



# atwork

Aesthetic diary as a reflection tool in socially engaged arts

-> Aesthetics & aesthetic experience

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# Aesthetics & aesthetic experience

- The term aesthetics is used in many different ways and appears in various contexts with different meanings. The connotation of 'beauty' is old-fashioned in our view.
- Etymologically, the word derives from ancient Greek αἴσθησις (aísthēsis) meaning 'perception, sensation'.



# Aesthetics & aesthetic experience

Gottlieb Baumgarten rooted the term in 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, where aesthetics developed into an autonomous scientific field with a strong focus on arts as the study of the 'beautiful'.

# Aesthetics & aesthetic experience

In the second half of the 20th century, with the dissolution of the boundaries of what art is and the increasing aestheticisation of everyday life, references to sensual perception and experience in general become more important; thus, the significance of aesthetics gets relevant beyond arts in other fields and everyday life.

(Cf. Liessmann, p. 17)





# Aesthetics & aesthetic experience

Therefore, the term aesthetic experience does not refer to arts alone, but also encompasses everyday life experiences.

Konrad Paul Liessmann on aesthetic experience:

*„Aesthetic experience, like all experience, can only be the result of a complex process involving sensory and emotional impressions, memory, satisfied or disappointed expectations, reflections, judgements and particles of knowledge capable of causing permanent change of state in a person.“* (Liessman, p. 17).

Sources:

Konrad Paul Liessmann: Ästhetische Empfindungen. Eine Einführung. 2008.

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ästhetik>



# Aesthetic experience

Ursula Brandstätter:

Aesthetic experiences are "rooted in the sensuality of perception; however, they urge reflective processing tied to corporeality. In aesthetic experiences, we experience ourselves and the world simultaneously and are stimulated to engage in diverse interactions: of sensuality and reflection, emotionality and reason, the conscious and the unconscious, materiality and the character of signs, the sayable and the unsayable, the definite and the indefinite. Perhaps the fundamental openness that constitutes these interactions is exemplary for human experience and cognition in general.

Source: Ursula Brandstätter: Ästhetische Erfahrung. 2012/13. URL: <https://www.kubi-online.de/artikel/aesthetische-erfahrung>



## Attributes of aesthetic experience

- **Synaesthetic:** Aesthetic experience is initiated by the sensuality of perception and is body-related
- **Autotelic und self-referential:** Aesthetic experience is independent of external tasks, functions or goals. Its meaning and purpose is rooted in the experience itself.



## Attributes of aesthetic experience

- **Relation to the world and to oneself:** Aesthetic experience combines self-experience and external realities. It emerges as an experience with oneself or in an encounter with 'others'.





## Attributes of aesthetic experience

- **Intrinsic temporality and intrinsic spatiality rest on the above mentioned attributes:** Aesthetic experience is 'instantaneous' and 'present'. It is detached from time as well as space, in which imagination plays a major role (for example, when listening to music).

# Attributes of aesthetic experience

- **Aesthetic experience as an experience of difference and irritation:** traditional patterns of perception and thought are disrupted, habits questioned.

Andrea Sabisch's term 'fracture lines and points of experience' expresses the limits of our understanding (Sabisch, p. 9) resulting in the intrinsic temporality and spatiality described above: Time and space are 'newly' constituted.





## Attributes of aesthetic experience

- **Aesthetic experience is indeterminable and interminable.** It takes place as an interminable interplay between unique individual perceptions and generalising concepts.



## Attributes of aesthetic experience

- **Starting from the question:** Can aesthetic experience lead to cognition?, Brandstätter states that aesthetic cognition is situated between the poles of cognition and art.
- > Artistic research strives for knowledge by connecting art and science.



# Attributes of aesthetic experience

- **Fact and fiction:** *"Aesthetic experiences make us realise that the realities we live in are in a sense only 'framed pictures' that can be replaced at any time by other 'pictures' with other 'frames'."*

Source: Ursula Brandstätter: Ästhetische Erfahrung. 2012/13.

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