

Aesthetic Confluences between Everyday Life and Nature. Introduction.

Confluencias estéticas entre
cotidianidad y naturaleza.
Presentación.

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In the second half of the twentieth century, two new branches of aesthetics emerged in the Anglophone world: environmental aesthetics and everyday aesthetics. From different angles, both questioned the increasingly close association between aesthetics and the philosophy of art generated within the modern system of the fine arts. The latter, especially from Hegel onwards, relegated to a secondary position —if not openly rejected— both everyday aesthetic experience and the aesthetic experience of nature not artistically intervened; both were called into question insofar as they were thought to compromise disinterested pleasure, then associated primarily with the model of aesthetic experience derived from art. In different ways, both currents resonated with the seminal work of John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934), in which he defended the continuity between art and (everyday) life and argued that the living creature naturally develops an aesthetic/artistic dimension through its interaction with the environment. The multiple points of contact between these two areas of study may be synthesised in two main aspects: the rejection of art-centrism and the connection between ethics and aesthetics.

Environmental aesthetics—also referred to as aesthetics of the environment or, more narrowly, aesthetics of nature—found a foundational text in Ronald Hepburn’s article “Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty” (1966), followed shortly thereafter by Theodor W. Adorno’s engagement with the topic in a chapter of his *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) (Taffalla 2019, 158). From that point onwards, and in parallel with the growing

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severity of the ecological crisis, the number of authors devoted to this field continued to expand, with Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson among its leading figures. Beyond a genuine attempt to articulate the aesthetic dimension of our experience of natural and mixed environments, the conviction gradually took hold that aesthetics should abandon its pursuit of autonomy and its emphasis on purely formal pleasure, and instead align itself with ethics in a shared effort to reconnect us with nature through an immersive, multisensory experience informed by ethical awareness and a sense of belonging to the natural environment.

Everyday aesthetics, for its part, emerged forcefully in Anglophone academic contexts during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, both from an analytic perspective —represented by authors such as Thomas Leddy— and from more phenomenological and pragmatist approaches, notably those of Arnold Berleant and Yuriko Saito. Drawing on the Deweyan sense of the notion of experience, these authors conceive aesthetics as a central dimension of everyday life, closely intertwined with the practical and the functional, with affective and multisensory aspects, and present in activities as mundane as hanging out the washing, tidying the house, preparing and enjoying a meal, or taking the dog for a walk.

In particular, Berleant and Saito have emphasised the intrinsic connection between the everyday and the environmental in highly influential monographs (Berleant 2005), with Saito herself being especially explicit about the capacity of the aesthetic to orient our practices in an ecologically committed direction, through what she terms a “green and sustainable aesthetics” (Saito 2007, 2017). More recently, Saito (2022) has further explored this close connection by focusing on specific attitudes and values —such as care and resilience— that ought to guide our everyday relationship with nature.

Following the first monographic issue devoted to everyday aesthetics in the Spanish-speaking academic context, entitled “The Transformative Power of Everyday Aesthetics” (*Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 58, 2025), the present volume seeks to continue this line of inquiry by addressing one of its most pressing contemporary developments. Thus, while retaining everyday aesthetics as its point of departure and central focus, it aims to deepen the

exploration of the confluences and intersections between everyday life and nature, in relation to aesthetic experience and action.

The eleven contributions that make up this monographic section explore this interrelation from diverse perspectives and through a plurality of methodological approaches. Considered as a whole, they allow for the identification of a series of recurrent notions that function as guiding threads throughout the volume and offer a telling picture of the current state of these aesthetic debates. Particularly prominent among them is the influence of the thought of Berleant and Saito, with their respective aesthetics of engagement and care. These are accompanied by other widely shared notions, such as embodied relationality, agency, co-belonging, co-creativity, interdependence, and co-responsible care, as well as a shift away from anthropocentrism towards biocentric positions.

This shift is further accompanied by a critique of modern, substantialist, and disembodied epistemology —based on distanced contemplation and the subject/object split— and by an opening towards relational ontologies that emphasise cognitive and emotional immersion, continuity between the human and the non-human, and interspecies dialogue. The transcultural expansion of aesthetics is also significantly present in the volume, particularly through Chinese and Japanese philosophical traditions, in which many of these notions find especially fertile ground for resonance. Alongside this transcultural approach, North American pragmatism and Continental phenomenology and hermeneutics constitute the main theoretical and methodological frameworks underpinning the contributions gathered here. In terms of approach, the volume combines theoretical reflections with concrete case studies grounded in specific practices and arts, such as dance and architecture, thereby enriching the perspectives from which to address these confluences between everyday aesthetics and the aesthetics of environment or nature.

A first instance of these confluences appears in the text translated by Laura Maillo from Arto Haapala, “‘Wild Thing’. The aesthetic Prospects of Wildness”, a topic of renewed relevance within contemporary ecological discourse, particularly in connection with rewilding as a strategy for repairing excessive destructive human intervention in nature. From a phenomenological and existential perspective, Haapala approaches the wild by attending to its

different degrees and modalities, in line with the idea of a human–nature continuum that also runs through many of the volume’s contributions. Drawing on Heidegger’s reflections on dwelling and inhabiting, he contrasts the wild with the identity-based security associated with the domestic and relates it —even in urban contexts— to experiences of the sublime, mystery, and the unknown, which attract us and counterbalance the threat of boredom latent in the monotony of certain forms of everyday life.

From a related concern with the ways in which we inhabit and transform our environments, **Matilde Carrasco**, in **“Sustainable Beauty: Rethinking Landscape Design from the Aesthetics of Care”**, situates her analysis within the field of architectural landscape design in order to offer a compelling defence of E. K. Meyer’s proposal of “sustainable beauty”, reinterpreted through the lens of Yuriko Saito’s aesthetics of care. Drawing also on Dewey and Berleant, the article advocates a transition towards an affective, performative, and agential aesthetics capable of repairing the divides between human and non-human, as well as between subject and object. In this vein, reciprocity and decentring emerge as aesthetic potentials that enable us to confront present-day environmental challenges from a position of explicit ethical commitment.

The notion of care reappears, from an interspecies perspective, in **Lenka Lee’s** contribution, **“Respecting the Hexagon: Honeycomb Ornament and Attentive Practices in Bee-Art”**. Here again, the author draws on Saito’s aesthetics of care to investigate the possibilities of artistic and aesthetic collaboration between species, based on the work of Czech artist and beekeeper Jan Karpíšek. Combining Lukács’s notion of ornament with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-animal, Lee develops a theoretical–practical inquiry centred on the collaborative work between the artist and bees. In this way, what might initially appear as mere ornament —the honeycombs, the bees’ rhythmic dances, or the artist’s interaction with them without protective clothing— vis revealed as a set of acts of care inseparable from aesthetic practices, in which authorship expands towards forms of interspecies co-creation and world-making.

Questions of dwelling and of a sense of belonging likewise lie at the heart of **Alejandro Jiménez’s** article, **“Tourists of the Everyday: Aesthetic Belonging and Disconnection from the Environment”**. Drawing on Renaud

Barbaras's notion of dwelling, in which the attitude of care plays a central role, the author analyses the effects of the commodification of spaces brought about by mass tourism and the resulting disconnection it produces both from everyday life and from natural environments, which are increasingly turned into objects of consumption. In response to this diagnosis, the article proposes a number of practices aimed at aesthetic reconnection and the restoration of meaningful bonds with the environment.

The volume's transcultural openness is made explicit in two contributions that engage with Asian philosophical traditions. First, **Gloria Luque**, in **"Exploring Other Ways of Inhabiting the Earth: Confucianism and Aesthetic Emotion"**, introduces the perspective of classical Chinese philosophy, characterised by non-anthropocentric relational ontologies and by an eminently aesthetic understanding of the relationship between human beings and nature. Focusing on Confucianism and its notion of harmony (*he*), the author establishes a critical dialogue with Berleant's proposal and challenges, from both perspectives, the contemporary paradigm of sustainability for its persistent anthropocentric bias. The analysis of aesthetic emotion, understood as a means of vital attunement to the world —drawing on Li Zehou, classical Confucianism, and recent Chinese ecological aesthetics— leads to the affirmation of a multisensory commitment to a world conceived as a continuous process of co-creation.

In a complementary manner, **María del Carmen Molina Barea**, in **"Constructing Japanese Environmental Aesthetics"**, deepens the critique of aesthetic anthropocentrism through the Japanese tradition, whose conception of the fusion of the human with nature constitutes a particularly fertile counterpoint to Western environmental aesthetics. The article begins by exploring the affinities between environmental aesthetics as articulated by Saito and, especially, by Berleant —with his emphasis on engagement— and traditional Japanese aesthetics, with particular attention to architectural examples. It then turns to Zen Buddhism and its philosophical formulation in the work of Watsuji Tetsurō, developing notions such as *fūdo* and *sonzai*, which the author relates to Berleant's concepts of environment and ecosystem. Finally, these ethico-aesthetic principles are applied to the analysis of ecological emergency architecture designed by Shigeru Ban.

A critical reappraisal of classical aesthetic categories occupies a central place in **Alicia Macías Recio's** article, **"From the Exceptional Sublime to the Common Sublime: A Critical Review of Environmental Aesthetics"**, which engages explicitly with Haapala's reflections on the wild. Through a historical survey of the category of the sublime —traditionally applied to nature within the context of modern European aesthetics, with authors such as Burke, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche— the author proposes, drawing on more recent approaches such as those of Leopold, Hepburn, and particularly Berleant, a reformulation of the sublime in ecological terms and rooted in everyday life. The notion of the "common sublime" thus makes it possible to conceive of an "ecological sublime" grounded in the collective recognition of our dependence on the vital relational continuum that constitutes us, dissolving both the human/nature divide and that between individual and community.

The centrality of the body and of embodied experience runs through **Laura Mailló's** contribution, **"Every Day We Dance: A Somaesthetic Exploration of Everyday Movements"**, which foregrounds aspects such as proprioception and motricity as fundamental dimensions of everyday aesthetic experience and of our relationship with environments. To this end, the author draws on Richard Shusterman's proposal of somaesthetics, in which the body–mind unity (*soma*) is conceived as dynamically intertwined with the everyday environments that host it. From this perspective, the distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary in everyday aesthetics can be understood as two phases of a single continuous process. The analysis focuses on the daily practice of walking, interpreted as a form of unintentional dance that has served as a source of inspiration for currents of modern dance such as *butoh*.

A systematic articulation between environmental aesthetics and ecological aesthetics is the aim of **Albert Moya's** article, **"Environmental Aesthetics and Ecological Aesthetics: From Engagement to Entanglement"**. Through a detailed account of the recent historical genesis of both currents, the author underscores how each constitutes a form of situated relationship with environments, characterised by an emphasis on engagement and interdependence. Within this framework, the broad concept of "environment" makes it possible to integrate the customary concerns of everyday and ordinary aesthetics as constitutive elements of the processes of interaction

—or, in Karen Barad’s terms, intra-action— that shape our lives. Drawing on thinkers such as Barad, Haraway, Latour, Böhme, and Bennett, Moya conceives aesthetics as an attentional practice that renders visible our ethically committed entanglement with the vitality of both human and non-human entities.

The use of concrete case studies characterises the contribution by Marcos Rostan Davyt and Nahuel Roel Aspeé, “**The Everyday and the Exceptional: The Aesthetic Dimension in Two Environmental Controversies in Uruguay**”. Through a comparative analysis of two situations —the Punta Ballena site and the town of Empalme Olmos— the authors examine the extent to which aesthetic considerations influence social mobilisation and public decision-making regarding the preservation of natural spaces. Whereas the former, due to its exceptional character, receives institutional protection, the latter, whose aesthetic value operates on a more local and ordinary scale, remains unprotected. In line with Saito’s critiques, the article highlights how aesthetic reasons and obligations are closely conditioned by social, economic, and cultural structures, and how the exceptional tends to prevail as an aesthetic value over the everyday-ordinary.

Taken together, the contributions gathered in this volume make clear that the confluences between everyday aesthetics and environmental or nature aesthetics do not amount to a mere thematic overlap, but rather signal a profound shift in our ways of understanding the aesthetic. Far from being conceived as an autonomous domain circumscribed to art or disinterested contemplation, aesthetics here emerges as a situated, embodied, and relational practice, inseparable from concrete ways of inhabiting the world and of interacting with the human and non-human environments that sustain us.

From this perspective, notions such as care, engagement, interdependence, co-belonging, and co-creation acquire central importance, not only as analytical categories but also as normative orientations capable of articulating experience, action, and responsibility. By bringing into dialogue theoretical approaches, diverse cultural traditions, and case studies grounded in specific practices, the volume’s contributions show that the everyday constitutes a privileged domain for rethinking our aesthetic relationship with nature and for imagining alternative —and more sustainable— modes of coexistence with it.