



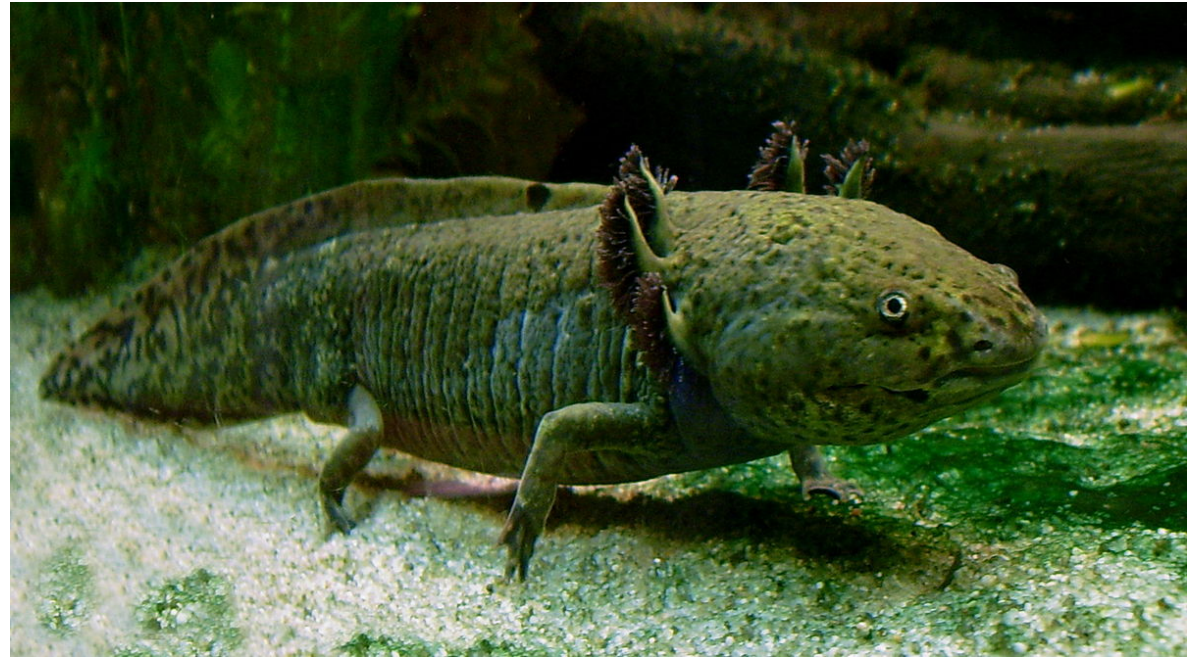
AESTHETICS CS-E5600
Sanna Lehtinen, PhD

Aesthetics: Evolutionary Aesthetics

11 Feb 2019

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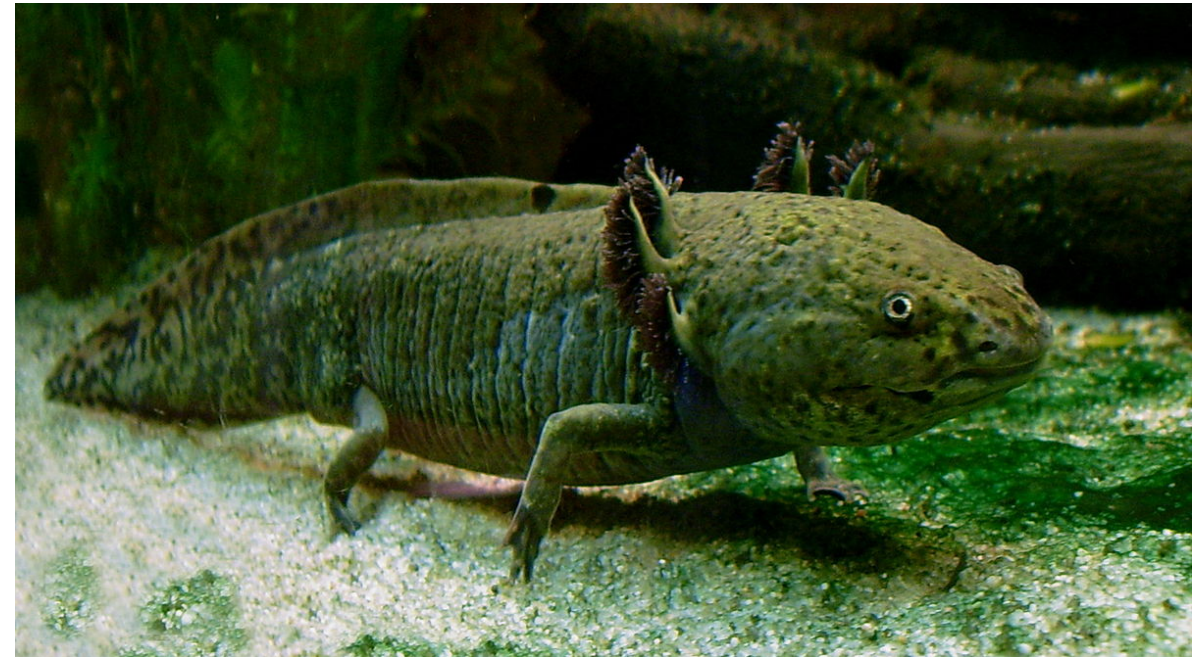
- Evolutionary Aesthetics
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- Animal Aesthetics
- Beauty – Ugliness – The Sublime
- Neuroaesthetics
- Group Task





World's rarest insect: Lord Howe Island stick insect (*Dryococelus australis*) or "land lobster"

Axolotl also known as a Mexican salamander (*Ambystoma mexicanum*) or a Mexican walking fish; critically endangered





Evolutionary Aesthetics: BEAUTY

- Based on Evolutionary Biology
- Combination of philosophical aesthetics and evolutionary psychology
- Human mind a result of the evolutionary process
 - “Not a general computer but more like a Swiss army knife”
- Aesthetic preferences developed as *adaptations*
 - Functional products of *natural selection* or *sexual selection*, e.g. fear of spiders, snakes & the dark, disgust of spoiled food, admiration of physically fit features
 - Developed during the past 2 million years, fully developed 10,000 years ago (beginning of Holocene)

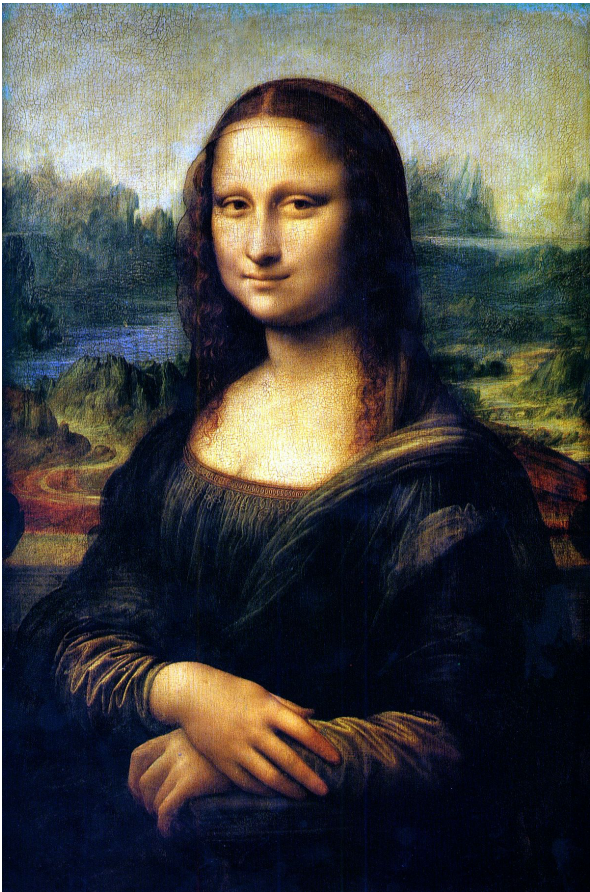
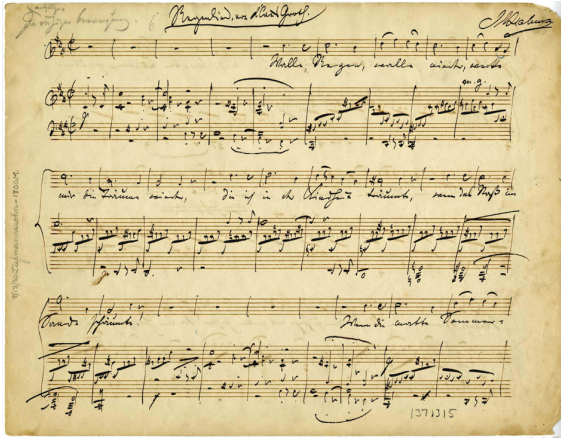
Evolutionary Aesthetics: ART

- Some type of art is found in every known human culture
- A fundamental human need is being expressed and met by *artistic activity* → universality
- Psychobiology of sense, feeling, and cognition
→ Ways we spontaneously and commonly think and behave

Denis Dutton: *The Art Instinct. Beauty, Pleasure & Human Evolution* (2009)

Universal characteristics of human aesthetics:

1. Expertise or virtuosity
 2. Nonutilitarian pleasure
 3. Style
 4. Criticism
 5. Imitation
 6. Special focus
- Criticism: too many exceptions



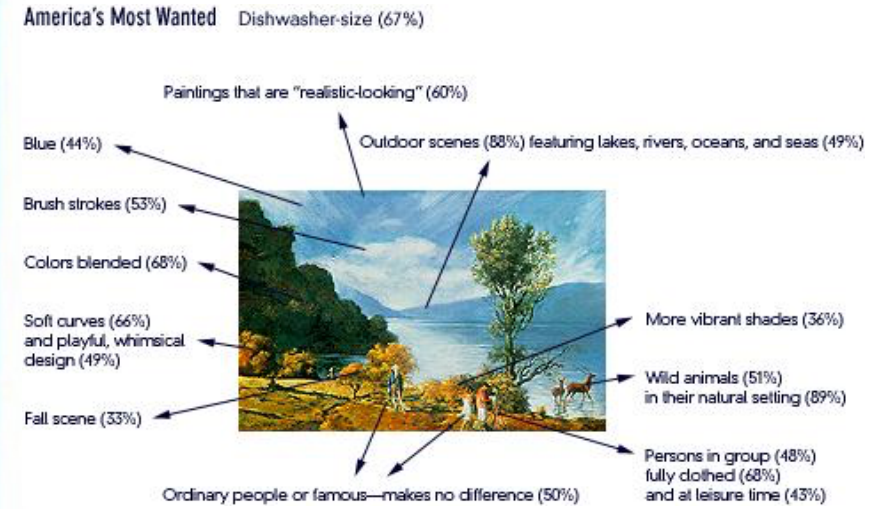
Landscape Preferences: "Savannah Hypothesis"





Chatsworth, landscape design by Capability Brown (1760s)

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Komar & Melamid: People's Choice series (1995)



Criticism towards Evolutionary Aesthetics (Welsch 2004)

1. Methodological reductionism
 - Aesthetic is more/other than a survival value
 2. Thematic restrictions
 - What is the relation between human & animal aesthetics?
 - What is the (pre)history of our aesthetic preferences?
- No 2 should provide the central questions

Animal Aesthetics

- What do different species find beautiful/aesthetically pleasing/attractive?
- Turn to *transhuman aesthetics*
 - Human is not the reference point, aesthetics beyond the human agency
- Aesthetic attitude in prehuman evolution?

