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**Of precious artefacts, utilitarian metaphors and archetypal shapes:
Psychological insights into the aesthetic experience of art, design and craft**

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Abstract:

Nowadays Aesthetics is not exclusively confined to the fine arts. Aesthetics is a way of perceiving the world, as it was originally understood by the Greeks (Calabrese, 1999). Thus, it can be argued that everything in life has its aesthetic side since aesthetics has to do with the set of preferences and aversions that intervene in our immediate relations with reality (Acha, 1990). This way of conceiving aesthetics has brought new and interesting developments to our understanding of the aesthetic experience of art, design and craft. Indeed, Empirical Aesthetics (that based on behavioural sciences such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc.) has acquired a similar status to the philosophical approach of Speculative Aesthetics. Differences about the type of activities, objects and things on which every society places its aesthetic consciousness are now taken into account more than ever (Maquet, 1999). Our emotional experiences have been found to be dependent on our relationship with the environment in which they take place (DiSalvo, Hanington and Forlizzi, 2004). Modal categories such as beautiful, ugly, tragic, funny, sublime, trivial, typical, and novel have been incorporated to the study of aesthetic experiences (Berlyne, 1974; Teigen, 1987; Crozier, 1994; Acha, 1999). And the link between cognition and emotional experiences, substantiated by neuroscientists (LeDoux, 1994), has not only re-affirmed the existence of an intellectual and a communicative dimension on top of the perceptual and emotional ones of our aesthetic experiences (Csikszentmihlayi and Robinson, 1990), but it has also given birth to a visceral, behavioural and reflective characterization of such experiences (Norman, 2004). In the light of these contributions, the author of this paper formulates theoretical similarities and distinctions between the aesthetic experiences of art, design and craft.

Key words: Aesthetic experiences, similarities and differences, art, design, craft.