

INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics and the Everyday. Une Liaison Dangereuse

Lisa Giombini, Adrián Kvočka

Abstract: What is the philosophy of everydayness and why is it important (if ever)? And what is the role of aesthetics in our dealings with everyday life? This introduction surveys some crucial issues that emerge when examining the notion of everydayness from a philosophical perspective. It offers a trajectory of the main approaches to the notion of everyday life that are relevant to understanding its contemporary developments. While interest in the everyday aspects of reality has been a neglected feature in the history of Western thought, everydayness has re-emerged recently as a central theme in aesthetics. The introduction also surveys the papers included in the collection and provides insight into their organization.

Keywords: Everydayness, Philosophy of Everyday Life, Everyday Aesthetics

1 Prelude. A History of Neglect

What is the philosophy of everydayness and why is it important (if ever)? And what is the role of aesthetics in our dealings with everyday life? These questions are puzzling. Everydayness is per se an incredibly slippery notion. It is at the same time the most obvious and the most elusive of ideas (Storey 2014, pp. 2-3). Rita Felski (2000, p. 77) describes everyday life as “the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds. It is the ultimate non-negotiable reality, the unavoidable basis for all other forms of human endeavor”. “Life without everydayness” claims Ossi Naukkarinen (2013), “is practically impossible, and it is difficult to even imagine a life that would be completely noneveryday-like.” Nevertheless, despite its pervasiveness, we are seemingly unable to explain what everydayness is. The everyday, comments Maurice Blanchot (1987,

pp. 12-13), is “what is most difficult to discover”. Just as one submits it to critical scrutiny, “the everyday escapes”.

While art, from Hesiod to through Flemish painting, the modern novel, Impressionism, and twentieth-century avant-gardes, has always been fascinated by the most mundane dimension of life, philosophers, on their side, have been inclined to ignore everydayness for centuries.¹ Since its Greek inception, philosophy was considered a product of the *polis*, the city, the public space. It concerned the *politeia*: discourses happening in the public arena within a community of citizens, all men, all equal before the law, all different from other non-citizens. Tales from the past of philosophy are all about these public spaces: squares, markets, worship areas, universities, and palaces of power. Everyday life, the dimension where the satisfaction of our most intimate bodily needs takes place – eating, cooking, feeding, dressing, cleaning, householding, washing up, sleeping, resting, taking care, nursing, loving – was relegated to the periphery of civilized concern. Locked in the four walls of the house, it was hidden from other people’s eyes, the prerogative of women, children, and slaves. It was considered personal and private and as such, a-political and a-philosophical.

What kind of philosophy can there be for everyday life, that which brings one back to their animal nature, their biological needs, and the necessities of survival? What is Beautiful, Good, and True in the world of low instincts and feminine concerns that hide in the kitchen and the bedroom, populate the garden and the yard? Taken as synonymous with commonsense and taken-for-grantedness, everydayness was regarded as the opposite of serious reflection and speculation, the symbol of a non-critical attitude towards the world.

This philosophical neglect of the everyday aspects of our life had many practical ramifications. As feminist scholarship has noticed (e.g. Smith 1987), it caused everydayness to become a dimension in which wrongs, oppression, and injustices have been hidden, forgotten, and mechanically reproduced for centuries. It is within and through the

¹ This claim should be taken *cum grano salis*. Obviously, the implication here is not that ancient philosophers did not concern themselves altogether with everyday life. One need only think of Stoicism and Epicureanism to gain evidence of the contrary. Ancient philosophers’ interest in everyday life, however, was eminently practical in nature. As a matter of fact, critics agree that everydayness, as an object of theoretical rather than practical investigation, is a modern concept, dating back to the late nineteenth century if not the beginning of the twentieth century (Lefebvre 1947/1991; Bennett and Watson 2002, p. x). For further discussion on the relationship between ancient philosophy and everydayness see Curnow (2009).

sphere of everydayness that gender inequality has been executed and justified, pervasively and over time. It is within and through everyday life that social and class imbalance have been pursued and reiterated.

On a theoretical level, forgetting about everyday life also meant for philosophy to forget something about its own origins. The everyday is where the lived experience constituting both material reality and subjective consciousness is located. It is the incubator of most of the ideas that have nourished our culture and society, a reservoir of insights for philosophical investigation not provided by politics, science, or art. And, contrary to common belief, the everyday is imbued with diverse strands of thought and beliefs, from the scientific to the religious to the philosophical. The opposition between everydayness and philosophical reflection; ‘natural attitude’ and ‘theoretical attitude’; everyday thinking and critical thinking is therefore preposterous.

2 The Times Are A-Changin’

Over the past few decades, something in this mechanism of withdrawal has been broken. The causes for this shift are a matter of speculation, but a central role is played by the rapidly transforming fabric of contemporary life, which creates a new awareness of the mundane and its conceptual underpinnings. In the chaotic vortex of the postmodern, globalized world, change is often perceived by individuals as being imposed rather than sought after. Accordingly, everyday routines and habits appear more as a means for preserving personal autonomy, memory, and identity, rather than as an evidence of our animal nature. Everyday life, which was long disregarded or taken for granted, has become attractive in both its actual and its traditional forms as a way to safeguard the distinctive qualities of a world that is currently threatened and disappearing. Seen as a bulwark against the currently wide-spreading sense of homelessness and placelessness (Relph 1976; Arefi 2007; Freestone and Liu 2016), it is hailed as a source of cultural value and strength, something to be investigated and rediscovered (Saito 2007, 2017; Carter and Yuedi 2014).

In the domain of social sciences, a driving impulse behind the reevaluation of everydayness has come from the often-cited work of two French intellectuals, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, perhaps the most prominent twentieth-century analysts of the everyday.² In his three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947/1991, 1961/2008a,

² Other important philosophers and sociologists that contributed to shaping our notion

1981/2008b) Lefebvre draws heavily on the work of Marx to criticize the dynamics of capitalism, its routinization and alienation, and proposes a radical reconstruction of everyday life with the human subject as an active creative force. For Lefebvre, everyday life is a material by-product of capitalism, but it is also connected to bodily and affective rhythms and hence retains a utopian power. De Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), in contrast, understands everyday life as a terrain of revolt and subversion, where the "tactics" of the dominated can subvert capitalist "strategies" with acts of popular resistance. De Certeau's investigations into the realm of routine practices such as walking, reading, dwelling, and cooking are guided by his belief that despite repressive aspects of modern society, there exists an element of creative opposition to these structures enacted daily by ordinary people.

Variouly inspired by the work of Lefebvre and de Certeau, an extensive tradition of scholarly writing has recently emerged that puts everyday life at the core of its interests. Everydayness has gained today a crucial place as an autonomous object of critical reflection in cultural studies, sociology, history, feminism, and represents an important reference point in many other areas within the humanities, including philosophy (Sandywell 2010; Harootunian 2010; Jacobsen 2018).³ A common intuition underlying these approaches is that if 'everyday' is characterized in terms of the mundane, the commonplace, and the familiar, the first question that needs to be posed is: "*whose* everyday?". Given the enormous differences in human lives across different periods and social contexts, talking about everydayness in general seems shallow. Everyday life changes from person to person, place to place, culture to culture. None has exactly the same everyday as someone else or could live her life in exactly the same way (Naukkarinen 2013). Moreover, even for the same person, everyday life also happens to change over time. An adult person's everyday is obviously different from when they were a child or a teenager.

Despite the large degree of variation related to provenance, age, and lifestyle, however, many contemporary accounts of the everyday emphasize the fact that everydayness resists, at least in part, the dynamics of history and change (Felski 2020, p. 78). Everyday life has indeed features of universality. Everybody, beyond age, personal history, culture,

of everydayness are Lukács, Bourdieu, Heidegger, Heller, Schutz, Simmel, Dewey and Habermas, among others.

³ Everydayness is now a key term not only in ethics, political philosophy, and phenomenology, but also in the field of metaphysics. See for example Baker (2007).

class, and ethnicity, eats, dresses, dwells someplace, sleeps, and washes on a daily basis. Everybody uses a series of objects in their daily life: furniture, different kinds of tools, clothes, machines, and dwells in some places: the home, the workplace, the streets, the neighborhood, and the city. We are all similarly anchored in the mundane.

A shared belief in this regard is that a list of objects or events is unable to fully capture the meaning of everydayness. This understanding justifies the phenomenological concern shared by most philosophical studies devoted to everyday life (see Begout 2005; Pollio, Henley, Thompson 1997; Schmid, Thonhauser 2017). More than a limited set of things and activities, the everyday should be construed as a way of relating to the world, the experience of becoming accustomed to certain places, behaviors, and practices, which come to seem familiar and normal to us. Everydayness, it is claimed, is not an intrinsic quality that characterizes particular actions or objects. It is rather a lived process of routinization that all individuals experience in their life (Highmore 2002, 2004), one that lies more at the level of relation than at that of ontology. Interestingly, ancient Stoicism used the term *oikeiōsis* to describe this process, a word meaning ‘appropriation’, ‘habituation’, and ‘endearment’ (Coccia 2021). *Oikeiōsis* signifies the sense of being ‘at home’ (*oikos*), of belonging to and by extension becoming ‘familiarized’ or ‘intimate’ with something. Anything that is subject to *oikeiōsis* becomes part of our everyday life, and while some objects, actions, and events may look more ‘everyday’ than others (washing one’s teeth, having lunch, shopping for food), this does not prevent others from falling in the category under different circumstances.

In a similar way, it is widely recognized today that everydayness does not form a clear-cut category in the proper sense of the term.⁴ Everydayness is rather the evanescent web that brings together the animate and the inanimate, the material and the affective, objects and people, and conflates oneself and others into the basic unit of what we call ‘life’. This elusiveness also explains an aspect that Lefebvre (1991, p.18) already underlined as essential for everyday life, that is, its ambiguity. The sphere of everydayness intersects but does not coincide with the distinction between the individual and the collective, the private and the public, the cyclical and the linear, the conscious and the unconscious. Furthermore, the everyday is not simply interchangeable

⁴ See especially Storey (2014, pp. 1-3); for discussions in aesthetics see Leddy (2012, 2015); Naukkarinen (2013, 2017); Puolakka (2014).

with the ordinary, the boredom, the humdrum. While people's everyday life is made up of routine, repetition, and habits, it also comprises exceptional events such as experiences of trauma, births, deaths, love, sexual passion, moments of heightened consciousness and contemplation, which sharply break away from everyday routines. This, as we shall see momentarily, creates a tension between features of the ordinary and the extraordinary in everydayness, and constitutes a continuing source of trouble for many scholars concerned with the topic.

3 Aesthetics and Everydayness

With respect to the contemporary process of reimagining everyday life, its nature, character, and significance, aesthetic concerns are essential for highlighting the valuable aspects of everydayness (Highmore 2004, pp. 311-312). As a matter of fact, the conviction that the everyday can only be redeemed by its aesthetic transfiguration was already a hidden motif for the social and political tradition exemplified by Lefebvre and De Certeau. In their work, the transvaluation of everydayness took the form of the aestheticization of daily reality, which was countered by experiences of repetition and routine (Felski 2008, p. 80). By contrast, current approaches to the aesthetics of everyday life aim at capturing the aesthetic value of our daily humdrum while respecting its intrinsic everyday nature. Calling us back to the mundane itself, such approaches intend to prove how aesthetic qualities are already embedded in the ordinary fabric of everyday life, which is thus by itself aesthetically fulfilling. Everyday life no longer appears as the grey and obscure background of philosophical, political, and artistic activity, but becomes an object of aesthetic inquiry in its own right.

The philosophy of John Dewey represents the main source of inspiration in this attempt to rehabilitate aesthetically the experience of the quotidian. In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey proposed the idea that aesthetic experience is “an experience” that arises and stands out from the indistinct flow of daily humdrum. Although the title of the book may tempt one to think otherwise, Dewey's primary intuition was that any aspect of people's everyday life can possess aesthetic qualities - great food, games, interesting conversations - if it satisfies us and leads us to reflection. In this way, Dewey paved the way for opening the scope of aesthetic inquiry to the multiplicity of everyday life. Another central reference for contemporary investigations in the aesthetics of everydayness is the work dedicated by the American philosopher Arnold

Berleant (1991, 1992) to the notion of aesthetic engagement. According to Berleant, engagement defines the interactive and immersive relationship that arises between the experiencing agent and the object of experience. Emphasizing the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic perception, Berleant's understanding of engagement offers a meaningful alternative to traditional aesthetic theories and provides the basis for a comprehensive approach applicable to both the domains of fine arts, the environment, and everyday life.

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Drawing on Dewey's pragmatism and Berleant's engaged aesthetic approach, since the early 2000s a whole new branch of philosophical research has emerged, whose main focus is the aesthetic reevaluation of everyday life. Developed initially in the Anglo-American milieu, so-called Everyday Aesthetics represents a response to the traditional Western understanding of aesthetics as a philosophy of art that dominated the scholarly debate until the mid-twentieth century. An important step forward in the advancement of the field was the publication of the collection *Aesthetics of Everyday Life* edited by Andrew Light and Jonathan Smith in 2005, which featured intervention by several well-known figures in the contemporary debate such as Thomas Leddy, Yuriko Saito, Arnold Berleant, Arto Haapala, Emily Brady, and Wolfgang Iser, among others. The volume showed for the first time the plurality of issues that can be analyzed through the perspective of an aesthetics of the everyday, proposing also some key terms for its conceptual development. Two years later, in 2007, the publication of *Everyday Aesthetics. Prosaics, the Play*

⁵ This also justifies the close relationship that exists between everyday aesthetics and environmental aesthetics. Despite not being interchangeable, the two disciplines have complementary natures and rely on the same methodological premises (e.g. the notion of aesthetic engagement). As evidence, many authors who specialize in one field also work in the other (e.g. Saito 2007, 2017; Brady 2003, 2013; Lehtinen 2020a, 2020b; Iser 2003; Diaconu 2011, 2015).

of *Culture and Social Identities*, by Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, by Yuriko Saito, officially sanctioned the birth of Everyday Aesthetics as a sub-discipline on its own.

In recent years, Everyday Aesthetics has experienced a blossoming in scientific discourse. Issues related to the aesthetics of quotidian life are today all the rage in books, journals, and conferences and the area is currently gaining momentum in many European countries, Italy and Slovakia included.⁶ However, while the aesthetic appraisal of daily experience is of concern to an increasing number of authors, the questions of what specifically defines the core concepts of the discipline and how these concepts affect the aesthetic theory that is proposed are still highly disputed. For example, there is no consensus as to what ‘everyday’ and ‘aesthetics’ in ‘everyday aesthetics’ mean and how they are related to each other. And what do ordinariness and extraordinariness have to do with them?

In the following section, we will take a quick audit of some of the major controversies that animate discussions in Everyday Aesthetics, in order to clarify the conceptual framework within which the essays that compose this book are situated.

4 A Dangerous Relationship

The first problem that arises when examining the field of Everyday Aesthetics is that the scope and boundaries of the discipline largely remain unclear. What are we to include within the notion of ‘everyday life’, whose aesthetic qualities everyday aestheticians aim to investigate? Scholars disagree about which objects, practices, or activities can be subsumed under the notion of everydayness.

One possible approach is to define the everyday *via negationis* by assuming that everydayness includes anything that does not fall within the field of fine arts or nature. In this way, practically all perceptible objects could be considered a proper item of investigation for Everyday Aesthetics (Leddy 2012), not only ordinary practices, but also special events such as weddings, travel, scenically staged environments, parties,

⁶ For recent work in everyday aesthetics in Europe, see e.g., in Denmark: Friberg, Vasquez 2017; in Finland: Kuisma, Lehtinen, Mäcklin 2019; in France: Formis 2010; in Italy: Matteucci 2017; Di Stefano 2017; Iannilli 2019; in Poland: Andrzejewski 2014; Salwa 2019; in Spain: León 2019, among the others. A comprehensive overview of recent European perspectives on everyday aesthetics can be found in the special issue of *ESPEs. The Slovak Journal of Aesthetics* edited by Di Stefano and Lehtinen, forthcoming in 2021.

interior decoration, and so on. The alternative solution consists in thinking that everydayness is a quality characterising solely and exclusively those aspects of our lives that are widely shared and multiply instantiated in our routines or habits. (Haapala 2005; Saito 2007; Forsey 2013a, 2013b; Melchionne 2011, 2013 and Naukkarinen 2013).

The question at stake in this dispute is whether ‘the everyday’ can be taken as synonymous with ‘the ordinary’. Does everydayness correspond strictly to what is ordinary, commonplace, and mundane or does it also include exceptional occasions, practices, or activities? According to Kevin Melchionne (2013), for instance, the only proper objects of Everyday Aesthetics are “food, wardrobe, dwelling, conviviality, and going out.” These objects are ‘everyday’ because of their daily presence in the life of a wide amount of people. Their commonality, repetitive presence, and pervasiveness justify their relevance for the field, although they provide modest satisfaction when compared to works of art or other exceptional events.

The debate over what falls within the scope of the discipline foreshadows another important issue in contemporary research in Everyday Aesthetics, one related to the methodology that is suitable to this kind of inquiry. What approach is the most appropriate to investigate the aesthetic properties of everyday life, however we choose to define them? In the literature, a distinction emerges around two main positions. Either having an aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary is construed as implying a process of distancing, defamiliarization, or estrangement; or it is seen as requiring an attempt to aesthetically appreciate the ordinary as such.

According to the former position, everyday life is by itself so familiar, so ordinary, and so routine-like that it forms a kind of frameless background. In order for this background to count as a proper object for aesthetic scrutiny, it needs to be rendered out-of-the-ordinary, unfamiliar, or strange. The aesthetic potential of our daily life can only be discovered if we capture the ‘extraordinary in the ordinary’ by raising “the everyday above the ordinary and the routine” (Puolakka 2018) and by giving it “heightened significance”, what Thomas Leddy (2012) calls an “aura”. However, while the idea of experiencing and appreciating the ordinary as extraordinary follows a rather traditional path in aesthetics discourse, many writers have pointed out this strategy eventually leads to losing the very “everyday-ness” of everyday experience, which was the object of our interest in the first place (Saito 2017, 2019; Haapala 2005; Irvin 2008; Forsey 2014).

Moving from this concern, such authors maintain that the main aim of Everyday Aesthetics should be to aesthetically grasp the ordinary without manipulating it, that is, to experience it 'as such'. This implies considering the mundane aspects of everyday life as aesthetically appreciable per se by emphasising for example the sense of comforting stability we feel when carrying out our daily routines in a familiar setting (Haapala 2005); the pleasure we gain by the appropriate functioning of commonplace objects and tools (Forsey 2014); or the fulfilment we derive by paying mindful attention to the activities of our everyday life (Saito 2017). Difficulties arise, however, when we try to explain what is distinctly aesthetic in experiences related to comfort, stability, and functionality (Dowling 2010; Matteucci 2017). To what extent can the feeling of familiarity and belonging count as pleasures from a specifically aesthetic viewpoint and not, as it may be the case, from a different cognitive, epistemological, social, biological, perspective?

These questions also form the backbone of the ongoing conversation concerning the degree of autonomy of Everyday Aesthetics with respect to so-called 'traditional aesthetics'. How should we conceptualize the relationship between this new sub-discipline and the philosophical field from which it originated?

Here, some scholars seem to endorse an inclusivist approach relying on the assumption that the notions at work in disputes over the value of art can be fruitfully extended and re-adapted to include experiences from daily life (Dowling 2010; Leddy 2012; Ratiu 2013). This might restore continuity between the humble events, doings, and activities that constitute our everyday life and the refined forms of aesthetic experiences that characterise artistic production and reception, which are the traditional subject of aesthetics (Matteucci 2017). To dismiss the aesthetic tradition entirely means instead leaving Everyday Aesthetics without a theoretical foundation that could support further conceptual progress (Forsey 2014).

Other writers, conversely, are inclined to grant greater autonomy to Everyday Aesthetics with regard to the sphere of the philosophy of art (Haapala 2005; Saito 2007; Melchionne 2011). Subscribing to the view that daily life can afford paradigmatic instances of aesthetic experience, they maintain that investigations into Everyday Aesthetics need not be bound by the limitations and conventions that temper discussions of value in art.

Between these two extreme poles, many intermediate stances have also been proposed that try to interpret more flexibly the relationship

between aesthetics of everyday life and the philosophy of art (Forsey 2014; Matteucci 2017). According to these latter accounts, aesthetic properties are not extraordinary facts that are ‘separate or exotic’, but emerge contextually along with our other concerns that are central to our lives.

As can be seen from the previous discussion, the methodological disputes involved in recent work in Everyday Aesthetics, including the fundamental problem of its definition, are far from being solved. Arguably, this is because aesthetic investigations into the nature of everydayness bring with them very complex theoretical questions concerning the status of the aesthetic, the relationship between aesthetic values and different kinds of values, the meaning of everyday life, and the role of normativity and intersubjectivity in philosophy. In this regard, while the multiplicity of approaches in Everyday Aesthetics debates may be an advantage for the field, ensuring conceptual pluralism and diversity, it also represents a possible threat, with the risk for scholars of getting lost in a fragmented landscape of case studies.

In conclusion, despite the variety of perspectives on the table, it is important to underline that there is at least one crucial aspect binding together different accounts of Everyday Aesthetics. This has to do with the shared assumption that emphasizing the aesthetic qualities of everyday life may not only be of theoretical and philosophical relevance but is also endowed with moral and practical implications. In line with the tradition of *ästhetische Bildung*, interest in Everyday Aesthetics is commonly perceived by practitioners as part of a broader concern for the quality of our lived experience, a moral tool for developing people into more deliberate, aware members of society and community (Saito 2017). In this sense, as Elisabetta Di Stefano (2017, p. 9) comments: “Aesthetics, as long as it is not separated from morality and engagement, can have a driving role in improving the reality around us. It is our aesthetic considerations that lead us to make the world more human, the society more just, the future more sustainable.”⁷

By prioritizing the material and biological subject that is doing the experience, Everyday Aesthetics brings to the fore the hidden practices of everyday life in all their bodily, social, and cultural complexity. As the topics it scrutinizes are accessible to everyone, regardless of their cultural

⁷ Our translation from Italian: “[...] l'estetica, purché non sia separata dalla morale e dall'impegno, può avere una grande forza propulsiva nel migliorare la realtà che ci circonda. Sono le considerazioni estetiche che ci muovono nel rendere il mondo più umano, la società più giusta, il futuro più sostenibile”.

education, religious affiliation, or social status, it may stand as an instrument of exchange and communication for different ethnicities and cultures,⁸ a platform where instances of political freedom and liberty of thought, self-righteousness and resistance can be given public voice (Virmani 2016; Vihalem 2018). We believe that the essays included in this collection provide clear evidence of this potential.

5 The Structure of This Volume

Most contributors to this volume are aestheticians, in addition to art historians, literary critics, and cultural historians. The issues addressed in this book, however, are not themselves ‘aesthetic’ in the traditional sense in which ‘representation’, ‘expression’, or ‘meaning’ are. Rather, what is emphasized is the pervasive presence of aesthetics in various spheres of daily life, from dwelling to clothing, walking, and eating. The twenty chapters that comprise this volume testify to the different ways in which this presence manifests itself in our everydayness. Nevertheless, each of the topics discussed can be seen as an ingredient in a heterogeneous whole, clarified and extended by its relationship with the others. Just as aesthetic experience is complex and made up of diverse elements, so is the various aesthetic significance of everyday life that is explored here. Dwelling, walking, clothing, eating, and the like provide diversity while the aesthetic focus on an individual’s growth and well-being unifies the discussion. The volume is arranged into four parts.

Part 1, ‘The Environment, Cities, and the Everyday’, presents several analyses that address the aesthetics of everyday environments and cities.

These environments are shaped by the intentions of designers and the actions of builders, but, as **Sanna Lehtinen** argues in her contribution, their temporality also influences how they are perceived, experienced, and used. Intergenerational aesthetic values are thus important to understand how to maintain and take care of these environments.

Following on from questions of urban architecture, **Zoltan Somhegyi**’s essay considers the disturbing sublimity of ruinous urban spaces and environments. While we appreciate areas of urban and industrial decay aesthetically, we tend to dislike natural decay. Somhegyi

⁸ An example of the cross-cultural dimension of everyday aesthetics is the volume edited by Curtis L. Carter and Liu Yuedi in 2012. As the editors claim (2012, p. viii) the aim of this work is to encourage the cultural dialogue between the West and the East, with a view to building a new form of aesthetics of everyday life from a global perspective.

proposes that this reluctance depends on our commitment to nature's irreplaceability and value.

The aesthetic appreciation of city environments is also central in **Yevheniia Butsykina's** chapter. By introducing the case of makeshift gardens on the Rusanivka Channel in Kyiv, Ukraine, Butsykina shows how aesthetic practices of care can transform alienated urban landscapes into a dear, familiar place.

Our relationship with the city is also the focus of **Filip Šenk's** paper. Šenk examines the nature of place experience in the urban context by drawing on the notion of edge experience. The constitutive relationship between places and their edges is emphasized by Šenk with regard to the case study of the park in Štefánik Square, in the city of Liberec, Czech Republic.

With **Petra Baďová's** essay we turn the focus to the notion of dwelling and its symbolic implications. Baďová explores the meanings that are embodied in the architectural shapes of a 'home' to show their deep, archetypal character. Different types of houses testify variously to our preconscious aesthetic relationship to the world.

Part 2, 'The Body and the Everyday', discusses the role of practices and activities related to the body in the everyday experience.

In his chapter, **Ian King** investigates the potential of clothing and dress to define personal identity via expressive forms of non-verbal communication. Turning to Merleau-Ponty's notion of chiasm, King raises questions regarding the status and relationship of dress with the body, showing that dress provides a direct instrument for appreciating the guise of everyday aesthetics.

Clothing is also the object of **Elena Abate's** contribution. Abate proposes a new perspective on fashion that draws on Wittgenstein's concept of "form of life". The practices of clothing, Abate argues, give rise to a 'grammar' that is able to encode social and aesthetic messages.

The topic of fashion receives further investigation in **Michaela Malíčková's** chapter. Malíčková approaches fashion semiotically as evidence of the individualistic tendencies that characterise the modern subject. Fashion appears in this light as an important tool of self-expression for both the individual and diverse social communities.

Andrej Démuth and **Slávka Démuthova** present us with the question of the aesthetic appeal of suffering and self-harm in their visual representation in the arts and literature. Combining evidence from the neuroscientific literature with art-historical investigations, the

authors discuss the attractiveness of suffering displayed in everyday life as well as in artistic contexts.

Attention to the living, experiencing body is also present in **Lukáš Makky**'s chapter. Makky scrutinises the bodily interactions that take place when we are immersed in a city to underline the virtues and limits of a somaesthetic approach. Makky's idea is that the body, as a tool for experiencing the city aesthetically, is per se insufficient unless knowledge and contextual information are duly taken into account.

Part 3, 'Art, Culture and the Everyday', includes essays that describe and interpret the aesthetic import of particular types of cultural practices shaping our everyday experience.

In **Elisabetta Di Stefano**'s chapter, the analysis of food preparation and consumption is pursued through the lens of the ordinary-extraordinary dichotomy. While the experience of eating has often been interpreted in an analogy with art appreciation, food preparation and consumption also have ordinary qualities. Di Stefano's proposal is to keep these two features together by how food can allow the extraordinary to manifest itself in everyday life.

Looking at the reality of contemporary globalised and consumerist societies, **Polona Tratnik**'s essay investigates how recent art has reacted towards the capitalist system, its ideology and dynamics. To examine postmodern art's criticism towards consumerism, Tratnik considers examples of performances where supermarkets, the 'temples of consumption', become the object of an act of artistic revolt.

A critique of capitalist society and consumerism is also implicit in **David Ewing**'s contribution, devoted to the analysis of Georges Perec's novel *Thing. A Story of the Sixties* (1965). By dramatizing the effects of consumerist dreams and aspirations on the protagonists' lives, Ewing suggests that the novel defines everyday experience as opposed to mimesis and defined by intransitive escapism.

Tordis Berstrand explores the existential implications of dwelling. Berstrand underlines how the work *Merzbau*, by the German artist Kurt Schwitters, is able to transform a seemingly ordinary house into an extraordinary architecture. Linking Western concepts of dwelling to traditional Chinese aesthetics, Berstrand promotes a trans-cultural reconceptualisation of the living space.

The making of a space into a home-place is also at the core of **Corine van Emmerik**'s chapter. van Emmerik analyses the practices that help create comfort and familiarity in the dramatic context of a refugee camp in Palestine. Drawing on the philosophical concept of *Sumud*, she shows

how domestic activities such as gardening may generate a space that is perceived as familiar also in the midst of a traumatic reality.

An ethical-political concern also characterises **Carolina Gomes'** contribution. Gomes reviews recent philosophical approaches that question the aesthetic and ethical implications of morally provocative art. By focusing on some of the most debated positions in the literature, Gomes interprets controversial forms of contemporary public art as a platform for testing social and political values.

Part 4, 'Methodological Approaches to the Everyday', involves a shift towards the methodological and meta-theoretical implications of everyday aesthetics.

Ancuta Mortu's chapter provides an examination of the notion of an aesthetic act, which forms the basis of the engaged approach promoted by authors in both everyday and environmental aesthetics. Investigating the alternative models of distance and engagement, Mortu interprets the aesthetic acts in light of a broader debate in contemporary philosophy to underline its relevance for aesthetic appreciation.

The notion of routine and the problem of its aesthetic appreciation is the focus of **Michaela Paštěková**. Paštěková addresses the question of how the pandemic has changed the perception of our everyday rituals and habits. Emphasizing the aesthetic quality of these practices by making their performative character explicit, she claims, can be an effective way to restore feelings of safety and familiarity even amidst uncertain times.

Swantje Martach's contribution concerns the central issue of how we can appreciate beauty in everyday life without betraying its ordinary nature. Martach's proposal appeals to recent research in the field of speculative philosophy as a possible solution to the problem. Recurring to speculation, Martach suggests, gives us a chance to engage with the aesthetic qualities of the everyday without intruding on them, thus preserving their fundamental ordinariness.

The aesthetic qualities of everyday life are also at the center of **Małgorzata A. Szyszkowska's** essay. Phenomenology, Szyszkowska claims, gives us a methodological framework to appraise and describe the aesthetic value found in everyday experiences. By focusing on the phenomenological notion of listening-in, the chapter proposes an understanding of our dealings with everyday reality as an attentive, open, and engaged aesthetic relation to the world-as-experienced.

As can be noticed, all the essays in this collection are highly varied in scope, focus, and methodology and mirror thereby the difficulty of finding a singular and objective approach within the aesthetics and the

philosophy of everyday life. We hope, however, that behind the individual pieces of this composite mosaic of topics and ideas a cohesive pattern can be discerned, which tells us a story about who we are and what life is. Our wish is that this book will make a small contribution to this story too.

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