On the adaptivity of preferences and taste

Preferences change over time as can be seen by objects of desire changing from time to time — sometimes even cyclically (Carbon, 2010, 2011). So does personal taste: Recent research shows that taste is highly susceptible for Zeitgeist-dependent effects. Using an adaptation paradigm often used in the domain of face research (e.g., Carbon & Ditye, 2011), we could show in a series of experiments that not only the representation of designs (e.g., car designs, Carbon, 2010) or artworks (Carbon & Leder, 2006), but also taste quickly adapts towards adaptors (Carbon, Ditye, & Leder, 2006). The present talk will not only show the adaptation towards specific design characteristics in product design, but even so for specific art-specific properties. For instance, one experiments made use of the idiosyncratic style of Amedeo Modigliani who employed manneristic face elongation. In the first part of the experiment, the pre-adaptation phase (T1), participants were asked to rate their liking of a number of portraits by various artists of a variety of different historical epochs on a seven-point Likert-scale. Each portrait was presented in 11 different versions which differed in the amount of compression or extension in heights (cf. Carbon, Leder, & Ditye, 2007). This block was followed by an adaptation-phase in which Modigliani’s paintings were shown. In a succeeding test-phase, the post-adaptation phase (T2), liking of the same paintings of T1 was rated again by the participants. Results revealed systematic changes in aesthetic appreciation for those exemplars that were structurally rather similar in the style to Modigliani (the extended versions). The talk qualifies and discusses such style-based adaptation effects to reveal their cognitive basis and tries to develop prediction models for predicting taste factors of the future.

References