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On the Proper Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature in Design

Abstract:

I will defend a thesis about the proper way to aesthetically appreciate instances of design that incorporate natural elements. My main case studies will be drawn from the work of fashion designer Alexander McQueen, such as a bodice incorporating mussel shells from the *Voss* collection (Spring/Summer 2001). I will defend a version of cognitivism about the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature incorporated in these design elements, according to which a certain amount of knowledge about one's object of appreciation is necessary for its proper aesthetic appreciation. The knowledge I will suggest is necessary concerns whether something is natural or artificial, knowledge of natural kinds, as well as an awareness of the contrast between the appearance of something and its nature. This account of the aesthetic appreciation of design incorporating natural elements can be developed to specify what is aesthetically praiseworthy in certain instances of sustainable fashion.

Keywords:

aesthetic appreciation of nature, design, fashion design, perfume, cognitivism, formalism

1. On the Idea of Proper Aesthetic Appreciation

What does it mean to *properly* aesthetically appreciate something? There is no single way of interpreting this notion, and indeed one might wonder whether the very idea of proper aesthetic appreciation makes sense, especially if it is taken to imply that a certain instance of aesthetic appreciation is straightforwardly either proper or not.

Such an all-or-nothing notion is not what I am suggesting here. Rather, properly aesthetically appreciating something comes in degrees: there are more or less proper ways of aesthetically appreciating something, and the more proper one's aesthetic appreciation of something is, the more one will be able to gain from it.

What does proper aesthetic appreciation consist in? Without any ambition of being exhaustive, I think it will be instructive to consider the following two possible ways of interpreting the idea, which will then inform the rest of this article. The first is due to Nick Zangwill.[1] According to it, the aesthetic appreciation of something is proper to the extent that, in his words, *it opens up more beauty*.[2] One way of aesthetically appreciating something is more proper than another if more beauty is to be enjoyed in the former as opposed to the latter way (more on this later).

On another conception, due to Allen Carlson,[3] a certain way of aesthetically appreciating something is more proper than another if the former is more effective than the other in preserving the subject of experience from aesthetic deceptions or aesthetic omissions. Carlson invites us to consider the contrast between a natural coastline versus one that looks exactly like a natural one, but which has been produced by human design. Suppose we were engaged in the aesthetic appreciation of the man-made coastline, failing to realize that it is non-natural. Our aesthetic appreciation, then, would be defective in two respects: it would suffer from aesthetic omissions (e.g., failure to appreciate its impressiveness as the product of human design), and from aesthetic deceptions (e.g., mistakenly ascribing its outline to sea erosion). Analogous twin failures would result from aesthetically appreciating a natural coastline while thinking it man-made.

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1) Zangwill, "Clouds of Illusion in the Aesthetics of Nature."

2) Ibid., 593.

3) Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity."

This goes hand in hand with Budd's notion that the aesthetic appreciation of nature should be understood as the aesthetic appreciation of nature *as nature*.[4] By this, he means that it is not sufficient that the object of one's aesthetic appreciation should, as a matter of fact, be part of nature in order for someone to be engaged in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. For example, suppose we aesthetically appreciated a certain color hue in the sky seen through a window at sunset, but without any awareness of, or concern for, the fact that it is part of a natural phenomenon (for example, because we are indifferent to whether this hue belongs to the sunset as opposed to a scene painted on the window). This instance of aesthetic appreciation would not be of nature *as nature*.

Note that Zangwill's and Carlson's notions of proper aesthetic appreciation yield contrasting predictions. According to Zangwill's notion, the proper aesthetic appreciation of something is compatible with being subject to some kind of deception, as long as the latter opens up more beauty. By contrast, for Carlson, the aesthetic appreciation of something is proper to the extent that it is free from deception. Because these notions are interestingly different and I do not mean to take a stand on which of the two is to be preferred, in the rest of the article I will explore the conditions for achieving a (more) proper aesthetic appreciation of something in relation to these different notions.

Let me now move to the more specific topic of whether knowledge is necessary for the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature. Theories that assume that some form of knowledge is necessary are called *cognitivist*, and those that do not are called *anti-cognitivist*. Within cognitivist theories, the required sort of knowledge varies from knowledge of natural kinds (e.g., tiger, horse, mammal) to more sophisticated kinds of knowledge (e.g., scientific). According to anti-cognitivism, by contrast, to achieve the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature it is enough to be aware of appearances. Knowledge is not necessary.

You might think that cognitivism naturally goes hand in hand with Carlson's view about proper aesthetic appreciation, and anti-cognitivism with Zangwill's. Indeed, this roughly corresponds to what these two authors have respectively defended (some provisos are introduced later). In what follows, I will defend a certain kind of cogni-

4) Budd, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature."

tivism, and show that it should appeal to both notions of proper aesthetic appreciation. Before doing so, in the next section I will explore an initial case for anti-cognitivism about the proper aesthetic appreciation of design incorporating natural elements.

2. Introducing McQueen's Design Incorporating Natural Elements, With an Initial Case for Anti-Cognitivism

I will begin by exploring a possible case for anti-cognitivism applied to the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature in design. I will draw inspiration from a thesis that Zangwill has defended about the proper aesthetic appreciation of inorganic natural things – for instance, lakes, rocks and clouds, the latter being his main case-study.[5]

According to Zangwill, to fully enjoy the beauty of clouds (that is, in my terms, to properly aesthetically appreciate them) we only need to be aware of their bare appearance, namely, of whatever properties they appear to have, independently of any knowledge we might have about their nature.[6] Bare appearances are appearances of something that persist despite knowledge of its actual properties. An example is the Müller-Lyer illusion: in it, the appearance of two horizontal lines being of different length persists despite knowledge that they are of the same length.

Zangwill's main example revolves around the idea that the aesthetic appreciation of clouds rests solely on their appearance – of solidity and fluffiness, for example. Knowing their real nature (which implies their being neither solid nor fluffy) would not add to our aesthetic appreciation of clouds – if anything, it would spoil it. There are two different claims of different strengths here: the first is that the real nature of an inorganic natural thing is not essential for its aesthetic appreciation; the second, stronger one, is that the real nature of an inorganic natural thing is detrimental to its aesthetic appreciation.

Zangwill takes it to be evident that enjoying the appearance of clouds as soft and springy will open up more beauty than being aware of what knowledge of their true nature reveals – namely, that their nature does not bear out these appearances of softness and springiness. Our enjoyment of the beauty of clouds will not increase

5) Zangwill, "Clouds of Illusion in the Aesthetics of Nature."

6) In the same article, he concedes that knowledge of natural kinds, by contrast, is essential for the aesthetic appreciation of organic natural things.

(if anything, it will diminish) if we draw on knowledge of the clouds' real properties. According to Zangwill, moreover, scientific knowledge about inorganic nature will at best satisfy our curiosity, but it will not "open up more beauty."[7]

Since Zangwill's proposal is concerned specifically with the aesthetic appreciation of inorganic natural things, it will not be my target. Rather, a thesis only loosely connected to Zangwill's, namely anti-cognitivism about the aesthetic appreciation of design that incorporates natural elements, will be a useful foil for what I want to defend. According to this sort of anti-cognitivism, it is enough for us to focus on the bare appearances of instances of design incorporating natural elements to enjoy their beauty. Knowledge will not "open up more beauty." Now, let me show that anti-cognitivism about the aesthetic appreciation of design incorporating natural elements is at least initially plausible.

A whole strand of fashion designer Alexander McQueen's work is based on the creative incorporation of natural materials into his clothes or accessories.[8] The *Voss* collection from 2001 included a series of garments created with mussel, razor clam, and oyster shells. Among these, the so-called *'mussel' bodice* is covered in hand-stitched mussel shells.[9] In the *What a Merry Go Round* collection (2001), McQueen designed a necklace featuring multiple vertical strands of pearls, surmounted by what, viewed from afar, looks like a fur collar. A closer look at this collar reveals it to consist in an unsettling cluster of lacquered pheasant claws. This is in line with the "strong gothic undercurrent" that characterizes the whole collection.[10] The very point of this necklace as a design item is the creation of a contrast between something refined and expensive (the long strands of pearls) on the one hand, and something vulgar and grotesque (the pheasant claws) on the other hand. It is worth noting here that, although originally trained as an apprentice with Savile Row tailors, Alexander McQueen often took a provocative stance within the realm of fashion design, and a lot of his work, including what I discuss here, can be considered an instance of critical design.[11]

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7) Zangwill, "Clouds of Illusion in the Aesthetics of Nature," 593.

8) Victoria and Albert Museum, "Nature and Organic Materials."

9) Ibid., "*'Mussel' bodice*."

10) Ibid., "*Necklace*."

11) I am grateful to Bálint Veres and to Felicia Nilsson for this discussion on these points.

An initial case could be made for anti-cognitivism here. It could be argued that, just like being aware of the appearance of clouds as soft and springy opens up more beauty than knowing about their nature, so does focusing on the appearance of the upper part of McQueen's necklace as light and delicate, compared to knowledge of its nature, namely that it is made of lacquered pheasant claws. Rather, the latter kind of knowledge would generate a sense of horror.

Something similar could be said about the *'mussel' bodice*. It could be said that one stands a better chance of enjoying more beauty only by focusing on the bodice's appearance – on the shapes and colors of the mussel shells, whereas a focus on the knowledge of their real nature would, again, generate unsettling feelings ranging from disgust to horror, in line with Contesi's idea that "disgust is primarily ideational, rather than sensory in nature; in other words, it is primarily elicited in virtue of the idea of a certain disgusting thing, rather than of its sensory features."[12] Moreover, it may seem that requiring someone to know about the nature of the components of McQueen's *'mussel' bodice* and necklace would be akin to requiring someone to have detailed knowledge about the nature of the paint employed for a painting.[13]

Thus, an initial case can be made for anti-cognitivism as the way to properly aesthetically appreciate design incorporating natural elements, at least in the cases of Alexander McQueen's *'mussel' bodice* and necklace. In contrast with this, in the next sections I will show why I think that a version of cognitivism is actually more promising.

3. Quasi-cognitivism: Knowing whether Something is Natural vs. Non-natural

Between this section and the following ones, I will put forward different versions of cognitivism, of different strength, as more promising approaches than anti-cognitivism to characterizing the proper appreciation of design incorporating natural elements. In this section, I will argue that at least a minimal version of cognitivism (what I shall

12) Contesi, "How Transparent is Disgust?," 1012; see also Contesi, "Korsmeyer on Fiction and Disgust."

13) I am grateful to Enrico Terrone for this point, and to Nardina Kaur for a case in which this might be relevant.

call *quasi-cognitivism*) is required. I shall draw on a proposal previously put forward by Malcolm Budd,[14] but with an important proviso.

Budd's conception of the aesthetic appreciation of nature as nature hinges on the more general idea that experiencing something under a certain description influences our experience of that thing – an idea formerly suggested in the context of environmental aesthetics also by Carlson.[15] More specifically, there are descriptions in virtue of which natural things can be aesthetically appreciated as natural. Obviously, one such description is the adjective *natural*, interpreted in a negative way as *not the product of human skill or design* – as Hamilton suggests, this is a platitude that everyone should be able to accept.[16] However, Budd is skeptical about the idea that the mere naturalness of an object could be enough to ground the aesthetic appreciation of nature. He notes:

> How the very naturalness of an object – the mere fact that the object is natural, not its being a natural thing of a certain kind – can properly ground an aesthetic response to it is severely limited, for what is common to all natural items in virtue of being natural is only a negative, not a positive, characteristic: they must not be the products of human skill or design. This leaves only such a possibility as marvelling at the fact that something as beautiful, attractive or remarkable as *this* – a rainbow or the exquisite fan-shaped leaf of a ginkgo, for example – is a product of nature.[17]

As an alternative to mere naturalness, therefore, Budd suggests specific aspects in virtue of which something might elicit aesthetic appreciation of it as natural, such as *being a form of life* or *being sentient*.[18]

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14) Budd, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature."

15) Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity."

16) Hamilton, "Indeterminacy and Reciprocity."

17) Budd, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," 214.

18) Budd is conscious of the fact that, as soon as one attempts to define the aesthetic appreciation of nature in terms of these more specific aspects, an exhaustive list of these aspects is not easily given, and so he does not even attempt to provide one, thinking that his examples will be a good enough illustration of the sort of thing he has in mind.

While Budd quickly gives up on the idea that "the mere naturalness of an object" could be enough to ground an appropriate aesthetic response to nature, I take this as a useful starting point for defending cognitivism, beginning with such a mild version of it that Carlson suggests calling it *quasi-cognitivism*.[19] According to it, knowledge that something is natural is necessary to ground the aesthetic appreciation of that thing as natural. In later sections, I will consider stronger versions of cognitivism.

Let me get back to the two previously outlined notions of proper aesthetic appreciation, and show how they are both compatible with quasi-cognitivism.

Consider again McQueen's *'mussel' bodice*. Its aesthetic appreciation would be largely incomplete if the mussel shells were not acknowledged as natural items, but, rather, as human artifacts. It is part and parcel of what makes this an especially creative piece of fashion design that something that has not been produced by human skill or design, namely mussel shells, can be so skillfully incorporated into a garment. There is a certain sense, therefore, in which knowing that the mussels are natural will open up more beauty for us. At the very least, it will not diminish our experience of beauty compared to just being aware of the mussels' appearance.

As said earlier, from the point of view of Carlson's version of proper aesthetic appreciation, we properly aesthetically appreciate something to the extent that we do not fall prey to either aesthetic deceptions or aesthetic omissions. Lack of knowledge that the mussel shells are natural might put us at risk of falling prey to either aesthetic deceptions or aesthetic omissions – for example, unduly crediting a hypothetical human for crafting them.

It is a further interesting question whether this minimal kind of knowledge (of "mere naturalness," as Budd put it) is also *sufficient* for the proper aesthetic appreciation of the *'mussel' bodice*. One may reasonably wonder whether it is not also necessary that the mussel shells are acknowledged not just as any natural items, but also as the particular kind of natural items that they are – namely mussel shells. Indeed, what is striking about the *'mussel' bodice* is that mussel shells are especially unlikely natural items in fashion design – especially, as part of a garment. In the light of analogous reflections, in the next section I will explore a case for a stronger kind of cognitivism – one that requires not just knowledge of naturalness, but also of natural kinds.

19) Carlson, "Nature and Landscape," 12.

4. Moderate Cognitivism: Knowing Natural Kinds

I will defend a form of cognitivism – to which I shall refer as *moderate cognitivism* – according to which the sort of knowledge necessary for the proper aesthetic appreciation of natural items is knowledge of the natural kind of that item. This idea was originally defended, among others, by Carlson,[20] who argued for it on the basis of a comparison with a case made by Kendall Walton[21] for the fact that knowing the genre of a certain work of art is essential for its proper aesthetic appreciation. Walton's example is Picasso's *Guernica*. According to Walton, only knowing that *Guernica* is a cubist painting allows one to make correct statements about its characteristics. For example, one might wrongly state that *Guernica* is awkward if one wrongly thought of *Guernica* as an impressionist painting. Knowing that it is a cubist painting, on the other hand, will place an observer in an ideal position for avoiding a false statement such as that *Guernica* is awkward. Interestingly, according to Walton, the aesthetics of nature does not similarly require a certain kind of knowledge. According to Carlson, instead, it does, and for precisely analogous reasons as those that Walton puts forward for the proper appreciation of artworks.

Carlson, in particular, contends that certain *natural kinds* (he explicates this notion solely by means of examples: elephants, horses, natural coastlines) can function in the same way as artistic categories such as cubism and impressionism,[22] and likewise ground correct or incorrect judgements. Carlson's defense of the aesthetic relevance of knowing the correct categories is based on examples such as the one that previously mentioned in conjunction with the more general distinction between cognitivism and anti-cognitivism: only knowing that a certain landscape is a natural (as opposed to man-made) coastline will enable us to make correct judgments about it.[23] In this section, I will defend moderate (that is, natural kind) cognitivism applied to the case of fashion design.

Think again of McQueen's necklace from the *What a Merry Go Round* collection (2001), made of lacquered pheasant claws and pearls. In the previous section, I consid-

20) Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity."

21) Walton, "Categories of Art."

22) Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," 19.

23) Ibid., 22–23.

ered an argument for the claim that, in order to find McQueen's necklace beautiful, it would be best if our appreciation stopped at appearances, and we *did not know* that the necklace is partly made of lacquered pheasant claws. Now I want to challenge that claim. Would we really find the necklace more beautiful if we stopped at appearances?

This relies on answering the question: what is beauty? This is an enormous question that goes well beyond the scope of this article. For the time being, let me note that hedonist conceptions of beauty, according to which beauty is connected to pleasure in such a way that what is beautiful will generally give pleasure[24] seem an especially good fit for Zangwill's idea that focusing on the bare appearances, rather than knowing the nature, of clouds will open up more beauty.

This, in turn, raises the question of what is meant by pleasure, another question well beyond the scope of this article. Even specifying it as an agreeable sensation will not settle the following question: is Francis Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's 'Portrait of Pope Innocent X'* (1953) beautiful? Does it give pleasure, in the sense of an agreeable sensation, even assuming that it is being properly aesthetically appreciated?

In the context of this article, I can only make a series of conditional claims.[25] Given the unsettling character of this painting, we can use it as a useful comparison for McQueen's necklace. Suppose we said that McQueen's necklace, taking into account its real nature, is beautiful. If so, knowing its real nature *will* open up more beauty, thus satisfying the conditions for a more proper aesthetic appreciation by the lights of Zangwill's definition.

Suppose, instead, that McQueen's necklace, taking into account its real nature, is not beautiful. Then, even though it might be thought that stopping at its delicate appearance as will open up more beauty than knowing its real nature, we could still say that this necklace has positive aesthetic properties that are better appreciated through knowledge of natural kinds.[26] In particular, if we stopped at

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24) For example, Hutcheson, *Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*; Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*; and Kant, *Critique of Judgement*.

25) The relationship between the beautiful and the unsettling can be traced back, for example, to the notion of the sublime (Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Kant, *Critique of Judgement*). See also, for example, Korsmeyer, "Terrible Beauties", and *Savoring Disgust*. I am indebted to Filippo Contesi, Andy Hamilton and Louise Hanson for discussion of these topics.

26) See Hamilton, "Indeterminacy and Reciprocity," 185.

appearances, we would fail to fully aesthetically appreciate the complexity and the distinctiveness of McQueen's design: "This necklace, made for a collection that had a strong gothic undercurrent, juxtaposes beauty and the grotesque with its intriguing combination of organic materials – expensive Tahitian pearls and lacquered pheasant claws."[27]

So far, I have argued that knowledge of natural kinds will yield a more proper aesthetic appreciation of instances of design incorporating natural elements such as McQueen's necklace. Here is a potential objection. One might reasonably wonder whether the following piece of knowledge is not sufficient for the proper aesthetic appreciation of McQueen's necklace, namely that it is partly composed of items *shaped as* pheasant claws. Maybe, one might think, this kind of knowledge, which is only of appearances and not of real nature, would be enough to generate unsettling feelings in someone observing the necklace, just by virtue of the resemblance between these items and real pheasant claws. This would show that knowledge of natural kinds is not actually needed for its proper aesthetic appreciation.

However, it can be replied that entertaining the thought that the necklace contains *real pheasant claws* will make one's aesthetic appreciation of the necklace significantly different from that which would be obtained solely entertaining the thought that the necklace contains elements that are merely *shaped like pheasant claws*.

Here is another, related, potential objection: maybe, being under the *illusion* that the necklace contains real pheasant claws, even if they are not real, might be enough to properly aesthetically appreciate this necklace and the sort of atmosphere it means to convey.[28] However, at least from the point of view of Carlson's notion of aesthetic appreciation, this would not yield a proper aesthetic appreciation of the necklace: we would be under an aesthetic deception, insofar as we would mistakenly credit Shaun Leane, the goldsmith responsible for lacquering the pheasant claws that are part of McQueen's necklace, for faithfully reproducing pheasant claws – something which he did not do.

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27) Victoria and Albert Museum, "*Necklace*."

28) I am grateful to Darren Hudson Hick for raising this objection.

5. Going Beyond Appearances: Awareness of the Contrast between Appearance and Reality

You might now wonder whether going beyond appearances in the case of design incorporating natural elements is always going to bring about a kind of experience that it is, at the very least, controversial to characterize as agreeable, as the previous discussion illustrated. I would now like to point out that going beyond appearances in the case of design incorporating natural elements can also lead to experiences that are much more straightforwardly agreeable. This will also give me the chance to specify that awareness of both appearances and natural kinds is important for the proper aesthetic appreciation of design incorporating natural elements.

Fashion designer Maria Grazia Chiuri created a gown inspired by Van Gogh's painting *Jardin fleuri à Arles* (Garden in Bloom, Arles, 1888) for fashion house Dior. The gown is covered in stitched-on flower-shaped decorations of several colors. At first sight and from a distance, it is not immediately clear what these decorations are made of. On closer inspection, it turns out that the petals of the flower-shaped decorations are made of very tiny feathers. This realization is likely to generate awe in a viewer. Knowledge of this piece of information, moreover, seems to be essential for the proper appreciation of this piece of design. As with McQueen's *'mussel' bodice*, the proper aesthetic appreciation of Chiuri's gown seems to require an acknowledgement that natural items have been cleverly incorporated into a piece of design, in line with the quasi-cognitivist view previously defended about McQueen's *'mussel' bodice*. In the case of Chiuri's gown, its proper aesthetic appreciation seems to also require the knowledge that these natural items are feathers. This is because it would be less striking (less imaginative, if you will) if the flower-shaped decorations were made of actual flowers.

Chiuri's gown is a perfect example for illustrating that, perhaps, the best position to adopt to reach a more proper aesthetic appreciation of design incorporating natural elements is a combination of both being aware of appearances and having knowledge of natural kinds – a position that Zangwill terms *moderate formalism*.[29]

29) Zangwill, "Clouds of Illusion in the Aesthetics of Nature," 590. Zangwill supports moderate formalism for biological nature, but not for inorganic nature.

Indeed, this position also enables us to make sense of the best way to appreciate McQueen's necklace too: "The long strands of pearls echo the drapery of the 1920s flapper-style gowns in the collection, while the inclusion of pheasant claws allude to a darker aesthetic. Although on the surface the claws appear hard and vulgar, from a distance they resemble fur."[30] Once we know more about what McQueen was trying to achieve, it can be said that the proper aesthetic appreciation of this instance of design requires both awareness of (delicate) appearances and knowledge of natural kinds (pheasant claws) and the grotesque associations carried by them. The cleverness of McQueen's design relies on this contrast.

The case I shall consider next to consolidate the need to combine knowledge of natural kinds with awareness of appearances is drawn from the realm of perfumery. *Nahéma* is a perfume created by Jean-Paul Guerlain for the Guerlain perfume house in 1979. This is one of the most iconic and celebrated rose perfumes. Luca Turin, chemist-by-trade perfume critic, has stated that: "it is certainly true that the unearthly radiance of *Nahéma* is without equal among perfumery roses, and so awe-inspiring that nobody even tries."[31] Nearly in the same breath, he reveals that "the consensus among experts is that this fragrance, Guerlain's greatest rose, is in fact done without using any rose at all."[32]

I think it will be hard to deny that the following piece of knowledge is essential to the proper aesthetic appreciation of *Nahéma*, namely that, despite arguably being the queen of rose perfumes, it contains no rose at all. This seems to be an especially high achievement from the point of view of design, and one that will contribute to our aesthetic appreciation tinging it with an additional element of awe. This would completely go missing if our aesthetic appreciation of this perfume did not go beyond appearances.

Again, this satisfies both Zangwill's and Carlson's notions of proper aesthetic appreciation: knowledge of the contrast between appearance and reality will open up more beauty, and it will enable us to give due credit to Jean-Paul Guerlain for an especially clever reproduction of a rose scent.

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30) Victoria and Albert Museum, "*Necklace*."

31) Turin and Sanchez, *Perfumes*, 267.

32) Ibid., 266.

In sum, it seems to be the case for many of the design items that I have considered in this article that part and parcel of their proper aesthetic appreciation has to do with knowledge of *both* appearance and reality, and of their contrast. This is the case with McQueen's necklace, where the sinister effect on an observer is achieved by the contrast between a delicate appearance and a harsh reality. A contrast between appearance and reality seems to be at play also in the aesthetic appreciation of Chiuri's gown – only, in this case the appearance of the flower-shaped decorations does not give us any hint as to their real nature, but, even so, we would not expect them to be made of feathers.

Knowledge of the contrast between appearance and reality seems to be essential to the appreciation of much clever design, and perfumery is rife with examples along these lines, but with a very specific characterization: the contrast between appearance and reality is that between real and artificial. The aforementioned *Nahéma* is an interesting case because, when it comes to the reproduction of the scent of flowers, in many cases natural essential oils derived from those very flowers are in principle available. But this is not so with many of the scents that are reproduced through perfumery. An intriguing case is that of leather scent, which is typically conveyed either through fully artificial chemicals (such as isoquinolones), or through natural products (such as birch tar) that have nothing to do with leather. Either way, when a perfume faithfully reproduces the scent of something through no recourse to anything connected to the actual thing, this is bound to be highly relevant to its aesthetic appreciation, and failure to appreciate this contrast between appearance and reality would no doubt constitute an aesthetic omission.

The same contrast between real and artificial versions of the same natural kind is central to the aesthetic appreciation of recent instances of responsibly produced fashion design, which involves, for example, the use of faux fur and faux leather as a replacement for the equivalent animal-based products. While it could be said that the design of these products aims at making them indistinguishable from equivalent animal-based products, still, it can be argued that the proper aesthetic appreciation of these products requires not only knowledge of appearances, but also knowledge of their real nature, and awareness of the contrast between the two, in order to duly appreciate the cleverness of their design.

Conclusion

In the foregoing, I have defended some version of cognitivism about the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature, according to which a certain kind of knowledge about one's object of appreciation is necessary for its proper aesthetic appreciation. By drawing on fashion design and on perfumes, I have suggested that the necessary knowledge concerns whether something is natural versus non-natural, what natural kind an object belongs to, and awareness of the contrast between appearance and reality when there is one. My arguments have hinged on two possible ways of interpreting the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature: one due to Zangwill, whereby aesthetic appreciation is more proper to the extent that it opens up more beauty, and one due to Carlson, whereby aesthetic appreciation is more proper to the extent that it enables us to avoid aesthetic deceptions and aesthetic omissions, and I have shown how the relevant kinds of awareness and knowledge satisfy both interpretations. While my main concern has been a better understanding of the aesthetic appreciation of design incorporating natural elements, I have shown how my account can be developed to specify what is aesthetically praiseworthy in certain instances of sustainable fashion.

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