

CPCL

EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF
CREATIVE PRACTICES
IN CITIES AND LANDSCAPES

CPCL Vol. 9, no 2

**Beauty as a
Public Category:
Aesthetics, Politics,
and Urban Space**

Edited by
Giovanni Semi
and Silvia Vizzardelli,
Irene Calabrò,
Zeno Mutton
and Angelica Rocca.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Beauty as a Public Category: Aesthetics, Politics, and Urban Space

CPCL
AESTHETICS



EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF
CREATIVE PRACTICES
IN CITIES AND LANDSCAPES

CPCL Vol. 9, no 2

**Beauty as a
Public Category:
Aesthetics, Politics,
and Urban Space**

In recent years, beauty has reemerged strongly in public discourse as an apparently shared, positive, and non-conflictual category. It is increasingly being mobilized as a normative criterion to guide urban policies, architectural practices, territorial transformations, lifestyles, governance of bodies, and collective imaginaries. On the other hand, beauty has been also mobilized by local collectives and dwellers, to reproduce or context such practices and transformations, and to imagine alternative futures for their cities.

In this sense, beauty seems to function as a conceptual *pass-partout*: a notion capable of replacing or integrating political, ethical, and moral demands, presenting itself as a desirable goal where the language of justice, conflict, or equality appears more controversial. Rather than a “just world,” a “beautiful world” is invoked; rather than a fair city, a “beautiful” city; rather than a good life, a “beautiful” life. This opens the reflection on how beauty – and its conceptual history – is mobilized, problematized, and pluralized, in the dialogues between the institutional and public spheres.

The call aims to critically question this overflow of beauty from the aesthetic domain into public use, exploring its theoretical, political, and cultural implications. The goal is not to defend or deny beauty, but to problematize its status as a historically determined aesthetic category, as a normative device in public discourse, and as an operational criterion in fields such as architecture, urban planning, consensus building, collective action, and the management of space and bodies.



EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF
CREATIVE PRACTICES
IN CITIES AND LANDSCAPES

CPCL Vol. 9, no 2

**Beauty as a
Public Category:
Aesthetics, Politics,
and Urban Space**

The call also aims to critically reconceptualize the changing role of beauty in today's everyday rituals, particularly with regard to the impact of the abundance of images on social and mobile media on aesthetic formation and education in contemporary societies. Media surfaces are increasingly competing with urban scenography, which was formerly considered to provide the framework for a society's sensory and emotional development. Consider, for example, the murals, ornaments, fountains, obelisks and statues in European cities, which seem to be increasingly replaced by AI-produced and manipulated images of 'ideal' beauty. One topic could be the beautification techniques, i.e. the ideology of embellishment, that social media focuses on.

Particular attention will be paid to the internal tensions within the concept of beauty (harmony and conflict, consensus and dissent, design and side effects) and its relationships with neighboring categories such as the sublime, the ugly, atmosphere, style, decorum, and degradation.



EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF
CREATIVE PRACTICES
IN CITIES AND LANDSCAPES

CPCL Vol. 9, no 2

Beauty as a Public Category: Aesthetics, Politics, and Urban Space

Thematic areas and possible variations

We invite contributions that address the following topics, among others, from a theoretical, historical, aesthetic, social or interdisciplinary perspective:

1. *Beauty as an aesthetic category*: Genealogies of the concept of beauty; ancient and modern beauty; the beauty of ugliness; the relationship between beauty and the sublime; modern and contemporary critiques of beauty as a norm.
2. *Public use of beauty and consensus building*: Beauty as a depoliticized signifier; the aestheticization of politics; beauty as a post-political dispositif; the normative use of beauty in public discourse.
3. *Architecture, urban planning, and public space*: Beauty as a design criterion; exclusive aesthetic models; beauty as a side effect; gentrification, touristification, and urban policies.
4. *Atmospheres and sensory experience*: Theories of atmospheres; public space and affectivity; design and extractive risk; interdisciplinary comparisons.
5. *Decorum, degradation, and the right to beauty*: Beauty and social regulation; conflicts over decorum; civic practices; spatial inequalities.
6. *The beautification of urban ugliness*: Since the radical transformation of the aesthetic perception of cities brought about by the Industrial Revolution, there have been many cases of urban ugliness being redefined from ugly to beautiful thanks to architectural theories, but also thanks to literary, artistic, photographic and cinematographic creations.



EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF
CREATIVE PRACTICES
IN CITIES AND LANDSCAPES

CPCL Vol. 9, no 2

**Beauty as a
Public Category:
Aesthetics, Politics,
and Urban Space**

7. *Urban void as decorum*: In urban density, the void represents a spatial device that generates different forms of perception of “beauty” or generates different “forms of beauty”, from the contemplation of monuments (think of the early 20th-century policy of reducing density to emphasise monumental elements) to the fascination with the lost city, from the construction of urban scenes (the square) to spare space as the creation of places of uncertainty and relationships between the solid elements of the city.
8. *Beauty and urban scenography*: Beauty as a surface phenomenon, and as a means of rendering the invisible visible, or conversely, of covering up and oppressing the undeniable conflicts of contemporary societies. What does it mean today that Friedrich Nietzsche characterized ancient Greek culture as born from the concept of ‘superficiality out of depth’ (Nietzsche)?
9. *Beauty, empty signs and simulacra*: The beauty of the city and the formalization and ritualization of everyday life.
10. *Marginal territories and landscape*: Aestheticization of villages; invention of tradition; beauty of the landscape and extractive processes.
11. *Bodies and subjectivity*: Cosmetic surgery; beauty and gender; normativity of bodies; psychosocial Effects.
12. *(Post-)Cinema, images, and space*: (Post-)Cinema and beauty; the sublime and the politics of images; cities, landscape, and visibility.



EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF
CREATIVE PRACTICES
IN CITIES AND LANDSCAPES

CPCL Vol. 9, no 2

Beauty as a Public Category: Aesthetics, Politics, and Urban Space

Edited by
Giovanni Semi
and Silvia Vizzardelli,
Irene Calabrò,
Zeno Mutton
and Angelica Rocca.

Editorial guidelines

Theoretical essays, case studies, interdisciplinary readings, visual contributions and nonfiction experiments on these liminal figures are welcome.

CPCL accepts full papers in English, up to **6,000 words**, including footnotes and bibliography with flexibility to be agreed upon.

Language: English. Submission: authors must clearly indicate the relevant call for papers at the beginning of the text or in the submission system.

Contributions that critically rework works already published in other languages are welcome.

All contributions will be subject to anonymous peer review.

Manuscripts should be submitted online at cpcl.unibo.it

CPCL does not accept email submissions.

Participating in the shaping of this issue and subsequent issues of the Aesthetics series are: **Editors** | Pierpaolo Ascari and Andrea Borsari; **Scientific Board** | PPierandrea Amato, Stefano Catucci, Filippo Fimiani, Jörg H. Gleiter, Elena Tavani, Matteo Vegetti, Silvia Vizzardelli; **Editorial Staff** | Aurosa Alison, Francesco Di Maio, Daniel Finch-Race, Elena Girelli, Ivano Gorzanelli, Zeno Mutton, Claudia Nigrelli.

CPCL Vol. 9, no. 2

31 May July 2026

mid/end of June

Timeline

Abstract submission (optional but recommended)

Submission of full articles