Psychological approaches to art appreciation

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Abstract:
Art is a unique feature of human experience and several approaches aim to understand what the psychological aspects of this uniqueness are. Art appreciation involves the complex interplay among stimuli, perceiver and contexts, which have been discussed as eliciting a special combination of aesthetic judgments and aesthetic emotions. Based on our model of aesthetic appreciation (Leder et al., 2004), we conducted studies to understand the nature of stylistic processing (Augustin et al., 2008), the dependence of art appreciation of the class of artworks (Belke et al. in press) as well as the complex interplay of the variables involved between these factors. For the latter, we conducted a study in which we measured differences in preferences for classical, abstract, and modern artworks (Leder et al., in press). Using structural equation modeling, we assessed the contribution of emotion, arousal, and comprehension as determining factors of art appreciation. The implications of these studies are discussed in respect to underlying theoretical foundations. Moreover, I will discuss what future research in light of these recent findings seems warranted.

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