



# THE SUBJECTIVE NATURE OF BEAUTY: EXPLORING EVERYDAY OBJECT PERCEPTIONS

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**Abstract:** This research inspects the dynamic and evolving nature of aesthetics, tracing its development from the functional focus of ancient Greek art to the contemporary emphasis on innate artistic value. Through in-depth interviews and assignments with art students, the study explores the subjective experience of beauty, revealing how personal experiences, artistic influences, and emotional connections shape individual perceptions. The diverse interpretations of a flower's beauty, for example, highlight the manifold nature of aesthetic appreciation. This study concludes that beauty is not only inherent in the object but also shaped by the individual's perspective, illuminating the critical role of individual interpretation and cultural context in influencing our understanding of art and aesthetics.

**Keywords** - subjectivity, beauty, perception, everyday objects, art education, Philosophy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of beauty has long piqued and debate, spanning centuries of philosophical and artistic exploration. From the ancient Greeks to modern aestheticians, the question of how people perceive and interpret the beauty of everyday objects has remained a complex and multifaceted one.

This study investigates the subjective nature of beauty, examining how various influences shape individual perceptions. Through interviews and assignments with art students, the research investigates how personal experiences and artistic backgrounds contribute to finding meaning and beauty in the mundane. The analysis explores specific cases, including a student who finds solace in a childhood doll, another who appreciates the intentionality behind modern tattoos, and a third who marvels at the microscopic world revealed through macro photography. Additionally, the study examines the beauty found in traditional craftsmanship, exemplified by the touch, rhythmic sounds and techniques observed in a brass repousse workshop. Thus, the study highlights the subjective nature of beauty and the ability of ordinary objects to elicit individual associations, emotions, and aesthetic appreciation.

## II. THE SUBJECTIVITY OF BEAUTY

I am obliged every day to weigh the aesthetic sense, and for this I have to furnish myself with concrete reasonings. In general, a sincere, true and functional work will possess an aesthetic sense, but it may also become a monster. This shows how difficult it is to define the aesthetic sense.

Of course, a work of art may and often does afford us the same time pleasure in a sensuous or moral way, but this sort of pleasure is derived directly from its material qualities, such as tone or texture, assonance, etc. or the ethical peculiarity of its theme, and not from its aesthetic qualities: the aesthetic experience is independent of this, and may even, as Dhananjaya says, be derived in spite of sensuous or moral displeasure

(Coomaraswamy, 1918) (Klein, Jean, 2008). There is thus a clear distinction drawn between aesthetic experience on one hand and sensuous pleasure and any moral on the other. For an artist, a work can take various routes to arrive at final form. The beauty doesn't lie in the richness of material or what it is meant to be. But, on the richness of spirit, invention and truth. Beauty can be seen in both micro and macro. I would like to dismiss mimetic representation and monumental scale as measures of beauty. Instead, the smallest commission is worthy of aesthetic attention and large-scale works do not necessarily produce objects of beauty. Similar, material objects they inherit or discover in their homes, Photographs of personal collection and academic photographs.

As the study's findings suggest, the perception of beauty is highly subjective, shaped by a multitude of personal experiences and artistic backgrounds. (Lehene, 2020) One student, for instance, finds solace and beauty in a childhood doll, a tangible connection to a cherished memory. (Farley, 2020) Another student, influenced by the intentionality behind modern tattoos, appreciates the artistic expression and personal significance embedded in these everyday objects. (Menninghaus et al., 2019)

Similarly, a third student marvels at the microscopic world revealed through macro photography, finding beauty in the intricate details and patterns that are often hidden from the naked eye. This diverse range of perspectives underscores the subjective nature of beauty, where individual perception plays a crucial role in ascribing meaning and value to the world around us.

### III. THE BEAUTY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

Beyond personal belongings and photographic subjects, the study also examines the beauty found in traditional craftsmanship, as exemplified by the brass repousse workshop. The rhythmic sounds and techniques that were noticed in this setting give a feeling of aesthetic appreciation, for the intentional and artistic production of ordinary things.

Through these various examples, the study also reveals how ordinary objects can elicit individual and emotional associations, aesthetic appreciation and thereby stress the relativity of beauty and the various ways in which people experience and assign value to objects in their environment.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This research uses interviews and written tasks with art students to investigate their views on aesthetics of objects in the everyday environment.

The participants, selected from diverse artistic backgrounds, were asked to bring in two objects for discussion: one work of art and one non-artefact. In this way, researcher wanted to find out what led the students to assign certain meanings to the chosen objects and what meanings they assigned to them.

The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that researcher could ask the participants more detailed questions about their personal experiences, artistic preferences, and the emotional significance of the chosen objects.

Also, the researcher visited a brass repousse workshop and analysed the process and the sound of the work in order to understand the aesthetics of the traditional craft.

The data gathered from the private communication and observations was analysed thematically to determine the common patterns and themes that would explain the cultural relativity of beauty and how people derive significance from ordinary objects.

## V. FINDINGS

The study findings show that beauty is very subjective and multidimensional, as shown by the art student's various opinions and interpretations.

Individuals frequently use the domain of imagination as a safe haven, a place where they may practice social interactions or process deep emotions that would be too complex or difficult to address in the actual world. This idea is particularly clear in the instance of Praneetha, who imbues her doll, Hearty, with lifelike traits, employing the inanimate item to satisfy her emotional needs while understanding its non-sentient nature (Fig 01).

‘There is a cute little Barbie doll in my toy shelf, I named it *Hearty*, and don't ask me why I put the hearty name I forgot that, but maybe my heart-touching toy, like that. It's been 14 years till know the journey of us. My father didn't buy me more toys because I don't spoil or break toys. I also didn't ask for toys. So, my only source to play with a toy is hearty. I am my mother's daughter and hearty is my daughter's child. I got so much angry when my brother used to touch my toys. I am so possessive about it because it's my only toy. He has so many toys so he didn't have much emotion towards toys. But me, she is my only child, isn't it? I used to talk to and feed her, even though I didn't know how to eat at that age, my mother fed me and I copied, and I will feed to hearty. When my mom stitches clothes for me, I stitch too hearty every time, new clothes and dresses for her. So, I also imitate my mom and behave with my daughter (the doll)’.

- (N Sri Lakshmi Praneetha, Private communication and assignment, July 24, 2024)



Fig 01 Praneetha's Hearty, Image source: N Sri Lakshmi Praneetha, student of Sculpture Department, Dr. YSR Architecture and Fine Arts University

The other student makes an interesting choice from her photographic collection, ‘Tribal vs. Modern Tattoos’. Her work highlights the notions of mimesis and catharsis, and each tattoo is meticulously placed. This approach to tattooing contrasts sharply with the previous trend of random and frequently meaningless tattoos. It is not simply a record of what the physical sight detects; rather, it aims to capture the fundamental reality underlying the physical world of the senses. (Kulkarini S.G, Eds, 2015)

In contrast, the work of Ustavi Jhaveri, a Mumbai-based tattoo artist, offers a different approach. Ustavi incorporates Raja Ravi Varma paintings into her tattoos, providing clients with meaningful and intentional body art (Fig 2 and 3).

‘I personally collected these photos from my neighbour aunty when I had a conversation with her I found free beauty in the way she was talking because she didn't have any knowledge about the meaning

of tattoos she decided to take them when she was young her brother take her to get tattooed she agreed because every girl in that generation has tattoos like her mimesis happening from their previous generations. The tattoo artist randomly selects some design that looks good on her and the representation of the tattoos is randomly decided.

But in the case of Ustavi Jhaveri Mumbai based tattoo artist, she does Raja Ravi Varma paintings as tattoos which has a purpose and a reason adherent to beauty she explains mimesis and catharsis to her clients, why only Raja Ravi Varma tattoos. The placement of tattoos is not randomly decided they give a long thought about the placement also.'

- (D Poojitha, Personal communication and Assignment, July 24, 2024)



Fig 02 Poojitha's Photography archive collection, *Traditional and modern Tattoos*, Image Source: D Poojitha, student of Painting Department, Dr. YSR Architecture and Fine Arts University



Fig 03 Left: Damyanti and Hamsa, Machine tattooed, Image Source: Instagram- Border.line.tattoos

[https://www.instagram.com/p/C23n3GhLMbE/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/C23n3GhLMbE/?img_index=1)

Right: Shakuntala, Machine tattooed, Image Source: Instagram- Border.line.tattoos

[https://www.instagram.com/p/C23n3GhLMbE/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/C23n3GhLMbE/?img_index=1)

Similarly, a third student marveled at the microscopic world revealed through macro photography, finding beauty in the intricate details and patterns that are often hidden from the naked eye. The microscopic view of a cactus (Fig 04), for instance, evokes feelings of awe, wonder and a tinge of fear. While the grandeur

of sculptures by Michelangelo or Rodin would be universally appreciated in public settings, abstract paintings often require artistic training for full comprehension. Despite this, even those without art expertise can still appreciate the visual elements of color, line, and form in these works.



Fig 04 Cactus series, Macrophotography, Kalyan Vemula, student of Photography Dept., 2024

Along with students, I selected a Photograph, from ‘Brass repoussé workshop: The sheet metal embossing of Onipenta’ held in August 2023, at Dr YSR Architecture and Fine Arts University. As a curator of a brass repoussé workshop, I caught a moment with the 24 sculpting students using this classical metalworking technique. The room was filled with the rhythmic sounds of hammers (Fig. 05) shaping thick brass sheets. It was fascinating to watch this collaborative artistic process unfold. I discovered beauty in the physicality of hammering, the harmonizing noises it made, and student’s genuine commitment to the sounds it produced, and the student’s deep engagement with their craft.



Fig 05: A photograph from ‘Brass repousse workshop’, 2023, Image Credit: M. Chandrakanth (Student of Photography Dept.)

By exploring these diverse cases, the study emphasizes the power of everyday objects to evoke personal connections, emotional responses, and artistic appreciation, underscoring the subjective nature of beauty and the multifaceted ways in which individuals perceive and find meaning in the world around them.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that aesthetics, far from being a static and universally defined concept, is a dynamic and evolving field of inquiry. Its journey from the ancient Greek emphasis on art's utilitarian function to the modern appreciation of art for art's sake reveals a shift in cultural values and philosophical perspectives. The study's exploration into the subjective experience of beauty, informed by in-depth interviews and assignments with art students, underscores the deeply personal and multifaceted nature of aesthetic appreciation. As exemplified by the diverse perceptions of a flower's beauty, individual experiences, artistic influences, and emotional connections play a crucial role in shaping our understanding of what constitutes beauty. Ultimately, this research highlights the significance of individual interpretation and cultural context in shaping our engagement with art and aesthetics, demonstrating that beauty resides not solely in the object itself, but also in the eye of the beholder.

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