

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



POSSIBLE WORLDS OF CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS: AESTHETICS BETWEEN HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND MEDIA

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Editors

Nataša Janković, Boško Drobnjak and Marko Nikolić

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Lisa Giombini |
Roma Tre University | Rome, Italy | lisa.giombini@libero.it |

Marta Benenti |
FINO Consortium | Turin, Italy | martabenenti@gmail.com |

THE AESTHETIC PARADOX OF TOURISM

Abstract | Millions of Japanese tourists visit Paris every year. On average, 20 of them are so disconcerted by the gap between reality and their idealized vision of the city, that they fall prey to the so-called Paris syndrome, a condition characterized by a number of psychiatric symptoms including delusional states, derealization, depersonalization and anxiety (Viala et al. 2004). Interestingly, subjects suffering from the syndrome are mainly travelers concerned with the aesthetic and artistic aspect of their journey. Psychopathological issues aside, the gap between expectations and reality is a common experience for tourists. Why it is so?

So far, the phenomenon of tourism has been enquired almost exclusively from an ethical, economic and social point of view (see Fennell 2006; Urry 2002), whereas its aesthetic implications have been mostly ignored by philosophers (exceptions are Tribe 2009; and Todd 2012). This is especially surprising if one considers the extraordinary spread of tourism on a global scale. On the background of the current debate in everyday and environmental aesthetics, in this talk we define tourism as an intrinsically paradoxical aesthetic practice. We assume that one first motivation for tourism is the fulfilment of aesthetic expectations (Todd 2009; 2012; Maitland and Smith 2012). At the same time, touristic practice is also driven by the search for authentic experiences, i.e., lacking qualities solely directed at touristic satisfactions. On the view, tourism provides a strong form of aestheticization of the ordinary: it encourages travelers to adopt what has been called the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990: 3), that is, a special form of aesthetic gaze. However, this attitude necessarily separates them from everyday experience. Tourists in Paris, for example, contemplate with an aesthetic eye what is just routine for the many inhabitants of the city: having a coffee sitting on the outdoor tables of a café, walking along the shady boulevards etc. Hence the paradox: for while looking forward to living an authentic experience (Live the real Paris!) tourists are inevitably confined to the role of detached spectators.

Though this is in line with everyday aesthetics’ idea of finding aesthetic values in objects, events, and activities that constitute people’s daily life, the entailed “process of de-familiarization of the familiar” (Saito 2015) is a prompter of deception for tourists. In other words, tourism is a promise that cannot be kept: an authentic appreciation of the ordinary by means of an experience of detachment.

Index terms | *aesthetic practices; aestheticization; authenticity; everyday aesthetics; tourism; tourist gaze.*

Lisa Giombini |

Marta Benenti |

Lisa Giombini (1986) is a Research and Teaching Assistant at the University of Roma Tre (Italy), Department of Philosophy, Communication and Visual Arts. In 2015 she was awarded a PhD in Philosophy by the University of Lorraine (France) and the University of Roma Tre (Italy), with a focus on music ontology and meta-ontology. She was subsequently DAAD post-doctoral fellow at the Institute of Philosophy of Freie Universität Berlin and at Stuttgart National Academy of Fine Arts. Aside from the philosophy of music, her research interests include the philosophy and ontology of art conservation and restoration. Lisa presented papers at several international conferences in Europe and in the U.S. She is the author of the volume *Musical Ontology. A guide for the Perplexed* (2017).

Marta Benenti is Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Turin - FINO Consortium. She has been visiting the philosophy departments of Glasgow, Bochum and Antwerp and in 2018 she was DAAD research fellow at the Berlin School of Mind and Brain. She is mainly interested in aesthetics and philosophy of mind, especially in the topics of perception, imagination and emotions. So far, she has been working on expressive experience of everyday objects and artworks, their arousal power and their perceptual structure. Currently, her main concerns are the role of emotions in simple perceptual experiences and the possible challenges to the notion of “aesthetic experience”.