



SUOMEN ESTETIIKAN SEURA
FINLANDS FÖRENING FÖR ESTETIK
FINNISH SOCIETY FOR AESTHETICS

Aesthetics Now

Fall webinar 2020 of the Finnish Society for Aesthetics

Zoom: <https://helsinki.zoom.us/j/64324128777>, Mon 7th Dec 2020

**“The objective of aesthetics is the perfection of sensuous cognition.” Alexander Baumgarten
1750.**

What is the role of philosophical Aesthetics in the contemporary world? Has Aesthetics made any progress since the times of Kant and Heidegger? Has the concept of Aesthetics different meaning for an artist than for a philosopher? Is there a need for something new to be created in the field of Aesthetics in the future?

Answering to the question ‘what is aesthetics?’ may not seem a simple task. Rather than finding a set definition, we would like to encourage an open discussion on contemporary conceptions of Aesthetics. The aim of the fall webinar 2020 is to map out scope, position, and value of Aesthetics as an academic discipline by looking into the present-day research and on-going artistic projects. The webinar brings together scholars from University of the Arts and University of Helsinki working on topics relevant for Aesthetics.

Schedule (Helsinki time, UTC+2)

12:15-12:30 Welcome words: [Sanna Lehtinen](#), president of the Finnish Society for Aesthetics

12:30-12:50 [Janne Vanhanen](#), University of Helsinki:

“Integrity of the Aesthetic? On Contemporary Conditions of Philosophical Aesthetics”

Is aesthetics coherent as a discipline – or has it ever been? My presentation is a review of some of the conditions affecting the concept of the aesthetic today. Taken as a historically evolving concept, speaking of “the aesthetic” as a category of certain type of experience or quality involves a number of presuppositions. These concern, for instance, the structure and limits of subjectivity, the nature of society and communication, and the vocation of art. I consider the contemporary conditions of the aesthetic in the light of recent philosophical and artistic developments, including affect theories, post-humanism and new materialism.

12:50-13:00 Questions & comments

13:00-13:20 **Esa Kirkkopelto**, Uniarts:

“Artistic Research and Aesthetics: The Incompatibles?”

In my intervention I will discuss the question of the relation between artistic research and aesthetics (art research, art philosophy). Does artistic research break with the boundaries of aesthetics, or does the former expand the boundaries of the latter? As I will indicate, the issue is not just a matter of taste. Each option has its consequences that we should be prepared to bear. As a case study on the topic, I will raise the conclusions of my recent study in the field of the performing arts (*Logomimesis. Tutkielma esintyvästä ruumiista*, Tutkijaliitto 2020).

13:20-13:30 Questions & comments

13:30-13:50 **Hanne Appelqvist**, University of Helsinki:

“Wittgenstein between Traditions: On the Scope and Relevance of Aesthetics in Philosophy”

The analytic and continental traditions of philosophy understand the nature, scope, and relevance of aesthetics in dramatically different ways. The analytic tradition is marked by an increasing compartmentalization into different subfields of philosophy that deal with their own specific topics and issues without aiming at a more comprehensive picture of the world. Aesthetics, too, is typically understood narrowly as the philosophy of art and beauty, and it is pushed into its own pocket of increasingly specialized debates that seldom interact with other fields of philosophy. By contrast, the continental tradition, understood inclusively as the family of philosophical approaches originating in and responding to Kant's transcendental idealism, has typically understood aesthetics in a maximally broad sense of investigation into sensibility in general. Hence, aesthetics has been seen as relevant for such core areas of philosophy as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. In my talk, I discuss Ludwig Wittgenstein's way of treating aesthetics and the arts and argue that, by contrast to the received view, his understanding of aesthetics belongs the German rather than the analytic tradition of thought.

13:50-14:00 Questions & comments

14:00-14:10 Break

14:10-14:30 **Päivi Järviö**, Uniarts Helsinki:

“Hearing the unhearable. Michel Henry's aesthetics of music performance.”

The presentation is based on Michel Henry's aesthetics of the invisible. The focus is on how art, music and specifically singing occur in the live body of a musician-singer and a listener. In illuminating the basic concepts of Henry's aesthetics I will draw on my own experience as a professional singer.

14:30-14:40 Questions & comments

14:40-15:00 **Raine Aiava**, University of Helsinki:

“Wonder at the end of the world: eliminating the subject in everyday aesthetics”

The concept of judgement has long demarked the limiting horizons of the discipline of aesthetics. Whether it's the pursuit of the “perfection of sensuous cognition”, or an oeuvre

on the faculties of judgement, within this discourse the subject has retained a privileged position over and against the objects upon which they apply their faculties. Even where Aesthetics has outlined the capacity for the things of the world to push back with affective force, the collected subject remains paramount, the very substance of Aesthetic investigation. Recently, however, post-humanism, nonrepresentational theory, and new materialism have re-energized calls for thinking from a more-than-human perspective – a call to challenge the situated subject at the heart of the discipline.

In this presentation, I will approach this problem from the perspective of everyday aesthetics. I will outline why I believe this issue to lie at the core of ongoing debates in within the subdiscipline, and propose a way forward through an analysis of wonder, using the event of enchantment as a foil. The aim here is to think an Aesthetics beyond the subject/object dichotomy, which is always substantiated in the apocryphal “as” and the hermeneutic “as” of discourse. Can there be an aesthetic experience without a subject to experience it?

15:00-15:10 Questions & comments

15:10-15:30 **Elina Saloranta**, Uniarts Helsinki:

“Something for the senses”

Dear People, I cannot discuss “aesthetics as an academic discipline” or “the role of philosophical aesthetics in the contemporary world”. I am an artist, not a philosopher. What can I do then? Perhaps create an aesthetic *experience*. That’s my field, that’s what artists do. But how can we have an aesthetic experience on Zoom? I imagine you sitting in front of your computers, with cameras and microphones off. Before my presentation, you have already heard five papers. You must be exhausted and longing for a walk, even though the weather is miserable – I hear raindrops on the windowsill. No, I hear something else. A fly. The sound is coming from the screen, from a film that I have made. Yes, that will be my contribution, the buzzing of a fly, something for the senses. The film is not long, only six minutes. In addition to a fly, it features a puddle and a lace hat and a letter from 1909. The letter has been written by my historical pen-pal Elli Forssell-Rozentāle (1871–1943). It starts with the words “Dear People” and ends with a plea: “I have written to you about all this in the hopes that you might find some source of light for me.” If you like, you can write a reply to Elli after the screening. Her email is elliforssell@gmail.com.

15:30-15:40 Questions & Comments

15:40-15:50 Break

15:50-16:20 Panel of all the speakers, moderated by **Arto Haapala**, University of Helsinki

"The Role of Aesthetics in the Contemporary World"

16:20-16:30 Ending words: Tero Nauha, board member of the Finnish Society for Aesthetics

16:30 Presentation of annual awards: Aesthetic deed of the year, Global aesthetic deed of the year, Article of the year