

Aisthesis



Foreword

Citation: Bertinetto, A., & Portera, M. (2024). Foreword. *Aisthesis* 17(1): 9-12. doi: 10.7413/2035-8466002

Copyright: © 2024 – The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY-4.0).

ALESSANDRO BERTINETTO*, MARIAGRAZIA PORTERA**

* Università degli Studi di Torino
alessandro.bertinetto@unito.it

** Università degli Studi di Firenze
mariagrazia.portera@unifi.it

In recent years, the concept of habits has emerged as a focal point within international philosophical discourse, particularly through historical, theoretical, and empirical lenses encompassing and integrating, among others, philosophical, psychological, neuroscientific and sociological perspectives. Habits, understood as dispositions that facilitate individual and social activities, influence everything from mundane daily practices to highly specialized skills. They shape the interaction between organism and environment, playing a pivotal role in personal and collective identity formation, cultural education, social coordination, organization and change, and the manifestation of political engagement.

However, the exploration of habits within the realm of aesthetics is a relatively new and intriguing domain. This special issue of “Aisthesis” seeks to bridge this gap by examining the intricate relationship between habits and the aesthetic life. Traditionally, habits have been perceived as antithetical to creativity and aesthetic experience, often associated with monotony and

routine. Yet, this issue aims to challenge that notion, proposing that habits and aesthetics are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

As the articles collected in this issue variously argue, aesthetic habits encompass a broad spectrum of activities and dispositions that are central to artistic practices, taste formation, and social rituals. They not only influence how we create and appreciate art but also how we engage with the world aesthetically in our everyday lives. From the shaping of judgments of taste to the role of aesthetic experience in social and cultural practices, aesthetic habits play a crucial role in defining our interactions with our environment and with each other. Thus, the discussion of the relationship between habits and aesthetics involves examining how habits influence aesthetic experiences and practices, and conversely, how aesthetic and artistic activities, experiences, and emotions impact and shape our habits.

The concept of aesthetic habits prompts several key questions, such as, but not limited to, the following ones: How do habits influence our perceptions and experiences of beauty and art? In what ways do they contribute to or disrupt social norms and practices? How are they shaped by and, in turn, shape our interactions with new technologies and media? Without aiming to exhaust the topic, but rather to propose an urgent and promising subject for philosophical and aesthetic discussion, the various sections of this issue of “Aisthesis” address these and other crucial questions from diverse perspectives.

The sections of the issue provide a comprehensive overview of the diverse perspectives and insights on aesthetic habits. The first section, *Historical Discussions*, delves into the historical dimensions of aesthetic habits, tracing their development and theoretical foundations through different epochs. Moving from Aristotle, Mariagrazia Portera explores the theory of the human aesthetic as a habitual disposition, arguing that our aesthetic sensibilities are deeply ingrained in our habitual behaviors and that the topic of aesthetic habits allow philosophers to investigate intriguing interconnections between aesthetics and analytic metaphysics, on the one hand, and the ethical theory of virtues on the other hand. Giuliano Gasparri examines, in his paper, mechanical models of habits and aesthetic perception in the works of Descartes and Gassendi, highlighting how early modern thinkers integrated notions of habit into their theories of perception and aesthetic appreciation. Along the lines of a historical-philosophical investigation, Alessandro Nannini in his contribution discusses the development of beauty as a set of habits in the Early Modern Age, arguing for a “hexiologia aethetica” that considers beauty as a habitual disposition formed through cultural and intellectual practices.

The second section (*Aesthetic Habits and Experience*) addresses how aesthetic habits shape and are shaped by our experiences, with a focus on contemporary philosophical and psychological insights. Alessandro Bertinetto investigates the interplay between habits and aesthetic experience, challenging the notion that aesthetic experiences are inherently non-habitual and proposing that certain hab-

its are essential for cultivating aesthetic sensitivity. Gregorio Tenti introduces the concept of Biophilia Aesthetics, exploring how our innate tendencies towards life and nature influence our aesthetic experiences and how these experiences, in turn, shape our habits. Bruno Latour's ideas on habits and sensibility is the topic addressed by Christian Frigerio: in his article he discusses how Latour's philosophy integrates aesthetics with ecological and political praxis. Giacomo Pezzano's contribution offers a pluralistic understanding of thinking habitus, emphasizing the role of both verbal and visual thinking in shaping our habitual aesthetic practices.

The relation between *Habits and Art* is the focus of the third section. It explores the role of habits in various artistic practices and how these habits contribute to creativity and cultural expression. In her article, Roberta Dreon argues for the intelligent nature of artistic habits, suggesting that artistic practices are deeply rooted in habitual behaviors that exhibit a form of intelligence responsive to the environment. Dwiwana Habsary and Muchammad Bayu Tejo Sampurno discuss aesthetic habits and cultural symbols in Indonesia, examining how traditional practices and modern influences shape aesthetic identities. Francesca Raimondi's and Yulia Tikhomirova's contributions are devoted to the role of habits in performing arts: Raimondi explores body techniques in theatre and performance art, highlighting how aesthetic technologies developed in avant-garde practices can transform social habits; Tikhomirova examines the abandonment of aesthetic automatisms in performative practices, focusing on the work of the Italian duo Didymos and their use of doubt to challenge conventional aesthetic habits. Finally, Robert Valgenti's and Claudia Tosi's papers deal with habits in artistic and aesthetic practices that problematize the very status of art and the link between art and life: Valgenti reflects on habits in the kitchen, proposing that culinary practices and recipes are sites of aesthetic habit formation and transformation; Tosi, on her part, considers the role of habits in documentary filmmaking, discussing how habitual practices influence the creation and recognition of documentary works.

The final section (*Normativity, Taste, and Education*) delves into the normative dimensions of aesthetic habits, exploring their impact on taste, education, and social practices. Alessandro Bertinetto's second contribution to this issue of "Aisthesis" delves into the aesthetics and normativity of habits, examining how aesthetic norms are established and maintained through habitual practices. Emanuele Arielli discusses the self-construction of preferences and tastes, arguing that habits play a crucial role in the development and transformation of individual aesthetic preferences. And *last, but not least*, Alberto Simonetti explores the aesthetic value in social education through the lens of Eric Kandel's work, highlighting how aesthetic habits can foster new forms of social coexistence and ethical practices.

The articles in this issue collectively highlight the significance of aesthetic habits in shaping our artistic, cultural, and social landscapes. The theoretical research presented invites readers not only to become aware of the role of habits in aesthetic life and artistic experience but also to engage actively in acquiring good habits within our aesthetic environments – considering their ecological impact as well. This special issue of “Aisthesis” thus aims to contribute to both philosophical and practical understanding, encouraging a mindful and sustainable approach to our aesthetic engagements.

As always, “Aisthesis” hosts also a “Varia” section, which includes for this issue four articles. The first contribution is by Fabrizio Desideri and is devoted to exploring the philosophical relevance of the human voice as inherently “dramatic”, i.e., taking the form of an action. The essay derives from the “Lectio” delivered by Fabrizio Desideri on March 3, 2023, at the Aula Absidale di Santa Lucia in Bologna, marking the opening of a lecture series on the voice organized by the International Center for Humanistic Studies “Umberto Eco” and the University of Bologna. Included in the “Varia” are also a contribution by Michael Jenewein, discussing the notion of style in Wölfflin and Wiesing; one by Kelin Li, discussing some crucial aspects of Chinese landscape painting, and one by Emanuele Mariani, who draws an interesting connection between Husserl’s phenomenology and Pessoa’s poetics”.

This issue of “Aisthesis” partly results from the discussions held in the context of the “Humboldt-Kolleg” on “Aesthetic Habits” organized in June 2022 thanks to the generous support of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung at the University of Turin, the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Rivoli Castle, and the Certosa 1515 of Avigliana (TO). Moreover, some of the research contributions come from the ART research group (that promoted an online workshop on aesthetic habits in May 2021) and from the AbiTo project of the Department of Philosophy and Education Sciences of the University of Turin. This publication was generously funded by the Department of Philosophy and Educational Sciences, University of Turin.