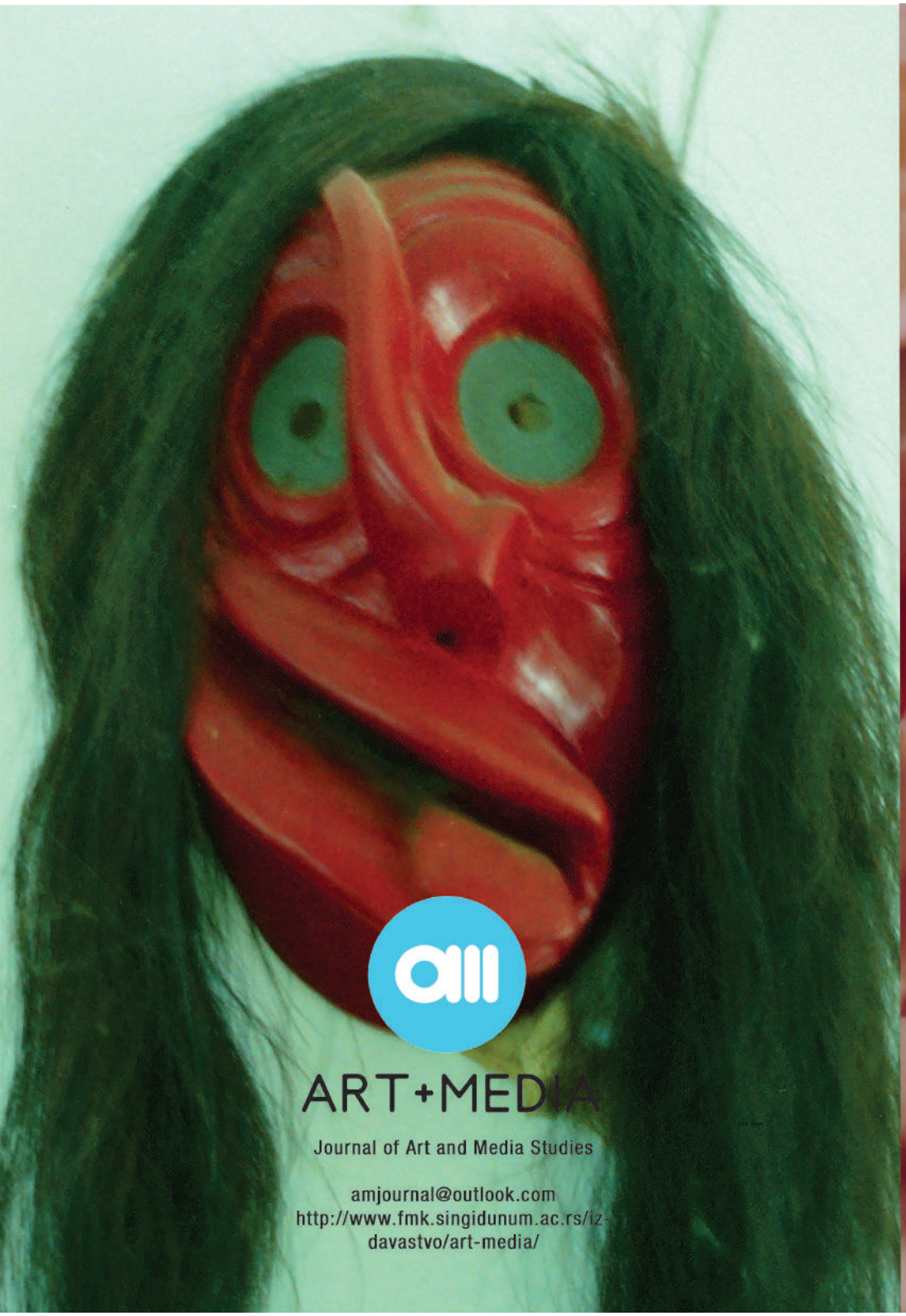

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Editors' Note

Aesthetic Learning and Sustainability

Human beings develop aesthetic preferences throughout their lives. They learn to appreciate certain features of their surroundings as aesthetically valuable and they make specific aesthetic choices. It is important to point out that aesthetic preferences govern decisions not only in art-related domains, but also in our everyday lives, especially through the preservation of cultural heritage, the design of urban environments, and, finally, in the conservation of natural ecosystems.

Of particular interest is the fact that the acquisition and development of aesthetic preferences are tightly intertwined with individual and collective behaviors affecting the environment.

Aesthetic inclinations for certain materials, styles, or forms of consumption can drive demand for resources, affect land use patterns, and even contribute to pollution or habitat destruction. The perception of wind farms as visually disruptive is a classic example. Despite their clear environmental benefits, opposition to wind farms often arises due to concerns about their aesthetic impact on the landscape. One strategy to increase their acceptance may involve reshaping current societal aesthetic perceptions by educating on their potential aesthetic values. Similarly, the traditional view of green lawns as the epitome of garden beauty carries considerable environmental repercussions. Maintaining lush green lawns implies excessive water consumption, chemical fertilizers and pesticides contributing to water pollution, habitat degradation, and resource depletion. Shifting towards alternative gardening practices may require a reevaluation of our collective aesthetic preferences (Saito 2017).

With the above in mind, in recent years, the notion of sustainability has been increasingly juxtaposed with that of aesthetic appreciation (Berleant 2014; Brady 2014; Saito 2017; Lehtinen 2019; 202; Mikkonen 2021). At the same time, artistic practices related to the topic of climate change and environmental sustainability more generally have multiplied (Welsh 2020; Simoniti 2023), reflecting a growing awareness and concern for these topics.

This issue of the *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies* aims to engage philosophical aesthetics, art criticism, and art practices in dialogue in order to bring out crucial issues raised by the relationship between art and sustainability. The authors who contributed their essays for this issue consistently emphasize the significance of aesthetic education in enhancing our environmental sensibilities in the time of

climate change.

In her opening contribution, María José Alcaráz León addresses the possible impact that being aware of global climate change may have on the aesthetic experience of current environments. Relying on the theoretical tools provided by environmental aesthetics, her article casts light on the emotional and imaginative outcomes of environmental awareness. She elaborates, in particular, on whether the temporal sense we have of irreversible processes affecting nature and the existential link of dependency we feel towards it leaves room for aesthetically rewarding experiences.

Our aesthetic relationship with places and, most of all, with natural landscapes is tackled by Paolo Furia's paper, focusing on the role played by images in understanding and defining our environment. Drawing on environmental aesthetics, human geography and media studies, Furia points out that the inherent dialectical interplay between places and their images urges us to learn to interpret the latter as valuable tools to access our geographical realities.

The need to represent the environment and human responsibility for its deterioration is at the core of the art critic Ana Frangovska's essay. On the background of classical dilemmas in aesthetics and moral theory, the paper analyzes two artistic projects by contemporary artist Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva. The installations *Silentio Pathologia* and *Haruspex* provide challenging, tangible examples of how the aesthetic conflict between formal beauty and disgust caused by certain materials, can confront us with moral questions about resource exploitation, capitalism, and animal abuse.

The task of a theoretical clarification is taken on by Noora-Helena Korpelainen, who devotes her contribution to disentangling close yet distinct notions at play in the domain of aesthetics and climate change. 'Aesthetic sustainability', 'the aesthetics of sustainability', and 'sustainable aesthetics' are addressed and defined to support scholarly endeavors regarding the role of aesthetic competence in sustainability deliberations. Aesthetic sustainability helps us assess our aesthetic engagement with reality in relation to environmental sustainability. The aesthetics of sustainability examines how ecology-related practices are liable to aesthetic evaluation. Finally, sustainable aesthetics is a self-reflective notion that examines how aesthetic theories and activities can comply with urgent sustainability requirements.

Thought-provoking case studies of all three concepts are offered by the artists' portfolio of the following section.

Artist Carolina Alfradique introduces *[meta]estratos*, a Brazil-based research institute where artists, curators and researchers carry out collective projects intertwining theoretical readings, critical analyses, and artistic experiments. *[meta]estratos's* portfolio can be fruitfully coupled with Furia's "Place and image. The role of representation in the aesthetic experience of places", for it seems to offer a tangible example of the productive and non-trivial entanglement between the geographical reality and the geographical imaginary.

The collective IC-98, formed by artists Visa Suonpää and Patrik Söderlund, presents two projects, the *House of Khronos* and the *Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded*

Earth that deal respectively with the passage of time in un-exploited environments and the possibility to creatively and collectively renegotiate the nature of an exploited land. Both projects mobilize concepts introduced by Alcaráz León's "Anticipating Aesthetic Transformations in the Face of Climate Change", namely those of the temporal sense of irreversibility that characterize our aesthetic appreciation of environments threatened by climate changes and of the existential dependency that we feel when confronting damaged environments.

Artist and photographer Virginia Hanusik's project *Louisiana 2014–2022* delves into the challenges of living in a changing climate, revealing the spiritual essence of existence amidst ecological degradation and collapse. Her aesthetically valuable images of the Gulf of Mexico's seacoast in the US state of Louisiana illustrate the passage of time through subtle modifications in the landscape, thereby functioning as representations not only of a landscape but also of the specific feelings stemming from her own awareness of ongoing climatic changes.

The issue concludes with Camilla Palazzolo's review of Vid Simoniti's *Artists Remake the World, a Contemporary Art Manifesto* (2023), which explores the role of art in addressing a myriad of challenges that today's societies are confronted with, such as climate change and global inequality. Simoniti's book provides a comprehensive examination of how contemporary art can influence modern democratic-capitalist societies, highlighting its potential to foster audience emancipation and cultural advancement.

Guest Issue Editors
Lisa Giombini and Marta Benenti

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Anticipating Aesthetic Transformations in the Face of Climate Change

Abstract: Recently, within the field of Environmental Aesthetics, there has been some attention paid to how taking into consideration the environmental impact of Global Climate Change (GCC) generates new problems and issues. Among different questions that Environmental Aesthetics needs to face under the impact of GCC, we can distinguish, at least methodologically, those which address the impact of GCC in the aesthetic experience of the environment we currently inhabit and those concerned with the possible aesthetic character that future environments might possess as a result of GCC. In this article, I would like to focus on how to characterize the possible impact that the awareness of GCC may have on the aesthetic experience of current environments. In particular, I would like to clarify this issue by exploring the roles that knowledge, forward-looking emotions, and imagination play in this experience.

Keywords: environmental aesthetic appreciation; GCC; irrevocability; solastalgia; environmental ruin.

Introduction

In the last decade, Environmental Aesthetics' scholars have paid some attention to how taking into consideration the environmental impact of Global Climate Change (GCC) involves new problems and issues for Environmental Aesthetics.[1] Most au-

[1] View, for example, Matthew R. Auer, "Environmental Aesthetics in the Age of Climate Change," *Sustainability* 11. 18 (2019): 1–12; Emily Brady, "Aesthetic Value, Ethics, and Climate Change," *Environmental Values* 23 (2014): 551–70; Emily Brady, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics," *Environmental Values*, Special Issue: Philosophical Aesthetics and the Global Environmental Emergency, ed. Jukka Mikkonen and Sanna Lehtinen, 31, 1 (2022): 27–46; Emily Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change," in *Handbook on the Philosophy of Climate Change*, vol. 1, ed. Gianfranco Pellegrino and Marcello Di Paola (Cham: Springer, 2023), 395–414; Jonathan Prior and Emily Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Rewilding," *Environmental Values* 26, 1 (2017): 31–51; Paul Haught ,"An Impossible Peace: the Aesthetic Disruptiveness of Climate Change," in *The Poesis of Peace: Narratives, Cultures, and Philosophies*, ed. by Klaus-Gerd Giesen, Carool Kersten, and Lenart Škof (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 202–220; Ariane Nomikos, "Place *Matters*," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 76, 4 (2018): 453–62; Benjamin J. Richardson, *The Art of Environmental Law: Governing with Aesthetics* (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2021) and the articles published in the special volume in *Environmental Values* by Sann Lehtinen, Emily Brady, Jukka Mikkonen, Mădălina Diaconu, Marcello Di Paola and Serena Ciccarelli, *Environmental Values*, Special Issue: Philosophical Aesthetics and the Global Environmental Emergency, ed. Jukka Mikkonen and Sanna Lehtinen, 31, 1 (2022).

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thors converge on the idea that GCC imposes a new set of conditions on our aesthetic experience of the environment. Some of these conditions are the large-scale spatial and temporal impact of GCC, the global dimension of a different natural dynamics affected by GCC, and the irreversibility of some of the predicted environmental changes caused by GCC. In this sense, there is a consensus that environmental aesthetics needs to incorporate this large-scale perspective and the temporal dimension that is often made vividly available by scientific models and detailed projections of future scenarios.[2] Other significant aspects to be considered are the awareness of human responsibility in GCC and its global environmental outcomes,[3] and the sense of irreversibility that accompanies some of the predicted changes.[4]

However, as Brady has remarked, a comprehensive Environmental Aesthetics agenda encompassing the issues that arise due to GCC is still underdeveloped. This is reflected, for example, in various aspects and problems that current aestheticians have addressed in relation to GCC, but also in the unsystematic manner in which these problems are presented. Although this may just be a normal feature of how the state of art within a field is responding to new challenges and problems, it makes the discussion about these new problems arduous.

In response to this, Brady[5] has tried to offer a comprehensive list of problems and challenges caused by these new conditions imposed by GCC on environmental aesthetic appreciation.[6] Some of these are (i) the impact of GCC in some neglect-

[2] One fundamental resource is the annual Climate Change Report produced by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. To see the last Summary of this report see IPCC 2023, "Summary for Policymakers," in *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, ed. The Core Writing Team, Hoesung Lee, and José Romero (IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 2023), 1–34.

[3] Although the role of human activities and the corresponding awareness of human responsibility are present in studies of mixed environments (Prior and Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Rewilding"), or in examining practices such as rewilding (Martin Drenthen, "Rewilding in Cultural Layered Landscapes," *Environmental Values* 27, 4 (2018): 325–30; Jamier Lorimer and Clemens Driessen, "Wild Experiments at the Oostvaardersplassen: Rethinking Environmentalism in the Anthropocene," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39, 2 (April 2014): 169–81; Mateusz Tokarski, *Hermeneutics of Human-Animal Relations in the Wake of Rewilding: The Ethical Guide to Ecological Discomforts* /Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019/), the issue of responsibility in relation to GCC has some peculiarities derived from its large-scale and pervasiveness as well as with its resulting from a set of factors that can only be understood globally. In this sense, there may be some aspects of our awareness of human responsibility in GCC that impact on our aesthetic experience that may be distinct or unique. Thus, for example, issues of intergenerational responsibility have been recently considered in relation to environmental aesthetic experience. Remei Capdevila-Werning, Sann Lehtinen. "Intergenerational Aesthetics: A Future-Oriented Approach to Aesthetic Theory and Practice," *Philosophical Inquiries* 9, 2 (2021): 175–98; Emily Brady, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics"; Nanda Jarosz, "Indigenous and Local Knowledge and Aesthetics: Towards an Intergenerational Aesthetics of Nature," *Environmental Values* 32, 2 (2023): 151–68.

[4] Jukka Mikkonen also explores the impact that a certain unpredictability can have. Thus, we need to assume a certain ignorance or incertitude concerning the environmental conditions that will predominate in future scenarios. Jukka Mikkonen, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature and the Global Environmental Crisis," *Environmental Values* 31, 1 (2022): 47–66.

[5] Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change", "Aesthetic Value, Ethics, and Climate Change", "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics".

[6] She also invites accommodating our current aesthetic tools to these challenges and problems.

ed environments within classical approaches to Environmental Aesthetics, such as cryosphere and aerosphere; (ii) a reconsideration of the tools provided by Negative Aesthetic to address the environmental changes and losses caused by GCC; (iii) issues related to Future Aesthetics[7] and Intergenerational Aesthetics; and (iv) "understanding the relationship between aesthetic and ethical values as they arise in regards to GCC."[8]

While this list allows us to identify and address some of the issues derived from the impact of GCC in Environmental Aesthetics, I propose to distinguish, at least methodologically, those issues which address the impact of GCC in the aesthetic experience of the environment we currently inhabit and those which address the possible aesthetic character that future environments will possess as a result of GCC - or what Brady refers to as 'Future Aesthetics'. [9]

Current scientific tools that help us to recreate - sometimes visually - future environmental scenarios not only provide us with a basis for aesthetically assessing those possible future scenarios, but also permeate, through several emotions and imaginative states, our experience of current environments. As a result, our current experience of the environment is infused with the awareness of its likely future radical changes. Some authors have explored the character of this experience in terms of certain emotions, such as solastalgia,[10] uncertainty and a feeling of dislocation[11], melancholia, anxiety,[12] worry, despair, guilt, anger, consolation[13] or hope; others have drawn attention to the role that imaginative processes, like projection or anticipation,[14] may have in this experience.

In this article, I would like to focus on how we should characterize the impact that the awareness of the expected environmental changes caused by GCC has on the aesthetic experience of current environments. And in particular, how this awareness can be considered to be aesthetically relevant by examining the roles that knowledge, forward-looking emotions, and imagination play in this experience.

[7] As characterized by Brady, 'Future Aesthetics' explores how scientific knowledge about GCC's expected impact upon our environments – including the visual models and simulations of the new morphologies of those environments – can be the source of an anticipated aesthetic experience that may, in turn, guide or motivate certain actions concerning those environments. See Brady, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics", and Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change".

[8] Brady, "Aesthetic Value, Ethics, and Climate Change," 27.

[9] Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change", "Aesthetic Value, Ethics, and Climate Change", "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics".

[10] Glenn Albrecht, "Solastalgia: A New Concept in Human Health and Identity," *Philosophy, Activism, Nature* 3 (2005): 41–55; Glenn Albrecht, "Negating Solastalgia: An Emotional Revolution from the Anthropocene to the Symbiocene," *American Imago* 77, 1 (2020): 9–30.

[11] Nomikos, "Place *Matters*".

[12] Timothy Morton, "This Is Not My Beautiful Biosphere," in *The Cultural History of Climate Change*, ed. Tom Bristow and Thomas Ford (London: Routledge, 2018).

[13] Robert S. Fudge, "Aesthetic Consolation in the Age of Extinction," *Philosophical Papers* 50, 1–2 (2021): 141–62.

[14] Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change", Haught "An Impossible Peace: The Aesthetic Disruptiveness of Climate Change", Justin White, "Revelatory Regret and the Standpoint of the Agent," Midwest Studies in Philosophy 41 (2017): 225–40.

To do so, I will present, first, some characteristics that derive from the distinctive character of GCC and its pervasive environmental consequences. Second, I will consider how these characteristics can, and often do, manifest themselves in a set of cognitive, emotional and imaginative responses to the environment. Thirdly, I will examine how these responses can enter into an aesthetic experience of the environment and which role, if any, they play in such experience. In particular, I will examine (i) whether the overall negative character of these responses implies that the proper aesthetic experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC is necessarily negative as well, and (ii) whether aesthetic categories such as the sublime or terrible beauty adequately capture the aesthetic character of this experience. I will end by summarizing the main points of this paper.

Temporal and existential dimensions of experiencing current environments under the perspective of GCC

As a result of an increased awareness of GCC and its manifestation in different phenomena, we may adopt, in perceiving and appreciating our current environments, a perspective in which the thought about GCC and its future consequences is present.[15] It is part of adopting this perspective that certain aspects (cognitive, emotional, and maybe imaginative) related to GCC enter into our experience. In tune with what other authors have pointed out in a more or less direct manner[16], I think that when adopting this perspective, at least two aspects of the experience of our current environment become especially salient under the perspective of GCC. The first one is the temporal dimension that accompanies our experience of current environments and that manifests itself in a sense of irreversibility of certain environmental changes and the termination of certain natural dynamic equilibrium. The second one is an existential dimension that emphasizes our dependency on the natural environment. I will now expand on these aspects to explore how their presence enters into our aesthetic experience of current environments.

[15] For the purposes of this paper, I will not assume that this awareness should be always part of the aesthetic experiences of current environments. A cognitivist position of environmental aesthetic appreciation à la Carlson (Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 /1979/: 267–76; Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* /London: Routledge, 2000/) will likely make this awareness a condition for a proper appreciation. Other alternative views about environmental aesthetics may consider this awareness a possible component of our experience but deny it is required for a proper aesthetic appreciation of the environment. Nevertheless, I think it is quite plausible that this awareness enters in some form or another into an aesthetic experience of the environment and my purpose here is to explore its contribution to that experience.

[16] Although there is no exhaustive characterization of the experience of our environment under this perspective (and maybe it is unlikely that there is just one characterization that fits all possible experiences), a number of authors (Auer, "Environmental Aesthetics in the Age of Climate Change", Brady, "Aesthetic Value, Ethics, and Climate Change", Brady, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics", Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change, Haught, "An Impossible Peace: the Aesthetic Disruptiveness of Climate Change", Nomikos, "Place *Matters*") coincide in some aspects as being characteristic of our experience. In this paper, I will rely on this minimal agreement and explore how these features impact in the aesthetic experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC.

The temporal aspect refers to the awareness of the progressive transformation of certain environmental dynamics and of their particular manifestation in different phenomena that we can observe as indications of this transformation. So, when we perceive certain changes in some natural regular patterns or cycles as a result of GCC, we come to experience these changes not only as singular accidental occurrences but as part of a greater pattern of change that affects an ecological equilibrium as a whole. Clear examples that can trigger this awareness can be the progressive desertification of certain areas, the reduction of the cryosphere, or the extinction of certain species as a result of severe changes in the quality of their environment. On a more local level, people involved in agricultural activities are noticing certain changes in the patterns of growing, ripening and harvesting of certain crops, with the corresponding changes in landscapes' forms. These changes are often caused by changes in rain cycles and temperature patterns.

In a broader sense, this temporal dimension has always been a condition of the aesthetic appreciation of our environments. It is present, for example, when we attend to the size and bearing of a long-standing tree while thinking of its continuous growth over a large expanse of time, or when we contemplate a coastal environment as shaped by the constant erosion caused by the sea waves striking the coastline. The temporal dimension is also present when we contemplate a bare tree with the expectation that it will grow leaves again in the Spring, or the colours of a rice terrace as indicating a particular stage of rice growing. Temporality is, in this sense, built into the aesthetic appreciation of environments and not something unique to their appreciation under the perspective of GCC.

However, I think that we can point to a new dimension of this temporal awareness that is related to the irreversibility that certain changes in the current environmental dynamics will take place as a result of GCC. This sense of irreversibility is, I think, a novel aspect of the temporal dimension of the aesthetic experience of the environment under the conditions of GCC. While in the previous examples, our sense of temporality was either marked by a certain backwards-looking awareness of the processes behind certain appearances or by the awareness of a certain cyclical pattern of change, when we contemplate the environment under the perspective of GCC we tend to become aware of the likely disappearance of certain environments and the loss of their current biodiversity. This primarily cognitive awareness is often expressed emotionally as well as imaginatively. Emotionally it often manifests in feelings of fear, regret, guilt, anticipated sorrow, anxiety, or even anger.[17] Imaginatively, this awareness is often reinforced by the visual information available through scientific modelling. Besides, our awareness of GCC's possible consequences can trigger imaginative projections that feedback into our current experience of the environment. By doing so, the contrast between what we presently experience and what we think we may experience in the future (or at least what we think the future experience of these

[17] Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change", 6–7.

environments will be like) becomes enhanced.[18] As a result, and as the studies done in this field confirm, the characteristic experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC is a complex one, in which certain emotions and maybe also imaginings seem to play key roles.[19]

The second aspect that, I think, plays a distinctive role in our experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC is an awareness of a certain form of existential dependency on the environment as a place to live and as a wellspring of vital resources. As the last, and previous, reports on GCC confirm[20], in the coming decades, certain areas currently inhabited by large human populations will no longer possess the conditions suitable for human life. Either due to the increasing desertification of large areas that are currently populated or by the rising of the sea level and the corresponding inundation of coastal zones, several areas currently habitable will cease to be so.

Furthermore, given that it is expected that the current population living in the threatened areas will supposedly migrate to those places where human life conditions are more hospitable, GCC will have a further consequence and impact on those areas still habitable in the future. So, the risks of GCC to our existential conditions will not only directly impact locally on certain areas of the globe. They will cause further large population migrations that, in turn, will impact other areas that are in principle less subject to this threat. In this sense, the dimension of this existential threat resulting from the GCC is global. We can find an analogous experience with environments where some (non-natural) devastating event has taken place, such as the areas still affected in Chernobyl (1986) or Fukushima (2011) after their respective nuclear disasters. Although these examples are not cases of deterioration of the environment as a result of GCC, they make vivid the threat of the existential condition that I am trying to capture and that has often been expressed in terms of finding our sense of homeliness in the world at risk.[21]

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[18] We can speculate that the recent increase of production in sci-fi works responds to the increase of this awareness and to the effort to imagine how our global environment will be like after some of the effects expected as a result of GCC.

[19] Among the most common emotions reported concerning GCC are worry, despair, anxiety, grief, guilt, solastalgia, and melancholy. Susan Clayton, Christie Manning, Kirra Krygsman, and Meighen Speiser, *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica, 2017); Susan Clayton and Christie Manning, eds., *Psychology and Climate Change: Human Perceptions, Impacts, and Responses* (Amsterdam: Academic Press, 2018) and Paul Hoggett, ed., *Climate Psychology: On Indifference to Disaster* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). These are often produced by thoughts or imaginative states that recreate in a visual or sensorily vivid manner future environments (Richardson, *The Art of Environmental Law*). These emotions and imaginative states are not only characteristic responses to the expected changes due to GCC, but also important motivating states to foster perceptual awareness of the signs of change in our current environment and to initiate action (Birgit Schneider and Thomas Nocke, eds., *Image Politics of Climate Change. Visualizations, Imaginations, Documentations* /Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014/).

[20] Annual Climate Change Report produced by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. To see the last Summary of this report see IPCC 2023, "Summary for Policymakers".

[21] For a characterization of the relation between a sense of homeliness in the world and aesthetic experience, see Arto Haapala, "Aesthetics, Ethics, and the Meaning of Place," *Filozofski vestnik* (Special Issue: XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics, "Aesthetics as Philosophy", Proceedings, Part I) 20, 2 (1999): 253–64; Arto Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday – Familiarity, Strangeness and the Meaning of a Place," in *The*

As we have seen with the temporal dimension analyzed above, this cognitive awareness also manifests itself emotionally and imaginatively. Emotionally, we find a similar range of emotions that characterized the sense of irreversibility referred to above. Fear and anxiety may be more prominent since they are the appropriate emotions in response to our sense of losing a place to live. Imaginatively, we can conceive of these future scenarios as having an alienating effect, turning familiar environments into inhospitable sites. Other imaginings that can arise from engaging with these hypothetical scenarios concern how this radical transformation will not only affect basic existential conditions, but a wide range of human relations, making certain experiences and human relations no longer sustainable.

My suggestion is that these two aspects, the temporal awareness of the irreversibility of certain environmental changes and the exacerbation of our existential dependency on the environment, play a distinctive role in the aesthetic experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC. Although certain forms of temporal awareness and existential dependency have always been part of the aesthetic experience of the environment given its role in our existence and development as a species, they acquire a novel dimension under the perspective of GCC which somehow dramatizes it.[22] Assuming this, in what sense are these cognitive, emotional and imaginative aspects - related to the irreversibility of certain changes and the existential dimension foregrounded by the perspective of GCC - significant when we address these environments from an aesthetic point of view?

In the following section, I would like to address this question by focusing on three aspects. The first one explores whether there is an aesthetic dimension already embedded in the characteristic emotional and imaginative responses mentioned above that can be responsible for - or at least contribute to a certain extent to - the aesthetic nature of the experience characteristic of current environments under the perspective of GCC. The second looks into the pervasive negative dimension of these responses and its relation to the valence of the aesthetic experience that follows. In particular, I would like to examine whether the alleged negativity of our emotional and imaginative responses to contemplating the environment from the perspective of GCC leaves some room for aesthetically rewarding experiences. Finally, I would like to assess whether categories such as the sublime or terrible beauty are adequate to capture the complexity of our emotional and formal responses to current environments under the perspective of GCC or if we need to explore other forms of capturing these experiences in light of the particular aspects examined in section 1.

Aesthetics of Everyday Life, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 39–55; Karsten Harris, "What Need is There for an Environmental Aesthetics?" *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 22, 40–41 (2011): 7–22, and Nomikos, "Place *Matters*". For an analysis of the experience of losing one's place as a result of GCC see Nomikos 2018.

[22] I do not present this claim as a novel claim about the kind of aesthetic appreciation that is characteristic of environmental appreciation under the conditions of GCC. My aim is to focus on these two aspects, which I think play a distinctive role in this case, and see which is exactly this role.

The aesthetic experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC

Some of the emotions that, as we have seen, characterize the experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC, such as solastalgia or melancholy, awe, terror, fear or strangeness, are not alien responses in aesthetic contexts. These emotions often feature in many aesthetic experiences in both art and nature and we often speak of them as aesthetic emotions.[23] Thus, for example, Clewis has characterized the notion of the sublime in terms of aesthetic awe;[24] Haapala and Brady[25] and Maes[26] have discussed the aesthetic character of melancholy.

It could even be argued that if these emotions are aesthetic, they will endow our experience with a certain aesthetic quality (for example, by involving a certain global perspective under which a particular situation is endowed with a special significance, both formal and content-like). Assuming this, maybe we can speculate that, to the extent that these emotions typically characterize the experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC, the experience will be, at least to a certain degree, aesthetic. Responding with those emotions will go hand in hand with adopting an aesthetic perspective.

Although this seems a tempting way to explain the aesthetic significance of the characteristic emotions that the awareness of GCC tends to trigger, we do not need to assume that all the instances of uncertainty, terror, awe, melancholy, or solastalgia are essentially aesthetic or possess an aesthetic character, for acknowledging to these emotions some role in the resulting aesthetic experience.[27] They can inform those experiences and provide some orientation to how certain features are experienced or some global emotional character, while preserving their ordinary character. They can dye or color[28] our perception of those environments endowing them with a certain emotional character.[29]

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[23] The question of what kind of state qualifies as an aesthetic emotion has been recently revived – see, for example, Joerg Fingerhut and Jeese J. Prinz, "Aesthetic Emotions Reconsidered," *The Monist* 103, 2 (2020): 223–39, or Jenefer Robinson, "Aesthetic Emotions," *The Monist* 103, 2 (2020). However, I will not enter into this dispute.

[24] Robert Clewis, "Why the Sublime Is Aesthetic Awe," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 79, 3 (2021): 301–14,

[25] Arto Haapala and Emily Brady, "Melancholy as an Aesthetic Emotion," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 1 (2003): Article 6.

[26] Hans Maes, "Aesthetic Melancholy" *Contemporary Aesthetics* 21 (2023), https://contempaesthetics.org/2023/06/20/aesthetic-melancholy/

[27] Given that there is no general agreement on what makes an emotion aesthetic or whether certain emotions are always aesthetic, it may be less theoretically compromising to remain neutral with respect to this question.

[28] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Richard Wollheim, *On the Emotions* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999).

[29] Nevertheless, as Pérez-Carreño emphasizes "The psychological tendency to see the world coloured by emotion also plays its part in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. But here it is important to distinguish between this tendency to see the world affected by mental states – something that goes for most of the time unnoticed and takes part of our daily life – and appreciating nature for how she appears expressive of emotions to us." Francisca Pérez Carreño, "Aesthetic Normativity and the Expressive Perception of Nature," *Studi di estetica* 4, 1 (2021): 144.

Similarly, the imaginings that may be triggered by the awareness of the GCC need not be necessarily guided by an aesthetic interest to enter into our experience in a way that provides it with a certain order or orientation. There are many instances of imagining possible scenarios that do not necessarily involve aesthetic activity.[30]

In this sense, and even if we do not need to assume that the emotional and imaginative responses referred to above have a particular aesthetic character, or that they constitute, in themselves, forms of aesthetically apprehending the environment, they can nevertheless play a central role in our current aesthetic encounter by providing some formal structure or orientation. Starting from this, appreciators can engage aesthetically with current environments and arrive at particular aesthetic experiences and judgments.

A second issue that can be considered concerning the role played by emotional responses and imaginings is the question of positive or negative valence of the aesthetic experience stemming from them. As indicated, most of these emotional reactions and imaginings to the irreversibility of certain environmental changes and the dramatized existential dependency tend to possess a negative tone. Does this negative character infiltrate into the resulting aesthetic experience?

In tune with a probable defense of the possibility of aesthetically valuable experiences in damaged or deteriorated environments,[31] I would like to motivate a similar claim in this case. In my view, we can acknowledge the significant role that these cognitive, imaginative, and emotional dimensions play without assuming that the resulting aesthetic value we will experience will necessarily be negative. I do not mean to underplay the negative character of the emotions and imaginings that the apprehension of the irreversibility of certain environmental changes and the dramatization of our existential dependency may bring into our experience, but I think this character leaves room for grasping the possible aesthetic worth that some of the environments' current features still afford. The form of aesthetic awareness that can be practiced in these contexts, in which our attention is very much guided by the aforementioned features, can make salient certain qualities such as fragility, fleetingness, or uniqueness of certain environments.[32] Furthermore, the resulting aesthetic experience can be enhanced by the awareness of its likely impermanence given that it would be unavailable in the future. In any case, each environment would possess a particular aesthetic character that, in turn, would be permeated by the awareness of its fragility given

[30] For example, scientific activity makes use of several forms of imaginings as a tool to predict or simulate future scenarios. In principle, these uses are not necessarily guided by any aesthetic interest but by a cognitive purpose.

[31] See, for example, María José Alcaraz León, "Morally Wrong Beauty as a Source of Value," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 40–41 (2011): 37–52; María José Alcaraz León, "On the Aesthetic Appreciation of Damaged Environments," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 80, 4 (2022): 420–31; Brady, "Aesthetic Value, Ethics, and Climate Change"; Nomikos, "Place *Matters*", or Robert Stecker, *Intersections of Value, Art, Nature, and the Everyday* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[32] If the awareness of the fragility, fleetingness, or uniqueness of certain environments is linked to positive human intervention in the environment, such as cases of environmental remediation or rewilding, it can give rise to a positive experience. I thank Sanna Lehtinen for this suggestion (personal exchange).

the conditions of GCC. The positive or negative character of the resulting aesthetic experience would thus depend on how these two levels of attention intertwine in a particular appreciative experience. But there is no *a priori* form of determining which aesthetic character would a particular environment possess just by reflecting what impact would these characteristic emotions and imaginative responses that typically emerge in this context have upon our experience.

The third issue I would like to comment with regards to the characteristic aesthetic experience of current environments under the perspective of GCC is the adequacy of certain aesthetic categories, such as the sublime, to grasp the aesthetic character proper to these environments. Certainly, some of the expected effects of GCC, like hurricanes or heavy storms, are, due to their magnitude and force, typical examples of sublime experience. This can be a consideration in favor of Brady's suggestion[33] that the category of the sublime may be especially adequate at least in some of these contexts.[34]

However, and taking on board this suggestion, I would like to qualify this adequacy by noticing an aspect of our experience under the perspective of GCC that seems to be at odds with some of the characteristics proper to the sublime experience. As we have already mentioned, our awareness of the consequences of GCC cannot be separated from an awareness of our role in those consequences and our responsibility as a species in the coming about of this phenomenon. In this sense, both our experience or current environments under the perspective of GCC and the anticipated experience facilitated by imaginative projections bear this understanding of human responsibility. That is, I think, one of the features that distinguishes our experience of typical examples of the sublime nature – such as a storm on the ocean, a volcano's eruption, or an immense desert – from our experience of current environments that may already be possibly contemplated under these traditional negative categories is that the awareness of the human impact and responsibility, in the latter case, is pervasive. Examples of the latter are the reduction of the Aral Sea, Chernobyl and Fukushima's environments, or areas drastically transformed by human activity that are often presented under their most striking appearances through photographs and film.[35] In these cases, our experience, however striking and overwhelming, cannot be simply understood in terms of a deep wonder at the acknowledged physical superiority of

[33] Brady, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics" and Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics and Climate Change," 407–8.

[34] Importantly, Brady does not think that the aesthetic category of the sublime captures the characteristic experience that most phenomena that we live through under the assumption of their connection to GCC produce. If the consequences of these phenomena are overwhelming or threaten the existing conditions of human and non-human life, the positive undertone of the sublime experience is absent and, hence, it is hard to think of these experiences in terms of the sublime. Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy. Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 163–4. Still, it may be, in some cases, a useful category to characterize the aesthetic experience of extreme natural phenomena or processes.

[35] A significant amount of photographic and film work produced by artists such as Sebastiao Salgado or Edward Burtinsky focuses on these environments.

nature.[36] Our sense of participation and responsibility precludes, I think, the experience of Nature's radical alterity, which is at the core of the experience of the sublime.[37]

I think a further indication of the inadequacy of the category of the sublime for characterizing environments, whose impressive nature might be partially caused by human activity, is the worry of aestheticizing its harmful consequences. [38]

Although these considerations do not completely preclude possible adequate instances of the sublime in the kind of cases examined, the awareness of our role and responsibility in the forms and appearances we aesthetically attend to, when appreciating current environments under the perspective of GCC, puts at least some pressure on its adequacy. On the face of this qualification, we could explore other conceptual alternatives that somehow capture the aesthetic power of these environments without ignoring the sense of human responsibility in the deterioration of the natural environment.

One suggestion could be to transfer the notion of 'ruin' – that in its ordinary use applies to cases in which natural processes overtake and devour architectural remains and human sites[39] – to the scenarios referred to, reverting its characteristic pattern of application. While the notion of ruin typically refers to human-made artefacts that become deteriorated and are eventually devoured by the natural forces and active dynamics of a natural environment, we could characterize extreme examples of environmental deterioration as 'environmental ruins' to convey the overwhelming and destructive effect that a continuous pattern of human exploitative activity has caused on the very sustainability and natural equilibrium of a certain environment. Thus, this reverse pattern of use of the notion of ruin will help us grasp, in an aesthetically vivid way, the effect that sustained and systematic human activity can, in its final outcome, have upon our environment. We can characterize as 'environmental ruins' cases in which human-sustained exploitative activity ends up ruining a particular natural

[36] It is important to underline that the moral significance of sublime experience is essentially connected to this aspect. Realizing our radical inferiority in the contemplation of natural vastness and force is, in turn, key to the reflective awareness of human moral superiority. The two aspects cannot be disentangled. For a further characterization of this relation see Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy*.

[37] Brady elaborates on this aspect as key to the quasi-epistemic value that the experience of the sublime affords. In her view, it is precisely by making our radical dependency and inferiority with respect to Nature vivid, that the experience of the sublime possesses a special capacity to raise our awareness about certain existential conditions governing our place within nature.

[38] See Tamara Schneider, "Aestheticizing Catastrophes. A Comparison of the Western and Japanese Approaches to Art Creation in View of the Climate Emergency," in *Degrowth Decolonization and Development. When Culture Meets the Environment*, ed. Milica Kočović De Santo and Stéphanie Eileen Domptail (Cham: Springer, 2023), 149–71.

[39] The relevance of the notion of ruin for the questions addressed in this paper is also reflected in some recent approaches to the aesthetic experience of cultural environments that invoke a similar notion - see, for example, Erich Hatala Matthes, "Environmental Heritage and the Ruins of the Future," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Ruins, Monuments, and Memorials*, ed. Jeanette Bicknell, Jennifer Judkins, and Carolyn Korsmeyer (New York: Routledge, 2019), 175–86, where he introduces the expression of 'ruins of the future' to refer to our awareness that many coastal areas will become ruins as a consequence of GCC; similarly, the wide literature on the notion of rewilding and restoration evokes attitudes to the environment that are similar, in some respects, to the ones we endorse towards cultural goods.

environment's equilibrium, impeding its possible restauration. Maybe scenarios like the aforementioned current state of the Aral Sea after its drastic drain or some devastated forests in the Amazonia can be perceived as exemplifying this sense of natural irreversible damage that the notion of environmental ruin can capture.[40]

I propose this way of conceptually grasping the aesthetic experience that certain current environments may typically afford as a possible metaphor to give some sense of the kind of mixed feelings that are involved in this experience. We are familiar with the vastness and impressiveness of some of these environments, but we are also aware of the human responsibility in the processes involved in their configuration. We feel that somehow our unrestricted and careless abuse of particular natural resources has ruined certain natural environments not allowing them the capacity to restore themselves or to recover some of their former natural dynamics.

Conclusion

I have tried, in this article, to emphasize the significance of the temporal sense of irreversibility and existential dependency to our aesthetic experience of current natural environments when they are approached from a perspective guided by GCC. I have also tried to show how these two aspects manifest in a threefold way: cognitively, emotionally, and imaginatively. Then I have explored the extent to which these different components of our experience can determine the aesthetic experience they characteristically afford. I have considered three possible issues about this broad question. The first one is whether we need to assume that the characteristic emotions and imagining typical in these cases need to be conceived in aesthetic terms for them to have some important role to play in the aesthetic experience of these environments. The second examines the possibility of valuable aesthetic experience in the context of this appreciation. The third explores the adequacy of certain aesthetic categories, such as the sublime, and proposes new conceptual metaphors, such as 'environmental ruin', to grasp the peculiar sense of human responsibility involved in these cases.[41]

[40] There may be a possible objection to the adequacy of this characterization that we need to consider. It could be argued that since the characteristic aesthetic experience of ruins comprises a negative as well as a positive feeling or components, there is some danger to aestheticize these scenarios.

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Place and Image. The Role of Representation in the Aesthetic Experience of Places

Abstract: In my paper, I will discuss the role of the image in the determination of people's approaches and attitudes towards places. After a short introduction (§1), in the first part of the essay I will discuss the main points of criticism against the image in relation to the issue of environmental appreciation. In doing so, I will relate Allen Carlson's criticism towards the so-called 'landscape cult' in environmental aesthetics (§2) to the post-structuralist critique of the concept of landscape that has been carried out in the field of human geography (§3). In the fourth section, I will emphasize the structuring and performative character of representations, and will show how, in the present, the image remains one of the fundamental ways of regulating relations between subjects of experience and places (§4). The task of a theory of place-image, informed by knowledge acquired in the fields of visual and media studies, is to learn to read images as tools for understanding and defining the environment around us.

Keywords: image; place; landscape; environment; art; representation.

Introduction

Criticism towards the oculocentrism typical of Western culture, and the modern era in particular, has become commonplace, especially in studies of environmental aesthetics and landscape theory. The modern overemphasis on the role of sight in the arts and aesthetics is now countered with a rediscovery of the importance of other senses in the aesthetic experience of places and, in general, in regulating our interplay with the world around us.

Before discussing the strengths and weaknesses of this critique, it is important to note that the fields of landscape theory and environmental aesthetics do not coincide. According to Emily Brady and Jonathan Prior, the main issues of the contemporary debate on environmental aesthetics are: "(a) the distinction between art or object-focused aesthetics and environmental aesthetics; (b) the multisensory potential of environmental aesthetics compared to visual and scenic approaches and (c) 'cognitive' versus 'non-cognitive' environmental aesthetics"[1]. In the framework

[1] Emily Brady and Jonathan Prior, "Environmental Aesthetics: A Synthetic Review," *People & Nature* 2 (June 2020), 256.

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defined by the intersection of these three questions, the concept of landscape seems to be out of tune: in fact, because of the peculiar mixture of nature and culture that characterizes it, the landscape resists the assumptions implicit in the Anglo-Saxon debate on environmental aesthetics, above all that of a clear ontological divide between nature and culture. As noted by Alberto Siani: "While natural beauty, as opposed to artistic beauty, is a traditional topic of philosophical aesthetics, this is less the case for landscapes, which have traditionally been neglected by it."[2] More recently, Brady has turned her attention to environments "that emerge from various nature-culture interactions"[3]. However, also in this case the term 'environment' is preferred to 'landscape'. This is intended to emphasize the materiality of the spatial area under consideration, in an argumentative context in which the term 'landscape' is often associated with figurative art as opposed to nature, or is conceived as a visual and scenic construct, opposed to an embodied, multi-sensory aesthetic.

Instead, the landscape theory is a complex transdisciplinary field, defined by the intersection of voices from disciplines accustomed to considering landscape as a mixed construct, referring simultaneously to an area in space and its perceptions and representations. The semantic ambiguity of landscape has been criticized, deconstructed or even rejected,[4] but also specifically claimed by some authors and schools in human geography and beyond.[5] What distinguishes these attitudes is the position taken by different authors and approaches on an eminently philosophical issue: what is the nature of the relationship between reality and image, given that the concept of landscape implies a relationship, however contradictory, between them?

It should be emphasized that hostility to oculocentrism is present in environmental aesthetics debates as well as in human geography and other disciplines that deal with the landscape in a substantive sense of the word.[6] As we will see in the next section, both environmental aesthetics and non-representational human geography emphasize the multi-sensory nature of environment or landscape, the perceptual richness made possible by immersion in the environment, and the incorporation of visual landscape experience into a multiplicity of embodied socio-spatial practices. However, referring to the non-visual factors that characterize landscape and how we

[2] Alberto Siani, "Landscape Aesthetics," International Lexicon of Aesthetics, Spring, 2022, https://lexicon.mimesisjournals.com/archive/2022/spring/LandscapeAesthetics.pdf, acc. on March 7, 2024.

[3] Emily Brady, Isis Broo and Jonathan Prior, *Between Nature and Culture: The Aesthetics of Modified Environments* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 2.

[4] In the history of geography, Richard Hartshorne has denounced the confusion induced by the use of the term 'landscape' in a scientific inquiry, because of its duplicitous reference to "the appearance of a land as we perceive it" on the one hand and "the section of the earth surface and sky that lies in our field of vision" on the other hand. Richard Hartshorne, *The Nature of Geography* (Ann Arbor: Edward Brother, 1939), 150.

[5] An example of this positive attitude towards the semantic ambiguity of landscape is the phenomenological approach of the cultural geographer John Wylie, according to whom "landscape is tension". John Wylie, *Landscape* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 5.

[6] The use of the adjective 'substantive' to describe landscape has been claimed by the geographer Kenneth Olwig to vindicate the socio-political roots of the landscape idea, against an only aesthetic view of it. See Kenneth Olwig, "Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, 4 (1996): 630–53.

experience it cannot suffice to abandon the question of representing and representability of places. Today we live in a world dominated by images, both online and offline; owing to social media and online photo and video repositories, we are literally surrounded by images of places, regardless of their geographical distance. Nonetheless, the question of representation has to do with the possibility to recognize, investigate, and communicate places since before the emergence of contemporary visual tools and even the innovations in figurative arts of the modern era. Of course, landscape painting is a product of Western modernity, but that does not mean that topographical representations have popped up in history with the diffusion of landscape painting, just like they have not begun with the diffusion of Instagram.[7] There are, therefore, both structural and contingent reasons to reconsider the importance of images for places. Images are able to give shape to aesthetic tastes that affect the way we live, build, preserve, or transform places. This is why we must take into account the importance that image has in structuring our spatial experience and shaping place, understood as "a meaningful segment of space".[8]

Environmental aesthetics and the landscape cult

In environmental aesthetics debates, criticism towards oculocentrism goes hand in hand with criticism of a modern aesthetics that is primarily concerned with art, and in particular figurative art. The rediscovery of nature as an object of aesthetic appreciation is thus related to an embodied and immersive aesthetics, which, by breaking out of the artificial and framed spaces of the art museums, allows for a rapprochement between humans and the natural environment. Ronald Hepburn, considered the first contemporary representative of environmental aesthetics, choses as the guiding question of his investigation: "What can contemporary aesthetics do about the topic of natural beauty?"[9] He retrieves the question of natural beauty by recovering the original meaning of aesthetics as an investigation into the sensual relationships between the subject and the world; to this end, he diverted attention from the field of art, understood *à la Rousseau* as the sphere of the artificial, characterized by 'frameworks and boundaries'[10]. In this approach, in continuity with American Transcendentalism, the aesthetic claim rests on ontological and phenomenological

[7] The geographer Ed Soja notes that much of what we can know of the first city in the world, the Neolithic city of Çatalhöyük in Anatolia, depends on the topographical representation found on the wall of one of the houses discovered in the archaeological excavations. The representation dates back to 6150 BC and its object is "a panorama seen from above of more than seventy houses: the first example of cityscape, at the same time real and imaginary". Ed Soja, "Foreword. Cityscapes as Cityspaces," in *Urban Spaces and Cityscapes*, ed. Cristoph Lindner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). XVI.

[8] Tim Cresswell, "Place," in *The SAGE Handbook of Human Geography*, ed. Roger Lee et al., (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2014), 4.

[9] Ronald Hepburn, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 3, 3 (1963): 196.

[10] Serena Feloj, "Environmental Aesthetics", in *International Lexicon of Aesthetics*, 2018. https://lexicon.mimesisjournals.com/archive/2018/autumn/EnvironmentalAesthetics.pdf, accessed on March 7, 2024.

premises.[11] Nature, especially in modern society, characterized by the invasive presence of humans, must be thought of as an ontological reference point, not at the disposal of human projects and strategies, but, on the contrary, capable of enveloping humans in space and time; a specific phenomenology must correspond to this reality, in which the passive and receptive dimension of experience is highlighted, and a related aesthetics, in which aesthetic value does not derive from the cultural action of humans (for instance, artists, planners, observers), but depends on the expressive and performative character of nature as such. This leads to one of the most popular arguments in the contemporary debate: the ways of aesthetically appreciating nature are specific to nature, and it is a mistake to apply to nature the criteria of aesthetic evaluation and judgement that we adopt when we look at a work of art.

Allen Carlson, as is well known, is the major proponent of such position.[12] In his cognitive approach to environmental aesthetics, the art/nature divide has as a corollary the opposition between an aesthetic of the gaze, doomed to remain superficial, and an informed and engaged aesthetic, in which knowledge plays a decisive role. In Carlson's proposal there is a choice to be made: on the one hand, the simplification and trivialization of taste favored by an overemphasis on the role of sight, separated from the other senses; on the other, body and mind reunited in a finally recomposed experience of nature, in which knowledge guides aesthetic appreciation as only science provides proper and sound information about what nature really is and how it must be experienced and appreciated. The junction between the question of Western oculocentrism and the misleading application of the artistic criteria of nature appreciation is realized, in Carlson's argument, in the notion of 'landscape' or 'scenic cult'[13]. The overlap between the terms 'landscape' and 'scenic' is very telling in this regard. The concept of 'landscape' should not be admitted among the defining concepts of the environmental aesthetics for landscape does not simply mean environment, but environment as long as it is seen from a distance, in the same manner in which we stare at a landscape painting from a certain distance. Aesthetic appreciation in the figurative arts, Carlson argues, is often of a contemplative kind, and it does not involve other senses than the sight. This means that, when we appreciate the compositional and pictorial values of a certain natural environment, we are addressing it from the outside, reducing it to a bidimensional scene endowed with lines, shapes, and colors, like a painting or a picture.

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[11] On the relationships between Ronald Hepburn's work in environmental aesthetics and American transcendentalism, see D. Cooper, "Aesthetic Experience, Metaphysics and Subjectivity: Ronald W. Hepburn and 'Nature-Mysticism'," *Journal of Scottish Thought* 10 (2018): 90–102.

[12] In what follows, I will not elaborate a complete and up-to-date critique of Carlson's argument. Therefore, I will not refer to the author's evolutions in thought, as evidenced by his latest publications, which I will not discuss. The need here is to isolate the argument that landscape is a disembodied artistic image, in order to relate it to the critical arguments raised in the framework of human geography against representation in the next section.

[13] Allen Carlson, "Formal Qualities in the Natural Environment", *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13, 3 (1979): 103; and Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 32–37.

In this framework, landscape is understood as a cultural image that implicitly misguides our aesthetic assessments directed to nature. According to Carlson, to properly appreciate nature means avoiding the distraction and misguide of images. As a consequence of such a net stance, the kind of appreciation that Carlson reserves to nature does not look much like aesthetic appreciation at all:[14] if, on the one hand, Carlson's effort to elaborate a sort of 'deep aesthetics' by retrieving its relevant (and often overlooked) connections to knowledge and cognition is shareable, on the other hand it must be acknowledged that also a 'deep' informed aesthetics must be a kind of aesthetics, to the extent that it concerns the sensuous interconnections between us and our surroundings. Furthermore, the junction between the art/nature dualism and the image/reality one hampers the understanding of the entanglements between, on the one hand, culture and nature in real places (ontological level) and, on the other hand, sight and other senses in embodied and mediated experiences of places (phenomenological level). The point is to establish whether the mediation of images is, per se, incompatible with proper appreciation of places or it can play a central part in mediating between the experiential subjects and places.

Landscape as veil, landscape as gaze

Human geography has always been aware of the mutual impact of nature on culture and culture on nature. In this sense, as anticipated above, human geography's epistemological framework does not coincide with that of contemporary environmental aesthetics. One of the forefathers of the 20th century geography, Carl Sauer, has defined landscape as "an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural"[15]. Another important geographer of the beginning of the 20th century, Vidal de la Blache, has defined geography as the 'science of places', where places are understood as spatial locations endowed with intrinsic morphological qualities and expressive potential suited to be represented. The very etymology of geography displays a nexus of invaluable philosophical relevance: the nexus of earth and drawing, *Gea* and *Graphein*, reality and representation.[16] Human geography is rather inclined

[14] Let us recall, in addition to Emily Brady's well-known epistemological criticism of Carlson's position, Roger Paden's arguments aimed at redeeming a positive meaning of the picturesque, a typical 18th-century taste against which Carlson took sides, reducing it to a mere trivialization and artificialization of nature, at work precisely in landscape painting. According to Paden, in the picturesque, the painter's gaze intersects with the naturalist gaze: with landscape painting, a less idealized nature than the classical one began to enter art, despite the undeniable influence of taste elements dependent on the socio-cultural coordinates of the 18th century. In his essays, the author looks for a positive interplay between aesthetics and natural sciences, retrieving a tradition that has its roots in Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt, rather than the American Transcendentalism. See at least Roger Paden, "Picturesque Landscape Painting and Environmental Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 49, 2 (2015), 39–61.

[15] Carl Sauer, *The Morphology of Landscape*, in *Land and Life. A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. John Leighly (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 321.

[16] This issue is discussed at greater length in Paolo Furia, "Vers une interprétation herméneutique de la géographie," *Annuario filosofico* 38 (2023): 123–44.

to deal with hybrid and in-between entities, which escape the rigid dualisms of the analytical cognitive approach in environmental aesthetics.[17] The question of the image is clearly intrinsic to geography as such, given the hybrid and singular nature of its objects of study (places and landscapes) can be better grasped through the gesture of drawing, that is, through the image, rather than categorical knowledge. This explains why geographical thought, broadly speaking, is more inclined than other research fields to challenge the idea according to which pictures can distract, amuse, and confuse, but are not suited to pursue knowledge, and appearance does not tell the truth, but hides or distorts it.

However, in the last few decades, in a profound epistemological self-criticism not devoid of political significance, even human geography has taken a critical distance from images as ways to knowledge and has recognized their deep ideological implications. Two cornerstones of geographical representationalism have fallen under the lens of an increasingly demanding critique: the map and the concept of landscape. In this section we will only deal with the criticism and deconstruction of the concept of landscape, leaving aside the important issue of criticism of cartography: the two issues are certainly interconnected, but it is the image of the landscape that draws our attention here, precisely because of its both aesthetic and geographical significance and because of its mediating function between the domain of art and that of knowledge.

Both the structuralist epistemologies, of mainly Marxist inspiration, and the post-structuralist epistemologies, linked to the development of cultural studies and feminist and post-colonial geography and anthropology, have fed a critique and often a deconstruction of the main visual concepts with which geography operates. John Wylie remarks that in these frameworks landscape art is considered "a system for producing and transmitting meaning through visual symbols and representations"[18]. The complex semantic ambiguity of landscape, halfway between land and eye, is solved in favor of the eye: landscape turns into a 'way of seeing'[19]. According to Denis Cosgrove, "the basic theory and technique of the landscape way of seeing is linear perspective"[20], the historical and symbolic character of which has been appreciated since at least

[17] The importance of the notion of milieu for human geography testifies to its inclination towards mundane, hybrid, entangled entities, which an analytic approach tends to dissect into its allegedly prior elements (such as nature and culture, or earth and image). According to Augustin Berque, the geographical term 'milieu' must be differentiated from the cognate term 'environment': in fact, this latter refers to an objective, natural entity which acts as the setting of human action, whereas the word 'milieu' refers to the always singular and ongoing outcome of the reciprocal co-constitution of humans and their environment. Berque claims that, technically, we co-produce our milieux, which does not contradict the fact that our milieux influence our behaviors, ways of thinking, and aesthetic tastes. From this point of view, the natural and the anthropic can be fully isolated only after an act of abstraction: to truly understand a milieu, it is necessary to understand how the natural and man-made elements combine to create, sustain, and modify it, in the knowledge that the milieu as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The issue is discussed in Augustin Berque, *Écoumène. Introduction à l'étude des milieux humains* (Paris: Belin Litterature et Revues, 2016).

[18] Wylie, *Landscape*, 55.

[19] Ibid., 56.

[20] Denis Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10, 1 (1985), 45–62 and Olaf Kühne, *Landscape Aesthetics* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 51.

Erwin Panofsky,[21] inspired in turn by the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer.[22] Cosgrove elaborates a socio-political interpretation of the interconnection between landscape and linear perspective: since the linear perspective is historically connected not only to artistic developments, but also to specific ways to exploit space, arranging it according to a visual point of view that claims to be exclusive and dominant, landscape emerges as a way to force the multidimensionality of space into the visual framework of the beholders and make it available for gauging, surveying, and exploitation. Landscape as a way of seeing, therefore, results in "a composition and structuring of the world so that it may be appropriated by a detached individual spectator to whom an illusion of order and control is offered through the composition of space according to the certainties of geometry."[23] From an aesthetic-phenomenological point of view, what matters the most is that a historical way of seeing is reified and imposed over the environment. In this conception, landscape results from the reduction of the geographical reality to the cultural and ideological codes of the gaze; the aesthetic qualities of the geographical reality, therefore, have a subjective origin, however reified, while space itself loses its autonomy and becomes a passive receptacle, waiting to receive forms from human demiurgic activity.

Geographer John Wylie traces the main argumentations of the critical approaches towards landscape in human geography by discussing two aesthetic metaphors: landscape as 'veil' and landscape as 'gaze'.[24] Both have the same approach: landscape is a 'frozen' image that hides invisible processes, and the task of critical geography is to reveal the real processes concealed by the landscape image. However, the veil metaphor refers to the existence of structures behind the landscape appearance, whereas the gaze metaphor disperses the geographic reality in a potentially infinite intersection of different, conflicting views. This is why, Wylie notes, the first metaphor is more related to structuralism, whereas the second is rather tied to post-structuralism. To some extent, the veil metaphor adopts and deepens the same ontological divide assumed by Allen Carlson in the framework of environmental aesthetics. According to Raymond Williams: "A working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation"[25]. In such separation there is room for idealization: landscape embodies aesthetic, painterly values for those who have the privilege to contemplate it from a distance. Differently from Carlson, however, the

[21] See Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher Wood (Princeton: Zone Books, 1991).

[22] See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. Ralph Mannheim, 3 vols. (New Haven and London, 1955–1957).

[23] Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea," 58.

[24] Also, Wylie discusses a third metaphor, quite important in the context of post-structuralism but less relevant for aesthetics: landscape as 'text' (Wylie, *Landscape*, 70–82). An aspect deserves to be recalled here, albeit very briefly: although the approach to the landscape concept implicit in the metaphor of the landscape as text is analogous to that of the metaphors of the landscape as a veil and as a gaze, the emphasis on the text, put in particular by the semiotics of the final decades of the twentieth century, takes away from the landscape image all autonomy and performativity, reducing it to the rigid result of a writing strategy in which the authors coincide with those who have the power (at the material and imaginary level) to manipulate geographical reality.

[25] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985), 68.

reality, according to Williams, is not nature scientifically understood, but the material conditions of spatial production.[26] These structural conditions can be detected and denounced through a critical analysis of the ways space presents itself to perception and in representations: in other words, a critical analysis of the landscape. According to the veil metaphor, the imagistic character of landscape is simply opposed to the geographical reality, which is in itself non-imagistic and, ultimately, non-aesthetic.

The gaze metaphor works differently. Instead of a veil imposed on geographical reality by a dominant class, the metaphor of the gaze suggests that the geographical reality itself is constituted by a multiplicity of competing looks. In this framework, the metaphor of the landscape as a veil is also the object of criticism and deconstruction. To break the spell of the landscape image, in fact, it is pointless to look for a full-fledged reality that lies under the aesthetic veil: there is really no geographical reality independent of the diverse gazes of the people who inhabit or pass through it. This means that, according to the metaphor of the gaze, any geographical entity is a landscape as long as there is an embodied subjectivity that perceives it and attaches affective meanings and significance to it. Putting the concept to extremes, we could say that, in this case, the geographical reality is itself image, where by image we mean a device through which everyone orients herself in space and time and gives meaning to the world around her. Among other things, from this metaphor follows a precise consequence: aestheticization of nature, and of geographical reality in general, is inevitable because the very nature and the same reality, to the extent that it makes sense to people, is given in the image. The critical task of human geography, in the post-structuralist attitude, does not consist in the refusal of the imagistic character of geographical reality, but in giving voices to gazes that are different than, or even subaltern to, the predominant ones. It is no coincidence that the metaphor of the gaze has been adopted in post-structuralist circles to give voice to other views, traditionally not considered by the humanities or philosophy: the gaze of women, the gaze of the suburbs and the margins, the gaze of those who live in places and do not limit themselves to contemplate them.[27] The relativism implied by the gaze metaphor, therefore, serves emancipatory purposes: instead of fighting against images in order to retrieve an allegedly authentic reality behind the veil, authors like Ed Soja,[28] Gillian Rose,[29]

[26] The idea that space is actively produced by structural and material processes is widespread in the context of critical geography: see, at least, David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1973) and Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

[27] See Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

[28] See Ed Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996): in this book, the author maintains that the cityscape of Los Angeles cannot be reduced to the mere mechanical output of a strategic planning, as sometimes happens in some hasty reconstructions, often Eurocentric. Los Angeles must be understood as an engine of development and competition of different imaginaries: that of the white elites, of Hollywood and the sparkling actors' homes of the actors, but also the Mexican and Latin, that of the countless communities of migrants, that of musical subcultures and examples of public art. The dominant image that we have of Orange County, whose promotion has been fueled, among others, by Jean Baudrillard, is actually a simplification that does not take into account the structuring part played by minor or local imaginaries.

[29] The author has continued to work on visual representation of geographical entities (cities, environments, landscapes…) up to now. In the edited book *Seeing the City Digitally* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University

Giuseppe Dematteis[30] work against hypostatized or reified images that claim to absorb the entire scope of reality.

The post-structuralist approach has certainly favored the reintegration of the gaze into the practical life of embodied subjectivities. However, this perspective results in a sort of human-centered culturalism in which aesthetic value and appreciation ultimately depend on the cultural codes that structure the involved bodies and gazes. In other words, such representationalist accounts in human geography emphasize the social and cultural structuration of people's attachment to places or imaginaries about places, without fully taking into consideration the morphological, topological and spatial constraints to cultural gazes. If, in the end, place-meaning is a mere cultural product, mediated by the cultural imaginaries of the involved subjectivities, the reality of place is reduced to a competition between images. It is against this kind of reductionism of reality to image that, in the last twenty years, in aesthetics as in geography, realist positions and approaches have started to emerge, aimed at redeeming the materiality, concreteness, and expressiveness of the geographical reality as such.[31] The negation of the reduction of the aesthetic experience of the nature to the scenic and the visual pursued by Carlson is part of this reaction as well. But is it really possible to remove the question of the representation to account for our aesthetic (but also ethic, socio-political, ecological) relationship with nature and geographical reality in general? And is it possible to address this question without falling into one of the two mentioned reductionisms, that of the image as a distortion of reality and that of the reality that evaporates in the image? We will sketch some possible answers in the next section.

Press, 2022), she discusses the transformations of the gaze induced by digital technologies, whose representational character is revealed, in contrast with many enthusiastic interpretations of the digital tools as non-representational, fully immersive, and performative.

[30] Giuseppe Dematteis is one of the most important representatives of the postmodern strand in human geography. His famous research on the metaphors of the earth aims at revealing the ineliminable function of images and imaginaries for the determination of various spatial practices and the emergence of place meanings (See: Giuseppe Dematteis, *Le metafore della Terra. La geografia umana tra mito e scienza*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1985). The third edition of his co-edited book *Geografia umana. Un approccio visuale* (Milano: UTET, 2019) aims at overcoming the prejudice that visual learning necessarily accompanies a weakening in rational cognitive processes and that, therefore, images are alternatives to concepts.

[31] In this regard, it would be interesting to note the liaison points between the performative turn in the arts and aesthetics (see E. Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008) and the so-called non-representational turn in human geography and landscape theory (Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory. Space, Politics, Affect*. Abingdon: Routledge 2008). In both cases, we have to do with a shift of emphasis from representations to practices, where the materiality of the body-space relationship gets greater prominence than the imaginary ways in which they are framed by the cultural subjectivity. A focus on spatial practices rather than representations can also be found in the framework of everyday aesthetics. See, for instance, Lisa Giombini and Adrian Kvokacka, eds., *Applying Aesthetics to Everyday Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).

Representation between simplification and enhancement: The dialectic of place and image

The role played by environmental representations in structuring our aesthetic appraisals and judgements about places can hardly be denied, especially today. We live in an interconnected world where places are put into competition to attract economic investments, residents, and tourists. In such competition, it is not only a matter of what instrumental need can be satisfied by this or that place. Much of their greater or lesser success depends on the image they are able to deliver to various potential targets of interest. The position gained by a place in the global imaginary depends on its capacity to persuade, attire, seduce potential consumers, who are now basically social media users. In other words, territorial marketing functions as a competition between place-narratives, in which the visual component plays a pivotal part. We have to do with a sort of 'iconoclash':[32] place-images display their performative power in inspiring people's preferences, motivating their choices, giving shape to the criteria we usually adopt to appraise places. At this point we are speaking of places, no matter if natural or anthropic, because the representational dynamic works the same way. Specific associations of natural and anthropic elements and forms on a portion of terrestrial space turn into places when they assume affective meaning for those who inhabit it, but also when they enter into the collective imagination. And they can do that if they manage to equip themselves with a place-image, which, by virtue of its immediacy, enters into direct communication with potential consumers and elicits appreciation from their part. In other words, if we stick to the definition of landscape as a portion of space insofar as it is perceived and represented,[33] we can argue that every place has a landscape, even more so in a visual-based global market of local identities; and that aesthetic appreciation of places, at least on a descriptive level, does not primarily depend on whether the considered environment is natural or cultural, but on its capacity to realize itself in an image that is effective and successful according to judgement criteria that are mostly visual.

The recognition of the performativity and effectiveness of place-images in fueling end even shaping our aesthetic appreciation of places and our spatial practices is not equivalent to justifying Western oculocentrism. On the contrary, realizing the power of the image in the context of contemporary communication about places is the first step to defend ourselves from stereotyping, trivialization and hyper-simplification that such 'scopic regime'[34] inevitably implements. The geographical, ecological,

[32] See Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Iconoclash. Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

[33] This is a sufficiently generic and neutral definition of landscape, which could be subscribed by both environmental aesthetics theorists who criticize landscape because of its visual character and those researchers who emphasize the aesthetic and imagistic character of landscape.

[34] The French film theorist Christian Metz coined the expression 'scopic regime' to differentiate cinema from theatre: "What defines the specifically cinematic scopic regime is not so much the distance maintained [...] as the absence of the object seen." Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 61. The American scholar

historical, and socio-cultural complexity of places can rarely be contained in a single image: in that sense, a scopic regime that relies entirely on the ability of place-images to anticipate and structure the aesthetic experiences of places often prove trivial and simplifying, despite the attempts to realize digital images as increasingly powerful and immersive. In some cases, the very experience of being in a place is sufficient to disarticulate the expectations of the visitor, which were based on disembodied visualizations. Yet, at least at the present stage of technological development, no technologically mediated experience of a place proves more effective and immersive than actually being there in flesh and blood. As the geographer Aharon Kellerman has recently claimed: "One can experience real space through body and mind using all senses [...]. Cyberspace, on the other hand, is a very sensitive and instantly changing way of presenting information, perceived through the senses by its users in rather circumscribed ways, usually at the visual or audio-visual level."[35]

The omnipresence of images in our everyday experience continues to fuel research in the field of visual studies[36], just when the digital mediation makes possible to simulate three-dimensional, audiovisual experiences of art objects and places, both real and imagined. There is no contradiction in this process: research in visual studies has long been aware of the mixed character of the new media. William Mitchell claims that: "'Visual media' is a colloquial expression used to designate things like TV, movies, photography, painting, and so on. But it is highly inexact and misleading. All the so-called visual media turn out, on closer inspection, to involve the other senses (especially touch and hearing). All media are, from the standpoint of sensory modality, 'mixed media.'"[37] This is not to deny the power of the visual in the present age, but to reveal "the intricate braiding and nesting of the visual with the other senses"[38]. This intricacy becomes apparent when we make experience of places: not only because when we perceive, we situate the perceived objects in "a scene of which we form a part"[39] (and we call such scene, inherent to our perceptive acts, place), but also because, when speaking about places, perception evolves into representation, meaning, the perceived qualities of a place are shareable and communicable thanks to representations. Of course, from perception to representation there is a leap: the fixation of the perceived qualities on the material supports (digital supports included) implies a selection of the information considered worthy of being displayed. In this sense, image (both

Martin Jay uses the term to indicate the way a culture organizes and implements visuality, according to the available technologies and media and to the social and political interests that are prevalent in a given historical context.

[35] Aharon Kellerman, *Geographic Interpretations of the Internet* (Cham: Springer, 2016), 10.

[36] "This focus on the visual was intensified in the 1980s and the 1990s by the explosion of visual images made possible by the proliferation of increasingly easy and affordable technical means of producing and remediating digital images." Richard Grusin, "The Mediation Is the Message," *Journal of Visual Culture* 13, 1 (2014): 55.

[37] William Mitchell, "There Are No Visual Media," *Journal of Visual Culture* 4, 2 (2005): 257.

[38] Ibid., 266.

[39] Ed Casey, *How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena*, in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 17.

cartographic and figurative, both conventional and topographical) always results from a first-hand experience abstraction.[40]

It would be a naif move to simply oppose the embodied experience of being there and the disembodied anticipation of experience made possible by representations. The analysis given so far rather leads to the conclusion that between place and image there is a dialectical interplay, according to which the geographical reality of places is modified by images and images are affected by places themselves. From the epistemic point of view, the place-image realizes or puts into light some aspects of the place in question, while obscuring or removing others from the sight.[41] To borrow a term from Gottfried Boehm, there is an 'iconic difference'[42] between the image and the ontological referent, not in the sense that the reality the image refers to is already accomplished in itself while the image is a mere copy, but in the sense that a certain image emphasizes, actualizes, and enhances a certain aspect of such reality, without being able to saturate it, to fully express all its virtualities. The entanglement between multi-sensuous, embodied experience and representation is clearly evident today, with the availability of customized social media which allow us to spread in the internet pictures of places that we visited and experienced, or to orient our choices in tourist destinations. Nevertheless, on closer inspection, the practices by which places are recognized, built, maintained, and projected into the collective imagination have always included the representational. Place-images are performative not only at the phenomenological level of how people make experience of places, but also at the ontological level of place-making. In fact, not only aesthetic preferences are influenced by place-images, but also urban planning, landscape architecture, natural heritage preservation choices and actions. There are cases in which image comes prior to the geographical reality,[43] but also in cases of representations that claim to be mimetic (like, say, photographical ones) there lies a surplus of meaning that settles down into the very fabric of the place in question. At the same time, the materiality of a place, that is, its morphology, its topology, its architectural elements, but also its geographical

[40] This is what Vilém Flusser maintains about images in general, while, from photography onwards, new technical images must be accounted as abstractions of the third order, which, despite their impression of immediacy, are realized by using sophisticated technological apparatus based on scientific knowledge. See Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).

[41] Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery have distinguished two kinds of dialectics: the dialectics-as-epistemology, which "refers to a method of reasoning by which one searches for understanding through the clash of opposing arguments"; and the dialectics-as-ontology, which "refers to a view of reality as the dynamic interplay of opposing forces." Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery, *Relating. Dialogues and Dialectics* (New York: Guilford Press, 2016), 18, 19. The relationship between places and image is an example of dialectics-as-ontology. The two opposing forces are, on the one hand, geographical places, and, on the other hand, their representations. This opposition is, at a closer look, a reciprocal action: images affect the reality of places, and places affect how a reality is represented.

[42] Gottfried Boehm, *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen* (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2007), 19.

[43] Between the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, with the decisive help of photography and cinema, urbanism becomes more dependent on the 'design' image. Images become, in modern urban planning, "the footprints or traces of real urban spaces." Gillian Rose, *Seeing the City Digitally* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 14.

position, exerts a significant influence in shaping place-images. The geographical reality and the geographical imaginary are dialectically entangled: it would be pointless to reduce one to the other, or to reify one to the detriment of the other.

At the end of this essay, I conclude by suggesting that the processual, transitional, dynamic character of space depends on the dialectic interplay between places and images. The issue of the aesthetic appreciation of places offers possible ideas to address the philosophical question of the relationship between reality and representation, bypassing the double reductionism of images to reality and of reality to image. Ed Casey concludes similarly in his seminal book devoted to landscape painting and maps, addressed together in relation to the question of the nature of representation:[44]

> Places […] are bound up with representation, just as representation in turn calls for places as the bounded particulars of any given landscape domain. The truth is that representation is not a contingent matter, something merely secondary; it is integral to the perception of landscape itself – indeed, part of its being and essential to its manifestation […]. To be a landscape at all, to be an integral part of a sensuously qualified place-world, is already to have entered the encompassing embrace of the representational enterprise.[45]

In such view, a critical stance is still required, not to eliminate representations as they are ideological and deceitful, but to learn to read and interpret them as ineliminable tools to access geographical reality, inherently endowed with shapes, lines, and colors. The representational enterprise, to borrow Casey's expression, is based on prior self-presentation of places: between reality and images there is a substantive continuity endowed with both phenomenological and ontological significance.

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[44] In my essay I have limited myself to address, in a necessarily synthetic way, the performative character of place-images in the contemporary era, characterized by digital technologies of visualization and communication. Casey's account of landscape paintings and maps broadens the range of the media under consideration, which is necessary in order to address the question of the relationship between reality and image in fully philosophical terms.

[45] Ed Casey, *Representing Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), XV.

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The Beauty and the Waste. The Trans-tactical Approach of Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva

Abstract: Contemporary art, reflecting present-day realities, adapts to the evolving social, technological, and societal changes in developed and capitalist-oriented countries. This adaptation involves breaking down disciplinary boundaries and embracing trans-tactics, where knowledge from diverse fields informs artistic creation. Art becomes a multifaceted endeavor, engaging with political, social, and ecological issues, contributing to deeper creativity and consumer engagement. The fusion of science, technology, and art raises ethical and aesthetic questions, particularly regarding the use of sustainable materials and environmental impact. Meanwhile, artists explore natural and cultural complexities, emphasizing political dimensions like ecology, sustainability, and social justice. Projects such as *Silenthio Pathologia* and *Haruspex* by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva exemplify these themes, inspiring discussions on eco-social crises and sustainable practices.

Keywords: contemporary art; trans-tactics; organic waste; aesthetics; ethics; sustainability; nature; humanity.

Introduction

In the face of the urgent threat of climate change and the global socio-environmental crisis caused by a modified form of capitalism, artists' roles are growing in significance. They play a crucial role in developing innovative approaches to foster new social connections and relationships rooted in principles of solidarity and social justice. Within the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, culture and the arts are recognized as the fourth fundamental aspect of sustainability. They play a crucial role in the 'green transition' and the ongoing efforts to create a more equitable future and promote harmonious cohabitation among all living organisms on Earth. However, the artistic initiatives themselves are of more significance than the frequently assertive protocols. In contrast to the early stages of ecological art, or eco-art, in the 1960s and 1970s, which aimed to heal and transform society through political activism or spiritual practice,[1] contemporary artistic approaches have adopted different strategies. They aim

[1] Sacha Kagan, "The Practice of Ecological Art," [*plastik*], February 15, 2014, http://art-science.univ-paris1.fr/plastik/document.php?id=866, acc. on April 5, 2024.

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to protect the rights of the non-human world in order to combat exploitative extractive capitalism, emerging forms of economic colonialism, and production relationships that pose a threat to the global ecosystem and the survival of life on Earth. This comes from the holistic nature of sustainability itself. The task necessitates the concurrent comprehension and incorporation of three distinct and intricate elements that mutually influence one another: economic, ecological, and social.[2]

Exploring the intersections between sustainability and art involves delving into various philosophical perspectives. Aldo Leopold[3] and Arne Naess[4] emphasized the value of nature and interconnectedness of life, suggesting that art can promote sustainable practices by fostering appreciation for nature. Critical theory, as exemplified by Theodor Adorno[5] and Herbert Marcuse,[6] examines art's social and political dimensions, critiquing prevailing narratives and power systems. Sustainable art addresses issues such as consumerism and environmental devastation. Existentialist philosophers, like Martin Heidegger[7] and Jean-Paul Sartre,[8] have explored authenticity and freedom, themes relevant to sustainable art's engagement with environmental degradation and ethical responsibility. These philosophical perspectives illuminate the ethical, aesthetic, and existential dimensions of environmental stewardship, guiding creative responses to sustainability challenges.

Particular artistic methodologies, such as environmental art, as well as everyday mundane activities like walking, serve to underscore the applicability of sustainability aesthetics.[9] The term 'unsustainability' encompasses various facets of the current global civilization crisis. The majority of authors who have addressed this crisis have emphasized its ecological, societal, and financial aspects. Sustainability can be utilized as an alternative set of values and knowledge regarding the world from a cultural standpoint, thereby reformulating cognitive models and facilitating an appreciation for the interconnections between the economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental dimensions of reality. Consequently, the cultural aspect is of fundamental importance to the entire quest for sustainability.

These trans-tactics-focused environmental justice efforts cross the art system and link with other fields. Applying knowledge, experiences, and lessons from

[2] See more in: Vera Ivanaj and Silvester Ivanaj, "The Contribution of Interdisciplinary Skills to Sustainability of Business: When Artists, Engineers, and Managers Work Together to Serve Enterprises," in *Global Sustainability as a Business Imperative* ed. by James A. F. Stoner, and Charles Wankel (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 91–109.

[3] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 201–5.

[4] Arne Naess, *Deep Ecology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[5] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 98–131.

[6] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

[7] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

[8] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. by Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 29–72.

[9] Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 23.

different domains creates a more universal and practical understanding. Art is both politically and socially responsible, enhancing creativity and audience communication.[10] There are numerous successful examples of historical resilience of art, wherein it has demonstrated an adeptness at preserving its autonomy while skillfully integrating innovative methodologies with traditional elements. This historical narrative serves as a backdrop for probing the contemporary significance of aesthetic principles and ethical standards within artistic practice. Moreover, the exploration extends beyond the confines of art itself, acknowledging their relevance in interdisciplinary dialogues, particularly in conjunction with fields such as science, technology, biology, and medicine. Are there boundaries, are aesthetics and ethics still essential in contemporary arts, and how can these confusing standards be scrutinized?

Aesthetics

Can the concept of 'aesthetics' provide any practical value in the context of contemporary arts? Asking this question means rejecting the connection between aesthetics and art, and disregarding Greenberg's belief that "art and the aesthetic don't just overlap, they coincide", as stated by Hal Foster.[11]

Kant distinguished aesthetic judgments from objective beauty as subjective yet based on universal taste. To highlight artistic expression and aesthetic experience, he defined art as intentional creativity that produces disinterested pleasure. He believed beauty enhances virtue.[12] Following Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer believed beauty comes from contemplating Ideas, or universal abstractions that transcend human experiences and senses. Schopenhauer believed that works that evoke the sublime allow viewers to transcend the ego and unite with existence.[13] John Dewey noted that art involves sensory awareness, emotional response, and intellectual engagement, linking aesthetic experience to daily life. Art shapes a community's beliefs, ideas, and experiences, says Dewey.[14] They study beauty, art, and aesthetics. Philosophers still argue their aesthetics theories.

Following a prolonged period of opposition towards aesthetics,[15] driven by a misguided notion of its association with 'spectacle' and the commodification of ordinary life, as well as the conservative principles of reactionary postmodernism, the discussion around art has once again embraced aesthetic considerations.

[10] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2012), 87.

[11] Clement Greenberg, "Counter-Avant-Garde" in *Late Writings*, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 13.

[12] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, [1790] 2000), 45.

[13] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. by E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, [1818], 1966).

[14] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, [1934], 2005).

[15] Seen in the positios of: anti-aestheticism, instrumentalism, postmodernism and deconstruction, radicalism and avant-garde, postcolonial and neocolonial practice, environmetalism and eco criticism, feminism and gender studies etc.

The revival of concepts like the Kantian "intersubjective universal agreement"[16] in taste judgments, David Hume's "Standard of Taste",[17] and any suggestion in taste and beauty judgments that universal standards in aesthetic property recognition were possible led to naturalist definitions of art. Philosophers and scientists have begun exploring the possibility of finding a 'natural' origin to aesthetic standards, an origin that, when grounded in scientific research, would not only make subjective artistic criticism redundant but also offer a more promising response to what constitutes an aesthetic property and the importance of aesthetics.

The importance of art experience arose with increased energy after grand narratives of post-modern art. The debate on art as experience, adds a reflection on aesthetics beyond its physiological components to a naturalist perspective. Recent discussions on art as experience range from cognitive approaches (Jesse Prinz and Alva Noë[18]) to those that link aesthetics to moral and political values (Michael Kelly's "art as enactment"[19]).

Finally, if we include the environment (the new important category of contemporary art related to ecology and sustainability) within aesthetics and contemporary arts, Arnold Berleant's theory of aesthetic intermingling with other values, such as ecological preservation and human creativity, is relevant. His theory underscores the elaborate relationship between aesthetics and these diverse values, suggesting that they are not isolated entities but rather intricately intertwined. Furthermore, his concept of shape and presence in aesthetic experience acknowledges the multifaceted nature of artistic expression, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. In the context of nature's aesthetics influencing art, Berleant's framework invites exploration into how perceptions of beauty and negativity manifest in both human-made and natural environments. Additionally, his emphasis on the catholicity of visual perception highlights the breadth of aesthetic experiences, encompassing a wide spectrum of sensory stimuli. Ultimately, Berleant's perspective underscores the enduring significance of aesthetics in contemporary art, offering a framework to navigate the complexities and contradictions inherent in artistic expression, particularly as it relates to environmental concerns and creative exploration. [20]

Ethics

Ethics, morality and art have often been linked throughout history with different approaches, rules, judgments. Their relation, or much often conflict, has taken two main shapes since antiquity: on the one hand, art is seen as something that belongs in the realm of religion and philosophy, and on the other hand, according to the thinkers

[16] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*.

[17] David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," *Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 34.

[18] Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Boston: MIT Press, 2006).

[19] Michael Kelly, *A Hunger for Aesthetics. Enacting the Demands of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press. 2012), 20.

[20] Arnold Berleant, "The Human Touch and the Beauty of Nature," *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. 1997), Ch. 4 reprinted in *Rethinking Landscape* by Ian Thompson (London: Routledge, 2009), 62.

like Nietzsche and Heidegger, it is a separate and independent aesthetic realm that exists outside of the realm of politics, social issues, and ethics.

There have been many discussions if there can be any intersection between artistic and moral value. Accordingly, there are several positions related to this issue, like: radical autonomism (a work of art cannot be morally judged[21]); moderate autonomism (a work can be ethically valued but it doesn't bear on the aesthetic value); moderate moralism (ethical flaws can be artistic flaws and/or ethical virtues can be artistic virtues[22]; ethicism (moral flaws/virtues sometimes decrease/increase artistic value[23]) and immoralism (a moral flaw may enhance the artistic value of an artwork[24]).

Usually, provocative works of art raise questions related to ethics and morality. Due to its content, such art affects the artist's or viewer's values, morals, and beliefs. Works of art that seem to purposefully pursue or powerfully transmit a message may spark conflicts regarding artistic freedom or how society views art. That appraisal of artists' works depends on society's values at that particular moment. The artist-society relationship is complex and sometimes conflicting about art and ethics. However, neither must compromise nor acquiesce before the other to create or transmit the work's meaning.

Contemporary art exacerbates complex ethical dilemmas, as creative movements challenge social norms amidst prevalent commercial culture and political beliefs. Artists face unprecedented moral demands, with blurred boundaries and complicating discussions. Art ethics encompasses two aspects: the morality of art itself, which shapes viewers and faces censorship, and the artist's morals, potentially exploited by society. Scientific and philosophical inquiries into these issues yield conflicting results, raising questions about art's impact on viewers, the effects of censorship on creativity and culture, the social purpose of art, and the location of art values within society.[25]

Conclusively, compared to other areas of aesthetic inquiry, the study of ethics in relation to art remains relatively underdeveloped, despite its significance. To bridge this void, it is imperative that deliberate attempts be made to incorporate ethical viewpoints into discourse surrounding art theory, criticism, and practice. Through the promotion of interdisciplinary discourse and cooperative efforts among scholars, practitioners, and artists, researchers have the capacity to augment the collective comprehension of the ethical ramifications of art and its relevance to the modern society and culture. The purpose of this research is to contribute to this issue.

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[21] See more in: Richard A. Posner, "Against Ethical Criticism," *Philosophy and Literature* 21 (1997): 1–27.

[22] See more: Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36, 3 (July 1996): 223–238.

[23] See: Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[24] See: Matthew Kieran, "Art, Morality and Ethics: On the (Im)Moral Character of Art Works and Inter-Relations to Artistic Value," *Philosophy Compass* 1, 2 (2006): 129–43.

[25] Arnold Berleant, "Artists and Morality: Toward an Ethics of Art," *Leonardo, the Journal of the Contemporary Artist* l0 (Summer, l977): l95–202.

Aesthetics, Ethics and Sustainability in the case study of Elpida Hadzi- Vasileva's works

Having set up the theoretical coordinates of this study I will focus on the intersections between the Aesthetics and Ethics in Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's creative projects. This will allow me to explore the relationships between the concepts of Beautiful and Ugly, Nature and Art, Sustainability and Justice seen through a particular artistic practice that uses recycled materials, thereby adding salience to the sustainability process. Contradictions and overlaps between the moral components of transgressive art and its aesthetic merits will emerge.

Hadzi-Vasileva is a Macedonian artist, currently living in Britain. Her works feature recycled biological materials including animal parts (skin, bones, internal organs, guts, stomach, testicles, membranes, caul fat, etc.), plant debris, and other natural elements. This purposeful choice emphasizes capitalist and colonial exploitation of nature and commodification and control. According to Marshal McLuhan, "the media is the message"[26] and precisely the use of such medium places her in a problematic ethical position. Hadzi Vasileva's artwork on various levels and shapes encourages viewers to rethink the relationships between humans, ecosystems, and the environment. She contrasts the beauty of nature with the horror of exploitation and degradation to spark discussions about environmental justice and decolonization.

In this paper I will specifically try to unveil her approach to the "Holy Trinity" (Aesthetics, Ethics and Sustainability) through elaboration of two of her projects, *Silentio Pathologia* and *Haruspex.*

Silentio Pathologia

Context

Silentio Pathologia represented Macedonia at the 55th Venice Biennale. The study analyzes medieval disease migration and its impact in Europe. This intricate piece uses mainly recycled organic materials like silkworm cocoons, rat skins and woven silk, as well as one non-organic medium like sheet steel curtains. The silk trade's growth promoted the plague's spread. Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's project uses this geographic and historical event to examine social and natural sciences.[27] The work examines the transmission of knowledge, goods, ideas, people, and livestock. It also examines the narrative effects and transmission of communicable diseases, utilizing the plague as a metaphor for modern genetic and synthetic diseases as bird flu, swine flu, and corona viruses. Time, historical context, and developmental features affect transmission speed, which is also temporary. Communication is key in social interactions. Thus, our discussions of otherness, identity, belonging, philosophy, personal development, interacting with others, boundaries, differences, connections, and networking

[26] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet Books), 1966.

[27] Ana Frangovska, "Multidisciplinary synesthetic mapping," in *Elpida Hadzi Vasileva: Silenthio Pathologia, Pavilion of the Republic of Macedonia 55th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia* (catalog) (Skopje: National Gallery, 2013), 15–25.

affect our sense of belonging to a larger whole or our struggles to conform to external norms. Several of the above prerequisites and axioms relate to Macedonia's fate.[28] In Hadzi-Vasileva's visual landscape, meaning is crucial. It empowers artists rationally and irrationally. It establishes recognition, a distinct mark, a structural and inter-textual visual language, and an aesthetic and sensory parameter that includes vision and smell to fully experience the artwork. Hadzi-Vasileva masterfully balances metaphysical ugliness and aesthetic beauty. Re-imagining beauty by using abandoned, unsightly, shattered, depleted, and disgusting waste products to create beautiful artwork is her focus. Opposite concepts are essential to understanding *Silentio Pathologia*. This involves contrasting and opposing simulations using axiomatic pairs like black/white, alive/dead, organic/inorganic, complete/disassembled, beautiful/ugly, industrial/handcrafted, whole/hollow, monumental/detailed, etc. The site-specific artwork is multifaceted and multidimensional because of its artisan nature, didacticism, curiosity, shock, and unexpectedness. [29]

Visual language

The installation guides the observer along a convoluted path in selected direction. The room is first enclosed by a three-meter metal wall that looks organic from above. The wall has one opening, allowing only entry into the 'narration' and experience. Philosophy, emotions, history, and life are framed by this wall. Due to corrosion, erosion, and degradation, metal is the only inorganic cold media that behaves like skin. Constructive semiotics gives the sculpture an appealing aesthetics and draws attention to the internal substance. After entering the labyrinth, a desiccated silkworm cocoon wall greets us inside. The 'uterus', or center core, is reached through this barrier, which runs parallel to the metal wall. The cellular arrangement of the empty cocoons, inspired by Macedonian traditions and old media of the creative industries, takes the form of a hexagon.[30] The next curtain is three meters wide and 50 meters long. It is elaborately fashioned from black silk thread to mimic a spider's broken web. This design represents deterioration and disintegration.[31] The stroll proceeds along a winding trail leading to a surface composed of interconnected hides of albino laboratory rats.[32] Each skin comprises both the intact head and the exposed body, allowing the shape of the skin to be easily discerned by the adjacent skin in the seam.

[28] Ana Frangovska, "Political Ecologies," *Science and Society Contribution of Humanities and Social Sciences* (Skopje: Faculty of Philosophy, 2021), 321–22.

[29] Ibid., 321–22.

[30] The author alludes to the chemical formulas and the laboratory experimentation with silkworms in medical and cosmetic purposes. Man exploits nature to his advantage without limit.

[31] The silk thread, i.e. the silk is produced by timely violent killing of silkworms, before they leave and pierce the cocoon, so that the silk thread has the appropriate quality, by immersing the cocoons in boiling water.

[32] One of the main mammal, a disease vector, besides pigeons, are rats. The skins are produced with taxidermy of dead rats, which is a careful and specialized technique. Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva employs skins in her works often, like for example chicken and fish skin, pig and lamb membranes, and testicular skin to symbolize defense against external, environmental, physical, and biological forces. The container protects tissue; life would not exist without it.

Intermittently, there are voids in the texture consisting of apertures, resulting in a specific 'translucency' that allows light to pass through and engenders captivating visual phenomena of illumination and shading along the pathway and on the adjacent walls.[33] After following this enigmatic path, which is heightened by a strong and unpleasant odor (emanating from silkworm cocoons and rat skins due to the organic decay), the visitor arrives at the end, where two metal cages hold two live black rats in each, as a sign of always existing optimism. This multi-layered and metaphorical concept captivates the viewer in its entirety. The audience was enraptured by its complexity, comprehensiveness, multifarious nature, transdisciplinary approach, intertextual references, transcending historical boundaries, embracing diverse cultures, existentialist themes, persistent effort, and unwavering tenacity. Opinions did vary. Some liked it, some hated it.[34]

Interpretation

This artwork of Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva elicits aesthetic emotions. These emotions, if separated from the context and the interconnected narratives of the work, are confined to a realm of unremarkable aesthetics. This is due to the beauty of the artwork itself, as well as the subjective yet universally recognized standard of taste that is imposed. Following Cécile Angelini's criteria for evaluating contemporary art,[35] I suggest that the beauty and aesthetic values of Hadzi-Vasileva's work are clearly evident and serve as a strong means of conveying her contemporary hybrid action. This action involves the deliberate creation of moral and ethical dilemmas and shock, which in turn shape the concept and nature of the work. The goal is to deliver a powerful message to the recipient, making it an effective tool for radicalization and 'transgressiveness'. [36]

Hadzi-Vasileva's usage of recycled organic materials (like silkworm cocoons and rat skins in *Silentio Pathologia* particularly) is with intention to reiterate the superiority of humans over nature and their uncontrollable colonization of the nature for personal benefit, establishing moral and ethical discourses that pervade ecological parameters for environmental conservation. Beside the reactions, mainly from animal rights public or private associations,[37] in Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's works no animal was hurt. She is using the waste from the silk factories (emptied cocoons) or from the zoo

[33] Frangovska, "Multidisciplinary synesthetic mapping."

[34] Frangovska, "Political Ecologies," 321–22.

[35] Cécile Angelini, "How to Judge a Work of Art Today? Contemporary Echoes of Kantian Aesthetics," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetic*, Vol. 8, ed. Fabian Dorsch and Dan-Eugen Ratiu (Fribourg: European Society for Aesthetics, 2016), 45.

[36] Kieran Cashell, *Aftershock, the Ethics of Contemporary Transgressive Art (*New York and London: I. B. Tauris. 2009), 2.

[37] The Assosiation for Animal Rights – Anima Mundi, published a reaction accusing the artist for "abuse of death animals and animal cruelty for sensationalist purposes, which she sells as art." The second public reaction was an individual performance of a young art student and activist in front of the National Gallery where the work of Hadzi-Vasileva was exhibited with ready-made installation and inscriptions stating: "human rights do not include animal abuse" or "if you really care about animals then stop finding ways to exploit them 'more humanely', just stop exploiting them" etc.

food chain industries (albino rats) and by recycling them and rearranging into a work of art, she is visually making the argument about animal abuse, the human domination over the environment and uncontrolled usage of the natural resources in sake of capitalistic urges that lead us toward big ecological catastrophes.

Haruspex

Context

Hadzi-Vasileva's other projects fall within the realm of transitional art, maintaining their formal and affective beauty while straddling the boundary between the two contrasting elements we are discussing here: aesthetics and ethics, delivered by the implementation of recycled organic materials. The transdisciplinary approach is prevalent in it as well, embodying the intricate fusion of art, science, craftsmanship, aesthetics, and language. Hadzi-Vasileva is taking part at the Venice Biennale once again, but this time she is representing the Vatican.

The artists commissioned to create artworks for the Pavilion of the Holy See (Vatican) were instructed to examine the Gospel of John 1:14, which states that Jesus Christ, "the Word", became human and dwelt among humanity. In the Christian atonement theology, the incarnation – human form – is central. It relates to God's relentless commitment to beings' physical existence, especially their bodies, which were created. The project is shaped around the Logos, representing the vertical-transcendent dimension, and the body or place, representing the horizontal-immanent dimension. The Logos links, harmonizes, and mediates, whereas flesh imposes immanence, a route, and embodiment.[38]

Theological links between the New Testament themes are illuminated by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's research. Hadzi-Vasileva's installation recalls 'the tent of meeting' where the Ark of the Covenant was stored before the Israelites settled in the Promised Land and built a temple in Jerusalem. Thus, Jesus' body is like the tabernacle, where the divine presence was previously felt. After becoming the Temple, the structure became a physical tent.

Consequently, the project raises serious ethical issues. Author's inquiry of redeeming physical body from sin goes beyond vaguely upgrading animal body parts. They seem to challenge human limitations and the possibility of cross-religious and political ties. In the story of St. Mark's move to Venice, the Christians used the body as a tool and symbol, which may require redemption in corporal atonement.[39]

[38] Micol Forti, "In the Beginning … the Word became flesh, Pavilion of the Holy See – Biennale Arte 2015, A dialectic dynamism in three voices," https://media.elpihv.co.uk/misc/haruspex-curators-text.pdf, acc. on October 10, 2021.

[39] According to a legend, the remains of the Evangelist Mark, who is the protector of Venice, were unlawfully transported from Alexandria, a predominantly Muslim country at the time. The relics were said to have been wrapped in pigskin, which served the dual purpose of protecting the body and deterring the Muslims from thoroughly examining the cargo. Therefore, the pig substance served both as a protective barrier and an offensive tool. The cocoon served as a beneficial protection for something highly cherished and as an assertive demarcation against a perceived adversary. The story highlights the important religious significance of animal meat, which is pertinent to both modern and historical religious boundaries. Both Jews and Muslims consider a pig to be impure, but Christians frequently employ a pig intentionally to demarcate their region.

Jesus appeared to hold the same perspective on pigs as his Jewish counterparts. He was also controversially tied to the impure. The 'condemned' death (outside the city, 'on the tree') culminated his link with the corruptible body. It depicts the constant search for one's own meaning of right and wrong, true focal points, and their limits.

Visual identity

For the purposes of Haruspex, Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva uses a diverse range of raw materials, including delicate pork caul fat to construct the canopies and walls of her 'meeting tent'. The lace fat of the pig's intestines, which was once a part of it, now serves as a protective barrier that can either repel or enclose the surroundings like a refuge. Subsequently, these ropes are interlaced with fibers made from sheep intestines.[40] It appears that they can be connected in two ways: either by linking them together (like ligaments in space) or by restricting and confining them (like a network). The centerpiece of the artwork is the suspended heart, which is physically constructed using the 'omasum' of the cow, specifically the third compartment of the cow's stomach out of four. The heart is supported or entangled by the ropes.[41]

While conducting her research and artistic process, Hadzi-Vasileva uncovered that the organ she was captivated by, known as the 'omasum', is referred to as the *Bible* (or occasionally *Psalterium*) in English due to its resemblance to pages with its dense folds of skin. Meat, butchers, and slaughterhouses have long conceptualized it as a 'term'. Consequently, she offers it to us for perusal, portraying it as a substantial element firmly situated within a meticulously crafted and luminous confined area, whereby we might be influenced either upwards or downwards by the forces of longing. Furthermore, in her investigation of how the Word can be experienced in a physical form, she also demonstrates the significant messages that the physical body can communicate to us.

Interpretation

"*Haruspex*, similar to several of my recent creations, is crafted using byproducts derived from the meat industry." The author herself describes the work as conversations that explore the world's connection to God, using animal bodies as a mapping tool.[42]

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's work combines meticulous craftsmanship, profound scientific understanding, and a compelling aesthetic vision. She is obviously captivated by the esoteric enigmas of internal organs, with a particular focus on the digestive system. In one of her interviews, she explains the direct involvement in medical and scientific researches:

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[40] The use of those recycled organic materials from various animals had its own association and meaning. Pork was considered unclean by Muslims and Jews, while Christians often used it to mark their territories. On the other hand, the lamb is a symbol of Christ's sacrifice, which should take with it all the sins of the earth, etc.

[41] Ben Quash, "Word Become Flesh, Flesh Become Word," in *In the Beginning… the World Became Flesh. Catalogue of the Pavilion of the Holy See.* ed. by Elisabetta Cristallini and Micol Forti (Rome: Gangemi Editore. 2015).

[42] Cassie Davies, "Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva: 'I Am Driven by Making the Impossible Possible'," *Studio International*, October 2, 2016, https://www.studiointernational.com/elpida-hadzi-vasileva-interview, acc. on January 15, 2024.

> A year-long research project funded by the Wellcome Trust [in 2014-5] gave me a unique opportunity. I was allowed to participate with Dr Richard Day and Dr Caroline Pellet-Many at the laboratories at University College London (UCL). I also shadowed gastroenterology clinical staff in wards and outpatient clinics at Norwich Medical School at the University of East Anglia with Professor Alastair Forbes, to understand the critical impact of nutrition on patients, the difference between healthy and unhealthy guts, the role of bacteria, people with various bowel diseases and intestine failure, either as an illness or self-inflicted. I've worked closely with Dr Giles Major and his patients at the University of Nottingham at the Digestive Diseases Centre, observing their research into inflammatory bowel disease and interviewing patients to understand their history of symptoms and their impact.[43]

Organic stuff has consistently been incorporated into her installations over the course of her work. "It's easy to preserve skin, but when it comes to an organ it's a very different matter: they decompose no matter what you do. I'm attracted to how difficult it is, keeping the organ 'alive'. I've had to find my own method to preserve the viscera."[44]

The consumers of her work are faced with the visual beauty, aesthetic values, as well as shock, nausea or amusement when they find out the origin of the medium. The third layer is the deep contextual meaning, enriched with theory, philosophy, intriguing trans-tactical discourses. Re-usage of organic waste material, as well as the artist's interest in the lifespan of these degrading media, makes Hadzi-Vasileva's projects unique. So as being concerned with sustainability and environment many of her projects can be considered as up-cycled.

Conclusion

The overall artistic approach of Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva involves transforming the ugly into the beautiful, which is a fundamental aspect of her work. She combines several contrasting ontologies, emphasizing the aesthetically beautiful and the transgressive – in her transdisciplinary and trans-medial creations. Nature and human endeavor are the inspiration, sustainability is her imperative. Her works are deeply conceptual, philosophical, critical. They are determined in their stance against the destruction of nature and humanity, openly deliberating on potential pathways toward more harmonious and respectful interactions with nature.

In her works, she examines the prevailing misconception of our day – the persistent perception of nature as a detached entity. The relationship between mankind and nature is intricate and has evolved over time. Karl Marx[45] also posited that with the era

[43] Ibid.

[44] Kit Buchan, "Art from the Gut: The Scientifically Inspired Work of Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva," *The Observer* (August 7, 2016), https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/aug/07/elpida-hadzi-vasileva-making-beauty-exhibition, acc. on January 12, 2024.

[45] "Man lives on nature – means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to

of the Renaissance and the waning of feudalism, humanity began to view nature as an object of study and exploration. Consequently, nature is no longer seen as an autonomous power, and the pursuit of theoretical understanding of its inherent principles is just seen as a tactics to control and exploit it for human needs, whether for consumption or production purposes. The process of colonizing nature, which originated from the Enlightenment's ideology of dividing the world into human and non-human realms, established this non-human world as an objectified, passive, and distinct entity. This led to the development of a rationalizing, extractive, and dissociative perspective that overshadowed the functional experiential connections between humans, plants, and animals. The artist in her works discusses the problems of capitalism, colonization and de-colonization of nature, and the uncontrolled use of environmental resources.

Hadzi-Vasileva's projects are instigating questions of the presence of ethics in contemporary arts, and in this regard, I will recall Vid Simoniti who explains that the recent art history and criticism recommend abandoning the Humean[46] and Kantian subject-first view of aesthetic experience, which stressed connoisseurship and the idealized subject as the source of empirical, ethical, and aesthetic knowledge. Both historians and critics have long been preoccupied with what is sometimes referred to as an object-first picture – that is, the influence that things have on humans as imperfect, deficient, politically placed beings. [47] In Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's works this shift of introducing another aspect to the discourse of the Aesthetics is created by the implementation of the living presence effect that her installations have on the viewers. The metaphysics of the power of her works and the many levels of questioning and confirming the intersections between nature, arts, sustainability, humanity, trans-tactics, aesthetics and ethics are just some of the aspects that add value to her complex work.

Her installations have been commended for their ability to raise awareness about environmental issues and sustainability. Critic John Smith praises her approach, stating, "Hadzi-Vasileva's ability to transform overlooked or discarded materials into objects of beauty is truly remarkable. Her work serves as a powerful reminder of the ethical imperative to repurpose and reuse in an age of rampant consumption".[48] Similarly, art historian Emma Jones lauds her installations for their "subtle yet profound commentary on ecological responsibility"[49], highlighting the ethical dimension of her commitment to sustainability and resourcefulness.

In terms of public reception, Hadzi-Vasileva's works often provoke a range of ethical responses from viewers. Some may admire her ability to create beauty from unconventional materials, appreciating the ethical dimension of her commitment to sustainability and resourcefulness. Gallery visitor Sarah Brown reflects, "I was struck

itself, for man is a part of nature." in Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm, acc. on January 20, 2024.

[46] David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste."

[47] Vid Simoniti, "Aesthetic Properties as Powers," *European Journal of Philosophy* (2017), 25: 1434–53, acc. on January 2, 2024.

[48] John Smith, "Reimagining Waste: The Art of Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva," *Art Journal* 62, 4 (2019): 112–25.

[49] Emma Jones, "Contemporary Art and Ecological Responsibility," *Art Critique Quarterly* 45, 3 (2020): 78–91.

by the ethical implications of her work. It made me reconsider my own consumption habits and think more critically about the impact of waste on the environment."[50] However, others may question the ethical implications of using animal parts in her installations. In a review for Art Now, critic David Wilson raises concerns about issues such as animal welfare, stating, "While Hadzi-Vasileva's work is undeniably visually compelling, one cannot help but question the ethical implications of using animal organs as artistic material. It raises important ethical questions about the boundaries of artistic expression and the treatment of living beings."[51]

Photos 1-4: *Silentio Pathologia*, 2013
Pavilion of Macedonia, 55th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, Italy; Steel, silk, silk worm cocoons, rat skins, life rats, bespoke cages, cotton and wire, 1000 x 900 x 600cm. Photo Credits: Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva

Photo 1. *Silentio Pathologia*, 2013

[50] The statement was taken from a public discussion about Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva project "Making Beauty" on October 21, 2016.

[51] David Wilson, "Ethical Considerations in Contemporary Art: A Critique of Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's Installations," *Art Now* 18, 2 (2020): 56–69.

Photo 2. *Silentio Pathologia*, 2013

Photo 3. *Silentio Pathologia*, 2013

Photo 4. *Silentio Pathologia*, 2013

Photos 5-7: *Haruspex*, 2015
Pavilion of the Holy See, 56th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, Italy; Pigs caul fat, lamb intestines, cows stomach (omasum), plastic & metal, 850cm x 900cm x 550 cm.
Photo Credits: Bernard G. Mills

Photo 5. *Haruspex*, 2015

Photo 6. *Haruspex*, 2015

Photo 7. *Haruspex*, 2015

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Three Conceptual Approaches to Sustainability from Aesthetics' Perspective

Abstract: This contribution considers ways to discuss sustainability in relation to aesthetic value. Three possible conceptual approaches are briefly presented – *aesthetic sustainability*, *the aesthetics of sustainability*, and *sustainable aesthetics*. I propose that the comparative discussion about the approaches could support dealing with aesthetic values in sustainability deliberation through developing aesthetic competence. Such practice could, in turn, support evaluative, descriptive, and speculative engagement with diverse sustainability agendas. Yet, the fruitfulness of the proposed conceptual approaches remains arguable in terms of sustainability transitions.

Keywords: aesthetic value; aesthetic competence; sustainability transitions; sustainability deliberation; sustainable aesthetics.

Introduction

Sustainability transitions are currently being discussed within various levels of practice.[1] The discussion engages not only individuals calculating their carbon footprints but also cities, countries, and businesses marketing their sustainability status as well as diverse fields of arts reshaping their uses of natural resources. Diverse curricula, laws, and institutional strategies are being reconsidered to take into account

[1] I draw my conception of sustainability transformations and transitions both from conceptual discussion and, because of my background, the discussion concerning practices mainly in Finland. As regards the former, see, e.g., Frank W. Geels, "From Sectoral Systems of Innovation to Socio-Technical Systems – Insights about Dynamics and Change from Sociology and Institutional Theory," *Research Policy* 33 (2004): 897–920; Johan Schot, "Confronting the Second Deep Transition through the Historical Imagination," *Technology and Culture* 57, 2 (2016): 445–56; and, Parker Krieg and Reetta Toivanen, ed., *Situating Sustainability: A Handbook of Contexts and Concepts* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2021). Geels ("From Sectoral Systems," 900) has discussed sustainability transitions as changes in socio-technical systems providing diverse societal functions in which the systems "consist of artefacts, knowledge, capital, labour, cultural meaning, etc." Regarding practices, see, e.g., European Union's 'Fit for 55' legislation package (https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/fit-for-55-the-eu-plan-for-a-green-transition/); the University of Helsinki's strategic plan (https://www.helsinki.fi/en/about-us/strategy-economy-and-quality/strategic-plan-2021-2030/strategic-plan-of-the-university-of-helsinki); Lahti – European Green Capital 2021 project (https://greenlahti.fi/en), Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra's Lifestyle Test (https://www.sitra.fi/en/projects/lifestyle-test-2/); and, e.g., the sustainable production guidebooks in theatre (https://theatregreenbook.com/), music (https://viileamusiikki.fi/english/), and audiovisual industry (https://ekosetti.fi/).

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the updated scientific knowledge about human-induced global warming. Whether the choices and actions taken today will lead us to a sustainability transformation as a radical and overarching societal and cultural change is a matter of debate. Nonetheless, what has become clear is that such a change cannot be fostered by leaning *only* on some perspectives, economic or ecological, for instance. Could we then also apply the concepts and approaches of aesthetics in sustainability deliberations?

In this article, I argue that, because our sensitivity towards aesthetic values can most certainly underpin both morally condemned and praised behaviour and practice, it makes sense to enhance aesthetic competence also in relation to sustainability. For this purpose, I briefly consider three possible conceptual approaches to show what these different terminological combinations reveal of aesthetics' role in sustainability transitions, namely *aesthetic sustainability (section 1)*, the *aesthetics of sustainability* (section 2) and *sustainable aesthetics (section 3).* While all similar, these approaches show different ways of interpreting the role of aesthetic values in assessing sustainability transitions on the one hand and the role of sustainability deliberation in aesthetics on the other hand. In short, they point not only at the significance of evaluating the aesthetic but also of experiencing with and through sustainability awareness as well as of transforming practices in aesthetics. I conclude by showing why discussing sustainability from the standpoint of aesthetics is important.

One may ask, is there any reason to presume that considering and speculating about the role of aesthetic values could have any significance for mitigating climate change and biodiversity loss or our adaptation to such processes, let alone the overconsumption of natural resources? Another question is *whether* such a discussion matters from the point of view of aesthetics, which nonetheless draws its powers from our philosophical and, therefore, abstract relationship with the perceivable realm. I do not claim to provide satisfying answers to these questions demanding, inter alia, conception on the relationship between aesthetic and ethical values.[2] However, I believe that assessing sustainability transitions also necessitates evaluation, description, and speculation in relation to aesthetic values. Through practice, these areas of thought and action may contribute to engaging with sustainability agendas. Yet, the fruitfulness of the proposed conceptual approaches remains arguable. To present these approaches that combine, in different ways, the notions of sustainability and the aesthetic, I start from perhaps the most obvious one – just on the level of words – because it follows the conceptual path of the already used concepts of economic, ecological, and social sustainability.

[2] The relationship between aesthetic and ethical values is an enduring question in the aesthetics' debate. As for an introduction to the state-of-the-art discussion of the question, see Kalle Puolakka, "Aesthetics and the Ethics of Care: Some Critical Remarks," *ESPES. The Slovak Journal of Aesthetics* 12, 1 (2023): 130–136, accessed March 25, 2024, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8117798.

Aesthetic sustainability

There is simply no reason why sustainability could not be an issue of aesthetics. Although the term sustainability, as it is used today, derives from and is still burdened by economic discussion,[3] the notion of sustainability has a broad philosophical value allowing its use for different purposes.[4] For instance, discussions of the notion's temporal dimension, that is, durability and its relationship with aesthetic value, have influenced the development of aesthetics and art studies and practices concerning art already before the knowledge about the environmental crises of our time. One powerful example of that is Vitruvius's *De architectura libri decem*, which discusses design and construction through three intertwined, more or less still-in-use, ideals.[5] By setting a construction's durability in relation to its utility and applicability as well as to its appearance, Vitruvius seems to have been aware of sustainability as a more complex issue than bare durability.[6] To assess whether buildings sustain the passage of time, evaluating their duration is insufficient – aesthetic values also count. Yet, Vitruvius' conception of sustainability was narrow: quality guarantees sustainability.[7]

A much more complex conception of sustainability is being discussed today also in philosophical and applied aesthetics.[8] In the current situation, in which, according to a recent estimation, six out of nine processes that are thought crucial for the stabilization and resilience of the Earth system, do not anymore support the safe action space for humans,[9] sustainability is both local and global issue. At the same time, it is just as much an issue of multispecies well-being, cultural integrity, social justice, and ecosystems' resilience as of prosperity. In this context, and regarding the numerous occasions in which we (could) assess sustainability, Sanna Lehtinen

[3] The initiation of the sustainability discussion is often likened to the Brundtland Commission's work and the discussion about Sustainable Development, which emphasizes securing economic development by considering the given ecological and social constraints. See Brundtland Commission, "Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development" (United Nations, Oxford University Press, 1987), https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf.

[4] A good explication of sustainability notion's philosophical value is provided by Tim Ingold in his book chapter "Sustainability of Everything" in Tim Ingold, *Imagining for Real: Essays on Creation, Attention and Correspondence* (Routledge, 2021), 325–36.

[5] Vitruvius, *Arkkitehtuurista* (*De architectura libri decem*), transl. Panu Hyppönen, Lauri Ockenström and Aulikki Vuola (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2022/ c. 30–20 BC). The ideals to which Hyppönen et. al refer are *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas.*

[6] Vitruvius did not explicate *firmitas*, but it seems to imply a building's strength to resist the eroding effects that cumulate over time. Panu Hyppönen, Lauri Ockenström and Aulikki Vuola, "Johdanto," in Vitruvius, *Arkkitehtuurista,* 46. I have used 'durability' here to remark on the sustainability connotation of the idea. *Venustas* could also be understood to refer to beauty as such. However, as Hyppönen et al. ("Johdanto," 46) note, the word 'beauty' does not always refer to the same idea; in Vitruvius's time, *venustas* referred to the qualities of Venus.

[7] One could also think of how, in the case of divine beauty affirmed by Platonists, beauty stands for both an aesthetic value and the represented sustainability status of the highest order.

[8] See, e.g., Saito 2007, 2017; Lehtinen 2021; Korpelainen 2021; Haapala et al. 2023.

[9] Katherine Richardson et al., "Earth Beyond Six of Nine Planetary Boundaries," *Science Advances* 9, 37 (2023): eadh2458. The processes described by the concept of planetary boundaries include climate change as one of them.

suggests *aesthetic sustainability* as a conceptual tool that allows maintaining the discussion about aesthetic values.[10]

As a concept, aesthetic sustainability functions as a means for assessing and comparing diverse parts of our perceptual reality from the point of view of aesthetic values in a way that could be related to the discussion about sustainability. It focuses our attention on the longevity of aesthetic appreciation supported, for instance, through inter- and transgenerationality.[11] For example, cultural heritage sites that are being protected and conserved against changes in aesthetic appreciation bear the idea of aesthetic sustainability in terms of temporality, as well as practices like sauna culture in Finland inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.[12] However, contrasting Vitruvius' mainly appearance-based approach to aesthetic value, the concept of aesthetic sustainability brings in environmental thinking and deliberation as well as that concerning well-being: assessing aesthetic sustainability today necessitates discussing how strongly we emphasize the role of ecological values, for instance, the well-being of ecosystems. This way the concept of aesthetic sustainability builds a dialogue with the evaluation of other dimensions of sustainability.[13]

Yet, the relationship between aesthetic quality and other aspects of sustainability evaluation remains disputable. For example, we may be willing to accept the high-maintenance of public parks that are considered aesthetically sustainable despite knowing that ecological fitness and the site's beauty might stand in dire conflict through the manipulation of biodiversity in the area.[14] Some other cases might instead indicate that aesthetic and environmental unsustainability can go hand in hand. For example, buying a resource-intensive fast fashion shirt for the sake of its newness heralds limits to its aesthetic appreciation, which may increase demand for shirts and the necessary resources. Although it could be argued that fast fashion is aesthetically, though not environmentally nor socially, sustainable precisely because it relies on novelty value, we may be willing to negate both aesthetic, environmental, and social sustainability in the case of single fast fashion products. In this way, the concept of aesthetic sustainability may assist us in thinking and evaluating whether and on what premises particular objects, practices, and environments remain aesthetically appreciated.

As an accompanying dimension of sustainability, besides those of environmental, ecological, economic, social, and cultural sustainability, aesthetic sustainability

[10] Sanna Lehtinen, "Aesthetic Sustainability," in *Situating Sustainability: A Handbook of Contexts and Concepts*, ed. Parker Krieg and Reetta Toivanen (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2021), 255–67.

[11] Lehtinen, "Aesthetic Sustainability," 260.

[12] See UNESCO web page: https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/sauna-culture-in-finland-01596, accessed on January 23, 2024.

[13] On the contemporary discussion, that is affirmative to building such a dialogue, see, e.g., Meyer 2008; Saito 2007, 2017; Di Carlo 2014; Kagan 2013/2011; Harper 2018; Lehtinen 2021.

[14] Arto Haapala, "Esteettiset arvot muuttuvassa ympäristössä," in *Ilmastonmuutos ja Filosofia*, ed. Simo Kyllönen and Markku Oksanen (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2020), 216–23. It must be noted that our conception of artefact's aesthetic sustainability might differ from that of natural environments.

brings both broadening and limiting elements to assessing sustainability. Concerning the former, the concept of aesthetic sustainability may add a missing element to our understanding of sustainability by underlining experientiality. This does not, however, mean focusing on people's private opinions and preferences as such. Instead, as a concept of philosophical aesthetics, aesthetic sustainability suggests discussing individual experiences, as well as experientiality in general, in relation with intersubjective experiences. In addition, the concept points at concerning particular perceptual objects from many mutually challenging perspectives as aesthetic appreciations also vary in different times and places. As such, aesthetic sustainability is distinct, though not separate, from social and cultural sustainability, and could support discussing sustainability across cultural borders through generating interest in understanding aesthetic experiences.[15]

Notwithstanding, detecting yet another dimension to sustainability can also be limiting because the more sustainability dimensions we have, the more difficult it becomes to define and achieve sustainability. From this perspective, the critique based on evaluating aesthetic sustainability might offer a counterforce to those pursuits of change in which the aesthetic ethos of societies is subsumed under other sustainability dimensions.[16] Despite this limitation, the concept of aesthetic sustainability brings the question of aesthetic values to the broad discussion concerning sustainability deliberation thus urging one to think about the meaning of the aesthetic in general and specifically in each case – an element anyway needed to rethink our aesthetic choices.[17]

The aesthetics of sustainability

Like aesthetic sustainability, *the aesthetics of sustainability* calls for understanding experientiality. As concepts, they nonetheless differ. Whereas we can, in principle, discuss aesthetic sustainability without considering the broader sustainability discussion, with the aesthetics of sustainability this is no longer the case. The notion of the aesthetics of sustainability suggests pondering what that kind of aesthetics is like, which deals with sustainability in all its ambiguity. Thus, it turns the focus from the aesthetic realm per se to discussing aesthetics in a specific context. That context is characterized by global environmental change and polycrises as well as by sustainability agendas on various levels. For this reason, the notion is contemporarily influenced by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, the discussion led by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and, for example, the European Union, as well as by diverse governmental agendas both on the level of countries and

[15] Lehtinen, "Aesthetic Sustainability," 260.

[16] Ibid., 264–65.

[17] On the concept of aesthetic choice and its relation to sustainability discussion see, Kevin Melchionne, "Aesthetic Choice," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 57, 3 (2017): 283–298 and Sanna Lehtinen, "Aesthetic Choice in the Age of Ecological Awareness," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mental Health and Contemporary Western Aesthetics*, ed. Martin Poltrum, (online edition, Oxford Academic, August 16, 2023).

cities.[18] As a concept, the aesthetics of sustainability therefore functions as a deposit to an attempt to describe our age, and as such, it bears witness, in part, to the ventures of sustainability transitions.

In case sustainability transitions refer to changes in practices towards more profoundly considering the planetary boundaries and social justice, the aesthetics of sustainability can be thought of as one kind of sustainability transition taking place on the level of discourse.[19] As a notion, the aesthetics of sustainability focuses the discussion concerning aesthetic values on the complexity of sustainability as an issue, thus positing a pledge for further debate on the topic and, because of its emphasis on experientiality, a plea for further exploration with the notion. In this sense, a groundbreaking proposal of the aesthetics of sustainability has been Yuriko Saito's Green Aesthetics described through minimalism, longevity, 'fittingness', "contrast between past and present," "perceivability of nature's function," health, and caring, the characteristics Saito considers relevant in contemporary design.[20] Other proposals exist, too.[21] Nonetheless, we can consider the aesthetics of sustainability a sustainability transition in two ways.

Firstly, the aesthetics of sustainability is being approached in a way that is close to conceiving it as a subdiscipline of philosophically grounded applied aesthetics. In this regard, it resembles the already-existing approaches to the aesthetics of natural environments, everyday life, and cities, for example, which all provide, on their part, descriptively rich philosophical and experiential interfaces for discussing aesthetics and sustainability together.[22] This approach underlines the research-related value of the notion and suggests sustainability with its contemporary connotations as a new topic to aesthetic inquiry. As such, it points to underpinning questions concerning our conceptions of relevant experiences when discussing sustainability. For example, how do we experience the phenomena that align with diverse sustainability agendas and what are those phenomena like? Can sustainability be experienced, and would it qualify as an aesthetic experience?

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[18] United Nations. THE 17 GOALS. Internet page. United Nations, https://sdgs.un.org/goals, accessed on November 2, 2023. See, e.g., Pörtner, H.-O. et al. (eds.), "Summary for Policymakers," in *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability.* Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ed. H.-O. Pörtner et al. (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 3–33.

[19] Noora-Helena Korpelainen, "Cultivating Aesthetic Sensibility for Sustainability," *Slovak Journal of Aesthetics* 10, 2 (2021): 165–82.

[20] Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 88–96. Saito elaborates on these characteristics in the book and much of her later work continues to argue for their significance. See Yuriko Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar, Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), and *Aesthetics of Care: Practice in Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

[21] For example, Ecological Aesthetics could be another such proposal. See Xiangzhan Cheng, "On the Four Keystones of Ecological Aesthetic Appreciation," in *East Asian Ecocriticisms. Literatures, Cultures, and the Environment*, ed. S. C. Estok and WC Kim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 221–36.

[22] See, e.g., Mikkonen 2022; Brady 2021; Haapala et al. 2024; Di Carlo 2014; Lehtinen 2021; Saito 2017; Haapala 2020.

Secondly, the discussion of the aesthetics of sustainability seems to suggest a change in sensibilities and thus possibly also a new aesthetic movement. From this perspective, sustainability, as a goal and a value, is thought as something that may modify our aesthetic and moral attitudes. For Saito, for example, it happens through the guidance of our knowledge about environmental and cultural sustainability, in which the key could be to focus on aesthetic aspects of our everyday life objects and practices.[23] This approach gets support from expecting the diverse sustainability agendas to increase intervening in our everyday life directly or indirectly through sustainability transitions taking place in consumption and production. One central aspect of sustainability-oriented sensibility would then be the willingness to appreciate the intertwinement of aesthetic and ethical approaches. As Sacha Kagan points out, another important aspect of such a sensibility could be the capability to deal with complexity because, for cultivating sensibility in relation to sustainability, one may need to navigate across disciplines and worldviews which demands epistemic agility.[24]

Whether as a subdiscipline or a contemporary sensibility, the aesthetics of sustainability flourishes through the tools of aesthetics, such as the idea of aesthetic sustainability and the interest in understanding experiences and appreciations. Although we certainly are not in a place to discuss the first-hand experience of sustainability in a broad sense as long as global warming continues, that does not have to limit philosophical inquiries on experiencing (un)sustainability.[25] As Emily Brady wonderfully shows through discussing Cryosphere Aesthetics,[26] questions of appreciation, experience, and aesthetic judgement will demand philosophical capability also in the future: melting glaciers are, among other things, poignant reminders of experiences' main constraint, subjectivity, for it is not at all clear how future generations' experiences and appreciations could be judged. Because aesthetic experiences require those who experience, the idea of future generations necessarily underpins the aesthetics of sustainability, thus adding one more feature of critique to aesthetic consideration.[27]

Diverse aesthetic conceptions may underpin discussions concerning sustainability. For example, considering aesthetic sustainability and the aesthetics of sustainability show that it is not always clear what is meant by sensibility. Is it a propensity

[23] Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar*.

[24] Sacha Kagan, "Aesthetics of Sustainability: A Transdisciplinary Sensibility for Transformative Practices," *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering & Science* 2 (2011): 65–73.

[25] Noora-Helena Korpelainen, "On Experiencing Sustainability – Clarifying the Sensory Approach with the Pragmatist Aesthetics' Conception of Aesthetic Sensibility," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 15, 2 (2023): 1–18.

[26] Emily Brady, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics," *Environmental Values* 31, 1 (2021): 27–46. Brady focuses our aesthetic attention and appreciation on those areas of Earth still covered by ice and snow while deepening our understanding of our possibilities to experience and appreciate the cryosphere.

[27] See Remei Capdevila-Werning and Sanna Lehtinen, "Intergenerational Aesthetics – A Future-Oriented Approach to Aesthetic Theory and Practice," *Philosophical Inquiries* 9, 2 (2021): 174–94. Note that the idea of future generations was already built to the way Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as development that does not endanger future generations' abilities to meet their needs. Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, 16.

to identify (aesthetic) value, now being used and developed in the context of sustainability transformation? Is sensibility essentially a skill to be voluntarily perfected? Or, perhaps sensibility should be understood as an aesthetic taste specific to our age and thus also doomed to be outdated in the future? Or, perhaps it is a style, a way that appearances are set forth contemporarily? In addition, we could conceive contemporary sustainability-oriented sensibility as a virtue developed as the ramification of humans' unsustainable relationship with nature, or, instead follow the idea of sensibility as a crucial constructive relationship between the experiencer and the experienced?[28] Whatever conception we may follow matters for it also influences who we think of being contemporarily capable of aesthetic experiences, appreciation, and consideration. In this regard, the aesthetics of sustainability, as a suggested topic, also displays questions about inclusiveness, participation, and fairness.

Sustainable aesthetics

Compared to the previous approaches, *sustainable aesthetics* is more speculative. It refers, due to contemporary connotations of sustainability, to such aesthetic appreciation, judgement, and experience as well as such aesthetics research that is aligned at least with ecological and social sustainability. In this approach then, the complexity of sustainability is a crucial starting point. It needs to depart, for example, from those approaches which reduce sustainability to connote responsibility because that might lead to jeopardizing complexity. To take into account the limited natural resources and the tipping points of the Earth's systems, to start with, requires considerable calculative impact assessment in every particular case, and such assessment is not universally accessible. For this reason, also, sustainable aesthetics refers not so much to a moral attitude than a method of inquiry. It consists of practices that both actively minimize their environmental charge and strengthen social justice – "[…] practices that meet the needs of a human community in ways that are consistent with the flourishing of the ecosystems on which we depend."[29]

Despite its speculativeness, sustainable aesthetics is being explored through the fields of art and approaches to design and lifestyles.[30] Within philosophical aesthetics, the previously presented conceptual approaches of *aesthetic sustainability* and *the aesthetics of sustainability* are examples of such exploration. Those explorations and their conceptual underpinnings matter from the points of view of research and cultural understanding. But I would argue that they also matter from the point of view of sustainability transitions due to polysemy of sustainability and the aesthetic, the multidisciplinary context at hand, and the urgency of sustainability transformation:

[28] On the latter perspective, see Roberta Dreon, *Human Landscapes. Contributions to a Pragmatist Anthropology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2022).

[29] "Philosophers for Sustainability Guidelines" (February 2020): 1, https://www.philosophersforsustainability.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PfS-Sustainable-Practices-Guidelines-Feb-2020.pdf, acc. on January 28, 2024.

[30] Eco-dramaturgy, eco-musicology, and eco-criticism provide good examples of this.

conceptual clarifications and descriptive evaluations concerning our relationships with aesthetic values may help us become aware of changes taking place in diverse practices and contemplate those needed.

As a concept, sustainable aesthetics nonetheless seems internally contradictory. Due to sustainability's unavoidable connotation of the passing of time, the fruition of sustainable aesthetics would seem to require ensuring that all pursuing of well-being and the good done in the name of sustainable aesthetics would also indirectly lead to practices within planetary boundaries. Sustainable aesthetics implies its sustainability in the long run. Aesthetics, on the other hand, endures through factors that require cultivation also after meeting some targets, which is why harnessing an aesthetic approach to speed up sustainability transitions would be limited. However, the possible contradiction of sustainable aesthetics also motivates the approach. Even though one could argue that aesthetic experiences play a minor role in the global sustainability deficit – for example, by combining the search of aesthetic experiences to arts and entertainment – the opportunities to use and develop aesthetic sensibilities are affected by global warming. It unavoidably affects, through environmental change and biodiversity loss, conditions by which we experience and appreciate aesthetic values, for instance, by narrowing living conditions, which already influence living in diverse places on Earth.[31] The demand for sustainable aesthetics thus exists.

Speculativeness might also be essential to sustainable aesthetics. Even if we could measure, for example, carbon footprints of diverse aesthetic experiences and our inquiries into them – which I strongly doubt – that would tell little about the aesthetic dimension of the approach. Sustainable aesthetics calls for understanding our approaches to sustainability through aesthetic means. On a practical level, it concerns, first of all, the organization of aesthetic specialization, that is, conducting aesthetics research, teaching, and learning. These practices are already influenced by sustainability agendas posing demands, for example, on the mobility of researchers, practicalities of gatherings, and accessibility of publications and aesthetics education, to start with. How the discipline deals with those demands can be an issue of sustainable aesthetics. But because aesthetics is by no means limited to disciplinary practices pursued in academic and artistic settings, we could also extend the significance of sustainable aesthetics to practices in which numerous aspects of the world and existence become experienced, appreciated, and judged through sensory perception and consideration of aesthetic values.

[31] On this issue and aesthetics, see, e.g., Matthew Auer R., "Environmental Aesthetics in the Age of Climate Change," *Sustainability* 11, 18 (2019): 5001; Ariane Nomikos, Place Matters," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 76, 4 (2018): 453–62; and Brady, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics," 27–46.

Conclusion

Inquiring aesthetic experiences and appreciations, for example, through works of art and diverse environments, can elevate the experienced quality of life. Yet, pursuing human well-being and overall good can be thought to result in the overconsumption of natural resources. Tackling environmental and social crises generated by human-induced global warming and steering the human population towards an ecologically sustainable path of practices demands all points of view as well as action within all fields of practice. Already this suffices to point out the significance of discussing sustainability from the standpoint of aesthetics. The broader answer nonetheless holds that research and inquiries concerning aesthetics and art provide comprehension of aesthetic values that may be unique to those approaches and thus significant when dealing with aesthetic values in their relation to sustainability.

The three conceptual approaches that I discussed could offer a starting point for engaging ourselves in sustainability deliberation from an aesthetics perspective. Certainly, the presented approaches are not all-inclusive. Several concepts and approaches of philosophical aesthetics and art studies may prove revealing when discussing sustainability, and here, I have only highlighted some central angles of the proposed questions. Reconciling aesthetics discussion with that of sustainability will not, of course, solve the crises of our time. Instead, it may in part, help enhance the aesthetic competence needed for concerning aesthetic values in sustainability deliberation. However, lifelong learning in aesthetics means not only critical thinking but also perceptual exploration, which may be of use when challenging existing practices and ways of thought.

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[meta]estratos

> "Quel mouvement, quel élan nous entraîne hors des strates [métastrates]?"[1]

[meta]estratos is an independent institute dedicated to research, education, and creative practices revolving around the concepts of Landscapes and Medium, approached through a transdisciplinary, libertarian, and ecological perspective. Our research work unfolds in a continuous exchange between concrete observations of the territory where [meta]estratos is based, theoretical abstraction, and the implementation of experimental practices, always with the overarching goal of collective emancipatory transformation.

The landscapes that make up the territory of [meta]estratos include domestication, hunting, camouflage, a park, etc. We are located in the rural area of the historic city of Paraty (Brazil), within a farm featuring 40 hectares of preserved Atlantic forest and 10 hectares of agroforestry, in accordance with permaculture principles.

Our range of activities encompasses a diverse array of initiatives, spanning from artistic residencies, radio broadcasts, and publications to socio-environmental education and exhibitions. [meta]estratos is constructed through a plurality of transnational and transdisciplinary voices, thereby reflecting the diversity and richness of perspectives that contribute to our development.

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[1] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2: mille plateaux:* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1980), 628.

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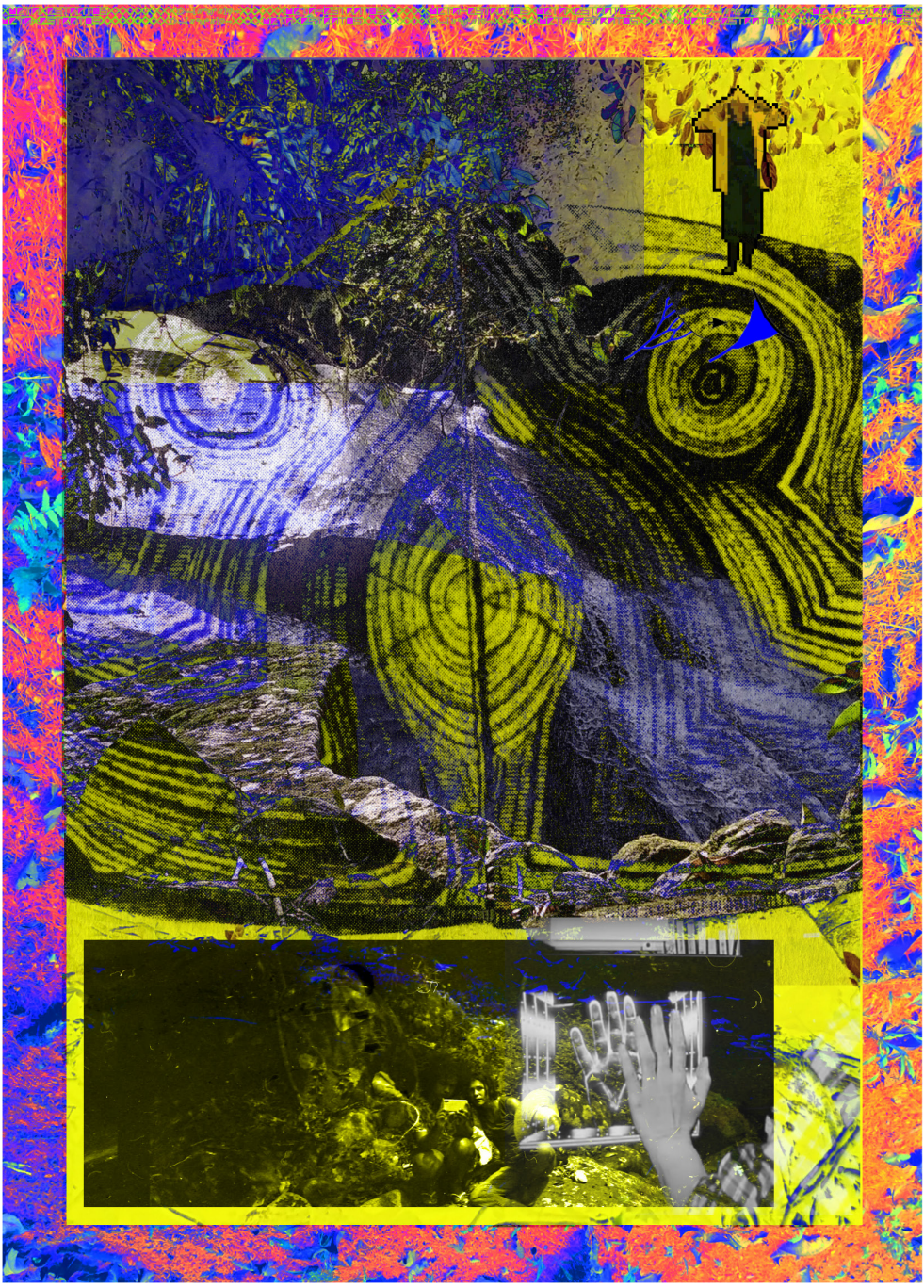

[Manifeste], photomontage made by [meta]estratos, January 2024.

Reading the landscape, starting with the stones – She says

Nature does not constitute a common given for all forms of life, just as culture is not a distinctive element between humans and non-humans. Nature-culture manifests as a complex work shaped by a multispecies community[2]. Emphasizing this realization distances us from the risk of being carried away by a kind of fantasy around an extra-natural (untouchable, wild) nature, which has served more to erase the existence of non-capitalistic relationships with the environment and to establish a kind of green neo-colonialism. It is fundamental to conceive nature from the ruins of the contemporary system of endless exploitation, learning to identify what emerges and persists despite its destruction, as well as to articulate concrete forms of existence and dwellings in the context of the Capitalocene.[3] "Environmental thinking has always been an exercise in scalar understanding. How much is too much, and when is enough enough?[4]

Living figures and stone figures seem to participate in the same action – She observes

Natural landscapes retain, nonetheless, a dimension remaining foreign to our regimes of meaning. They elude the logic of our positive research, they telescope it and guide us towards an impure, cacophonous, and mobile origin. In this regard, the notion of protection must not distance itself from those of destruction and creation. One must begin by desiring the vertigo and opacity specific to interspecific intimacies in order to learn about the living's non-repressive, non-paternalistic dimension and its unintentional character. "And what is the ending of no beginnings, middles, and meanings?"[5]

We begin to connect to the nervous system of the Earth, now becoming an image. Can we be as beautiful as an image?

There is not a singular solution to ecological problems, but rather concrete ways of dwelling where more inclusive perspectives of thinking and healing[6] can emerge. Archipelagic thoughts that lead to conceiving the elusive totality of the world-chaos, and that understand a fundamental multiplicity, opposing systemic paradigms and any form of universality[7]. These approaches evoke operations such as imagination, dreaming, and *fabulation*, allowing us to shape the multispecies commons as a projective space, the concentrated expression of affections, a true work of art. "What do non-human beings have to tell us about planetary history?"[8]

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[2] Cf. Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

[3] Cf. Anna L.Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[4] Alenda Chang, *Playing Nature – Ecology in Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 70.

[5] John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 139.

[6] In French: penser/panser. Malcom Ferdinand, *Une écologie décoloniale – Penser l'écologie depuis le monde caribéen*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2019), 24-28.

[7] Édouard Glissant, *Poétique IV: Le traité du Tout-Monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 31.

[8] Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro, *Quando o sol aqui não mais brilhar: a falência da negritude* (São Paulo: N-1 edições, 2022), 33.

[Study Group], photomontage made by [meta]estratos, January 2024.

Our study group's work commenced in October 2022, and three modules – focused on the concept of [domestication] – have been completed.

[Domesticating, Civilizing] from October to December 2022 [Domesticating: Perspective, Mediation, Scale] from April to May 2023 [Toward a Counter-History of Domestication] from November to December 2023.

By giving paramount importance to this concept, our goal is to challenge the frequent naturalization of non-human landscapes. [Domestication] is thus considered both a figure that composes natural landscapes and a set of techniques contributing to their shaping. Throughout our meetings, we implemented a hybrid working method, intertwining theoretical readings, critical analyses, and artistic experiments. Fragments of the discussed texts served as catalysts for poetic production. Collectively, we have developed an archipelago of ideas, references, images, sounds, and fabulations that constitute a collective archive and will serve as a starting point for future projects at [meta]estratos.

[**Dérives Residency**], photomontage made by [meta]estratos, January 2024.

Dérives are deviations from the course, points of escape, strolls, and creative traversals through the landscapes – their fragments, formal qualities, and conceptual aspects – of the territory where [meta]estratos is based. The residencies have been conceived as a punctual contribution to our research, linking individual projects with the research developed by [meta]estratos. Thus, any project to be realized in our spaces aims to establish a dialogue with the activities carried out by [meta]estratos, seeking to respond, unfold, and amplify the questions collectively raised by its members and collaborators.

Navigation sonore à la lisière des frontières du parc de la Bocaina, interactive platform, video, film, 2022

Author: Matière Revue. Collaboration: [meta]estratos. Supported by: Institut Français

In September 2022, [meta]estratos hosted the French artistic collective Matière Revue for the realization of the sonorous navigation project at the edges of the internal and external borders of Bocaina National Park – one of the largest reserves of Mata Atlântica, adjacent to the [meta]estratos site. This project was commissioned by the French Institute (IF) and gave rise to several works, including an interactive platform (exhibited on the collective's site), a video (broadcast by Sesc and on the Homeostasis Lab site), and a film currently in the editing phase.

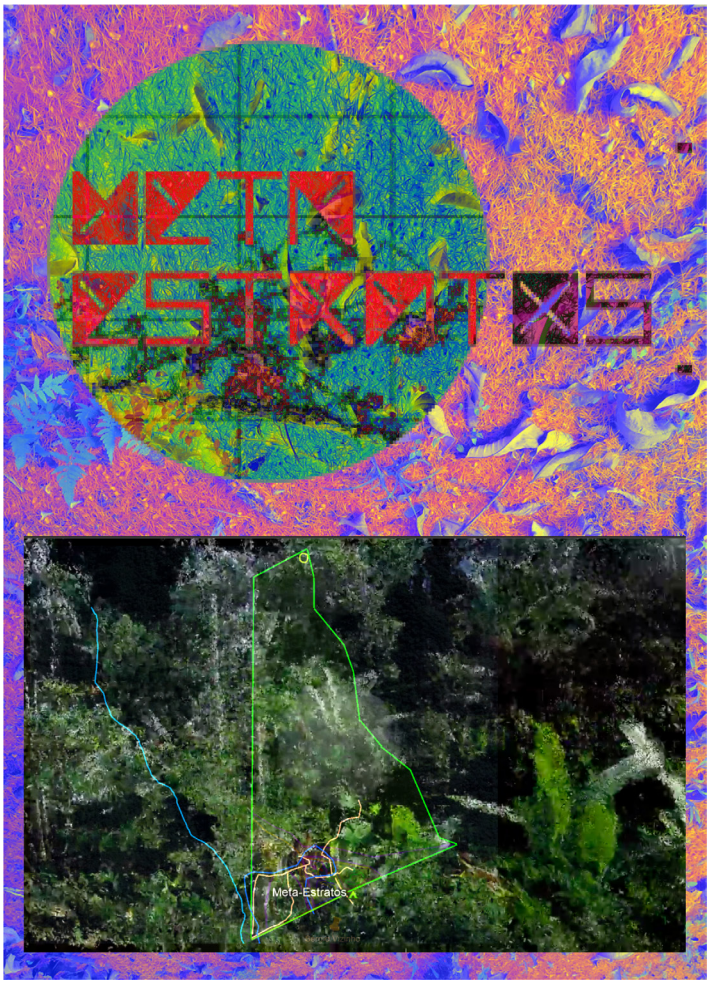
Sei que o mistério subsiste além das águas, video, photo, film, 2023

Director: Azizi Cypriano. Starring: Agui Berenice, Thais Ayomide. Cinematography: Luciana Araujo, Lucas Magalhães. Sound: Anti Ribeiro, Gabriela Soares. Editing: Lucas Magalhães, Loren Minzú. Color: Marcos Reis. Production and collaboration: [meta]estratos. Supported by: Odé cultural, Estudio Saua.

For this residency with the artist Azizi Cypriano, we produced photos and videos to enrich two of his works: a video exhibited at Sesc as part of the exhibition titled "Um oceano para lavar as mãos" (An ocean to wash one's hands), and a film titled "Além das águas" (Beyond the Waters), premiered at the 16th edition of the Zózimo Bulbul Black Cinema.

[Nursery], photomontage made by [meta]estratos, January 2024.

Our gallery serves as an interface intertwining artistic works, historical archives, and scientific materials. It presents itself as an exhibition space, both virtual and on-site, where we make elements from the institute's collection available to the public, while experimenting with innovative curatorial methods. The material integrated into our collection does not follow a hierarchical organization. On the contrary, we deliberately seek to provoke confusion/contamination regarding the origins and meanings of these elements during their exhibition.



[Gallery: Confused Assembly of Objects], photomontage made by [meta]estratos, January 2024.

We regularly organize self-managed meetings with local farmers belonging to the agroecological association "Caminhos do ouro". Each gathering takes place on the property of one of the participants and serves as a space for sharing knowledge, exchanging seeds, collective planning, communal cultivation, etc. We work together for the perpetuation of the richness of the genetic and cultural heritage of the Mata Atlântica and the development of equitable forms of production and consumption.

[Forest Parabolic Radio], photomontage made by [meta]estratos, January 2024.

Our radio is composed of the following programs:

1 >> Narratives on Landscapes: narrations of events experienced, observed, or heard by the inhabitants of the region. 2 >> Pioneer Sections: educational program for children on ecological themes. 3 >> Metallic Forest: broadcasting of soundscapes created by the flora and fauna of the institute's territory.

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IC-98 (Visa Suonpää and Patrik Söderlund)
Finland

House of Khronos

2016–
site-specific intervention (abandoned farm, fence, time, application and decision-making processes)
Pöytyä, Finland
commissioned by Lönnström Art Museum

House of Khronos is a long-duration project based on the disused Päivölä farm in Pöytyä, Finland. The property, consisting of 2,000 m2 of land and five buildings enclosed by a gateless fence, has been left to be claimed by nature. The project sets out to make visible the passage of time, seeks to offer protection to nature and culture as a mutually inclusive pair and investigates issues of ownership and environmental exploitation.

The property was bought in 2016, donated to the municipality of Pöytyä and thoroughly documented before being gated. Geological, archaeological, ornithological, vegetation, building and historic landscape surveys were carried out to collect material evidence to back the main argument of the project – that any given stretch of land has enough biodiversity and thus inherent value to be removed from excessive human use and ownership and to be returned to the planet itself.

After the material first phase of the project, the second part commenced. The municipality of Pöytyä was now contractually bound by the terms set in the contract to both prohibit humans from accessing and interacting with the property and the processes taking place within it, and to seek further protections and safeguards under local and national legislation to fulfil this objective.

The first step was to start a process to preserve the property under the Act on the Protection of Buildings, which involves working with a number of public authorities, including the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Finnish Heritage Agency.

The purpose of the *House of Khronos* is to reposition the project, which initially began as an artistic endeavour, into the realm of bureaucracy and political decision-making. This would allow the questions posed through the project to be placed in the context of official applications, statements and licensing and permit processes.

In the coming years, *House of Khronos* will have a life not only in Pöytyä but across myriad official documents.

IC-98 et. al.

Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded Earth

2020–
landscape park (hiking trail, architectural interventions, phytoremediation)
Kemijärvi, Finland

Raa'anhaava was once Misi-Raaka,[9] *untouched by name, then Raajärvi mine of raw materials. It was always full of life, even when things died and gave birth to something new. The same humans worked the land, dug deeper, extracted some value. It was never really abandoned, not even after the time of the mine. Birch, pine with the symbiotic fungi, reindeer, foragers, offroad-drivers, divers, generations of hares, swallows, swans and mosquitos, those who stayed or had always been or found their way there. They found themselves – founded – a sanctuary, not through conquest but through shared if not coordinated interest.*

This new community thriving in and on the wounded earth was already there when we had the idea of re-founding it as a temple. More of an incantation than a place, actually, a temenos but without borders demarcating the clean and the unclean. Carefully, we planted ideas, thoughts, gestures, seeds of possible future institutions in the seams of this multiplicity, this patchwork of vibrant life. Never replacing or covering but adding, grafting our well-meaning things into this constant growth, ages old and always new.

We have worked on a plan for *Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded Earth* in the abandoned Raajärvi iron mine in Kemijärvi, Finland since 2020. If implemented, the park would become a place for witnessing the wound, which we have inflicted on Earth. It is simultaneously a critique of extractive capitalism, a mode of convivial nature conservation, community building and above all a place where complex, politically polarizing questions could be treated on the basis of embodied and situated experience. It is a glimpse beyond the false promises of the green leap.

The Park is fashioned as a trail running through the disturbed landscape of the former mining area. The journey is based on the liminal logic of separation, transition and integration. Entering the park, the visitor faces the scars mining leaves on the environment. Then comes the move towards the new ecosystem thriving in the environment altered by humans, composed of a multitude of lifeforms. The scale changes, we learn to listen to complex life worlds around and inside us. We admit our responsibility for the wound, find concrete methods of repair and, having seen the horror

[9] Finnish 'raaka' means raw and untouched; raw material is 'raaka-aine'; Raa'anhaava is a play of words with local geographical name 'Raa'anvaara', replacing 'vaara' (hill) with 'haava' (wound). Thus, Raa'anvaara ('untouched hill') and Raajärvi ('untouched lake') are renamed 'wounded, untouched, raw Earth'.

and beauty of a new world, return from the Park as members of a strengthened more-than-human community.

Not only an attempt at re-enchantment, the park is at the heart of currently negotiated futures as Global North has opted for a techno-scientific fix to climate crisis by replacing fossil fuels with green electricity to power the current system. To power green technologies, we need increasing amounts of Rare Earth Elements at a time when recent geopolitical shifts force EU to guarantee self-sufficiency on critical minerals. Extraction moves to our own backyard, but not due to global justice. In the critical Arctic context, *Raa'anhaava* asserts itself as the mirror of e.g., Kiruna and Sokli mines, which carry high hopes of extracting REE minerals.

Our project critiques this continued extractivism without seeking to completely abolish it. The park aims to be something of a space of arbitration. If we as a society essentially plan to go on as we have for the past 500 years, it is necessary at the very least to build a new spiritual understanding of debt, responsibility and mutual care.

As the amount of mines in Finland and the Northern Periphery will increase, there will be an urgent need for an act of crystallization and reflection. A need for a 'mining community church', a temple, a ting. It is irrelevant to ask about the Gods worshipped. In the temple, the community worships itself, here and now. *Raa'anhaava* is the temple for the new mines.

* * *

In relation to the *House of Khronos*, *Raa'anhaava* is a step forward – or perhaps a different perspective – on the issue of human use of land and resources. *House of Khronos* can be seen as an example of a sort of rewilding or now mainstream conservation logic, where human activity will be minimized. *Raa'anhaava*, on the other hand, operates on the convivial conservation and new ecosystems thinking, emphasizing the continuous entanglement of agents over time and space.

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House of Khronos, 2016–

Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded Earth, 2020–, illustration for a forthcoming publication

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Virginia Hanusik
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

Louisiana 2014–2022

For the better part of the past decade, my work has been influenced by the role of visual media in shaping the physical realm and our lived experience. With my projects, I am interested in parsing the complexity of living with a changing climate to unfold the spiritual qualities of existing in the world at a time of ecological degradation and collapse.

Many of my images were made after returning to a specific area again and again over many years in order to illustrate time through subtle changes, or lack thereof, in the built form or landscape. The photographs I am often drawn to produce capture moments of quiet that point to something beyond the frame, to that which holds an ephemeral quality.

Water, and the need to control it, is omnipresent in Louisiana. In 2021, Hurricane Ida was the biggest test of the multibillion-dollar levee system surrounding New Orleans and its suburbs. Once the storm had passed, it was clear that ambitious investments in infrastructure work. Still, the system remains vulnerable to a 100-year storm, the kind that has a 1% chance of occurring every year. And the system grows weaker with each square mile of coast lost to the Gulf of Mexico. I capture these moments of ethereal beauty to convey the complexity of living with a shifting landscape while advocating for the value of this place that the rest of the country has often treated as a climate buffer zone.

My approach to making photographs over the past ten years has also been influenced by this concept of scale and distance, particularly as they relate to perception. The distance between

buildings and between a house and a body of water that surrounds it communicates our relationship with the earth. In embracing the reality in which no two people see or react to things in the exact same way, I am interested in exploring perception, both experientially and ideologically, and how this layering of experience challenges the limits of representation in visual material.

I am fascinated by the connection between landscape art and identity, and the history of landscape representation in America. I was born in the Hudson River Valley, which instilled a deep understanding of how art can be used to sell an idea around the value of certain spaces. My work over the past ten years along the Gulf Coast takes this idea further by analyzing the impacts of landscapes not represented in the canon of American landscape art and the exploitation of that land as a result.

The End of the Mississippi River, Port Eads, Louisiana (2020) Copyright: Virginia Hanusik

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Power Lines in Kenner (2020) Copyright: Virginia Hanusik

Hurricane Katrina Memorial on the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (2021) Copyright: Virginia Hanusik

Full Moon Over Lake Pontchartrain (2021) Copyright: Virginia Hanusik

Lake Pontchartrain #8 (2021) Copyright: Virginia Hanusik

Lake Pontchartrain Causeway #1 (2020) Copyright: Virginia Hanusik

BOOK REVIEW

ART+MEDIA

Camilla Palazzolo

Book Review. *Artists Remake the World, a Contemporary Art Manifesto* – Vid Simoniti, New Haven and London, Yale Press University, 2023

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Camilla Palazzolo
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Book Review. *Artists Remake the World, a Contemporary Art Manifesto* – Vid Simoniti, New Haven and London, Yale Press University, 2023

Faced with numerous political challenges of capitalist democracies, such as climate change and global inequality, the contribution of art may seem negligible. However, over time, artists have increasingly incorporated social and political themes into their works. This prompts a crucial question: what meaningful contribution can contemporary art offer to politics? Vid Simoniti, in his book *Artists Remake the World: A Contemporary Art Manifesto,* sets out to answer this question. Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines different philosophical and art-historical traditions, the author explores the relevance of contemporary visual art in modern democratic-capitalist societies. His intention is to demonstrate how artistic experience possesses a unique potential to emancipate audiences from conventional patterns of thought, prompting them to conceive possibilities beyond the political *status quo*.

The volume is structured into seven chapters, each of which is introduced and enriched by a series of examples from works of art created over the last two decades. Among the many artists carefully discussed by Simoniti are Ai Weiwei, Wangechi Mutu, Olafur Eliasson and Naomi Rincón Gallardo. By positioning itself as a manifesto, Simoniti's work aims not only to describe but also defend the presented artworks, elevating them to models for the evolution of art and its political engagement. This programmatic aspect sets it apart from a conventional book, signaling a commitment to shaping the discourse and direction of contemporary art.

The first chapter outlines the origins of political engagement in contemporary art. Simoniti traces this engagement back to the 1960s, a period that witnessed the emergence of the *avant-garde* and the simultaneous abandonment of traditional media in visual arts. According to the author, the flexibility gained through this abandonment is the distinctive feature of contemporary art exhibited in museums and galleries, determining its political potential. Building upon this premise, the subsequent three chapters explore various forms of political expression in which contemporary artists actively participate.

The first form of political art presented by the author is *evidence-based art*. In this genre, artists employ a new form of realism to contribute to public debates

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by using their works to portray injustices or direct the public's attention to neglected aspects of society. A notable example highlighted by the author is the installation *77sqm_9:26min* (2017) by the British collective Forensic Architecture. This work features a reconstruction of a crime scene, contributing to the debate about the role of police in a racially motivated murder case.

The second form of political art explained in the book is *socially engaged art*. This type of art goes beyond discourse and directly involves the audience in concrete actions that can have an immediate impact on people's lives. Prominent examples of this engaged art are Tania Bruguera's *Arte Útil*, wherein the artist strives to improve people's lives, and *Artivism*, a practice where artists actively participate in existing movements.

The third political form of art discussed in the book is '*Worldmaking*'. Instead of offering a direct commentary on a political situation or advocating for a specific cause, artists participating in Worldmaking aim to provide alternatives to the world as it is given to us. Among the examples provided by Simoniti, Naomi Rincón Gallardo's work is particularly interesting; through imaginative performances such as *The Formaldehyde Trip* (2017), the artist seeks to re-organize public perceptions of issues such as social justice, making queer and indigenous lives more central and valued.

The author contends that the most effective manifestation of political art occurs in this more experimental and daring form. While evidence-based art and socially engaged art run the risk of assimilating entirely into practices like investigative journalism or activism, this more experimental form of political making appears to be the most promising in preserving artistic specificity.

Throughout the book, Simoniti expresses skepticism about the arts' tendency to assimilate with other forms of thought and action. Aligned with thinkers such as Adrian Piper, Claire Bishop, and Jacques Rancière, Simoniti advances the thesis that a work's political potential is maximized when art retains its distinctive, namely aesthetic, character. By the term 'aesthetic', Simoniti refers to the ability of artworks to generate reflective, non-ordinary experiences through which art reorganizes our perception without imposing conclusions. This inconclusiveness serves to prevent the oversimplification inherent in polarization, a demand often placed by politics. Instead, it allows individuals to reflect on issues with which they may not feel directly involved or in agreement.

Simoniti's manifesto finds practical application in the chapters dedicated to the pressing issues of the Internet age and climate change. Here, the power of art to critically address crucial issues such as global warming and the impact of the Internet on democracy becomes evident. Art, functioning as an experimental terrain, encourages us to reconsider our surroundings. An illustrative example is David Hockney's work, *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool* (1966), contributing to a world where homosexual desire takes center stage, challenging prevailing social norms, and fueling the civil rights debate. Similarly, environmental art can reshape our perception of the existing economic system, offering glimpses of possibilities to reconsider our consumption habits.

In the concluding chapter, Simoniti summarizes the addressed issues and clarifies his own philosophical theory. In this section, the author engages with the theories of Adorno and Rancière, sharing with them the idea that art should opt for its own autonomy, but he does not echo their pessimism. Through his engagement with Piper's philosophy, Simoniti articulates the notion that contemporary art, in its most successful form, serves as an experimental branch of politics capable of addressing problems and confronting hard truths that traditional politics may not yet be equipped to discuss.

Although Simoniti's book makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the essence of contemporary political art, it must be recognized that contemporary experimental art often faces two obstacles: the elitism of exhibition spaces, such as biennials and galleries, and the complexity of the works, which undermines their comprehensibility. I believe it is essential to address these challenges in order to actualize the political contribution that Simoniti's Manifesto recognizes in contemporary art. By embracing the strategies outlined in the Manifesto, which encourages a balance between experimentation and comprehension, those working in the arts can strive to overcome the accessibility limits of contemporary art. In doing so, contemporary art could authentically play a significant role in democratic capitalist societies.

BEYOND THE MAIN TOPIC

ART+MEDIA

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Temporality and Spatiality in In-game Photography

Abstract: This study delves into the intricate relationship between temporality and spatiality within the realm of in-game photography, aiming to dissect its unique methodology and uncover its vast potential. While in-game photography shares fundamental elements of temporality and spatiality with classical photography, it carves out a distinct niche by virtue of its association with virtual environments. Temporal considerations reveal commonalities between in-game and classical photography, as both capture specific moments in time, akin to the concept of the decisive moment. However, the arresting of temporal progression within the game, accomplished by halting or pausing the gameplay, introduces a novel facet to photography. In-game photography's capacity to exist within the 'extended present' creates a more manageable and distinctive approach to temporal freezing, redefining the notion of the decisive moment, which posed technical, aesthetic, and philosophical challenges in modernist photography. Spatiality, intricately intertwined with temporality, assumes an ergodic structure within in-game photography, offering a multitude of photographic possibilities. Within this framework, photographer can navigate along x, y, and z axes, transforming the camera into a mechanical eye that unveils the invisible and alternative facets of the subject. This newfound freedom introduces an additional layer of engagement between the photographer and the virtual environment, a feature scarcely attainable in classical photography.

Keywords: in-game photography; temporality; spatiality; ergodicity; decisive moment.

Introduction

In-game photography, whose boundaries are quite unclear but also needs to draw its own boundaries, stands in a methodologically different perspective. This perspective, in terms of time and space, has the feature of documenting, objectivity and index of photography, and on the other hand, it forces these features. The change of these features attributed to photography by light, of course, has been expressed by the discussions that have arisen with the digital, artificial, virtual and coded. Scholars

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such as Mitchell,[1] Manovich,[2] Rosler,[3] and Lister[4] have noted its ability to embrace and evolve with rapidly advancing technology. Photography has moved beyond the limitations of its past, not concerned with labels like 'post-'[5], 'after-'[6], or 'non-'[7]. Instead, it has entered the era of dematerialization, cybernetics, algorithms and video-games. While photography used to be primarily associated with documenting reality or expressing emotions, it now has the capacity to create and depict non-existent pasts and experiences. Modern photographic technologies allow us to capture images within computer games, incorporate them into virtual reality environments, and even generate them through artificial intelligence. Some scholars argue that these shifts represent the emergence of a 'new visual regime',[8] while others see them as opening up possibilities for new forms of subjectivity.[9]

The prevailing and contentious threads in the realm of photographic expansion today revolve around three key domains: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Extended Reality (XR), and In-Game Photography. The incorporation of photographic attributes within popular video games such as Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Wildlands, Death Stranding, Cyberpunk 2077, The Last of Us and Watch Dogs 2 has sparked extensive discourse on various dimensions of in-game photography, including its (non)diegetic nature, its remediation of visual media, its affective qualities, its aesthetic considerations, its isometric aspects, and its integration within cybernetic systems. Nevertheless, owing to the rapid evolution of the video game industry itself, in-game photography continues to generate novel aesthetics and modalities, such as the emergence of screencast and screenshot photography as distinct practices.

Applying this line of thought to in-game photography, we can understand it as a form of photography that maintains the efficiency and function of classical photography,[10] while presenting it in an unfamiliar or non-traditional manner. As Nitsche

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[1] William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Virtual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 1992).

[2] Lev Manovich, "The Paradoxes of Digital Photography," in *Photography after Photography: Memory and Representation in the Digital Age*, ed. Amelunxen von et al. (G+B Arts, 1995), 57–65.

[3] Martha Rosler, "Image Simulations, Computer Manipulations", in *Decoys and Disruptions*: *Selected Writings 1975–2001* (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press in association with International Center of Photography New York, 2004), 259–317.

[4] Martin Lister, *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge, 2013).

[5] Joan Fontcuberta, *The Post-Photographic Condition* (Montreal, Bielefeld: Mois de la Photo, Kerber Verlag, 2015).

[6] Fred Ritchin, *After Photography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

[7] François Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011).

[8] Daniel Rubinstein, Johnny Golding and Andy Fisher, *On the Verge of Photography: Imaging Beyond Representation* (Birmingham: Article Press, 2013).

[9] David Bate, D. (2014), "The Emancipation of Photography," in *The Versatile Image: Photography, Digital Technologies and the Internet*, ed. Alexandra Moschovi, Carol Mckay and Arabella Plouviez (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), 37–52.

[10] The approach I call classical photography here is a form of production created after the use of an analog or digital camera. This includes straight photography, street photography and other fields of photography where a camera is used.

states in his comment on the necessity of the camera, the camera creates both a technical and contextual space for gaze and narrative in any form:

> It is in the nature of a camera (virtual or real) to select, frame, and interpret. Through this selection, the moving image infuses the virtual world with a perspective. It narrates the space to the player. Because every video game space needs a camera, there can be no 3D video game without such a narrating. Even if this camera strategy is limited to a single viewpoint throughout the whole user experience – as seen in the first-person shooting genre – it still constitutes a particular perspective that uses a specific expressive range and features a genuine narrative force.[11]

Hence, it becomes evident that in-game photography, with its photographic perspective and accompanying narrative potential, warrants exploration and investigation within various contexts. Thusly, Giddings[12] suggests rethinking the nature of photography rather than lamenting its transformation into simulacra. Emphasizing the distinctions between in-game photography and classical photography is important. These forms of photography can mutually enrich each other. In-game photography, inspired by real-life photography, offers creative possibilities within the virtual world. Game world photographs, derived from virtual spaces, constitute a unique and mechanical reality. They should be appraised from a different perspective, one that considers the virtual world's peculiarities rather than real-world norms. What can in-game photography, which converges with classical photography but also creates its own methodology, offer us ontologically and methodologically? The subject I want to examine with this question is how spatiality and temporality are in in-game photography and what potential it can reveal. More specifically, a comparison will be made between the 'decisive moment' methodology specific to classical photography and the 'decisive moment' methodology of in-game photography. Naturally, this distinction is not made to glorify the capabilities and features of in-game photography, but to understand its methodology.

Perspective on temporality and spatiality in photography

The diverse techniques employed in the transference of imagery onto surfaces, while having traversed a trajectory punctuated by various transitional phases until the 19th century, should deem the technique executed by Joseph Nicephore Niepce in 1826 as constituting a pivotal qualitative transformation. Within this context, the advent of photography, as an outgrowth of the organic progression from the operational principles of its precursor, the camera obscura, embodies a departure from an insular

[11] Michael Nitsche, *Video Game Spaces: Image Play and Structure in 3d Game Worlds* (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 2008), 77.

[12] Seth Giddings, "Drawing Without Light: Simulated Photography in Videogames," in *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, ed. Martin Lister (London: Routledge, 2013), 46.

observer, detached from corporeal exigencies, to the construction of a novel observer model that reintegrates ocular perception with corporeal presence. This transition, manifesting during the nascent epoch of the 19th century, emerges as a concomitant outcome of the overarching modernization movement.

The objective realm, which manifests as a delineated vista within the camera obscura, finds itself inscribed by the photographic apparatus. It constitutes a material vestige akin to the photonic imprints cast upon sands, thereby enshrining a distinct ontological demarcation from alternative representational modalities. Photography, facilitated through the agency of this operation of optical rendition, proffers an envisage surpassing the realm of perception's attainments in objectivity. As such, it becomes tenable to encapsulate the quintessence of photographic praxis as an assertion of 'that has been'[13]. In this new way of representation, where photography takes over the effort of painting to represent temporality, the methodology of photography will make the visible more possible and establish a causal link with the physical.

According to Batchen,[14] the phenomenon in question can be seen as an early representation of what he terms the 'desire to photograph' – an inherent yearning to capture the fleeting passage of time and halt its elusive nature. This impulse, along with its visible manifestations, was prompted by a disruption of previously established notions of time's stability. In essence, Batchen argues that the very concept of photography is intricately tied to, and even embodies, a distinct modern anxiety about time that became pronounced during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Batchen delves into the notion that 'time holds significance within several discourses that gave rise to the longing for photography.'[15] Continuing his inquiry he proceeds to assess writings penned by Talbot, William Gilpin, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Thomas Wedgwood. He then establishes a connection between these textual compositions and the artworks of Constable, putting forth the assertion that these endeavors constitute "as much a study of the temporal exigencies of human observation, and thus of human subjectivity, as a picture of a cloudy sky."[16] Drawing upon primary-source materials authored by some of the foremost pioneers of the medium, Batchen[17] discerns a shared impetus among these early practitioners in their endeavor to articulate temporality. This collective motivation, as evidenced through historical texts, underscores their concerted aspiration to encapsulate the intricate nuances of temporal experience within the evolving realm of photography.

Expanding this analysis, an extension is promptly undertaken to encompass the domain of early photographic artifacts. Early photographers sought to express temporality through a convergence of technical innovations, like the motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge (1870s and 1880s), and Étienne-Jules Marey (1880s–1904). In addition,

[13] Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York, Hill & Wang, 1980), 77.

[14] Geoffrey Batchen, "Desiring Production," in *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 2–24.

[15] Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 90.

[16] Ibid., 99.

[17] Batchen, "Desiring Production," 10–12.

since the early 1950s, electrical engineer and photographer Harald Eugene Egerton became the pioneer of stroboscopic photography by reducing temporality in photography to the level of microseconds and showing the aesthetic and scientific unity of the decisive moment. However, these developments mostly proceeded with semi-scientific and semi-artistic expressions. From this point of view these works exemplify a sequence of chronological and positivistic methodologies employed by a cohort of innovators who diligently pursued incremental technological enhancements. These advancements were primarily geared towards augmenting the light-sensitivity of photographic plates and negative chemical compositions. The overarching objective was to expedite the image production process, facilitate the capture of motion, and mitigate, if not eradicate, the occurrence of blurring. Besides, preceding the advent of photography, stereograms and Daguerre's dioramas can be regarded as early manifestations of virtuality. Therefore, what we basically encounter is the examination of a kind of contemplative art that emerges from the image production mechanisms that develop upon the experience of virtuality. This examination now takes place in virtual environments where the experience is at a higher level by involving more than one sense. Slater proposes that the scenario uncovered by diroma exceeds modernity's goal of objectively explaining the world's mysteries. Rather, it reignites fascination, blurring the boundary between reality and representation. Paradoxically, it aims to enchant the world anew through natural magic, rather than rational analysis. The environments crafted by Daguerre were not just representations; they were simulations filled with immersive virtual experiences.[18]

Photography's transformation of temporality into a representation of modernity has enabled temporality to emerge as instantaneous. Following these, the once pressing positivist technological and scientific challenge that the visual manifestations of the fragmented second embodied underwent a transformation, leading to a shift away from its initial sense of urgency and character. At this point, the art historian Gilles Mora speaks of a split in the photographic expression of temporality. Mora postulates that the emergence of the 'aesthetic of instantaneity' within the domains of both mass-produced and fine-art photography, arising from the aspiration to adeptly control exposures lasting a fraction of a second, exhibits a range of distinctive attributes: firstly, it fosters a proclivity for capturing the ordinary facets of human existence, mundane objects, and everyday activities; secondly, the veracity of reality becomes subjected to meticulous documentation, driven by the pursuit of encapsulating life's 'decisive moments'; lastly, the perceived 'imperfections' inherent to such visual compositions are embraced as an emblem of genuineness and are revered as an artistic 'virtue.'[19]

In this context, serving as an emblematic representation of a significant paradigm shift in the portrayal of temporality and standing as a trailblazer in both contemporary and classical photographic realms, Bresson's concept of the decisive moment holds a pivotal role as a noteworthy photographic approach. Of course, this understanding of modernist photography's discourse of temporality and spatiality

[18] Don Slater, "Photography and Modern Vision: The Spectacle of 'Natural' Magic," in *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (London: Routledge, 1995), 218–37.

[19] Gilles Mora, *Photospeak: A Guide to the Ideas, Movements and Techniques of Photography, 1839 to the Present* (Abbeville Press, 1998), 180.

leads to a crisis of representation on reality. While artists such as Gerhard Richter, Jeff Wall, Thomas Demand and Hiroshi Sugimoto work with the crisis of representation of time and space (and reality) in classical photography, temporality and spatiality evolve towards another form of representation with the adaptation of photography to the digital and virtual world. In parallel, digitality, computer technologies and new media have brought the existence of photography as a material to virtual environments and enabled the emergence of significantly new methods and representations in photographic production. In the digital game as a new media, photography provides a transition to hyperspace and hypertime. Although there are often debates that the causality that gives the ontological definition of photography's power of proof has been 'shaken'[20], this new field, on the other hand, serves as a document for the temporality and spatiality in which it is formed.[21] What we encounter here is the belief that the same methodology that analog photography revealed in temporality and spatiality will continue or should continue. The methodology of in-game photography related to video games as new media will inevitably be similar to its predecessors such as analog photography and the decisive moment. Because there is a 'subtractive process'[22] in both. The process of selection (selecting the main subject), extraction (i.e., leaving it out of the frame), and framing is basically the same in both approaches. However, the temporality and spatiality in which the virtual environment and the video game exist depend on another representation. In line with Vasselau's assertion, simulation models, rather than replicating the natural world, dismantle a naturalized metaphysical perspective and substitute it with systems that generate a world-order based on quantifiable and manipulatable outcomes. She discusses how a particular computer graphics model for subsurface scattering is used to control the appearance of inner light within materials. It transforms the previously ambiguous quality of translucency into distinct and adjustable translucency effects, challenging traditional metaphysical perspectives by providing a controllable and believable representation of materials.[23] Here, it can be said that in-game photography has a structure that can 'refer to itself'[24] due to its unique temporality and spatiality arising from the virtual space.

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[20] Michael Punt, "'Well, Who You Gonna Believe Me or Your Own Eyes?': A Problem of Digital Photography," *The Velvet Light Trap – A Critical Journal of Film and Television* 36 (1995): 3.

[21] Gerling explains the relationship between photography, in-game photography and reality as follows: 'It is a double simulation: if photography simulates a view of the world, then in-game photography is simulating a simulation.' Winfried Gerling, "Photography in the Digital: Screenshot and In-game Photography," *Photographies Journal* 11, 2–3) (2018): 160.

[22] I use subtractive process as a term that can refer to the opposite of additive process of the painting. Photography is more about the act of exclusion, it references absence. That is, the process of curating, isolating, and composing. Apart from this technical definition, see Barthes's idea of photography as the sign of an absence. Barthes, *Camera lucida: Reflections on Photography*.

[23] Cathryn Vasselau, "Simulated Translucency," in *Digital Light* ed. Sean Cubitt et al. (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 174.

[24] Nöth utilizes Jäger›s framework to classify digital images and conventional non-referential photographs as follows: digital images are classified as 'Concrete Photography,' as they create images without any abstraction, whereas non-referential conventional images are categorized as 'Abstract Photography,' as they abstract from the referent Gottfried Jäger, "Abstract Photography," in *Rethinking Photography I+II: Narration and New Reduction in Photography* ed. Ruth Horak (Salzburg: Fotohof Edition, 2003), 178.

Decisive moment and temporality

Henri Cartier-Bresson is one of the most influential photographers of the 20th century. The concept and methodology of 'decisive moment' developed by him has deeply affected many photographers. Cartier-Bresson, who created the philosophy of 'decisive moment' by feeding from many different sources, presented us a new way of seeing, in which he showed different possibilities of photographic vision. He was heavily influenced by the philosophy of a Zen archer, surrealism, and modern art. The book '*Images à la Sauvette*',[25] is the photographer's manifesto. There are some explanations about temporality in the book, and these discourses formed the building blocks of classical and documentary photography. His most well-known motto, which reflects his methodology and philosophy, is "the joint operation of the brain, the eye and the heart"[26]. As per Cartier-Bresson's perspective, the compositional essence within a photograph materializes through the harmonious alignment of concurrent visual components. He contends that disentangling content from form remains an impracticable endeavor within his framework. What he means by this is the geometrically formal arrangement of the elements that make up the compositions of the photograph. John Szarkowski[27] conveyed that Cartier-Bresson's statement of moment of decision was misunderstood; he asserted that what happened at the decisive moment was not a dramatic zenith (unusual) but a visual climax. The main issue here is not a mechanical capture of the moment, but rather the taking form of the moment. There are two things that make up the form, determine the form (composition-space) and content (narrative-time), which are the two basic elements that make up the summit that Szarkowski points out: temporality and spatiality. Cartier-Bresson's methodology is actually a visual definition and expression of modernist definition of time, which takes us directly to Augenblick.[28] Cartier-Bresson's question is how I can capture and express the temporal present. It is a moment in flowing time and it is necessary to stop the flowing time in a meaningful way. According to Heidegger's perspective, the present doesn't manifest as an unending procession of instantaneous occurrences that I passively observe drifting past. Instead, the present is an entity I can actively grasp and decisively mold to my own purpose. The future's anticipatory realm unveils the phenomenon of our past existence, which unfurls itself into the immediate instant of action. Heidegger designates this occurrence as 'the moment of vision'[29].

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[25] Literally French meaning is, '*images on the run*'. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952).

[26] Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, [ii].

[27] John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966) 4.

[28] Augenblick, literally translating to 'glance of the eye'.

[29] This expression, borrowed from the lexicon of Kierkegaard and Luther, can be interpreted as a rendition of the Greek term 'kairos', signifying the fitting or opportune moment. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964) / Martin Heidegger,* edited, with general introduction and introductions to each selection by David Farrell Krell, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

The concept of Kairos embodies this control he wields. Through his deliberate self-examination, Cartier-Bresson attains the ability to seize upon a critical juncture. The photographer embodies the metaphor of a wanderer, in pursuit of something he cannot define until it manifests itself before him. During these moments of eager anticipation, he genuinely embraces a 'futural' state, receptive to the possibilities that may unfold. Cartier-Bresson has to be on the alert because he has to focus and foresee a brief and irreversible moment in time. This encapsulates the essence of kairos – the opportune instance for deliberate action, informed by experiential wisdom and technical proficiency, the moment of determination. Decisive action brings about a state of 'presence', unveiling the potential contained within this moment. In Cartier-Bresson's context, the concealed becomes unveiled. According to Cartier-Bresson, the immediacy of capturing an image 'on the run', framing it within the viewfinder the very moment it's seen, holds paramount significance in grasping the essence of the scene. He firmly opposes altering the image through cropping or darkroom modifications, considering the composition as framed by the eye during that precise instant to be unadulterated and authentic. However, this sense of immediacy encompasses not only temporal and spatial dimensions but also an intimate connection between the subject, which has come into existence, and the photographer, who is poised to capture it. If, in the darkroom, when it seems that a shot has 'failed' due to hesitation or uncertainty, Cartier-Bresson says it is usually "because your glance became vague, your eye wandered off".[30] To avoid this, the decisive moment, Kairos and Augenblick need to be considered together. Ward delves into the concept of being authentically future and suspended within the hiatus before the moment, emphasizing how this disposition leads to the Augenblick, possibly translating as the 'glance of the eye'. This glance of perception, directed toward an object, opportunity, or potential, carries a revelatory essence, offering a glimpse into the world's facets that one can then complement with personal knowledge and expectations. Cartier-Bresson's skilled eye adds a layer of anticipation, a premonition embedded within the atmospheric of the scene. Simultaneously, the Latin term 'momentum' holds a deeper connotation beyond the temporal instant – it imparts movement to the moment, accompanied by extraordinary future-bound prospects. The photographer's futural momentum, intertwined with the world's movements, implies an ongoing receptivity to unfolding possibilities within the environment, extending beyond the immediate 'now' instant. This perspective intertwines the philosophical contemplations of being 'futural' with the artistic anticipation embodied in Cartier-Bresson's photographic practice.[31]

[30] Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographs* (Aperture, 2004), 25–7.

[31] For the 'decisive moment' concept and its in-depth investigation with Augenblick, see Koral Ward, *Augenblick. The Concept of the 'Decisive Moment' in 19th- and 20th-entury Western Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

In-Game photography and temporality

It is possible to say that temporality in in-game photography is close to classical photography and decisive moment philosophy to a certain extent. Of course, it is quite difficult to understand this from the result images. However, we can say that his methodology works quite differently. The decisive moment seeks to encompass one of the temporal intervals derived from the 'modernist concept of time'[32]. In classical photography, the taken photograph solidifies a particular moment, conserving it for the future. The time aspect becomes concentrated within this singular juncture, encouraging observers to ponder over the past even as the present remains immutable. Time becomes confined within the frame, eliciting contemplation and potential interpretations. In contrast, in-game photography grapples with a dynamic temporality. Virtual worlds are often designed with fluid timelines, where day turns into night, weather changes, and characters move through narrative arcs. In-game photographers must anticipate these shifts, capturing moments that not only align with their artistic vision but also synchronize with the game's evolving narrative. This intricate dance between time and photography adds layers of complexity to the craft. However, the most important aspect of in-game photography for temporality is that time can be stopped or paused as a phenomenon that changes temporality and even the story and events can be repeated.

Christopher Hanson[33] argues that games introduce novel forms of temporal control that significantly reshape our comprehension and experience of time. As shown by these diverse shifts in ludic temporality, game time stands out for its observable flexibility, navigational potential, and range of possibilities. Engaging in gameplay involves navigating through several temporal dimensions. One is the actual passage of time in which we function as individuals. Simultaneously, the game introduces its own temporal framework, marked by intervals in turn-based gameplay or a seamless flow in real-time experiences. Photographer can exert control over these temporal structures through actions like pausing and saving, or by interacting with gameplay elements that integrate temporal manipulation and navigation as essential mechanics. The following can be understood from Hanson's statements: multiple temporalities could create temporal manipulation and vice versa. The possibility of manipulating the temporality and creating multiple temporality in connection with it is possible by stopping, pausing or starting again from the previously saved place in the games. In gaming, pausing a game lets photographer momentarily halt gameplay, breaking the game's time flow. Unlike real life, where time moves forward uncontrollably, games present us with alternative time experiences that we can manipulate.

[32] For the relation of temporality to global standardization, see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); for the politics of modernist temporality, see Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995); also for 'a near obsessive fixation with time' of modernist writers see Adam Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire: Modern Britain and World Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) 1.

[33] Christopher Hanson, *Game Time: Understanding Temporality in Video Games* (Indiana University Press, 2018).

From the perspective of photography practice and methodology, stopping or pausing the game is a kind of photographic praxis specific only to in-game photography. As Hanson states: "[…] pause typically extra-textually interrupts a player's engagement in a digital game by visually ceasing all gameplay action […]."[34]

In the flowing time, Kairos cuts the time to the exact 'now' and at the same time can split the time into pieces. In classical photography, outside the frame, outside the moment that cuts like a knife, there is a time flowing. Temporality is then only capable of standing on a two-dimensional surface, as an image. In-game photography, we can also see the moment when time stops and what is outside. Kairos can interrupt time and see outside the 'moment'. A moment that we cannot see in the 'token of absence'[35] that Sontag defines for photography can be seen in the in-game photography. Cartier-Bresson knows he only has one chance to capture the decision moment, he can also predict the next time frame of the moment, but he can only see it after taking the photo. At the moment of taking a photo, he cannot see the moment when he is taking it. Considering the 'what happens next if I'[36], in in-game photography, there is a high probability of learning this, because the photographer has a chance to pause or stop the time. Photography is an inferential practice, and the methodology of Cartier-Bresson's inference and in-game photography's inferentialism is different in terms of temporality. In a way, this is a situation where the understanding of postmodern temporality versus modernist temporality emerges. Postmodernism rejects the linear and coherent view of temporality that is prevalent in modernist thought. Instead, temporality is seen as fragmented and non-linear. It is characterized by an array of overlapping and disjointed experiences, events, and narratives, rather than a unified historical progression. The postmodern view of temporality incorporates the concept of simultaneity, where different temporal layers or realities coexist simultaneously. This is closely tied to the idea of hyperreality, where the boundary between reality and representation becomes blurred, influencing how temporality is perceived. A possibility emerged over the playability of time. This has a different meaning from the fact that a moment is just one of a series of decisions. Heise views postmodern narrative experiments as a counter to the decline in temporal experience amid media-driven culture. Postmodern authors, distinct from their modernist predecessors, highlight time's complexity, contingency, and lack of linearity. This emphasizes the intricate, fragmented temporal patterns shaping society, which are expressed within the text as a whole rather than through individual experience. By challenging traditional frameworks, these narratives prompt readers to contemplate how science and technology shape modern time, encouraging them to envision alternative temporal expressions[37]. As an example of deconstructing modernist temporality in terms of

[34] Ibid., 72.

[35] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977) 18.

[36] Barry Atkins, "What Are We Really Looking at?: The Future-Orientation of Video Game Play," in *Games and Culture* 1, 2 (2006): 137.

[37] Ursula K. Heise, *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 53–74.

photography, the work of Jeff Wall can be exemplary. Wall brings temporality into discussion with his fictionalized snapshots that deconstruct the decisive moment of what he has called 'complex illusion of instantaneousness'[38]. Jeff Wall's body of work can be interpreted as an endeavor to capture the sensation of 'being present' within photography, striving to infuse photographic surfaces and textures with a painterly quality. The fundamental requisites for imbuing a photograph with the essence of a painting involve Wall leveraging technical capabilities that allow the photograph to embody the formal characteristics of a painting. However, this aspiration begins with a conceptual act of imagination. This pursuit revolves around challenging the prevailing judgments, a concept termed by Jeff Wall as "the most significant illusion spawned by photography."[39] This phase distinguishes Wall's photographic production timeline from conventional street and documentary photography, as well as his instantaneous aesthetics. It encourages the viewer to perceive the photographic object through a painterly lens, resulting in the creation of distinct mimetic realms. Notably, its temporality extends beyond a singular mimetic domain. Wall, "[…] alludes to the tension between staging and contingency, which has troubled notions of photography as 'document' or 'decisive moment'."[40] Wall questions the decisive moment and the temporality beyond it. The decisive moment that Wall constructs represent a wider and playable range in terms of temporality. Wall's photographs often introduce temporal ambiguity. They may combine elements from different time periods, creating a sense of temporal dislocation so the final image is 'iconically multiply indexical'.[41] This challenges viewers to consider the fluidity of time and its intersections, blurring distinctions between past, present, and future, Wall even defines it as 'the decisive absence'.[42] Fundamentally, it is similar to Wall's method in that in-game photography treats time in a more playable space. However, the only difference here is that at the moment when time stops in in-game photography, all spatiality stops with temporality. It is not about the temporality outside of the decisive moment, which Wall questions in the methodology of classical photography. It's about the moment with creating the decisive moment.

Decisive moment and spatiality

I revealed that temporality as a phenomenon is quite close in both photography practices. Spatiality, which we should consider together with temporality, emerges as another phenomenon in which the two photography practices differ considerably.

[38] Jeff Wall, "Restoration – Interview with Martin Schwander – 1994," in *Jeff Wall: the Complete Edition*, ed. Thierry de Duve et al. (London: Phaidon Press, 2009a), 87.

[39] Jeff Wall, "Cinematography: A Prologue, 2005," in *Jeff Wall: the Complete Edition*, ed. Thierry de Duve et al. (London: Phaidon Press, 2009b).

[40] Naomi Merritt, *Jeff Wall and the Concept of the Picture* (London: Routledge, 2021), 26.

[41] Helen Westgeest and Hilde Van Gelder, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective* (Wiley: Blackwell, 2011), 38.

[42] Jan Tumlir, "Interview with Jeff Wall: The Hole Truth," *Artforum* 39 (2001): 116.

The spatial experience of the decisive moment is an arrangement that coincides with temporality for the photographer. In Bergson's words, 'spatialized time'[43] emerges where the two cannot be separated from each other, overlapped. As per Bergson's view, the segments of time that we divide to enable photography is a representation of space rather than true time. In our daily lives, we perceive time as a uniform medium through which the events of our consciousness flow. According to him, memories that we can retain function as snapshots, capturing the result of an action rather than the action itself. These snapshots are a fusion of both time and space, emerging wherever the passage of time leaves an imprint in space. In such instances, time takes on a visual and quantifiable dimension; time essentially becomes spatial. What we often consider as segments of time are actually fragments of space. While these symbols represent time, they are indeed symbols and representations, not time itself. The process of spatializing time operates bidirectionally. On one side, time requires space to manifest as an externalized representation. On the other side, spatial representations of time, these snapshots, necessitate an awareness of time to be categorized as such. Bergson argues that if genuine time did not exist, a point would remain just a point, not a moment. The snapshot encapsulates two components: the uninterrupted flow of real time (duration) and spatialized time. This spatialized time interacts with genuine time, leading to the emergence of a moment.[44]

The decisive moment creates an intermediary time period, bringing the timed space before us. Here, temporality and spatiality cannot be separated from each other in the photograph that the photographer observes for the decisive moment. Because time and space are simultaneously in flux and emerge as an inseparable whole. Spatial time emerges at the moment the photograph is taken, that is, as a divided time. The photographer's spatial navigation is about being able to stop time only in two dimensions. Spatial navigation is limited. Cartier-Bresson cannot navigate spatiality when he foresees the decisive moment. The decision of how the spatiality will be may only be about arranging the elements that it wants to remain in and out of the photo planarly. Therefore, he cannot go beyond the spatiality he sees. However, it can be said that just like temporality, spatiality also undergoes changes in classical photography. The post-decisive moment period, in which photography is constructed and reality representation is questioned, shows us what spatiality can be and how we can dominate it. Thomas Demand's artistic endeavors revolve around an intriguing exploration of spatiality, a concept that plays a pivotal role in his unique approach to photography and installations. Thomas Demand makes paper models and photographs of real-life spaces in his works. At the core of Demand's methodology lies the meticulous construction of intricate paper models that fastidiously recreates various environments and objects. These models serve as the foundation for his photographic compositions, constituting a multi-layered process that challenges traditional notions

[43] Henri Bergson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, trans. Melissa Mcmahon, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (Londra: Continuum, 2002), 211.

[44] Bergson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, 211.

of spatial representation. Through the lens of photography, Demand masterfully manipulates spatial perception. The transition from three-dimensional paper models to two-dimensional images creates an uncanny interplay between reality and illusion. As viewers, we are initially drawn into the scenes, captivated by their lifelike qualities. Yet, upon closer inspection, we become aware of the crafted nature of these environments, prompting us to question our perception of spatial depth and authenticity. Sugimoto, on the other hand, shows a different spatiality in terms of his relationship with physical space. Sugimoto's 'Theatres' series features photographs of movie theaters taken during film screenings. The long exposure times capture the passage of an entire film in a single image, blurring the lines between temporal dimensions. These works address the spatial aspects of both the theater architecture and the ephemeral light and shadow play of the film screening.

In-Game photography and spatiality

Spatiality has quite a different meaning in in-game photography. Aarseth presents the notion that virtual space and its depiction hold fundamental significance within all computer games. Acknowledging the virtual space's inherent ambiguity due to its abstract nature, Aarseth underscores its vital role in the functionality of computer games. He proposes that these games not only possess a degree of ambiguity due to their representational nature but also emphasize the importance of spatiality. Aarseth's core argument revolves around the idea that computer games are fundamentally focused on investigating and commemorating spatial representation, which becomes their central theme and purpose. He posits that these games not only "celebrate and explore spatial representation as their central motif and *raison d'être*" but also evolve their essence around this exploration and celebration.[45] As Orlando and Brey stated, multiple layers of reference in games reveal a model of a situation, moment or person completely different from the real one.[46] Within this framework, channeling spatiality to perceive numerous layers of reference stands out as a pivotal characteristic of in-game photography. With the pause of the game to take pictures, the photographer/player has the option to move within the three-dimensional space from two-dimensional screen as a camera.

When the photographer pauses the game, being able to move spatially in the space reveals a very provocative, avant-garde and innovative photography method in many respects. Being able to navigate spatiality means that the object and subject of the photograph can also be navigable.

[45] Espen J. Aarseth, "Allegories of Space: The Question of Spatiality in Computer Games," in *Cybertext Yearbook 2000*, ed. Markku Eskelinen and Raine Koskimaa (Saarijaärvi: Research Centre for Contemporary Culture, University of Jyväskylä, 2001), 161.

[46] Alexandra Orlando and Betsy Brey, "Press A to Shoot: Pokémon Snap-shots and Gamespace Ownership," 2015, http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/press-a-to-shoot/, acc. August 7, 2023.

Just like in a studio[47], the photographer can examine all options related to spatiality, the location of the object, the place within the free space. The photographer can move not only on the surface in the x and y axes, but also on the x, y and z axes depending on the spatiality. By capturing a moment in time, the photographer gains the chance to carefully examine intricacies typically hidden and overlooked during the game due to specific camera angles.[48] The photographer can move away from space and temporality, crossing over to the other side. They may realize that the image discovered as the moment of decision is not really the moment of decision but that another, better option exists. The option to leave behind the initial moment of choice and transition into a different temporal and spatial context is open to them. What could be on the other side of a photo taken at the decisive moment, what happened? In classical photography, we cannot see what is happening on the other side of the space or subject. What is on the reverse side of a portrait at the decisive moment, what is this side view from the back of Cartier-Bresson's puddle jumper? Such a reality can only be realized with a 'spatial dominance'[49] of cyberscape. In a camera-less camera movement, the photographer who is allowed to roam freely in space thus explores by moving with a 'subjective camera'.[50] The way the photographer experiences spatiality in the game is related to a method of seeing that stems from axial independence. According to Qvortrup, axial experience and axial vision are here specific to game spatiality, namely cyberspace:

> Cyberspace should be understood neither as something constituting a parallel world (referring to a dualistic paradigm), nor as a representation of the real world (referring to a positivistic paradigm), but should be conceptualized as a representation of the space experience of human beings (referring to a phenomenological paradigm).[51]

Therefore, there is a corporate where the body (vision and axial independence from the photographer's point of view) and the virtual environment meet. The view-centered (egocentric[52]) presentation and the ego-moving spatial concept act together in

[47] Sebastein Möring, S. and Marco De Mutiis, "Camera Ludica: Reflections on Photography in Video Games," in *Intermedia Games-Games Inter Media: Video Games and Intermediality*, ed. Michael Fuchs and Jeff Thoss (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 81.

[48] For spatiality and camera use in video games, see: Nitsche, *Video Game Spaces: Image Play and Structure in 3d Game Worlds*, 2008.

[49] Anders Stephanson, "Regarding Postmodernism. A Conversation with Fredric Jameson," *Social Text 17* (Autumn, 1987): 29–54; Fredric Jameson, "The End of Temporality," *Critical Inquiry* 29, 4 (2003): 695–718.

[50] Hanson, *Game Time: Understanding Temporality in Video Games*, 43.

[51] Lars Qvortrup, "Cyberspace as Representation of Space Experience: In Defense of a Phenomenological Approach," in *Virtual Space: Spatiality in Virtual lnhabited 3D Worlds*, ed. Lars Qvortrup et al. (London: Springer, 2002), 5.

[52] Roberta L. Klatzky, "Allocentric and Egocentric Spatial Representations: Definitions, Distinctions, and Interconnections," in *Spatial Cognition. Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, ed. Freksa, C., Habel, C., Wender, K.F., vol. 1404. (Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, 1998), 1–17.

a paused moment of the game. Here we see a visual data of time, that is, the decisive moment and at the same time its spatiality, as Mylov states time and space often embedded.[53] Unlike classical photography, it provides a different spatiotemporal visual data due to its ability to move towards any desired area of the space as navigable. The 'Ergodic'[54] structure inherent in video games can unveil alternative realities within spatial dimensions. Just as Benjamin connects photography to psychoanalysis in his theory of the 'optical unconscious',[55] the camera's techniques, like slow motion and enlargement, provide a virtual mode of perception that allows us to delve into the spatial and temporal complexities of the photographic subject. Similarly, in in-game photography, a unique visual space emerges, as the ergodic nature of games brings temporality and spatiality to a more accessible and navigable level, revealing hidden facets and enabling us to explore the 'other side of the photo'. This spatial navigability is a distinctive feature of in-game photography.

Conclusion

In the present inquiry, an examination was undertaken to explore the interplay between temporality and spatiality in in-game photography in order to understand the methodology, and most importantly, the potential of in-game photography. Although the methodology of in-game photography is similar to classical photography in terms of temporality and spatiality, it is clear that it has a unique method due to the virtual environment it is connected to. In this sense, exploration of temporality and spatiality reveals interesting distinctions and convergences between in-game photography and classical photography. To begin with, temporality is similar in both photography techniques in that a certain section of time is stopped, just like at the decisive moment. Nonetheless, the total cessation of temporal progression within the game due to the act of stopping or pausing the game, a distinctive trait of video games, presents us with a distinct approach to photography. The way in which in-game photography reveals temporality is the ability to be in the 'extended present'[56]. Thus, the decisive moment and temporality, which modernist photography technically, aesthetically and philosophically problematic, emerges as a more controllable, unique area in in-game photography. Secondly, spatiality, which is intertwined with temporality, is in an ergodic structure where there are more photographic possibilities, and in a sense, there is a unique interplay between temporality and spatiality. The photographer can move along x, y and z axes within this structure, showing us the invisible

[53] Peer Mylov, "On Space, Its Time, and Spatiotemporal Expressions," in *Virtual Space: Spatiality in Virtual lnhabited 3D Worlds*, ed. Lars Qvortrup et al. (London: Springer, 2002), 47.

[54] Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

[55] Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *Selected Writings: Volume 2. 1927–1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al., ed. Michael W. Jennings, Eiland, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press., 1999), 512.

[56] Helga Nowotny, *Time: The Modern and Postmodern Experience* (Polity Press, 1994), 8.

and the other side of the photo as a mechanical eye. When the game stops to take a photo, ergodic movement gives the photographer a chance to manipulate the space to see alternative aspects of the subject to be shot. This is not just being but moving within the extended present. Hence, in-game photography introduces an additional layer of engagement between the photographer and the environment. Indeed, when employing the classical photographic method, the photographer navigates within a 3D space, yet their control over time and space remains relatively constrained. Consequently, this scenario typically necessitates the photographer to assume a fixed position relative to both space and time. On the other hand, the fact that the in-game photography has a camera view without a conventional camera creates it a 'counter narrative-representation'[57] in terms of the use of time and space, both technically and narratively as a provocative form that has consistently questioned the norms of classical photography. Borrowing from Batchen's camera-less photography, by rejecting the conventional camera (obscura), in-game photography disrupts established ideas about perspective, space, illusion, truth, and time, blurring familiar distinctions and prompting a re-evaluation of many norms in photography. However, the concept of blurring should not be perceived as a negativity, but as a methodology that questions what the narrative that emerges as a result of the visuality imposed by the linear narrative actually is and could be.

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[57] Geoffrey Batchen, *Emanations: The Art of the Camera-less Photograph* (München, New York: Prestel, DelMonico Books, 2016), 47.

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Queering Distances and Disoriented Dancing Bodies: Matija Ferlin's Relational Performances *Sad Sam Revisited* and *The Other for One*

Abstract: The paper argues spatial parameters in defining queer identity, especially in Anglo-American critical discourse, eager to employ it as a strategy for queer performance, or notable, modern, or contemporary dance hermeneutics. Leaning on traditional queer researchers, e.g., Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and José Esteban Muñoz, to name just a few of them, as well as on materialist concepts of the body, affects, the human touch, etc., a deep analysis of two Matija Ferlin's performance projects is offered, precisely from a perspective of queer resistance to dominant heteronormative paradigms of -'orientation'-, -'identification-', and 'affectuality'.

Keywords: disorientation; queering; dance; embodiment; trauma.

> "*La lutte continue*. The world we inherit [...] is more degraded, more violent, a degradation of violence laid down by industrial capitalistm and morphed into our post-Fordist nightmare."[1]

Introductory notes: (De)staging performances

The relevance of queering structures implemented in arts' research usually resurface when discussions delve into specific LGBTQ movements and communities, e.g., in Eastern Europe, along with their strategies. For instance, the endeavours of LGBTQ individuals to find their place within their national communities, the organization of pride parades, and the utilization of the EU-backed human rights discourse often come under scrutiny as specific political or activist agendas. Surprisingly, when attention shifts towards the political landscape of the arts as such, e.g., contemporary dance, validity of the construct of post-socialist European 'backwardness' often occurs. I share the concern that many theoretical frameworks of queer performance, or

[1] Christina Crosby, "Queer Studies, Materialism, and Crisis: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18, 1 (2011): 135.

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queer dance, or even their research, often exhibit a Western-centric focus and offer limited tools for unpacking non-hegemonic contexts that stem from the arts *eo ipso*, and not from a broader political context. This approach tends to spotlight the woes of dominant spaces, while only superficially mentioning lived experience of marginalized ones. Nevertheless, different artistic forms can help to dismantle this partial and oversimplified understanding of this 'regional' homophobia, while also obstructing the scrutiny of LGBTQ actors' alignment with Western ideals of sexual democracy, which may intertwine with post-socialist European quasi-nationalism, or its discourses of modernity and progress. Despite post-socialist Europe often being portrayed as Europe's less developed counterpart, nationalism probably plays a pivotal role in its assertion, transcending itself as a mere geographical marker, as a complex political, cultural, historical, and temporal category. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the sudden disappearance of the Second World category, many post-socialist states underwent a process of transition, aiming to transform their perceived backward and totalitarian states into Western-style democracies. From the outset, these '-transitional'- states were often perceived as lacking in democratic knowledge and practices, trailing behind the West. This perspective, still influencing the configuration of Europe's internal hierarchies, defines these states as constantly catching up in both material and institutional terms. A good example of trans-positioning these 'transitional'- habitus of post-socialist (artistic) legacy into the realm of dance is, definitely, a compelling two-channel video installation by Igor Grubić, called *East Side Story* (2006–2008). By interweaving authentic documentary footage with a captivating re-enactment through the artistic medium of dance, the author offers a thought-provoking view into the challenges and activism of the LGBTQ community, although deeply rooted in the interdisciplinary realm of queer studies and informed by the ethos of LGBTQ activism. The documentary segment adeptly amalgamates televised snapshots from two pivotal gay pride events: one hosted in Belgrade in 2001 and another in Zagreb in 2002. These parades were marred by instances of verbal and physical aggression, orchestrated acts of violence perpetrated by neo-Nazi groups, and the unsettling participation of bystanders. These disturbing visuals serve to underscore the grim reality faced by LGBTQ participants. On one screen, Grubić employs a seamless alternation of excerpts from both events, knitting together a narrative thread of shared adversity. Simultaneously, the second screen, thoughtfully positioned adjacent to the first, showcases a re-enactment performed by a group of dancers hailing from Zagreb. Four dancers take centre stage, each infusing their unique interpretation of the documented events by mirroring distinct movements and postures witnessed within the televised coverage. Remarkably, the dancers are queering the screen, they engage in solo performances, as well as the group choreography, all unfolding within the very settings where the original incidents transpired. Notably, the title draws a parallel to the iconic American musical (as well as the 1961 film), renowned for dramatizing the rivalry between ethnically distinct teenage street groups. Within this context, but here, set against the backdrop of Yugoslavia's

post-war fragmentation, this piece serves as a poignant reminder that extreme nationalism, devoid of an immediate external ethnic other, can reorient itself towards an internal enemy, a role, in this instance, embodied by sexual minorities. The ingenious juxtaposition of the turbulent, aggressive visuals on the primary screen against the graceful movements of dance unfolding in serene streets initially creates a jarring contrast, gradually affording a form of healing and catharsis for the historical traumas portrayed. In a word, dance does not serve here only as a juxtaposed form, seemingly confronting the cruel reality of a documentary (television) video materials, but, on the contrary, it resonates as a central queering mechanism – as a *lutte continue*.[2] One more example situates Central European queer performance in an obsolete (even though more private) political context. Matija Ferlin is a contemporary Croatian performer, dancer, choreographer, and performance director, who has been present on the European stage for two decades ???, mostly transgressing the alleged generic models, whether in contemporary dance or in contemporary theatre, or somewhere in-between. He confronts us with at least four paradigmatic structures of dealing with the performance's existence. The first one encompasses his solo pieces from the *Sad Sam* register, where different aspects of contemporary dance semiotics are being dismantled in front of the audience, usually transgressing the allegedly stable definitions of 'the dancing body', which moves freely through space in a perpetual flow, without any obstacles, relying merely on its technique. Deconstruction of this pre-structured, *habitus*-oriented 'danceness', moreover, allows the performer to deviate from a secure choreographic path towards bodily stubbornness, elusiveness, or the un-commodifying resistance of a structure that resembles dance, but it's not a dance, as well as it resembles theatre, but it does not fully envision theatrical in-betweenness. Or, in other words, what one is about to see does not only stem from what one expects, but, on the contrary, what one would expect becomes merely a failure of an overall dancing structure, or a failure of a conventional theatre performance. A childish playfulness with language is already present in most of the performances from this series. Nevertheless, it will become of central importance in the second paradigmatic structure in Ferlin's continuous dwellings on the dance phenomenology, the one provisionally described as *staging a play*. Not a performance, not a scenic vision, not theatre, not even dance, or drama, but precisely staging – staging a play, i.e., something that is written down, and has canonical value, mostly because it has been written, among all possible, but un-inscribed works of art, that had been left silenced. Ferlin offers them his own interpretation of silence, or even muteness. What happens when a canonical text is deprivileged of all its nuances, solely because it had been stripped off his worldly existence, e.g., resonating only in the performer's mouth, thus left unspoken, sustained by the performer's body, left inhibited, or maybe dis-attached from the performer's vocality, thus left lingering in a void between organicity (and material structure) of speech and an abstract teleology of language. Paradigm is, often,

[2] Shamita Sharmacharja, "Postcards from Istanbul – Through Crimson Tinted Glasses," www.artvehicle.com/postcard/40, 2010, s.p., acc. on November 10, 2023.

presented here as a minus procedure, as an 'enjambment' in a poetic structure, as a queering strategy, which rushes towards structural ending. Ferlin's third choreographic structure, also being paradigmatic, explores a communal dispositive, which lies in the background of every performance as a structure. What does it mean to create in an ensemble? And how does this affect complex relationships between singularity and plurality in performance, where precisely the individuation logic was about to assure global creativity. Working with bigger ensembles, or creating different communal asset, that will approach performance through de-habitualizing and de-familiarizing it, or even deviating it from the movement and gestures, allows Ferlin to fully experiment with queering dance phenomenology as such, whether through its embedment, through an inner criticism of the original narrative structure, or by simply removing all the obstacles that usually interfere, hence emanating from the performer's 'over-educated' or normative body. The final paradigmatic strategy that Ferlin re-employs in his performance pieces is of fully choreographed nature. Nevertheless, even there his concept is eager to simultaneously eliminate "wordness" as total prescriptiveness (*-graphy*), from the choreographic realm, which often produces an uncanny effect of the improvisation inside of a *dancescape* that would otherwise exist on its own. All these strategies are more than visible in his first performance piece, envisioned as a queer-critique of a normative body paradigm of modern dance, or modern theatre as such.

On being oriented: Dance as political meta-structure

It is quite easy to imagine aspects of experience, as well as realities, that do not represent themselves in propositional, linguistic, or even verbal form, often ill-defined as linguistic aberrations, i.e., almost existing in a space beyond, beneath, and beside visibility, as though they are invoking a sort of "Deleuzian interest in planar relations, the irreducibly spatial positionality of *beside* [that] also seems to offer some useful resistance to the ease with which *beneath* and *beyond* turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos."[3] The author argues that this spatial paradigm of *beside*, moreover, does not produce or enforce any kind of dualism, but it nevertheless comprises a range of desiring, identifying, attracting, addressing, etc. These relations form another linguistic universe, far beyond the hegemony of dominant language, or any other would-be liberatory repressive system of values, encoded in art, or life as such. A solo performer on-stage embodies most of these relations mainly because his existence is defined in spatial relations, e.g., towards a space around him, his props, his movements, his voice, his own body. He is always an activist on the stage, usually triggered by the infantile awareness that somebody is watching, flooded by shame, almost *exhibited* like an artifact in a museum where all his performance assets are somehow on self-display. Thus, precisely this

[3] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 8.

shame, as it has often been argued, a transformational shame, represents the realm of performance, affecting all of its outlines, or sometimes even being in its ontological or phenomenological centre. To put it differently, keeping in mind the queerness of performative shame that expresses or exhibits itself on-stage: "Performance interlines shame as more than just its result or a way of warding it off [...] Shame is the affect that mantles the threshold between introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality, between performativity and – performativity."[4] One could easily argue that this kind of performativity, indeed, resides 'in space', whereby the eye of the spectator is often a quite privileged analytic machine, a prestige centre, eager to register and (re)figure most of the inputs, as though being in a museum. Following Derrida, Judith Butler used to perceive performativity in its temporal context, as aberration, iteration, citationality, the 'always-already' register for different time-conceived transposition.[5] Hence, this negative uttering of performativity, or even its peri-performativity, also exists, as it has often been demonstrated within a queer criticism of 'the marriage example'. In a word: "Persons who self-identify as queer will be those whose subjectivity is lodged in refusals or deflections of (or by) the logic of the heterosexual supplement [...] The emergence of the first person, of the singular, of the active, and of the indicative are all questions rather than presumptions for queer performativity."[6] A spatialized dynamism of witnessing an act where heteronormativity is uttered (in a performative realm), thus, could easily be understood as an essence of queer hermeneutics, i.e., of how the queer interprets the world. Judith Butler even argues that the term queer emerged as a kind of 'interpellation' within the concept of performativity, that questions its stability, its variability, its dynamism, etc., but always reproducing the same ontology of shame onto subjects in question.[7] Moreover, queer became a concept that hegemonized a space of identity invocation, e.g., narrow-mindedly linked to accusation, pathologizing, insult, etc., and "this is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time. The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speakers, as if they spoke in unison across time."[8] An imaginary chorus that taunts queerness, that Butler is interpreting, nevertheless, ought to be perceived as the discourse of collective contestation, of historical reflection and future imagining, which cannot be framed, and hegemonized – because it is constantly in the process of twisting, deconstructing, or redeploying its political purposes. If one transposes this (temporality-oriented) arguments into field of dance, it is obvious enough that, for queer performers, being visible should not only mean proclaiming otherwise invisible sexuality on the stage, as a form of occupying a space of new social creativity, or political utterance, but, on the

[4] Ibid., 38.

[5] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 11–24.

[6] Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, 71.

[7] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, 226–28.

[8] Ibid., 226.

other hand, it ought to also imply a rigid analysis and a wry criticism of hegemonic norms, that usually stems from the most intimate feeling of isolation and personal traumas. Interpretative queering, in a way, whether it is of hermeneutic nature, or purely artistic, often includes different assays of deconstructing mainstream representations, sometimes even forcing it to differ or to signify differently, but as a "refusal of the law in the form of the parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command, a repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one who delivers it."[9] Although Butler does not refer to dance, she is acknowledging that a moving body is always in the core of some sort of sociopolitical embodiment, often derived from the impossibility of choice. This only means that queer bodies (that matter) offer a strange resilience, quite different from the one of contemporary dancers, who were struggling against an over-imposed muteness or grammaticalization of their bodies. Notably, Butler evokes a somewhat specific return to materiality, which has more than one history, and ought to be analyzed as something prior to discourse.[10] Dancing bodies, hence, constantly *flash* with their own materiality which is, in a way, pre-discursive, and even pre-expressive. They do not accept being only an obvious catachresis-machine, i.e., standing for something else, symbolizing, metaphorizing something else inside of the temporal alignment of, e.g., rigid structures of narrative, dramaturgy, rhetoric, or language logic. Dancing bodies are material because they are queer, i.e., because they are not relying on structures they are contaminated by, but they are constantly deconstructing them, often in favour of new phenomenologies that refuse to be stabilized. Both, performance art and dance as body-oriented-performance, as well as the concept of identity, are somewhat misconceived throughout the notion of 'orientation'. One dances 'being oriented', as well as one 'has' sexual orientation. To put it in other words: "In order to become oriented, you might suppose that we must first experience disorientation. When we are oriented, we might not even notice that we are oriented: we might not even think 'to think' about this point. When we experience disorientation, we might notice orientation as something we do not have."[11] This queer dependence of, both, dancing bodies and identity politics on one often ill-defined spatial concept is of utmost importance not only to dance-as-phenomenon but to queer-as-phenomenon, as well. Disorientation in dance and body-oriented practices often means performative stuttering, ill-structured and not defined moving, but it, moreover, allows us to reconsider the phenomenality of space that is often re-inscribed onto one's body, and, in different words, "how space is dependent on bodily inhabitance", definitely "not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body".[12] This does not mean, however, that space of the dancing body is relative to

[9] Ibid., 122.

[10] Ibid., 28–29.

[11] Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 5–6.

[12] Ibid., 6, 9.

subjects around it, to "one's position", etc. Conversely, it presumes a moving/dancing subject as "the container of space rather than contained by space,[13] although it, as a meta-structure, unfortunately, immediately makes a distinction between 'correct' orientation and its alleged deviations. Similar process appears in discourse about sexual orientation, where lack of neutrality presumes quasi-standard binarism, between 'normal' or 'normative' (bodies) on one side and its 'imagined' aberration on the other. Bodies somehow 'become directed' in some ways more than in others, which consequentially creates social or political requirement for turning in some directions, and not the others. Thus, this question of directing oneself towards something, or turning, is crucial to formation or structuring of one's subjectivity. Or, to put it somewhat differently: "If such turns are repeated over time, then bodies acquire the very shape of such direction. It is not, then, that bodies simply have a direction, or that they follow directions, in moving this way or that. Rather, in moving this way, rather than that, and moving in this way again and again, the surfaces of bodies *in turn* acquire their shape. Bodies are 'directed' and they take the shape of this direction."[14] Queer identity often represents a kind of detour, set against the social and political norms, where the inhabiting body is not the extension of a heteronormative desire, and social means of 'correct' expressiveness, but involves disorientation, seeing the world through different eyes, often dwelling, shifting, or deviating. Queer bodies are usually politicized from this perspective of space, obviously, in order to attribute them a different existence, a different phenomenology. The queer effect can be activated, however, if queer bodies no longer appear to be deviated, off centred, oblique, not aligned, always in comparison with the imaginary central, vertical line. One could even turn to the etymology of the word queer, absorbing most of the afore mentioned nuances of spatiality, denoting a certain 'twist', or, translated in identity (politics) terms, an ill-structured sexuality, which ought to be re-straightened.[15] A spatial field of queer subjects is always of deprivileged nature, mainly because it is forced to manifest itself set against the wall of heteronormative spatiality, e.g., a kitchen table, family photos displayed on a living room wall. Dancing bodies are produced and reproduced, constantly, by means of perpetual symbolization, i.e., re-linkage between linguistic phenomena, practices of its institutionalization, cultural practices, or rituals, which means that it is also discursively constructed, only insofar discourse is perceived not only as a mere representation of the social or the historical that encompasses only practices of speaking, writing and communicating, but as something constitutive of the social and of histories that encompasses all dimensions of social reality. In other words, discourse does not reflect the mentality of rationalizing the 'being' of an object at the level of universal conceptual form (this would be idealism or realism); it rather reflects the material character of every social construction and that the very being of objects is itself a discursive production – not an 'essence'. The question that arises out

[13] Ibid., 13.

[14] Ibid., 15–16.

[15] Ibid., 67–70.

of the discursive approach to the understanding of objects will then be – not what the objects of art are – but rather *how* they are configured as well as what are the consequences of structuring the objects of art *as such*?[16]

Queer differentiations somehow 'inform' dancing bodies, and not only because different institutions are eager to frame different artistic practices into quasi-fixed regime of representation – attributing them different historical, social, or cultural symbolics – but also because the institutions are not willing to admit that most practices, they would like to enforce in this way, are often precarious, contingent, and utterly unstable. One has to be fully aware, as well, that arts and politics go hand in hand, always establishing some kind of contingent relationship, whereas the political dimension of arts could be found, both, in its consensual and its contesting nature, in its 'straightness' and its 'queerness', where the latter contains an antagonism persistent in counter-hegemonic discourse, not only as a point of struggle, resistance, or transgression of a dominant politically imposed order, but, on the contrary, as a constantly contesting force against discourses appropriated by hegemonic establishment. Even the greatest silence on the stage, or even pure abstraction, disintegrates dominance, exposing antagonism as a creative force, re-claiming once occupied field of representation. Dance is precisely that *loud silence* on the stage, contaminated by its own social relations, body signs, different interventions in the fields of subjectivity, representation, etc. Spaces often acquire 'the skin' of the bodies they are inhabited by, as though they are being reshaped in this performative *betweenness*. Disorientation is an unsettling bodily feeling, usually connected with losing one's firm ground, and misstructuring it. But this is precisely what queer bodies tend to produce: gestures that will make deviations, or aberrations, 'phenomenological' again. Or, to put it in other words: "This is how phenomenology offers a queer angle – by bringing objects to life in their 'loss' of place, in the failure of gathering to keep things in their place."[17]

Dance's queer futurity

Elisabeth Grosz argues that a human body is constantly opening itself to the environment, internalizing most of its inputs, as well as often externalizing its own 'organicity'. But it also opens itself up to a kind of prosthetic synthesis, transforming and rewriting the environment's inputs, and its own ecology, trying to escape all of its de-biologizing definitions.[18] Dancing body is, maybe, a metaphor of this kind of openness, of utmost viscosity, or even fluidness. What queer body tends to manifest inside of the hegemonic realm, a dancing body represents in the most natural form – the abandonment of gravity, direction, or security, for the sake of better, imagined

[16] Goran Petrović Lotina, "The Political Dimension of Dance: Mouffe's Theory of Agonism and Choreography," in *Performing Antagonism: Theatre, Performance and Radical Democracy*, ed. by Tony Fisher and Eve Katsouraki (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 259–60.

[17] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 65.

[18] Boris Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 188–94.

futurity. Or, in Ahmed's own words: "For a life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. A queer life might be one that fails to make such gestures of return".[19] The futurity of the queer dancing body, as it has often been argued, normally stems from its urge to exist in a constant state of potentiality, of becoming, where everything is at stake. Hence, if, on one side, one is confronted with the obvious attempt to reorient queer subjects towards an alleged normality, there is a strong tendency to fix it against the normative setup of the sociohistorical discourse of family, procreation, economy of desire, etc. Referring to Bloch's notion of hope and Agamben's idea of potentiality, as a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, or as the non-existing presence, José Esteban Muñoz redefines queerness as something always on the horizon, i.e., a thing that is not yet imagined – so it cannot be historicized:

> Queerness as utopian formation is a formation based on an economy of desire and desiring. This desire is always directed at that thing that is not yet here, objects and moments that burn with anticipation and promise [...], born of the no-longer-conscious, the rich resonance of remembrance, distinct pleasures felt in the past. And thus, past pleasures stave off the affective perils of the present while they enable a desire that is queer futurity's core.[20]

In one of his recent books, reflecting on ill-defined (actually Stefan Brecht's) notion of queer theatre, Muñoz will dwell upon differences in minoritarian and majoritarian approaches to "the fiction of identity", rather convinced that minoritarian subjects "need to interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own senses of self-",[21] as though they are destined to a demand for disidentification, normally, again, coming from (spatially) disoriented realms, which inhabit the margins of artistic practices, e.g., negotiating its own positionality, its own fixedness into genre-structures, or theoretical paradigms. Dancing bodies could, thus, opt for this third way of dealing with a hegemonic discourse, i.e., beyond identification or assimilation on one side and counter-identification, that seldom reverses to utopianism, on the other. If one is about to reformulate Muñoz' arguments, one could even claim that disidentifying performance practices, e.g., disidentifying dancing bodies, obviously try to transform a dominant cultural logic from within, hence creating a resistance that 'remakes' identifying paradigms, negotiating with(in) a variety of discourses or power schemes. Muñoz defines these attempts as 'revisionary', primarily in the sense of different "strategies of viewing, reading, and locating 'self' within representational

[19] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 21.

[20] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 26.

[21] Ibid., 5.

systems and disparate life-worlds that aim to displace or occlude a minority subject".[22] The mode of reading also opposes, resists, demystifies, or even deconstructs the normative, seldom imposed models of reading and representing identity. A quasi-orientational powers of the dominant (majoritarian) discourse often fragmentates minoritarian (identity) practices, proclaiming it to be not-enough-clean, turbulent, twisted, perverted, or somewhat hybrid. Leaning on Kosofsky Sedgwick's definition of queerness as the ability to attach intently to different cultural objects whose meaning seems, at first glance, mysterious, or excessive and oblique, Muñoz almost rehabilitates this term, arguing that "to perform queerness is to constantly disidentify, to constantly find oneself thriving on sites where meaning does not properly 'line up'".[23] Contemporary dance employs these strategies of attachment to non-orthodox meanings to facilitate performers' bodies, to abandon the rigid jaws of control, normativity, or obedience, while pursuing a new futurity, where their bodies will start to function as a signifying medium, non-representative and unrepresented, distorted because of their willingness to deconstruct all the thresholds between the sociopolitical and the natural. Of course, in performance reality, moreover in contemporary dance, this denial of representativeness is derived from different imaginations that function as pre-expressivity of language, and that explicitly point towards different majoritarian topographies materialized in language, or by language, e.g., different levels of deprivation, logocentrism, Eurocentric masculinism, etc. In a word, Muñoz was definitely one of the pioneers in analyzing the re-emergence of utopia as a theme in queer studies and its connection to capitalist power dynamics. His books emphasize the importance of queer hermeneutics that challenges traditional notions of universality, i.e., often viewing capitalism as heterogeneous and interconnected practices, affected by specific histories and (postcolonial) desires. Suggesting that capitalism is not just about 'material objects', but about bodies and their desires as well – which take various forms, (inter)connected with the mundane labour (of life) – queer studies argue that different confluence of materialist and identity-oriented perspectives are quite able to rearticulate variety of performance theories and consider the potential of queerness for contemporary dance, particularly in posing the question of totality, difference, non-normative bodies, etc. Even the most rigid concept of capitalism could be challenged by queerness, i.e., by queer futurity, so queer hermeneutics is quintessential to understanding the fugitive and elusive modes of life, an un(der)valued desire in the realm of the (minoritarian) identity politics, because "queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future."[24] By concluding that the future is actually queerness's domain, Muñoz underlines what many identity scholars

[22] Ibid., 26.

[23] José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 78.

[24] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 1.

have already emphasized, and performance (and even dance) studies scholars have often neglected: queerness is, both, spatial and temporal notion of assuring bodies in motion with disidentifying meaning, the one that is able to stipulate transgression. One does not interpret pain or trauma (of identity) as a sign *of* something, and a signal *for* something, but, notably, as the effect of various past impressions, often not so visible, that reshape our bodies, therefore often creating new traumatic impressions. Every touch provokes different attachment, so the experiences of trauma and pain – although being solitary – are never truly private. Or, as Ahmed has already argued, proclaiming every pain to be political and social: "A truly private pain would be one ended by a suicide without a note. But even then one seeks a witness, though a witness who arrives after the anticipated event of one's death".[25] This sociality is often manifested on the surface of the body, on its imprints, i.e., intense impressions of objects, others, moments of collisions, outer injuries, relations' surfaces, etc. Instead of asking ourselves how does pain or trauma enter queer politics, here it is, maybe, sufficient to interpret a variety of its manifestations on the surfaces of dancing bodies.

Choreographic *telos* of *Sad Sam Revisited*

One is neither completely autonomous, completely free, nor completely subordinate to the outside world. The ambivalence of this relationship also applies to our desire for the other, for its difference, for our own Other. A reproduction of life itself is often, simultaneously, a threat and a representation of the existence of others, whether these are queers, blacks, or immigrants. These simultaneous procedures can create accumulative narratives that are, again, reproduced, or repeated, usually resurfacing under the sign of biology, quasi-naturalness, etc. Bodies are controlled through repetition: "Through repeating some gestures and not others, or through being oriented in some directions and not others, bodies become contorted; they get twisted into shapes that enable some action only insofar as they restrict capacity for other kinds of action."[26] In these procedures of re-orientation, re-shaping, and compulsory re-directing, moreover, one's body is being constantly shaped, contaminated by different, concealed normative histories. Disobedience towards a dominant narrative, hence, at least in the case of dancing bodies, often conceals a metaphor of *de-scriptedness*, a certain kind of twisting (etymologically *queering*) a genuine feeling of choreographic *telos*. The physical event in dance constantly takes place in performative self-immersion and release of emotions, often purposely abandoning all theatricality and spectacular excesses, i.e., in bringing the audience into a state that inherently *belongs only to the performer*, the state of the performance, the state of playing. Dancing body does not seek a kind of public comfort, e.g., by extending into social space that is already normatively shaped, or pre-defined, sometimes even tailor-made for heterosexual,

[25] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 29.

[26] Ibid., 145.

patriarchal, masculine, white, or any other privileged, majoritarian intimacy. Sara Ahmed argues that queer grief could easily function as a metaphor for non-existence, because it really "may not count *because it precedes a relation of having*".[27] Without going deeper into these stimulating arguments, one could, nevertheless, fully employ them while analysing queer topics in contemporary dance. The questions posed by most of Matija Ferlin's performances are related to the interpretation of the body, of the ways how to avoid its determinism, or even how to activate its queering potency, while, at the same time, accepting the immediacy of its action, the rhetorical parameters of its metaphorical and metonymic relationships. Ferlin often deals with the contingencies of use of different viewing strategies, e.g., the play of the invisible and the exposed, superior and inferior, pleasure and pain, desire and absence, etc. Pleasures of the dancing bodies open to the world through opening to the others, taking up more and more space, thus displaying enjoyment, grief, love, hate, aggression, i.e., a variety of emotions that exist beyond verbality of language. Ferlin's spaces are not only colonised by emotions, but also claimed through them, often generating discomfort in the audience that is confronted with an uncanny gaze. A queer pleasure inhabits new spaces, beyond scripted impressions, often private ones, ripped from the most intimate histories that would never enter official narrative. To put it differently: "Queer bodies 'gather' in spaces, through the pleasure of opening up to other bodies".[28] Marina Gržinić argues that Ferlin's *Sad Sam Revisited* is a "performance with sharp discontinuities in the narration (that are possible as well to be seen but from very afar as references to Jérôme Bel dance performances)", facing its viewers with a de-stratified "set of anti-actions each pushing Ferlin's body/mind/presence/absence to and over the edge".[29] The author emphasizes a long, almost Deleuzian, repetitive sequence where a performer, hidden behind a big loudspeaker, with only a microphone, queering and teasing, even though he is not entirely visible to the audience,

> produces a sound that forces us to think that he masturbates (what else we do these days?). When Ferlin reappears in front of us we see that he rubbed with the microphone his chest so violently that his skin is long after painfully red. He lip-synchs few old and deadly romantic pop songs in front of the public so persistently long that what was at first, during the first song just a failed karaoke encounter with the public, is soon because of his stubborn in-sistence (he lip-synchs forever!) a repetition of ex-sistence at its purest.[30]

[27] Ibid., 156.

[28] Ibid., 165.

[29] Marina Gržinić, "Mladi levi 2007: What Is That Wakes a Contemporary Dance Performance Theater?" [manuscript; Slovenian version published as "Mladi levi 2007: kaj je tisto, kar prebudi gledališče sodobnega plesa?", *Borec: revija za zgodovino, literature in antropologijo* 59 (2007): s.p.

[30] Ibid., s.p.

Even if one is not eager to interpret his solo performance in this way, an utmost insistence on repetition – either in walking patterns, endless synchronizations, or proxemic forthcomings, e.g., in different bodily announcements – is quite obvious. But this repetition only dismantles the global narrative, precisely *as being global*, universal, resisting every kind of social or political appropriation, and, again obviously, being immanently intimate and present. A long-term project titled *Sad Sam* was launched in 2004, creating a tension between Croatian version of the title (*Sad Sam* as *Now I Am* or *Now Alone*) – which alludes to an intimate psychological portrait of an auto-fictional character – and the implied Englishness of this title (*Sad Sam* as *Tužni Sam*). Notably, the attention to present moment, as a driving force of Ferlin's choreo-writing, has been expressed in this performance in multiple variations. The performer comes alone on the stage – in later versions, he stands still, waiting for the audience to enter – having many clothespins on his face. This sequence of de-gesturing is, maybe, the queerest moment of the piece, because it presumes, both, a warming up exercise for an actor's face, as well as its minus procedure, a strategy of eliminating every possibility of gesticulation by applying rigid fixation – almost in a way like classical ballet 'fixates' its dancer's body – to one's own face. This is not theatre, because every possibility of gesturing, hence, becomes redundant. Is it, therefore, a dance? After that, the audience is confronted with a series of repetitive movements that try not to correspond with dance, whether being responsive to music, lines of narrative projected in the background, or props from everyday life. These dramaturgical devices, nevertheless, resist every kind of script, even appealing for the total deconstruction of its own narrative, *re-acting to* and *resonating with* quotidian bodily procedures, persistent in their revival, reusage, and even recycling. Two sequences that are relevant for interpreting this performance in the context of its queer futurity, besides the masturbation scene, are the following: the first one, where Ferlin explores his mouths, an organicity of the organ for speaking, its inner and outer limits; and the second one, where he is engaged in a repetitive walking pattern, in regular, everyday sneakers, with an uncanny Santa-like beard (in one later version with the untied shoelaces, as well). Although he seems to be oriented towards a higher, choreographic *telos*, Ferlin actually performs disorientation patterns, structures that are not willing to subordinate to any kind of narrative, except the one radiating from this presence. The only presence being ~~re~~presented here is a personal story from the author's life, although in a form of continuation of a conceptual current in de-choreographing dance, with visible influences from the Dutch improvisation practice. The horizon of the stage is, therefore, transformed into pure presence, where everything that goes out of the frame, e.g., as his empty walks, his redundancy, his stage inaction, or even his ill-tuned lip-singing impro, turn into an important semantic link towards anything that is about to be transgressed, therefore, anything that does not correspond to a process of *differing* as such. Ferlin's first solo piece represents 'an ontology of dance', embodied by a "pure terrorist (of the Deleuzian type), who has decided to eliminate the too many returns of all there is in the theatre of contemporary dance and opted for difference in its purest form,

which is life".[31] *Sad Sam Revisited* encapsulates the procedures of contemporary performance and dance with an unexpected contingency, de-choreographing not only his own dancing habitus, his private embodied history, but also demanding performative stamina in a variety of non-acts of duration, of persisting in forming a bodily ascetism instead of stage dynamics, albeit never wavering to interrupt the narrative. The palette of Ferlin's performing corpus in *Sad Sam Revisited* performance already incorporates recognisable sequences of the physical procedures he will use in later *Sad Sam* performances, as well as some experimental pieces that date from the same period, e.g., the video-performance *4:48*, inspired by Sarah Kane's *4:48 Psychosis*, where he employs similar music patterns, repetitive bodily expressions, all 'tuned'??? to a projected narrative, but this time in a form of subtitles. Even some motives reoccur, e.g., the one with clothespins attached to his face, the skilful shifting between disclosure and hiding, between humour and dryness. If *4:48* performatively played with the traumatic fragments by Sarah Kane, *Sad Sam Revisited* almost parasites on poetic fragments written by Katalina Mella, never colliding with them, never directly referring to them. A pain that is being supressed, a traumatic experience, does not extend the expressiveness of the projected verses, neither it supplements them. One can imagine a fictional, or even real narrative behind these verses, but its existence is twisted, deviated, queered somewhere on the surface of the performer's body.

"This is the fortune of a manhood
Images and an image
Burning the calm fever of love
I press the button
He feels
Fainting upon
The distance of touching
Nothing I care remains
He took the silence
And I took the devotion
Of a starring fantasy
The scent of my destroyer
Leans on my mortal goal
Up to the thirst
Unforgotten I knew
The parallel of an innocent choice
In a holy room
Beside
I see the begging in tears
An unknown talk
Symbolic dreams of desire

[31] Ibid., s.p.

I was chosen
In front of someone who didn't suffer
I knew he was alone
And he was invisible
I tell stories about contrary
Good memory times
I walked outside
And cut my mind
To be desired
Remember the mouth
The eyes
The dangerous situation
Of falling into essential secrets
It is possible to make a mistake
In choosing the entrance
Again and again
I never turned away
I spoke into his eyes
The action of duty
Do not be distracted
I felt I was bigger
Than you
Spectacular touch
The position of his chest
Helped to survive one week more.
I would provoke
The sequences of passion
Once we were in the corner
I tried to lick your offences
Like you like everything on me
I know you would like it
I explain myself
In a natural way
Nothing can reveal my broken legs
I explain the courage
The sins in my songs
I can recall my first death
There is time for being ahead
There is time for being behind
The world made me an animal
Of distrust
I can't be improved".[32]

[32] All excerpts from the performance scripts are from Matija Ferlin's private archives.

Ferlin demonstrates remarkable choreographic self-assurance on stage, but he is not enslaved to the script, almost like showcasing 'liveness', coupled with negative procedures – of eliminating and extracting, not narrating, gesturing, or dancing. Evidently, he is situated within a conceptual lineage of artists as Jérôme Bel, Gilles Jobin, and Xavier Le Roy, but central to his performance is the profound sense of stage abstraction, as well as the exhaustion of all information that tend to signify. If the process of signification is pre-oriented, clustered by the hegemonic regimes of interpretation and determinacy, then, this non-eventfulness or pre-eventfulness, almost a seclusion-like ascetic awareness, becomes his recurrent theme. First part of the performance, hence, utters linear dramaturgy, with even hyper-controlled movements, where Ferlin nonchalantly 'spends' much of his time on stage with his hands tucked in his pockets, singing nostalgic tunes by Dionne Warwick, or Sandie Shaw, recreating an intimate atmosphere of joy. Although it cannot be depicted, or firmly grounded, even dated in a real (historic) period, these joyful moments are constantly negotiating with futurity using 'queer eyes'. Even the masturbation scene depicts this. Although it is hidden, it is quite obvious that it can stimulate the audience's imagination. Being hidden behind a big speaker does not eliminate its scenic existence, its potency, as well as it does not deteriorate into perversion. Hence, often employed in queer art, e.g., in queer cinema, it almost functions like a teasing moment, or a provocative structure playing with spectators' enjoyment, confronting them with a deviation from the dominant system of values, or from its heteronormative desire. One has to keep in mind, moreover, that this sequence can function as an intimate scene – *as the performance of masturbation* – as far as it preserves its metaphoric potency *as contingent*, not attached and never attributed to some regime of interpretation. In other words, insofar as its outcome is uncertain. Notably, the most intimate atmosphere of *Sad Sam Revisited* does not emanate from a single coherent source, but stems from lucid interplay between introversion (constant presence of the performer's shy gaze) and subtle exhibitionism, which is about to escalate in the last scene, fully disoriented and quite risky for the performer. In-between sequences of serenity, occasionally delving into experimental body-narrating procedures, different acts of masochism occur, culminating in an explosive display of emotions and suppressed trauma and pain. If a visible redness of Ferlin's face, stimulated by clothespins in the first part of the performance, eliminates gesture, or acting, a visible redness on his chest, consequence of a simulated masturbation with a microphone, deterritorializes his desire, queering it not only as a deviation (that maybe unsettles the spectators), but as a turning point in his stage presence, that is now able to stimulate, to trigger, even to manipulate with the viewers own interpretation of deviation, blurring the lines between discomfort and understanding. A reminder that bodily processes and their manifestations in performance ought to somewhat defy simplified, narrowminded, often heteronormative categorizations of cultural norms, therefore, becomes activated. What appears to be a taboo in one context may be embraced in another, eluding every kind of stigmatization and social conventions. For Gržinić, an element of lips synchronizing different tunes, or a

microphone that embodies, function as performative surpluses. Or, to follow her line of thought, fully aligned with Deleuze's notion of difference and repetition:

> We are confronted with a violent set of foreclosed sequences completely distilled from any surplus element; only skin and microphone, only lips that try dramatically to synchronize themselves with the playback. This selectivity is a process similar to that of pealing of an onion, in the end only the pure core remains. What is going on here is a radical process of selection that not simply selects, but actively, in the process of repetition, throws away, gets rid of all that belonged to the process of repetition. Therefore, what we get is a drama, the difference at its purest. I can push a thesis that what we get is the Jacobinism of difference, difference in extremis, its totalitarian version. Actually, this third modality is not a repetition of everything, but a terror of a difference at its purest.[33]

Even if one only performs, it does not mean that the process of embodiment functions only as *coitus interruptus*. Indeed, bodily fluids highlighted, or alluded to in Ferlin's performance, e.g.,sweat, blood, saliva, as well as the implied presence of semen, connect the private, intimate sphere with the outside world, but not orienting it, thus challenging its autonomy and the influence of external forces that are eager to orient, straighten, or taxonomize. This ambivalence is of utmost queering nature, mainly because it 'extends' one's desire for the other, one's longing, one's pain, into purely physical realm. By touching oneself, Ferlin touches others. Or, to put it differently:

> The contingency of pain is linked both to its dependence on other elements, and also to touch. The word 'contingency' has the same root in Latin as the word 'contact' (Latin: *contingere*: *com*, with; *tangere*, to touch). Contingency is linked in this way to the sociality of being 'with' others, of getting close enough to touch. But we must remember that not all attachments are loving. We are touched differently by different others [...] and these differences involve not just marks on the body, but different intensities of pleasure and pain. So, what attaches us, what connects us to this place or that place, to this other or that other is also what we find most touching; it is that which makes us feel. The differentiation between attachments allows us to align ourselves with some others and against other others in the very processes of turning and being turned, or moving towards and away from those we feel have caused our pleasure and pain.[34]

[33] Gržinić, "Mladi levi 2007: What Is That Wakes a Contemporary Dance Performance Theater?", s.p.

[34] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 28.

Ferlin's performance contrasts the eventfulness of the body with the uneventfulness of lingering on the stage, moreover, making a strong statement on self-immersion and emotional release through the process of performing one's presence, one's immanent expressive powers. The final release is facilitated with a resonance of Katalina Mella's words:

> "Even if I've decided not to talk to you
> I feel
> I have decided to do so
> So much
> So many times
> So often
> Several important times
> In my life
> My moral behaves
> Like the bird in your arms
> It could fly inside
> Touching the edges
> And the texture of the entrance
> I wanted to enter
> To resist the nature of my aggression
> Standing there
> Assuming again
> The impact
> Show me the logic
> The surrounding informs you
> About the logic of the beliefs
> This crazy river
> And you".

A stage presence of the performer in *Sad Sam Revisited*, alongside with its expressiveness, does not arise from a hypertrophic usage of dance, acting, or other performance devices, but precisely the opposite: its absence. Consequently, Ferlin's performance art appeals to a necessity of queer hermeneutics, urging us to navigate through the tensions not only between determination and spontaneity, metaphorical and metonymic relations of the body, but between deviated and standardized in modern or contemporary dance-as-art as such. Hence, employing "*karaoke*, where *kara* means empty or void of an *oke*, a Japanese way of pronouncing the English word orchestra (in Japanese it is pronounced as ōkesutora), repeats the void not only of what is without the live orchestra, but as well the void of contemporary dance, as a difference at its purest".[35]

[35] Gržinić, "Mladi levi 2007: What Is That Wakes a Contemporary Dance Performance Theater?", s.p.

Deconstructing a normative love score in *The Other for One*

After the performance of *Sad Sam Revisited* Matija Ferlin continues to research the concept of pure stage presence, which is, again, visible in *The Other for One* (2007). Intimate content related to a topic of love, or relationships, hence, functions as a procedure for his bodily interpretation of complementarity. Using the experience of falling in love, falling out of love, deception, flirtation, sexuality, sin, and other physical, emotional, and psychic sensations, in the relationship between two people – this time in a form of duo with Dijana Vidušin – he decomposes a normative 'love score' onto its primary choreographic elements, as though in an exercise for 'enacting' a relationship, but other way around. All the elements of a heteronormative score are thus present: a common place that can function as a flat, common procedures of living together, or being in love, etc. Relationship metaphors are often of directional nature: a love letter addressed *to(wards) him* in the first sequence, female confessions about their love life, variety of quotes from the Bible, as well as its comments, love advertisements, etc. Popular songs about love function also as directional interludes, informing the viewers about the nature of this (or every) relationship, which is often blinded, as well as the performers, therefore, roaming on the stage with their heads covered by everyday clothes. In *Sad Sam Revisited* the performer puts his fingers in his own mouth, as though he would like to penetrate it – with a whole fist. The same procedure is repeated in *The Other for One*, albeit this time a female performer, Dijana Vidušin, is putting her fingers (if possible, her hand as well) in his mouth. Verbality is, thus, suspended, slightly before it turns towards repetition, although here, on the contrary, entirely in a verbal manner. Performers repeat each other's short sentences, not ready to acknowledge the repetition as their main dramaturgical procedure: "I apologize for constantly repeating myself". This performance tends to ignore its decorative moment, obviously related to physicality of two bodies, colliding, conflicting, flirting, transforming each other, as it pursues in its research of pure stage presence. A queer moment is, again, being activated. Even when he cites from the Bible, a canonical *Song of Songs* does not function as a narrative metaphor for relations based on Godly love, neither being analysed nor embodied afterwards, but its purpose is to expound it – as a kind of ethereal underpinning, that intersects with the intricate layers of the human condition, two individuals' pursuit of a deviant authenticity in a world fraught with normative complexities. Within the performance's emotive ebb and flow, Ferlin and Vidušin channel shared memories – they are friends and have similar artistic background – shaping a compelling portrait of the two body's ascension to pure love, as well as their decays into quotidian conflicts. The narrative complexity of this performance is reminiscent of different phenomenological concepts of intersubjectivity, blurring boundaries between personal history and artistic expression. Ferlin's choreographic canvas, often punctuated by shifts in attire and scenery, somewhat even robust, or animalistic (in one short sequence they seem to impersonate animals), echoes with the mutability of relationships, a theme woven into the fabric of Nietzschean

ponderings on recurrence, and again – repetition. Amidst the performative tapestry, a recurring motif of an enveloping fur serves as both a literal and symbolic shelter, evoking musings on deviant heterotopias, liminal spaces that challenge conventional understanding of humanity – as the strongest kind. Fur's tactile presence unveils a vulnerable, unadorned humanity, emphasizing the inherent openness, responsibility, and interconnectedness between individuals – that are always, like the Bible says, *the other for one*. Ferlin and Vidušin, as two metamorphic entities on the stage, changing constantly, traverse temporal and spatial dimensions of performance, or dance as such, emblematic as a *durée*-structure, i.e., a continuous flow of subjective experience. Their fluid transformations reflect an intricate dance of human desire, echoing an exploration akin to poetic reverie and the queer dialectics of daydreaming about better futurity. In conclusion, Ferlin's performance of *The Other for One*, an artistic symphony of vulnerability, and complexity, invokes a pantheon of ideas and philosophical notions. The convergence of divine ideals from the opening scenes, followed by human intricacies, and relational nuances, hence, yields a thought-provoking tapestry – like the one re-appearing in the background – that echoes with allegory of the first people, as well as it prompts introspection into the enigma of human connections. It dwells upon the human desire as well:

> The affinity of the couple form is socially binding: premised as it is on resemblance and on 'naturalness' of the direction of desire, which produce the couple as an entity, as a 'social one' (from two). The image of couples as 'twos' that become 'ones', which flashes before us in the present, is an effect of the work that brings the future subject into line, and as another point on the vertical line.[36]

Two imaginations are almost trapped on this stage. None of them is privileged. Although it may seem so, the main question of this performance does not revolve around the idea of 'being male' or 'being female', or 'acting as male' or 'acting as female'. These are not roles in front of us, even though one might easily see it as a kitchen-sink drama; but neither they are dancing bodies. Nevertheless, they are here to embody the principle of complementarity. Relationships are usually based on communication, and communication implies language, as well as its barriers, obstacles, duels, conflicts, etc. Ferlin is eager to explore the necessity of inventing a new communication frame based solely on imagination. In order to do so, one ought to discover first, where, and how imagination fails, by exposing different discrepancies of language, thoughts, and emotions. If the performance of *Sad Sam Revisited* deals with the elusive borders of the embodied imaginative spaces, constantly redirecting the viewers' perspective from its traumatic narrative to the outer imaginative turn, towards its soloistic choreography, then, on the other hand, *The Other for One* pursues the problematic question of complementarity, whether as performance structure of *twofoldness*, or duo, whether

[36] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 84.

as a metaphor of life, or human relations in it, which surpass art-as-life with its ambivalence, contingency, or even traumatic experience. Approximately in this phase of his work Ferlin was experimenting with a play written by Sarah Kane, trying to describe this complex relationality, either from within, or from outside. Again, a queer moment occurs, prompted by a spatial deviation. Both of these performances try to explore the subtle balance between solitude and contact with other people, which is what Barthes calls an idiorrhytmic model *per se*, or "something like solitude with regular interruptions: the paradox, the contradiction, the aporia of bringing distances together".[37] Barthes calls this *pairing*, not *coupling*, because living-together always deals with mutual alienation of the couple (*folie-à-deux*), i.e., never with conjugal, or pseudo-conjugal relations. Language structures *ones* and *twos*, but it also structures *the dual*, as the body proves, using pairs for eyes, ears, arms, legs, hands.[38] The image of unity in only *one* rests dramatized as such, and deviated by so many critical approaches, especially in queer studies. So, the idiorrhytmic queerness in both of these performances arises from deviation, or, at least, from deconstruction of the imposed image of duality as a fluid, normal, rhythmic structure one has to be oriented towards. This desire for two is not only questioned in these performance pieces, but it is even complemented by their structure: the first one eager to become a duo, and a second one trying to manifest itself as a solo.

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BIOGRAPHIES

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Carolina Alfradique Leite is a curator and researcher affiliated with the Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherches sur les Logiques Contemporaines de la Philosophie (LLCP) at Université Vincennes-Saint-Denis (PARIS VIII). She is a founding member of the French art association Matière Revue (winner of the Les collectifs d'artistes prize from the Institut Français and recipient of a scholarship from the Studio National des Arts Contemporains, Le Fresnoy) and the transnational art and ecology collective [meta]estratos. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Theater Theory from the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), a Master's degree in Philosophy from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), a Master's degree in Film Studies from Université Paris Diderot (PARIS VII), and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Université Vincennes-Saint-Denis (PARIS VIII). Throughout her interdisciplinary education, she has focused on researching the (hetero)genesis of contemporary art, addressing issues such as the inscription of time in artistic forms; the relationship between mnemonic act, image, and color; the implications of the transparency/opaqueness dyad in the conception of modern/contemporary image; and the (re)definition of the concept of work in experimental artistic practices of the 1960s/70s. Currently, she is a postdoctoral fellow at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RIO).

María José Alcaráz León is Senior Lecturer in Aesthetics at the Universidad de Murcia, Spain and an active member or the Research group ARESMUR. Her research focuses on aesthetic normativity, art's cognitive value, emotional responses to fictional artworks, art theory, and environmental aesthetics. Recently, she has published on whether fictional artworks afford a specific cognitive experience (2023) and on the possible aesthetic value of damaged or deteriorated environments (2022). She has been a visiting post-doc fellow at the University of Sheffield, Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona, Università della Calabria, and the University of Uppsala. She is currently the co-editor, together with Francisca Pérez-Carreño, of the Aesthetics section of the SEFA online encyclopedia and subject editor (Aesthetics) of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Personal webpage: https://webs.um.es/mariajo/miwiki/doku.php?id=inicio

Ana Frangovska is an art historian and a curator. Born in 1978 in Skopje. Graduated Art History and Archaeology in 2001 at the University "St. Cyril and Methodius", Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, Institute of Art History and Archaeology. Earned her MA at the same Faculty in 2017. Frangovska has a PhD in Transdisciplinary studies in Contemporary Arts and Media from the Faculty of Arts and Media in Belgrade. She is a senior curator at the National Gallery of the R. N. Macedonia since 2006 and a lecturer at the Institute of Art History and Archeology, Faculty of Philosophy, since 2016. She has curated and organized a great number of institutional and independent projects in the country and abroad and was a curator of the Pavilion of the Republic of Macedonia at the 55th and 59th Venice Biennale, Italy; in 2013 she curated the

project "Silentiopathologia" by the artist Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva and in 2022 the project "Landscape Experience" by the artists Robert Jankuloski and Monika Moteska. She is now the curator of the Pavilion of the Republic of North Macedonia at the 60th Fine Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, Italy, 2024, with the project "Inter Spem at Metum" by the artist Slavica Janeshlieva.

Paolo Furia currently works as a fixed term researcher at the Department of Humanities of the University of Torino (Italy). He co-organizes the Aesthetics Research Turin cycle of Seminars. He is a member of the European Society of Aesthetics, the Italian Society of Aesthetics, the Interuniversity Center of Morphology, the Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi - Luigi Pareyson and the Society for Ricoeur Studies. Paolo Furia participated in international conferences and seminars in Berlin, Paris, Palermo, Rome, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, Leuven, Ljubljana; he is a member of the PRIN project "Revis – Silentscapes" and was a member of project teams in Paris (Ehess and Paris Nanterre). He has published 3 monographs (*Rifiuto Altrove Utopia*, Mimesis 2019; *Estetica e geografia*, Mimesis 2020; *Spaesamento. Esperienza estetico-geografica*, Meltemi 2023) and several articles in English, Italian, and French.

Virginia Hanusik (1992) is an artist whose projects explore the relationship between landscape, culture, and the built environment. Her work has been exhibited internationally, featured in The New Yorker, National Geographic, British Journal of Photography, Places Journal, The Atlantic, MAS Context, and Oxford American, among others, and supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation, Pulitzer Center, Graham Foundation, Landmark Columbus Foundation, and Mellon Foundation. She regularly writes and speaks on landscape representation and the visual narrative of climate change and is on the board of directors of The Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans, where she coordinates multi-disciplinary projects on the climate crisis. Her book, *Into the Quiet and the Light: Water, Life, and Land Loss in South Louisiana* (Columbia Books on Architecture and the City), is published in May 2024.

Noora-Helena Korpelainen is a doctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki. Her research aims to understand aesthetic sensibilities within the context of sustainability transformation. Currently, the Finnish Cultural Foundation funds her research. Korpelainen works as a Specialist in the Lahti University Campus Coordination Unit and in relation to the International Institute of Applied Aesthetics' (IIAA) functions.

Camilla Palazzolo is PhD student at the University of Genoa within the ERC project – PEA "The Philosophy of Experiential Artifacts", under the guidance of Enrico Terrone. She graduated in Philosophy from the University of Roma Tre, with an MA thesis in Aesthetics entitled "Beyond Perception: Conceptual Art and the Possibility of Aesthetic Experience" under the supervision of Lisa Giombini and Stefano Velotti.

Her research focuses on the experience of conceptual art and the relationship between artwork and matter. Her interests include the philosophy of art, contemporary art, the relationship between aesthetics and epistemology and Kantian philosophy.

IC-98. With backgrounds in visual arts and cultural history, IC-98's collaboration spanning three decades has produced artist publications, site and context specific projects and interventions, animated moving image installations, short films and numerous public commissions. IC-98 received the Finnish State Art Prize in 2009 and represented Finland at the Venice Biennale in 2015. Their work has been showed extensively at museums, biennials and festivals in Europe, Asia and the Americas.

IC-98's work since 2010s addresses the environmental crisis and artistic-political methods of finding solutions to it. Their projects seek to replace anthropocentric worldview with modes better suited to take into consideration the interrelationships, dependencies and myriad temporal rhythms of all animate and inanimate nature.

Animations *Nekropolis* (2016), *Epokhe* (2017), *Lands of Treasure* (2021), and short films *Omnia mutantur* (2018) and *Impivaara* (2024) are allegorical descriptions of time, climate, and how environmental and cultural histories merge in different eras. The site-specific projects *House of Khronos* (2016-), *Mare tranquillitatis* (2020), *IÄI* (2020) and the ongoing *Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded Earth* (2019-) have instead of mere artistic depiction sought to create tools – free zones, novel languages, new founding myths – to help this community of all organisms emerge from the crisis.

Leo Rafolt was born in 1979 in Zagreb, where he graduated in Comparative Literature and Croatian Studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, and received his PhD in theatre and performance studies. He worked at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb until 2017, and currently he teaches performance studies, cultural theory, and theoretical dramaturgy, as a full professor, at the Academy of Arts and Culture of Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek. He has been a guest professor at many European, American, and Asian universities. On several occasions he had fellowships in France, Hungary, Poland, Italy, the USA, the UK, Slovenia, Norway, Finland, and Japan. He has written more than a hundred articles for encyclopedic and lexical editions and has edited several collections of works (*Odbrojavanje: antologija suvremene hrvatske drame*, 2007; *Miljenko Majetić, Između Hekube i Rabbija: dramatološki, teatrološki i ini spisi*, 2017; *Public Sphere between Theory, Media, and Artistic Intervention*, 2019; *Joseph Texte, Jean-Jacques Rousseau i ishodišta književnog kozmopolitizma*, 2019; *Jean-Luc, Jeener, Kazalište na samrti*, 2019, *Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta, Tere Vadén, Umjetničko istraživanje: teorije, metode i prakse*, 2021; *Dubravko Matković*, 2022). In addition, he is the author of a number of scientific papers, essays, reviews, critiques, as well as the following books: *Melpomenine maske: fenomenologija žanra tragedije u dubrovačkom ranonovovjekovlju* (2007), *Drugo lice drugosti: književnoantropološke studije* (2009), *Priučen*

na tumačenje: deset čitanja (2011), *Odbačeni predmet: između filologije i izvedbe (2017)*, *Tijelo kao glagol: japanski budo, transkulturalne tehnike i trening za izvedbu* (2019), *Preskočene niti* (2022), *Montažstroj's Emancipatory Performance Politics: Never Mind the Score* (2022), *Tijelo nacije: uvod u japanski budo* (2023, *M/F x Staging an/Archive* (2024).

Ozan Yavuz (1983) is a lecturer of Basic and Advanced Digital Photography Courses at the Middle East Technical University, Music and Fine Arts Department (Ankara, Turkey). In 2019 he received his PhD in Art from the Yıldız Technical University Art and Design Department for researching the relation between historical metafiction, photography, migration and autoethnography within his personal history. He collaborated on the translation of the book *Education of the Photographer*. His book titled *Anthropology and Photography: On Method and Representation* was published in Espas Sanat ve Kuram Publishing in 2020. He is currently working on the translation of Sarah Pink's *Advances in Visual Methodology* into Turkish. Yavuz has also had two solo exhibitions; "Workers", Patti and Rusty Rueff Galleries, Purdue, Indiana/USA (2016); and "Lily and Wild Pear" Public Art Project, Istanbul/Turkey (2019). He also participated with his in-game photographic works at the Rotterdam Foto Fest ("The American", February 9–12, 2023) and at the Eindhoven Fotofest, ("MetaScapes", May 18–23, 2023). His core areas of study are visual anthropology, virtual photography, in-game photography and theory of photography.

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Gueorgi Kossinets and Duncan J. Watts, "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Social Network," *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (2009): 411, accessed February 28, 2010, doi: 10.1086/599247

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