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An Aesthetic Approach for the Improvement of Everyday Life

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Everyday Aesthetics – VIII International Summer School of IIAA
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Workshop Presentations

Eeva Aarrevaara: *Everyday aesthetics reflected in vernacular architecture – the viewpoint of professionalism* (Faculty of Technology, Lahti University of Applied Science)

In this paper I'll discuss differences between vernacular architecture and modern design from the viewpoint of the process of constructing built environment. My main interest is focused on the social transition concerning the emergence of professionalism in the process of design and building.

Vernacular architecture represents a model of inhabitants' participation in building, while modern architecture is dominated by different professionals from design to construction process. Designers and planners like architects are now facing new demands of resident participation and better communication between different groups. According to Schön (1983) the confidence on professionals seems to be in crisis in several fields. Similar aesthetic appreciations are not shared in dominant professional discourses and opinions of ordinary inhabitants. The authorization of the professionals is not a matter of course from the viewpoint of citizens. The examples provided in so-called popular building confirm observations of this type.

Cultural tradition represented practises accepted by the community (Talve 1990). The lack of professional training (in the modern sense) was typical in vernacular building processes although special craftsmen had leading role in the building. While vernacular architecture represents a phenomenon of the past, it still provides lessons concerning inhabitants' possibilities to participate in construction of their residential environments and to influence the aesthetic choices made in the process.

Epp Annus: *The Phenomenology of the Everyday* (Estonian Literature Museum/ Ohio State University)

My paper is an introduction to my project "The Phenomenology of the Everyday". I aim to lay bare the phenomenological foundations of the sphere of the everyday. I ask: what are the most basic categories that form my experience of the everyday? I proceed from simple answers: My moods and feelings. The things around me. The people around me. The space and time that I inhabit. My caring about what is happening around me. My analysis develops through a critical relationship with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Lacan.

In the field of cultural studies, the everyday is most commonly understood as a question of the social sphere. Yet why limit the concept of the everyday to the sphere of common experience, to the field of an anonymous 'everybody'? In Heideggerian terms, we could say that the everyday as a social sphere is the everyday of 'always already', the everyday that does not need myself, a

particular person. It is the everyday that is impersonal (although interpellative), that is out there waiting for me, but it would not be insulted if I could stay away instead.

Another way to look at the everyday – which I call the phenomenology of the everyday – is to start from myself, from my experience of being in the world. I am the centre of my everyday. My being is part of the ontical sphere of modern industrialization, but this is not all I can say about my being in the world. My everyday way of being is, most of all, centred around the notions of moods, feelings, togetherness, and care. I care about my life and about my world – this I claim to be the primordial basis of my everyday being in the world, the basis of my human happiness, but also of the existence of society and culture.

Eveliina Asikainen: *Suburban Forests and the Everyday Aesthetics of Wilderness* (University of Tampere)

Many contemporary writings emphasize the split of culture and nature as well as that of built environment and wilderness. Yet suburban dweller can appreciate their nearby forests as wilderness. This study presents the case of Hervanta – one of Finland's biggest suburbs – and its surrounding forests. I use several many kinds of research materials (walking interviews, photography, local anthologies, histories and other written materials) to describe and analyse the aesthetics of wilderness a part of the residents' relation(s) to local forests and even identity. I claim that aesthetics of wilderness affect markedly the inhabitants' understandings of good urban forestry and attractive recreational forests. This relationship is not, however, simple as wilderness can raise attraction as well as fear.

Emeline Eudes: *Of the Utility of Rêverie - How to build unprecedented 'everydays' by the bringing closer of aesthetics and politics* (University of Paris 8, France)

When Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote his *'Reveries of a Solitary Walker'*, he accepted to see his writing work taking unintentional paths. Working about images and contemporary art has brought me to take the reverie into a close consideration, not only for its capacity to empower the experience of the world by an extra imaginary dimension, but also for its way to structure mental journey. Considered as an unproductive activity in our occidental market economy world, the reverie can also be conceived as a subversive track, from the moment we think about it as an opener of seemingly illogical possibilities.

Associated to different postures, such as walking, whistling, drawing, contemplating, cooking (to quote a few), the reverie offers this ordinary but intriguing experience of a particular meeting between the body and the mind. In the reverie space, sensitive perceptions activate a body memory, which turns on forgotten, virtual, impossible, as well as customary channels. In this perspective, Gaston Bachelard's studies of reverie introduce an interesting phenomenological point of view, in giving to it a chance of becoming a method. Helping to cross over the boundaries of taste judgment and logical evaluation, it unlocks conditional events and can work to make them tangible and feasible.

Reverie gains then a new value, which finds practical uses when applied to politics. Strong of its desire of changing and dynamic will towards life, it can participate to what Michel Onfray called 'generalised aesthetics'. Sustaining plurality, dispersion and sensitive awareness from local environments to the global space in which humankind acts, reverie reveals a power of discovering and organising the social sphere in opposition to the monolithicism and centralisation of state institutions.

If thinking was for John Dewey the only method to escape from upheaval and routine, reverie might accompany it to work for enlivening 'everydays'.

Pauline von Bonsdorff: *Tacit aesthetics* (University of Jyväskylä)

Despite the fundamentally sensuous character of aesthetic experience, there is a strong emphasis on the conscious and cognitive character of aesthetic appreciation in most dominant theories of aesthetics. Arguably, appreciation as a term implies an explorative and attentive activity; in this precise sense, aesthetic appreciation is always “interested” and involved with its object. At the same time one might wonder, however, whether aesthetics, described along these lines, does not risk losing contact with the senses and the body, emotions and imagination – or, perhaps, whether its contact with these areas does not become limited, even superficial, and ideal. That is: we accept only a part of the areas of sensuousness, emotions and imagination – the part where the subject remains in control. In this paper I shall discuss *tacit aesthetics*, a border area of “aesthetics proper” concerned largely with what has traditionally been seen as aesthetic only in an inferior sense. The tacit dimension of aesthetics is especially relevant in the area of everyday life and environments, where many aesthetically significant elements are not so much attended to as present to the subject in a non-focused manner. Rather than taking the borderline between aesthetic attention and tacit aesthetics for granted I shall, however, suggest that there is a symbolical, moral and cognitive import of tacit aesthetics *precisely as tacit*. Further, although the presentation does not allow for a thorough discussion of this, the relevance of the tacit dimension for aesthetic creativity – a topic that has likewise been in the margins of philosophical aesthetics for a long time – at least deserves mentioning.

Carsten Friberg: *An Aesthetic Approach for the Improvement of Everyday Life* (Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark)

One approach to the aesthetic for the everyday life is to focus on how different places and objects affect us and how we improve our sensibility towards them. The concept of atmosphere offers an opportunity to characterize these effects. Atmosphere is a key-concept in aesthetics, focusing on our perceptions rather than on art and criticism. It relates aesthetics to everyday life by describing how spaces and places are causing sensory and bodily affects. This is obviously a matter for places of strong emotional impact like in religious and entertaining context, but it is just as well about places of everyday life like the public office, the working place, our private living etc. By focusing on atmosphere, we can improve our knowledge of and practice with creating places that make us feel in certain ways. This is already done deliberately in many ways e.g. to enhance consumerism, and to create experiences in entertainment and tourism, but the perspectives are much broader than these examples; it can be about integrating people, changing habits for more sustainable living etc. I will present my experiences from working with atmosphere at the Aarhus School of Architecture and my reflections on how this concept offers more than a theoretical perspective on aesthetics. It can also give a frame for practical work with creating atmospheres. My focus is on what atmosphere is and how it becomes operational and can be applied in specific contexts.

Heidi Grönman: *Citizens of the designworlds. Aesthetic ethnomethods and domestic interior decoration* University of Art and Design, Helsinki)

In this paper aesthetics of the ordinary or the everyday aesthetics is discussed by benefiting from the notion of "the designworld." The notion is based on empirical research concerning the role of design in the mundane aesthetic practices resulting as home's interior decoration and draws from the discussion of "the artworld" originally proposed by Arthur C. Danto (1964, 1998). It is suggested that similarly as with the works of art, it is possible for a material or immaterial object to be (or not to be) a work of design because we have theories about design. Likewise, we have institutions, distribution practices, professions, conventions and discourses that congregate what is considered

design canon. However, design canons appear to be comparatively national. Furthermore, while most are aware of and acknowledge national design canon, in the domestic settings irrelevance of the canon or even hostility appear to dominate our everyday aesthetic practices. As a consequence, home owner may for example appreciate modernist aesthetics but at the same time does not want home resemble canonical (i.e. modernist) representations in the interior magazines.

The paper discusses "the designworlds" of the households in our research data with a focus on the aesthetic ethno methods (Heritage 1984) that interviewees apparently have in their command when decorating home with designed items. More closely it is looked to the aesthetic acrobatics one needs to master in order to have "anti-canonical" domestic aesthetics by using canonical mass produced design.

The data has been collected in order to study the role of design properties in the domestication of mass produced consumer goods and consists of about thousand product-biographies (Kopytoff 1986) that were collected by interviewing and photographing 17 households in the Helsinki metropolitan area in 2004-2007.

Dehlia Hannah: *Naturalized Disaster: Seeking Sublimity in Everyday Life and at the Extremes* (Columbia University, New York, USA)

This paper examines the aesthetics and politics of natural disaster through the concept of the sublime. The sublime was characterized in the 18th century as the mix of fear and pleasure of perceiving the overwhelming power of nature from a position of relative safety, a morally edifying feeling that elevates the perceiver over the base concerns of everyday life. In the last century, increasing capacities for prediction and control over nature have expanded and multiplied positions of safety with respect to dangerous natural phenomena, yet too much power over nature renders the sublime elusive. Mass mediated images of disasters, extreme weather, and a rapidly warming global environment can be enjoyed everyday from the safety of the couch, and heavily insured adventure tourism safely conducts a privileged few to nature's awesome extremes. Yet, I argue, for those who can no longer be caught off guard by nature the intensity of the sublime can only be derived vicariously from the very real fear and suffering of Others, particularly victims of distant natural disasters. Human relations to nature are socially stratified with respect to danger as well as pleasure. The benefits of technoscientific prediction, control and response to natural phenomena are unevenly distributed internationally as well as within communities in wealthy nations. As recent events including hurricane Katrina in the United States and the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean have made clear, the impact of natural phenomena on human life and interests is radically mediated by the socioeconomic and political contexts in which they occur. I examine how naturalization functions as a form of aestheticization, by restoring a form of pleasure lost to those on the receiving end of technological progress, and as a form of depoliticization which renders disaster blameless and normalizes the stratification of access to safety along class, racial, and national lines. This paper asks, how can we resist the tendency to allow natural disaster to function as an ideological antidote to social catastrophe?

Teija Luukkanen-Hirvikoski: *Art in the Business World. Art at Workplaces* (University of Jyväskylä)

Every day tens of thousands of employees face the company's art whether they are interested in art or indifferent to it. Art has various functions in companies e.g. decoration and shaping the corporate image. Making workplace comfortable or inspiring environment is one reason to collect art. Corporate art collections are linked up with the concepts of taste, canon, corporate image or identity and corporate social responsibility. The reasons for supporting arts are instrumental and commercial.

Taste and ideas of “good art” are based on the management’s ideas of art. Members of management purchase art. Most of them are personally interested in arts but their views about good art are usually restricted to the traditional techniques of art making such as oil painting and bronze.

Corporate art is private collecting. Many companies still want to show their collections to the public. There are several ways to use corporate collections. Companies can have art exhibitions or they can loan single artworks to the museums. Some have art education programmes for interest groups but programmes could be more versatile. One tool for communicating is almost totally missing in Finland. Companies don’t tell about their art collections in Internet.

Kirsi Mäkinen: *Routes, rhythms and practices – a study of forest suburbs through motion* (University of Helsinki)

The research examines the uses and meanings of urban forests and forest suburbs through motion and embodied and spatial knowledge. Whereas the uses of green space are usually examined through frequencies of visits, user types and types of uses, this study presents that a ‘walk or run through a forest’ contain deeper meanings. An analysed walking interview material presents route selections, different types of rhythms and meanings that are connected to urban forests and forest suburb landscapes. The walking as a research method raises various notions of the environmental qualities, such as walkability, that are usable information for planners, managers and other decision-makers. In addition, the research examines the spatial and material meanings of the urban forests and suburban landscapes through map analyses and narratives. These meanings are connected to the dwelling, the perceived possibilities of everyday environment and the quality of life.

Key Words: Embodiment, Practice, Spatiality, Urban forest, Walking interview

Kaj Nyman: *Architecture could be an art of everyday life* (emeritusprof, University of Oulu)

We are rarely aware of our everyday environment – the body’s actions are routine, our consciousness concentrating on things which are not everyday. The environment is experienced all the time, though, but unconsciously, in the body. Like other animals, humans have a peculiar relation to their environment, i.e. an ecology typical of the species; the human being feels at home only when the environment conforms with the ecology.

Unlike other animals human builds their own ecology; this is called architecture. It is extremely important for the survival of human species that the architecture be conducive to being at home in the environment. However, such claims are seldom raised. Our culture’s understanding of architecture is markedly visual; architecture is one of the visual arts. The everyday use of the environment is regarded as of marginal significance. As makers of the art of architecture the architects disregard the social importance of their art.

But our humanoid forefathers hundreds of thousands years ago already built ecologies of their own. Proportionately, architecture as a visual art is young, only 5000 years. Under the surface of the old ground stream is still flowing along: architecture as *Gebrauchskunst*. All good architecture is, in addition to being visual art, also *Gebrauchskunst*.

If it is true that there is a peculiar human environment relation then it is also true that there is a specific human way of behaving in relation to this environment. In order to accomplish the necessary feeling at home, the architecture should provide the appropriate physical frame for such behaviour. When confronting an architecture of this kind the user would recognize the ecology demanded by her body. The use of such architecture would promote good environmental habits.

Presumably the emotions corresponding to the environmental relation are sufficiently universal to render possible artistic expression. If this is true, it should be acknowledged that the proper art of architecture be *Gebrauchskunst*: the art of planning the human environment on basis of the species specific environmental behaviour. The aesthetics of this architecture would be grounded

on contemporary environmental emotions permitting differences of opinion on a wide range – e.g. about what should be regarded as beautiful. The aesthetics would embrace all senses; kinaesthesia would be central.

For the architecture, there is nothing restraining her from choosing such an attitude to her professional work that the architecture be realized as an art of everyday life. The architect is obliged to act in the context of money, technology and politics, but she is free to choose the users' feeling at home as her determining context.

Matthew Pelowski & Fuminori Akiba: *10 minutes to Enlightenment: or Please Move so that I can have an Aesthetic Experience* (Nagoya University, Japan)

John Dewey introduced a version of “aesthetic experience” that, when combined with the psychology of our perception of the world, offers exciting possibilities for pragmatic approaches to design of our interaction with the environment. In this paper, making use of concepts from cognitive psychology and evidence from empirical testing, we show that Dewey’s perceptual movement from “recognition” to “perception” corresponds to a very real perceptual shift that can occur in a viewer. This perceptual change results in a crescendo of emotions, from anxiety and self-awareness to happiness and epiphany; and, if successful, causes a viewer to re-evaluate their own expectations for perception and come to a deeper understanding of both the object they are perceiving and also of themselves. In turn, this self-change, culminating in a “new organization of feeling, attention, or intentions,” offers a useful design objective for applying aesthetics.

However, based on evidence from empirical testing in two art-environments by an artist notable for producing this aesthetic outcome, the Mark Rothko chapel in Texas and the Rothko Room in Kawamura, Japan, we show that this outcome requires that 1.) a viewer initially *not* understand what they are perceiving, and 2.) they be allowed to work through this initial confusion for at least 10 minutes. When we compare the rooms we see that, although both share similar design, art and viewers, people visit one specifically to cry, feel good, think and to change, and they visit the other for 91 seconds. The difference hinges on elements of the environment typically overlooked in design—the location of the security guard, the bench, and the gaze of other viewers. By discussing the psychology and sociology of aesthetic experience we might better understand the possibilities that environments hold for changing viewers—or would if people didn’t get in the way.

Anna Poranen: *Keep It True! Aesthetics of Metal Music in Finland* (University of Helsinki)

My main issue is, have the aesthetics of metal become watered down or, on the contrary, been spiced up by camp and therefore become a joy for us all. What I am especially interested in, is the metal music culture signs in art, fashion and media today. Like many other subcultures, metal fashion has experienced the rise of the retro trends. As a result of this development, the metal culture itself has also changed. I assume that the use of kitsch and camp styles in metal has played its part in the commercialization of metal aesthetics in the media.

It is not long ago when people still had an image of metal music as a doubtful marginal music genre that was, in the public eye, connected to satanism and youth suicides. Today, when metal music is like bread and butter for the Finns, this is hard to believe. With Lordi winning the Eurovision Song Contest, child audiences having their own metal bands even Matti Vanhanen, the prime minister of Finland, is "throwing the horns". Metal has become a part of the everyday media in Finland and the entertainment industry has harnessed metal music fashion and metal music art for its commercial use. One factor in this popularization is the middle aged audience that grew up listening to metal and is now hungry for metal nostalgia.

I base my argument on practical experiences attained by following the changes of metal culture. By this, I mean going to metal gigs and festivals and following websites of metal bands and

analyzing the marketing of metal bands and festivals. My analysis of the metal aesthetics questions the fact that true metal still exists and discusses whether it is practical to speak about metal when we speak about pop metal bands like Lordi.

Kalle Puolakka: *Everyday Aesthetics, Aesthetic Experience, and Reconstructive Pragmatism* (University of Helsinki)

It is rather common to draw a connection between everyday aesthetics and pragmatist aesthetics. This is not a surprise, for not only has John Dewey's *Art as Experience* served as an important inspiration for many who have considered aesthetic phenomena arising from everyday life, but the two fields also share the goal of readdressing the nature of aesthetic theorizing. Both of these strands are united in Richard Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics. On the one hand it draws on Dewey's work on aesthetic experience, and on the other it outlines a more reconstructive role for aesthetics in which it seeks to actively participate in improving our culture in such a way that people could live aesthetically fuller lives.

Despite Dewey's ideas admittedly contain aspects that make them relevant for everyday aesthetics, the connection between pragmatism and everyday aesthetics isn't by all means uncomplicated. That is, to see pragmatism as laying a foundation for a focus on everyday phenomena, i.e., as a kind of philosophy of the everyday, runs risk of overlooking the radical aspects of this philosophical tradition. These factors emerge especially in Richard Rorty's views and they concern no less significant issues than truth, knowledge, and justification. In this presentation, Shusterman's reconstructive view on aesthetics is assessed in relation to Rorty's holistic concept of justification. Basically, the question at issue is how the concept of aesthetic experience is able to serve the function Shusterman wants it to, that is, in what way the concept of aesthetic experience is able to justify the need for certain cultural changes that the reconstructive pragmatist insists on. While pragmatist aestheticians have been keen on emphasizing the boundless and undefined nature of aesthetic experience, I shall argue, that Rorty's views on justification imply that the opposite goal should, in fact, receive more attention.

Pauliina Rautio: *Beauty in the Everyday as Place Based Self-Education? The case of a year long correspondence in a small northern village* (University of Oulu)

In the field of anthropology of education a claim has been made that humans or humanity can no longer be researched as universal phenomena but as actual persons in concrete social, cultural and historical contexts. In aesthetics the definition of beauty by referring to particular individuals and their life context has likewise started to flourish.

In my doctoral research (Education) I am researching the everyday life of four women living in a very small northern village. The theme through which the everyday is approached and reflected is in this research beauty. Wishing to surpass the 'frozen in time' slices of life that interviews yield as data, I set up my data collection as a year long process of correspondence. By asking the participants to write I have not only wished to grasp a process in time but also to invite reflection and leave space for the consideration of one's everyday life. The about 50 letters together with supplementing individual and group interviews form the data of my research.

By introducing a thematic frame in the consideration of one's everyday life, I wish to invite focused and reflected accounts of the everyday instead of random diary-like notes and thoughts. And by this introduced theme being beauty, I wish to investigate the everyday particularly in the light of one's engagement with one's surroundings. Beauty, as a concept and a word of everyday speech, is also open enough to include subjective definitions and thus portray particular and individual accounts of the everyday. By framing this research as I've described, I am ultimately

investigating the possibility of beauty (or the reflection of it) in the everyday to function as what I've started to call place based self-education.

The correspondence has ended in January 2008. I am proposing a paper for the summer school where I will take a look at the completed data, evaluate the research process so far – especially the theoretical setup – and engage in initial analysis of the data.

Kimmo Sarje: *The Aesthetic Values of Gustaf Strengell's Helsinki* (University of Helsinki)

Gustaf Strengell (1878–1937) was one of the leading critics of architecture and urban environment of his generation in Finland – well known also in Scandinavia. He was a productive journalist and writer following intensively the development and construction of Helsinki. In his early years in the beginning of 20th century he was most interested in new buildings, but after the First World War he focused on the questions of the urban milieu as wholeness. His book *Staden som konstverk* (1922) propagated the ideal of a unified city image.

In the 1930s Strengell wrote several articles about Helsinki, about Aleksanterinkatu as a business street, about Heikinkatu (contemporary Mannerheimintie) street as a traffic channel, about Esplanadin and Kaisaniemen puistot parks, about Senaatintori square and the University, and about role of the sea and coasts surrounding Helsinki. In my paper I try to introduce Strengell's critical visions and dreams of the capital and its urban way of life concentrating in his texts of the 1930s.

Chris Stevens: *Everyday Aesthetics: Problems, Principles, and Prospects* (University of Helsinki)

A central theoretical problem for the discipline of everyday aesthetics is the resolution of a tension, between the component parts making up the very concept 'aesthetics of the everyday', which threatens the concept with a stultifying incoherence: progressive enlargement of the logical extension of the concept 'aesthetic'—from the smaller set of objects traditionally thought to merit aesthetic attention to those objects, environments, and experiences with which aesthetics of the everyday is concerned—renders the concept's intension increasingly less informative, so that to the extent an aesthetics of the everyday is an aesthetics *of the everyday*, it's to that extent seemingly less justifiable as an *aesthetics* of the everyday. This tension can be captured also in the form of a question and response: "Is everyday experience of sufficiently appreciable aesthetic merit to warrant the pairing of the two terms *aesthetic* and *everyday*? To answer 'yes' will in the minds of many appear to commit one to a dangerously thin construal of the meaningfulness of the term *aesthetic*.

This tension or threat of incoherence is the unrecognized root of purportedly discrete, prevalent criticisms of the everyday aesthetics enterprise and lies also at the root of potential problems looming at the heart of the enterprise which everyday aestheticians themselves worry about. But response to these criticisms and potential problems has been less than satisfying. After discussion of such a problem as it appears in Tom Leddy's work, and some of the most lucid of these criticisms and their responses which appear as part of an exchange between Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant, I first show that all are manifestations of the same tension. Second, by suggesting the adoption of a very different conception of the aesthetic than everyday aestheticians have typically favoured, together with the introduction of a strong normative principle into everyday aesthetics, I build on insights by Arto Haapala and Kendall Walton to offer a sketch of a new kind of model for the aesthetic appreciation of the everyday which allows for a novel, more satisfying response to the problem of potential incoherence, and with it, I hope, renewed prospects for everyday aesthetics.

Matti Tainio *The Aesthetics of Long Distance Running – Runners Point of View* (University of Art and Design)

The subject of my paper is the aesthetics of long distance running, observed from a runner's point of view. If races and organized running events are the highlights of runner's life, then the regular year-round training is the everyday for runners. Its aesthetics will be in central focus of my paper.

I will map several aspects of the everyday aesthetics of running. The aspects of training are following: running alone, short and long runs, basic endurance training and training for speed. There aspects of the runner and environment like: the runner's experience of environment, the (inner) experience of running and seasons and running – differences of running during summer, autumn, winter and spring. Special aspect of long distance running is the aesthetics of numbers. With new technology – heart rate monitors, GPS devises and internet forums – you can record your training very accurately and share it with your co-runners in the internet. Distances you run, your speed, even your heart rate can be judged aesthetically.

Runner's body, shoes and running gear are also subjects of aesthetic evaluation, which I'll deal in my paper.

The paper will be based on my own experiences as a runner as well as the experiences other runners share in Juoksufoorumi.fi – the biggest internet discussion forum for runners in Finland (www.seponkotisivut.com/vb/index.php).

Sirpa Tani: *Re-interpreting Urban Public Space – the Case of Parkour* (University of Helsinki)

Parkour is a physical discipline created in the late 1980s in the suburbs around Paris. Key figures in its development were David Belle and Sebastien Foucan. Its aim is to move as efficiently, fast and smoothly as possible from one place to another by jumping, vaulting and climbing and by using obstacles as a means to reach further. Although parkour can be practised in all kinds of environments, it is usually connected with urban spaces.

From the viewpoint of geography, parkour raises some interesting issues. First, it can be seen as a new way to 'read' everyday urban environments. It attaches positive meanings to spaces that have usually been seen as banal, boring or even ugly. Practitioners of parkour (traceurs) interpret their environment by paying special attention to physical structures of space. Buildings, fences, rails and walls offer challenges for them. Modern urban areas, especially suburban neighbourhoods with concrete buildings, rundown industrial areas and business districts, which can usually be seen as non-attractive environments, are valued as the most interesting areas for parkour. Secondly, traceurs' encounters with other people, for example with passers-by, security guards and the police make the unwritten rules of how to use public space visible. My analysis of this aspect of parkour will be guided by the concepts of *tight spaces* and *loose spaces*. In this presentation, the everyday aesthetics of banal landscapes, as well as the possible conflicts in traceurs' ways to use public space, will be discussed.

Julie Van Camp: *Yes, but is it vandalism? Graffiti, conceptual criminals, artists, and free speech* (California State University, Long Beach, USA)

A recurring debate among art lovers, aestheticians, critics, and the general public occurs when graffiti, an act that is putatively vandalism, is claimed by some to be art and therefore exempt from criminal laws because of the protection of free speech. I consider whether these episodes are really vandalism, and, if they constitute a crime, whether they could be considered a justifiable or excused crime *because of the claim that they somehow constitute art*. Although other vandalism in art is not uncommon (e.g., damage to priceless works of art in museums), I focus specifically on graffiti, a ubiquitous presence in our everyday life.

First, I consider what constitutes "graffiti." Is it merely a style of visual art construction? Or does it necessarily involve violation of someone else's property or rights in the art construction to

constitute graffiti? Is part of the concept or meaning of graffiti the necessary destruction or desecration of someone else's property? Second, I consider specific examples of contested graffiti, focussing especially on the recently liberated countries of the former Soviet bloc, now experiencing an unwelcome explosion of graffiti. I draw on my experiences as a Fulbright Scholar teaching in central Europe in the recent past and as a U.S. scholar familiar with graffiti in the U.S. Third, I make recommendations concerning more fruitful ways to consider issues presented by graffiti. Simply because something is art does not *necessarily* mean it should be granted the usual protections of free speech, especially when it involves the destruction of property belonging to someone else. I will suggest that we focus on the alleged crime of vandalism and ask whether the status of the work as "art" supports a *justification* or an *excuse* from criminal prosecution or public condemnation that we would not afford other acts of vandalism.

Mette Volf: *Quality of Aesthetic in design process* (Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark)

By equating design with problem solving - rhetorical - and through longer time had been focusing on issues such as user survey, process management and communication, it seems like the design profession in many settings had tried to push design out of the superficial understanding, which indicate superfluity and additional consumption.

But unfortunately at the same time – unintended – it seems like the design profession in that way had been contributory in pushing design out of the artistically sphere and had come to devaluate aesthetic as a fundamental condition in the design process.

My paper will focus on the connexion between aesthetic and designers social practice from a sociological angle and analyze how designers make choices in the process - especially choices that has influence on aesthetics issues – and how designers interact in the process including designer's unexpressed norms and commonsense concerning aesthetic.

Annu Wilenius: *Green Moonscapes– Monotonous Landscaping as Contemporary Urban Value in Reykjavík* (University of Art and Design, Pori)

In recent years the green planning policies in the city of Reykjavík have been changing to match both the demands of sustainable development agreements and criticism of alienating landscaping. As a result vegetation not deemed Icelandic enough has been plunged out of park grounds, green lawns turned into rocky meadows, recreation grounds adorned with fake geysers and roadside lamps embedded in lava stones, and above all the grass lawns so typical for Reykjavík claimed to be very high-maintenance and meaningless.

Although nature preservationist solutions in green planning are necessary and important, I argue that values specific to urban nature should be taken into consideration as well. Thus I would like to suggest that the monotonous grass lawns are not simply a failure that should be redeemed now that someone has time to be concerned with the issue. This may well be how they originally came into being, but since then they have become an essential part of how Reykjavikians have experienced their urban environments and even though they may lack in biological value, they most certainly have urban cultural value.

My presentation reflects on these questions in green planning and urban nature from the point of view of phenomenological conceptions of place/placelessness and the discussions on grades of naturalness/originality recently discussed in environmental aesthetics. An essential part of the presentation will be photographs of contemporary parks in Reykjavík.