

This article was downloaded by:[University of California Irvine]  
On: 5 March 2008  
Access Details: [subscription number 764697333]  
Publisher: Routledge  
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954  
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Consumption Markets & Culture

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713455353>

### The aesthetics of consumption and the consumer as an aesthetic subject

Alladi Venkatesh<sup>a</sup>; Laurie A. Meamber<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The Paul Merage School of Business, University of California, Irvine, USA

<sup>b</sup> George Mason University, Fairfax, USA

Online Publication Date: 01 March 2008

To cite this Article: Venkatesh, Alladi and Meamber, Laurie A. (2008) 'The aesthetics of consumption and the consumer as an aesthetic subject', *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 11:1, 45 - 70

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/10253860701799983

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10253860701799983>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## The aesthetics of consumption and the consumer as an aesthetic subject

Alladi Venkatesh<sup>a\*</sup> and Laurie A. Meamber<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The Paul Merage School of Business, University of California, Irvine, USA; <sup>b</sup>George Mason University, Fairfax, USA

(Final version received September 2007)

This paper examines aesthetics in everyday consumption practices and patterns. Combining aesthetic theory with prior work of consumer scholars to support our theoretical framework, we investigate empirically the following issues: the integration of aesthetics into everyday consumption, the distinction between everyday aesthetics and of the arts, and the relationship between aesthetics and the construction of meaning and identity. In addition, we introduce the idea of the consumer as an aesthetic subject. The data also shed light on the following aspects of aesthetic consumption: intrinsic value versus instrumental value, emotions, sensory pleasure, beauty, context, and taste formation.

**Keywords:** consumption; aesthetics; art; identity; aesthetic subject

### Introduction

Recently, consumer scholars have argued that as commercial influences on popular culture increase, aesthetic images make their way into everyday consumption (Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003; Brown and Patterson 2000; Maclaran and Brown 2005; Schroeder 2006). Similar ideas have also been echoed in more popular writings (Postrel 2003; Schmitt and Simonson 1997). Various studies focusing on such topics as fashion (Murray 2002; Thompson and Haytko 1997), personal care (Askegaard, Gertsen, and Langer 2002), the arts (Joy and Sherry 2003), performance (Deighton 1992), visual images (Schroeder 2002; Scott 1994), and cultural history (Ger and Belk 1995) have pushed the limits of aesthetic discourse in consumer research. Although not cast in terms of aesthetics, the works by Arnould and Price (1993) on river magic and Kozinets (2001) on *Star Trek* have elements of aesthetic appeal. With so much attention being paid to consumer aesthetics, this topic is becoming a rich area for systematic exploration by consumer researchers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of aesthetics in everyday consumption practices and experiences and to examine how these tendencies lead us to consider the consumer as an aesthetic subject. Before presenting our analysis of consumer narratives and research implications, we postulate a theoretical framework concerning aesthetics of consumption.

### Theoretical framework

#### *Aesthetic meanings and consumer research*

In our contemporary discourse, the term “aesthetics” (also written as “esthetics”) has come to possess different meanings (Townsend 1997) or combinations of meanings. The first meaning extends to all forms of sensory experiences relating to arts, painting, and other visual forms,

---

\*Corresponding author. Email: [avenkate@uci.edu](mailto:avenkate@uci.edu)

including crafts as well as music and other performing arts (Holbrook and Zirlin 1985; Schroeder and Borgerson 2002). Second, it includes sensory experiences concerning everyday objects (Forty [1986] 1995). Third, it refers to a wide range of conceptual categories that define aesthetics such as form and expression, harmony and order, symbolism and imagery, beauty, taste, and feelings (Carroll 2001). In one form or another, these three meanings have been absorbed into consumer research. For ease of understanding and to aid in the analysis, in the remainder of the paper we will use the term aesthetics inclusively, unless the discussion warrants, without regard to the philosophical distinctions emanating from the categorization of objects and experiences into high art and low art, decorative art, and popular culture (Carroll 1998).

Beginning with Kotler's (1972) idea of the generic concept of marketing, much attention in both scholarly and practitioner-oriented research has focused on ways to market the arts and segment arts markets, as well as on marketing mix variables, especially in relationship to performing arts subscription models. As Semenik (1987) points out, arts managers embraced the marketing perspective and began to adopt marketing tools and techniques. Representative academic research that focused on arts marketing issues includes: Bamossy and Semenik's (1981) study of motivators for performing arts consumption; Currim et al.'s (1981) examination of the factors influencing subscription purchase of arts programs in general; Andreassen and Belk's (1980) work on family life cycle and theatre and symphony attendance; and Belk and Andreassen's (1980) research on "co-patronage" patterns." Some recent work that falls under this category, but that accounts for additional social and cultural complexity, includes Caldwell and Woodside's (2001) comprehensive models of buying and consuming systems for the performing arts, Garbarino and Johnson's (1999) work on trust and commitment issues in theatre patronage, and Askegaard's (1999) discussion of image marketing for the performing arts.

Although the marketing and consumer literature on aesthetics is somewhat limited, it is not insignificant (Bloch 1995; Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003; Holbrook and Huber 1979; Levy and Czepiel 1974; Wallendorf 1979). From the firm side, a good example is the work of Schmitt and Simonson (1997) that focuses on brand images and identity issues through the management of product and/or corporate aesthetics. The main arguments in their book are related to how strategic branding can be employed to interact with product (organizational) attributes, what impacts product (corporate image) elements have on customer sensory experiences, and how this system of interaction creates brand appeals and ultimately brand differentiation in the market place. Thus the emphasis is on the aesthetic appeal of the product (corporate) presentation, that is, its creative execution.

From the consumer side, everyday objects have the potential to satisfy aesthetic needs of the consumers through sensory experiences (Heilbrun 2002). Consumption of experiential-type products, according to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), becomes a need to engage in experiences for pleasure. That is, the consumption experience is a phenomenon directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun. Hedonic experience, defined as enjoyment or pleasure, is one type of aesthetic response that activates the multi-sensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of experience. Taken together, the contribution of Holbrook and Hirschman's collective work leads to an understanding of the notions of the experiential (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), symbolic (e.g., Hirschman 1983), and hedonic properties of artistic (aesthetic) endeavors and products (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Other recent studies that consider arts consumption (and in many cases address arts production issues as well) include Ger and Belk (1995) and Joy (1998, 2000).

Related to the experiential aspects of consumption are the symbolic aspects of consumption as enunciated in the works of Levy (1959), Mick (1986), and Schouten (1991). Studies of symbolic, ritualistic, hedonic, and performative consumption behavior illustrate how individuals collect past meanings, negotiate future meanings, and assemble present meanings of cultural

constructs such as family, religion, gender, age, and tradition through their participation in particular consumption behaviors. These and other studies of such consumption experiences include an aesthetic component that is being discussed in consumer research especially in the context of spatial aesthetics (Maclaran and Brown 2005). Recent work on spectacular consumption at the Nike Town retail store comes closest to the point (Peñaloza 1999; Sherry 1998). Central to spectacular consumption processes at Nike site are both consumers' movement through space, and interactions with intertextual displays that include celebrities, products, and corporate narratives. The architecture, sculptural details, photographs, product design and layouts provide multi-sensorial stimulation that caters to consumer imagination and creation of cultural meanings of competition, exceptional performance, style, and recreation. The consumption of Nike Town is experiential, sensorial, and spectacular. Above all it is aesthetic.

One perspective that has enriched our understanding of aesthetics is recent work on the production and consumption of cultural products, including film plots, artworks, literary texts, and advertising. The content of such works provides insights into consumption and consumer culture, such as materialism, nostalgia, and cultural myths (e.g., Holbrook and Grayson 1986; Stern 1989, 1992). Schroeder's recent work (1992, 1997, 2002) on the artist, the art market, advertising imagery, and representation takes the cultural product framework one step further by linking aesthetic processes and contemporary consumption practices, including an examination of representation as a key process of experiencing the world, and of photography as a vehicle for individual and cultural identity construction.

Our study contributes to the discussion of consumption aesthetics in the everyday life of the consumer by approaching it phenomenologically. That is, we argue that aesthetics are part of everyday life of consumers who negotiate aesthetic meanings through everyday life experiences and consumption practices. Before turning to our research questions, it is useful to discuss four different theoretical perspectives found in extant consumer research that inform our study.

### *Aesthetic experience – some theoretical concerns*

With slight modification of Carroll's typology (2001), we identify four approaches to the study of aesthetic experience: the traditional, the critical (labeled the allegorical by Carroll), the minimalist (or termed deflationary), and the pragmatic.

According to the traditional approach, art pieces or aesthetic objects are valued for their own sake (i.e., for their intrinsic value rather than their instrumental value), and as such aesthetic experiences are self-rewarding. The attitude of the individual is one of contemplation and reflexivity, and the resulting pleasure is, in Kant's terminology, "disinterested."

In the critical account especially espoused by the Frankfurt School (Adorno 1984; Marcuse 1977; see also Murray and Ozanne 1991), aesthetic experience is derived from symbolic activism within the social order. Art becomes emancipatory; that is, it is used as resistance to the existing hegemonic order. Thus both the producers and consumers of art engage in artistic processes that are liberating and fulfilling, and art becomes an autonomous enterprise, constituted by its capacity to promote aesthetic experience separate from daily routines.

In the third approach (minimalist), the aesthetic experience is viewed at its core. The question is simply: how does the individual evaluate an aesthetic object in his/her own terms? The emphasis here is on the criteria the individual uses in evaluating a *specific* aesthetic object at a given moment. Carroll labels this approach minimalist because it deflates the grand schemes proposed by the "disinterested," "contemplative," and "liberatory" modes of experiencing art and gets closer to more matter-of-fact practices. The minimalist approach avoids the essentialisms of the two other accounts and looks at the specific aesthetic object at hand phenomenologically.

In the pragmatic account, attributed to Dewey (1934), all aesthetic and non-aesthetic experiences have a similar structure. Dewey laments that art objects of the “high” or “fine” art tradition have become so venerated that they are virtually detached from the conditions in which art develops and thus have become remote from our daily lives. Dewey exhorts us to return to the basic concept of experience of art and to the sorts of aesthetic experience that make up our everyday lives. For him, the aesthetic experience is not distinct from, but part of ordinary experience. Ordinary experience, for Dewey (1934), has an aesthetic phase in which objects and events arrange themselves in an integral, purposeful pattern that is perceived via emotion. Following Dewey, we deduce that aesthetic experience is part of the everyday experience of the aesthetic object, but is a particular quality of emotional experience that is specific to the individual. It is the individual, his or her actions, and dispositions that define aesthetic experience.

The above four approaches raise some important questions for our study. Is aesthetic experience disinterested or tinted with subjective perceptions? Equivalently, is aesthetic experience motivated by seeking intrinsic value or instrumental value? Is aesthetic experience a generalized experience or is it specific to an art object? In addressing these questions, we propose a model of aesthetic consumption that guides our study and is closer to the pragmatic approach but also contains some elements of other approaches.

### **A model of aesthetic consumption**

We define aesthetic consumption as those aspects of sensory experiences that are made manifest in the consumption of everyday objects that are presumed to have aesthetic qualities, as well as those experiences relating to art and art-like objects and artistic events. Figure 1 represents a conceptual model of aesthetic consumption. The elements of the model are marked A through E. According to Dickie (1971), aesthetics involves two domains of experience: everyday life experiences (A) and experiences more specifically concerning the arts (B). Consumers may have aesthetic experiences in either realm or both in some combination and therefore try to integrate them into some level of unified aesthetic consciousness (C). Some consumers may differentiate their consumption experiences in one domain from those that occur in the other domain. Other consumers may not separate their aesthetic consumption into these two domains, but instead treat them in a cohesive though not necessarily unified fashion. No matter what the consumer’s orientation is towards aesthetic consumption, aesthetic experiences contribute to consumer identity formation and how consumers construct meaning in their lives (D). This leads us to reflect on the notion of the consumer as an aesthetic subject (E). Each of the components of the model will be discussed below in some theoretical detail.

#### ***A. Aesthetics and everyday consumption experiences***

In the consumer research literature, consumption of experiential-type products becomes not only a need to solve problems, as discussed in product market theory, but a need to engage in hedonism or pleasurable experiences (Arnould and Price 1993; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). In a slightly different twist to this hedonic (or fantasy) oriented consumption, Thompson, Locander, and Polio (1990) argue that consumption experiences can also play a different role of deeper significance by providing meanings to consumers and contributing to their identity formation. Taking shopping and exercise as examples of everyday consumer practices, Rantala and Lehtonen comment: “The traditional view of aesthetics as reflection or contemplation of objects is apparent in many consumer practices: shoppers look at products with an eye for style, exercisers evaluate bodies and the teenagers draw impressive pictures” (2001, 79–80). Thus many

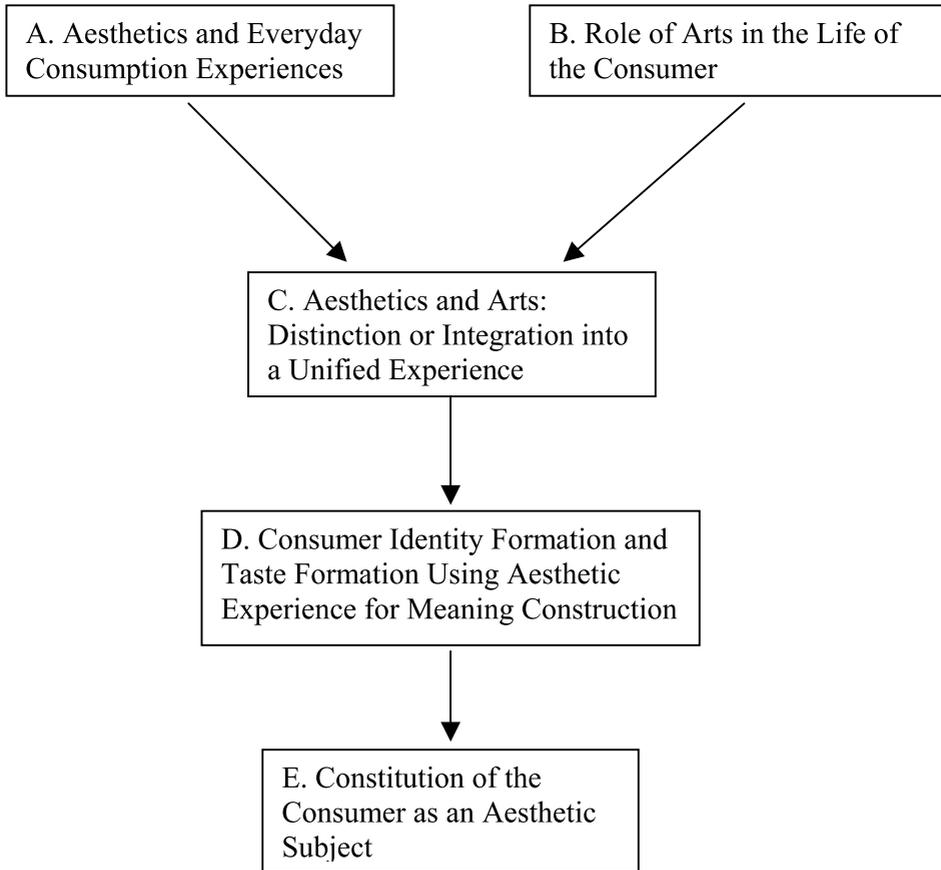


Figure 1. A model of aesthetic consumption.

everyday situations – including clothing and consumer products, as well as shopping, exercise, home decoration, etc. – incorporate aesthetic elements.

### ***B. Role of the arts in the life of the consumer***

Many scholars hold the view that the purpose of art is to bring emotional enjoyment and feelings of pleasure to people's lives (Carroll 2001; Eaton 1988). Recent consumer studies consider arts consumption (and in many cases address arts production issues as well) in this light (Joy 2000). In the field of aesthetics, expression theory comes closest to acknowledging emotions and feelings as the basis of aesthetic experience (Townsend 1997). The two most frequently cited theories in the field of aesthetics are the imitation theory (later to be known as formalism) and the expression theory. The imitation theory is concerned with matters of representation; that is, how well the art object imitates reality. The main limitation to this theory is that it fails to take into account both the emotional involvement of the artist in the creation of the object and the viewer's emotional response to the aesthetic object. In contrast, the expression theory takes into account the feelings and emotions of the subjects emanating from their aesthetic experience.

Consumers either directly consume artistic products or are exposed to popular images whose source can be traced to the world of art. In the former case, as some scholars (Csikszentmihalyi

and Robinson 1990) argue, the consumption of art involves an emotional experience of some sort, and most consider the emotions felt in relation to art to be different from those expressed in daily life possibly because artistic feelings are associated with disinterestedness in a Kantian sense. That is, disinterested individuals (those experiencing detached affect), put aside ordinary concerns of life and enjoy art for its own sake. In the alternative case, as Schroeder (2002) has shown, art becomes part of everyday encounters by entering other institutional sectors of life. Thus, according to Schroeder, art can be the source of advertising images to which consumers are exposed on an everyday basis.

In sum, art can be an important arena of aesthetic consumption in the everyday life of the consumer. However, given that aesthetic experience can occur in consuming everyday objects and events, and also by consuming artworks and artistic events, the next question is how do consumers integrate these experiences, or do consumers differentiate between experiences in these two domains or treat them as related and complementary?

### ***C. Aesthetics and the arts: aesthetic distinction or integration?***

In the history of Western thought, a longstanding belief has been that the realm of aesthetics is set apart from daily life. Mort (1996) labels this “cultural dualism” and argues that the whole movement toward industrial design and commercial art was a way to resolve this dualism by introducing art forms into everyday objects. Forty ([1986] 1995) also provides an exhaustive account of how various art forms from neo-classicism to pictorial realism and abstractionism have been incorporated into the design of everyday objects, from home decor to pottery and such. This intermixture of art and design into a unified aesthetic code is supposedly absorbed by the consumer as part of everyday life. Our empirical analysis will investigate if and how consumers integrate or differentiate these two realms of experience.

### ***D. Consumer identity and taste formation using aesthetic experience***

The question of consumer identity has been a major topic in consumer research (Hogg and Mithell 1996; Schouten and Mc Alexander 1995). One view is that a person’s identity is established through group membership, social class, and other demographic characteristics. With greater accent on consumer culture, individual identities are known to be the result of how consumers relate to their possessions (Belk 1988; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988).

There is also extant literature that discusses identity formation in its relation to taste formation, especially in the context of consumer culture and aesthetics (Gronow 1997). In his philosophical treatise, Kant ([1791] 1964) initiated the idea of taste and its universal appeal in aesthetic formulation. More recently, Bourdieu (1984) contested the universality of tastes and offered the notion that tastes are a class phenomenon, and the privileged classes determine what tastes dominate within the social order and how tastes become entrenched in the social fabric as a matter of class distinction. In consumer research, Holt (1998) has expanded Bourdieu’s work and discussed the formation of tastes as a means to building cultural capital. Our study focuses on tastes at the individual level, rather than at the level of collectivities or social groups. We are thus closer to Thompson and Haytko’s (1997) view of individual identity formation via meanings.

In a similar vein to Thompson and Haytko (1997), Willis (2000) associates aesthetics, including art and everyday creative endeavors, with meaning-making and identity formation. He says that people are driven to make sense of their cultural world and their place in it, which he calls cultural production. Through this process, individuals shape their own persona. This identity construction is ongoing; the quest for identity is not internally focused upon discovering a true essence as an unchanging inner expression, but instead is focused on the individual’s interaction

with a cultural world that keeps evolving. “Art [or aesthetics in our definition] as an elegant and compressed practice of meaning making is a defining and irreducible quality at the heart of everyday human practices and interactions” (Willis 2000, 3).

Thus identity creation involves the aesthetic orientation of individuals, allowing them to express who they are and to communicate affiliation with others. In this way, the consumer can be positioned as an aesthetic subject, using aesthetics to construct and communicate through personalized experiences involving the consumption of art and everyday objects.

### *E. Constitution of the consumer as an aesthetic subject*

In our model (Figure 1), we contend that identity formation using aesthetic experience based on the consumer articulation of meanings leads us to the construction of the aesthetic subject. One of the problems in philosophical aesthetics that is of relevance here is the paucity of discussion of the aesthetic subject. Most theorists, with very few exceptions, have worked on the basis of aesthetic experience and aesthetic objects (Carroll 2001). However, in the works of Husserl ([1913] 1982) and Gadamer (1986) or, more generally, within the phenomenological tradition, “object” is understood more extensively, so that what might be called the aesthetic subject is really a phenomenological object. Specifically, post-Kantian aesthetics begins with a unique form of experience which talks about a disinterested observer. The alternative, explored by most aesthetic theorists, begins with the aesthetic object. Dewey’s (1934) art as experience is a third line, but it pretty quickly slides into the aesthetic experience/object approach. The difficulty for most thinkers with taking the aesthetic subject as a starting point has been that it has the problems of dissecting aesthetic experience plus the additional difficulties implicit in a theory of personal identity.

The limited discussion in philosophical aesthetics concerning the aesthetic subject also reveals some ambivalence, especially in regard to the individual as an aesthetic subject separate from the individual as a cognitive subject. Beardsley (1982) has held the view that the aesthetic is distinct from the cognitive, for one touches deeper affective emotions and has a different neurological as well as cultural basis. For example, when an individual watches the beauty of a sunset or listens to overpowering music or stands in front of a painting and is lost in admiration, he or she is undergoing sensory experiences that are not of a calculating nature or of a rational character. An individual may rationalize his or her particular modes of experience later, but the experience itself is not rational in origin and content. In fact, Heideggerian existential phenomenology goes one step further and questions whether *any* experience can be explained in terms of “an intentional content of consciousness,” which is another way of questioning “cognitivism, or the information processing model of the mind” as a valid basis for explaining experiential modes (Dreyfus 1991, 5). That is, there are no rules of how one experiences an object. Experience simply *is*. Thus, according to this view, aesthetic experiences cannot be subject to cognitive reductionism (Choi 2003). Of course, individuals vary in terms of their aesthetic responses based on personal and social factors, but one must be careful not to confuse post hoc cognitive rationalization by the consumer with unpremeditated aesthetic response.

If we take the phenomenological tradition seriously, the preponderance of theoretical evidence suggests that aesthetic experiences are different from cognitive understandings of the world, are affective in nature, reflective, and contemplative. Such aesthetic experiences can be extended to everyday objects, from the style of a piece of clothing to the shape of a coffee mug to the interior décor of a room. To the extent that individuals view everyday objects or special art pieces aesthetically, we argue that they are doing so in their capacity as aesthetic subjects. Thus the final step of our theoretical model is to construct the consumer as an aesthetic subject. In doing so, we refer to some recent work in the field of consumer research.

In consumer research, the last 20 years have witnessed the emergence of a new paradigm (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989) anticipating alternative formulations to the cognitive subject. For our purposes, without meaning to be exhaustive, we can say that the foundational developments leading to the aesthetic subject, in no particular order, may be listed as follows. In an early work, Wallendorf (1980) stressed the role of social structures in establishing aesthetic criteria. In their original piece, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) presented consumer subjectivity from a hedonistic and an experiential point of view. Arnould and Price (1993) described how extraordinary hedonic experiences can be derived in natural settings. Thompson, Locander, and Polio (1990) treated the consumer as a phenomenological being. Murray and Ozanne (1991) questioned the existing assumptions of consumer research that can be traced to the long-established legacy of the age of enlightenment. Kozinets (2001) extended our imagination to experiences in science fiction by recounting the world of *Star Trek*. Long before all of these developments, Levy (1959) had already introduced the notion that the consumer is embedded in a symbolic world. At the risk of simplification, what is common to all these authors and some others as well is that they were providing us an alternative to cognitivism by demonstrating that the individual consumer is constituted differently through direct experience with objects or through the manipulation of symbols that are projected via the goods he or she consumes. In this study, we are taking this line of thinking one step further and argue, without sounding tautological, that notions of aesthetics and related experiences suggest that the subject is constituted aesthetically in the consumption of objects that have an aesthetic appeal. Hence we have labeled the subject, *the aesthetic subject*.

### Research issues

Following the theoretical discussion outlined above, the inquiry into the topic of the consumption of art/aesthetics suggests the following research questions: (1) What factors influence the consumption of aesthetics in consumers' lives? (2) Do consumers make a distinction between the consumption of everyday aesthetics and the consumption of art as aesthetics? (3) How is the consumption of aesthetics related to the construction of meanings and identity in consumers' lives? (4) What are the implications of our study for the constitution of the aesthetic subject? Implied in the discussion are the questions raised in the section on aesthetic meanings and consumer research concerning the notions of disinterestedness versus subjective perceptions, intrinsic value versus instrumental value, and the idea of aesthetic experience as generalized versus specific to art or an aesthetic object.

### Methodological approach

The methodological approach to this study follows a combination of principles of grounded theory (Spiggle 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1998) and interpretive phenomenology (Benner 1984, 1994; Thompson and Haytko 1997). This research combination yields themes and exemplars that underlie textual data.

The grounded theory interpretive process begins with textual data. The process of coding is central to the data analysis. Coding involves the process of breaking down data into discrete parts, then examining, conceptualizing, and reconfiguring these parts into new forms. The three stages of coding (open, axial, and selective) represent a progression from elemental categories and properties to a high level of abstraction in the form of a story line.

In grounded theory, as with other interpretive approaches (cf. Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Spiggle 1994), finding evidence of variation is important because it signals a need to refine the provisional theory by adding more contextual details to the emergent model.

Once concepts have been identified, they are accumulated, collapsed, and related to each other (i.e., development of “theoretical codes” [Glaser and Strauss 1967] or “axial” coding [Strauss and Corbin 1998], often via “concept cards” [e.g., Martin and Turner 1986] or similar documents that allow the researcher to combine and relate concepts). The story line is strengthened when the data supports the emerging theory and the relationships it proposes over and over again, although the particular details of each case may differ.

For interpretive phenomenology, we followed the guidelines suggested by Thompson and Haytko (1997) in their research. Although we had a set of questions that we asked, there was no predetermined format. Interview questions were shaped according to specific responses from the informants. The primary idea behind the interviews, to quote Thompson and Haytko, is to “allow each participant to articulate the network of meanings that constitutes his/her personalized understanding of [aesthetic] phenomena” (19). Sampling in grounded theory refers to concepts, their properties, dimensions, and variations, not in terms of sampling individuals. Concepts are the basic units of analysis and are developed from a focus on incidents, events, and happenings. Representativeness refers to concepts, not persons.

The informants for this study included a total of 19 consumers residing in the western United States (Table 1). In-depth interviews were conducted using McCracken’s (1988) long-interview procedure. All interviews were tape-recorded and consisted of one-on-one dialogues up to two hours in length between the researcher(s) and participant. The ages of the informants ranged from 21 to 56. Twelve (63%) were female and seven (37%) were male. Sixteen individuals were members of middle and lower-upper socioeconomic classifications, and 12 (63%) were single. Table 1 reports the characteristics of each informant.

Table 1. Informant profile.

Pseudonym	Occupation	Country	Marital status	Age
Bob	computer technician	USA	single*	25
Ann	graduate student	USA	single	28
Tim	graduate student	USA	single	27
Richard	professor	USA (Ireland)	engaged	25
Robert	doctoral student	USA (Ireland)	single	23
Vicki	administrative assistant	USA	single	32
Elizabeth	graduate student	USA	married	32
Brenda	receptionist/undergraduate student	USA	single	21
Cherise	mother	USA	married, children	26
Kathy	part-time teacher	USA	married	42
Peter	doctoral student	USA	single	34
Jane	administrative assistant	USA	single	47
Jim	executive	USA	married, children	49
Elaine	part-time teacher/student/mother	USA (Taiwan)	married, children	33
Marie	aerobics instructor	USA	single	27
Tom	civil service	USA	single	38
Sally	secretary	USA	married	56
Alice	PR professional	USA	single	26
Kim	staff assistant	USA	single	24

Note: \*single – may include individuals living with partners.

## Empirical analysis

We will now examine the various textures of aesthetic experiences and articulations as narrated by our informants. To preserve continuity with our theoretical model (Figure 1), we will present our findings according to the main elements (A, B, C, D, and E) of our model.

### *A. Aesthetics and everyday consumption experiences*

#### *A.1 Motivation for aesthetic consumption*

*Hedonistic consumption that is pleasurable.* In the consumer literature, aesthetic experiences for consumers are often equated with pleasure. Work on hedonic experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) has previously suggested that art is very much related to the senses and sensory pleasure. Marie notes that colors impact her everyday life experiences.

For some reason I am just drawn to certain color patterns. Certain patterns, certain colors I think just look real pretty together. I like bright colorful things that put you in a positive frame of mind ... things that brighten your life. (Marie)

Another informant, Peter resorts to photography as a form of his personal aesthetic consumption experience, one that is pleasurable.

Peter: For my own pleasure. Yeah, I like to do that. I mean, taking pictures.

Q: Just because it is relaxing?

Peter: Yeah, it is part of my work forty-five minutes, take a fifteen minute break routine.

*Immersion.* Immersion is an aspect of aesthetics that for many informants, including Ann, provides insight into aesthetic consumption.

I don't like going with people who don't understand what is going on and keep asking me to explain it to them ... this also bothers me in movies ... I don't like to have to make small talk. When I go to a performance I like to become engrossed in the moment and forget about what is going on around me. If someone goes with me I feel that I cannot remain focused on the performance. However, at museums and art galleries, I like to go with people who I can talk with about the art and their reaction to it. I don't know much about visual art so it is interesting to talk with people who know a lot about it and can explain it to me or with people like myself who don't know much but can voice an opinion. The difference is that in a performance, it is critical to become part of the story. (Ann)

While many of the other immersion narratives referred to aesthetic experiences taking place outside of the home, some consumers indicated that their consumption or ownership of art in their homes was also immersive in nature. For example, Tim said that some of the art objects in his home were passed down, including a Picasso in his bathroom, some abstract art pieces on his stereo, and some Chinese calligraphy.

*Therapeutic value.* Aesthetic experience provides escape from life, can be cathartic in nature, and Duhaime, Joy, and Ross (1995) refer to this in terms of familiarity, surprise, humor, play, emotionally charged experience, intimacy, discovery, growth, self-knowledge, and feeling "right there." The following passages reflect Kathy and Cherise's use of art for therapeutic reasons. Kathy describes playing the piano and quilting as activities she engages in for the purposes of relaxation:

And then, after that, after I was able to get out of doing that, as I grew up, then when I lived back and Indiana and I was working, I took piano again. I took more classical piano from one of the women that was in the film. ... So I was able to take classical piano with her, which I thoroughly enjoyed ...

really relaxing, 'cause you know this was while I was working and it was just a real good, relaxed-type thing to kind of wind down after being a supervisor for eight hours. ... [lost her train of thought] and that I continue to do. I mean I will always work on that, 'cause that [quilting] once again, is for relaxation purposes. (Kathy)

Aesthetics or something, yeah. They make me happy, especially if I am upset and I start looking through my books or ... I have a lot of art books. ... I think architecture is very important. the design of a building makes a person feel comfortable or willing to work or happy or sad. ... They [arts] mean something fun to do, something that is interesting, something to take your mind off ... [pensively] something to escape the hell I live in. (Cherise)

*Novelty and creativity.* Novelty was also an issue that was mentioned by consumers as an important element in art or aesthetic quality of an experience. For example, in dance, theatre and the visual arts, seeing the artists create the artistic product was important.

The whole production was very impressive. I liked the piano and the music, we sat up close. ... Yes, at a concert like that I don't think it matters where you sit because it doesn't matter if you see the performers or not. (Tim)

Many of the informants likewise expressed that arts expanded the limits of their creativity.

Maybe it's ... I think it's [art is] one area that helps develop creativity because it's not channeled into certain ... like these very constricting guidelines. In that respect when I think of the arts I think of something that [thinks] ... the mind is the limit and you just do whatever you want, what you feel comfortable with. ... Just like I said, even if it's just to relax you more, and to stimulate your creativity. (Kathy)

## *A2. Aesthetics in everyday life*

In this section, we discuss aesthetics in everyday life – first at a simple level of everyday experiences and, second, at a more complex or nuanced level.

*Everyday simpler themes.* At a basic level, consumers hold strong beliefs regarding the boundaries of aesthetics in their everyday lives. They are able to articulate the ways in which aesthetic issues enter their daily concerns in a number of different ways.

Ann had been a performer throughout her childhood, and her aesthetic tastes were formed through exposure to art. She is a kind of person who is very much interested in making aesthetics part of her everyday life. In particular, she refers to her preference for conservative colors and style in clothing. As a professional person, she cares very much how she looks. The products she mentions in her narrative are furniture, fashion/clothing and shapes of bottles and jars. Here is how Ann describes her aesthetic preferences:

It depends on the context, but in general, I like conservative styles and colors and to look casual-professional. I buy a lot of natural fibers because they are more professional looking. (Ann)

In order to keep herself updated with aesthetics in the world of consumption, Ann “notices print advertising.” She considers advertising for its aesthetic qualities, for entertainment, and as a means of learning about consumption objects.

Bob is quite certain that aesthetics affects him on an everyday basis. Here is how he represents his views: “The aesthetic quality of anything that I am going to consider buying. ... I definitely take the appearance into account. All things considered I don't mind paying more for aesthetically oriented products.” In his recent purchase of a car, he placed an emphasis on the features of color and styling over other considerations, such as price and fuel efficiency which were taken for granted.

For Elaine, who was reared in large cities and socialized into artistic sensibilities as a child by her parents, aesthetics has become central to her life whether or not it is directly related to consumption. It has a very holistic appeal. Here is what she has to say about her consumption experience. First, Elaine talks about products and then about built environments.

I prefer artistic looking products. ... That is one reason why I think Japanese stuff is selling so good, everything is so neat and clean, and well-designed with some kind of cute graphics on it. That is why you import a lot of stuff from Japan ... it's because their stuff is so neat, cute. ... I think architecture is so important ... I derive pleasure from a beautiful design. (Elaine)

In terms of everyday consumption specifics, here is what Marie has to say: "I mean it is part of why I make certain decisions in what I buy. If it is home decorative items, if it is jewelry, if it's clothing, I definitely look at artistic colors and artistic patterns. So it has definitely had a tremendous impact on my decisions." She extends her aesthetic vision to the aesthetics of exercise. "Well, if you consider exercising creative, ... there you go, that's true, making up choreography and that would be definitely [what] you would consider artistic [aesthetic]."

Cherise, like Marie, regards aesthetics as central to her consumption activities. Although there is no overarching aesthetic theme, she finds aesthetic justification in everyday products such as stationery. She says she uses marble paper. For her, writing notes and letters is an important communication activity, and the medium becomes an extension of her individuality.

*Discussion.* The above narratives provide some interesting insights. The products and consumption situations mentioned by the informants are quite widespread. Some consumers are keenly aware of the impact of aesthetics upon their living (and work) spaces and consumption objects as suggested by Bloch (1995) and Schmitt and Simonson (1997). Elaine, Bob, and Ann consider aesthetics important in their everyday lives, but each individual relates to aesthetics in different domains of daily life. For Elaine, aesthetics is an attitude, an approach to choosing among products, and the environment that surrounds her. Bob values aesthetics over economics when making product decisions. Unlike Elaine and Bob, Ann is more discriminating in her use of aesthetics in making product choices – for certain products, aesthetics is an important consideration, and for other product categories, aesthetics is less important. Marie, like Ann, uses aesthetic criteria when making certain consumption choices related to home decor, jewelry, and clothing. Scholars studying consumption of fashion and exercise have touched upon aesthetic issues, but our informants suggest that these activities can also be considered from a more formal aesthetic framework (Crane 2000; Davis 1992; Thompson and Haytko 1997). Cherise considers aesthetics important in her purchase of writing paper and uses marble stationery to make an impression as a thoughtful and likable communicator.

### *Aesthetic complexities*

In this section, we examine the subtleties and nuances that emerge from consumer narratives. Beyond engaging with aesthetics in their daily lives in a non-reflexive way, the informants express more complex feelings toward aesthetics and aesthetic objects and related experiences.

We already accounted for Marie's hedonistic approach to aesthetic experiences. Here we uncover some deeper issues. For example, Marie gives a cognitive twist to her view of aesthetics by asserting that colorful objects put her in a positive frame of mind. That is, Marie makes sense of aesthetic appeals because of their effect on her mental state.

I find myself going to certain environments more frequently because the environment may have something that's colorful in it ... you need that [positive energy] in your life sometimes and people get stressed out. I get stressed out, over, just worrying about my job thing. ... You need some other

outlet to take you away from things that you just don't have any control over ... art can help you do that. ... Aesthetics makes me feel happy. I seek happiness and pleasure in aesthetics. (Marie)

The hedonistic theme for Marie is a pervasive element of aesthetics. It gives her pleasure, and objects are one way to essentialize pleasure. One is tempted to assert that since aesthetics gives rise to pleasure, aesthetics serves an instrumental purpose. This conclusion is a bit more complex because, as Marie's narrative indicates, pleasure is both a property of aesthetic outcome and an instrumental driver.

In the following narrative, some intricacies emerge as Sally tries to articulate her aesthetic feelings and routines. Her range of thinking involves several factors, from personal idiosyncrasies to visual appeals and design considerations. Sally equates aesthetics with design and states that she will be more likely to purchase a non-perishable object using aesthetic criteria.

Q: What about product design? Do you notice product design?

Sally: Oh yes. I like to buy things that look nice. For example, I recently bought a new coffee maker and I chose one that had a nice, modern design. It was more expensive than a regular coffee maker that was white and plain looking, but I thought I would enjoy making coffee more if I had the nice, black and grey, fun looking coffee maker ... well, I guess if I'm having company over, I guess then I might care about things like the look of the dishes I serve on, the quality of the ingredients of the food I serve ... for example, I might buy produce from the health foods store, because it looks and tastes fresher than what you get in a regular store.

Q: So appearance becomes important when others are involved?

Sally: Appearance becomes more important than when it's just me and my husband. But, the coffee maker makes me feel happy. My husband thinks all coffee makers are the same. But I wanted the one that looked nice because I'm the one who makes the coffee in the morning.

Sally's tastes are governed not only by her personal aesthetic vision, but also by social and situational concerns (e.g., company). If she is with her husband only, she is willing to relax her aesthetic standards. But aesthetic appearance is larger than her association with her husband. She puts a premium on appearance, and this extends to objects (e.g., shoes and appliances) as well as spaces in the home. Sally confirms that the aesthetics of space and environments, such as the home, is a central aspect of a consumption experience.

Elaine's holistic aesthetic appreciation extends to her view of architecture. "I admire architectural beauty. The buildings in Chicago impress me," she says. She further states that she "feels comfortable in the presence of a beautiful building." Just the presence of attractive landscapes and physical structures seems to impress her. It is not so much the possession of objects but being close to them and having access to them that matters most.

In a similar vein, Kathy appreciates what spatial aesthetics mean for her in her life. She is quite certain that aesthetics play a role in her consumption decisions. Kathy grew up participating in the arts, but her husband refuses to attend arts events with her. Instead, she combines her engagement in art with her consumption decisions. Here is how Kathy views architecture and its role:

... I guess because of geometric shapes, when I think about my quilting, I can really get a lot out of different (styles of) architecture. It's like, looking at different patterns on the floor or the roof, if there's something unique about the roof that's just real interesting that you could pick up a pattern with the fabric that you are putting together or an actual quilting pattern where you go to finish the piece. That's a real big help. It's not unusual for me to sketch something ... you know what I mean. (Kathy)

The products that Kathy mentions of specific interest are quilts and fabrics. Asked why, she explains that geometric shapes are important to her, a reference to abstract forms. Although Kathy is artistic, she is careful to note that in product consumption, she tries to maintain a balance between "economics and aesthetics." In other words, for her aesthetics alone is not a

decisive factor. The use of the word “balance” is instructive because as a person of artistic orientation, she appreciates the role of aesthetics, but she also is not blinded by her excessive artistic preoccupations.

Tom, like some other informants, is very much into design. In an interesting way, Tom compensates for his impoverished childhood by investing in aesthetic objects. When he was young, his family did not engage in artistic endeavors in any formal way. In order to escape his circumstances, Tom read voraciously about faraway places, and when he was an adult, he traveled extensively and experienced the built environments that he had read about as a child. In contrast to the meager surroundings he experienced as a child, Tom fills his home with material possessions that have aesthetic properties.

Peter, in contrast to Tom, grew up in a privileged home with parents who were involved with the arts (his father was a member of a light opera company) and aesthetics in general. He, nevertheless, is a bit more categorical than Tom is when he says, “Economics dominates aesthetics. I look for price. I am very price conscious. . . . I am into cheap.”

Peter speculates that aesthetics may affect him at an unconscious level. The fact that he mentions more than once that aesthetics does not affect him at a conscious level demonstrates (together with the fact that he is very utilitarian in his buying patterns) that he remains unaffected by aesthetic considerations in his consumption patterns.

The symbiotic relationship between design and aesthetics, although a bit exaggerated, is expressed in the following way by Elizabeth: “Memorable shopping experience is an aesthetic experience. . . . I am attracted to design and I no longer have to see the utility [of a product].”

The link between design and aesthetics is manifested in many consumption activities. Here is how she further expresses her views: “Aesthetics was prominent in the recent purchase of a condo. In general, design catches my eye. Social occasions arouse my aesthetic sensibilities.”

*Discussion.* We use the above narratives to demonstrate the complexities of aesthetic modes in people’s lives. At a mundane level, many of the above narratives capture people’s feelings about aesthetics in the realm of everyday consumption. At a deeper level, this is not a question of mere cognitive reductionism or a simple opposition between form and function or appearance and utility. The complexity arises because individuals encounter or entertain abstract thoughts and feelings while dealing with material and existential reality. These feelings permeate consumers’ views of the role of aesthetics in everyday life. As such, consumers’ expressions are not vague assertions, but concrete articulations of their feelings and dispositions that affect them in some fundamental ways. The expression in regard to “positive energy” that aesthetics provide is one of essentializing pleasure, not in a vulgar sense but as a way to gain control over matters. Similarly, the informants make reference to aesthetics contributing to long-lasting values, to the balancing of aesthetics and economics at a global level. As consumer culture becomes more and more a visual culture (Schroeder 2002), the movement toward aesthetization becomes stronger and more compelling.

### *A3. Aesthetic typologies*

*Product aesthetics.* Some consumers are keenly aware of the impact of aesthetics upon their living spaces and consumption objects. For example, Elaine states that aesthetics play an important role in the negotiation of her everyday life and in her consumption behavior. Here is what she has to say:

Q: Do you think that the aesthetics affect you on an everyday basis?

Elaine: I mean it is part of why I make certain decisions in what I buy. If it is home decorative items, if it is jewelry, if it’s clothing, I definitely look at artistic colors and artistic patterns. So it has definitely had a tremendous impact on my decisions.

Marie's response is as follows:

I am also thinking about such things as spices. Right now I buy the store brand or mis-matches of spice brands, whatever is the cheapest. In the future, I may buy all one brand, such as "Spice Island" because it comes in glass bottles and looks more artistically pleasing than some of the other spice jars which use brighter colors. The same with furniture and other things. (Marie)

Robert presents a different perspective. He believes himself to be an educated consumer who approaches product aesthetics from a deliberate, critical stance. While acknowledging the role of aesthetics in consumption activities, when it comes to product purchases, Robert is a bit skeptical that "aesthetics may be used to cover up a lack of content. I am for content." Beautiful objects are not necessarily useful objects and in everyday life, he is not buying a product just because it scores high on aesthetics. For example, Robert's most important quote is:

Aesthetics plays a role only if it is related to the product content. You might raise the question, would I buy a can of Campbell's soup because Andy Warhol painted it? Probably not. Personally, I would find it difficult to justify buying a product that costs more because it had some artistic qualities. (Robert)

Robert further elaborates his position by asserting, "I have an eye for interesting ads that tell a good story." What he probably means is that he looks at advertising messages rather critically and, unless they make credible and substantive claims about a product either through visual images or verbal appeals, it is not likely that he will be impressed. Since so much of advertising has to do with visual consumption of products, it is natural for advertisers to imprint their messages on the minds of the consumers. Robert resists the idea of simply acquiescing to visual appeals and argues for a critical scrutiny of the ads for their substance.

Richard, also is rather selective in his aesthetic perception. Something has to be spectacular for him to notice it. If it is spectacular, it leaves a lasting impression. Richard does not customarily notice things that have an aesthetic appeal in his daily life. He needs to be in an aesthetic mode; otherwise things tend to go by him. But he is very sensitive to music. Music grabs his attention. He says, "I need to be in an art-appreciation mode. I might just miss a painting on the wall if I am not in the mode. But music, that's different. Music can stop me."

*Spatial aesthetics.* According to consumer researchers, the aesthetics of space and environments, such as the home and shopping is also a central aspect of a consumption experience (Bitner 1992; Sherry 1998). As indicated by some of the consumer narratives, one of the areas of life where aesthetic experience is quite prominent is interior design and home décor. Since home is an intimate living environment and has special meaning as a living space (McCracken 1989), certainly the visual aspects of home make an imprint on people's minds. Here is how Alice describes her living environment:

Alice: I love decorating. I've been decorating my condo. I read decorating magazines and watch the show "Trading Spaces" on TLC [cable television channel] and get ideas.

Q: What ideas have you gotten from the magazines and the TV show?

Alice: Well, painting ideas mostly. I recently painted a guest room in primary colors, blue and red, and white. I guess it is my patriot room. But I don't think it's too overdone – it looks good. I would have never tried painting each wall a different color if I hadn't seen it on "Trading Spaces."

In a similar vein, Jim considers his home as more of an art object than home:

We have all kinds of stuff. In the broadest sense, you could say that our house is art, given the rains and the leaky roof. (Jim)

Another arena of everyday life that concerns aesthetics that came up during the interviews was the shopping experience. The importance of the retail or service environments (servicescapes) has

been addressed by many consumer scholars (Bitner 1992; Peñaloza 1999; Sherry 1998). For Jim, who spent some years working in theatre before turning to corporate life, shopping itself can be a memorable aesthetic experience.

I remember several lives ago we were living in San Francisco. And I went down to the section of town, and there was a retail store there called "Hot Flash," which really wasn't a retail store. When you looked at what he was doing it was really an art gallery ... everything was for sale and a lot of it was kitsch, sculpture and some of it was mildly pornographic, but a lot of traffic went through. ... So you purchase something for the experience ... you were just caught up in the whole thing. (Jim)

*Personal aesthetics.* Fashion and exercise can also be considered from an aesthetic framework (Crane 2000; Davis 1992; Thompson and Haytko 1997). For example, Ann states that fashion aesthetics is related to her public image and identity.

The one thing that I purchase now with a concern for aesthetics is clothing. I like to look nice most days, so the aesthetic message given off by the clothing is important to me. (Ann)

Jane certainly subscribes to the notion that she is willing to pay more for appearance-enhancing products and therefore price is not an issue. Body care and appearance supersede mere economics. However, Jane's perspective on aesthetics is limited and does not extend to her overall consumption strategy. One would like to conclude that for Jane, aesthetics is instrumental in the sense that it is limited specifically to cosmetics, which she sincerely believes enhance her value as a person. She says, "I notice packaging. ... Probably more on products women use like makeup or facial treatment, things like that. I appreciate the packaging, the beauty of it."

In the consumer narratives presented above, it is clear that Goffmanesque themes of self-presentation and representation seem to be important. Ann wants to buy clothes that would make her look casual-professional. Jane is willing to spend more on body care products and believes price is less critical than appearance.

### ***B. The role of the arts in consumer's life***

The discrepancy between life and beliefs about everyday existence may also be related to the critical nature of art and aesthetic experience. While imitative, formalist, and expressionist theorists continue to debate and write about art, consumers also hold both convergent and divergent ideas about what constitutes art. For most informants, art included the high-art genres of theatre, dance, music, and visual arts; for Bob, art included calligraphy; for Kathy, art included quilting; and most would expand their view of art when asked about their consumption of popular culture to include movies, concerts, and advertising. Many informants also expressed confusion about the definition of art. For example, Bob stated a few times in his interview that "it depends on what you consider artistic," while Marie said that perhaps in her occupation as an aerobics instructor, she was able to experience art on an everyday basis – "Well, if you consider exercising creative, in terms of being artistic ... [unsure, pauses]" – and Robert similarly looked for approval from the interviewer that what he was speaking about constituted art. Perhaps the confusion can be attributed to the debates in aesthetic philosophy. For example, Collingwood (1938) is careful in his writing to distinguish between art and craft, arguing that art involves personal expression of the artist while crafts represent collective endeavors where individual artists are not identified. Of course, the reference here is not to performing arts. On the other hand, Carroll (1998) uses the term, "mass art" to include all genres. For many consumers, art also included "popular culture" such as going to the movies or other forms of performing arts, while still others took a "high art" view.

We find a whole range of experiences in relation to art. It would appear that people are concerned about aesthetics in everyday objects and experiences more so than in their preference

for arts and art-related experiences. However, for those who are involved in the arts, such experiences are very special. For example, Elaine visits art galleries and states:

Art means, for me, art means you describe something beautiful in the world and beautiful in your life. Because always there is the dark side and the bright side. Art is just beautiful, no matter what, dancing or music or painting. Basically, I believe those things express the good part of the world so I think that is why I like it. Some things, painting, more towards dark, weird stuff I don't really like. And art to me means another thing. ... It's like, for example, if you are a person living with a bad temper you do arts which can calm you down and can somewhat train yourself to be a better person. ... Art, any kind of art is good. It is opposite of violence. It is very important. [pensively] I think it is very important. (Elaine)

Elaine represents the ultimate Kantian perspective on art as being both beautiful and virtuous. For Kant and other metaphysicians in the Western classical tradition, "beauty, truth, and virtue or goodness are intrinsic properties of an ordered reality, represented in artistic forms (Townsend 1997, 12). Elaine seems to confirm this view. In a similar vein to Elaine and rather eloquently, Bob asserts that the arts are liberating. Here is how he sees it:

I guess the arts make you more aware of your own position within your environment, your interrelations with other people and may help you open your mind to different preconceptions you might have. ... It is a liberating experience in many ways. (Bob)

For both Elaine and Bob, the arts represent an additional dimension that is beautiful, virtuous, and liberating and transcends everyday experiences. Contrast this with Dewey (1934) who believed that everyday experiences and artistic experiences are very similar in substance. Bob's position resembles more closely the critical approach to aesthetic experience as discussed by the Frankfurt School. One conclusion, if somewhat elitistic, is that the arts transcend the ordinary, routinized and conventional means of expression in daily life.

The informants in this study emphasized the hedonic aspect of aesthetic consumption experiences of art itself. For example, the following passage by Ann points to the pleasurable aspect of going to performances that allow her to confront negative emotions. "I enjoy challenging my intellect and feeling something deeply, such as sadness, depression, that I normally do not feel in my everyday life."

Not everybody is able to relate to arts in this way. For Richard, art is neither a preoccupation nor a diversion. He is conscious of arts in his life but he is selective.

Q: Moving on to the arts in general, do they impact you in any way in everyday life?

Richard: Probably not. I do think that I separate art. I have modes ... you could have a really nice painting in this office and I would not see it unless I am in art appreciation mode. ... The arts in general, don't jump out at me, like with a lot of people. ... On the other hand, with music, it is more likely to happen with popular music, a song will come on the radio and I will stop and listen. In general, not ... if I am in work mode then no.

For one of our informants, Vicki, the arts have no place in her life. Although she participated in the arts as a child, Vicki today has no contact with arts and does not feel the need to. In her mind, the arts are distant and have no immediate relevance.

### ***C. Everyday aesthetics and the arts: distinction or integration***

The relationship between the arts and everyday aesthetics exhibits some interesting symbiotic patterns. We note three distinct patterns. In the first case, artistic experiences influence everyday aesthetic choices. This is a strong relationship. In some instances, everyday aesthetics display similar properties to art although there may not be any direct relationship between the two. Finally, there are informants for whom neither the arts nor aesthetics matter much.

For some of our informants, aesthetic notions of everyday objects overlap with properties of high art, especially in regard to forms, shapes, and colors. In other words, consumer tastes in the arts are transferred to everyday objects. There are also instances where the consumption of aesthetics in daily life is a direct substitute for the consumption of art.

Sally and Kathy mentioned these ideas in their narratives. For Sally, decorating ideas have come from visiting museums. Kathy has taken inspiration from architectural design in creating new quilting patterns. Ann is another example of a consumer whose consumption of art has impacted her consumption of aesthetics in her daily life. Regarding her notions of art or artistic endeavors, although she is not directly involved in them on a regular basis, Ann likes artistic-oriented products. She sublimates art into everyday aesthetic experiences. She certainly notices the architectural beauty of buildings, especially when she travels. Her interest in architecture was triggered when she was buying a house. Thus context comes into play. "I certainly go for the aesthetic quality of an object or place" mentions Ann. She also says, "I notice it [aesthetics] when I travel. I was looking at home designs in glitzy magazines when I was recently purchasing a house."

Sally is also very design conscious and is rather sophisticated in her artistic sensibilities and everyday aesthetic encounters. Once again, here is a quote from Sally: "I do make a distinction between arts and art-like objects. I look for aesthetic sources for decoration. Hobbies – arts, crafts, home decorations."

Aesthetics acquire a larger meaning for Marie when she declares, "Aesthetics is art and art is aesthetics." This is clearly a departure from some others who try to differentiate aesthetics in the everyday context from art reserved for special occasions. In fact, the notion of special occasions is a theme that enters her narrative: "Packaging is important when it comes to products purchased for special occasions – Christmas, birthdays, etc."

Jim is totally preoccupied with aesthetics. As a busy corporate executive, he misses having time to enjoy art and its pristine qualities ("Don't have time to enjoy art"). So he goes for the next best thing. That is, he believes that aesthetics in everyday life compensates for art (or lack of it). "People make up for a lack of direct exposure to art by looking or buying artistic products. We have all kinds of artistic stuff at home."

In contrast to these accounts, other consumers perceive little or no relationship between art and everyday consumption.

#### *Separation between art and everyday aesthetics*

Richard was an example of a consumer who, with the exception of music, partitions his consumption of art from everyday aesthetics. He provides an example when he did not pay attention to the everyday aesthetics of his living environment (in this case a bouquet of flowers left by his fiancé) until prompted by his friend. He expresses that he can be attuned to art when he is in "art appreciation mode."

#### *Contra aesthetics*

Finally, some consumers claim that they do not consume aesthetics in either their everyday lives or as art – suggesting *contra aesthetics*. Tim, for example, gives no importance to aesthetic considerations in his consumption activities. In answer to the question of whether he would be influenced by aesthetics in his product purchase, he remarks, "It would depend on the product, probably it would not influence my purchase." Tim's views on formalistic arts, in general, are similar. He states his lack of interest in the following way: "Not part of my life. I know the importance of art and appreciate it [but don't engage in it]."

Similarly, Brenda has a very utilitarian conception of life, and this extends to her consumption practices. Her world is aesthetically limited. She views aesthetics as a luxury and not part of her everyday consumption practices. She is categorical when she says that she goes for cheap products and is very price conscious. This does not mean she has no sense of quality. For example, she says, "Brand name is very important. I go for the brand before I go for anything fancy." Thus a noted brand is her security blanket and somewhat synonymous with quality, but as she says, "Art was not important to my family."

In sum, this section provides us with insights into the way consumers mix their everyday experiences with their notions of the arts. For all these consumers, whether they are consuming art in a formal manner and/or experiencing aesthetics in their everyday lives or choosing not to consume aesthetically, there is a sense that they are making a choice that is intimately related to their notion of self and identity (Belk 1988).

#### ***D. Identity, taste formation and meanings***

According to Barilli ([1989] 1993), Dissanayake (1992), and Read (1965), art and aesthetics play an integral role in the way we conceptualize ourselves and the world. Our study shows that aesthetic experiences serve to foster the constitution of consumers' identities. The relation of aesthetic experiences to the self was apparent in the stories consumers shared about themselves and the construction of meaning in their lives. For example, for Robert, singing for an ice cream at a pantomime performance as a child stands as a symbolic metaphor that encapsulates his belief about himself as an outgoing, successful individual.

Jane is conscious of aesthetics when it comes to specific products such as women's makeup, facial treatments, and the like. Aesthetics is closely linked to the physical appearance and the presentation of her body. She also gives a more transcendental meaning to aesthetics when she says, "Aesthetics is important to the extent that it enhances my value as a person."

For Ann, aesthetics means being able to look nice. Looking nice, or presenting herself in an aesthetic fashion to others, gives her a sense of identity. She relates: "I like to look nice most days, so the aesthetic message given off by the clothing is important to me."

For Vicki, although she chooses not to participate in the arts, aesthetics has a special place – in her physical appearance. She is very conscious of how she dresses and what impression she makes on others. There are two aspects to her aesthetic sensibilities. One is how she perceives herself and the other is how she believes others will perceive her in the right clothes. Both are important to her. In order to achieve maximum effect, she follows an emulation strategy: "I look for models, actors and would like to dress like them."

As mentioned earlier, Bob considers aesthetics on an everyday basis when making a consumption decision. The meaning of aesthetics to him is summarized in this statement: "To me aesthetics is about order and neatness." Bob personalizes his notion of aesthetics in terms of his own experience with his surrounding environment and objects around him. His personal identity is expressed in the following way: "I like order in my life." In summary, for Bob, both aesthetics and arts are important elements in his subjectivity.

Let us examine a quote from Marie in the present context:

I mean it is part of why I make certain decisions in what I buy. If it is home decorative items, if it is jewelry, if it's clothing, I definitely look at artistic colors and artistic patterns. So it has definitely had a tremendous impact on my decisions. Aesthetic environment is important. I see things that attract me and don't realize why and then I notice later on, oh yeah, I kind of like that color or something like that, definitely, yeah. ... Packaging is important when it comes to products purchased for special occasions. Christmas, birthdays, etc. (Marie)

In the above quote, we detect three important themes. First, aesthetics play an important role in decorative items like jewelry and clothing, which enhance the value of “self.” Marie’s identity is closely tied to what she wears. Second, the context is very important; thus holidays like Christmas and special occasions such as birthdays seem to enhance the value of aesthetics in her life. Third, on such occasions, product presentation (i.e., packaging) increases her self-worth and adds to her social capital.

Jim’s identity is established when he calls himself an “appreciator of design.” He says the following: “Sometimes design I think makes up for form and function. ... [Design] compensates for a lack of function ... so design stuff I am attracted to it and I no longer have to see the utility. I kind of suckered into the neatness of it, the visual.” Jim’s eloquence fully testifies to his aesthetic commitment in his everyday life.

While many of our informants, like those mentioned above, related aesthetic consumption to identity, for others, such as Brenda, identity formation was related to other factors. Brenda declares about herself: “I am not aesthetically oriented but utilitarian.” Her only concession to design is stated in the following terms, “Design is important but not for ordinary products.” Brenda is more an exception, for many of our informants, aesthetic experiences carry meanings that are part of their identity construction.

### *Aesthetics and taste formation*

Our informants do not exhibit a common aesthetic experience and given their differing life circumstances, one would not expect them to. This suggests that there is no such thing as a universal taste or universal aesthetic considerations, but they are specific to life experiences. However, to the extent that informants are part of the same culture and share the same set of cultural values and meanings, their cultural framework may have a common element built into it. Within such a framework, each individual aims to establish individual patterns of taste. This is central to the way we conceptualize the aesthetic subject, the main focus of this paper.

One of the key insights from our empirical work is how aesthetic tastes were influenced during the formative years of our informants. The literature on taste formation (Gronow 1997) suggests that consumer tastes are formed through exposure to cultural symbols and visual images both during childhood and in later life. Recent literature on consumer socialization (John 1999) suggests a strong relationship between childhood experiences as consumers and later behaviors. But the literature does not specify how aesthetic experiences during childhood carry over into adulthood. We do not attempt strong theorizing on this issue or claim to establish an indisputable link between childhood exposure to arts and behaviors during adult life. Our aim is to gain some insights into the relationship between childhood experiences and taste formation.

Some of the quotes from our respondents seem appropriate here. Alice’s current love for interior decoration seems to resonate with her museum-going experiences.

When I was little, my parents used to take me to a lot of museums and scientific museums because that was important in my family. ... I always told my parents “let’s go to San Francisco to one of those painting museums.” (Alice)

Marie’s preference for color patterns and artistic shapes seems to have some relationship to her childhood days: “When I was growing up I was very into paper dolls and I played with paper dolls beyond the age where people normally play with paper dolls ... I was in high school.”

Ann’s musical tastes were formed by her piano playing when she was young. “I used to take piano lessons, sing in the church choir and play hand-bells there when I was growing up. I went to a performing arts high school and took a drama class at the insistence of my father and found that I really enjoyed it and that my teacher thought I had talent.”

We also have examples of individuals who did not have similar exposure. Robert cultivated his aesthetic interests much later in life and approaches the issue rather critically.

We lived in the countryside. The nearest town was seven miles away. Exposure wise, there was no theatre, there was cinema, but it was seven miles away. My parents were not very art conscious. ... I remember actually, when I was a kid, my uncle ... my uncle was absolutely opposite of my father, he was very art conscious. He used to bring us to pantomimes. (Robert)

There are also some examples of consumers such as Peter, who grew up with art in his childhood but did not feel its impact in later life.

Based on our empirical examples and related theory, we note that one of the factors influencing taste formation may be childhood experiences (Bamosy 1985). While many of the examples provide evidence as to how childhood experiences are important in taste formation, it does not stop there. In fact, as Jim's narrative shows, taste formation may be a life-long process.

My tastes change a lot. My wife coming from an Asian culture different from me. So we might have some things in our house which seem to clash or be eclectic. ... My tastes change too. Some of the stuff I had on my walls I wouldn't put up with anymore, not because I am bored with it, but because it is no longer my taste. (Jim)

To conclude, in this section, we provided empirical evidence that suggests that aesthetic experiences have a strong relationship with identity construction through appropriation of meanings and taste formation. This leads us to our conceptualization of the aesthetic subject which is discussed in the next section.

### *E. The aesthetic subject*

As noted in the theoretical section at the beginning of the paper, treatises on aesthetics do not deal with the aesthetic subject explicitly, focusing instead on properties of aesthetic objects and on the nature of aesthetic experience. Our interviews with consumers indicate that consumer subjectivity is a vital element of an aesthetic framework. Thus, we consider the aesthetic subject to be a valid alternative to the cognitive subject when it comes to analyzing sensory experiences.

Many of our informants do consider aesthetics in varying degrees as part of their everyday life and consumption. Only a very few deny that aesthetics considerations enter their everyday consumption practices. For those who indicate that aesthetics matter, articulations are different both in terms of their aesthetic experiences and their aesthetic identities resulting from the meanings they attach to material objects and aesthetic experiences. For some, aesthetics are product specific, for a few it is the context or situation that matters, and for some others aesthetics represent a state of mind and being. In some cases, aesthetics represent a sense of personal values or value system, and for quite a few aesthetics give pleasure and therefore aesthetic experiences are considered hedonistic. Aesthetics also concern taste and taste formation. In our study, taste does not become a simple psychological construct as much as a cumulative construction based on consumers' personal life experiences and their social milieu. This explains the variability among consumers regarding the formation of taste, because their life experiences are not the same nor are their understandings of similar experiences.

In terms of the construction of the aesthetic subject, our findings show that consumers locate themselves somewhere within the instrumental and inherent value spectrum and try to balance these two objectives based on the product and the context. That is, instead of categorically stating that consumers are seekers of either inherent value or instrumental value, we recognize that they combine both elements. There are, of course, individual differences.

As expected, aesthetics seem to be linked to emotions as Dewey (1934) and more contemporary thinkers have theorized (Dickie 1971). Consumers use such words as "stress relief," "brightens

my life,” “gives me pleasure,” “feel comfortable” “puts me in positive frame of mind” while a very small number express negativity, suggesting that commercial designs might in fact hide some functional deficiency. According to the expression theory of aesthetics, referred to in the theoretical framework, aesthetic objects produce various kinds of emotion, from simple to complex (Townsend 1997, 79). Normally, the designers of products appeal to such emotions. This link between aesthetics and emotions is a cardinal element in the construction of the aesthetic subject. In the Cartesian world, emotions and feelings have been traditionally subordinated to rational and calculated modes of decision-making as if the latter somehow elevate the individual to a higher status. Based on our empirical study, we would like to propose that emotions and feelings are central to human subject formation, and aesthetic modes of experience should not be compared to rational modes of thinking hierarchically but must be considered equivalently.

Some of our respondents derive sensory pleasure from experiencing the aesthetic properties of objects that they have seen or possessed and enjoyed in their living environments. In the consumer literature, aesthetic experiences for consumers are often equated with pleasure. Previous work on hedonic experience (Arnould and Price 1993; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) suggests that art and nature are very much related to the senses and sensory pleasure. This is borne out in our empirical work.

Sometimes, the context of consumption is important, for no consumption takes place free of situational factors. Individuals invest in an expensive object to make a positive impression on their guests. Special occasions such as holidays and birthdays cause people to think about objects aesthetically and gifts are wrapped artistically to suit the occasion.

There is also the issue of aesthetic taste. It arises because literature tells us that aesthetic taste is a matter of great concern for designers and producers (Heilbrun 2002; Veryzer and Hutchinson 1998). Then the question is whether taste is acquired or innate, or a combination of both. Our analysis demonstrates that tastes may have basis in childhood experiences but do change, and new tastes are formed during the life course.

In sum, our analysis sets out the essential contours of the aesthetic subject, locates the analytical concepts within the wider area of subjectivity, and suggests some of the issues involved in conceptualizing determinate aspects of aesthetic subject. This certainly needs greater exploration and refinement in future research.

## **Conclusion**

This paper is an attempt to capture some key ideas and developments in the aesthetics of consumption. The underlying notion here is that as the everyday life of the consumer becomes aestheticized, we can conceptualize the consumer as an aesthetic subject. Our study has resulted in the following conclusions.

First, many consumers do incorporate aesthetics into their everyday consumption experience, in their homes, product choices, and personal adornment. Second, some consumers consume everyday aesthetics and the arts, and there can often be direct or indirect relationships between these two consumption realms. The meaning of art and everyday aesthetics for consumers suggests that they deal with them both for their intrinsic value and for their instrumental value. Third, participation in aesthetic experiences contributes to identity construction and is related to many motivating factors, including hedonism, sensory experiences, and emotions. Fourth, ongoing aesthetic experiences may lead to taste formation. Fifth, aesthetic consumption implies the existence of the consumer as aesthetic subject.

This paper is not without limitations. Future research may include specific design issues, inquiries into specific artistic/popular cultural phenomena, the blurring boundaries between commerce and entertainment (e.g., products as art/art as products) and how these are creating

new symbols, icons, and rituals and, new ways of having, being, thinking, and looking at marketing phenomena – such as products and consumer environments – and what these changes are doing to traditional concepts such as the brand and retail environments both locally and globally.

Finally, a note on interpretive phenomenology is in order. The challenge in interpretive phenomenology (Benner 1984) is to find conceptual coherence in studying the phenomena of interest and at the same time preserve the divergent quality inherent in the phenomena. In consumer research, and in general, in the social sciences, we are used to dealing with neat categories, dividing the world into well-defined and non-overlapping theoretical concepts, drawing boundaries between them. The reason for this theoretical parsing is to present an underlying structure which then becomes the basis for our theoretical understanding. Unfortunately, the phenomenological world is not always amenable to such neat categorization. Categories are mixed, they are overlapping, contradictions abound, ironies persist, and individual experiences move into other experiences. To impose a rigid theoretical structure on a phenomenological mass is not always conducive to gaining deep insights. This is an issue or challenge that Benner (1984, 1994) addresses in her work, very much implied in Thompson and Haytko (1997), and is very relevant to what we are attempting to do in this study. It is simply that as researchers, our task is to engage in theoretical categorization up to the point where we do not encroach or suppress the variabilities in the data we collect. Thus the goal of interpretive phenomenology is to present a theoretical mosaic that calls for enough structure without sacrificing the informational richness of the data. In statistical terminology, this means that we not only deal with explained variance but tap into unexplained variance – a seemingly impossible task in statistical enterprise but somewhat achievable in interpretive phenomenology.

## References

- Adorno, Theodor W. 1984. *Aesthetic theory*. Trans. C. Lenhardt. Boston: Routledge, Kegan, Paul.
- Andreasen, Alan and Russell W. Belk. 1980. Predictors of attendance at the performing arts. *Journal of Consumer Research* 7 (September): 112-120.
- Arnould, Eric J., and Linda L. Price. 1993. River magic: Extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research* 20 (June): 24-45.
- Arnould, Eric J., and Melanie Wallendorf. 1994. Market-oriented ethnography: Interpretation building and marketing strategy formulation. *Journal of Marketing Research* 31(November): 484-504.
- Askegaard, Søren, Martine Gertsen, and Roy Langer. 2002. The body consumed: Reflexivity and cosmetic surgery. *Psychology and Marketing* 19, no. 10: 793-812.
- Askegaard, Søren. 1999. Marketing, the performing arts and social change: beyond the legitimacy crisis. *Consumption, Markets & Culture* 3(1): 1-25.
- Bamosy, Gary L. 1985. Aesthetic judgment and arts patronage of adolescents. In *Advances in nonprofit marketing*, ed. Russell W. Belk, vol. 1, 161-206. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Bamosy, Gary L. and Richard J. Semenik. 1981. Tangible and intangible motivators of performing arts patronage. In *The changing marketing environment: Theories and applications*, eds. K. Bernhardt et al., Series 47, 154-7. Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association.
- Barilli, Renato. [1989] 1993. *A course on aesthetics*. Trans. K.E. Pinkus. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Beardsley, Monroe. 1982. *The aesthetic point of view*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Belk, Russell W. 1988. Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research* 15 (September): 139-68.
- Belk, Russell W. and Alan Andreasen. 1980. The effects of family life cycle on arts patronage. *Journal of Cultural Economics* 6 (December): 25-36.
- Belk, Russell, Melainie Wallendorf, and John. F. Sherry Jr. 1989. The sacred and the profane in consumer behavior: Theodicy on the Odyssey. *Journal of Consumer Research* 16 (June): 1-38.
- Benner, Patricia E. 1984. *Stress and satisfaction on the job: Work meanings and coping of mid-career men*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

- . 1994. The tradition and skill of interpretive phenomenology in studying health, illness, and caring practices. In *Interpretive phenomenology: Embodiment, caring, and ethics in health and illness*, 99–128. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bitner, Mary Jo. 1992. Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees responses. *Journal of Marketing* 54, no. 2: 69–82.
- Bloch, Peter H. 1995. Seeking the ideal form: Product design and consumer response. *Journal of Marketing* 59, no. 3: 16–29.
- Bloch, Peter H., Frédéric F. Brunel, and Todd J. Arnold. 2003. Individual differences in the centrality of visual product aesthetics: Concept and measurement. *Journal of Consumer Research* 29 (March): 551–65.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brown, Stephen, and Anthony Patterson, eds. 2000. *Imagining marketing: Art, aesthetics and the avant-garde*. New York: Routledge.
- Caldwell, Mary Louise and Arch Woodside. 2001. Attending performing arts: A consumption system model of buying-consuming experiences. In *Advances in consumer research*, eds. Mary C. Gilly and Joan Meyers-Levy, vol. 28, 348. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Carroll, Noël. 1998. *A philosophy of mass art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 2001. *Beyond aesthetics: Philosophical essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Choi, Jinhee. 2003. Fits and startles: Cognitivism revisited. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 61, no. 2: 149–56.
- Collingwood, Robert G. 1938. *The principles of art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Crane, Diana. 2000. *Fashion and its social agendas*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, and Rick E. Robinson. 1990. *The art of seeing*. Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum.
- Currim, Imran S., Charles B. Weinberg and Dick R. Wittink. 1981. Design of subscription programs for a performing arts series. *Journal of Consumer Research* 8 (June): 67–75.
- Danto, Arthur C. 1964. The artworld. *The Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 9: 571–84.
- Davis, Fred. 1992. *Fashion, culture and identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Deighton, John. 1992. The consumption of performance. *Journal of Consumer Research* 19 (December): 362–72.
- Dewey, Thomas. 1934. *Art as experience*. New York: Penguin Publishers.
- Dickie, George. 1971. *Art and the aesthetic*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Dissanayake, Ellen. 1992. *Homo aestheticus: Where art comes from and why*. New York: Free Press.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. 1991. *Being in the world: A commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, division I*. London: MIT Press.
- Duhaime, Carole P., Annamma Joy, and Christopher A. Ross. 1995. Learning to see: A folk phenomenology of consumption of contemporary art in a Canadian museum. In *Contemporary marketing and consumer behavior*, ed. J.F. Sherry Jr., 351–8. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Eaton, Marcia Muelder. 1988. *Basic issues in aesthetics*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Forty, Adrian. [1986] 1995. *Objects of desire: Design and society, 1750–1980*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1986. *The relevance of the beautiful and other essays*. Trans. Nicholas Walker. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Garbarino, Ellen and Michael S. Johnson. 1999. The different roles of satisfaction, trust, and commitment in customer relationships. *Journal of Marketing* 63 (April): 70–87.
- Ger, Güliz, and Russell W. Belk. 1995. Art, art collecting, and consumer culture: A cross-cultural and historical analysis. *Marketing and development*, ed. A. Joy, K. Basu and Z. Hangsheng, 448–9. Beijing: International Society for Marketing & Development.
- Glaser, Barry and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Gronow, Jukka. 1997. *The sociology of taste*. London: Routledge.
- Heilbrun, Benoit. 2002. Alessi: Italian design and the re-enchantment of everyday objects. In *Consumer behavior: A European perspective*, by M. Solomon, G. Bamossy, and S. Askegaard, 569–673. Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall.
- Hirschman, Elizabeth C. 1983. Aesthetics, ideologies, and the limits of the marketing concept. *Journal of Marketing* 47 (Summer): 45–55.
- Hirschman, Elizabeth C., and Morris B. Holbrook. 1982. Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods and propositions. *Journal of Marketing* 47 (Summer): 92–101.

- Hogg, Margaret K., and Paul C. N. Mitchell. 1996. Identity, self and consumption: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Marketing Management* 12 (October): 629–44.
- Holbrook, Morris B. and Joel Huber. 1979. Separating perceptual dimensions from affective overtones: An application to consumer aesthetics. *Journal of Consumer Research* 5 (March): 272–83.
- Holbrook, Morris B. and Mark W. Grayson. 1986. The semiology of cinematic consumption: Symbolic consumer behavior in *Out of Africa*. *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (December): 374–81.
- Holbrook, Morris B., and Elizabeth C. Hirschman. 1982. The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research* 9 (September): 132–40.
- Holbrook, Morris B., and Robert B. Zirlin. 1985. Artistic creation, artworks, and aesthetic appreciation: Some philosophical contributions to nonprofit marketing. In *Advances in nonprofit marketing*, ed. Russell W. Belk, vol. 1, 1–54. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Holt, Douglas B. 1998. Does cultural capital structure American consumption? *Journal of Consumer Research* 25 (June): 1–25.
- Husserl, Edmund. [1913] 1982. *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*. The Hague: M. Nijoff.
- John, Deborah Roedder. 1999. Consumer socialization of children: A retrospective look at twenty-five years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 26 (December): 183–213.
- Joy, Annamma, and John Sherry. 2003. Speaking of art as embodied imaginations: A multisensory approach to understanding aesthetic experience. *Journal of Consumer Research* 30 (September): 259–82.
- Joy, Annamma. 1998. Framing art: The role of galleries in the circulation of art. In *Servicescapes*, ed. John F. Sherry, 259–303. Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association.
- Joy, Annamma. 2000. Art, works of art, and the discourse of fine art: Between art worlds and art markets. In *Research in consumer behavior*, ed. R.W. Belk, Janeen Costa, and John Schouten, vol. 9, 71–102. Stamford, CT: JAI Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. [1791] 1964. Critique of judgment. In *Philosophies of art & beauty: Selected readings in aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, ed. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhn, 280–343. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Kotler, Philip. 1972. A generic concept of marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 36 (April): 46–54.
- Kozinets, Robert V. 2001. Utopian enterprise: Articulating the meanings of *Star Trek's* culture of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research* 28 (June): 67–88.
- Levy, Sidney J. 1959. Symbols for sale. *Harvard Business Review*, July, 117–24.
- Levy, Sidney J. and John Czepiel. 1974. Marketing and aesthetics. *Proceedings of the American Marketing Association Educators' Conference*: 386–391.
- Maclaran, Pauline, and Stephen Brown. 2005. The center cannot hold: Consuming the Utopian market place. *Journal of Consumer Research* 32, no. 1: 311–23.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1977. *The aesthetic dimension: A critique of Marxist aesthetics*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Martin, Patricia Yancey and Barry A. Turner. 1986. Grounded theory and organizational research. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 22 (2): 141–157.
- McCracken, Grant. 1989. "Homeyness": A cultural account of one constellation of consumer goods and meanings. In *Interpretive consumer research*, ed. Elizabeth C. Hirschman, 168–84. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- . 1988. *The long interview*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mick, David G. 1986. Consumer research and semiotics: Exploring the morphology of signs, symbols and significance. *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (September): 196–213.
- Mort, Frank. 1996. *Cultures of consumption*. London: Routledge.
- Murray, Jeff B. 2002. The politics of consumption: A re-inquiry on Thompson and Haytko's (1997) "Speaking of Fashion." *Journal of Consumer Research* 29 (December): 427–40.
- Murray, Jeff B., and Julie L. Ozanne. 1991. The critical imagination: Emancipatory interests in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 18 (September): 129–44.
- Peñaloza, Lisa. 1999. Just doing it: A visual ethnographic study of spectacular consumption behavior at Nike Town. *Consumption, Markets & Culture* 2, no. 4: 337–400.
- Postrel, Virginia. 2003. *The substance of style: How the rise of aesthetic value is remaking commerce, culture, and consciousness*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Rantala, Kati, and Turo Kimmo Lehtonen. 2001. Dancing on the tightrope: Everyday aesthetics in the practices of shopping, gym exercise and art making. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, no. 1: 63–83.
- Read, Herbert. 1965. *Icon and idea: The function of art in the development of human consciousness*. New York: Shocken Books.

- Schmitt, Bernd, and Alex Simonson. 1997. *Marketing aesthetics: The strategic management of brands, identity, and image*. New York: Free Press.
- Schouten, John W. 1991. Selves in transition: Symbolic consumption in personal rites of passage and identity reconstruction. *Journal of Consumer Research* 17 (March): 412–25.
- Schouten, John W., and John H. McAlexander. 1995. Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research* 22 (June): 43–61.
- Schroeder, Jonathan E. 1992. Materialism and modern art. In *Meaning, measure, and morality of materialism*, ed. Fred Rudmin and Marsha Richins, 10–14. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Schroeder, Jonathan E. 1997. Andy Warhol: Consumer researcher. In *Advances in consumer research*, eds. Deborah MacInnis and Merrie Brucks, vol. 24, 476–82. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Schroeder, Jonathan E. 2002. *Visual consumption*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2006. Introduction to the special issue on aesthetics, images and vision.
- Schroeder, Jonathan E., and Janet L. Borgerson. 2002. Innovations for information technology: Insights from Italian Renaissance art. *Consumption, Markets & Culture* 5, no. 2: 153–70.
- Scott, Linda M. 1994. Images in advertising: The need for a theory of visual rhetoric. *Journal of Consumer Research* 21 (September): 252–73.
- Semenik, Richard J. 1987. State of the art of arts marketing. In *Advances in non-profit marketing*, ed. Russell W. Belk, vol. 2, 99–124. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Sherry, Jr., John F. 1998. The soul of the company store: Nike Town Chicago and the emplaced brand-scape. In *Servicescapes*, ed. J. F. Sherry Jr. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Business Books.
- Spiggle, Susan. 1994. Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 21 (December): 491–503.
- Stern, Barbara B. 1989. Literary criticism and consumer research: Overview and illustrative analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research* 16 (December): 322–34.
- Stern, Barbara B. 1992. ‘What’s in a name?’: Aristotelian criticism and drama research abstract. In *Advances in consumer research*, ed. John F. Sherry and Brian Sternthal, vol. 19, 452. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Strauss, Anselm L., and Juliet Corbin. 1998. *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Thompson, Craig J., and Diana L. Haytko. 1997. Speaking of fashion: Consumers’ uses of fashion discourses and the appropriation of countervailing cultural meanings. *Journal of Consumer Research* 24 (June): 15–42.
- Thompson, Craig J., William B. Locander, and Howard R. Polio. 1990. The lived meaning of free choice: An existential-phenomenological description of everyday consumer experiences of contemporary married women. *Journal of Consumer Research* 17 (December): 346–61.
- Townsend, Dabney. 1997. *An introduction to aesthetics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Veryzer, Robert W., and J. Wesley Hutchinson. 1998. The influence of unity and prototypicality on aesthetic responses to new product designs. *Journal of Consumer Research* 24 (March): 374–94.
- Wallendorf, Melanie, and Eric J. Arnould. 1988. “My favorite things”: A cross-cultural inquiry into object attachment, possessiveness, and social linkage. *Journal of Consumer Research* 14 (March): 531–47.
- Wallendorf, Melanie. 1979. The formation of aesthetic criteria through social structures and social institutions. In *Advances in consumer research*, ed. Jerry C. Olson, vol. 7, 3–6. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Wallendorf, Melanie. 1980. The formation of aesthetic criteria through social structures and social institutions. *Advances in Consumer Research* 7: 3–6.
- Willis, Paul. 2000. *The ethnographic imagination*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.