

The Medienschöne. Evolution of Aesthetics.

Aesthetics is a theory that we use to depict structures of beauty. The question of its quality is secondary. While the work of art belongs to the *Kunstschöne* (art-beauty), technology is a subject of the *Technikschöne* (technology-beauty) despite the fact that 'techne' etymologically means 'art.' The German philosopher Max Bense distinguishes art from technology but simultaneously clarifies that both can consist of same characteristics, which makes their proximity to each other clear. According to Bense, the *Kunstschöne* can be distinguished by its modality of "randomness" whereas the *Technikschöne* is defined by "necessity". Consequently, computers must be ascribed to technology's aesthetics—the *Technikschönen*—since these machines can be nothing more than a necessary tool for people. However, as Abraham Moles recognized as early as 1991, the future in which we live today presents itself as an information society beyond the simple use of the machine as a tool. This construct of human being and machine, society and algorithm, constitutes its own type of object and requires an aesthetic detached from the *Technikschöne*.

The *Medienschöne* (media-beauty) is formed out of recorded and elaborated data. Due to the mass of information and global networking with other human and non-human actors (Bruno Latour), there is a constant exchange of data among each actor regardless of their type. Defining this aesthetic seems absurd considering the speed at which it varies. However, its existence is beyond question, and its entry into human life and, thus, the fusion of machine and non-machine is already underway or even completed. The most familiar representatives of the *Medienschöne* are search engines; more complex and probably more alienating are already social bots, which are now indistinguishable from humans. As one example for literary work, Flarf poetry can be mentioned; here, it becomes clear how difficult it is to distribute authorship. Consequently, the aesthetics of the *Medienschöne* lies in the fusion of two actors who could not be more different. The former tool, the computer, has left the executing hand, and although the machine is a human creation, both are now equal. Moreover, the machine is no longer just the mediator in the shadows. The youngest child of aesthetics now demands a new way of thinking, in which human beings and machines, art and technology, and fiction and simulation are inseparably fused together.