

INTRODUCTION

This issue of *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* is the second issue, and the first of its kind, since we took over the editorship in the summer of 2023. In contrast to our first edited issue—a questionnaire on “Aesthetics in the Age of Unreason”—this issue consists of a small selection of the articles submitted to the journal. It therefore also covers a much broader and heterogeneous field of aesthetic theory and beyond. Let’s call it an “open issue.”

The first article is written by Devika Sharma and is entitled “Skeptimentality: The Square and the Aesthetics of Complicity.” In the article, Sharma identifies and discusses a “sensibility of privilege,” a particular structure of feeling and aesthetic mode dominant in Scandinavian public cultures, which she calls *skeptimentality*. In contrast to the familiar notion of sentimentality—theorized by scholars such as Saidiya Hartman and Laurent Berlant—which conveys a positive “meta-response” to a positive “basic feeling,” the skeptimental mode is more ambiguous. Its “meta-response” is not positive but generally negative, and its modus operandi is therefore not sympathy but complicity; not trust in the virtue of oneself and the world, but mistrust. For Sharma, this aesthetic mode is at stake in Ruben Östlund’s film *The Square*, which problematizes Scandinavian public culture’s own struggle with its “predicament of privilege,” the logic of which is expressed in the seemingly banal question: “Is this okay?”

The next article, written by Lorenzo Gineprini, theorizes the “Aesthetics and Politics of Waste: Rejects in Consumer Society’s Distribution of the Sensible.” Taking the well-rehearsed critique of commodity fetishism and the aestheticized logics of capitalism as its starting point, Gineprini turns his attention to one of the dominant ecological effects of such logics: the systemic invisibility and disappearance of commodities once discarded as “waste.” Drawing on the work of Jacques Rancière, Gineprini argues that waste constitutes an “aesthetics of disappearance” central to the reproduction of capitalist commodity culture and its phantasmagoria. This argument is primarily anchored in a reading of Gordon Matta-Clark’s *Garbage Wall* (1970). Through this work, bordering on architecture and sculpture, Gineprini argues that Matta-Clark subverts any ethics of recycling, instead invoking an “aesthetics of waste” that gestures toward a “new architecture” built on the refuse of commodity culture.

In the article “The View from Above and its Counter-Appropriation,” Hauke Ohls discusses how artworks by Carolina Caycedo and Forensic Architecture critically hijack a seeming untenable tool for capitalist and technoscientific power and its extractive operations: the view from above. In a critique of the scholar Macarena Gómez-Barris’s distinction between a “neoliberal” view from above and an embodied locus for “submerged perspectives,” Ohls shows how such a distinction falls short in the practices of Caycedo and Forensic Architecture. In distinct

ways, these works employ a range of strategies that demonstrate how the “view from above” is not solely a neoliberal tool for capitalism’s extractivist desires. On the contrary, as is evident in Caycedo’s montages of satellite imagery and Forensic Architecture’s video work, this perspective can be turned against itself in ways that deny a solid distinction between the view from above and from below; one flying in the air and the other walking on the ground.

Søren Bro Pold’s “Performing Profiling: Algorithmic Enunciations, Transgender Perspectives, and Ada Ada Ada’s *in transitu*” is a critical discussion of how algorithmic interpellation and profiling on digital platforms create a flattened reading and viewing space. Through a reading of the artist Ada Ada Ada’s year-long art project and Instagram performance *in transitu*, Pold unpacks the gendered enunciative limitations inherent in such spaces. Drawing on theories of enunciation and technosociality, he attends to the production of “digital subjects” shaped by the algorithmic systems of platforms like Instagram. Pold argues that these restricted structures of enunciation can be *undone* by exposing their contingency and inbuilt illiteracy—an intervention particularly pertinent when discussing transgender perspectives. Ada Ada Ada’s playful refusal to be profiled exemplifies how these limitations can be challenged and subverted.

The following article, “Butoh and Embodied Transformation” by Max Liljefors, focuses on how the Japanese dance form *butoh* enacts an inner bodily transformation. Butoh, Liljefors argues,

invites a rethinking of the central aesthetic notion of embodiment as an outer *and* inner potential for transformation; involving the physical body as much as the imagination. Drawing on his fieldwork and interviews with butoh dancers, Liljefors shows how butoh “trains” an aesthetic sensibility by evoking an “embodied simulation” that fundamentally changes the dancer’s “body schema.” In this sense, Liljefors points out, the physical performance and transformation in butoh is inextricably linked to the aesthetic experience of an expanded bodily awareness of the subject and its surroundings.

The article “Machines of Articulation: Reading Politics through Aesthetic Operations” by Daniela Agostinho, Anders Engberg-Pedersen, and Jussi Parikka stems from a public conversation originally held at Kunsthall Aarhus in September 2023. The discussion builds on Engberg-Pedersen’s book *Martial Aesthetics: How War Became an Art Form* and Parikka’s *Operational Images: From the Visual to the Invisual*. Agostinho facilitates the dialogue, providing critical perspectives on the intersecting issues and problems addressed in the two books. The conversations cover a range of topics and questions, including the aesthetic, visual, and “invisual” conditions and effects of war—and “operations other than war”—as well as the methodological legacy of Harun Farocki and media archaeology. It also highlights the critical role of scholars in engaging with these issues in the contemporary moment.

The final article in the issue, “Emmanuel Levinas’s Aesthetic Consciousness” by Jussi Pentikäinen, revisits Levinas’s polemical and harsh critique of art and aesthetics. Pentikäinen sets out to unpack the philosophical background for why Levinas felt compelled to articulate such a critique. According to Pentikäinen, Levinas’s critique of aesthetics share a familiarity with what Hans-Georg Gadamer famously called “aesthetic consciousness,” a subjectivist and for Levinas unethical notion of art that, paradoxically, he himself evoked, as seen in his distinction between conceptual truth and art. In the article’s conclusion, Pentikäinen shows how Levinas offers a certain remedy to his critique through his notion of “criticism” as a hermeneutic practice. This practice, Pentikäinen argues, holds the potential to break with the shortcomings of “aesthetic consciousnesses.”

In addition to the articles, the issue also includes two reviews of recent books relevant to our field.

— Maja Bak Herrie & Tobias Dias