



PURPOSING AESTHETICS IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION: ADVOCATING, SIGNIFYING, AND INTERPRETING AESTHETICS

PROPUESTA DE LA ESTÉTICA EN LA PRESERVACIÓN HISTÓRICA: DEFENSA, SIGNIFICADO E INTERPRETACIÓN DE LA ESTÉTICA

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Highlights:

- Proposing aesthetical advocacy, aesthetical signification, and aesthetical interpretation as a platform framework to assess the purposing of aesthetics was feasible.
- As aesthetical purposing was approached from a broad, international perspective, the conclusions of the study commensurate with the selective scope of information used.
- The contribution to aesthetical purposing at each of the three platforms is hard to measure; however, the indications point to uneven contribution.

Abstract:

Aesthetics is a pillar consideration in historic preservation. Yet, purposing aesthetics for historic preservation ends seems to lag behind the opportunities. Utterly subjective, aesthetics poses challenges for the preservation community worldwide to moderate, accommodate, and purpose aesthetics in heritage programs. The challenges revolve around the assessment of aesthetical purposing in three domains. These domains include the community disposition towards accommodating aesthetics (advocacy), the criteria and strategies for assessing the aesthetic value of historic resources (signification), and the standards for treating historic resources in preservation projects (interpretation). This study, therefore, assesses the trends for purposing aesthetics in historic preservation thought and practice through three platforms: advocating aesthetics, signifying aesthetics, and interpreting aesthetics. The study completed literature content analysis on aesthetics in general and aesthetics in historic preservation in particular. Further, because of the perspective of the study, the works of international and country preservation programs provided information relevant to advocacy, signification, and interpretation of aesthetics that have been refined by classification, comparison, and exemplification methods. Among others, these works include those of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the U.S. National Historic Preservation Program in the National Park Service. The study culminated with general and platform-specific conclusions. First, as the three proposed platforms (advocacy, signification, and interpretation) maintain structural and serial relationships, they constitute a relevant and feasible framework for assessing aesthetical purposing. Second, as the aesthetical purposing assessment followed a broad, international perspective, the conclusions of the study are commensurate with the selective scope of information used from international and country preservation programs. Third, the contribution to aesthetical purposing at each of the three platforms can be measure only in general, and at times, subjective terms.

Keywords: purposing aesthetics; aesthetical advocacy; aesthetical signification; aesthetical interpretation; historic preservation; preservation standards

Resumen:

La estética es una consideración fundamental en la preservación histórica. Sin embargo, el propósito de la estética para fines de preservación histórica parece estar a la zaga de las oportunidades. Totalmente subjetiva, la estética plantea desafíos en la comunidad de la preservación mundial para moderar, acomodar, y usar la estética en los programas patrimoniales. Los desafíos giran en torno a la evaluación del propósito estético en tres dominios. Estos dominios incluyen la disposición de la comunidad hacia una estética acomodaticia (defensa), los criterios y estrategias para evaluar el valor estético de los recursos históricos (significado) y los estándares para tratar los recursos históricos en los proyectos de preservación (interpretación). Por lo tanto, este estudio evalúa la aplicación de la estética tanto en el pensamiento como en la práctica de la preservación histórica, a través de tres plataformas: la defensa de la estética, la estética del significado y la estética de la interpretación. El estudio completó el análisis del contenido de la literatura sobre la estética en general y la estética en la preservación histórica en particular. Además, debido a la perspectiva del estudio, los trabajos de los programas de preservación internacionales y nacionales proporcionaron información relevante para la defensa, el significado y la interpretación de la estética que se ha perfeccionado mediante métodos de clasificación, comparación y

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ejemplificación. Entre otros, estos trabajos incluyen los del Consejo Internacional de Monumentos y Sitios (ICOMOS) y el Programa de Preservación Histórica Nacional de los Estados Unidos del Servicio de Parques Nacionales. El estudio culminó con tres conclusiones generales y específicas de cada plataforma. En primer lugar, cómo las tres plataformas propuestas (defensa, significado e interpretación) mantienen relaciones estructurales, constituyen un marco relevante y factible para evaluar el propósito estético. En segundo lugar, cómo la evaluación de la finalidad estética sigue una perspectiva internacional amplia, de modo que las conclusiones del estudio son acordes al alcance selectivo de la información utilizada en los programas de preservación internacionales y de cada país. En tercer lugar, cómo la contribución a la finalidad estética en cada uno de los tres dominios puede medirse solo en términos generales y, en ocasiones, subjetivos.

Palabras clave: estética intencional; defensa de la estética; significado estético; interpretación estética; conservación histórica; estándares de conservación o preservación

1. Introduction

As a knowledge discipline dealing with the culturally significant resources of the built environment, historic preservation has purposed aesthetics to the call of heritage recognition and protection. Aesthetics has a myriad of lexical definitions in the language. For example, Encyclopaedia Britannica (Munro, 2019) associates aesthetics with the study of beauty and taste, but submits that defining aesthetics is enormously difficult. Ironically, this difficulty does not necessarily avert appropriating aesthetics for creative ends. In a departure of associating aesthetics with the Western philosophy of beauty and in an attempt to contextualize the study of aesthetics, Barenboim, 2017, (1) expands the notion of aesthetics to include the migrants' recognition of the visual value of indigenous objects. Aesthetics has a gamut of explanatory appropriations in the disciplines of architecture, literature, medicine, and others.

For this study, aesthetics relate to those visually exquisite qualities of heritage buildings, ensembles, and landscapes—perceived through human idiosyncratic experiences. The elusive “aesthetics” is obviously much less definable than these observable physical resources, rendering the challenge of relating aesthetics to the built environment's physical entities clear. This challenge adds to the need for the assessment of aesthetical purposing through the suggested concepts of aesthetical advocacy, signification, and interpretation (application). These are the three platforms of aesthetical purposing slated for discussion.

Aesthetics has practical implications—and applications. Crippen (2019) argues, “while perceiving expression is sometimes about reading minds, it is more squarely about perceiving solicitations or closures for action.” Saito (2015) conveys the same tone, stating, “the aesthetic dimension of doing things instead of, or in addition to, the experience gained as a spectator or beholder.”

Those who deal with historic preservation of buildings, urban districts, and archaeological sites have aesthetical obligations before, during, and after the physical intervention in the resources. This is the premise of the study. Underlying the discussion are questions about the kinds of obligations, both ethical and aesthetical, that might constrain the practices of intervention. Regarding obligations, Lamarque (2016) brings out “what ought and ought not to be done in particular cases and how such decisions might be made,” concluding with that “different principles seem to operate in different cases and accordingly that different obligations obtain.” Consideration is given to what establishes such principles and obligations.

Purposing aesthetics here encompasses the setting up and use of aesthetics for furthering preservation ends, as a catalyst if you will. We consider that “aesthetic value cannot be denied when we recognise the ways that aesthetic experience is already embedded in a range of human practices” (Brady, 2006).

In this Introduction, the status of aesthetical purposing in historic preservation is explored in two ways. The first is a general discourse under the heading “Holistic observations on the aesthetical purposing,” and, the second is a focused discussion explaining the three platforms of aesthetical purposing under the heading “Topical characterization of aesthetical purposing.” Both the holistic and topical explorations paved the way for stating the “Context of the study” (Section 1.3.) and the “Purpose of the study” (Section 1.4).

1.1. Holistic observations on the aesthetical purposing

Aesthetics is courted mainly through the doctrinal and operational narratives advanced by the international organizations and national preservation agencies for policies and programs they administer in the respective jurisdictions. These narratives tend to be invariably abstract in expression and, taken collectively, do not convey a coherent message. The situation in the scholarly circles does not fare much better. Scholarly explorations on how building aesthetics figures in the preservation activities—in the sense of “as is” let alone “as should be used”—is far from complete.

Architects, writers, and others across the breadth of interests construe and practice aesthetics at some level of subjectivity. However, subjectivity tends to lessen by focused adaptation of aesthetics to meet the need of the discipline in question. A variable that is apt to add to the complexity of aesthetical adaptation is the change in the appreciation of the beautiful. Aesthetic and social values tend to change (Halperin & Garrido, 2019).

Within the scope of this study, organizations in the business of historic preservation are the primary vehicle for entertaining aesthetics. International preservation declarations as well as numerous country national directives address the exquisite qualities of historic buildings, urban districts, and designed landscapes. The 1964 Venice Charter plainly explains that “the intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence” (ICOMOS, 1964). The Charter, in more perceptible language, declares that the aim of restoration “is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument” (ICOMOS, 1964).

National organizations in many countries followed suit in accommodating aesthetic values of heritage resources, with, understandably, their own proclivities. The Australian Burra Charter casts the aesthetic value in the lead among the facets contributing to the overall cultural significance. The Charter asserts consideration for the place's "siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material" (Australia ICOMOS, 2013).

In the United States, the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act advances the aesthetic value as a basis for historic preservation on par with cultural, educational, and economic values. The Criteria for Evaluation of the U.S. National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) situate aesthetic values in resources "that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic value" (NPS NRHP 1995, Bulletin 15). The Register tackles aesthetics further in the section on evaluating integrity. It establishes the property's characteristic "design" as a guiding measure for physical intervention. Where heritage protection organizations, preservation project managers, and preservation designers stand on accommodating aesthetics is an open question. One gloomy note says, "aesthetics has become a fashionable buzzword—in historic preservation statutes and ordinances, with little exploration of the concept and its applications" (Van Camp, 1980). In the same vein, Page (2017) criticized what he believes is preservation's fixation with beauty: "preservation was concerned with beauty and buildings, not an unknown problem that would come to be called climate change." A contrasting note celebrates the effect aesthetics might have on the community's quality of life through good urban place making. Vihanninjoki (2019) asserts, "aesthetics plays a major role in... place-making, and the related interpretation of 'commodified aesthetics of place' emphasizes certain experiential and qualitative place-attributes—such as authenticity—despite apparent conceptual confusions and controversies." Good spatial design affecting the community quality of life, one may argue, can be furthered by creating "spatial aesthetic expressions relating to the specific context of the participants/users—how to reflect their values, norms, etc., as a group" (Ebdrup, 2017).

1.2. Topical characterization of aesthetic purposing

This study proposes that aesthetic purposing materializes at the advocacy, signification, and interpretation platforms. Accordingly, the aesthetic purposing assessment builds from the cumulative aesthetic assessment at these three platforms. The basis for this proposition emanates from the intertwined, and broadly sequential, flow of aesthetic thoughts and activities binding the proposed members of the triad.

1.2.1. Advocating aesthetics

Advocacy connotes the support for an issue or a cause. It is a process of building up a public outlook in preparation of action for furthering the cause. International charters are probably the most illustrative of the diverse voices of the preservation community worldwide. International charters, among which the famed 1964 Venice Charter, address aesthetics in ways to promote—understandably—the intent of the charter under consideration. Driven by unique motives, these charters came to life at sporadic times and targeted diverse areas

of heritage, thus resulting in inevitable diversity in the evenness and potency of the advocating message. Section 2 discusses "advocating aesthetics" in detail.

1.2.2. Signifying aesthetics

Because the worth of cultural resources is the *raison d'être* for the built environment heritage construct, this worth—expressed as heritage significance, importance, or value—is the cornerstone of the heritage protection activity. International and country programs almost invariably accommodate aesthetics as a member of the significance imparting criteria, together with the economic, scientific, and other factors. These programs also invariably recognize the physical and spatial integrity of the heritage resource as a verifying condition for the quality of significance. While aesthetic "signification" is a mainstay activity worldwide, there remains the challenge of diverse versions on how to go about the signifying task. Section 3 discusses "signifying aesthetics" in detail.

1.2.3. Interpreting aesthetics

Interpreting aesthetics by an in-place operational apparatus may include overarching standards, explanatory guidelines, and recommended practices. The interpretation here occurs at the application end of aesthetic purposing. The UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention hardly touch on the aesthetic interpretation. The American National Historic Preservation Program has literature on the preservation treatment (rehabilitation, restoration, etc.) standards and guidelines that accommodate aesthetic interpretations. There is a recognition of the need to interpret aesthetics at the project implementation level. However, addressing the issue suitably is less common, probably because of the demanding professional requirements for developing operational preservation standards, guidelines, and strategies—including the expertise to carry out the process. Section 4 discusses "interpreting aesthetics" in detail.

1.3. The context of the study: aesthetic qualities and concerns of historic resources

Prefaced by the observations and characterization discussion, the statement of purpose declared next transpires in a context unique to the aesthetic purposing—the focus of this study—and its nuances. As in any study, the context helps shape the scope and outlook of the discussion. In this tone, this Sub-Section singles out and comments on the major question of aesthetics definition and the debatable aesthetic qualities.

In its theoretical core, aesthetics of a spatial realm, like architecture, or of a mental realm like poetry, portrays in multiple dimensions. For example, for an architectural, sculptural, or mural scene, the visual qualities—scale, proportion, color, etc.—that contribute to the harmony or unity of the composition come readily to mind. However, capturing the essence of an aesthetic experience entails, in addition, the consideration of other human agency factors at play in the scene including intent, theme, time, and values.

The degree to which disciplines like architecture and art accommodate aesthetics in its "full" range of visual and

human angles varies vastly. Given the collective research efforts in any discipline, it is safe to assume that the range is accommodable through the additive effect of disparate projects, each slanted to a coached purpose and scope. A research undertaking in architecture, for example, may delve in-depth into the theoretical investigation of the user's aesthetical perception of an architectural scene targeted to reveal personal values; another project may focus on identifying the aesthetics of a downtown architectural ensemble through the visual qualities of shape, proportion, color, and so forth targeted for rehabilitation.

This pattern of research accommodation along the human and visual range of dimensions applies, obviously, to the built environment historic preservation field. The pattern builds up from desperate research endeavours stemming from slanted contexts and outlooks. In this sense, the context of the paper is placed within the thoughts and practices that the preservation community has developed and followed over the years dealing with aesthetical qualities and concerns of historic resources.

The discussion has already touched on some philosophical meanings and the undisputable subjectivity of aesthetics. More clearly, the discussion has established a specific context for the study: the thoughts and practices that the preservation community has developed and followed over the years regarding aesthetics. Accordingly, the defining qualities of aesthetics important for this study are those espoused and practiced by the preservation community as communicated through the established policies, standards, guidelines, and projects. Such defining qualities associate mostly with the visual realm, not the philosophical discourse, making it logical for visual qualities to assert in the discussion.

1.4. Purpose of the study

In broad strokes, the aesthetical purposing efforts of the international historic preservation community are diverse and their effect is not clear. Therefore, this study aims at identifying and assessing aesthetical purposing under the three major aesthetical purposing platforms: advocating aesthetics, signifying aesthetics, and interpreting aesthetics.

The discussion plan of the three platforms is shown in Figure 1.

2. Advocating aesthetics

Because seeing is a dominant mechanism of environmental reading, the incessant visual perception of the built environment lends a hand to architectural observation and, hence, aesthetic appreciation. This is a reason why heritage aesthetics commands public attention probably more than the historic, scientific, or other significant attributes of the resources. [Tenen \(2020\)](#) states, "in valuing something for its historical significance, it need not always be the case that there is a reason to want people to experience the entity. Valuing something for its aesthetic merit, by contrast, does imply a reason to want people to experience the entity."

The concept of heritage itself drives the public interest in the aesthetic power of the historic resources, which typically also enjoy historic, scientific, or other value attributes—established worldwide in forms and

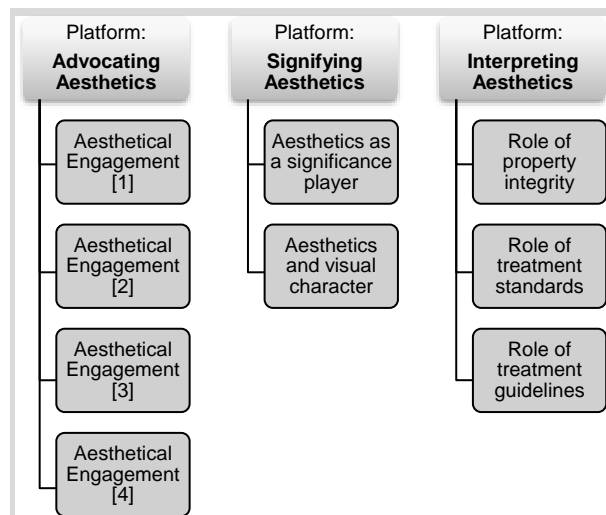


Figure 1: The structure of the platform's discussion.

interpretations as wide as the gamut of cultures they emanate from. The recognition of a building, a structure, or a landscape as a heritage asset implies the resource's possession of inherent and potential attributes important to society: the populace of the jurisdiction in the first place. Consummate designs and construction conveyed in the resource (aesthetic); eminent historic events, trends, and persons of the place (cultural); and the capability of the site for revealing new information (scientific) all represent domains of values associated with the *inherent* attributes of cultural properties. On the other hand, the capacity of the resource for financial yield (economic) and the sensuous, but viable, proposition of the resource's contribution to communal sustainability (social) represent classes of values associated with the *potential* attributes of properties.

Although aesthetics is of primary interest in the public eye, it stacks in parallel with other considerations in the professional paradigms of heritage significance now burgeoning internationally, countrywide, and locally. Inevitably, aesthetics interfaces with cultural, scientific, and other considerations deemed contributing to the resource significance; it boosts its sway in relation to the argumentative weight of these considerations. The position of the aesthetical argument in the philosophical underpinnings of preservation is conveyed in the language of doctrinal documents, particularly those associated with the ICOMOS.

Sensibly meant to cater to the public sentiment and professional expertise, aesthetics has through history reconciled with the visions of the political powers in the making and conserving of architecture and cities—and the posture is believably continuing. One would suggest that this is a likely phenomenon in centralized political regimes more than in systems with open traditions. [Falasca-Zamponi \(1997, 10\)](#) entertained a vivid depiction of this phenomenon as related to the practices of the Fascist regime: "aesthetic considerations were indeed central to the construction of fascism's project, and they reached deep into the heart of fascism's identity, its self-definition, its envisioning of goals."

2.1. Aesthetical engagement areas

Still, engagement in the aesthetics of the built environment, in particular, receives scrutiny and appeal. [Stanford University \(2019\)](#) asserts, "engagement is

particularly significant in this regard, constituting a model for the aesthetic appreciation not simply of both nature and art, but also of every other aspect of human experience; it studies the aesthetic dimensions of rural countrysides, small towns, large cities, theme parks, gardens, museums, and even human relationships.”

References to the aesthetical engagement are pervasive in charters and declarations on diverse topical orientations. Aesthetics, with its broad interpretations, influence charter resolutions by way of a number of aesthetic engagement areas. The four engagement areas figure below supported with tables illustrating the corroborating doctrinal documents. The material in quotes in the left column of tables is taken verbatim from the corresponding doctrinal source in the right column. The sources are hyperlinked with References at the end of the paper.

2.1.1. Resource character and value perpetuation

These references corroborate the importance of aesthetics as an eminent value in its own right and that explains the aesthetical role in preserving the historic character of buildings and areas (Table 1).

Table 1: Aesthetical engagement in relation to resource character and value perpetuation.

<i>Aesthetical Engagement Aspect</i>	<i>Doctrinal Source</i>
Stressing the role of formal building appearance in preserving building character through artistic parameters such as scale, style, and color	ICOMOS. (1987). Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas, the Washington Charter
Employing artistic language to define vernacular architecture: “Coherence of style, form and appearance”	Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage, 1999
Assigning a testimonial aesthetic value to the heritage that bound to incite continued interest by the community	ICOMOS. (1996). The Declaration of San Antonio
Rationalizing the preservation of the material evidence—including design, materials, and context—in order to secure the ability of the resources to continue conveying the values	ICOMOS. (1996). The Declaration of San Antonio.

2.1.2. Counterpart heritage values

These references clarify the position of aesthetics in relation to the competing counterpart values (social, scientific, etc.) in contributing to the aggregate significance of resources (Table 2).

2.1.3. Changes, adaptation, and new development

These references emphasize the protection of existing aesthetical qualities and maintenance of harmony in changes involving the resource or the resource’s context (Table 3).

2.1.4. Urbanism, management, setting, and art

These references call for aesthetic considerations at the scale of urban geography, management planning, and architectural art (Table 4).

Table 2: Aesthetical engagement in relation to counterpart heritage values.

<i>Aesthetical Engagement Aspect</i>	<i>Doctrinal Source</i>
Paralleling the importance of the aesthetic aspect with the social and cultural factors...	ICOMOS. (1999). International Cultural Tourism Charter
Coupling the aesthetic significance with the historical significance in at least three places, requiring the respect of these values when intervening into the structure	ICOMOS. (1999). Principles for the Preservation of Historic Timber Structures
Bending the spatial and visual intervention in service of the historical values	ICOMOS. (2011). Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas
Listing aesthetic value first in fourteen categories of values: “aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, commemorative, functional, historical, landscape, monumental, scientific, social, spiritual, symbolic, technological, traditional”	ICOMOS New Zealand. (2010). Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value
Setting the aesthetic value first in the definition of cultural significance among a set of values	Australia ICOMOS (2013) The Burra Charter, the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance

Table 3: Aesthetical engagement in relation to changes, adaptation, and new development.

<i>Aesthetical Engagement Aspect</i>	<i>Doctrinal Source</i>
Encouraging harmony of the added, physical elements of interpretive infrastructures with the character and setting of the site.	ICOMOS. (2008). ICOMOS Charter on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites
Adaptation or additions to structure: considering aesthetics by stipulating coherence with the spatial layout, scale, and development patterns.	ICOMOS. (2011). Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas
Calling for minimizing the visual effects of changes inherent to urban growth on townscapes.	ICOMOS. (2011). Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas
Suggesting that artistic paradigms, such as design and layout, contribute to inspiring creative architecture.	The ICOMOS (2011). Paris Declaration on Heritage as a Driver of Development
Taking measures to protect the aesthetic coherence of the whole when dealing with new work	ICOMOS. (1993). Appleton Charter for the Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment
Promoting aesthetics of monuments by emphasizing the integrity of the resources during changes or developments	ICOMOS. (1931). The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments.

PURPOSING AESTHETICS IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION: ADVOCATING, SIGNIFYING, AND INTERPRETING AESTHETICS

Table 4: Aesthetical engagement in relation to urbanism, management, setting, and art.

<i>Aesthetical Engagement Aspect</i>	<i>Doctrinal Source</i>
Addressing qualities of arts in buildings; appropriating the “aesthetic integration” to improve “the legibility of form and content of the wall painting”.	ICOMOS. (2003). <i>Principles for the Preservation and Conservation-Restoration of Wall Paintings</i>
Stressing the benefits of visual features as part of the urban context and uses of design aesthetics parameters of harmony of heights, colors, materials, volumes, etc.	ICOMOS. (2011). <i>Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas</i>
Establishing aesthetic values as a foundation block in building management plans for societal development.	The ICOMOS. (2011). <i>Paris Declaration on Heritage as a Driver of Development</i>
Emphasizing the role of aesthetic attributes of place such as textures and colors in contributing to the ethereal qualities of place.	ICOMOS. (2008). <i>Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place</i>
Summoning artistic urban principles in preserving the context of heritage resources: “Significant skylines, sight lines and adequate distance between any new public or private development and heritage structures”.	ICOMOS. (2005). <i>Xi’an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas</i>

3. Signifying aesthetics

As a notion, aesthetics has an effect on us. An object, a building, or a piece of poetry is likely to invoke our interest because they are beautiful, that is because they appeal to how we relate to the world. Things have qualities; we have values. “Aesthetic value is the value that an object, event or state of affairs (most paradigmatically an art work or the natural environment) possesses in virtue of its capacity to elicit pleasure (positive value) or displeasure (negative value) when appreciated or experienced aesthetically” (Plato & Meskin, 2020).

The philosophical and aspirational nature of advocating aesthetics in historic preservation is made meaningful by attempts at transforming advocacy into intermediary “signifying” measures. Property “significance” and visual “character” are contexts that work in such capacity.

3.1. Aesthetics as a significance player

Such attempts are expediently explained through understanding aesthetics in the realm of the notion of cultural significance. Bridging the theoretical and practical flanks of heritage, aesthetics in preservation is pursued worldwide through, understandably, different approaches reflecting the locale’s characteristic structures and intended outcomes. In the United States, in particular, preservation programs have rich preservation planning and implementation records that are, first, well rounded and self-contained and, second, widely disseminated and publicly available. This Section draws on some American programs’ plans and strategies associated with cultural significance definition and evaluation to glean the connection with the aesthetic interest.

The work of the National Register of Historic Places, the agency in charge of the identification, evaluation, and registration of historic properties in the United States, revolves around the construct of historic significance—of which property aesthetics is a convergent feeder. Property significance, according to the Criteria for Evaluation, (NPS NRHP, Bulletin 15), is derived from one or more of four broad areas of criteria. Rephrased, these areas are:

- A. Events: association with events that permeate into general historical patterns.
- B. Persons: association with accomplished individuals in times past.
- C. Design and construction: sources of ingenuity in design and creation in its broadest sense, including works of masters and works of artistic values.
- D. Information potential: sources of newly revealed knowledge significant in history and prehistory.

Out of the four sweeping areas of criteria above, C is clearly the area that most directly deals with aesthetic matters. Criteria area C states that “properties may be eligible for the National Register if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction” (NPS NRHP, Bulletin 15).

The statement lays out a set of aesthetically related dimensions. Two of the dimensions are highlighted below. The aesthetically related dimension associated with distinctive characteristics of type, period, and method of construction (Table 5) is demonstrated in Figure 2 (NPS NRHP 2005). The aesthetically related dimension associated with the properties possessing high artistic values (Table 6) is demonstrated in Figure 3 (NPS NRHP 1980).

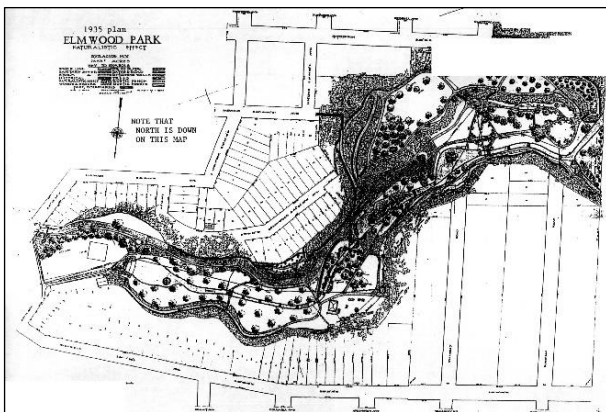
The text suggests no emphasis as to which types of resources aesthetic values are attached. As such, the text makes a tacit recognition of any resource category—districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects—as abodes for aesthetic qualities. Similarly, the text extends recognition to all domains of knowledge (history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture) as disciplinary contexts of aesthetic qualities.

Table 5. Aesthetically related dimensions in Area C of the NRHP Evaluation Criteria: Associated with distinctive characteristics of type, period, and method of construction. Source: (NPS NRHP, Bulletin 15).

<i>Description</i>	<i>Eligible Property Examples</i>
“High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. A property is eligible for its high artistic values if it so fully articulates a particular concept of design that expresses an aesthetic ideal.”	“A landscaped park that synthesizes early 20th century principles of landscape architecture and expresses an aesthetic ideal of environment can be eligible.”

Table 6. Aesthetically related dimensions in Area C of the NRHP Evaluation Criteria: Associated with the properties possessing high artistic values. Source: (NPS NRHP, Bulletin 15).

Description	Eligible Property Examples
<p>“Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials. They can be general, referring to ideas of design and construction such as basic plan or form, or they can be specific, referring to precise ways of combining particular kinds of materials.”</p>	<p>“A building eligible under the theme of Gothic Revival architecture must have the distinctive characteristics that make up the vertical and picturesque qualities of the style, such as pointed gables, steep roof pitch, board and batten siding, and ornamental bargeboard and veranda trim.”</p>



(a)

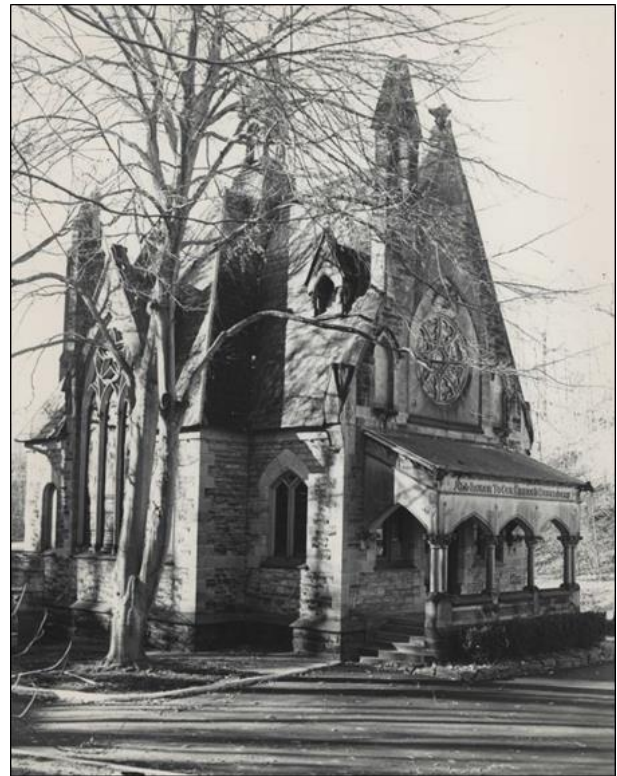


(b)

Figure 2: Elmwood Park, Syracuse, New York as an excellent example of park design representing both the Pleasure Ground and Reform Park Eras: a) The 1935 Plan; b) Natural and man-made features.

3.2. Aesthetics and visual character

Aesthetically based vocabularies have been used at length in developing visual character, also called architectural or historic character, a cornerstone paradigm of utility in both defining heritage and treating historic resources. Applicable particularly to buildings, the historic character paradigm builds on human visual perception. As approached in this study, the architectural character is an all-encompassing term that expresses the observer’s overall visual perception of a building through its physical, geometric, and polychromatic configurations.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3: Memorial Chapel, Akron Rural Cemetery Buildings, Akron, Summit County, Ohio: a) Showing the distinctive characteristics that make up the vertical and picturesque qualities of the Gothic Revival style; b) The Chapel (in background) complementing the Gothic Revival architecture ensemble of the Cemetery.

The premise is that these building configurations are the same or acceptably the same as they were during the historic period of significance the building experienced. International and country preservation programs do not necessarily use the architectural character in the sense described above. For example, ICOMOS Australia enlists character only as a feature of the visual setting alongside others including use, bulk, form, scale, and color (ICOMOS Australia).

One paradigm of architectural character approached in line with this study is that of the National Park Service in the United States. Conceived by the late Lee Nelson, the paradigm differentiates between the human perceptions

of building features observed from three proximity positions: from a distance, up close, and inside (NPS TPS (n.d.) *Walkthrough*). This proximity arrangement exploits a spatial sequence to model a holistic perceptual relationship between the observant and the observed—the edifice. The observant would comprehend the building in terms of a set of building physical and spatial attributes at each position (or station) in relation to the building. For example, the observant would experience the attribute building “shape” when at the “from a distance” position; experience the attribute “materials at close range” when at “up close” position; and, experience the attribute “surface finishes and materials” when at the “inside” position. The accumulated perception of these attributes builds up in the observant mind as a holistic characterization of the building that communicates the visual character.

Fourteen in total, these character-defining attributes belong to the visual, spatial, and formal realm of architecture and design. The following are three example attributes, each explained to show the aesthetical effect of the attribute on the historic character:

- Shape (a member of the attribute set “from a distance”).
 - The distinctiveness of the shape and its degree of consistency with nearby properties.
 - Complexity versus plainness of shape.
- Materials at Close Range (a member of the attribute set “up close”).
 - Characteristic texture or color of materials.
 - Combinations and juxtaposition of different materials.
- Surface Finishes and Materials (a member of the attribute set “inside”).
 - The effect of new finishes on design, texture, and color of interiors.
 - The effect of exposed marbled, stenciled, or wallpapered surfaces.

Developed out of the accumulative effect of the character attributes, an overall visual character of a building serves as the framework for guiding the preservation intervention process.

4. Interpreting aesthetics

By means of its significance and character expressions, signification as the second pillar of aesthetical purposing paves the way for “interpreting” aesthetics, namely, what to do and what not to do to accommodate aesthetics in preservation intervention projects. Proper aesthetical interpretation obtains through the judicious use of property integrity, treatment standards, and treatment guidelines. Each plays a role.

4.1. Property integrity

Maintaining property integrity is a fundamental tenet of preservation. Integrity is a mental and visual perception quality of historic resources. The permeating goal of protecting the visual character of historic properties gives rise to the imperceptible concept of “integrity.” Tampering with distinctive materials, features, spaces, or spatial relationships of a historic building takes away from its character by disturbing, say, its integrity. Stated

otherwise, not to disturb integrity is to protect the building character. Therefore, integrity must be ascertained before and upon completion of the intervention into the body of the building:

- The presence of integrity is a condition for making the case for the worth of the historic resource in the first place—before inflicting any change onto the building material, spatial, or contextual configurations. The NRHP defined seven measures of integrity including design, material, and setting. “Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the identity for which it is significant” (NPS NRHP Bulletin 15).
- The maintenance of integrity during preservation operations is a condition for meeting acceptable treatment standards.

4.2. Treatment standards

Protecting character through observing integrity, with all its geometric and aesthetic connotations, is a clear directive in the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction—the codified types of treatments—are rooted in the preservation principles as developed in the United States. Mainly differentiated in the demarcated extent of intervention and ensuing change limits to properties, these treatments are regulated by sets of standards that embody commensurate aesthetic accommodation. To illustrate, preservation and rehabilitation, the most common types of treatment, are summarily contrasted below, first, in terms of definition (scope) and, second, in terms of the aesthetic relevance their standards hold.

The two treatments are defined as follows:

- Preservation is “the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction” (NPS TPS (n.d.) *Preservation*).
- Rehabilitation is “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values” (NPS TPS (n.d.) *Rehabilitation*).

The aesthetic relevance is conveyed plainly or implicitly through the language of a number of standards for each treatment. In this vein, four out of eight preservation standards address aesthetic concerns while five out of ten rehabilitation standards do. Table 7 contrasts preservation and rehabilitation standards in terms of a) count, b) disposition to the change of property, c) addressing aesthetic concerns, and d) the context in which aesthetic concerns are addressed.

Table 8 contrasts preservation and rehabilitation standards that address aesthetic concerns in terms of the aesthetically related language conventions used and the context/area of focus.

Because rehabilitation is associated with new additions and alternation, aesthetic references appear in Standard 9 dealing with such issues.

Table 7: Contrasting preservation and rehabilitation standards. Source: NPS TPS. (2017). *Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties.*

Terms	For Preservation	For Rehabilitation
Count of standards	Count: Eight	Count: Ten
Disposition of standards towards change	Little flexibility	Considerable flexibility
Standards addressing aesthetic concerns	Four (Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6)	Five (Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9)
Context/area of focus	Use; Character; Distinctive Aspects; Repair vs. Replace	Same as preservation plus the focus "New Additions/Construction"

Table 8: Contrasting preservation and rehabilitation standards (S) in terms of the aesthetically related language. Source: NPS TPS (2017) *Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties.*

Standard No. & Focus	For Preservation	For Rehabilitation
S1 Property Use	Distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships	Distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships
S2 Character	Historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships	Distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships
S5 Distinctive Aspects	Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship	Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship
S6 Repair versus Replace	New material will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture.	New feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.
S9 New Additions/Construction		The new work shall be differentiated from the old; will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale

4.3. Treatment guidelines

Treatment guidelines are sets of instructions that inform and direct field action plans. The guidelines follow a hierarchy of intervention according to the intensity of expected change to the building materials and spaces; they apply to building aspects, such as masonry or roof, one aspect at a time.

Guidelines are an offshoot of the standards and deal with distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships in the building. The guidelines advise users to begin with the simplest and the least potentially invasive action: identifying "the form and detailing of those

architectural materials and features that are important in defining the building's historic character" (NPS TPS (2017), *Guidelines*). Adhering to the call for keeping to the most conservative action under the circumstances, the guidelines, in response, recommend pursuing the following sequenced actions: a) identify and retain, b) protect and maintain, c) repair, and d) replace.

In this sequence, the user of the guidelines would single out a building component, say masonry, and complete analysis for the masonry conditions. The user would then apply and interpret the guidelines accordingly for the masonry component. In the context of the standards and guidelines, building components group under the following categories:

- Exterior materials, such as masonry.
- Exterior features, such as windows.
- Interior features such as spaces, features, and finishes.
- Site, setting, and special requirements.

5. Conclusions

This study set out to explore aesthetical purposing in historic preservation at the platforms of advocating aesthetics, signifying aesthetics, and interpreting aesthetics. With recognition of the diversity of approaches of aesthetical purposing at play across the regional cultures of the world, the study culminates with the following conclusions.

5.1. General conclusions

- Proposing aesthetical advocacy, aesthetical signification, and aesthetical interpretation as a platform framework to assess the purposing of aesthetics is germane and feasible. The platforms maintain a serial relationship. The signification platform (the second) depends on and evolves from the advocacy platform (the first); and the interpretation platform (the third) depends on and evolves from the signification (the second) platform.
- As aesthetic purposing was approached from a broad, international perspective, the conclusions of the study commensurate with the selective scope of information used particularly from international and country preservation programs.

5.2. Platform-specific conclusions

The contribution to aesthetical purposing at each of the three platforms can be measured only in general, and at times, subjective terms. Inferences on the individual aesthetical platforms can be made below with such shortcomings in mind.

5.2.1. Relevant to advocating aesthetics

Aesthetics is a universally celebrated idea by the preservation bodies. It appears in numerous international doctrinal documents and national landmark resolutions. Because doctrinal charters and declarations are, by necessity, philosophical and hardly readily interpretable in their prose, aesthetical messages evolve in the same disposition. Further, aesthetical concerns are influence by the authoring organization's mission and the respective requirements of the forum from which the documents

emerged. While the aggregate body of aesthetical advocacy efforts is considerable, it does not portray an integral and robust message on the subject.

5.2.2. Relevant to signifying aesthetics

The universal references at the aesthetical advocacy platform received a boost from the aesthetical signification practices of some national heritage programs. The acts of aesthetical signification are perceptible in the works of the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, for example. Because the Register's responsibilities include the identification and evaluation of historic properties, the construct of "significance" and that of "character" are included as

media into the realm of identification and evaluation. Both significance and character, are framed with considerable attention to the recognition of aesthetical values and their perpetuation.

5.2.3. Relevant to interpreting aesthetics

Building on the aesthetical signification platform, the aesthetical interpretation platform operates at a hierarchy of three elements: property integrity, preservation treatment standards, and treatment guidelines, each with a defined role. The elements interface to crystalize the aesthetical intent. Integrity echoes its effect in the branded preservation standards; the standards, in turn, echo their effect through the respective guidelines.

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