

Aisthesis



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Foreword

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In recent years there has been a marked resurgence of interest in the concept of landscape – not only within philosophical aesthetics but also, just to name a few disciplines, in architecture, literature and geography. This renewed focus has gone hand in hand with a growing attention toward a broad set of related notions, such as “environment”, “territory”, and “nature”, which, although deeply interconnected with the idea of landscape, are not entirely synonymous with it.

The foundational premise of this issue of “Aisthesis” is that landscape should not be understood as something purely “natural”, especially within the domain of aesthetics. Beyond its material, orographic, and morphological dimensions, the landscape must be recognized as a human construct – shaped by complex interactions involving urban planning, settlement patterns, resource management, economic activities, and, more recently, ecological constraints, and attention to biodiversity. These overlapping practices often generate tensions that are not only difficult to reconcile but, at times, fundamentally incompatible. For instance, issues related to sustainability frequently clash with the imperatives

of profit maximization; similarly, the regeneration of specific landscapes may conflict with prevailing business interests.

In this context, posing the question “which idea of landscape should we favor in response to the challenges of a green economy?” serves, provocatively, to highlight the structural asymmetry between landscape conservation and the so-called sustainable economy, and between – more broadly – aesthetics and ecology. This disjunction becomes particularly apparent when considering the urban landscape, where productivity, housing needs, mass tourism, ecological preservation, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) converge in a dense and often contradictory network of demands.

The thematic focus of this issue of “Aisthesis” stems from the awareness of the multitude of concerns that the concept of landscape brings into play – concerns which seldom, if ever, combine into a harmonious synthesis or promise any definitive resolution. Rather than offering a pragmatic search for simple or conciliatory solutions, contemporary landscape aesthetics positions itself as an interdisciplinary field that critically engages with a wide array of social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental issues.

This issue of “Aisthesis” brings together a diverse collection of essays on the theme of landscape, organized into two main sections. The first section features contributions with a distinctly historical-philosophical orientation. Valagussa, drawing on Dante, Vico, Cézanne, Simmel, and Merleau-Ponty, explores how the modern concept of landscape emerges through the formation of a mental image within the subject – thereby emphasizing the interplay between landscape, poetry, and painting. Restuccia looks back to pre-modernity, highlighting how a non-instrumental approach to nature – and thus an *ante litteram* “sense” of landscape – can be identified in the experiential dimension of Christian pilgrimage. Gemmani offers a critical analysis of the relationship between the concepts of landscape and environment, contributing valuable perspectives to contemporary interdisciplinary discourse. Essays by Boffi, Gentili, and Giannuzzi focus on authors central to the landscape discourse: Boffi provides a passionate reflection on Gianni Celati and Luigi Ghirri in the context of the Italian landscape; Gentili revisits the work of Rosario Assunto, a pivotal figure in the history of Italian landscape aesthetics; Giannuzzi examines the relationship between climate change and temporality through the lens of Walter Benjamin.

The second section delves more deeply into the intersections between landscape aesthetics, sustainability, environmental protection, and emerging technologies. Portera’s essay interrogates the role of aesthetics in strategies aimed at biodiversity conservation; Furia explores the relationship between landscape preservation and renewable energy, articulating an “aesthetics of the solar landscape”. Raffa and Calise reflect on the sustainability of digitalizing cultural heritage, particularly in light of UNESCO regulations. Lamberti and Ianniello, in

turn, explore the notion of landscape in the era of Instagram and the socio-material entanglements that define the human ecological niche, including analyses of environmental art practices.

The issue also includes a special collection of three articles – by Mecacci, Ibarlucia, and Montanelli – that approach surrealism and the philosophy of Walter Benjamin from diverse perspectives. A rich “Varia” section follows, featuring articles by Casadio-Chamizo (on Leonardo da Vinci), Carrieri (on aspects of Siegfried Kracauer’s thought), and Ferrara (on Cronenberg’s *Videodrome*).

Finally, this issue inaugurates a new section titled *Carte d’artista*, which fosters dialogue between aesthetics and the visual arts: the main point, with this new section of “Aisthesis”, is not that much to provide new material for philosophical-critical discussion *strictu sensu* but rather to offer to our readers documents and papers (*Carte*) that have exemplary value as works of art. *Carte d’artista* opens, in this issue of “Aisthesis”, with a presentation of works by photographer and visual artist Pino Musi.