

# Synaesthesia and Asceticism

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## Abstract

The example of a watching tower is used as a metaphor for the ladder of the senses and serves to present two extreme attitudes: the ascetic repression of the senses and the euphoric hyperesthesia. However, both miss the *unitas multiplex* and synergy of the senses in the everyday life. The multisensory dimension of perception has raised the interest in the recent aesthetics of nature, theory of architecture, anthropology and marketing, where it is frequently called »synesthetic«, in spite of the differences between the idiopathic, neurological synesthesia and the broad meaning of synesthesia.

The synesthetic dimension of art reaches from involuntary experiences to experimental correspondences between the senses. The architecture has one of the highest »synesthetic« potentials among arts; experiencing it requires »aesthetic engagement« (A. Berleant) and implies perceptual, emotional, imaginative, and cognitive aspects. Moreover, the architects create not only environments and sensescapes, but they also shape indirectly the users' sensibility. Therefore it finally turns out that the ascesis in its etymological meaning of »training« is even necessary, if one understands by that the deliberate cultivation of the senses. On the contrary, an anesthetizing ascesis without engagement is co-responsible for the blandscapes of our environment and immoral from the viewpoint of a social aesthetics.