# Aesthetics of the Environment and Environmental Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT

The thesis underlying this paper is that "the aesthetic" intrinsically possesses an environmental feature (and that therefore this latter should be a feature of aesthetics, too). In order to prove this claim viable I will tackle the implications of a so-called "environmental tension" in aesthetics. This tension, signaling a specific "environmental momentum" for contemporary aesthetics, will be understood in a threefold sense. First, in the sense of a relationship between academic/theoretical/thematic and practical/operative environmental aesthetics emphasizing the pluralistic character of the aesthetic. Second, in the sense of a relationship between backgrounds and foregrounds in aesthetic experience emphasizing the potential character of the aesthetic. Third, in the sense of a relationship between quantities and qualities in aesthetic experience emphasizing the irreducible first-hand, situated, or embedded character of the aesthetic. Ultimately, I will give an overview of seven different theoretical endeavors carried out in the framework of contemporary Italian aesthetics addressing the topic of "aesthetic environments" and whose common denominator – as I shall try to show – is precisely the environmental feature of the aesthetic and aesthetics.

KEYWORDS
Environmental Aesthetics; Environmental Tension; Contemporary Italian Environmental Aestetics

## 1. Introduction

Environmental issues are indeed at the center of contemporary international debates in aesthetics. An extremely detailed and updated account of the various forms in which these issues have historically been and are currently addressed can be found, for instance, in Carlson (2020). Resorting to his contribution is helpful in order to get ahold of the extremely wide-ranging coverage of themes and problems that an aesthetics concerned with environments provides. Here Allen Carlson offers a rich historical-conceptual reconstruction from the 18th century until today, while also hinting at possible future directions of the field. He addresses basic orientations between cognitive and non-cognitive views and analyzes

two main conceptions of the field beyond natural environments (i.e. aesthetics of human environments and of everyday life). He also offers a survey of new approaches linked to the challenging and promising question of the globalization of environmental aesthetics via the question of this latter's hotly debated relationship with environmentalism. Another useful way to connote the manifold relationship between environmental issues and scholarly aesthetics is provided by D'Angelo (2008, and partly retrieved in Feloj 2018), who subsumes this relationship under four main models: the cognitivist model (whose main advocate is Carlson), the non-cognitivist and formalist model (see Berleant 2013, Brady 2003, Carroll 1993, Budd 2002, Zangwill 2001), the atmospheric model (Böhme 2017, Griffero 2017) and the geophilosophical model, drawing from the term coined by Guattari and Deleuze (see Bonesio 2002). He also suggests a fifth way of dealing with environmental questions from an aesthetic point of view by making the notion of landscape their core and testbed (aiming at overcoming the traditional oppositions between nature and art and nature and history). This complex understanding of the appreciation of nature is also central in Brady (2003), where the imaginative, relational or even "integrated" aesthetic characters of appreciation are emphasized. A further way to look at the question is then seeing practically aesthetic value as an orienting factor of our choices and behaviors either for the preservation of environments in terms of a "green", "eco-friendly", "eco", or ecological aesthetics (see for instance Saito 2007, Lintott 2006, Feng 2019, Toadvine 2010, and with a focus on the arts Morton 2007[1]) or in the sense of it being an accelerator of the current global environmental crisis in terms of an aesthetics of consuming, or even of a consumer aesthetics (see for instance Saito 2018). And if a wider approach to how environmental-aesthetic questions affect human experience in general is adopted, interesting and crucial points are made by currently thriving investigations that stress anthropological and evolutionary implications of environmental aesthetic experience (see at least Ingold 2000, Davies 2012, and Bartalesi, Portera 2015).

Evidently, this is only a sample of the present wide-ranging and flourishing reflections on the topic at stake. However, this seems to be enough to show how addressing the relationship between aesthetics and environments today means entering an already densely

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[1] Although most of the more recent sub-disciplines of aesthetics such as Environmental Aesthetics originated as a reaction against an exclusively art-centered aesthetics neglecting certain aspects of experience not directly concerned with the arts, Land or Environmental Art play an important role in the aesthetic discourse on environments.

populated and adequately mapped field of research. Therefore, it won't be the goal of this essay to repeat what has already been extensively analyzed and nicely put by scholars worldwide. Instead, I would like to expand on a general question about the meaning of an environmental inquiry for aesthetics, namely a question that is intrinsically underlying the theme "aesthetic environments" on which the contributions collected in this issue of "Aesthetica Preprint" are focused.

One aspect that I would like to ponder in this paper has to do with the difference that can be drawn between reflections that address the environment as an object of aesthetic analysis and reflections that focus on the constitutive environmental component of aesthetics. A third element that shall be involved is a more general environmental modality that intrinsically and practically constitutes the quality of that relationship that we call aesthetic. This difference has been heuristically marked in my title by using the labels "Aesthetics of the (natural, built, etc.) Environment" and "Environmental Aesthetics". They are not mutually exclusive but are simply different ways of dealing with or experiencing something. The aim of this contribution, in other words, is to compare approaches that 1) tend to thematize the environment and those that 2) focus on the constitutive and more general environmental component of aesthetics, while also taking into account the 3) overall environmental endowment of our aesthetic experience. What I am interested in specifically are these latter two options.

In particular, in order to address the question of a more general environmental feature of the aesthetic and aesthetics I will focus on one specific side of the problem: the nexus between nature and artifice. When we speak of environments today we don't exclusively refer to natural surroundings, but also to life-contexts in which artificial components are embedded, overlap or even "take over". Calling into question such a couple of terms – "nature and artifice" – in turn indeed opens a gate through which a great deal of aesthetic thinking has passed already. Just think of the very idea that thematizing (referring to, conceptualizing, reproducing, enhancing…) environments *per se* implies the creation of a "non-natural break", that is to say, a taking a distance from a "natural operative flow" in which we are personally immersed (also by dwelling in, inhabiting it) anyways, and that concerns our environmental experience *qua* experience. This is true inasmuch as there is a reflective attitude towards environments and thus what is at stake is that typically anthropological dimension of the reflective artifice, namely thematization, which is expressed already in the production of a language,

images, functions or, in general, in the forms of so-called "about-ness". In this sense, the environmental tension between naturality and artificiality is something that intrinsically pertains to human experience, especially when the "difference" between "non-natural breaks" and "natural operative flows" becomes as blurred as it is today, namely, when it does not concern merely the production and consumption of an "object", but when it involves experiential wholes in which we are immersed.

For this reason, what I aim to focus on is not an aesthetics of "the environment", in the sense of something that would point to the determination of a factual content, but instead an "environmental aesthetics" bringing to the fore the inherence of aesthetic experience in qualitatively environmental structures in which one is relationally situated, embedded. It is a non-object-oriented environmental aesthetics, so to speak. This is also why I would discern the label "Environmental Aesthetics" from the label "Ecological Aesthetics". An ecological investigation is characterized by what it examines thematically, as the term eco-logy clearly states. It can therefore also converge with empirical-factual investigations or tend towards the identification of "quasi-things" (i.e. atmospheres) that possess an ontological status opposing, or rather affecting the subject so much so that they can imply also a pathic aesthetics (Griffero 2019) (and this justifies the use of "Ecological Aesthetics" in the field of atmosferology; see Gambaro 2020). But the ecological investigation will also be "environmental" insofar as not only does it thematize somehow the environment but it also stresses the relational, active and passive, quality of the aesthetic providing an overall environmental description of this experience (as it happens in Perullo 2020)[2].

In this framework, the aforementioned nexus, or rather, the environmental tension in aesthetics that I aim to tackle, will be located in the specific context of everyday practices and will be understood in a threefold sense. First, in the sense of a relationship between academic/theoretical/thematic and practical/operative environmental aesthetics emphasizing the pluralistic character of the aesthetic. Second, in the sense of a relationship between backgrounds and foregrounds in aesthetic experience emphasizing the potential character of the aesthetic. Third, in the sense of a relationship between quantities and qualities in aesthetic experience emphasizing the irreducible first-hand, situated, or embedded character of the aesthetic.

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[2] We refer the reader also to Morton (2018) and to his idea of an "ecological thought".

The emphasis on the pluralistic character of the aesthetic is useful for bringing to the fore the friction between the conceptual determination and the phenomenological description of aesthetic features of experience (or in other terms the friction that occurs on the threshold between quantitative determination and qualitative processes) both in scholarly and in practical aesthetics. This is reflected in the tendency aesthetics has to exist in many and diverse sub-disciplines. The very existence of the latter is due to the fact that the aesthetic is practically manifested in a variety of ways and forms, which can hardly be "tamed" in absolute categories. For this reason reference will be made to markers of the aesthetic which tend to signal its presence and hence to express well precisely its untamability. In the course of the text we shall see, however, that environments do not constitute a sub-theme of aesthetics. Rather, they constitute the general matrix of the relational status of the aesthetic as such. If anything, environments understood in this sense are conducive to and make the various pluralizations of the aesthetic possible when we focus on given regions within the wider aesthetic-environmental relationship as such.

The specific trait of the "markers of the aesthetic" that will be made the core of this contribution is precisely a somehow gratifying[3] first-hand experience, namely the fact that as far as aesthetic experience is concerned, we are talking about individuals who are (enjoying their being) qualitatively situated, embedded in and interacting somehow with qualitatively charged environments. The point is that these interactions taking place between individuals and their surroundings are not totally pre-determinable – even if they can be strongly infrastructured – and hence any of them can potentially become gratifying, aesthetic, or take on an aesthetic "configuration". In order to explain this point we will resort to a series of spatial metaphors that have been used in the philosophical tradition, which interestingly strengthen *per se* already the idea that the aesthetic, and aesthetics, are inherently environmental. My specific take on this question will concern the relationship between foregrounds and backgrounds, or between someone's everyday and shared neighborhoods.

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[3] Gratification is meant here in the sense that a certain experience "was worth it", despite the fact that it may concern both harmony and dissonance, taste and disgust. It is hard to deny, in general, that aesthetic is that experience which, in its occurrence, keeps on promising to "reward" or, precisely, to "gratify" the energy involved in taking part in it, whatever the reason or the factually determinable content. An experience that is not somehow appealing and inviting in this sense could hardly be considered aesthetic. And this is even compatible with the fact that there are aesthetic (gratifying) *experiences* of non-aesthetic (unappealing) *objects* (see for instance Matteucci 2019, pp. 201-202, 240-243).

In particular, my focus will be on three types of cooperative "knowledge" contributing to the current dynamics informing everyday practices. The first one is linked to ecology, the second one is linked to aesthetics, and the third one is linked to design. On the one hand the first and the third type tend to rely on "quantities", or on measurements and reductions aimed at making qualitative aspects of experience easily "readable", or "usable". On the other hand, as far as an aesthetic standpoint is concerned – that is to say a standpoint in which the first-hand, gratifying component of experience is concerned –, as seen, the (attempted) quantitative determination, the measurement or reduction of certain qualitative aspects is not enough. Mentioning the cooperative character of these types of knowledge is no coincidence. As we shall see, it indeed brings to the fore, again, that fundamental environmental tension between naturality and artificiality which is at the center of this contribution.

Our testbed to prove the irreducibility of the qualitative dimension of aesthetic experience will be a preliminary analysis of the current and widespread digitalized forms of experience which, despite the de-humanizing power generally attached to them, actually corroborate our point, that is to say, that aesthetics implies experiential modalities that are chiefly environmental. Resorting to digitalized forms of environmental experience will also allow us to identify some trend lines within this overall environmental and experiential momentum of aesthetics also by presenting in the last paragraph (to which we directly refer those who are not interested in the path that I have just outlined) the main concepts addressed by the essays included in this issue of "Aesthetica Preprint".

## 2. *Looking for "the" Aesthetic*

How many aesthetics can there be? Many, apparently.

What do I mean by this? One good starting point for justifying this claim could be simply looking at the English word "aesthetics", or its original Latin version "aesthetica". As trivial as it may be to make this "technical" remark, (what at least looks like) the plural form of the noun should not be ignored, as it seems to suggest that we are dealing with a plurality of aesthetics, or at least with a plurality, a diversity of "aesthetic things". Etymologies and grammar aside, though, I believe there is much more behind this claim. Generally speaking, it can be linked to a particular tension that emerges any time one tries to pin down "the essence" of something while at the same time making an effort in preserving the irreducible par-

ticularity, or diversity, of that something. More specifically, within "aesthetics meant as a philosophical discipline" this tension has to do with the theoretical, academic efforts to pin down something that pertains to "aesthetics meant as a set of practices" carried out immersively, operatively, experientially by an individual, or organism, interacting with an environment, or milieu. I am referring to the tension that exists between what we may call "quantities" (something that can range from measurable aspects to aspects that can at least be thematized, labeled, or made explicit through conceptual determination) and what we may call "qualities" (something that can range from non-measurable aspects to aspects that tend to remain implicit, and that can at best be described). Nevertheless, we will get back to the specific treatment of the relationship between quantities and qualities later in this text. For now, suffice it to say that they represent the extreme polarities constituting the tensive relationship we have referred to.

What interests us at this point is something else. It is also worth stressing the fact that aesthetics meant as a philosophical discipline – not coincidentally – has several sub-disciplines, and this, as such, already signals aesthetics' pluralistic status. These sub-disciplines, though, should not be seen as closed in themselves, but as specialized fields that equally aim at providing accounts and making sense of diverse and various aspects of human nature, namely of the wider concept of aesthetic experience. Of course, there are sub-disciplines that are more or less at the center of aesthetic debates, but this is something that has to do with how predominant, or urgent a certain topic or philosophical tradition is in a certain period. Right now, for example, it cannot be denied that what is trending, for several reasons, is a research that is concerned – just like this issue of "Aesthetica Preprint" is – with environments in their various instances: ecological, natural, built, imagined, artificial, human, personal, social, extended, virtual, augmented, biological, cultural, emergency-related, etc.

However, when it comes to defining what "the aesthetic" is, that is to say what the qualifying element of a wider "entity" called aesthetics is, the tension recalled between quantitative determination and qualitative processes becomes particularly poignant. When we speak of the aesthetic, we generally refer to a sensory, perceptual, and emotional dimension of experience. This has great implications when it comes to provide sufficiently stable definitions of what the aesthetic is. If it is true that aesthetics has generally to do with what is sensed, perceived and felt, it necessarily has to do with individuals who personally, bodily, and uniquely experience things,

events, etc. In these terms, although there can be commonalities in experience that can be identified and categorized, as far as the aesthetic is concerned, experience can hardly be reduced to a set of determinable features once for all. This is true to the extent that philosophers with an anti-essentialist approach to aesthetics have resorted to more dynamic concepts such as "symptoms" (see Goodman 1978), or "indicators" (see for instance Naukkarinen 2017) of the aesthetic, rather than getting ahold of it by enucleating its properties or necessary and sufficient conditions. They "signal" its presence or, in other terms, that something has somehow acquired an aesthetic relevance.

It must be noted, though, that a similar tension can be found also within aesthetics in its practical, immersive, operative, or experiential dimension, that is to say outside of its strictly theoretical-academic field. One instance of this can be represented by our aesthetic conceptions, considerations, and evaluations. They can be expressed discursively through the usage of specific terms, but they can be equally expressed through certain actions, gestures, behaviors, choices, or lifestyles, that *per se* tend to exceed propositional contents, as Wittgenstein (1966) has nicely put it in his lectures on aesthetics. Sometimes these expressions do not fully do justice to the ways we actually *dwell in* our aesthetic sphere of experience *qua* experience, and we keep looking for the "right expression", able to account for them to others; sometimes these conceptions, considerations and evaluations are not communicated at all (or at least not consciously), insofar as certain "things" are dispersed in the flow of our experiences, or are tacitly part of our taken-for-granted experiential background. Particularly in this latter case, these "things" are not in our aesthetic experiential focus (yet), but they can potentially become part of it as aesthetically meaningful ones[4]. It is important to clarify that all the aspects that I mentioned concern degrees that run on a spectrum, or on a continuum, and don't mutually exclude each other. They are aspects that imply things that can contingently become salient, or conspicuous, and then be re-absorbed in the already mentioned flow, or background; they are not absolute "crystallizations", so to speak, endowed for good with aesthetic value. This is a further way of saying that when we speak of aesthetics, we do it in the plural.

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[4] On the relationship between perception and attentive processes see also Nanay 2016.

## 3. *Aesthetics Between Backgrounds and Foregrounds*

What I would like to emphasize is that something, when aesthetically meaningful for us, takes on a particular and distinctive experiential configuration. At the same time, the latter can be reshaped according to the energies that are each time in force in the specific context in which we are experiencing, and in which we are contributing vectors ourselves. In order to emphasize this dimension of dynamic potentiality of the aesthetic, it is useful to discern the content of this experiential modality from mere factual elements. As we have seen before, the aesthetic is connoted not only by determinable, measurable elements, but also by processual and dynamic elements, namely relational elements intrinsically inhering in an environment. Precisely with the aim to free from purely factual contents the contents of this experiential modality, some scholars have suggested not to resolve, or rather, not to reduce, the aesthetic content to a simple *aistheton*, to a determined, given content (namely to a sensed, perceived, felt one) – to a content of *aisthesis*. A very effective way of describing the emergence of these dynamic configurations – which indeed exceed those factual contents – has been put forward through the somewhat similar – Aristotle echoing – concepts of "aisthema" (Matteucci 2020) and "aestheme" (Naukkarinen 2020).

In the case of the former, an "aisthema" is something in which

the aesthetic [...] appears as something with which we experience – that is: when we experience with something, we are faced with aestheticity as a relational modality. In this case, the object, instead of being the target of a subject, performatively generates an experiential field which is aesthetically qualified as a whole. [...]

Since this manifestation pertains to operative, and not substantial elements, the kind of experience at issue here is radically contingent, as well as intrinsically creative. It hence forces to an exercise of competences: the organism does not merely attend to, but participates in the apparition of the *aisthema*, even when it plays the role of the "author" of an aesthetic structure, by also making use of itself, and not only of those same contents that are mere functional terms for its experience-of, that is, of the matter it interacts with. In the practice of the aesthetic, activity and passivity pertain to both *relata*, according to a performative intertwining between feeling and feeling-oneself that produces reflexivity. By virtue of this involvement the organism, in fact, from its interaction with the environment acquires plastic competences about the "self-in-the-world" (a non-quantifiable formula within itself) that are outside of merely functional relationships and whose ownership is to be ascribed to the field as a whole. (Matteucci 2020, p. 176)

And in the case of the latter an "aestheme"

expresses someone's views on the aesthetic dimensions or features of something. It reveals how they perceive the aesthetics of a specific target. [...] The neologism

aestheme simultaneously refers to the various pieces in the shoreless space of aesthetics as well as the process of estimating, assessing or outlining. The result of the evaluative process is a statement on how the observer perceives the aesthetic dimensions of a specific part of the surrounding world (which could manifest itself as, for example, a commentary in a periodical or an oral expression of opinion) or how they themselves want to change and manipulate them (manifested as, for example, a work of art, a meal or a choice of accessory). However, an aestheme does not necessarily have to be a fully-formed and stable end result; it can also be a changing and developing process; for example, an ongoing discussion or debate. The entire space of aesthetics is, in other words, filled with different aesthemes, and in some cases, they form entire aesthetics. (Naukkarinen 2020, pp. 33-34)

It is interesting to note how both these concepts, if considered within the wider work of the authors who used them, hint at a spatial account of aesthetics also in the more directly "galactic" sense of the word: an aisthema is understood according to a conception of aesthetics as a constellation (or in an even more Adornian sense, according to the somewhat similar ideas of firework and apparition), and an aistheme is understood according to a conception of aesthetics as canopies of stars with their own lifecycle.

Spatial metaphors, or ways to visually render conceptions of aesthetics, or the experience of the aesthetic, are actually quite frequent in the field. This is not surprising, given the intrinsic character of "inherence in an environment" of the aesthetic that has already been pointed out. More historicized versions of this "environmental status" are, for instance, that of Stimmung, aura, constellation (more or less critically central in the aesthetic reflections of various philosophers such as – historically – Simmel, Benjamin and Adorno) – but we could go even as back as to Plato's cave and Leibnitz's monad insofar as their aesthetic resonance is concerned. More recent ones are Arnold Berleant's notion of field (Berleant 1970), neo-phenomenology's atmospheres (as in the philosophies of at least Gernot Böhme 2017 and Tonino Griffero 2014), and the notion of niche (as developed by Richard Menary 2014, Richard Richards 2017, Giovanni Matteucci 2019, etc.). Also all those thematizations of the notion of world, space, place, borderline, and of various "-scapes" should be mentioned. Although it has been developed not necessarily in the specific domain of aesthetics, even Peter Sloterdijk's notion of spheres (as bubbles, globes and foams) could be included in this partial list.

In the case of this contribution, the usage of the word "background" is not coincidental. Of course, the way it has been used earlier seemed more evidently to refer to its meaning as the totality of one's own "experience, knowledge, and education". Literally, though, "background" also means, for instance, "an inconspicuous

position", or "the conditions that form the setting within which something is experienced"[5]. Indeed, it has a particular relevance in the arts (i.e. in paintings) and in science (i.e. in physics), but it is also synonymous with "environment" and "milieu". These latter terms perhaps convey better the idea that when we are experiencing something, we are inevitably and irreducibly immersed, situated, or embedded personally, in the first person – as experiencing individuals – in certain contexts – which yet can be of a shared kind, as they belong to the "common world". Even when the kind of experience we are having is one of a contemplative kind, we are still having that experience *as* we are immersed somewhere, sometime. We could even go as far as claiming that, after all, aesthetics is always (Dewey echoing) environmental.

It seems worth delving deeper into this problem as it can give us useful indications in order to grasp more precisely the nexus between aesthetics and environments. Significantly, a background necessarily implies that also a foreground exists. Perhaps it is no coincidence that nature has entered the scene in Western painting in the specific form of landscape painting along with the adoption of the technique of perspective, which is entirely played out on the different planes between foreground and background. The by now classic case of Giorgione's *The Tempest*, as interpreted by various scholars (above all: Wind 1969, Settis 1978) can be recalled here. And the relationship – the continuity relationship, as mentioned above – between background and foreground is what interests us here. In this sense it should be noted that in the context of this contribution these terms are being used in a descriptive and not in an honorific way. There is no hierarchy in this relationship, but cooperation, between "back" and "fore". A foreground is something that emerges *against* a background, stems *out of* it as something conspicuous, salient. The emphasis should be put not on the fact that background and foreground are somehow distinguished yet interacting aspects of experience, but what I aim to emphasize is precisely the fact that it is their interaction in itself, their permeability, or continuity relationship, that dynamically and mutually endows each one of them in a specific (yet contingent) manner. Whatever the "propositional" content is, that is, whatever appears in the foreground of our experience, it acquires aesthetic significance insofar as it is grasped in its dynamic interaction with that which sustains it tacitly, with its background. The simple content in the foreground is no

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[5] See https://www.merriam-webster.com/.

guarantee, nor unquestionable proof, of an aesthetic experience. Foreground and background are such by virtue of each other. So much so that, to return to Giorgione's example, landscape painting could arise almost by chance when what should have occupied the proscenium of the representation had simply disappeared (due to the fact that the painter did not have time to produce it). And so, it is as if one had realized that even in that operational background, which had by then become extraordinarily refined, there was an intrinsic aesthetic significance that could even become thematic itself.

This means that the terms of this couple should not be taken as an essentially "natural" given, "natural" datum, so to speak, or even as "authentic" and immutable, since they are the outcome of processes and, as such, they imply a certain degree of artificiality, and hence they are constituted. These processes, most of the time, take place obliquely and are thus hard to grasp as such but – at least up to a certain point – they can equally be intentionally controlled and constructed, clearly following certain procedures that can be explained, labeled. We will get back to this point later.

If we were to find in the history of philosophical concepts one instance of this operative "background", surrounding space, we could resort to the phenomenological concept of *Lebenswelt* (as it has been put forward at least starting from Husserl 1936), and even to the concept of *Lebensform* (see for instance Wittgenstein 1953; 1980). It is not my aim here to discuss in detail how they are related (for a work providing such an analysis from a phenomenological and pragmatist point of view we refer the reader to Renn et al. 2012). What I deem useful from introducing this consolidated philosophical pair of concepts is that they are, interestingly, something that is simply taken for granted, that is unquestioned, carried out automatically, with spontaneity, *and*, at the same time, something that is historically, materially constituted through processes of which it keeps the traces. They can be considered as historical-material apriori.

As for philosophical takes on the notion of "foreground", we could resort, again, to phenomenology, by referring to the concept of "emergence", but also to the Deweyan notion of "an" experience, in which those "things" dispersed in an experiential flow, or stream, become meaningfully prominent. It is important to define the peculiar nature of such prominence. As far as aesthetic experience is concerned, it generally has the feature of positivity, it is gratifying. The gratification linked to some kind of aesthetic prominence, though, can also be generated by the experience of negative

elements connected with dissonance, puzzlement, suspense, fear, and the like by virtue of the dynamic tension they have with their energetic (qualitative) background, so to speak. In the 18th century, with Burke and then with Kant, for instance, there has been a magnification of the experience of the sublime. This magnification is precisely due to the fact that the seeming dissonance, the seeming disorder that constitutes the spectacle which is typical of a violent nature actually reveals an aesthetic, gratifying background for the subject who is experiencing with those surrounding natural, or even, according to Burke, social forces. The sublime is not merely terrifying precisely because it is not merely "a foreground" which is experienced. Its aesthetic significance is intrinsically environmental. Significantly, there is also a background which, in this case, can be understood as the instance of being part of a powerful living context, but also of being able to take a distance from it. This latter case is possible because there is a foreground "behind which" we can take shelter and feel safe. The sublime is a spectacularized form of the environment. If the aesthetic weren't environmental, a phenomenon such as the sublime wouldn't be justified from an aesthetic standpoint.

These negative elements, along with more positive ones, can be typically found in the experience of certain critical or speculative forms of design, artworks, and, as seen, even in natural phenomena. If the sublime is one instance of the environment in its aesthetic "gigantism", another way to look at this question, but also to define in a more specific way the kind of prominence we are referring to, is through the more "man-sized" lens of everydayness, that is to say, the qualifying aspect of an area (another spatial metaphor, by the way) of our experience with specific features which generally concern such elements as comfort, seamlessness, and the like. I deem useful taking on this perspective for several reasons, which I will illustrate in the next paragraph.


## 4. *Aesthetics Between Qualities and Quantities*

What are the advantages of an analysis of the "environmental aesthetic" through the lens of everydayness, that is to say for how it acts in the "smaller" frameworks of everyday life? First, an everydayness perspective provides an instance of the twofold, or rather polarized, characterization of aesthetics as both an academic, theoretical endeavor – namely as a sub-discipline of aesthetics known as "Everyday Aesthetics", which is aimed at giving accounts

of our everyday aesthetic experiences – and as a set of aesthetic practices carried out in our everyday environments – namely the aesthetic transactions we have with our surroundings, whatever they might be.

Second, it provides an instance of that inextricable mixture of inconspicuousness and conspicuousness, vagueness and focus, spontaneity and construction we mentioned earlier when we described the features of a "background" and a "foreground". Our everydays, particularly today, are not merely a matter of "spontaneity", "naturality", so to speak, since they are strongly designed, "infrastructured", and also partly dependent on the technological constraints of the devices that innervate them. They are neither merely a matter of "artificiality" though, as the human component is irreducible, since the experiences we have – as far as the aesthetic is concerned, as we have seen above, when I referred to some anti-essentialist approaches to aesthetics – are always, and irreducibly, carried out in the first person. In this sense, perhaps, it would be better to speak of *someone's* everyday, rather than of a more general notion of "everyday" or "everydayness".

Third, speaking of someone's everyday brings to the fore an important set of aspects of our experience, which include familiarity, normalcy, security, and identity (see at least Haapala 2005, Lehtinen 2013, Saito 2017). These are all aspects that, as far as someone's everyday is concerned, are generally deemed positive, they are what we generally aim at. Of course, since here we are subscribing a processual, continuist, dynamic, and anti-essentialist conception of aesthetic experience, this set of aspects can be reshaped (positively or negatively, suddenly or slowly; see Naukkarinen 2013) by unfamiliar, strange, challenging aspects. For instance, they can take on a negative connotation, insofar as they generate boredom, or we feel like they are holding us back or also, more generally speaking, when they exclude some kind of gratification. In this latter case we tend to escape from them. Yet, as far as someone's everyday is concerned, even if only at a contingent level, we are speaking of a specific and gratifying dimension of experience which we effortlessly dwell in or inhabit as our own. In other terms, it is an environmental scenario we are living in as long as we are feeling ourselves belonging to it, "owning it".

That is why speaking of this dimension of own everydayness helps to clarify the conception of "prominence" we have introduced as a key notion for the understanding of our actual environmental experience: someone's own everyday is for her/him something that is highly recognizable (that is, familiar), but that at the same

time both shapes the environment and is shaped by conscious and unconscious processes and transactions with the environment that cannot always be unequivocally, sheerly or explicitly pinned down. It is prominent but at the same time dwelled in operatively. Somewhere else (Iannilli 2020), I suggested that what I have tried to explain here in terms of a "background-foreground" relationship can be understood as the relationship between a "fully rounded" area of experience and something that (following the corresponding mathematical concept) I have labeled "neighborhoods". In the first case, "fully rounded" would be a rather (that is, again, contingently) stable, focused, saturated, foreground that we deem our own, personal; in the second case, "neighborhood" would be a proximal surrounding in which we are immersed, an environment, a milieu, a background that we share with others.

Significantly, the emphasis that has been put on processes, continuism, mutuality, contingency and anti-essentialism sheds light, again, on the concept of potentiality. From this perspective, potentially anything can become salient and – as far as the aesthetic is specifically concerned – aesthetically meaningful for us, just like it can be re-absorbed in the operative flow of experiences from which it stemmed out in the first place. Again: aesthetics in its plurality.

It should be clarified, though, that speaking of someone's everyday as something personal, individual, and of neighborhoods as something proximal should not be seen as a narrow-minded, short-sighted, or parochial, individualistic conception of aesthetic experience. Quite the contrary. It actually aims at stressing at least two implications: 1) the fact that as interacting experientors, we are always personally situated, or embedded, in certain situations, and this both gives us a relevant role, that as such preserves our diversity as individuals, and also calls for greater responsibility and respect in the management of such interactions, because they take place in a shared environment; 2) the fact that in a globally interconnected, ubiquitous and reactive world such as the one where we are experientially situated, or embedded, the notion of neighborhood should be understood as widely as possible.

## 5. *Types of Environmental Knowledge: Ecology, Aesthetics, Design*

Our own neighborhood, or (everyday) environment, and our choices and behaviors within it forge more directly our own identities and contribute to or interfere with our well-being. At the same time, the choices we make and the behaviors we have with-

in our own neighborhood, or (everyday) environment here and now can impact greatly, although perhaps more indirectly, other neighborhoods, or (everyday) environments, and the quality of life somewhere else at some other time, and vice versa (Maskit 2011, Naukkarinen 2011). This point can be better explained through the comparison between the concept of Aesthetic Footprint, coined by Ossi Naukkarinen, and the concept of Ecological Footprint, made known by Mathis Wackernagel.

> The Aesthetic Footprint can be defined as the aesthetic impact of any object or action on the environment, here and everywhere, now and at other times. It is activity's total aesthetic effect. For example, if I buy a T-shirt in New York how does it make the environment look and feel like in the cotton fields of India or Pakistan? How will it affect any environment aesthetically anytime and anywhere? How have the producing and marketing processes of the T-shirt already affected the world as we can aesthetically sense it? (Naukkarinen 2011, p. 92)

> The Ecological Footprint is the measure of how much biologically productive land and water an individual, population or activity requires to produce all the resources it consumes and to absorb the waste it generates using prevailing technology and resource management practices. The Ecological Footprint is usually measured in global hectares. Because trade is global, an individual or country's Footprint includes land or sea from all over the world[6].

Both concepts take into account the impact that certain everyday actions, and production and consumption choices can have: they are very important and especially today we must be aware of both of them. Yet, they also greatly differ. In the case of the latter, the definition of the Footprint is based on measurable, empirically identifiable elements which can then be easily pinned down, defined, and indicate, or make understand, how to act accordingly. In the case of the former, we are dealing with elements which instead are not as easy to be pinned down or defined, since they more directly concern the aesthetic sphere, where judgments of taste are not objectively universal, and it is not as simple to reduce them to data and hence prescribe unequivocally what is good and what is not good (on this topic see also the distinction between ecological value and aesthetic value in Naukkarinen 2011, p. 107 *vs* Saito 2007). Also, as far as the Aesthetic Footprint is concerned, understanding data and their implied impact is not enough. Awareness is certainly central, but, as Naukkarinen shows (Naukkarinen 2011, p. 95) also a typically aesthetic faculty such as imagination, combined with a planning ability is important in its framework. This is a faculty that, moreover, as the author holds, is able to "compensate

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[6] https://www.footprintnetwork.org/resources/glossary/ [accessed June 30, 2020].

for" the impossibility of being bodily present – i.e. the fundamental first-hand mode of experience which is typical of the aesthetic – anywhere in the globe in order to "check" what our Aesthetic Footprint might be[7].

Also by drawing from these considerations, using the lens of everydayness in order to explain that peculiar – or even, to a certain extent paradoxical – aesthetic, gratifying prominence we have mentioned earlier in this text is then useful because it makes emerge more clearly that tension we have initially referred to in the relationship between quantities and qualities, measurable and non-measurable aspects. This environmental tension can be addressed from the point of view of the relationship between ecology and aesthetics (as we have just seen), but if we enlarge our perspective and we include in the conception of environmental experience also "artificial" features that qualify human surroundings as such it can equally be addressed from the point of view of the relationship between design and aesthetics – showing how ecology, design and aesthetics are deeply intertwined.

In particular, I am referring to design meant in its specifically experiential connotation. Experience Design can be understood from the point of view of a designer as a research activity and as a practice that is aimed at making certain experiential functions available to a user by enhancing them, by making them more conspicuous while keeping the user engaged in that experiential construct as seamlessly and naturally as possible. Experience designers are hence concerned with the design of overall experiences rather than with the design of discrete, individual things such as objects. From the point of view of a user, Experience Design can be understood as what facilitates, is conducive to certain experiences that otherwise would need more effort or would not be possible at all. It is something that gratifying-

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[7] "To imagine does not have to mean inventing something completely fictional and unreal; it may often involve simply thinking about how things may actually be in reality even if one cannot go and check the situation on site. Accentuating this does not mean promoting the so called 'imagination mode' of environmental aesthetics versus the '(scientific) cognitive' one because both points of departure may have their place in approaching the environment aesthetically and in both perspectives some versions of imagination can be used. It is a perfectly normal to have a capacity to imagine, and that is what we have to use in thinking about Aesthetic Footprints. The important point is that very often when we think of aesthetic considerations we have something quite local in mind, something that deals with what we can perceive here and now (e.g., a work of art in front of us, a landscape), but that is not enough for environmental discussions. Just as the rest of environmental discussion takes note that actions, objects and organisms exist in large, even global networks, so should aesthetics. This does not mean that our personal experiences would not take place in particular, local contexts, but just underlines that whatever we do may affect how we ourselves and other people may experience the environment on some other occasion and in some other locale" (Naukkarinen 2011, pp. 96-97).

ly affords conditions for operativity. For an "experience consumer" what counts is not possessing an object, but the experiential process as such (see Lipovetsky 2006). In general, Experience Design concerns the *(direct) "manipulation" of quantities in order to (indirectly) obtain quality*, the attempt to make something "artificial" be felt positively and effortlessly as if it were "natural", or "cool"[8], and the interaction between pre-constituted experiential frameworks, or environments, and personally involved or immersed individuals. In this sense Experience Design can also be understood within a so-called (interacting, operative, cooperative) "experience-with" paradigm (Matteucci 2019) of aesthetic experience. Interestingly, this shift towards experience which is particularly made explicit in a label such as "Experience Design" has a specifically aesthetic endowment. Experience Design is a further, more radical, step within a progression from the mainly cognitivist and minimalist/simplicity-oriented approach typical of Usability – something for which a central goal is to make functions "available" in an easy and efficient manner – to the more aesthetically oriented approach of User Experience Design – in which it is important to make functions available in a way that is also gratifying (by emphasizing such features as fun, emotion, delight, performance, style, identity, etc.).

This leads us to a further point. It is worth resorting to one statement we made earlier in this text. We stated that when we deal with backgrounds and foregrounds, with neighborhoods and someone's everyday, etc. and their mutual relationships, we are not dealing with clear-cut or fixed procedures. We are instead dealing with complexities, with experiential processes that, most of the time, unfold and take place obliquely and are thus hard to grasp as such. Yet – at least up to a certain point, as showed with the example of Experience Design – they can equally be intentionally controlled and constructed, or reduced, clearly following certain procedures that can be explained or labeled (granted that we must at least try to make sense of things that seem to be ineffable, even if we do not fully succeed in doing that). In this context I am going to tackle some aspects implied by an element which is particularly relevant to the construction of our environments as we experience them today also from an aesthetic point of view: the digital. This point further corroborates the need to take on an environmental perspective in aesthetics in the widest sense possible.

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[8] We refer the reader to Russell (2011) for a philosophical analysis of the concept of the effortlessly cool person precisely in the sense of a tension between spontaneity and construction of a certain attitude. Russell's conception of coolness has led me to recommend an understanding of Experience Design as a "cool design" in Iannilli (2020).

## 6. *"How Much" Quality?*

Human Computer Interaction is "a multidisciplinary field of study focusing on the design of computer technology and, in particular, the interaction between humans (the users) and computers [covering] almost all forms of information technology design"[9]. It is one important step in the overall development of the design of environments meant in the sense of a broadening, also beyond nature, of our environmental experience, namely in terms of our environmental experience via the digital.

Significantly, the digital 1) has an ever increasing role in our everyday practices, personal spaces and for our creativity as users and consumers, or also as producers and practitioners engaged with a certain technology[10], strengthening that idea of a shift "from objects to experiences" in design that has already been mentioned; 2) it has also spurred a research direction in fields that have traditionally relied on empirical data such as scientific disciplines, or the "harder" sciences, which is now trying to give accounts of less measurable and conceptualizable elements, namely of experiential and aesthetic elements. In the first case, a technical term has been used in order to describe those processes of increasing digitalization of certain areas of experience, namely that of "technological adoption" (see Denning, Lewis 2020). Interestingly, it has been noted that the most recent groups of technologies playing a role in this process of adoption and re-shaping of more consolidated areas of experience are: Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things, and Extended Reality, this latter including both Virtual and Augmented Reality (see Marfia 2020, and Noruzzi et al. 2019). In the second case, I am referring to a research direction grossly coinciding with a so called "third wave" of Human Computer Interaction. This third wave is one instance of a shift in design research towards the (both practice-based and speculative) investigation of non-measurable elements defining experience and interactions (see Bødker 2006 and Spence 2016). Another example of this shift could be represented by a certain version of visualization design concerned with the measurement not only of commonalities, or patterns, but also of aesthetic diversity. A scholar who has recently delved into this field

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[9] https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/human-computer-interaction [accessed June 30, 2020].

[10] Making the link between sustainability and digital practices very clear, i.e. fashion collections or shows, or retailing that exist only in digital, not materially wasteful worlds. Perhaps they do produce some sort of "digital pollution", as far as the digital element is exclusively concerned, and the ever developing and obsolescent technologies that physically support it are not taken into account.

from the standpoint of AI aesthetics is Manovich (2019). Although his book mainly focuses on the level of the analysis of users' image production (yet aiming at accounting for cultural products in the wider sense of the word), it is emblematical as it precisely stresses the idea of a plurality of aesthetics against (total) reduction through the challenging and, perhaps, in Manovich's own words "utopian" task of measuring cultural variability also by making it visually intelligible through quite elaborated configurations, or visualizations (he has developed a project called "Cultural Analytics". Here, so-called "Data Humanism", an interesting project carried out by information designer Giorgia Lupi, should also be mentioned).

It almost seems as if, on the one hand, "qualities" needed to give away a bit of their specificity in order to be enhanced and, on the other hand, "quantities" had to sacrifice a bit of their efficiency, in order to make things work better, in a more "all-encompassing", "overall", even environmental, ecosystemic, way. Or also: it is almost as if (sometimes consciously and sometimes not) the "human environment" and the "digital environment" broadly speaking modified themselves while co-existing, or even had to modify themselves in order to co-exist with each other[11].

So, be it the point of view of a user, or of a designer, the role of "the digital" in the current processes of design of experiences seems to bring even more to the fore, or even to radicalize that tension between qualities and quantities that has already emerged as characterizing aesthetic experience especially in today's environments saturated with designed, intelligent, experiential functions.

In the case of users (both seen as practitioners and as consumers), this tension has been explained in terms of a technology adoption which is ever increasingly environmental and experiential and less objectual, and of the related issue of the modification of the quality of everyday practices which can take place also according to a specific technology adoption. In the case of designers, the tension has been explained by making reference to their inevitable tendency to quantify qualities, and to the unavoidable (at least to a certain extent) undertaking of processes of reduction of a complexity (i.e. of experience). Yet, this tendency and undertaking take place while

[11] So much so that we could speak of a sort of mutual "Deep Learning" for both sides. However, one way to understand this "co-constitutive" relationship from the specific point of view of AI is also provided by two concepts which are central in Floridi (2019): "ludification of interactions and tasks" and "enveloping of realities around the skills of our artifacts". Interestingly, Floridi holds that "Ludifying and enveloping are a matter of *designing*, or sometimes re-designing, the realities with which we deal [...]. So the foreseeable future of AI will depend on our design abilities and ingenuity. [...] The very idea that we are increasingly shaping our environments (analog or digital) to make them AI-friendly should make anyone reflect [...]" (Floridi 2019, p. 13).

attempting at enhancing experiential wholes, totalities, in which individuals are situated, embedded, rather than exclusively focusing one's efforts on discrete and easily measurable entities, while also maintaining the relevance of diversity and differentiation. In either case, it is not an easy task to keep things together[12].

It is maybe too soon to draw some conclusions about the implications of the ever-increasing digitalization of our experience, and in particular our aesthetic experience[13] (i.e. a sensory, perceptual, emotional, taste-related, etc. kind of experience). As far as the aesthetic is concerned, though, as we have seen, the experiential turn in design already emphasizes *per se* aesthetic components of experience, and does so by precisely valorizing the qualitative characters of first-hand, personal – human – experience, situatedness and embeddedness. Interestingly, this seems to be the case also in its more evidently digital specification, which is usually seen as making experience less "human". In the various instances where its experiential, environmental connotation is more evident, such as the ones we mentioned already (AI, Internet of Things, Extended Reality), the role of "the digital" seems, in fact, also to bring to the fore that specifically environmental connotation of aesthetics we suggested earlier. I made that suggestion when I advocated the idea that a) as we are experiencing something, we are inevitably and irreducibly immersed, situated, or even embedded personally, as experiencing individuals, in certain contexts, which yet can be of a shared kind, as they belong to the "common world"; b) as we are experiencing something environmentally, that is to say, in the interactions or transactions between individuals and (also digital, shared) environments, mutual modification processes take place[14]. When, in other words, I advocated the idea that aesthetics, after all, is *always* environmental.

## 7. *Contemporary Italian Perspectives on "Environmental Aesthetics"*

I started off this paper by asking the question "How many aesthetics can there be?", and a preliminary answer was: "many", basing this claim on a pluralistic and anti-essentialist conception of aes-

[12] And, perhaps, as far as design theory and practice is concerned, it is precisely in a good interdisciplinary environment that this ability can and should be developed.

[13] For specifically aesthetic investigations which just like Manovich's are not limited to an analysis of AI as an "art generator", but that deal with questions such as perception and the like see also Marfia, Matteucci (2018) and Naukkarinen (2019). On algorithms and aesthetics see Melchionne (2017) and Arielli (2018).

[14] And as we have seen all this calls not only for gratification but also for greater responsibility.

thetics and of the aesthetic. In the course of the analysis developed in the previous pages a further, radical, claim was also made, namely, that aesthetics is always environmental. This second claim was based on a (Dewey echoing) immersive, experiential, relational, processual and non-object-oriented conception of aesthetic experience.

Here it seems useful to resort to the analysis, carried out by D'Angelo (2008), of the difficult relationship between an aesthetics concerned with the landscape and an aesthetics following an environmental paradigm. In particular, he refers to the limits of a reduction of the notion of landscape to that of environment, hence the limits of the way too easy dismissal of the relevance that the landscape has for aesthetic experience. D'Angelo sets the problematic origins and development of this relationship between the 1960s and the 1990s, when ecological thinking and various environmental concerns surfaced and flourished[15] leading to a stigmatization of the notion of landscape. In recent years, though – D'Angelo says – in aesthetics there has mostly been a "reconciliation" between landscape (which he understands as a relational, properly aesthetic, concept) and environment (which he describes as physical-biological, hence as a concept that, as such, is non-aesthetic). Two ways of understanding this reconciliation, so to speak, can be: a re-gained importance of the landscape; a conflation of the term landscape into the term environment (a view, as said, of which he is particularly critical). The kind of value D'Angelo attaches to the landscape is of an irreducible yet relational kind, and bringing to the fore this aspect allows him also to provide elements for overcoming a narrow and biased conception of the landscape (see D'Angelo 2010). Such conception would suggest for instance that 1) only those landscapes with some extraordinarily beautiful features actually deserve the recognition of aesthetic value – while, actually, aesthetic value concerns also more ordinary, and negative experiences, and 2) the fact that the appreciation of the aesthetic value of a landscape tends to be based on a projection of aesthetic values learned from landscape painting – while, actually, landscape aesthetic appreciation is the outcome of a dense mixture of natural, artistic, artificial, historical, memorial, and imaginative (see in particular also Brady 2003) features of experience.

Landscape is indeed a well-defined portion of a wider environment endowed with aesthetic value for the experientor. Maintaining this while subscribing a general environmental mode of aesthetic experience does not entail at all the dismissal of the aesthetic rel-

[15] Interestingly, one specifically Italian philosophical endeavor countering this general tendency in the 1970s is represented by Assunto (1973), who aimed at preserving the aesthetic specificity of the landscape also by stressing its intrinsically historical dimension.

evance of the landscape, on my part. In my view, the relationship between landscape and environment, in fact, concerns the same foreground-background relationship already addressed in this paper. In a sense, a landscape can be understood as a "kernel", as that prominent fully rounded area of experience that we deem aesthetically meaningful while we are situated, or embedded, in wider "neighborhoods" of experience. I have so far referred to an "Environmental Aesthetics" rather than to an "Aesthetics of the Environment", and this is not another technical remark, just like the one that I made at the beginning of this essay in reference to the plural form of the noun "aesthetics" was not. Emphasizing the adjectival form of "environment", that is to say using the word "environmental", rather than stressing a factual content such as "the environment" would be, is useful in order to make a distinction between "the how" and "the what", that is to say, in order to stress the fact that it is not a realm of objects, or events ("the what") – factual contents – as such that makes our experience aesthetic, but it is the way we experience them, that makes our experience aesthetic. Again, it is not a matter of an aesthetics concerned with "the" environment, but of an aesthetics that is intrinsically environmental. This can be explained in the same terms as that wider shift "from objects to experiences" taking place both in design theory, practice and consumption, namely, as that shift in focus from single, individualized entities, to larger experiential, environmental wholes and totalities.

The shift from objects to experiences seems to be generally also at the center of the contributions included in this issue of "Aesthetica Preprint". They represent another example of the pluralistic nature of aesthetics, being at least seven instances of different styles with which one common topic, that is to say "aesthetic environments", can be addressed. Paolo Furia deals with this topic from the point of view of the relationship between geography and aesthetics. He intertwines a phenomenological notion of geographical experience with an analysis of some of the metaphorical underpinnings of the geographical notion of place and with an understanding of the geographical notion of landscape based on aesthetic appreciation. Alberto L. Siani puts at the center of his contribution the interpretation of art and nature of which he aims at providing a unified conception by adopting a consistent pragmatist framework. In order to do so he compares Emily Brady's and Umberto Eco's takes on interpretation. He emphasizes the several similarities between the two authors but at the same time suggests that Eco could provide some fruitful indications that would make some of Brady's claims even more consistent, that is, avoiding not only a hedonistic relativism

but also a form of naïve realism. Lisa Giombini proposes a revision of the notion of heritage site. By specifically locating her analysis in the scenario of the aftermath of an extreme natural event, she suggests that in the context of the reconstruction procedures of damaged sites, besides more technical elements, it is necessary to take into account and preserve the value people attach to certain sites, which makes them places of human significance. Marcello Barison intersects the discourse on Anthropocene with current philosophical research on architecture in the light of various shortcomings that can be found in each of these two fields and which he aims to overcome. In particular, he focuses on the general and unifying "philosophical-architectural" concept of world-formation. This focus allows, Barison says, both the disciplinary establishment of a philosophy of architecture and a better understanding of Anthropocene. Martino Feyles addresses environments in their augmented form phenomenologically. His thesis is that if it is true that what distinguishes human perception is its being intrinsically bound to language, it is always, in fact, of an augmented kind. He identifies what differentiates the kinds of perceptual activities at stake in the animal-environment and human-world exchanges in the relationship between pre-determination and openness of perceptual and operative possibilities, which is now partly reshaped in augmented environments. Stefano Marino puts forward an idea of "second-nature" as a chiefly aesthetic concept. By focusing in particular on the mimetic component of experience he aims at downsizing the almost exclusive and too narrow focus on rationality and language that has been generally put forward by certain philosophical views when providing accounts of the difference between animal ways of inhabiting the environment and human ways of shaping a world. Nicola Perullo, by retrieving some of the concepts recently addressed in Perullo (2020), lays the grounds for an ecological aesthetics based on a "haptic perception". The "integral" ecological aesthetics he recommends follows a specifically participatory logic implying attention, intimacy and care, thus excluding any isolationist, predetermined attitude while emphasizing instead a relational and processual – a so-called "perceiving with", haptic – model of experience.

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