CALL FOR CHAPTERS

Aesthetospheres: Aesthetics and Critical Theory according to Rodrigo Duarte

Edited volume in honor of Rodrigo Duarte

Rodrigo Duarte obtained his Ph.D. at the University of Kassel (Germany) in 1990 and the same year became a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte, Brazil). From 2006 to 2014, he served as president of the Brazilian Association for Aesthetics (ABRE), and in 2022, he became the first Latin American to hold the position of director of the International Association of Aesthetics (IAA).

According to Christoph Türcke [1], Duarte's work marks a cultural difference in Critical Theory. The global economy and cultural industries appear differently from the Brazilian perspective compared to the European or North-American perspectives. It is precisely the peculiarities of his country that he brings to the discourse of Critical Theory. In recent decades, Rodrigo Duarte has also extensively explored a wide range of authors and themes, including Vilém Flusser, anthropophagy, and Brazilian aesthetics.

The concept of the volume *Aesthetospheres: Aesthetics and Critical Theory according to Rodrigo Duarte* is conceived by its editors Daniel Pucciarelli and Luciana Nacif to honor the Brazilian philosopher within *Transcultural Aesthetics: An International Association for Aesthetics (IAA) Book Series* (Brill), under the supervision of its series editor, Manfred Milz.

The editors welcome abstracts (in English) between a minimum of 500 and a maximum of 700 words.

Deadline for abstract submission: July 30th, 2024.

Please email your abstract to arelli@gmail.com and nacif.lu@gmail.com

Final contributions (in English) are ideally limited to a maximum of 7,000 words (including notes).

Deadline for the final submission: November 30th, 2024.

We invite authors to submit their work in relation to Duarte’s publications in one of the seven axes listed below.

**WORKING AXES**

1. **Aesthetospheres**

The concept of the "aesthetosphere," developed by Rodrigo Duarte in the paper "Theses on the Aesthetosphere" [2], represents one of the author's most interesting and original contributions to contemporary aesthetics. In general, aesthetospheres are aesthetic environments where there is a convergence of organized sensory stimuli that evoke aesthetic pleasure. Specifically, for these environments to be classified as aesthetospheres, the stimuli must simultaneously engage at least three of the five human senses (vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) which characterizes aesthetospheres as essentially synesthetic and polymedial.

Moreover, concerning their instauration, aesthetospheres predominantly manifest in urban or urban-like settings, in contrast to the long-standing Western tradition of confining artistic experiences to enclosed or regulated spaces. This disposition inherently renders aesthetospheres as open and democratic, typically emerging through collective or communal efforts, allowing for spontaneity among participants, and often reflecting a hybridization of cultural influences, incorporating Afro-descendant, indigenous, Oriental, and other contributions alongside their customary (e.g., Western) elements.

2. **Aesthetic-social constructs**

The category of "aesthetic-social constructs" emerges as a contribution by Rodrigo Duarte aimed at acknowledging the significant heterogeneity and diversity of aesthetic constructs in Contemporaneity. Indeed, aesthetic-social constructs are conceptualized as artistic-sensory phenomena that defy traditional categorizations of aesthetic manifestations. They neither strictly adhere to the concept of autonomous works of art (in the sense of the European tradition), nor cultural commodities, nor phenomena deeply rooted in popular culture. Instead, they represent a complex amalgamation of these various types.

According to Duarte, within aesthetic-social constructs, there is “the presence […] of a negativity of mixed character, i.e., not only aesthetic, since the formal criteria would not be observed here, but also aesthetic,
since the adherence [...] to this movement presupposes the cultivation of a certain type of expressive language – sound, visual, scenic, discursive or corporeal. In this case, negativity, instead of being translated exclusively into the aesthetic element, continually oscillates between this and an ethical-political positioning of radical transformation of what exists” [3].

3. Cultural industry 2.0

For some decades now, a broad debate has been ongoing about the impacts of the internet and the new media on various social spheres, ranging from artistic production to the world of work, from personal life to social interaction. Particularly in the sphere of culture and the arts, one of the questions that arises in this context concerns the contemporary validity of theories and aesthetic categories such as the so-called "classical theory of the Culture Industry,” as presented by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in their work "Dialectic of Enlightenment” (1944).

This is where Rodrigo Duarte’s contribution, significantly entitled “Cultural Industry 2.0” [4], comes into play. In this paper, Duarte aims to demonstrate how the “five operators” of the “classic” culture industry (i.e., retroactive manipulation, confiscation of schematicism, domestication of style, depotentialization of the tragic and fetishism of cultural merchandise) remain fully applicable even in the age of the new technologies.

4. Vilém Flusser's post-history

Rodrigo Duarte stands as one of Flusser's main commentators from Brazil. In “Vilém Flusser's Media Theory Between History and Geography”[5], Duarte asserts that the philosophical background of Flusser's media theory lies in his approach on “post-history”, i.e., which characterizes contemporary society dominated by apparatuses, operated by functionaries, and producing technical images that rules over our daily routine. According to Flusser, the current unfavorable state of affairs stems from the prevalence, in typical communication within post-history, of amphitheatric discourses over networked dialogues. People passively consume content presented in the discourse of mass culture and subsequently engage in unfruitful and uncreative discussions in networked dialogues. According to Duarte, “Flusser’s theory suggests that an adequate example of this perverse symbiosis of amphitheatric discourse and networked dialogue is precisely the industry of entertainment.”

Duarte argues that Flusser's media theory can be interpreted, at least partially, as a consequence of his over thirty-year stay in Brazil. In "Phenomenology of the Brazilian," Flusser introduces the concept of the African element as the most significant constituent of Brazil's "deep culture", pointing, therefore, to “the central question, whether a strong popular culture can effectively neutralize the aforementioned perverse effects of mass culture.” Brazil offers numerous examples of cultural phenomena that seem to resist manipulation by the mass media. In this regard, Duarte posits that Flusser's media philosophy, stemming from his theoretical foundation of post-history, was influenced, at least in part, by his experiences in Brazil.

5. Anthropophagy

In the text “Oswald de Andrade's Anthropophagy as a Model of Transcultural Aesthetics”[6], Duarte asserts that “aiming at inspiration for a project of an authentic Brazilian culture, Oswald de Andrade proposed that the cases in which Brazilian indigenous ate white European colonizers could be metaphorically understood as an operation of both confronting their oppressive and violent actions in Brazil and also the opportunity to assimilate their qualities that could be useful for the aboriginals own purposes.” According to the anthropophagic viewpoint, one of the most important procedures of anthropophagy is turning taboos into
totems, liberating “what was repressed and subterranean, thus overcoming the arrogance of the Western World towards the rest of the planet.”

Duarte argues that “Andrade’s Anthropophagy appears today as a powerful proposal for the closest interpenetration of very different cultures, not only establishing a complete equivalence between them, thus confronting all kinds of Eurocentrism, but also claiming for a kind of historical compensation for the harms that Western colonizers inflicted on indigenous population all over the world. And the most important thing for us, researchers in the field of aesthetics and philosophy of art, is that this proposal is underpinned by an aesthetic viewpoint that incorporates social, ethical, and political elements.”

6. Modes of presence

In the text published in 2019, "Modes of Presence in Contemporary Aesthetic Manifestations" [7], Duarte presented reflections on the specific characteristics of elements associated with the aesthetic perception of phenomena, outlining four modalities of sensory stimuli linked to the apprehension of cultural and artistic phenomena, which he termed "modes of presence".

The first modality, "irrepresentation," is a neologism denoting phenomena associated with sound. It acknowledges that sound does not represent anything beyond itself, and the artistic language originating from the arrangement of sound elements is known for being "non-significant". The second modality, "presentation," encompasses phenomena that replicate the contours and other perceptible elements (shapes, colors, lines, etc.) of what is the object of our visual perception. The third modality, "representation," pertains to discursive language and is also linked to visuality, as texts have historically held significant importance in human civilization, with the graphical form of language — highly mediated — assuming a primary function in this modality. The fourth modality, "perpresentation," is a non-dictionary term where the Latin prefix "per" denotes completeness. In this context, it signifies the convergence of the three basic modes of presence (irrepresentation, presentation, and representation) into a single aesthetic phenomenon. This mode of presence is characterized as essentially "polymedial".

According to Duarte, his focus on "modes of presence" serves as a theoretical framework for understanding contemporary aesthetic phenomena. Through a radical critique of today's media phenomena, Duarte aims to combat what Christoph Türcke termed "aesthetic exploitation" [8] — a systemic aggression against individuals through their sensory experiences, complementing the physical and psychological strains they face in the modern world. It is believed that by comprehending the mechanisms behind this type of exploitation, potential victims may take precautions, thereby becoming less susceptible to its severe social, political, and psychological consequences.

7. Brazilian Aesthetics

Duarte delves into the works of contemporary Brazilian aesthetes to highlight their relevance to international readers. Special attention is given to Benedito Nunes' most significant books: Passage to the poetic. Philosophy and poetry in Heidegger, and The Drama of Language. A Reading of Clarice Lispector. Furthermore, Duarte emphasizes Flusser's recognition of the significance of Nunes' contributions about Clarice Lispector’s work on a global scale.

In addition to Rodrigo Duarte's reception of the work of Brazilian aesthetes, his exploration of Brazilian and Latin American artists and cultural movements, such as Tropicália [9], is noteworthy.
The editors wish to emphasize that this call is open to all scholars in the fields of aesthetics and philosophy, especially those who find an elective affinity between their own concepts and those outlined above and proposed by Rodrigo Duarte.

Any formulation that may inspire intellectual engagement with our promotion of Rodrigo’s concepts at this juncture — through this proposal — is welcomed here.