performed, in order to explore the relational and ethical constrictions and capacities.

Session: Situatedness, Entanglement & Relationality

Elena Romagnoli (University of Pisa)

Situatedness and Responsibility. A Hermeneutical Perspective for Aesthetic Sustainability

My presentation will highlight the connection between the notion of situatedness as developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer and aesthetic sustainability, in line with Reetta Toivanen (2021) and Lehtinen (2020). Although very promising, the contribution of Gadamer's hermeneutics is little explored in this field of studies.

First, I will elucidate Gadamer's definition of situatedness, summarized as the fact that every human experience can only happen in a specific spatial-temporal context. Contrary to cognitivism, this does not constitute a limit, being rather a productive element. Every human experience is situated inside a web of relations. The notion of situatedness relates to historicity, thereby countering the naive idea of reconstructing past landscapes without considering their history.

I will then highlight how situatedness helps to elicit responsibility towards landscapes. Differently from conceiving the latter as an object of contemplation that we perceive as

distant and separate (and perhaps as the preserve of a few holders of specialized scientific knowledge), the hermeneutical perspective conceives landscapes as something in which we are all situated and which influences our way of being, in line with Berleant's elaboration of the aesthetics of engagement (Berleant 1991) and Saito's definition of "situational aesthetics" (Saito 2017).

A concrete example can be found in mass tourism and attempts at making it sustainable, e.g., the case of "the pink beach" in the Maddalena Archipelago in Sardinia which was at risk of disappearing because tourists kept on removing sand (appropriative behavior) and is now only accessible for contemplation from a boat (contemplative behavior). In this case, both models, the unsustainable and the – apparently – more sustainable, are consequences of the same dualistic conception of the landscapes. Trying to propose a third way, situatedness remind us of our responsibility towards the places we visit, against appropriation, but also against musealization and contemplative approaches, which fail to understand the historicity of landscapes, attempting at recreating untouched territories.

Filip Senk

Entanglement in the World

A popular thinking tool for navigating complex situations is the use of dualisms. They can help to manage chaos and ambiguity, thereby streamlining difficult decision-making. The works on display support various popular dualisms, suggesting that reality can best be understood by reducing it to opposing principles: surface–space, place–space, subject–object or inside–outside.

Drawing on the works of Pierre Francastel, Rosalind Krauss, Edward Casey and Hal Foster I will focus on the polarity of image and space in relation to the understanding of human situatedness. The image is an object in real space with a specific surface of this object that simultaneously serves as a gateway to an illusory, solely visual space. This distinction gives rise to two forms of space: real and illusory, which we could also call pictorial. The second target dualism, appropriately grounded in the field of architecture, is the relationship between place and space. Here, the situation is similarly legible: Place is defined by the boundary that defines it, while space can be understood as the opposite

of the presence of a boundary. Space is defined by the absence of a boundary.

Within the confines of the artistic sphere, the relationship between subject and object in the work of the minimalists is deliberately questioned by emphasising the phenomenological reflection of the viewer's position. It fulfils the artists' ambition to transcend the naïve idea that a person, when understanding the world, is an unburdened, neutral observer and, furthermore, that this unburdened perspective stems from a privileged position. The rigid opposition of subject and object is challenged by the subject's situatedness among objects. Through the form thinking of art works by Anthony McCall and Jaromír Novotný I will show how our unavoidable situatedness in the world can be revealed.

Axel Rudolphi (Uppsala University)

Triangulating Aesthetic Relationality: Aesthetic Autonomy and Arendtian Disinterestedness

How do we best make sense of the relational structure that undergirds aesthetic judgment?

According to a prevalent understanding within contemporary post-Kantian discussions on aesthetic judgment, 'aesthetic autonomy' refers to the idea that aesthetic judgments must be grounded solely in the subject's first-hand experience with the object of judgment and without any external influence from e.g. the aesthetic testimony or opinions of others. This principle is often paired with the Kantian qualification that aesthetic judgments must be 'disinterested' in order to claim validity outside the ambit of the individual subject making the judgment. Common to these contemporary interpretations of aesthetic autonomy and disinterestedness is that they presume a single-sided relation between a self-sufficient judging subject and an object.

Against this single-sided relational view on aesthetic judgment, this paper argues for a relational view on aesthetic judgment as based on the idea of triangulation between object, self, and other. Triangulation arguments have been defended by philosophers like Donald Davidson (1982, 1992) and Jeff Malpas (2018) mainly within the spheres of ontology and epistemology, but its application to aesthetics has remained scarce. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's (1961, 1982) critical interpretation of Kant's notions of

aesthetic disinterestedness and common sense in a political register, the paper argues that the idea of triangulation is well suited to the aesthetic domain of the post-Kantian tradition, and that the triangulation view better accommodates previous intuitions about aesthetic autonomy without reducing aesthetic judgment to the sort of single-sided relational view that this has been taken to entail. Moreover, following Arendt in focusing judgment toward the things and events that make up our shared world, rather than on some universally shared cognitive make-up, triangulation is argued to better ground the political aspects of aesthetic judgment. Implications for the framework known as 'relational aesthetics' are, finally, considered.

Max Ryyänen

Aesthetics of Martial Arts: A Disciplinary Proposal

What should an aesthetics of martial arts include? First of all, many martial arts have turned into arts / aesthetic culture through the need to hide them for political reason (e.g. occupation, which is unfavorable towards local martial practices). E.g. capoeira is a famous example of a martial art, which has become dominantly dance. Secondly, the practice of martial arts has included the practice of arts, and/or one martial art has even been discussed as a proponent for becoming a member of the family of arts. The Samurai, especially during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868), included painting and poetry into their practice, and they were seen as analogous practices (already by e.g. Miyamoto Musashi, the famous martial art philosopher from the 16th century). Sumo was discussed as a possible Japanese addition to the art system in 19th century Japan, but later on thought to not really fit it. Thirdly, martial arts are aesthetically pleasing to look at – at least often. Tai chi in the park or someone doing a karate kata is considered by many to be pleasant. The fourth perspective is that somaesthetically moving in martial arts is a sort of aesthetic pleasure, which stems from many backgrounds, e.g. heritage thinking (many martial arts are really old), an understanding of how the movement looks, and maybe even the feeling of being thrown around by someone. The fifth perspective is the cultural aesthetization of martial arts including e.g. films, which have choreographed martial arts for our visual pleasure. In my talk I will try to give an overview of the needs and potentials of building a sub-discipline of martial arts

aesthetics.

Session: Epiphany & Beauty

Teresa Schillaci (University of Pisa/University of Florence)

The Concept of Epiphany by Roman Ingarden: a Bridge Between Aesthetics and Ethics

Roman Ingarden (1893-1970) is one of the most prominent representatives of early phenomenology within the context of the Husserlian tradition. Regarding aesthetics, his name is mainly associated either with the rigorous multilayered structure of the literary work of art (Ingarden 1931), or with the active role of the receiver which had a massive influence both on literary theory (Iser 1976) and philosophy (Ricoeur 1988, Thomasson 1999). According to Ingardenian views, the receiver plays a crucial role in shaping the work of art, which couldn't be complete without external appreciation. The work of art represents, therefore, a peculiar entity because it is filled with spots of indeterminacy. The receiver completes (concretizes) the work by transforming it into the object of an aesthetic experience. My paper aims at showing that Ingarden's account instead of supporting the psychologism, defends realism, and it extends the latter to the realm of values. Furthermore, he builds a bridge among gnoseology, aesthetics, and ethics, by using the concept of metaphysical qualities (Ingarden 1931). The distinctive trait of works of art is the epiphany (Offenbarung) of metaphysical qualities, namely peculiar entities revealed as an atmosphere which, «hovering over the men and the things contained in these situations, penetrates and illumines everything with its light» (Ingarden 1931). Even though the atmosphere is produced by the work of art, the receiver is not merely a passive participant in the game. In my essay, I will elucidate the concept of the epiphany. Besides I will propose a comparison between phenomenological account of aesthetics and the poetics of epiphany by Italian poet Eugenio Montale (1896-1981). In my essay, I will show that Montale poems serve as a brilliant example of works evoking metaphysical qualities, in support of Ingarden's theory.

Panos Paris (Cardiff University)

Beauty and Pleasure: Internalising Ends, Experiencing Values

That beauty pleases is perhaps the most widely agreed upon claim about it. But what is the source of pleasure in the beautiful? In this paper, I offer an answer to this question using a specific species of beauty--functional beauty--as my case study.¹ I thereby hope to illuminate beauty's link to pleasure more generally, and, through it, its link to other values.

I take Paris' (2020) arguments against Parsons and Carlson's (2008) construal of functional beauty as my starting point. According to Paris, understood simply as looking fit for function, or even wellformedness for function, functional beauty faces serious counterexamples: objects exquisitely well-formed for their function--e.g., certain torture instruments, sanitary products, toilets, or pornography--that are evidently far from beautiful insofar as they fail to please in the relevant way. To avoid such counterexamples, Paris revises functional beauty as consisting in *pleasing* wellformedness for function.

Yet this seems to hedge an important question: why do some instances of wellformedness for function fail to elicit pleasure? The obvious answer may seem to be that the examples offered above are either immoral, indifferent, or otherwise non-valuable objects. But this, I argue, is one key step too quick.

Instead, drawing on feminist accounts of oppression, I argue that the source of pleasure in functional beauty stems from an alignment between an object's ends and what I call appreciators' internalised ends. This account points to an ineliminably relational dimension of beauty, which, in turn, elucidates the inextricability link between experiences of beauty and other values.

Bente Larsen (Oslo University)

"Das Naturschöne. On modernism and Landscape".

Focus in my presentation shall be the relation between the esthetics, landscape and nature.

It is an approach based on a differentiation between nature and landscape. A point of

departure will be Adorno's concept of "Das Naturschöne", implying non-identity: "The beautiful in nature is the residue of non-identity in things, in an age when they are otherwise spellbound by universal identity." (AT 108) This concept of non-identity is important in the understanding of nature in a world where modern capitalist way of production has degraded nature into a material useful for the formative powers laid on it. This instrumentality in our relation to nature also permeates the fact that it is only in leisure that we experience the landscape aesthetically, an experience that presupposes the human mastery of nature as landscape.

In my approach the differentiation, formulated by both Hegel and Adorno, of natural beauty and beauty in art, shall be in focus, opening up aesthetics as way to approach the concept of 'natural beauty.' It is a reflection that pertains that: "Pure expression in art works ... converges with nature, just as in the most authentic works of Aton Webern the pure sound...turns into its opposite: the sound of nature...While nature's language is mute, art tries to make this muteness speak."(AT 115, ÄT 221) And muteness as an aesthetic expressions of 'natural beauty' shall be in focus of my talk, approached through works by Vilhelm Hammershøi and Gustav Courbet.

Edit

Karlson

Non-aesthetic Uses of Aesthetic Language

Many philosophers argue that aesthetic value can both influence and be influenced by other values such as moral, political, and environmental values, a perspective known as interactionism. However, acknowledging that aesthetic value can be significantly affected by other kinds of values raises concerns about the distinct nature of aesthetic judgment. If aesthetic value is heavily influenced by environmental value, for example, the ensuing judgments might not be purely aesthetic but, rather, compromised with regard to its unique aesthetic character.

This issue extends to aesthetic language and discourse. In contemporary society, aesthetic language is often used to support and enhance environmental values. It is e.g., common to advocate the preservation of natural environments by highlighting their aesthetic qualities. Yet, if aesthetic expressions and terms are employed to reinforce non-aesthetic values, the inherent aesthetic nature of these terms may be undermined. Can we maintain aesthetic discourse in environmental discourse without reducing it to the

environmental?

In this paper, I propose a solution that distinguishes between the uses of aesthetic language and the meanings of aesthetic terms. By “uses,” I refer to the pragmatic content a speaker intends the audience to grasp, which is not necessarily literally stated. This content is influenced by the speaker’s aims, contextual features, implied information, and elements such as tone and gestures. By “meanings,” I refer to the literal meanings of aesthetic terms, understood universally and context-independently, by competent speakers of the language. This distinction allows for separating the specific, context-dependent uses in discourse from the general, context-independent meanings of the terms involved. By adhering to widely accepted principles concerning the pragmatics of language and minimalist semantics, aesthetic discourse with non-aesthetic aims does not, then, undermine the inherently aesthetic nature of aesthetic judgments. This approach offers a new perspective on how aesthetics can interact with other evaluative spheres while preserving the distinctness of aesthetic judgments and values.

Keywords: aesthetic discourse, environmental value, pragmatics, semantics

Session: Virtue Aesthetics & Care

Nicole Hall (Institut d’Optique Graduate school)

Nature, aesthetics and consciousness

The aim of this paper is to examine relationality between ‘nature’ and ‘consciousness’, the aesthetic value of consciousness as it pertains to aesthetic judgements of natural environments, and to investigate their role in the cultivation of environmental virtue aesthetics.

The urgency of environmental problems calls upon us to carefully consider an appreciative model of natural environments that is respectful of natural entities without delegitimizing natural aesthetic value, in its positive and negative manifestations, as one of the great goods of human experience, consciousness, and existence.

I begin by providing some conceptual clarifications, for example, of ‘value’, ‘nature’, ‘environment’, and ‘ecology’. I follow with a brief discussion of recent approaches, particularly those that argue (i) for positive aesthetics (Carlson and Parsons) and (ii) for

nature's intrinsic value (Callicott). In this presentation, I will focus on (iii) arguments against an idealized concept of 'nature' (Descola and Latour).

Contra these positions, which I argue minimize natural aesthetic value and its role in human consciousness (and therefore human intentionality and action), I maintain that conscious experience is aesthetically valuable insofar as conscious aesthetic experience and appreciation of nature is emmeshed with moral and epistemic considerations.

These considerations pertain to (a) the natural entities experienced (including natural environments that span the globe and skies in all their diversity, rather than primarily focusing on 'pristine', 'othered', or 'wild' nature) and (b) the human consciousness experiencing it (making space for all manner of cultural, imaginative, rich, and creative approaches, not just scientific ones).

The aesthetic value of consciousness lies in this experiential propensity of diversity and cultural richness, but also its cognitive capacity for weighing up epistemic and moral value that draws on both culture and science through the cultivation of aesthetic virtues.

Remy Martin & Nanette Nielsen

Affective framing, care, and (en)action in musical encounters

What do we care for in aesthetic encounters? The affective vitality of musical experience is a result of rich, cross-sensory interactions and varied participatory practices. The complexity of such aesthetic entanglements has recently led musicologists, philosophers, and psychologists to argue for an embodied-enactive view that emphasises vital perceptual and affective interactions and relations.

In this paper we explore the affective allure of musical affordances: the affective resonances that define musical experience. Our analysis is inspired by and complements recent philosophical and empirically oriented studies of affect-action dynamics (Rietveld, 2008; Rietveld & Kiverstein, 2014; Krueger and Colombetti, 2018; Martin & Nielsen, in press) but pays particular attention to Michelle Maiese's rich notion of 'affective framing' (2014). This concerns the ways perceivers engage with and appraise their surrounds through bodily feeling and, of primary interest here, 'feelings of caring'. Maiese posits that bodily attunement is a core component of care, that feelings of caring

define the very way in which the world shows up to perceivers, and that care—a sense of what matters—shapes possibilities for thought and action.

These points seem especially relevant to thinking about musical consciousness and ethics. To show how, we offer a novel consideration of care and the relational subject (Phillips-Hutton & Nielsen, 2020) in three musical contexts. The first focuses on shared subjectivity, shared time, and embodied interaction in 'media encounters' with film music. Next we turn to 'live encounters', interpreting audience motion data and reports on affective experience collected at the 2021 MusicLab Copenhagen with the Danish String Quartet research concert. Finally, we examine selfluminous (everyday) 'listening encounters' probed in recently conducted phenomenological interviews. Along the way, potential—and potentiating—aesthetic resonances are discussed in relation to ethical consequences, clarifying how music can make us care.

Mateusz Salwa (University of Warsaw)

Virtue aesthetics without objectivism

One way of linking aesthetics with ethics is to promote what has been termed 'virtue aesthetics' (Snow, Hall&Brady). It can be seen as moving beyond the traditional boundaries of aesthetics, which can be accused of being "judgmental" (Böhme), i.e. focused on issues related to judgments of taste. Consequently, "non-judgmental" aesthetics should focus more on aesthetic, i.e. sensory experience. Virtue aesthetics can then be associated with "the cultivation of aesthetic sensibilities, including perceptual discrimination, imagination, and emotion; sympathetic attention; care, respect, and the exercise of virtues appropriate to the aesthetic mode of attention" (Hall&Brady). The premise behind the idea of virtue aesthetics, as well as "appreciative virtues" (Brady), is that it is possible to comprehend and appreciate things "on their own terms" (Saito), even if it requires certain skills and even proficiency. Given that such an objectivist stance has been widely debated, it is worth asking whether it is possible to propose an aesthetics of virtue without making the above assumption.

The aim of my talk will be to answer this question in the affirmative, by suggesting that aesthetic virtue may lie in adopting an approach that, on the contrary, recognises the inadequacy of our aesthetic categories and concepts, as well as the resistance of objects and their surplus to our attempts to value them. My argument will be based on a new

materialism or object-oriented ontology.

To illustrate my argument, I will briefly discuss gardening as a practice associated with both aesthetics and environmental virtues (di Paola). Understood less as cultivating the soil and nature than as negotiating relations with the latter, gardening is also a good example of how virtue aesthetics can be practiced without relying on objectivist assumptions. It also inevitably shows the limitations of virtue aesthetics.

Karl Axelsson (Södertörn University)

Environmental Virtue Aesthetics and Shaftesbury's Virtue Ethics

Emily Brady and Nicole Hall have recently introduced the theory of Environmental Virtue Aesthetics (EVA) as a model for the relationship between aesthetics and ethics in a time marked by environmental crises. EVA abandons the focus on the intrinsic value of nature and instead invokes Environmental Virtue Ethics (EVE), which is the part of environmental ethics that is concerned with the evaluation of character. I find EVA's avoidance of the intrinsic value of nature problematic. In this paper I show that EVA neither can, nor should, eschew it. I proceed in two steps. First, by drawing on the neglected virtue ethics of the third Earl of Shaftesbury, I show that EVA's focus on virtues of character is not incompatible with a strong emphasis on the intrinsic value of nature. Second, while debunking some of the current readings of Shaftesbury's primary aesthetic principle, namely the virtue of disinterestedness, I provide EVA with its first historical anchoring in Shaftesbury's understudied corpus. The overall aim of this paper is not to question the relevance of EVA, but rather to supplement it and to expand its historical sinews.

Panel: The educational value of aesthetics and the arts

In this joint panel, academics, teachers, and artists from Iceland University of the Arts and the National Gallery of Iceland will invite participants to take part in a workshop that consists of short theoretical presentations and a hands-on investigation of specifically chosen artworks from the collection of the National Gallery aiming for an exploration of the broad educational value of aesthetics and the arts through visual literacy.

The National Gallery of Iceland has developed training material in visual literacy that uses methods of critical thinking through specific questions to raise awareness in the audience of the aesthetic elements of artworks, content, meaning and context. The method involves slowing down the thought processes, allowing for deeper perception, deliberation, and democratic discussions, leading to a better understanding of art and a richer appreciation of artworks. This approach is efficient for integrative learning, allowing for conversations about pressing contemporary issues, e.g. ethics, nature and environment, politics, and society. The artworks used in the workshop are chosen accordingly.

Ingimar Ólafsson Waage (Iceland University of the Arts)

Virtue literacy through visual literacy

The current emphasis on flourishing as the aim of education suggests the need for more holistic educational practices regarding materials and methods. Research results imply that the arts have a significant role in this respect, mainly through their insights into human life and experiences. This emphasises the well-known role of the arts in transforming consciousness and the undisputed importance of sense perception for developing knowledge. The educational value of the arts is based on cultivating human faculties through exposure to artworks and active participation in collective deliberation about them. The arts also allow for the transformation of the personal into the universal and social, allowing us to imagine unfamiliar experiences and unknown objects.

While theoretical underpinnings regarding the value of the arts in this respect are solid, there is a dire need to develop further methods and opportunities to reach a larger audience, whether within general education or the museum sector. This could be met through training in visual literacy to develop sensory processes and connect them to thought processes and active interaction with other people.

In this panel presentation, I will discuss how artworks can provide insights into the potential of the arts for moral deliberation. The artworks discussed in this panel generated reflections on various issues, ranging from general social justice threatened by civil wars, racism, misogyny, and poverty to moral virtues such as courage, compassion, and empathy and to emotional responses where pupil related what they saw in artworks

to their personal experiences in life and challenges.

Ragnheiður Vignisdóttir (National Gallery of Iceland)

“What do you see?”: The museum educator brings artworks to life

The role of museum educators is multifaceted. For the past years, the educational department at the National Gallery of Iceland has been fostering cultural and visual literacy in a unique program for school groups called *Power of Vision* (is. Sjónarafl). The project is based on theories and international research, many of which are well-known, such as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), Project Zero, and *Thinking Museum*.

In the project *Power of Vision*, one hour is reserved for discussions about two artworks, one at a time. Therefore, the time in front of each artwork is relatively long compared to a traditional guided tour at a museum. Critical thinking and exchanging points of view are things that are taught throughout the project. Artworks from the museum’s collection are explicitly chosen, and often, they evolve around nature and each group’s shared experiences. Within the artworks, the thought of nature comes alive, sometimes inviting viewers into a realm of serenity or, on the opposite, bringing their minds to somewhere dangerous or exciting. Expressing and acknowledging feelings is part of the project. The project has been ongoing for quite some time now, and hundreds of conversations have been made where different opinions meet in a dialogue. When looking at an artwork, viewers’ life experiences may shape their feelings towards the art. Therefore, diverse thoughts always come alive when methods of visual literacy are used in museum education.

In the *Power of Vision* project, the educators use specific questions to bring viewers closer to the artwork. These questions all have a defined purpose of seeking information, encouraging critical thinking, and prompting discussion, always relevant to the context of the artwork. The first question, though, is always: *What do you see?* With this method, the aim is to promote understanding and engagement with art, museums, and culture, but last but not least, foster a sense of connection to the world and nature, interpret and respond to environmental themes, and awareness of our relationship with the nature and advocacy for a sustainable future.

Marta María Jónsdóttir (National Gallery of Iceland)

“Having a home”: Insights into a session in the museum

In response to dwindling visual literacy and general understanding of the arts, the National Gallery of Iceland has developed a robust visual literacy program and online educational resource, *Sjónarafl (The Power of Seeing)*, which covers twenty-six artworks paired in thirteen chapters. Each work is accompanied by text that places the work in a historical context and provides different perspectives from which to view it. Suggestions for further discussion also accompany each work. They have been divided into four categories: (1) Society, (2) Nature, (3) Reflections (4) Colours and shapes. This is intended to open further conversations about the works, placing them in different contexts.

During a visit to the museum, the educators encourage participants to articulate their thoughts while looking and expressing their feelings and ideas. What comes to each mind varies, and listening to and respecting other’s opinions is essential. Diverse artworks raise different questions and thoughts. Landscape paintings spur questions about beauty or the sublime, while other artworks bring up equality or loneliness. Some works evoke inward thoughts, while others make you think about others. What we feel is personal, but our experiences are often shared.

Artwork can evoke feelings or give insight into the past. However, the conversation often leads to unexpected directions. The painting *Sumarnótt* by Gunnlaugur Scheving might initially prompt questions about Icelandic summer nights, life in the countryside, why the mother and child are outside at night, and why the cow in the picture is big. In one session about the painting, a group of young students went from discussing bright colours and precise forms to discussing the outfits of the mother and child. Suddenly, all the focus went on the mother’s scarf she had wrapped around her head. The scarf reminded one of the students of refugees, and from then on, the conversation led to the importance of having a home.

Session: Artificial Intelligence

Jean Lin (University of Tsukuba, Japan)

The Aesthetics of Attribution: Comparing AI Art and Cultural Appropriation

By indicating the parallel structure between AI art and cultural appropriation, this presentation offers a unique theoretical framework, 'the aesthetics of attribution,' helpful in analyzing various phenomena involving authenticity, morality, and bias.

Combining properties of multiple categories has been a common method that artists relied on to achieve innovation, especially prominent in postmodern art. However, this method tends to accompany some 'side effects.' Based on the discourse of cultural appropriation, the first part of the presentation points out that such practice could lead to 1) the excessive influence of the artist's title on the aesthetic value of an artwork, 2) the issues of authenticity and morality in relation to how the appropriated properties are being handled, and 3) the difficulty in evaluating the artwork due to its ambiguous attribution to a category.

Such problems apply to AI art, which also combines properties across categories to achieve innovation. The second part of the presentation applies the problems (1)-(3) mentioned above to consider issues in AI art. (1) There is a view that 'AI art must be inferior to human art.' Even if the difference between the two is not observable, the value of AI art may be perceived to be lower as soon as one learns that the artwork is created by AI. (2) Based on the idea that 'only humans can create art,' there is an opinion that 'AI works are inauthentic as art.' In addition, since the copyright of the images used by AI is not legally protected, there are also moral concerns. (3) Since some AI image generators specialize in creating 'ambiguity' in style, the work's ambiguous attribution to a category may induce confusion when one tries to evaluate the work. There is also a debate over whether AI works should be assessed in existing art categories.

Gioia Laura Iannilli (University of Bologna)

AI and Aesthetics Beyond the Arts: the AIsthetics Project

As the literature on the relationship between AI and aesthetics from the standpoint of art and creativity is increasingly growing (Manovich & Arielli 2021-24; Navas 2023; Samo & Highhouse 2023, Aesthetics for Birds 2023, etc.), the question of the relationship between AI and aesthetics as an academic, philosophical discipline hasn't been taken into consideration extensively.

In this paper, I will first claim that the relationship between AI and aesthetics should be tackled from different standpoints, and not the artistic one alone. One of them is the

standpoint of everydayness, since AI's impact on our aesthetic everyday lives – namely on the ways we perceive and express our relationship to the world as mediated by AI – is undeniable. For instance, we consume, communicate, choose experiences and things, or develop a taste in ways that often are at least partly informed by it.

Moreover, we need a standpoint concerned with the future of aesthetics as something which is taught, researched, learned and written at universities. I will focus on this aspect by presenting some of the core issues of a project currently being carried out by Bologna University and Aalto University, the "AIsthetics" Project, in which both aestheticians and philosophy students interact with ChatGPT (and possibly with other AIs). Students will test the abilities of ChatGPT in aesthetics: how can it address concepts, topics, argumentation styles, etc. of aesthetics? One of the project's main aims is to test how the AI responds to aesthetics' traditional, human-made knowledge, and if and how it is possible to still develop a critical sense for the tool while using it and not exclude it from the field.

Beatriz de Almeida Rodrigues

Is AI art created by AI?

The development of generative artificial intelligence in recent years has raised concerns regarding the status and authorship of AI-generated art. Although there is a growing acceptance of AI art as a legitimate kind of art, empirical research suggests that people resist recognizing AI as an artist even when they recognize its outputs as art. In this paper, I aim to consolidate the philosophical foundations of these intuitions, arguing that we can coherently recognize AI art as art without recognizing AI as the artist by attributing the authorship of the work to the human agents involved in the process of artistic creation. The question "can AI create art?" should thus be understood, in more precise terms, as "is AI art created by AI?". In response to this question, I further argue that, although the status of AI as an artist and author is hindered by its limited agency, there are reasons to conceive of a weak and dissymmetric form of collaboration between AI and humans in the creation of AI art.

In the first part of the paper, I examine whether AI-generated objects can qualify as art based on contemporary theories of art, concluding that this only poses a problem for theories that refer to the author's intentions (or other mental states), such as Levinson's intentional-historical definition of art. In the second part, I explain the resistance or refusal to recognize AI as an artist based on the latter's lack of autonomy, especially the autonomy to define its own goals, and lack of responsibility over the finished object. Finally, I address some of the persisting difficulties in settling the authorship of AI-

generated art, such as the relative autonomy of AI and the uncertainty regarding the individual responsibility of the human agents involved.

Session: Entanglement

Anette Vandsøf (Aarhus University)

Panel: Hidden plant stories.

Enriched aesthetics: excavating the hidden plant stories.

When Anna Tsing suggests an ‘art of noticing’ with a reference to the avantgarde coryphaei John Cage (1912-1992) it is to counter the logic of extractivism, the plantational strategy of monoculture and allow for us to discover the more-than-human entanglements. This plays well with Yuriko Saito’s everyday aesthetics that aims to enhance our sensibility for the mondain objects that, in contrast to their exotic others, have little aesthetic benefit and thus are less cared for. The strive to cultivate other modes of attention that might lead us to discover, and appreciate, the overlooked, has in both theoretical settings, ethical and political implications, due to what we might with Rancière call the a ‘re-distribution’ of the sensible, and in both cases a fundamental understanding of interspecies interdependence serves as an epistemological framework in line with Natasha Myers’ (2016) idea of the ‘planthropocene’. I want to argue that these critiques have certain similarities with the avantgarde critique of the modernistic idea of autonomy and the sanctuary of the sphere of art. Both respond to a logic of autonomy the object, by re-locating the and situating it in the actual social space. There are also differences. As the contemporary perspective situates its object in an environmental more-than-human material context that exceeds the social space explored by the avantgardes. I want to suggest that this development leads to a new regime of aesthetics; an enriched or thick aesthetics of our contemporary condition, where the entanglement between subject and object in both a material, social and narrative sense is part of the aesthetic experience of the object. I will conclude by demonstrating how such an idea of an *enriched aesthetics* informs our current research project *Hidden plant stories*.

Pernille Leth-Espensen (Aarhus University)

Panel: Hidden plant stories.

The Aesthetics and Politics of Houseplants

In our homes, houseplants are detached from their place of origin and environment, and their histories and travel patterns are invisible. Instead, they have been transplanted into a domestic milieu. Houseplants entered Danish homes mainly from the 1820s onwards and were thus also depicted in interior paintings. Houseplants were imported from tropical and subtropical areas, often former colonies, and were part of a global plant exchange. Could unfolding the hidden stories of houseplants provide us with new enriched perspectives on our own houseplants today? This paper wishes to unfold some of the hidden histories of houseplants by looking at 19th century art. How were houseplants and colonial history connected? How did plants mediate gender and class relations, and how were relations between care and power negotiated?

Sarah Kolb (University of Arts Linz)

Making Kin with/through Fungi. Sensing, Sharing and Caring in Entangled Environments

In view of the pressing problems of climate change, global migration movements and the entire range of other alarming consequences of capitalism, Anna L. Tsing's 2015 book *The Mushroom at the End of the World* hits the nerve of our times. Given the many dystopian future scenarios of the present, Tsing offers a quite optimistic perspective on the possibilities of living within the "ruins of capitalism." Against the "grand narratives" of Enlightenment, in which Nature was to provide nothing more than a passive and mechanical "backdrop and resource for the moral intentionality of Man," Tsing sets out on the trail of the Matsutake mushroom to uncover ways of overcoming the traditional separation of Man and Nature in terms of an egalitarian coexistence of different species. Drawing on Tsing's approach, this paper develops a proposal for a pedagogy of the future that, beyond the well-known concepts of Flora and Fauna, also uses the fundamentally different world of Funga as a model for the conception of alternative futures. Whereas the models of Flora and Fauna long taught us to think and act according to a logic of hierarchical family trees and competing individuals that follow

one-dimensional lines of progress, the world of Funga with its widely ramified subterranean networks and strategies of symbiosis and interdependence might also be considered as a model for development and learning. Fungi are masters of collaboration and can easily adapt to new situations by developing highly flexible exchange strategies and forms of coexistence. Along the theoretical approaches of Anna Tsing, Roger Caillois, Jacques Rancière, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Yasmine Ostendorf-Rodríguez, the paper provides a multisensory approach to the relational sense-making of fungi the starting point for learning concepts that are based on forms of collaboration, sharing and caring.

Session: Heritage and Conservation

Åsa Arketeg (Södertörn University)

Artistic Practice as Affect and Care in The Natural World Heritage of The High Coast

This paper will discuss how art and aesthetics can bring new perspectives to the meaning of “outstanding universal value” in relation to the natural world heritage of the High Coast (The Baltic Sea region, Sweden), with the intention to contribute to research concerning the relation between aesthetics, art, environment and natural world heritages.

The date for the inscription of the High Coast as a natural world heritage was 2000 (the Kvarken Archipelago, Finland was added in 2006). The World Heritage Convention attributes the universal value of the High Coast/Kvarken Archipelago, as a natural world heritage, to the isostatic uplift and the on-going geological process. The universal aspect of value as it is problematized by Labadi (2015) will here be further explored in terms of “relationality” (Saito, 2022). In this context, the idea of relationality supports the argument that world heritage sites must be seen in relation to the environment (landscape) and materiality (including economy, tourism and so forth). The requirements for protection and management does not mention any threats apart from those that can have a negative effect on the geological process, however. Changes in the landscape caused by deforestation are thus not mentioned as a threat to the

preservation of the High Coast. This paper argues that these changes should be taken into consideration in a discussion about value, and that aesthetics and artistic practices can bring attention to these changes in the landscape. This paper will explore how affect and attention (Nielsen, 2023) can be used in a discussion about the art that relates to this region today, and I will argue that art can respond to the changes of the landscape through an “attitude of care regarding the world.” (Saito, 2022: 8).

Matti Tainio

The care of environments and the aesthetic indifference

The paper will deal with current norms, ideas and practices pertaining to the care of natural environments and their aesthetic consequences. The issue of the paper is the detachment of the aesthetic view and the prevalent inventory methods used in the surveys and analysis regarding the natural and ecological values of the environment.

When evaluating the impact of human activity on nature, quantitative measures define the natural and ecological values of the environment. This means that surveys and inventories of vegetation and animal species as well as the significant ecosystems are based on counting and identifying the species and significant characteristics of protected habitat types. The inventory forms a baseline for the norms and it is used to define the limits for the acceptable environmental damage, for instance noise, particles, erosion and other safety measures for protecting natural habitats.

This prevailing approach is aesthetically indifferent: the impact of human activity on the sensuous quality is not decisive. If the human activity does not cause a significant change to species or the amount of individual plants or animals, the conservation of the habitat is successful. The conservation appears de jure, despite the possible aesthetic damage to the environment.

In addition to the theoretical approach to the disconnection of aesthetics and nature conservation as well as the effect of human (aesthetic) preferences to other species, the paper analyzes real cases in which human activity occurs in nature conforming to the currently valid standards. Regularly, the aesthetic indifference is visible in the documents and the loss of aesthetic value becomes obvious after the activity is initiated. Often the aesthetic damage is permanent or requires an extended period to heal. This

prospect could be prevented by expanding the methods used in estimating the natural values.

Þorvarður Árnason (University of Iceland)

Wild2Wild: Inter-relational aesthetic value generation in settings natural, wild and free

Wilderness is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with long and contorted history, intellectual and otherwise. In his book, *Rethinking Wilderness* (2017), philosopher Mark Woods identifies seven main “anti-wilderness arguments” which, each in its own way, seek to “unground wilderness out of existence”. In conclusion he suggests that a new wilderness ethic can be developed, based on three core properties of the “other-than-human world”: naturalness, wildness and freedom. These properties are “symbiotic”, mutually nourishing. While I certainly do not disagree with this conclusion, I would still contend that aesthetic values – or rather their mode of generation in wilderness encounters – should have a more central role than Woods gives them credit for.

Wilderness in Iceland – especially within the Central Highland – provides a 'laboratory' of sorts to explore and work through these issues. An important aspect of this laboratory is its relative simplicity, both in terms of natural and historical socio-cultural conditions; the absence, by and large, of biotic life including human beings. This may prove conducive to a 'bare bones' approach, stripping away some of the problems that have arisen from wilderness conservation practices in other contexts, and thus providing a clearer look at what lies at the core of these highly contested efforts. From this starting point, a rehabilitation of wilderness might prove possible.

Of Wood's three “other-than-human” properties, “wildness” seems the one most difficult to connect to the human condition. It seems to stand for the opposition of nature to humanity (or vice-versa). An acknowledgement of the “otherness” (or “moreness”) of wild nature need not, however, force us into dualistic modes of thinking. The key lies in grounding aesthetics firmly within wilderness conservation, through close attention to the process-based inter-relationship of the wild in nature to the wild in human beings.

Session: Literature and the environment

Auður Aðalsteinsdóttir & Ole Martin Sandberg (University of Iceland)

Creative Responses: Environmental Crises and Aesthetics

We experience an increasing hopelessness about the state of our planet. However, environmental discourse that fights against destructive power systems seeps into fiction and art, often in experimental ways and with unexpected results. Literature, fiction and the arts are often presented as powerful and meaningful ways to deal with our new reality of climate change, species extinction and other ecological crises but at the same time the monstrosity of the problems we face is testing and challenging the boundaries of existing genres and aesthetics. Aesthetics are challenged in new ways, and recently posthuman emphases have moved us further towards interconnections, engagement and blurred boundaries. These themes are explored in a coming anthology, *Creative Responses: Environmental Crises and Aesthetics in Nordic Art and Literature*. This publication offers analyses of how climate change and other environmental crises affect contemporary aesthetics and the way Nordic literature and the arts contribute to the investigation of our new reality, offering both theoretical discussion of environmental aesthetics and ecocritical analyses of contemporary literature and art.

In this presentation one of the editors of *Creative Responses* will discuss emergent, ecocentric themes in Nordic art and literature in the light of theories on social ecosystems, complex, adaptive art systems, and art as a process of sustained differencing, and one of the contributors to the volume will discuss how issues in environmental crises and ethics are reflected in popular narrative media, in particular postapocalyptic fiction which is a medium that has the potential to grapple with new forms of ethics for a broken world while it can also either expand or constrain our imagination in ways that affect our ability to act towards a more sustainable future.

Judith Sarfati Lanter (Sorbonne University)

Representing future generations in contemporary literature : ethical and aesthetic issues

Günter Anders and Hans Jonas have revisited the question of future generations in the

light of the environmental crisis and the development of nuclear energy, which, along with the disasters that punctuated the twentieth century, have contributed to shattering the belief in progress and the benefits of technology. Taking account of the interests of future generations is a legal, ethical and political issue, which also affects the order of representation and, for this reason, also concerns the arts and literature. How do we imagine future generations when we are projecting ourselves into a sometimes very distant future? The issue of nuclear waste in particular, and the dangerous nature of radioactivity, is emblematic of the difficulty of projecting oneself into the long term and imagining the interests of these future generations on this timescale. I will look at how contemporary literature has been able to tackle this problem, which is both conceptual and aesthetic, by inventing new narrative forms - as in the case of writers like Chantal Spitz in the Polynesian context, Terry Tempest Williams on Nevada, or Michaël Ferrier on Fukushima. I will focus in particular on an analysis of a work by John D'Agata entitled *About a Mountain* (2010), a creative non-fiction that I will cross-reference with some contemporary legal reflections on the notion of 'future generations' - because literature is not the only field to be disrupted by environmental issues, and nuclear waste in particular: on the matter, law and literature are both valuable anthropological laboratories, but literature exemplifies the institutional power of imagination by its aesthetics exploration alone.

Christian Refsum (University of Oslo)

The Aesthetics of Friendship: Ali Smith's *Autumn*

Sharing aesthetic experiences is an important aspect of establishing and maintaining community and friendship. In this paper, I argue that several contemporary European novels explore the aesthetics of friendship and its potential political consequences. I shall take Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) as my case. The novel describes the development of an unlikely friendship with lifelong consequences between a little girl and her neighbor, an elderly man. I read the descriptions of this friendship as a critical reflection on how the arts can explore and inspire new or unusual friendship forms, inventing and reinventing friendship in a precarious situation.

I will focus on two ways in which the novel explores the aesthetics of friendship. First, the novel questions to which extent one can experience community through the

recognition of a particular way of *seeing*. Speaking about the pop artist Pauline Boty, the elderly man claims that: “it is possible [...] to be in love not with somebody but with their eyes. I mean, with how eyes that aren’t yours let you see where you are, who you are” (p. 160). Second, the novel experiments with rules for making up narratives in conversation. To *play collage* is in the novel a conversational technique based on the principle that neither of the participants can decide what is the correct or most relevant elaboration of a story, even when the story is based on a well-known fairy tale. Playing *collage* is a technique for facilitating a free and playful form of communication.

Aesthetics has from its beginning in the mid-18th century been concerned with the conditions for sharing sensual experiences but has rarely addressed friendship explicitly. The paper presents a case that can hopefully inspire a wider discussion on the aesthetics of friendship.

Workshop

Joe Dumit

Slowmenology: the aesthetics of neurodiverse togetherness in making and learning

A workshop on experiential learning and aesthetics with/from non-humans and then each other. Using ‘slowness’ as an experimental portal into the how of experience and reflection. The workshop engages a sense of how (radically) different others’ approaches to the world are, in a way that invites curiosity and wonder, in which everyone has so much to share/teach, and everyone’s neurodiversity (as mix of personal, cultural, and disciplinary) is opportunity to expand one’s own experience; and ways of experiencing the world come to be seen as relational (inter-being, generated through past interactions and learnings).

Session: Existence and Care

Alexandra Hayes

Saying No: A Path of Discipline, Beauty, and Care

In her recent paper, “Wisdom Regarding Beauty: Self-effacement and one’s right

relationship to beauty,” Alexandra Hayes argues that aesthetic life ought to be pursued in a self-forgetting way. Here I wish to expand on that view, arguing that the self-forgetting relationship to beauty not only does beauty justice as a value, but lays the proper foundation for our free and caring relationship to ourselves and to the world. The situation of the world is new, but the solution is not. I draw on the ancient traditions of ascetic practice to remind us of something that we have seemingly forgotten: saying no to ourselves is a way of caring for ourselves and loving the world. Popular conversation about self-care abounds because many of us feel individually over-stimulated, over-committed, and frankly, burnt-out. This is all taking place as many of us feel we are in the midst of a collective crisis. The two are related, at least in part, by our commodifying view of beauty. Instead of this, the care that is needed ought to be understood in the context of aesthetic virtue and discipline. Beauty becomes possible when the freedom to say no, and therefore yes, is present. The path to do just this is simultaneously simple and challenging. This paper will address a brief history of ascetic practices and how they relate to aesthetic value, but will also begin to explore practical ways that saying no might be implemented for our path forward to greater discipline, beauty, and care.

Steinunn Knúts Önnudóttir (Lund University)

How Little is Enough? A Quest for Existential Sustainability

Existential Sustainability is a term that has recently caught the attention of scholars across the academic field e.g. sociology, health, religion, arts, and design. The term concerns systematic care and innovative means to meet fundamental human needs. In the article the term is explored through the artistic research project, *How Little is Enough? Sustainable Methods of Performance for Transformative Encounters*, where existential sustainability transcends all layers of the project; on personal level, in the artistic method, and in both content and format of the artistic work. The article discusses how artistic experiences can be understood as human need and how the four performances of the project address existential sustainability. The film deals with the driving force of change and gives a personal account of what it means to be an artist striving to be existentially sustainable.

Max Liljefors (Lund University)

Art between Aesthetics and Medicine

The arts are increasingly used in healthcare to combat illness and promote health and wellbeing. A scoping evidence report from WHO (2019) gathers results from some 4 000 studies showing health effects from engagement in artistic and aesthetic activities, e.g., decreased need for medication and doctor's visits, reduction of pain and stress, faster recovery, and increased quality of life, across the lifespan. Research on art and health in the medical and health sciences has a methodological focus on randomized controlled trials (RCT:s), evidence, and predictability. How does this new growing body of knowledge about the arts relate to the knowledge represented by aesthetic philosophy?

In this paper, I address this question from two angles. First, I propose an understanding of the relation between aesthetics and care based on philosophers who see, as a core facet of aesthetics, a renewal and re-calibrating of a self-world relation, e.g., John Dewey, Iris Murdoch, Elaine Scarry, and Martin Seel.

Specifically, the paper juxtaposes philosophical ideas about 'unselfing' (Murdoch) and a 're-balancing of our trust and mistrust in the world' (Seel) in and through the aesthetic, with an empirical case study of how visual art is used in geriatric care at a Swedish hospital.

The paper is based on the research project Art Worlds Apart, funded by the Swedish Research Council 2022-2024. Secondly, I discuss possibilities and obstacles for an exchange of knowledge between the medical and health sciences and aesthetic philosophy, through non-hierarchical 'intermediary discourses'.(Rabeharisoa & Callon 2004) I address potential stumbling blocks for such discourses, such as the issue of instrumentalization of the arts, and differing criteria for truth value in the respective fields

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Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir & Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir

Aesthetics and methods of philosophical thinking

In this presentation we explore the notion that aesthetics is „first philosophy“ – that it is the source of all our knowledge, values and thinking, as Arnold Berleant amongst others has pointed out. In the research project Freedom to make sense: Embodied, experiential and mindful research our aim is to explore this source of knowledge and practice methods that allow us to work with this embodied source more directly than we are used to in what has become traditional academic research. As well as presenting the forthcoming publication of this project, titled Embodied Thinking in research and learning: a leap into practice, we will discuss how the important link between the methods of embodied thinking we have been practicing and various artistic methods from the different arts (such as somatic practices in dance, walking and sensing practices from visual art, listening practices from music ect.) can be understood and explored through the notion of aesthetics as first philosophy.

Morten Kyndrup (Aarhus University)

Aesthetics as Aesthetics? - The Autonomy Problem

All values are mixed values, we might state rephrasing W.J.T.Mitchell's famous remark about media. Concordantly, all experienced values take place in situations, in particular contexts and circumstances, and in practice they always exist along with or perhaps even embedded in other kinds of values. Aesthetic relations never stand alone. Nevertheless, aesthetic qualities are different from, say ethical and cognitive qualities, not only in terms of conceptual form and criteria of pertinence, but also when it comes to actual operational mode.

Ever since aesthetic quality was separated out as something particular in its Modern sense, conceptualized by Baumgarten and above all Immanuel Kant, the autonomy of the aesthetic has been under pressure of varying kinds. In the earliest days we saw Schiller's instrumental approach and G.F.W.Hegel's alignment of aesthetics with philosophy of art (as truth). Later in history countless efforts have been made to regarding aesthetic quality as per definition in the service of this and that, including the ethically good, the cognitively true, the politically desirable. "Truth" has remained a core value of continental aesthetics, "the speculative tradition" (Schaeffer). Recently, however, serious efforts also in the German tradition have been made to free aesthetics from "philosophische Majorisierung" (Rüdiger Bubner), and overall, from "Heteronomie" (Menke, Rebentisch et al.).

Re-installment of aesthetics' conceptual autonomy is one important step. But still, in practice aesthetic qualities are always entangled with other qualities. How should such real-life amalgamations of values be conceptualized, analyzed and (not least) produced to ensure the specific qualities of aesthetic dimensions and value to be adequately discerned, exposed and made effectual?

The paper will discuss this "autonomy-problem" with reference to aesthetic theory – and to contemporary examples.

Guy Damman (Uppsala University)

Criticism, crisis and aesthetics

Drawing on an etymological analysis of the concept of criticism, this paper aims to show how the ideas of criticism and crisis are analytically linked. The practice of criticism is at bottom, I argue, simply the perception of states of crisis.

In practical domains, this perception is typically joined with action. In other words, the practical point of apprehending a crisis is to try to deal with it. In aesthetic contexts, however, such action is typically suspended. Art criticism, that is to say, is concerned not with dissolving states of crisis but merely with apprehending them.

Why is this? A simple answer is that the objects of aesthetic criticism are by definition things which, often by design, require and retain our attention. Works of art, qua aesthetic objects, exercise a kind of demand on us to be looked at, listened to, or attended to. They command a kind of enduring gaze. In being dissolved, this demand is lost. Thus, to the extent that works of art endure, the practice of criticism appropriate to them is limited to mere perception, or to strategies which promote their apprehension as critical.

What this suggests is that our concepts of criticism and art are analytically bound up with each other. If criticism is conceived as the apprehension in art of its critical status, art may be perceived as a kind of demand for critical engagement. This contrasts with standard accounts of criticism in the philosophical literature (e.g. Carroll 2009, Grant 2013). Furthermore, our concepts of aesthetic experience and value can be understood in this light, where having aesthetic value, or meriting aesthetic experience, constitutes a state of being critical (see also Benjamin, 1935). Works of art, qua aesthetic objects, are in this sense critical to the culture which produces them.

Ole Martin Skilleås, Professor (University of Bergen, Norway)

Aesthetic Judgment: Expertise and Talent

In this presentation I shall discuss the importance of talent and practice in developing aesthetic judgment, with particular emphasis on music and musicality. All the way from

Hume's 'Of the Standard of Taste' and its emphasis on practice and comparison, the question of the existence or not of an aesthetic talent has gone largely unanswered.

The competence, expertise and, not least, normativity of critics is a highly contested matter, as we know. The variable aesthetic aptitude of performers however, from the school band to the celebrated performers on most prestigious stages in the world, is less controversial. Performers and artists are not generally considered as making aesthetic judgments though, but of course they do – both as instructors and as critics of their own work in progress. To make good judgments of music in these contexts they need musicality – a talent or skill that is assessable through the recent PROMS methodology (Law and Zentner 2012).

Psychologists such as Marcus (2012) and Winner and Drake (2018) have argued, with empirical evidence, that musicality is innate but that it requires a personality trait that Winner and Drake calls 'a rage to master.' I discuss to what degree these findings are valid, and if they are – to what degree (if any) they can be extrapolated to aesthetic fields other than music.

I shall conclude with an argument for the place of aesthetic talent within the aesthetic eco-system or network (Lopes 2018).

Session: Aesthetics and Politics

Marteinn Sindri Jónsson

Infrastructures of the Public Sphere: Fantastic Feminist Futures

This paper reports on the findings of my PhD where I study a range of politically and socially engaged curatorial practices in Germany in the contemporary moment. In virtue of the role of these practices beyond established institutions, their mandate for social change, and their collaborative, collective, or participatory essence, my work focuses on their roles as infrastructures of the public sphere. I will devote particular attention to the curatorial project Strandbad Tegeler See and its programme Fantastic Feminist Futures where I have been conducting field research since its foundation in 2021.

Situated on the intersection of political philosophy, art theory and curatorial studies my

research follows critical theorist Marina Vishmidt, who has suggested that infrastructure may replace the institution as the focus of artistic critique. I examine how socially engaged art is on the one hand invested in developing alternative artistic and cultural infrastructures to established institutions. However, insofar as the work of artists and curators aims for social or political change, I consider how such practices tend to change, subvert, or repurpose largescale socio-technological systems. This is evinced for instance by the repurposing of a public beach in Berlin as an intersectional feminist art space as well as the development of surveillance infrastructures to identify far-right supporters in Chemnitz in 2018 to or the efforts of rights to the city activists to infiltrate urban planning processes in Hamburg in recent years. However, as I will argue in my paper, the metaphorical valence of the term infrastructure is as important as its materiality. I understand this recognition to acknowledge the social reproduction and labor at the heart of socially engaged art, redirecting our attention away from socio-technical systems towards the time, energy, and skill invested by practitioners and publics alike in the projects of socially engaged art

Chris Dunn (University of Colorado)

Do Clouds Have Politics?

This paper will reflect on contemporary academic discourse concerning the relationship of nature and the political. The main question it will consider is the significance of aesthetic encounter with nature, specifically if and to what extent nature's display can be understood as providing a vantage or connection to something beyond human power relations. It will do so by drawing from some reflections in the philosophy of technology and environmental philosophy concerning the nature of the artifactual and the artifactuality of nature. The title itself is derived from Langdon Winner's essay *Do Artifacts Have Politics?* In considering this question, Winner undertakes an analysis of New York City underpasses and can be seen as a precursor to political ecology. This paper will thus consider the limits of a shared understanding within political ecology of nature as inherently and inseparably political. I will make a distinction between socially totalizing and socially transcendent views. In the socially totalizing view, natural beauty and the sublime are suspect and subsumed as yet another manifestation of oppression. The paper will incorporate phenomenological reflections and respond to certain key

philosophical texts such as Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*, Eric Katz's criticisms of ecological restoration, and long-standing relevant contemplations ranging from Thoreau to the Tao Te Ching. This topic is increasingly pertinent in an era of climate change and other global environmental crises.

Jonathan Maskit

The Politico-Aesthetic Imaginary and the Remaking of the World

Hans Jonas argued that one of the central characteristics of technological modernity is "restlessness." Technology, he argues, is driven by internal forces to ever new developments. Material objects, including built environments, thus become rapidly obsolete, leading to a cycle of construction, use, demolition, and replacement. The material world we inhabit is thus often in flux while seeming to have been built by forces that are foreign to us: the economy and technology. This world, as Steven Vogel argues, presents itself as foreign, that is, as alienated and alienating.

Aesthetically, our environment often presents itself to us as what James Gibson called affordances. It permits or encourages some ways of being and acting while forbidding or discouraging others: stairs afford vertical movement, walls generally do not. In this paper I think of affordances more broadly, seeing environments as affording "forms of life" (Wittgenstein) or "lifestyles" (Arne Naess). Lifestyles political or social determination is always only partial. They are also aesthetically determined, e.g., in the decoration of our surroundings and bodies, how we organize time and space, how we move, and in our approaches to food, entertainment, etc.

As we confront today's environmental problems, we face, politically, a choice between attempting to address those problems technically or doing so by changing how we live. This latter option, however, requires imagining a different environment that affords a different form of life. Since none of us individually can change our shared environment, this aesthetic project of imagining otherwise, in order to build and thus live otherwise, must also be political. It is in part our collective failure or unwillingness to imagine alternative forms of life that makes technical means appear as the only, or unreflectively preferred, solutions to our environmental problems.

Session: Everyday and Technology

Onerva Kiianlinna (University of Helsinki), Sanna Lehtinen (Aalto University)

Evolutionary Aesthetics of Technology: Adapting as an Everyday Process

Evolutionary aesthetics is not mainstream in philosophical study of aesthetics. Neither is technology a central topic of interest in philosophical aesthetics. On the quiet, both approaches have become relevant for understanding the aesthetic dimension of our contemporary surroundings. We argue that brought together under the broader frame of process philosophy, a synthesis of evolutionary aesthetics and aesthetics of technology sheds light on the issue of navigating the evolving and increasingly intertwined physical, virtual and hybrid environments.

Adapting to not only use but also to evaluate and assess new types of technologies is increasingly required to function in the contemporary world. This type of assessment relies on perceptual features. Making aesthetically informed choices, we lead our everyday lives, and failing to make meaning with a particular piece of technology colors the everyday equally. The choices made in one context may influence the ones in another and contribute to the overall feel of the everyday. Making all these choices means that we are in a process of constructing and occupying an “aesthetic niche” (Portera 2016) within the parameters of technologies available.

The aesthetic niche, the feel or flare that technologies afford to the everyday, is emergent. The niche that we occupy and that shapes our everyday habitual actions is more than a sum of the aesthetically informed choices made as the experimental niche cannot be predicted by the individual aesthetic choices although it emerges from them. Therefore, philosophical aesthetics benefits from the analogy to ecological niches in the context of adapting to technological environments. In short, the ideas presented by evolutionary aesthetics resonate with that of process philosophy in far-reaching ways and could help in grasping what role aesthetic perception, preferences, and judgment play in the assessment and adoption of new and emerging technologies.

Anu Besson (University of Jyväskylä)

Home and beyond – interaction with everyday environment as foundation of being

Can housework ever be enjoyable? Although this question has garnered some attention in everyday aesthetics, the main interlocutors remain in social sciences where the answer typically is: not really. Sociologists commonly conclude that housework remains unsatisfactorily laborious and unfairly distributed and thus is a burden that society must eradicate in its entirety. Some proposed solutions include, among fairer sharing and outsourcing, smart home technologies. Who would not want a robot vacuum, smart fridge or kitchen that cooks for you?

What if this is not the whole picture? Housework has mainly been studied as a micro- and macroeconomic and equality problem, but also as everyday aesthetic activity that may bring aesthetic satisfaction to its doer (Yuriko Saito, Pauline von Bonsdorff). In my empirical study, where I interview Finnish people living abroad, I found that housework should be 1) broadened as a category to also include activities outside of the home, e.g. urban foraging, 2) understood as anchors for identity where people restore themselves through chores linked to traditions, 3) appreciated as sensuous, agential being-in-the-world and 4) examined as an aesthetic outlet that intertwines chores and hobbies, labour-work and action in Hannah Arendt's terms.

Why focus on humble housework in the era of more pressing, even catastrophic problems? I argue that everyday interaction with the near-environment, including nature for urban foraging, can be a 'cure' to anaesthetisation: today, many complain about cognitive overload and alienation caused by the abstract, digitalised worklife and screen entertainment. I offer empirical findings to support Saito's suggestion that when we re-invigorate our ability to pay attention, discern and appreciate, and develop skills, style and taste, we are more likely to extend a caring attitude to the wider world. Connecting with others, also the more-than-human world, starts from embracing our own sensuous embodiment, including its laborious aspects.

Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen (Aarhus University)

Reading as situated resonance

Relations between aesthetics and cognition finds itself at the centre of reading as an activity. Reading as gaining a competence deal with decoding of signs, reading comprehension, and with cognitive and embodied aspects of sense-making (Elbro 2014, Mangen 2013). Reading is also an aesthetic, relational concept: reading literature as an

aesthetic activity has relational sense-making at its core. When engaging with a literary text you take part in semiotic processes, in engaging with places and characters, with imagining worlds and situations. These activities take place as senses are being evoked through aesthetic apparatuses.

The ways in which senses are distributed have changed due to the digital reading condition, creating an increasing multisensory reading landscape including born digital phenomena, audio reading, alongside with the reading of printed books (Engberg et al 2023). The paper will discuss this condition in terms of two different perspectives of the concept of resonance: the sociological interpretation of resonance as a response to acceleration of time and attention (Rosa 2016) and resonance as a metaphor for the ways (audio) reading can create aesthetic entanglement with the world (Koepnick 2013, 2023). The concepts will be used to display a discussion of the need for re-thinking value systems regarding reading practices and situations. Even though reading, as Price and Rubery (2020) argue, has in fact never had an agreed upon definition across disciplines it is as a concept loaded with cultural weight and biases.

The concept of resonance will in the paper be used for rethinking these biases - reflecting aspects of reading in the digital age as genuinely situational (Drucker 2020) and relational. The paper will outline how digital reading through resonance produces new ways of sense-making through entanglement (Koepnick 2023) with materialities, senses, and surroundings – hereby producing situated, sensory knowledge.

Joachim Aagaard Friis (University of Agder)

Vulnerability as an aesthetics of openness to more-than-human intensities

In the last decade, care has been theorized as an aesthetics for the socially engaged arts field, drawing lines between the understanding of care workers' labor as having aesthetic qualities and the understanding of certain interactions created by artists as involving care (Thompson 2023); as well as an aesthetics of the everyday that is grounded in human and more-than-human relationships (Saito 2022). In this paper, I wish to propose the aesthetics of vulnerability as a closely connected notion to the aesthetics of care in contemporary art and literature.

Instead of other approaches to this concept that focus on the aesthetics of vulnerability

in the context of the social sphere of interpersonal human relationships (Ganteau 2015), and on vulnerability as an affect to mobilize in political struggle (Koivunen, Kyrola and Ryberg 2018; Butler, Gamber, Sabsay 2017), I wish to explore the concept regarding the affective and sensuous relationship between the human and the more-than-human. In this context, I understand the aesthetics of vulnerability as an openness to the sensuous and affective qualities emanating from everyday more-than-human objects and organisms. I base my understanding of the concept on Miri Rozmarin's argument that vulnerability is a "dual affective relation between subjects and their surroundings" that involves "an affective response that marks the micro vital connections of bodies" (2021). This dimension of vulnerability, as an affective response that marks vital connections of bodies, I use in a more-than-human register when I go on to analyze aesthetic encounters in Pernille Abd-el Dayem's short story collection *Omsorgsdage* (2022). Several subjects in Dayem's stories encounter a more-than-human world of smells that are described meticulously. I understand these encounters as creating an openness – a vulnerability – in the subjects that allow them to a world that is made up of sensuous elements, elements that slow down time and zoom in on everyday objects. Which returns us to care and how the aesthetics of vulnerability in this mode is intricately related to care aesthetics, however focusing on more-than-human imprints on the subject instead of its actions towards others.

Session: Aesthetics and Architecture

Harpa Stefánsdóttir (Agricultural University of Iceland)

Urban aesthetics; perception, evaluation and meaning.

The different factors of the built environment that influence the daily life and behaviour of the population play important role in research and analysis within the field of urban and regional planning. Knowledge about how planning of the built environment influences behaviour supports better targeted policy recommendations, implementation, and management.

Through my research, I have gradually built-up new knowledge on how to approach aesthetic aspects of urban public spaces, what concepts are useful for investigation in this field and how urban aesthetics are perceived by people on foot or travelling by

bike. I have also built up, through several publications, ways to interpret and evaluate the aesthetic meaning of urban public spaces for city life. Application of various concepts in my work, to evaluate empirical data, is important contribution to the debate about the value of aesthetics in the city. In my lecture, I intend to present selected publications of my work and discuss, across them, the relevance of the concepts applied, to interpret qualitative data regarding perception of urban characteristics and spaces. In addition to my publications that directly apply the aesthetic concept (e.g. Stefansdottir, 2014) I intend to discuss the contribution of Stefansdottir (2018) that gives important insight into the role urban atmosphere has for visits to various urban locations. This papers also enlightens what urban qualities should be accentuated, and which disadvantages should be reduced to support meaningful and sustainable transformation of both central and suburban areas to improve livability. Stefansdottir and Xue (2018) identifies and describes significant themes and concepts for studying the perception of dwelling quality in terms of liveability by combining measures of human needs and subjective wellbeing. Finally, Stefansdottir et.al, (2022) regards an approach that unfolds the role place attachment has for the future use pattern of second homes with respect to changing climate.

Mami Aota (Gunma Prefectural Women's University, Japan)

Aesthetic Guidelines for Urban Redevelopment Based on The Aesthetics of Care

This presentation examines what kind of urban redevelopment truly enriches our lives from an aesthetic perspective. Cities are human environments constructed with various artifactual structures. After a certain period, they may have to be redeveloped because they have dilapidated or no longer conform to people's lifestyles.

We need to view urban redevelopment not only from a practical standpoint but also from an aesthetic one. If we view urban redevelopment solely in terms of economic efficiency, we may end up with boring landscapes. Also, we could destroy things that are not practical but are affectively important to us. Therefore, we also need aesthetic guidelines.

This presentation will refer to the aesthetics of care to obtain the aesthetic guidelines. When we take an attitude of care, we pay attention to the object's "(hi)story" and act toward the future to continue it instead of throwing away the old. In this presentation, I will apply the aesthetics of care to the larger object, that is, the urban environment, to

obtain the aesthetical guidelines mentioned above.

In Section 1, I will review Saito's aesthetics of care. In Section 2, I will offer the aesthetic guidelines for urban redevelopment based on the aesthetics of care. The discussion will focus on the fact that (1) cities should last longer than our lifetimes and be handed down to future generations, and (2) in urban redevelopment, it is difficult to feel that each of us is involved. I will argue that the aesthetics of care can deal with these points and give us aesthetic guidelines.

In Section 3, I will classify some successful and unsuccessful case studies in light of the aesthetic guidelines proposed in this presentation. Through this process, I will also examine the validity of our aesthetic guidelines.

Josephine Norrbo (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences)

Views on Aesthetics in The Case of Architects Sweden's Landscape Architecture Award

This paper analyses how landscape architects view aesthetics in relation to landscape architecture and what processes and actors that are assumed to generate aesthetic value. The essentiality of aesthetics in landscape architecture have been pointed out by researchers, yet the meaning of aesthetics remains unclear and definitions are varied and sometimes contradictory. Likewise, understanding for how aesthetic value is assumed to be generated is uncertain. Not knowing what is meant when talking about aesthetics in landscape architecture or how it is supposedly generated makes it difficult to critically discuss or evaluate the assumptions about- and methods related to - aesthetic value of landscape architecture. This paper analyses what views on aesthetics that are represented in the nomination processes of Architects Sweden's landscape architecture award. Former jury members' experiences of the assessment process as well as written jury statements are utilized as cases. Drawing on three dominant views on aesthetics in landscape architecture writings, as well as adding a critical perspective, this paper is mapping landscape architect's views on aesthetics. Moreover, the power dynamics inherent in landscape architect's notions of how aesthetic value is generated were analyzed. The paper argues that even though the meaning of aesthetics is vague to landscape architects, aesthetic values comes first when they assess landscape; through experience, senses and emotion. Furthermore, the paper then considers whether

aesthetics in landscape architecture could be more inclusive, relevant and sustainable if views and methods were expanded beyond traditional Western ideas. This paper aims to contribute with knowledge to the under researched subject of aesthetics in landscape architecture. Moreover, it wishes to highlight aesthetics a possible strategy against authoritarian tendencies a world in desperate need of justice for both humans and the more-than-human.

Pilar Lopez-Cantero (Tilburg University)

From concealing harm to caring architecture: Aesthetic value and emotional well-being in the built environment

Aesthetic value and emotional well-being are closely tied in the built environment. For example, the aesthetic homogenization that follows gentrification, or the installation of hostile architecture such as armless benches, can be harmful to city dwellers (Nguyen 2022, Krueger forthcoming). It makes sense that these two phenomena are harmful, given that both gentrification and anti-homeless design are inherently unjust. However, can urban design projects that are not inherently unjust also result in harm to city dwellers? Here, I look into the use of aesthetic value as a vehicle to conceal emotional harm in the built environment.

I focus on two examples: the redesign of the residential area of Gellerup in Aarhus (Denmark) and the new Apple store in Piazza Liberty in Milan (Italy). On one hand, it can be argued that by adding aesthetic value, both projects foster inhabitability, which has been defined by Abel Franco (2019: 2) as an aesthetic feature of architecture that offers “means to realize and experience possibilities which are significant for us”. In that sense, they seem to be different from aesthetic homogenisation and hostile architecture. However, on the other hand, both projects result in emotional harm: the Aarhus redesign reinforces the idea that inhabitants of impoverished areas are ‘in need to be fixed’, while the Piazza Liberty conceals the commodification of so-called third places (public spots that are used as a space for social connection).

I argue that in order to avoid the concealment of harm, it is not enough for architecture to be a means to an end, as implied by the notion of inhabitability—i.e., a means to significant possibilities. Instead, it is required that the built environment is expressive of care, while aiming to avoid the ‘care-washing’ (Kopitz 2022: 30) that is expressed in the above

examples—and similar regeneration projects.

Session: Temporality and Imagination

Karen

Holdaway

Grön

But is it art?

In this paper, I will present how the idea of the museum as a space for constituents/users has inspired and transformed Trapholt Museum of Modern Art and Design. Instead of rejecting the spectator, I will suggest that both participants and spectators can be understood as users of aesthetic practices (Rancière 2014), and outline the conflicting interests between participatory museum practices and classic spectators and explore how these can be reconciled.

Tensions can arise when an art museum at the same time functions as a temple of aesthetics and societal agents and the different positions on what aesthetics at an art museum can and should be. The paper will explore opposing elements like process-artwork, participant-spectator, attraction-societal, and inclusion-exclusion and propose a framework to map the conflicts at stake. The aim is to understand why participatory art projects often can be experienced as meaningful for the participants but not interesting and sometimes be experienced as excluding visitors at an art museum. I will propose an interdisciplinary method including theories of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci 2017) and creativity (Tanggaard 2013), which have been used at the Trapholt Museum of Modern Art and Design in developing collaborative art projects with up to 1000 highly engaged participants resulting in award-winning artworks and enjoyed by the museum visitors.

At some art institutions, the gap between education and curation has been removed. At the forefront is the Arte Útil movement with artist Tanya Bruguera who reject the spectator and reframe the public as constituents/users in projects that transgress the conventions of autonomous art through new collaborative connections with the users (Aikens 2016; Morgan 2018). At the Documenta 2022 this approach to art was introduced in a large scale, and Documenta received harsh criticism for not being art, and visitor numbers landed 17% under the numbers of 2017.

Kaisa Mäki-Petäjä (University of Jyväskylä)

Drawing Together – Drawing as a Way of Connecting with the Past and Distant

Salman Rushdie described in *Is Nothing Sacred?* how in the act of creation the artists and the world flow into each other as the border between the self and the world softens and turns permeable.

Inspired by Rushdie's words, in my presentation I will explore how this softening can take place when drawing from life, and how this softening can also affect the boundary between places, lives and people separated not only by distance but also by time. For this I will delve into a peculiar aesthetic experience I had while sketching in The National Museum of Finland in 2019. In that sudden moment of understanding I became acutely aware of that distant artisan who had created the artefact I was drawing in the now, of how similar our embodied, lived experience of creation must be.

If making art is a state of encounter, can drawing then bridge people separated by culture, distance and even time? Can the drawer experience the presence and gain understanding of the absent, of that which is perceptually and experientially unavailable directly? And what are the conditions for this to be possible? The answer to these questions can, I believe, be found through the concepts of embodied and lived experience, embedded-ness of the human experience and cognition (Alva Noë, Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson), engaged nature of aesthetic experience (Arnold Berleant), and encountering the other as it is (non-judgemental attitude). Drawing seems to be one aesthetic practice where these prerequisites (if they indeed are such) come together particularly well. These concepts and questions may also shed light to the importance of material presence over seeking interpretation (Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht)

Jacob Lund (Aarhus University)

The Changing Temporalities of Imagining in the Age of Planetaryity

More than 30 years ago cultural critic Fredric Jameson famously presented his understanding of the postmodern as "some weakness in our imagination," insofar as it seemed easier for us "to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of

nature than the breakdown of late capitalism." Taking Jameson's diagnosis and his implicit call for a reinvigoration of our imaginary capacities seriously, this presentation will try to reflect on some of the characteristics of the temporality of the modern imagination that Jameson seems to be mourning, and how the modern Western regime of chronological progress may be said to have been replaced by a kind of planetary contemporaneity, an intensified interconnection of different times, human and non-human, and scales and experiences of time. A condition of contemporaneity, of intensified temporal cohabitation, which we – at least those of us whose minds have been formed by the logics of (post)modernity – are still only beginning to grasp. What might it mean to imagine an earthly existence liberated from the modern Western imagination of one-dimensional succession and progress? How would such displacement effect the temporality of our imaginary practices?

Session: Ethics and Aesthetics

Erika Larsson (Lund University)

The Task of Mourning

This paper explores works of contemporary art that engage with challenging aspects of Sweden's history, including Katarina Pirak Sikku's ongoing exploration of the archive of racial biology (2014-), Ann Böttcher's *Resan och hamnen* (2011) relating to the experiments of the Vipeholm Institute and Hanni Kamaly's focus on Sweden's (and Scandinavia's) legacy of colonialism and racism, such as the work *Passagainst* (2021). The paper investigates the question of what ways a notion of mourning can be useful in approaching the (often collaborative) processes that are activated in the production and perceiving of these works. Building on theories of mourning of Sigmund Freud, the research discusses mourning as an emotional and embodied process, in which cognitive associations are intertwined with affective and visceral forces. (Freud 1917) Not taking on board the entire machinery of Freud's psycho-analytical theory, the main aspect that the research takes inspiration from is the idea of mourning as a process that requires both work and time. This is also what is found in other contemporary discussions about mourning. For example, in anthropologist Paul Connerton's reflections on engaging with history in terms of mourning, he reflects on how the memory of traumatic events is inscribed in human bodies, and how these embodied memories are expressed and

worked through in particular manifestations and events.(Connerton 2011) The paper also relies on the philosopher Martha Nussbaum's ideas around grief as the process through which cognitions that we have about certain objects and subjects in the world are forced to be revalued, or in Freudian terms, redirected.(Nussbaum 2001) The paper, and the wider research project to which it relates, has two primary aims: to contribute to the development of a theory of how a notion of mourning can expand the understanding of how particular works of contemporary art engage with difficult aspects of history; and to express the strategies through which particular works open up the possibility to process the more challenging and resistant aspects of Sweden's difficult history.

Ingvild Kristine Melby (University of Oslo)

Unsettling the colonizing gaze: The ethical intervention of Opacity

In my engagement with Orupabo's collages I work with the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, and the Martinican theorist and writer Édouard Glissant's notion of Opacity —the right not to be understood— to challenge modes of relationality shaped by coloniality and to imagine a way of approaching artworks 'otherwise'. I ask: How can we approach these works in a way that does not reproduce colonial hierarchies? The answer to this question can be found in our engagement with artworks that create "opaque movements" which resist hegemonic ways of being in relation by precluding the associated problems of identification and appropriation. In such Opacity functions as a principle of queerness, as a troubling and disturbing force that unsettles the colonizing gaze. It is the place from which another way of seeing might emanate. In search of an ethical *approach* to these works I will take as my point of departure Levinas' notion of the "caress" reconceptualized as an embodied form of vision. My assertion is that in Levinas we may find a way toward a nonviolent approach to alterity based on the recognition of a singular and irreducible otherness. Moving beyond an understanding of "the caress" as only pertaining to the erotic, I will imagine an ethics of relationality that starts from the sensuous, ambiguous, and vulnerable gesture of the caress and that respects difference through the recognition of the *right to opacity*.

Jussi Pentikäinen (University of Helsinki)

Am I Another? Reading Fosse With Levinas

In his *Septology* Jon Fosse uses the literary device of the doppelgänger to pursue the question of what it means to be “me.” A painter named Asle knows another painter by the same name, identical to him physically but living a vastly different life. Throughout his book Fosse makes it increasingly unclear which memory or experience belongs to which Asle, or if such distinction can even be made.

From the viewpoint of Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy, the idea of an *alter ego* is problematic. For Levinas, the other human can never be understood as another me as “the I” (*le moi*) is made unique by his/her responsibility towards the radical alterity of the Other (*Autrui*). This uniqueness is lived in the weight of corporeal existence which cannot be evaded.

Does the idea of the of two Asles, then, go against this basic principle of Levinas’s ethics? I maintain that, on the contrary, Fosse’s novel helps to elucidate and even deepen the Levinasian conception of the I. Both Asles are identical, but only in appearance. This appearance is mere semblance, or what Levinas would call a “shadow” (*ombre*). *Septology* shows how the doppelgängers are made “I” by life itself. As one of the Asles says: [I]t’s like life itself has forced them to be what they’ve become, life made them become themselves”.

I argue that reading Fosse with Levinas helps to illuminate the meaning of the subject in Levinas’s ethics. Paradoxically, the motive of the doppelgänger shows how the I is truly unique despite any number of similarities with others, but at the same time always already beset by alterity. This comes to the fore in the relationship between the two Asles who are bound to each other in ways which – as Levinas and Fosse might both argue – go beyond being.

Session: Time, Ontologies & the Anthropocene

Anne Sauka (University of Latvia)

Build the Fire in the Stream: Genealogies of Water in Baltic Knowledges

Water transgresses the borders between embodiment and environment, uniting

humanity with its environment both symbolically and materially. Due to the dire state of affairs in the world, water today is thoroughly discussed in hydrofeminism as well as environmental humanities in a broader sense. It seems evident that something in our relations with water needs to change, though, how and what exactly?

In 1965, upon building the Pļaviņas Hydroelectric Power Station, the drowning of the highest waterfall “Staburags”, was received with outrage in the general population of Latvia. Though, the event was tragic and is still remembered as such here in Latvia, it could also be argued that here the aesthetic perception of the lost waterfall, helped the small nation to rebuild its cultural identity. Does such a relation only benefit the people or could bonds like these also “give back” to water itself? The broader question here leads us to ponder – what is the role of the aesthetic, experiential relationships with nature, and how are they embedded in our past?

With these questions in mind, I turn to the Latvian folk poetry *Dainas*, where water and stone often are paired together as cosmological counterparts. To me, these symbolize also the blurred lines between the living and non-living and reflect the processual thinking of the past. I then argue that the everyday, aesthetic, sensual experiences continuously reflect the presence of processual thinking within us. Finally, I turn to the mythologies of the past as potential vehicles for “giving words” to the experiences that sometimes lack words of expression, with the aim to bring forth the underlying relations of care and interdependency that have sometimes been left outside the symbolical framework of the sociopolitical realm, and are thus often subjected to “louder” frameworks of utility and instrumental value.

Rudi van Etteger (WUR Wageningen University and Research centre)

The sublime beauty of Dutch river-landscapes, adapted to climate change

Climate change has called for adaptations of the Dutch river-landscapes. Extremes in terms of both droughts and flooding are increasing due to raised temperatures. The new landscapes of allowing room for the river have been developed under a dual policy goal of creating functional safety and spatial quality. A simultaneous effort in creating more areas for natural processes has resulted in the creation of new designed “natural” floodplains, stepping away from modernist controls through civil engineering by simply

raising dikes. In the paper I will illuminate this development from a unique multifaceted perspective as a landscape architect/designer, an academic philosopher, an inhabitant, who visits on foot and by kayak and artist who draws these new river landscapes.

The paper explores the quest to find the sublime in a small, densely populated and man-made country and how it can be found in the liminal details of that landscape. I will argue contra Burke that vastness is not a necessary condition for the Sublime, but that the threatening power associated with the sublime can also be found in wind, water and the exuberant life forces in river ecosystems. I think drawing attention to the sublime beauty that can come from climate adaptation, if well designed, can and should be mobilised in political discussion on climate adaptation. It can be used to make people care about measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, even though this might threaten parts of existing life styles and landscape qualities and make people care about these landscapes. The functional solutions are for floods every 1200 years, but the beauty will be there daily for everyone to enjoy. The talk will be illuminated by personal photographs, drawings and paintings from the river area.

Gineprini Lorenzo (Bauhaus-Universität Weimar)

Metamorphosis of Mediality: Waste as Speculative Medium in the Aesthetics of the Anthropocene

Waste is one of the most used materials in the art of the last century and has been put to work in a myriad of ways, which has been discussed by art history (Whiteley 2010) and art theory (Boetzkes 2019). The innovative focus of this presentation lies on the different forms of mediality – i.e the capacity to store, communicate and transfer information and energy – that waste has taken in the history of art. Relating to the central topic of the conference, the role of aesthetics in a changing world of environmental crisis, the presentation supports the thesis of a transformation of waste's mediality in the face of climate change.

When waste first appeared on the artistic scene with Kurt Schwitters, it was primarily intended as a carrier of traces of a forgotten past, as a material capable of embodying a counter-narrative and an alternative memory. The explosion of consumer society in the post-war period brought to an aesthetics of accumulation, wherein mountains of trash

were displayed to reveal the hidden mechanisms of hyper-consumption. However, in recent years, waste has been increasingly employed as a medium not only to convey information about the past or to unmask a consumerist present but rather to make visible the destructive ecological effects of the Anthropocene in the future. Through the close reading of the artwork *An Ecosystem of Excess* by Pinar Yoldas, which blends artistic and scientific research to imagine new organisms and life forms in a world dominated by plastic refuse, the presentation aims to show how speculative aesthetics can transform waste in a medium to perform an “archeology of the future” (Jameson 2007), which explores and presents to the sensible experience our future in the “Wasteocene” (Armiero 2021).

Panel: Transcending Boundaries: Art, Architecture, and Environment in Contemporary Aesthetic Experience.

This panel brings together diverse perspectives from the fields of contemporary art, architecture, and environmental studies, emphasizing the radical freedom and transformative power of the aesthetic dimension in these disciplines.

Imaculada Kangussu (State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil)

The Radical Freedom of the Aesthetic Dimension

Aesthetic experience provokes thoughts, visions, feelings, we didn't know we were capable of. Marcuse notices there are forms of art (he calls them 'illusionist') that lead to a kind of relief that transforms them into affirmative instruments of the status quo, insofar they offer pleasurable and brilliant escape valves by sublimating unfulfilled desires into artistic forms. But there are also works of art that make possible material, physical, bodily experiences of situations that are not yet existing in the so-called “real world.” Such art is no longer sublime but has descended to earth and taken deep root in the hard core of life. This paper desires to present this power of aesthetic experience with the help of the 'Gambiarras', work of Cao Guimarães.

Júnia Penna (State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil)

Contemporary Art: Social and Environmental Dialogues

The proposal is to present a discussion around the artistic, conceptual, and contextual

elements present in the work "MURO" (2020-2023) by Brazilian artist Júnia Penna. "MURO" consists of a vertical structure measuring 7 x 1.60 x 1.20 meters, erected with cardboard from flattened and overlapped supermarket boxes. The work, positioned diagonally in relation to the walls, inscribes itself in the exhibition space in a way that activates it. It redefines space as a journey, diverting from the usual neutrality of exhibition rooms. Made of cardboard, the wall contrasts with the solidity of the walls, emanating a sensory presence through its contingent fragility and characteristic odor.

Its first presentation in the Session Room of the former Senate of Minas Gerais, currently the Museu Mineiro in Belo Horizonte, takes on an even more significant dimension. The location, laden with traces of hegemonic power, currently housing the museum's classical painting collection, is reinterpreted by the presence of "MURO," which brings contemporary art into friction with historical past, power structures, and latent issues of current society. By contrasting the fragile cardboard with the solidity of historical walls, the work not only redefines space as a journey but also traverses time and narratives, transforming the viewer's perception of the collection and the museum space itself.

Furthermore, the conscious choice of recycled material prompts social reflection on sustainability and environmental issues. Thus, "MURO," by adopting an environmentally responsible approach, not only critically engages with power structures that perpetuate social hierarchies but also demonstrates the possibility of transforming artistic concepts into sustainable practices.

Celina F. Lage (State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil)
Reimagining Museums in the Contemporary World :Olafur Eliasson's 'Life' at Fondation Beyeler

Olafur Eliasson's "Life" at the Fondation Beyeler in 2021 reimagines the traditional museum, blending contemporary art, architecture, and environment with cutting-edge technology. This exhibition in Basel, Switzerland, embodies Eliasson's unique style, challenging the conventional museum framework and reshaping the interplay between art and the environment. Eliasson's immersive and sensory methods transform the Fondation Beyeler, aligning its architecture with the surrounding nature, portraying the museum as a dynamic, living entity. This reinterpretation of the museum space as an integral part of nature questions its current relevance and suggests a need for

transformation in how art is perceived and interacted with.

The design of the exhibition erases the boundaries between inside and outside, allowing nature to infiltrate the gallery space. This integration symbolizes the museum as a 'ruin' in the traditional sense, prompting a reevaluation of its purpose in contemporary society. The museum thus becomes an interactive art piece, conversing with its environment. "Life" uses new technologies to deepen this interaction, offering an immersive experience that alters viewers' perceptions of space, art, and nature.

This exhibition serves as a model for the potential of contemporary art to transform museum practices. It raises important questions about the museum's role in an evolving cultural and environmental landscape. By presenting the museum as an environmental 'ruin,' Eliasson's "Life" underscores the necessity for museums to adapt, integrating more harmoniously with the environment and society.

Panel: Aesthetics of Generative AI images

This session explores images made by use of generative AI (GAI). To generate images by use of popular GAI image tools (such as Dall-E, Stable Diffusion, or Midjourney) text prompting is a dominant input option where users are invited to type a text describing the image they would like to generate – e.g. “A group of scholars gathered at The Nordic Society of Aesthetics’ conference in Iceland” (see output below). The session analyses and discusses GAI images through the aesthetic lenses of multimodality, flatness, and judgement of taste and it is proposed by *AIIM, Centre for Aesthetics of AI Images at Aarhus University*.

Lotte Philipsen (Aarhus University)

Visual-textual aesthetics of AI images

The presentation investigates image theoretical heritages relevant to the word-image relations in GAI image models. Technically, generating an image by use of text prompting is made possible by recently invented multimodal AI models, whose image components have been criticised for reducing complex visual phenomena to simple, and biased,

concepts. However, the linkage of images/visuals with words/phrases has a long history in art and aesthetics, in theory and practices of synaesthesia, visual semiotics, ekphrasis, iconography, and iconology. The paper analyses the text-image relation of contemporary GAI images through the theoretical lenses of three significant books from the 1980s-1990s (*Iconology* and *Picture Theory* by W.T.J. Mitchell and *Word and Image* by N. Bryson). The overall hypothesis of the paper is that even at a time when technically text and image are transformed to similar datapoints in the latent space of diffusion models, diving into key concepts of poststructuralist image theory – such as distinctions between e.g. ‘image’ and ‘picture’, ‘perception’ and ‘recognition’, ‘discourse’ and ‘figure’ – may provide us with a nuanced understanding of the aesthetic ideologies governing contemporary GAI tools.

Maja Bak Herrie (Aarhus University)

Exploring aesthetic flatness

In my presentation, I will examine the impact of AI image generation on aesthetic analysis, exploring some of the key features of this new kind of images. Based on a recent interdisciplinary study conducted in collaboration with the Danish Technological Institute, I will share findings from a series of experiments with generative AI image models. Framed within Charles S. Peirce’s semiotic theory, the study aimed to understand these models’ boundaries through prompts designed with distinct sign-relations. Using three AI image generators—DALL-E 3, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion—we created and evaluated 480 images based on how the models interpreted the prompts. During this panel, I will discuss some of the aesthetic and epistemological issues that arise from the study. While the images offered by the models in many cases displayed meticulous detailing of various objects, diverse textures, and a sort of composition with a foreground and a background, they remained strangely “flat” in terms of referentiality. A theoretical hypothesis for explaining this limitation could be that the models operate inherently probabilistically. Lacking a sufficiently rich “internal conceptual” framework to comprehend implication and abstraction, the models

compensate by expanding their embedding spaces to accommodate an ever-growing array of tokens and combinations thereof. This results in a semiotic “flatness,” I will argue, which affects how we understand this kind of images.

Nicolas Malevé (Aarhus University)

The production of machine vision’s aesthetic score

How to approach the relations between aesthetics and infrastructure? The presentation will approach this question through the case of the AI image generation software Stable Diffusion. To function, image generators need large datasets or collections of images paired with descriptions and several other metrics such as an aesthetic score. This presentation will analyse the various actors, humans and machines, who intervene in the curation of these images and the production of aesthetic scores for which images are rated on a scale from one to ten, from the less to the most aesthetically pleasing. It will do so by unravelling a vast network of image production, exchange, description and exhibition that includes photosharing websites, annotation platforms, chat rooms, and university departments. Through the lens of a background aesthetics, it will show how this network functions as an exhibitionary complex enabling feedback loops and modes of reflexivity in the design and deployment of image generators as well as the vagaries inherent to teaching the judgement of taste to machines.