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## Everyday Aesthetics and Everyday Behavior

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## Everyday Aesthetics and Everyday Behavior

Ossi Naukkarinen

### Abstract

This article addresses everyday aesthetics from the point of view of everyday behavior. I suggest that the ordinary daily interaction of people with each other is one of the most important areas of everyday aesthetics. I present an interpretation of the concepts of both the everyday and aesthetics, and argue that in the context of everyday social relationships, it is wise to understand everyday aesthetics in a way that emphasizes the very everydayness of aesthetics, not its opposite, namely non-everyday or extraordinary aesthetics. This does not mean that extraordinary aesthetics would not have its place in other contexts, but it is not normally the goal in everyday behavior.

### Key Words

aesthetics; behavior; everyday; tact; taste

### 1. Introduction: aesthetics of behavior

For most of us, the first context in which we encounter and learn aesthetic values, practices, and requirements is our normal, daily life. From a very early age, we are repeatedly guided to talk, sit, eat, dress, play, and, in general, behave nicely and beautifully, and, as we grow older, these requirements become more complicated, varied, and nuanced. Such demands, of course, have ethical and many other implications but, at the same time, they are aesthetic guidelines for our social life. They tell us what kind of behavior is expected and how it looks, sounds, and feels. Traditionally, the code of conduct has been strongly gendered and class-related; male and female rules have been different and, on many occasions, they still are, and also different socio-economic groups have acted in their own ways. Little by little, as we grow into our own culture, we tend to internalize such practices so deeply that acting against them feels genuinely embarrassing. There are rebels who question the traditional norms but such deliberate questioning shows that the mutinous also know the rules quite well. Rebels would like to have different rules but such alternative ways of living would probably have aesthetic norms of their own. Cultures with no aesthetic norms for behavior most likely do not exist, be they modified through gender differences, socio-economic structures, or in some other way. It is no wonder that since Erasmus of Rotterdam's *De civilitate morum puerilium libellus* (1530), countless books of good manners have been published and nowadays their followers can easily be found on the internet.

Unlike the aesthetics of institutional high culture art and nature, both of which have been the focus of academic philosophical aesthetics for a long time, the aesthetics of everyday behavior is something that necessarily involves all of us. It cannot be avoided, it covers all walks of life, and we all have our opinions about it. It is much more widely spread than the aesthetics of the fine arts. Second, it has a strong impact on the quality of our quotidian life. Simply put, aesthetically good manners make living with others smoother while rude behavior creates conflicts and may feel disturbing and depressing, even if what is considered good and bad depends on one's culture. I will return to this issue in more detail soon. Moreover, as aesthetically colored ways of behavior guide our practical choices and deeds, they even affect our physical environment, as they direct our consumption of goods and services.

In the following, my intention is to address the concept of everyday aesthetics and to analyze a more specific case to illuminate this general issue by focusing on instantiations of everyday aesthetics in social relationships in everyday behavior. First, I will briefly present the main strands of the contemporary everyday aesthetics debate. Then, I will clarify what makes certain social relations everyday-like and what makes some of them aesthetic. Third, I will suggest how these two can be combined into everyday aesthetics, and how the result can be seen in everyday behavior.<sup>[1]</sup>

### 2. Expanding and restricting the scope of aesthetics

In recent years, a growing interest in everyday aesthetics has evolved in philosophical aesthetics.<sup>[2]</sup> However, even if the tendency has recently become more apparent, it is nothing entirely new. Thomas Leddy addresses the history of the approach from Plato via Immanuel Kant and David Hume to Walter Benjamin and John Dewey, and his list could easily be complemented with somewhat lesser-known names that he does not mention, such as Jean-Marie Guyau and Yrjö Hirn.<sup>[3],[4]</sup> A comprehensive history of everyday aesthetics is yet to be written, and it will be interesting to see what is revealed when someone writes it. However, despite the present lively interest in the theme and the long history of discussion preceding the contemporary debate, or because of

that, it is far from self-evident what its core concepts are. There is no consensus about what 'everyday' and 'aesthetics' mean and how they are related to each other. However, there are ways of analyzing the debate that provide useful stepping stones in clarifying the core issues.

Leddy, who is one of the most active contemporary authors writing on this theme, has described the main strands of the debate by describing its expansionist and restrictive tendencies.<sup>[5]</sup> Leddy defines himself as an expansionist. This means that he wants to expand or broaden the field of academic aesthetics outside its traditional areas of high-culture art and nature. According to him, we should pay more attention to phenomena such as everyday clothes, motoring, cooking, sports, shopping, cleaning one's house, and so on. Nowadays, I would also strongly emphasize the role of digital everyday environments created by cellphones, computers, tablets, and other devices. At the same time, however, he emphasizes that these areas are not completely detached from each other but, from the aesthetic point of view, similar things are important in all of them, in the fine arts and elsewhere. For him, the role of extraordinary or heightened experiences, and also the events and objects that make them possible, is particularly important, even though some experiences are more clearly extraordinary than others. There are differences in the degree of extraordinariness. Here, he builds on the tradition of John Dewey's aesthetics. He suggests that some moments of driving or cooking can be as aesthetically rewarding and extraordinary as those of looking at or listening to pieces of fine art, and, in this respect, I see no reason to disagree. However, unlike Dewey, Leddy does not think that an interesting, rewarding, or consummatory, to use Dewey's term, experience is necessarily art. For Leddy, art is art and everyday phenomena are not, although they are related.

In fact, those scholars whom Leddy calls restrictivists, for example, Arto Haapala, Kevin Melchionne, Ossi Naukkarinen, and Yuriko Saito, are also actually expansionist, in the sense that they, too, expand the field of academic aesthetics outside the fine arts and nature and may also see some similarities in these areas. However, whereas Leddy emphasizes the importance of extraordinary, heightened, and exceptional experiences throughout the aesthetic sphere, these scholars pay more attention to ordinary, low-key, prosaic, mundane, or even trivial experiences, events, and objects. They claim that to be aesthetically important or valuable, things do not have to be exceptional or related to art, even if they can be. On the contrary, especially in everyday life, normal and typical aesthetic solutions can be the goal. As a matter of fact, it can be claimed that this approach expands the traditional attitude of academic aesthetics even more than Leddy's choice, which positions itself closer to the conventional art-based starting point.

Leddy's astute description clearly raises fundamental issues in the debate about everyday aesthetics but does not yet resolve them. We still need to know what should be considered everyday and what is aesthetic in it. What do ordinariness and extraordinariness have to do with them? And are they related to art or not? If these questions can be answered, it would help us better understand an area that, to my mind, is one of the most important ones in everyday aesthetics and aesthetics in general: our everyday social interaction with other people.

### **3. Everydayness of the everyday**

Sometimes, everyday aesthetics is simply approached by focusing on objects and events that are, undoubtedly, typical of everyday life for most of us. We then deal with the aesthetics of cars, shopping malls, sports, clothes, home decorations, cooking, Internet surfing, and other non-art areas. However, this does not, as such, take us very far because it does not explain why such things are everyday-like. It is quite clear that there are cars and clothes that are of the everyday kind but there are also ones that are quite the opposite, extraordinary, rare, and weird. Moreover, the one and the same object can belong to someone's everyday life and be very exceptional to someone else's, be that object art or non-art. This is also true of our ways of behaving, my object of interest in this article. A list of objects or events does not suffice when we want to understand the very everydayness of the everyday. What makes some things everyday-like? And what makes them everyday-like to someone but not to someone else?

In agreement with Ben Highmore, I suggest that everydayness is a relational concept.<sup>[6]</sup> Almost anything can be of the everyday kind to someone as long as they are familiar with the things around them, in a certain way. This happens gradually when we repeatedly and continuously face and use things and, typically, learn to master them. But it takes some time, and the environment in which we live and use things must be tolerable, at least, and preferably more than that. Namely, there can be environments and periods in which we may literally encounter certain things daily but still do not feel that we experience them in an everyday manner. This can happen, for example, in such extreme conditions as when one is in a prison and tortured but also in more normal contexts, such as when we move to a strange country. Then, everything is new and unfamiliar, which may cause

anxiety. We do not really know how to behave and take care of even small, simple chores. We do not know the language, and we do not feel that we can control the things we would like to. We have not mastered the local everyday aesthetics, and we have not been able to develop any kind of taste for it. In such periods, we do not necessarily have a genuine and strong experience of the everyday but sooner or later it will evolve.<sup>[7]</sup>

I tend to think, however, that we can have more or less everydayness in our lives, which means that everydayness and non-everydayness do not form a binary pair, so that only one of them can be actualized at a time, completely excluding the other. Perhaps even a violently treated prisoner might have some tiny traces of everydayness in his life, and, in a strange country, we very quickly develop comforting routines to ease our life.

The everyday is characterized by features such as normalcy, routine, repetition, habituality, and ordinariness. It is typically something well-known, safe, comfortable, and reliable but it can also be boring, gray, monotonous, and dull. Thus, it has both positive and negative, plus rather neutral, aspects to it, depending on how we see it. Such features define the very everydayness of the everyday, and it is a completely different matter what kinds of objects and events fill different individuals' everyday lives. The everyday of a baker or an athlete consists of different things from that of a philosopher or an artist. My everyday right now can be different from yours and even from my own everyday life in the past and in the future. In any case, it is nothing very exceptional, strange, weird, or extraordinary.

In aesthetics, it has been typical to focus on things that break the everyday or take us out of the ordinary, and that is what Leddy emphasizes, too. This is quite understandable. Most of us want to face something other than just the routine all the time, and art, especially, is often seen as a way of creating something new and exceptional, both for the artist and the audience. In such cases, art is frequently considered to be a positive fracture in the normal stream of life. Other positive fractures can be parties, tourist trips, or the moments of starting a new hobby. However, if we spend enough time with anything, even the most extraordinary art, we get used to it and turn it into something everyday-like. Interestingly, however, some artworks may first seem very banal and everyday-like and reveal their non-everyday character only after we get to know them a bit better, which can perhaps happen with works by artists such as On Kawara, Tino Sehgal, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. Of course, some works are trivial and banal from the beginning and remain so.

The everyday can also be broken down negatively. Getting into a car accident or becoming seriously ill may destroy most of our daily routines and make us understand how valuable they actually are, even if they sometimes feel boring. We may only learn to appreciate the normal when we do not have it. Indeed, we do not necessarily even notice that we have an everyday, in the positive sense, when we are just living through it, going through the motions of our daily routines.

The difference between the expansionist and the restrictivist lies here. Leddy and some others especially appreciate positive ruptures in the ordinary even if they also see stronger and weaker cases of them and, at the same time, take them as a part of our everyday lives. Moreover, such breaks are considered to be, to some extent, art-related even if they are not really art. If we agree, everyday aesthetics understandably focuses on such positive breaks. Restrictivists, in turn, tend to think that such fractures are not really a part of everyday life but breaks from it, something that takes us out of the ordinary. Without denying the importance of such breaks, they want to emphasize that those experiences and objects that are safe, normal, usual, habitual, and sometimes almost unnoticed, remaining within the sphere of ordinariness, can also be valuable and appreciated, aesthetically and otherwise.

In principle, it does not matter whether such everyday experiences and objects are art(-related) or not because art can also be normal and ordinary to many. However, scholars such as Yuriko Saito want to emphasize the non-art-related nature of everyday aesthetics. I believe that both approaches are needed and have their merits. However, if we focus on everyday behavior and its aesthetics, the option that Leddy calls restrictivist seems to be more apt. Why is this?

#### **4. Behaving as nicely as everyone else**

When we are taught to behave nicely as children, we are taught to behave normally, in the way people are expected to behave in our culture, in the way everybody else does. Some children and teenagers show that they understand very well what this means by sometimes purposefully acting exactly in the way they know they should not. Then, paradoxically, they actually behave as people of that age and type quite normally do. Unlike the artistic and aesthetic values of (modern) art, the aesthetic value of everyday conduct is not based on creativity,

experimental attitude, or exceptions; quite the contrary. This is not only true of children's behavior but also characterizes most of our lives at all ages. It seems obvious that most of us value normalcy in this respect: quite ordinary behavior, normal clothes, furniture, hairstyles, cars, food, and common use of language. Few want to be very different from the rest, in any way. Of course, there are people who want exactly that but they are, by definition, a minority within any given group.

This does not mean that everyone universally behaves in exactly the same manner. There are cultural, gender, socio-economic, age-group-related, and other differences. However, in the course of our lives, we are normally able to adopt only relatively few cultural codes of behavior so that we deeply and genuinely feel and sense their values and nuances. Others seem, more or less, strange to us. We grow into valuing only some cultural formations and their aesthetics, some of which are related to the countries we live in and some to our professions and hobbies. Some of us might be tolerant and open-minded regarding other cultures but it is plain to see that there are equally many who openly hate and feel contempt for almost everything that is different from their own everyday life. All this indicates that proper, nice, or beautiful behavior is, at least partly, dependent on culture and context. What is normal and respected depends on whom you ask, which does not make it less important. Bikers and bankers both have their codes of conduct that are equally binding although very different from each other.

Perhaps the most pointed cases of disagreement are related to our national, and thus necessarily political, symbols, ceremonies, and rituals. It is quite normal to wholeheartedly admire the flag and national anthem of one's country; they may look and sound beautiful or sublime. In addition, one knows how to behave with them: where to look and put one's hands when they are present, whether to stand or sit, or to be quiet or sing. It feels disrespectful and ugly if someone violates the norms related to them. In fact, this does not only happen with national symbols but also often with those of religious groups, sports clubs, and the like. The aesthetic, ethical, and political intertwine because we strongly and genuinely feel what is both beautiful and good, both aesthetically and ethically desirable, and we know who has the power and right to act, speak, and define how to behave.

Aesthetic and other values are not identical for the reasons I address in Section 5 of this essay but they often go hand in hand. Culturally valued symbols bring together the people who belong to the same group and exclude all the rest, sometimes marking them off as enemies. These are extreme cases, and we do not face them all the time in our everyday lives, but the group-related codes of conduct and aesthetics connected to them are, in some form, ubiquitous in our lives.<sup>[8]</sup> Without claiming anything as strong and universal about the role of aesthetic values and activities as Friedrich Schiller did in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), one can say that culture-bound aesthetic preferences, mixed with ethical values, are very strong factors forming our social lives, as the examples involving national symbols highlight.

In recent years, it seems that politics, in general, and the aesthetic aspects of it, in particular, have become more confrontation-oriented and aggressive in many countries. We only have to think about the 2016 presidential campaign in the United States, the Brexit process in the United Kingdom, and the rise of various kinds of nationalist forces in France, Germany, and elsewhere. It appears that there are strongly oppositional aesthetic camps, and that the oppositional setting itself has become the norm. There is no consensus over what is valued or even tolerated aesthetically or otherwise, and, as the fight continues, it is becoming a part of the everyday. It is a different issue how many people actually appreciate this development but we are probably, and sadly, becoming used to it. It may well be that some form of aesthetic-political conflict, in any given society, is quite healthy, so that we can avoid totalitarianism and stagnation, as scholars such as Jacques Rancière have repeatedly emphasized, but I am not sure whether the recent phenomena belong in the category of such beneficial developments.<sup>[9]</sup> However, this issue would require an analysis of its own.

Christopher Dowling argues that one of the aspects that everyday aesthetics should adopt from the arts is the requirement of normativity. He does not believe that an anything goes attitude, with regard to our aesthetic judgments and valuations, is worth defending in either area, art or everyday life, but that there are rules and conventions that guide and restrict our thinking and actions. I would be slightly more liberal. I do not see why there could not be some space for idiosyncratic, trivial, and merely pleasurable aesthetic experiences in both the arts and everyday contexts, for feelings and thoughts that are not meant to be socially shared and critically examined. We may privately enjoy a lazy moment in a hammock, for example, and categorize that as an aesthetic experience. However, if we discuss the aesthetics of everyday behavior, I believe that because of its social nature it has rather strong normative elements that presently seem to be connected to such political conflicts that are addressed above, too.<sup>[10]</sup>

## 5. Characteristics of the aesthetic

We must still clarify what is particularly aesthetic in all this. Everyday aesthetics cannot be the same as the everyday *in toto*. This is a crucial point because authors, such as Arto Haapala, who have emphasized the very everydayness of the everyday aesthetics, as I now do, too, have been accused of losing sight of what is specifically aesthetic in everyday situations. [11],[12] For example, if we emphasize the almost automatic, normal, ordinary, and smooth use and familiarity of quotidian objects too strongly, can it mean that we do not actually notice them at all, aesthetically or otherwise, but just use them? And could the same also happen with everyday behavior? What and where, then, is their aesthetics?

I would see the aesthetic as a kind of lens through which one can evaluate or approach basically anything, even if it is not always the best or ethically right lens to use. In principle, art, nature, other people, mundane objects, and everything else can be approached aesthetically. As such, the aesthetic approach compares to ethical, political, and many other approaches that are equally widely used and not restricted to some areas of life only. But what kind of lens it is? What do you see when using it?

By using the metaphor of the lens, I do not suggest that one has to deliberately decide to approach things aesthetically or intentionally wear aesthetic glasses and distance oneself from other, perhaps more practical, concerns. I am not proposing a classical aesthetic attitude approach. [13] No, many times aesthetic evaluation probably just happens, when the things that we encounter and our own approach toward them ignite this point of view. When evaluating our own and other people's everyday behavior, this repeatedly *does* happen because we have learned this approach since we were very young. In fact, as human beings, it seems that we are even biologically hard-wired to aesthetically evaluate other people's faces, bodies, and actions, but that issue would require an account of its own. [14],[15] On the other hand, if we encounter, say, a victim of a car accident, aesthetic evaluation is not the dominant approach to take; we act to help the victim to survive. We usually do not have to think of what the appropriate response is, and the suitable approach comes rather naturally.

When, for whatever reason, we end up approaching someone's behavior aesthetically, there are typically certain aspects that are emphasized. I believe that they can be clarified by paying attention to four issues: a sense-based approach; the strong role of emotions; a special vocabulary; and a lack of explicit rules of evaluation. These can all be tied together with the concept of taste. I do not believe that we can offer a universally applicable definition of the aesthetic approach through them but they are still frequently mentioned as its indicators.

First, when assessing things aesthetically, we use our own senses and do not necessarily need any other tools. It is enough to see or hear or, on some occasions, smell, taste, or touch. Moreover, if we do not have this kind of sense-based experience of the object, event, or behavior in question, it is much more difficult and uncertain for us to form an aesthetic opinion of it. We might have a good verbal description, in a novel, or a picture of the action, and it is possible to make an estimation based on that, but that is still not quite the same as a personal, first-hand, direct observation that is the paradigmatic basis for aesthetic evaluation.

As soon as we observe someone's behavior, we can immediately perceive the aesthetic quality of it, and it is actually fairly hard not to. We know right away whether they are talking, walking, or eating nicely or not, and there is no need for meticulous inferring, deducing, or reasoning. Of course, when we observe a person more carefully, or receive more background information about them or the situation in question, our evaluation might change. We may learn that when eating, slurping and belching can be polite in some Asian countries even if it is rude in the West. However, we still use our senses on both occasions, and both evaluations might feel equally right when they emerge. But, in fact, just realizing that slurping is not violating normal social rules in a given culture is a rather elementary remark. Members of such culture can most probably perceive variations between aesthetically different ways of slurping. They know *how* to slurp; it is not just a matter of realizing *what* to do but *how* to act. In the West, we all use forks and knives but also see that one can use them in very different ways. These kinds of observations and evaluations are made all the time in our social interactions with other people, which means that our social life almost constantly has an aesthetic tone to it. At least, it is almost always one option for evaluating others.

Second, the aesthetic approach is normally emotionally charged. As has been repeated many times in this text, too, an aesthetic experience feels good, bad, awesome, great, boring . . . or something else. It is not a matter of coldly calculating or deducing. It is important to emphasize that, in everyday situations, we do not often aim for fantastically great

experiences, as we might with art, but for something that is normal and therefore typically nice, comfortable, cozy, pleasant, pretty, relaxing, and so on. These are characterizations that Leddy addresses, too. In any case, we feel or sense such things, which means that they cause genuine electro-chemical and thus physical and mental changes within our brains and bodies. That is not a side effect but the central focus of our aesthetic evaluations. We want to feel and sense such things, and, if we do, that is rewarding, or painful, as such. In the context of everyday behavior, it is not rare to say, for example, "that kind of behavior really feels so nice." This also means that even if everyday feelings are nothing very exceptional, there is no reason to think that we would not notice them and their aesthetic features at all but would somehow just semi-consciously float in them, live through them, like in some sort of slumber. I do not see why everyday coziness or niceness could not be both emotionally noticed and considered as aesthetic phenomena without making them something special.

Third, as the list of expressions in the previous paragraph indicates, aesthetic experiences or feelings and the behavior, objects, and events related to them tend to be described with the help of a certain kind of terminology that, in fact, finally reveals that we are really approaching the thing in question aesthetically and not in some other way. We need verbal tools to make the difference because our senses perceive and feel other aspects of things, too, not only aesthetic ones. The aesthetic approach has its own vocabulary or language that is at least somewhat different from that of ethics and politics, for example. We may use words such as 'beautiful,' 'ugly,' or 'pretty.' Of course, single words can be used in many ways, and they alone do not necessarily characterize anything in a specifically aesthetic manner. 'Nice' or 'cool' can refer to almost anything positive. So even certain, typically aesthetic verbal expressions are just possible indicators of an aesthetic approach, not unquestionable proofs of it. However, in everyday reality, we do not necessarily verbalize our behavior and aesthetic evaluations at all, which means that the possible aesthetic character of a given situation can remain implicit from other people's perspective.

Fourth, it is interesting that, in many aesthetic characterizations, there does not seem to be a need for explicit definitions or rules. We learn to use them through examples, and they have plenty of elasticity. Expressions like 'awesome' or 'swag' can refer to all kinds of things that are (aesthetically) positive in one way or another, and they do not have to have very much in common. There is a long tradition, started by Kant, in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), and updated by Frank Sibley, in his classical article, "Aesthetic Concepts" (1953), of debating whether all aesthetic concepts and evaluations are non-rule governed and whether they, in this sense, differ from some other concepts and approaches, such as scientific ones. However, it is enough for the purposes of this article if we can accept that, at least in the context of everyday behavior, such concepts seem to function fairly well without strict rules. We learn to use and modify them as we use them, or when we play language games, as Ludwig Wittgenstein put it in his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953).

Cas Wouters, who has analyzed books of manners in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands from the last hundred or so years, claims that, all in all, at least in these countries, when seen through such books, our behavior has become less and less rule-governed and free from explicit etiquette.<sup>[16]</sup> Interestingly, if we still had clear rules, we could simply follow them and thus behave ourselves. But now, if we do not have them to the same extent, non-rule-governed aesthetic descriptions and evaluations and non-rule-governed everyday behavior go very well together. In fact, evaluations and descriptions that are context-sensitive and elastic are exactly what are needed, if explicit rules, based on which we could infer and deduce, are not available. If so, the only thing that can guide us in our behavior is some kind of sense of tact, and we can also evaluate other people's behavior with the help of it.

Such social sensibility has always been seen as a pivotal aesthetic skill. Often, it has been called taste, and its centrality to one's social abilities was already noticed by David Hume, in his classical treatise on the issue, "Of the Standard of Taste" (1757). Taste, in this sense, is an ability to evaluate and appreciate beauty and other aesthetic features not only in the arts but everywhere in our social lives, everyday behavior included. It is also an ability to make the right choices; right, from the point of view of a certain social or cultural group, as Hume also very well realized. If one has good taste, one is able to have the right feelings and genuinely and immediately like the right things. Standards of taste are not universal but are still binding: "anything" does not "go" even if we do not have explicit rules. Such taste might be necessary for group coherence, but it is also quite clear that following and strengthening it can lead to very conservative, biased, and restrictive cultural formations that do not encourage change or creativity, even if these were needed. Tastes do change, and alterations in fashion boost such changes, but conservative normative tendencies still play a role in many social contexts.<sup>[17]</sup>

As tact-related everyday judgments of taste are sense-based evaluations, they easily guide us to pay attention to things that are present here and now and also supposedly appeal to similar people in our close vicinity and thus help us be socially accepted.<sup>[18]</sup> These are two, slightly different aspects of the same phenomenon. We tend to focus on things that are present to our senses in the social situations we are facing at any given moment, and we want to present ourselves as well-behaved and aesthetically competent in the situation we happen to be in. We want to do the right thing, here and now. Sometimes we can also rebel against the situation and norms, if we find that more appropriate. However, tact-based behavior is typically more or less conformist and situational and it persuades us to forget about other kinds of people elsewhere, even if nowadays 'here and now' and 'vicinity' do not need to refer to geographical factors; physically remote things can be brought together via the Internet, which creates another kind of sense of presence. In the present-day global world, where we should be able to think and act globally, focusing on what we have in our immediate proximity might be considered harmful narrow-mindedness but yet it often colors or even dominates our everyday aesthetics. It is not as easy to consider the aesthetic features of something that we cannot observe with our own senses because the things on site, in our everyday lives, tend to steal our attention.

Group-related tastes tend to define what is normal and usual in the group's everyday behavior, aesthetically or otherwise. Psychologists, such as Solomon Asch, in his well-known studies in the 1950s, and his followers after that, have shown that many of us are conformist and follow the majority's choices even if they are very different from our initial understanding. Group pressure can make us doubt even our own clearest and simplest sensory observations, if others disagree. This, I believe, suggests that while everyday aesthetics is often produced and evaluated within normal everyday behavior, in what we say, do, consume, and so on, in our social groups, the mainstream of it is something that is typically quite ordinary and not very accentuated, and that is, as such, safe and comfortable. To stand out as something special might be considered an uncomfortable aesthetic mistake. This attitude of conformity does not cover everyone's everyday aesthetics at all times but I would see it as a strong strand within everyday aesthetics. It is most probable that there are many variations within the frames of conformist everyday aesthetics, and the differences could be studied by empirical means, but I believe that as a general tendency, aesthetic conformity is a rather remarkable phenomenon in everyday settings. I want to emphasize, however, that in this article, I am just describing the phenomenon as I see it, and my remarks are not intended to be normative, that is, I am not saying that everyday aesthetics should or must be conformist.

## 6. Conclusion

Considering the remarks above, I would like to suggest that one of the most important and wide-reaching areas in which everyday aesthetics is expressed, developed, and evaluated is our normal, daily behavior. Sometimes it is related to various kinds of objects, such as cars, clothes, and tableware, but it is equally often realized in our ways of speaking, posturing, walking, and so on, in our behavior.

Everydayness, at large, is characterized by what is normal, usual, and habitual for the members of a given cultural group. Everyday aesthetics, too, is characterized by normalcy, ordinariness, and even triviality. We evaluate it with our senses, and many tend to aesthetically value behavior that does not show off but that can be rather low-key, even if we are also able to value breaks from such normalcy. Everydayness makes us feel comfortable and safe, which does not, however, mean that it could not be emotionally clearly noticed and, at the same time, considered aesthetic. Everyday aesthetic behavior can but does not have to be explicated by the use of aesthetic vocabulary. In addition, our everyday aesthetic notions that have to do with daily behavior are strongly social and are, as such, normative and often rather conformist although not explicitly rule-dependent. A good example of all these characteristics of everyday aesthetics is the wearing of a business suit. All this does not by any means undermine the value of other, more extraordinary and experimental versions of (everyday) aesthetics, but conformist ordinariness is one of the most important features of our everyday aesthetics.<sup>[19]</sup>

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## Endnotes

[1] Many issues addressed in this article could be studied by empirical means in social psychology, for example. In particular, studies done on the phenomena of conformity following Solomon Asch's classical analyses could be relevant and give more nuances to the general outlines presented here. However, my approach is philosophical, and space does not allow me to systematically elaborate the possible connections and differences between philosophy and other fields.

[2] The growing corpus includes publications such as Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson, eds., *The Aesthetics of Human Environments* (Peterborough, Plymouth and Sydney: Broadview Press, 2007); Carsten Friberg and Raine Vasquez, eds., *Experiencing the Everyday* (Copenhagen: NSU Press, 2017); Joseph H. Kupfer, *Experience as Art: Aesthetics in Everyday Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, London and Moorebank: Broadview Press, 2012); Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith, eds., *Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Giovanni Matteucci, "The Aesthetic as a Matter of Practices: Form of Life in Everydayness and Art," *Comprendre*, vol. 8/2 (2016), 9–28; Kevin Melchionne, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics," *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2013) at <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=663>; Ossi Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics?" *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2016) at <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=675>; Dan-Eugen Ratiu, "Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and the Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, vol. 4 (2012), 385–411 at <http://proceedings.eurosa.org/4/ratiu2012.pdf>; Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Roger Scruton, "In Search of the Aesthetic," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 3 (2007) 232–250, and Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 2nd edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), to mention just a few.

[3] Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary*, Chapter 1.

[4] Lev Kreft has recently referred to Guyau's relevance for understanding the aesthetics of sports in his article, "Hedonistic Morality and the Art of Life: Jean-Marie Guyau Revisited," *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 2 (2014), 137–146. Hirn, who is best known for his book, *The Origins of Art: A Psychological and Sociological Inquiry* (London: MacMillan, 1900), addresses themes that are relevant for everyday aesthetics, for example, in his *Vanhat postivaunut ja muutamia niiden matkustajia* ("An old stagecoach and some of its passengers," Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Otava, 1926). Most texts by Guyau and Hirn have not been translated into English, which is probably the reason why they have not been noticed by scholars working only in English.

[5] Thomas Leddy, "Experience of Awe: An Expansive Approach," *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2015) at <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=727>. See also Leddy 2012. Another way of dividing the sphere of the everyday or daily life aesthetics into two is presented by Christopher Dowling, who makes a distinction between weak and strong versions, where the former would promote the use of art-based approaches to non-art situations and the latter would not. Christopher Dowling, "The Aesthetics of Daily Life," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 3 (2010), 225–242. As he argues, in reality the borders between art and non-art are not quite clear, and there are good reasons to consider that at least some aspects of art-based aesthetics might be useful for understanding everyday aesthetics, too. As such, whether the approaches we use in everyday aesthetics come from the art world or somewhere else is not important. Moreover, it might be that everyday aesthetics has different kinds of areas, and art-based approaches can be useful in some of them and not in some others. I am more interested in pointing out that if we focus on aesthetics of everyday behavior, we should not overemphasize extraordinariness, art-based or otherwise.

[6] Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 2–9.

[7] It is possible to make a difference between daily and everyday aesthetics. One can live one's daily life without paying much attention to its everydayness or without realizing what everydayness means. In addition, as mentioned above, daily encounters do not, as such, guarantee experiences of everydayness. Space does not allow me to go deeper into this issue here, but it has been addressed by Ossi

Naukkarinen and Raine Vasquez, in "Creating and Experiencing the Everyday through Daily Life," in *Experiencing the Everyday*, eds. Carsten Friberg and Raine Vasquez, (Copenhagen: NSU Press, 2017), pp. 166–189.

[8] A useful analysis of the interrelated areas of ethics, aesthetics, and politics, covering other authors, such as Friedrich Schiller, Herbert Marcuse, and Jacques Rancière, among many others, is Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Exeter and Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2010). See also Crispin Sartwell, *Political Aesthetics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[9] E.g., Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010).

[10] Dowling, "The Aesthetics of Daily Life." Dowling's argument seems to suggest that the normative aspects of aesthetic judgments should be taken from the arts to everyday contexts. Historically, however, I assume that normativity has been a crucial element in everyday aesthetic behavior as long as human beings have produced and evaluated it, well before high arts in the modern sense of the word started to evolve. So, originally it has probably been taken from the everyday contexts to the arts, not the other way round.

[11] Arto Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place," in Andrew Light and Jonathan Smith, eds., *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 39–55.

[12] Jane Forsey, "The Promise, the Challenge, of Everyday Aesthetics," *Aisthesis* 1 (2014), 5–21.

[13] On different versions of it, see David E.W. Fenner, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1996).

[14] Later in life, we also learn to approach many other things aesthetically, such as art, even if art also has other important aspects to it, not only aesthetic ones.

[15] Space does not allow me to analyze here the recent lively discussion around this theme. I refer to one book that elegantly presents the most important aspects and actors of the debate, Anjan Chatterjee, *The Aesthetic Brain: How We Evolved to Desire Beauty and Enjoy Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[16] Cas Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2007).

[17] Some contemporary authors, such as Pierre Bourdieu and Theodore A. Gracyk, also connect the concept of taste with group-related consensus. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, orig. 1979); Theodor A. Gracyk, "Having Bad Taste," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 2 (1990), 117–131. It is evident that the idea of consensus has several problematic ethical and political aspects to it related to gender, socio-economic and other issues but it is not possible to address them in this article.

[18] Tact is, in fact, a rather complicated aesthetic and ethical concept that cannot be analyzed in more detail in this text. For discussion, see Ossi Naukkarinen, "Everyday Aesthetic Practices, Ethics and Tact," *Aisthesis* 1 (2014), 23–44.

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