Everyday Aesthetics and Everydayness from an Intercultural Perspective

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Everyday aesthetics represents a relatively recent discipline which challenges modern Western art-centered aesthetics. Already at an early stage, North American scholars in the filed brought into discussion other cultural traditions that appreciate transience and do not clearly differentiate between art and non-art, professional artists and amateurs. Far from defending the autonomy of the aesthetic value, they emphasized how aesthetic phenomena are integrated into practical life and connected to spiritual traditions, insofar as their interpretation itself is influenced by cultural heritage .

Under this perspective, Zen Buddhism was often mentioned as a key example for the aestheticization of daily life (Yuriko Saito, Thomas Leddy, Sherry Irvin). Chinese scholars proposed the concept of “living aesthetics” (and declared the connection between life, art, and beauty as definitory for Confucianism and Taoism). Liu Yuedi even claimed that while in the West the aesthetics of everyday life reacts against its own tradition of privileging art, in the Far Eastern countries it draws on local traditions and tries to catch their specificity without imposing on them a foreign frame of interpretation. One may speak about everyday aesthetics also with regard to the Islamic culture, which takes different shapes from one linguistic border to another, yet remains traversed as a whole by the integration of aesthetic practices within daily life and the lack of a sharp distinction between art and its counterpart. Last, but not least, both aestheticians and anthropologists invite us to think about the role which different artefacts play in indigenous cultures, without assimilating them uncritically to “art” (Crispin Sartwell, Philippe Descola).

Thus, we may think of everyday aesthetics as not only challenging the Euro-American understanding of the relation between art and daily life, but also as opening up a new research field that paves the way for a global aesthetics. Ultimately, it makes us ask ourselves about the specificity of everydayness and how does it differ from one culture to another. Could everydayness and its aesthetics open us up towards the most fundamental traits of a culture, which are visible in the way the taxis look like and in the shape of houses no less than in philosophy and poetry, as Heinrich Rombach implies? And how can an intercultural everyday aesthetics provide the theoretical scaffolding for practices of “doing culture” in specific contexts worldwide?

We are looking forward to discussing these themes and many others which touch upon this field, inviting submissions that explore how aesthetic experiences shape our daily lives across cultures. We encourage presentations that examine the interplay between ordinary objects, environments, and activities in diverse cultural settings. Particularly welcome are papers reading current major debates in everyday aesthetics through an intercultural lens.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

* Non-Western cultural sources (philosophy, religion etc.) of everyday aesthetics;
* Cultural analyses as resources for terminological enrichment in everyday aesthetics;
* The prefiguration of universalist and culturalist approaches in the everyday aesthetics (e.g. when Kevin Melchionne reduces everydayness to few general practices, while Arnold Berleant asks “whose everydayness?”);
* The applicability of the controversy between the “weak” everyday aesthetics (which extends explanatory art models to everyday life) and the “strong” everyday aesthetics (which defends the specificity of everyday aesthetic patterns) to cultures that do not sharply distinguish between art and non-art;
* Culturally shaped routines, habits, and rituals, as well as their relevance to other forms of expression and of thought (e.g. philosophy, literature);
* The question of the aesthetics of atmosphere/ambiance in everyday contexts;
* The role of everyday aesthetics in identity formation, including in colonial and postcolonial contexts;
* Possible controversial political implications of everyday aesthetics: do aesthetic practices reinforce the status-quo or can support resilience and emancipation as well?
* Everyday aesthetics and social dynamics: continuity and disruption in the migrants’ way of life, as mirrored by aesthetic practices and with focus on intergenerational aspects;
* Hybridization of ways of life in an interconnected world;
* The influence of modern technology and new media on the aesthetics of everydayness.

Please submit abstracts of maximum 300 words by 1 November 2025 to madalina.diaconu@univie.ac.at and madalina.guzun@phenomenology.ro

Notification of acceptance: 15 November 2025.

The conference will take place exclusively in person on 27-28 February 2026 at the University of Vienna, Austria.