



**European  
Society for  
Aesthetics**



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## ADDRESS

Pauline von Bonsdorff,  
President of the European Society of Aesthetics

Dear members of the European Society for Aesthetics, dear friends and colleagues,

The new Executive Committee (six members were elected in Athens) has started its work with admirable energy, sharing responsibilities and working very competently. This reminded me that some orchestras have experimented with playing music without a conductor, and they say it works quite well. I am sure ESA could do without a president. That said, I enjoy my own role as much now as with the former Committee.

In a few months, the Russian war in Ukraine has been going on for four years, if there will not be peace soon. ESA published a statement against the aggression on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, and we stay behind yet. Yet there has been informal discussion about whether we should also react to other armed aggressions, such as Israel and Palestine, Sudan, Myanmar, etc. Whose life matters? While Ukraine is part of Europe, the roots of colonialism go wide and deep. But it would be hard to know where to stop. The World Population Review (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-currently-at-war>) lists 40 countries presently at war through different kinds of conflicts, including “terrorist insurgency” and drug wars (the US is not listed).

On the other hand, to be against war is an easy commitment. A commitment for peace is more demanding but also more inspiring, if we understand peace as an active and dynamic state. In *Peace by Peaceful Means* (1996), peace researcher Johan Galtung describes positive peace as “a cooperative system beyond “passive peaceful coexistence” where “processes of life enhancement” are key, while negative peace is merely “the absence of violence of all kinds”.

Art and aesthetics can certainly be, often are, processes of life enhancement, especially when they engage us fully as human beings. I am now thinking of the Nobel laureate in literature 2025, László Krasznahorkai, whose novel *The Melancholy of Resistance* I just finished. The world of that work is sombre: a city covered by debris, an atmosphere of fear and aggression, characters who are selfish, manipulating, drunk, depressed, or dreamers, and events that lead to a worse state – a negative peace, indeed, fulfilled through order. In the dark and morally darkening world of the novel, an escape route for the reader is provided by the last change of perspective, where the “inner life” of the person we followed in the beginning is described. Only the inner life is not hers, it just takes place in her: it is the life of the countless bacteria that destroy a body after death, helped by chemical processes and described with scientific accuracy and detail. This zooming in is at the same time a zooming out of the world of humans. It offers some relief.

Krasznahorkai’s world is not too far from Kafka’s, yet distinctly its own. Furthermore, it resonates with recent European histories of violence, totalitarianism and repression. *The Melancholy of Resistance* was originally published in 1989, the year of the fall of the Iron Curtain. That was a time when resistance had started to grow and soon no longer was melancholic, and the need for resistance seemed to disappear as a new freedom arrived.



## ADDRESS

Today totalitarianism is rising again and militarisation, fuelled by fear, meets little resistance. Strangely, the novel appears to be ahead of us, pointing to a situation before closing civil society and burying values such as liberty, fraternity and equality.

In the novel, a key condition for a new seize of power is fear, giving the opportunity for manipulation. Why is reading not depressing? In *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (1953) Mikel Dufrenne argued that the truth of art is in how it articulates “existential a prioris” through the “expressed world” of an artist. These are historically constituted, individual ways of seeing and coping with reality. Importantly, they are not just about perceiving or expressing but also about constituting worlds. We access them through art and thereby grow in our own capacity of feeling, thought and action. We might become more apt to resist – whether melancholy or not. The *Melancholy of Resistance* can be taken as an antidote to totalitarianism and accepting to be ruled by fear. It makes us see something.

Positive peace is not necessarily happiness and harmony; it can be dynamic, complex and dissonant. But it is about life enhancement – the stimulus and clarity, the heightened sense of feeling and understanding that art and aesthetic values provide at best, even when facing darkness.

To return to happier news: preparations for our next Conference, hosted by my university, are well underway. The CFA has been distributed, and we have three excellent keynote speakers. Early next year, the ESA committee will face the interesting task of reading abstracts – and then we are almost there. While Jyväskylä may not be as internationally known as Athens or Paris, this cradle of Finnish-language education – sometimes called “the Athens of Finland” – has distinct aesthetic charms. The pre-conference sauna has been reserved and, as the refrain of the “sauna atmosphere” song ([Saunatunnelmaa](#)) says, “the green birch whisk is beauty for us” (“*vihta vihreä meille on kauneus*”) and a “daily experience”. If this is too exotic, we also plan a post-conference tour to some of Alvar Aalto’s key works located in the region ([Säynätsalo Town Hall](#), [Muuratsalo Experimental House](#)), not to forget the [University Main Building](#) which is the main venue of the conference.

With warm wishes and Season’s Greetings,

**Pauline von Bonsdorff**  
Jyväskylä and Helsinki, Finland



## WELCOMES

### Notes by the New ESA Executive Committee Members



This year, six new members of the ESA Executive Committee were elected during the ESA Assembly, held in Athens on 16 June 2025. Here, they briefly introduce themselves and share their priorities for the Society.

#### Michalle Gal (Shenkar College)

I am honored and excited to serve as a board member of the European Society for Aesthetics. Today, more than ever, the support and maintenance of humanist thought as practiced by academic societies is significant. Aesthetics, both a veteran and an ever-emerging discipline, is a central player in the discourse on human nature, perception, ontology, creativity, the transgression of boundaries, society, and the transcendent as well as everyday aesthetic layers of our lives. It is crucial to meeting the theoretical challenges of our visual age. Thus, contributing to the continued flourishing of ESA is a deeply meaningful role for me. In my service, I will focus on making it an intellectual and professional home for its members—a framework for collaboration, collegiality, and friendships among aesthetic scholars—while also reaching out to parallel societies.

I am a Professor of Philosophy at the Unit of History and Philosophy of Art and Design at Shenkar College, specializing in the philosophy of design and art, visual ontology and perception, and metaphor theory. My current project, “Visualism,” develops an Externalist Aesthetics by exploring the visual sphere as a context for addressing human nature, praxis, and theories of reality, while re-examining the conceptualist-cognitivist school in aesthetics. I have long been active in the international aesthetics community. Since 2022, I have served as a trustee on the board of the American Society for Aesthetics, where I chaired the Nominations Committee and am a member of the Divisions Committee. I have edited several special issues in aesthetics, co-organized international research groups, workshops, and conferences, developed an international online course in the philosophy of design attended by thousands of students worldwide, and taught a seminar as a visiting professor. I have published books and numerous essays. The European Society for Aesthetics is especially important to me, and I am committed to devoting my time and experience to its work.



#### Julia Langkau (University of Geneva)

I am pleased to join the Executive Committee of the European Society for Aesthetics. I am currently Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Geneva, where I lead the Geneva Research Group on Creativity and Imagination. My interests lie in the intersections between philosophy of mind, epistemology, aesthetics, and the philosophy of language. My research focuses on imagination, fiction, and literariness, especially the ways in which literary texts guide and constrain imaginative engagement in ways that differ from other modes of understanding. I am also interested in creativity, both as a feature of imaginative processes and as a feature of artefacts. I look forward to contributing to the committee's work and to supporting the Society's activities.



#### João Lemos (University of Turin)

My name is João Lemos. I work as an *assegnista di ricerca* at the University of Turin, where I am currently developing a research project on Kant and Art, funded by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo. This project aims to explore the full significance of Kant's reflections on the actual arts, artworks, and artists he engaged with. Its first output was a special issue on Kant and Art which I guest-edited for *Estetika: The European Journal of Aesthetics*.

As a member of the ESA executive committee, my priorities for the Society are to help make it a more welcoming and inclusive community, to strengthen its position as a leading and dynamic reference point in philosophical aesthetics, and to foster a spirit of dialogue that connects current developments with the rich and fascinating history of aesthetics as a discipline. I genuinely believe I can contribute to this by responding to emails, regularly updating the list of members, and preparing the minutes of board meetings – among many other tasks.



## WELCOMES

### Notes by the New ESA Executive Committee Members



#### Ancuța Mortu (University of Bucharest)

It is with great joy and humility that I join the Executive Committee of the European Society for Aesthetics. I am currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of French at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Romania. My research focuses on cognitive processes involved in aesthetic appreciation; I am particularly interested in the aesthetic appreciation of creative practices from small-scale societies. I have published in journals including *Nouvelle revue d'esthétique*, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, and *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, and am the guest editor, together with Jakub Stejskal and Mark Windsor, of the *British Journal of Aesthetics* 2024 Special Issue on Remote Art. Current projects include a monograph on aesthetic human cognition.

My priorities for the ESA are to work towards expanding the field of aesthetics through celebrating the worldwide diversity of aesthetic and artistic practices. As co-editors of the ESA Newsletter, we aim to capture aesthetic diversity in this bulletin and encourage submissions from members of underrepresented groups.



#### Enrico Terrone (University of Genoa)

I am Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Genoa and Principal Investigator of the European Research Council project “The Philosophy of Experiential Artifacts”. My research is broadly concerned with the relationship between art, technology, and experience. I work mainly in analytic aesthetics, focusing on film and other technologically mediated arts, and I investigate how artistic and technological practices reshape perception, imagination, emotions, cognition, and agency. I have published in journals such as *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Ergo*, *Erkenntnis*, *Analysis*, *Synthese*, and *The Philosophical Quarterly*.

Within the ESA, my priority is to consolidate the role of aesthetics as a place where reflection on art meets broader questions about technology, science, mind, and society. I would like the ESA to foster interaction between traditional topics such as beauty and art, and contemporary issues related to the pervasiveness of digital technologies. I see the ESA as having an important responsibility towards early-career researchers, encouraging them to pursue a way of doing philosophy that is clear and rigorous, but also open to creative engagement with new questions and methods. I hope to contribute to maintaining and expanding the geographical and thematic diversity of ESA activities, so that the Society continues to reflect the variety of aesthetic practices and philosophical approaches across Europe and beyond.



#### Uku Tooming (University of Tartu)

I am an Associate Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Tartu, working on imagination, desire, memory, self-knowledge, and the nature of pleasure. I also lead the research project “Imagination in Cognition: Contemporary and Ancient Perspectives” in Tartu. In aesthetics, my recent work has been on aesthetic reasons and their dependence on individual sensibilities, on good bad art, and on the relationship between imagination and aesthetic appreciation. As a new member of the Executive Committee of the European Society for Aesthetics, I’m in charge of updating the ESA website. I aim to contribute to the society’s scholarly activities and to represent perspectives from Eastern Europe and Baltic states in particular.



## INTERVIEW

Artur Harris (University of Oxford), “Aesthetic Properties Are Not Kinds of Aesthetic Value”, Winner of the 2025 Fabian Dorsch ESA Essay Prize.  
An Interview by Mark Windsor (Uppsala University)

**Mark Windsor:** Congratulations on winning this year’s Fabian Dorsch Essay Prize! Let’s start by saying something about your essay, so that any readers who didn’t see you present it at the ESA conference can get some idea of it. In your essay, you argue that aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value. Part of what makes your paper so interesting, I think, is that the view you argue against seems to come with a lot of intuitive plausibility. Consider the elegance of one of Brancusi’s *Bird in Space* sculptures. A fairly natural way of thinking about the relationship between the sculpture’s elegance and its aesthetic value is to identify the one with the other: the sculpture’s elegance is its particular way of being aesthetically valuable. But according to you, this is wrong. On your view, the sculpture’s elegance *contributes* to its aesthetic value, but we shouldn’t say that its elegance just *is* its aesthetic value. Is that a fair way of putting the main thrust of your paper? If so, why, in summary, do you think that?

**Artur Harris:** Thank you for suggesting this interview and thank you, again, to the prize panel for this wonderful distinction!

The claim of my essay is that aesthetic properties (elegance, monotony, flamboyance and the like) are not kinds of aesthetic value. This does sound counterintuitive at first. But that’s because it is easy to read the claim as stronger than it is. To pick on one part of your reconstruction, I do not deny that the sculpture’s elegance is a particular *way* of being aesthetically valuable. I only deny that the elegance is a *kind* of aesthetic goodness. Some ways are not kinds. For example, blushing is a way of being red. But it is not a kind of red, like scarlet or crimson. Here’s another way of putting my point. Elegance may be an aesthetically good-making property, but it should not be identified, so to say, with the aesthetic goodness that it makes.

Why do I think this? Suppose first that the view I criticise says that aesthetic properties are kinds of *overall* aesthetic value. This view has absolutely disastrous consequences. As a general conceptual truth, kinds are strictly sufficient for what they are kinds of: for example, if something is scarlet, it is guaranteed to be red. Similarly, if elegance is a kind of overall aesthetic goodness, then all elegant things are guaranteed to be overall aesthetically good. But this is absurd: surely, some defects could outweigh the elegance.

This disaster can be averted if the view is instead understood as claiming that elegance is a kind of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness, i.e. the property of being aesthetically good in some respect. Now, this is where the argument gets difficult. I can’t do justice to it here, but my basic complaint is that the view would make *pro tanto* aesthetic value different in nature from overall aesthetic value. But, of course, they ought to be the exact same thing with the sole difference that one obtains in a partial respect and the other does not.

**WINDSOR:** So, in your view, the elegance of a sculpture can be part of what explains why the sculpture is aesthetically good, in the same way that my blushing can explain why my cheeks are red. But just as we don’t want to say that blushing is a kind of redness, neither, in your view, should we say that the sculpture’s elegance is a kind of aesthetic goodness. If so, I wonder if you should be happy with saying that the sculpture’s elegance is its particular *way* of being aesthetically valuable. To my ear, it sounds odd to say that my blushing is my particular way of being red, in a way that, for example, it doesn’t sound odd to say that my rosy cheeks are my particular way of being red.



## INTERVIEW

**Harris:** I think it's definitely right to say that blushing is a way of being red. As I understand it, this is just to say that whoever blushes is red – in the face, that is – and that is true. But I also do hear you worry: it is less obvious that blushing deserves to be called a *particular* way of being red. And it may also sound strange to say that it is *my* particular way of being red. As I understand the notion, particularity is a matter of detail. Maybe blushing is not specific enough to count as a particular way of being red, whereas something more detailed like having certain specific capillaries in my cheeks dilated does. But then, it is not obvious either that elegance is a *particular* way of being aesthetically good. After all, lots of different things are elegant in lots of different ways: the Brancusi sculpture is elegant in a very different way to Euler's identity. In some ways, aesthetic properties may be better understood as *general* ways of being aesthetically good or bad. The generality of aesthetic properties was emphasised, for example, by Frank Sibley.

Now, maybe the elegance of the sculpture and that of the equation are distinct particular ways of being aesthetically good because they are different elegances. This has been a popular view, although it has more often been assumed than argued for. I'm just not sure what to think. The sculpture and the equation are definitely elegant in different *ways* but, as I have explained, this does not entail that they have elegance of different *kinds*.

**WINDSOR:** There's one other thing I'd like to clarify. You speak about how aesthetic properties cannot be kinds of overall aesthetic value because clearly something can be, for example, elegant, where elegance is an aesthetically good-making feature of the object, and yet the object is aesthetically bad overall. Do you think that elegance is always an aesthetically good-making property, or are you open to the possibility that the valence of aesthetic properties can depend on the context in which they're instantiated, for example, that elegance could be an aesthetically bad-making property?

**Harris:** This is a tricky question and the view I defend can remain neutral on this matter. Still, although I do not pursue this line in the essay, an entire family of responses to this problem provides a separate route to my conclusion that elegance is not a kind of aesthetic goodness.

It has certainly seemed to many that things can be aesthetically bad *pro tanto* in virtue of their elegance. For example, elegance may be an aesthetic defect in some decorations for a young child's birthday party. The question is how to explain this fact. There are two camps: those who think that elegance is a way of being aesthetically good and those who deny this.

The first camp, the 'outweighers', concede that elegance can sometimes make its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically bad, but insists that it also always makes them *pro tanto* aesthetically good. They say that elegance makes the decorations both *pro tanto* aesthetically good and bad, but that the badness outweighs the goodness.

The second camp, the 'cancellers', says that the decorations are not *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of their elegance at all. Rather, the usual positive contribution of elegance is cancelled out.

Suppose that the cancellers are right. If so, then some things are elegant without being aesthetically good, in which case elegance cannot be a kind of aesthetic goodness. After all, as already mentioned, being a kind of P is strictly sufficient for being P, just as nothing can be scarlet without being red, or be a cat without being an animal.



## INTERVIEW

My essay gives a reason even for outweighers to believe that elegance is not a kind of aesthetic goodness. But in a way my efforts to show that elegance can be a way of being aesthetically good even if it is not a kind of aesthetic goodness already presuppose a concession.

**WINDSOR:** I had the pleasure of providing comments on your paper for the conference, but there was one question I wanted to ask that I had to cut out because of time constraints, so I'm going to sneak it in here instead! The kinds of aesthetic properties you talk about in your paper are all ones that have a descriptive content, such as elegance, garishness, brashness, and daintiness. But what about solely evaluative aesthetic properties, such as aesthetic goodness and aesthetic badness? It seems trivially true to say that these are aesthetic properties and that they are kinds of aesthetic value – namely, the good kind and the bad kind. Are they?

**Harris:** Yes, they are! If anything is a kind of aesthetic value, aesthetic goodness and badness are. Indeed, my arguments depend on that premise.

Is this a counterexample to my case? I don't think so, but you are right to question me on this point. The overall question is how properties like elegance or garishness stand to properties like aesthetic goodness and badness. I put this as a question about the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value, thereby not counting aesthetic goodness and badness as aesthetic properties. But you could also understand it as a question about the relationships *among* aesthetic properties: namely, between thick or partially descriptive ones and thin or purely evaluative ones. These are two ways of asking the same question and I'd be happy to accept this paraphrase.

**WINDSOR:** What you say about how we can frame the question you're interested in as being about the relationship among aesthetic properties is interesting. The contrast we've just been drawing is between aesthetic properties that are *solely* evaluative and those that are *both* descriptive *and* evaluative. One slightly different way of interpreting your project might as follows. What we have here are two fundamentally different kinds of aesthetic properties: the solely evaluative kind and the solely descriptive kind. And what your argument is designed to show is that we go awry when we start thinking about descriptive aesthetic properties in evaluative terms (as kinds of aesthetic value). It doesn't seem like that is quite how you want to draw the line between different kinds of aesthetic properties. Or is it?

**Harris:** I'll admit that I have spoken loosely in saying that the contrast is between partially descriptive aesthetic properties and purely evaluative ones. Aesthetic goodness and badness are clearly evaluative properties, whatever that means exactly. But then it is unclear what to say about properties such as elegance or garishness. Perhaps this is one reason to prefer my original framing of the question.

There has been much discussion about whether aesthetic properties, in my original sense that excludes aesthetic goodness and badness, are evaluative. Many, including Frank Sibley and Jerrold Levinson, have denied that they are evaluative. And you are right that my argument could be read as friendly to this tradition.

But I don't think I need to commit to that. It is far from clear what it is to be an evaluative property in the first place. And it is not obvious that on any sensible notion of 'evaluative' that *only* kinds of value, aesthetic or otherwise, deserve to be called such. For example, one could think that for a property to be evaluative is for it to be action-guiding. And for all that I have shown, elegance may still be evaluative in that sense, as well as perhaps in others.





## INTERVIEW

**WINDSOR:** I'm wondering how your essay fits into your broader research. You're just finishing your PhD in Philosophy at the University of Oxford. Is your essay part of your thesis? Could you say something about the bigger project that it's part of?

**Harris:** The arguments of the essay are at the core of my doctoral thesis, which I have just submitted.

The big question is how aesthetic properties relate to aesthetic value and then how aesthetic value relates to value more broadly. Like the essay, the thesis focuses on views that claim that the relevant relation is kindhood. These have been the focus of recent attention from philosophers such as James Shelley, Dominic McIver Lopes and Nick Zangwill. But I also consider some alternatives I find more promising.

The main theme is that philosophers have overlooked how demanding the notion of a kind is. As a result, some claims that look obvious, tautologous even, are ones that we should reject. In the essay, I argued that this is the case with the claim that elegance is a kind of aesthetic value. An exactly parallel argument shows that aesthetic value is not a kind of value. This sounds crazy. But, importantly, it is not a revisionary view. It does not involve denying that aesthetically valuable things are thereby valuable.

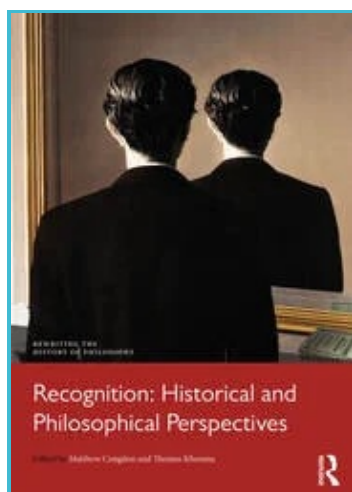
I focus on aesthetic value, but similar arguments apply to moral value as well. In that way, I hope that my project could not only contribute to aesthetics but also to value theory more broadly.

**WINDSOR:** That sounds like a great project! Thank you, Artur, it's been a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk about these questions with you. All the best for your PhD defence, and I very much look forward to reading your work on this in the future.



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

### Books



Congdon, Matthew, Thomas Khurana. 2025. *Recognition: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*. Routledge.  
<https://www.routledge.com/Recognition-Historical-and-Philosophical-Perspectives/Congdon-Khurana/p/book/9781032304915>

Contributors in this volume expand our perspective on recognition beyond the standard story, providing a thought-provoking reassessment of the concept and its history. Covering the fundamental figures and themes, while also going beyond them, the twenty-nine chapters explore the full scope of recognition in four sections: i) aesthetic recognition, including chapters on Kant, Simmel, Murdoch, and the relationship between recognition, art, and film, including Boorman's *Deliverance* and the Dardenne brothers' *Rosetta*; ii) recognition in philosophy of mind and language, including chapters on mind-reading, psychoanalysis, the logic and language of recognition, and its relation to epistemic agency; iii) the ethics of recognition, including chapters on Homer, Plato, classical yoga, F. Schlegel, Beauvoir, the Anthropocene, and recognition in the ethics of cognitive disability; iv) the social and political philosophy of recognition, including chapters on property and gift-giving, Hegel's aftermath, slavery and liberation, colonialism, Arendt, and alterity.



Cseh, Dávid Sándor. 2025. *Dzso-ha-kjú. Ritmus, hatás és jelentés a hagyományos japán nő-játékban*. [Jo-ha-kyū. Rhythm, Effect and Meaning in Traditional Japanese Nō Theatre.] Budapest: Ráció Kiadó. <https://www.racio.hu/index.php?p=kiadvany&v=320>

Published in Hungarian as the seventh volume of the *Pagoda és krizantém* [Pagoda and Chrysanthemum] series, this is a slightly revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation. The book focuses on the jo-ha-kyū rhythm, how it defines Japanese nō theatre, what effect it aims to create based on genre founder Zeami Motokiyo's teachings, and what meaning it could have in the context of Zen Buddhism. The volume includes illustrations in color, a lexicon, a bibliography containing English, Japanese and Hungarian sources, multiple indices, summaries in Hungarian, English and Japanese, and the author's translation of Zeami's *Rokudai no uta* [The Song about Rokudai], a dramatic poem with many characteristics shared with nō plays.



Haidle, Miriam N., Martin Porr, Sibylle Wolf, Nicholas J. Conrad (eds.). 2025. *Images, Gestures, Voices, Lives. What Can We Learn From Palaeolithic Art?* Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. <https://heup.uni-heidelberg.de/catalog/book/1453>.

The concept of 'Palaeolithic art' and its study have changed considerably in recent decades. The modern notion of 'art' is cross-culturally and diachronically problematic. The phenomenon cannot be reduced to material visual culture, but also has acoustic, haptic and other dynamic aspects. It must be understood as a variety of processes that can encompass both the everyday and the extraordinary. In this volume, archaeologists, philosophers and anthropologists approach 'Palaeolithic art' from different perspectives, including its conceptualisation, aesthetics, relations to art history and art brut. The contributions deal with the challenge of materiality, evolutionary aspects, physical re-enactment by actors, digital technologies as a means of interpreting art objects, and the protection of cultural heritage. The volume offers innovative insights into past practices and contemporary ideas and approaches related to Palaeolithic art, based on careful empirical research combined with reflective and sophisticated theoretical approaches.



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

## Books

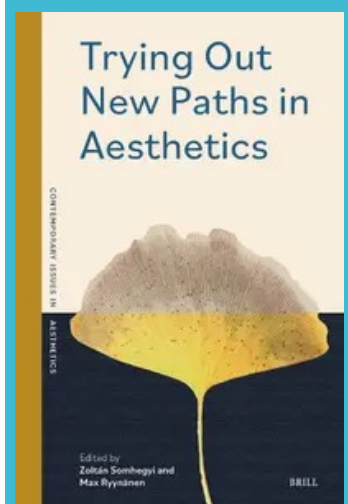


Ogden, Marina G. 2026. *Warburg, Kandinsky, and Shestov on Renewal of Art and Humanity: Artistic, Philosophical, and Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, London, Bloomsbury Academic. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/warburg-kandinsky-and-shestov-on-renewal-of-art-and-humanity-9781666964943/>

Aby Warburg's, Wassily Kandinsky's, and Lev Shestov's rethinking of the meanings of art and culture transcended temporal and disciplinary boundaries, which led to the reframing of the traditional bonds between pictorial reality and different forms of art. Drawing on intercultural and interdisciplinary perspectives, Marina G. Ogden brings the pioneering thoughts of the three twentieth-century innovators of European culture together. Making a compelling case for affirming the concept of renewal as the foremost idea galvanizing cultural advancement in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century as well as for its continued contemporary relevance, Ogden argues that the work of Warburg, Kandinsky and Shestov redefined the relationship between expression and perception, perception and memory, artist and artwork, and between artistic expression and form. By engaging Sigmund Freud's, William James', John Ruskin's, Karl Jaspers', Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and other thinkers' insights into philosophy, art and the nature of creativity with those of Warburg, Kandinsky and Shestov, the exploratory perusal of the concept of renewal evokes interconnections between artistic, philosophical, and psychoanalytic viewpoints. The book will be of interest to scholars in the visual arts, continental philosophy, psychoanalysis, twentieth-century history of European culture, and to anyone who is interested in spirituality and art.

Puolakka, Kalle. 2025. *Miksi lukea kirjallisuutta? Filosofinen tutkielma*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. <https://kirjat.finlit.fi/sivu/tuote/miksi-lukea-kirjallisuutta-/5512144>

This book, titled (in English translation) *Why Read Literature? A Philosophical Essay* defends the value of literary reading by focusing on the knowledge and experiences literature affords. It begins with a close analysis of the sense of intimacy involved in literary reading. The book's principal perspective, however, is cognitive. It gives a thorough overview of the different ways in which the cognitive content of literature has been conceived in contemporary aesthetics and develops a novel view of the idea of experiential knowledge according to which literary works give knowledge of what it is like to undergo a particular experience. The book furthermore argues that literature should be taken as a serious epistemic medium, because authors' creative work can embody significant epistemic virtues. Particular value is attributed to habitual literary reading, and the book examines the status of this type of reading in the pressure of the digitalising world. The book's main claim is that the so-called crisis of reading may very well be a crisis of experience, knowledge and understanding as well.



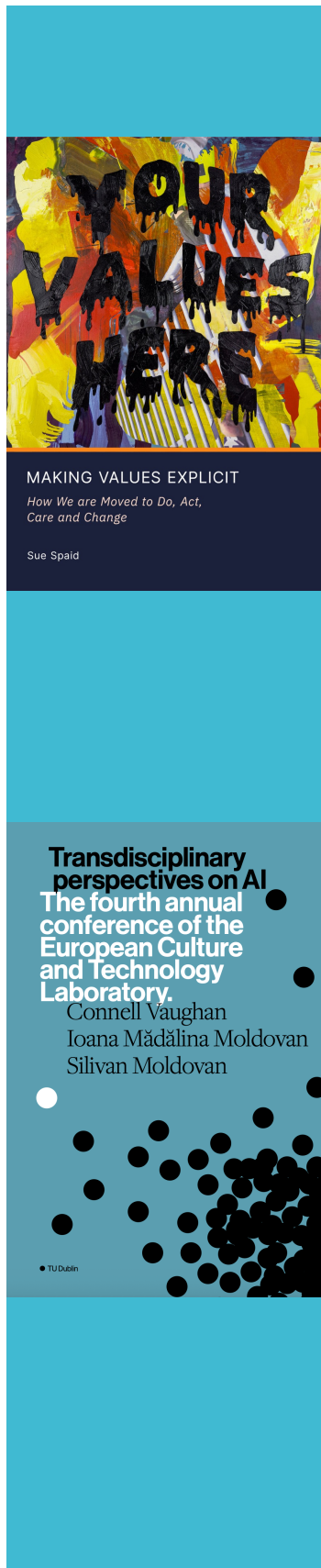
Somhegyi, Zoltán, Max Ryynänen. 2025. *Trying Out New Paths in Aesthetics*. Leiden-Boston: Brill. <https://brill.com/display/title/73172>

This book focuses on one of the all-time primary interests of all researchers—finding new perspectives and research topics—and expands it. What new routes could aesthetics, philosophy of art and the aesthetic take today and in the future? Thirteen authors open new doors for the discipline to new companion disciplines, new discussions, and new concepts. Heritage studies, Greek aesthetic concepts, found literature, power, safety and mythology, monuments, artificial intelligence, sensibility, hybrid spaces, textiles, aesthetics of AI, aesthetics of literature, aesthetic values, homo ludens and martial arts studies are approached in new ways in this volume, where the spearhead lies in thinking about the next step of the ancient discipline of aesthetics and what potential it could have for the world of research in the future.



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

### Books & Conference Proceedings



Spaid, Sue. 2025. *Making Values Explicit: How We Are Moved to Do, Act, Care, and Change*. Cambridge: Ethics Press. <https://ethicspress.com/products/making-values-explicit>

The book argues that values, wellbeing, and personal identity triangulate. That is, they influence one another. When we're young, at least two if not all three variables are unknowns, but as we mature each variable comes into sharper focus, giving us access to the very values that motivate our every thought, action, attitude, and emotional response. Like beliefs, values are dispositional. That is, we act on our values, even when we don't know what they are. Oftentimes, we (or others) gain access to our values by examining our actions or others' responses to our actions. Values thus prove to be a key component of self-knowledge. Spaid distinguishes values plural (Brené Brown's list) from value singular (worth), valuing (verb) and evaluative adjectives (assessment). This book demonstrates that values ground notions of disgust, ideas regarding qualitative worth, attitudes toward gifts, respect for nature, and concern for climate change. Group activities that augment "compensatory values" improve wellbeing, which depends on a combination of capacities and access. This book demonstrates why getting people to change depends on stressing their values, rather than stressing facts they likely know already.

Vaughan, Connell, Ioana Madalina Moldovan, Silivan Moldovan, and Noel Fitzpatrick. 2025. *Transdisciplinary perspectives on AI: The fourth annual conference of the European Culture and Technology Laboratory. Books/Book Chapters*. <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/eutectbk/1>

The fourth annual conference of the ECT Lab+ was hosted by Technical University of Cluj-Napoca over two days in October 2024 at the Cluj Innovation Park. The conference brought together experts from the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Technology, and other fields to discuss and reflect on the advent of Artificial Intelligence and how the associated technologies are transforming how we live, work and study. Under the title *Transdisciplinary perspectives on AI: Alternative Histories, Current Practices and Possible Futures* the conference moved beyond simplistic technophilia and technophobia to consider whether we can co-evolve with these new technologies which combine machine learning and large-scale calculations. By critically assessing the technical operations of AI in terms of Epistemology, Ethics and Aesthetics the conference focused on the limitations and material operation of AI technology from transdisciplinary perspectives.



## CONFERENCE REPORTS

The conference *Changing Aesthetics and Society in the Digital Age* took place in Antwerp on 18–19 September 2025. It was jointly organised by the Dutch Association of Aesthetics, the Center for European Philosophy (Antwerp University), and LUCA School of Arts (KU Leuven), and co-funded by the Research Foundation Flanders.  
<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/center-for-european-philosophy/activities/past-activities/ngeconference2025/>

The conference focused on the changing relationship between art, aesthetics, and society in the digital age, and attracted an interdisciplinary public of academic and artistic researchers. Five keynote speakers addressed the theme from distinct perspectives. Media scholar Lucie Chateau (Utrecht University) examined the political potential of meme aesthetics. Architectural designer Cristina Nan (Eindhoven University of Technology) showed how computational design transforms the aesthetic language of architecture. Video artist David Claerbout testified about the ambivalent role of digital technology in his artistic practice. Philosopher Jörg Noller (University of Augsburg) explored the possibility of a digital transcendental aesthetics. Philosopher Sanem Yazicioğlu (Istanbul University) analysed how digital art challenges traditional notions of visibility and cultural memory. Across four parallel sessions, speakers discussed digitalization's impact on aesthetic experience, emancipatory practices, and art-theoretical concepts such as authorship, authenticity, aesthetic value and judgment. Proceedings of the conference will be published in a special issue of *Aesthetic Investigations*.

### *EVAnetwork — Everyday Aesthetics Network* (<https://www.evanetwork.eu/>)

On 7–8 November 2025, scholars from Europe, Asia, and the Americas gathered at the University of Warsaw for *Aesthetic Ideas for the Everyday*, an international workshop that marked a turning point for EVAnetwork — closing its first phase and opening a new chapter in the collective exploration of everyday aesthetics. The event focused on rethinking the future directions of this field, exploring how aesthetic ideas evolve and respond to the transformations of contemporary life. Established through its first Agreement signed in June 2022, EVAnetwork has since been coordinated by Professor Elisabetta Di Stefano at the University of Palermo. The network connects researchers engaged in studying aesthetic experience in everyday life — from sensorial perception and social practices to ethical and environmental concerns — and fosters an inclusive, interdisciplinary dialogue bridging philosophy, art, design, and environmental studies. The Warsaw meeting reaffirmed this shared commitment and set the stage for the renewal of the Agreement in 2026, which will expand the network from thirteen to around twenty institutions. EVAnetwork is also supported by a group of Honorary Partners — Yuriko Saito, Arnold Berleant, Thomas Leddy, and Emily Brady — whose intellectual guidance lends continuity and distinction to its mission.

The international conference *Creativity and Algorithms. Codex, Interactions, Products*, was hosted by The Center of Contemporary Aesthetics Research ESC, Università L'Orientale di Napoli, Università FedericoII di Napoli, Università di Salerno, on 26 - 27 of November 2025 - DSUS - Università L'Orientale Naples.  
<https://centroesteticacontemporanea.unior.it/it/conferenza-internazionale-esc-2025-creativita-e-algoritmi-codici-interazioni-prodotti-0>

The 2025 edition of the Annual Conference of the Centre for Contemporary Aesthetic Research was dedicated to the relationship between creativity and algorithms, and to the centrality of codes, interactions and products generated or mediated by computational systems in contemporary culture. The three thematic sections – Aesthetics, Arts/Media, Law/Ethics – addressed issues such as algorithmic authorship, distributed creativity, transformations of aesthetic experience and regulatory issues related to artificial intelligence. The dialogue between theoretical perspectives, artistic practices and ethical-legal issues aimed to bring out new critical and design scenarios in digital culture.



## UPCOMING EVENTS & PROJECTS

### Upcoming 2026 ESA Conference

We are happy to announce that the 17th annual conference of the European Society for Aesthetics is taking place on **8-10 June 2026** in **Jyväskylä, Finland**. The conference is co-organised by the [ESA](#) and the [University of Jyväskylä](#).

The confirmed keynote speakers are: **Diarmuid Costello** (University of Warwick), **Monique Roelofs** (University of Amsterdam), and **Max Rynnänen** (Aalto University).

Please find the Call for Abstracts here: <https://www.eurosa.org/conferences/#call-for-abstracts>

### AESTH-L

The ESA is collaborating with—and encouraging ESA members to engage with—**Aesth-L**, an interdisciplinary and international mailing list created in partnership with the International Association for Aesthetics. Calls for papers are directed to Aesth-L list from now on. Aesth-L provides a platform for scholars and artists working in aesthetics and the arts, across all disciplines and approaches, to share news and initiatives with one another. We invite you—and any students or colleagues who may be interested—to join for free here: <https://liste.unige.it/www/info/aesth-l>

Once subscribed, you will be able to send and receive messages through the list. You can also choose **nomail** mode, which allows you to stop receiving messages while being able to send them, or **digest** mode, which delivers periodic summaries instead of individual messages. For all details and to review posting rules please visit the list's homepage linked to above. We look forward to welcoming you to the Aesth-L community!

### Call for expressions of interest for new research group : *Aesthetica Prima Philosophia*

We invite expressions of interest for a new international research group, to be established in early 2026, dedicated to questions at the intersection of aesthetics and theoretical philosophy. *Aesthetica Prima Philosophia* will provide a platform for collaborative work on rethinking concepts such as truth, knowledge, representation, modality and reality through the lens of aesthetics. The idea of aesthetics as a 'first philosophy' aims, on the one hand, to counter the predominant discursive paradigm in theoretical philosophy (e.g. reducing knowledge to propositions, being to empirical reality, truth to correctness) by reformulating these concepts as aesthetic phenomena or problems. On the other hand, it seeks to resist the tendency to treat aesthetics as a merely applied (or 'last') philosophy—an auxiliary theory of art focused on definitions of art or aesthetic properties—by reclaiming aesthetics as a primary site for re-engaging fundamental questions in sensuous, affective, imaginative and artistic modes of thought. Our platform will host colloquia, workshops, conferences, a reading group and eventually a publication venue for work that expands the boundaries of aesthetics and theoretical philosophy. We welcome participants from any tradition. To receive our mailing list or to participate, please contact Errol Boon (Freie Universität Berlin / Leiden Centre for Continental Philosophy): [errol.boon@fu-berlin.de](mailto:errol.boon@fu-berlin.de)

### Workshop on *Hegel's Political Aesthetics: Critical Perspectives*

This workshop is organized by Caecilie Varslev-Pedersen (University of Copenhagen/University of Southampton) and Gregor Schäfer (University of London/University of Basel). Speakers include, among others, Rebecca Comay (University of Toronto) and Peter Osborne (Kingston University). The workshop is taking place at Senate House (London), on May 1, 2026; for registration, updates, and the final program, check <https://www.sas.ac.uk/news-events>.

In Hegel's system, art is understood as a form of absolute spirit in which spirit accomplishes the highest degree of self-consciousness. I.e., in art, religion, and philosophy humanity becomes self-conscious of its own collective practices of sense-making. That art is one of the systems' concluding figures, however, does not mean that, according to Hegel, art is not part of the finite reality of social-political life (what Hegel calls "objective spirit"). Art emerges in world history as the systematic transition from objective to absolute spirit. This implies that art continues—retroactively—to exert full impact on the social, political, and historical world, and that, in Hegel's system, art cannot be separated from the political. The aim of this workshop is to bring together scholars in philosophical aesthetics, political philosophy, and GWF Hegel studies to develop a fresh perspective on the intersection between aesthetics and politics in Hegel's philosophy.

## NEWS ABOUT ESA MEMBERS

**DOMINIC McIVER LOPES**, University Killam Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of British Columbia, is Gulbenkian Visiting Professor at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, until March 2026.





## EDITORS

This issue was edited by Michalle Gal and Ancuța Mortu.

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The *ESA Newsletter* is published twice a year by the European Society of Aesthetics. To become a member, please fill in the membership form : <https://www.eurosa.org/esa-membership-application/>. Membership of the ESA is free and open to everyone.

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Deadlines: April 30, 2026, December 1, 2026