

# From garbage a flower is born

## Abstract

The article “From garbage is born flower” examines the connection between art, beauty and the environment, highlighting the regenerative potential of disposable materials in a scenario marked by consumerism and social inequalities. This work revisits several philosophical perspectives on the concept of beauty, including contributions from Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Kant, and Roger Scruton. With a qualitative approach, the study illustrates how beauty, sensory experience, order, and sustainability can coexist. In music, the compositions “Aquarela”, composed by Toquinho and Vinícius de Moraes, and “What a Wonderful World”, performed by Louis Armstrong, stand out. In architecture, the “Garden of Versailles-France”, designed by André Le Nôtre, “Salgado Filho Square”, signed by Burle Marx, was presented. In the visual arts, works such as “O beijo”, by Gustav Klimt, and “Carnaval nos Arcos da Lapa”, by Heitor dos Prazeres, are presented. The text emphasizes the ability of art to transform adversity into beauty, exploring examples of creations by Vik Muniz, Oseas da Mata and Evânia de Paula. It reinforces the concept of biophilia, aligning with the message of Pope Francis’ encyclical “Laudato Si”.

**Keywords:** art, beauty, education, garbage, environment

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## Introduction

We are living in a critical moment for humanity and for planet Earth, when the ethical disconnect from our impact on the planet is alarming for humanity. The throwaway culture and rampant consumerism have resulted in a massive accumulation of waste plaguing our cities, reflecting the lack of respect for both nature and humanity. This scenario not only degrades the environment, but also profoundly affects our health, perpetuating a cycle of pollution, dissatisfaction, and hopelessness.

Ecological crises, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and ocean pollution, require an urgent reformulation of practices and values. In the midst of this challenging reality, the need to adopt a new paradigm that unites ethics, aesthetics, and commitment becomes evident, promoting a harmonious and respectful relationship with the natural world.

The expression “*from garbage is born a flower*”, symbolizes the regenerative capacity of nature, which transforms what is discarded into beauty. This principle should serve as an inspiration for human creativity, instigating us to see potential in discarded materials. This perspective invites us to rethink our relationship with the planet.

In this context, the phrase “*from garbage to luxury*” may represent a cultural change. The transformation of waste or materials into desirable products is not only a matter of sustainability, but also of creativity, which involves a deep reflection on beauty.

This article aims to investigate the concept of beauty over time, highlighting works of art that inspire, transform the being, the environment and serve as inspiration for the rescue of essential values, contributing to the construction of a resilient future.

With a qualitative approach, the study illustrates how beauty, sensory experience, order, and sustainability can coexist. In music, the compositions “Aquarela”, composed by Toquinho and Vinícius de Moraes, and “What a Wonderful World”, performed by Louis Armstrong, stand out. In architecture, the “Garden of Versailles-France”, designed by André Le Nôtre, “Salgado Filho Square”,

signed by Burle Marx, was presented. In the visual arts, works such as “*O beijo*”, by Gustav Klimt, and “*Carnaval nos Arcos da Lapa*”, by Heitor dos Prazeres, are presented. The text emphasizes the ability of art to transform adversity into beauty, exploring examples of creations by Vik Muniz, Oseas da Mata and Evânia de Paula. It reinforces the concept of biophilia, aligning itself with the message of Pope Francis’ encyclical “Laudato Si”.

## Objectives

The concept of beauty has been investigated over time, highlighting works of art that inspire, transform the being and the environment, in addition to serving as a reference for the rescue of essential values, contributing to the construction of a resilient future.

To meet the general objective, the following specific objectives were defined: to identify the understanding of beauty throughout history, to examine its expression in different forms of art and its influence on society, and to demonstrate how the appreciation of beauty can help overcome contemporary challenges and promote a sustainable future.

## Methodology

The methodology adopted a qualitative approach, exploring the notion of beauty through the perspectives of philosophers such as Plato (428 B.C.-347 B.C.), Aristotle (384 B.C.–322 B.C.), St. Augustine (354 BC-450 A.D.), Immanuel Kant,<sup>1</sup> and Roger Scruton,<sup>2</sup> to reflect on our identity and future. Artistic examples were used to illustrate this connection: in music, “Aquarela”,<sup>3</sup> by Toquinho and Vinícius de Moraes, and “What a Wonderful World”,<sup>4</sup> by Louis Armstrong; in architecture, the “Garden of Versailles”,<sup>5</sup> by André Le Nôtre, and the “Praça Salgado Filho”,<sup>6</sup> by Burle Marx; and in the visual arts, “O beijo”,<sup>7</sup> by Gustav Klimt, and “Carnaval nos Arcos da Lapa”,<sup>8</sup> by Heitor dos Prazeres.

In addition, the text highlights the transformation of adversity into beauty in the works of Vik Muniz, Oseas da Mata and Evânia de Paula, reinforcing the concept of biophilia and aligning with the message of the encyclical “Laudato Si”,<sup>9</sup> by Pope Francis.

## Result and discussion

This study approaches beauty from various philosophical perspectives, analyzing the contributions of Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Immanuel Kant and Roger Scruton. Each thinker offers a unique insight into the concept, revealing different ways of evaluating and understanding beauty.

Plato<sup>10</sup> (428 B.C.-347 A.D.) defines beauty as an ideal of perfection accessible only by reason and philosophical contemplation. For him, beauty transcends the sensible world, representing a harmonious essence that reflects cosmic truth and promotes the evolution of the individual.

Aristotle<sup>11</sup> (384 BC–322 BC) complements this view by stating that beauty is manifested in the simple contemplation of the world. It highlights the role of both the viewer and the artist as mediators that influence aesthetic perception, suggesting that beauty is present in lived experience.

St. Augustine<sup>12</sup> (354 A.D.–450 A.D.) introduces a hierarchical approach based on the ontological attributes of mode, species, and order. He argues that beauty reflects a divine order and is intrinsically linked to goodness and harmony, reinforcing the connection between aesthetics and morality.

Immanuel Kant<sup>1</sup> presents a subjective view of beauty, suggesting that, although it is present in objects, it is perceived as a universal and uninterested pleasure for aesthetic enjoyment. This approach emphasizes individual experience and the ability to appreciate beauty in a way that is free of concepts or interests.

Roger Scruton,<sup>2</sup> for his part, defends beauty as essential for human well-being, warning that its absence leads to cultural decay and the prevalence of ugliness. He criticizes contemporary neglect of traditional aesthetics, stressing the need to cultivate beauty in order to preserve values and social harmony.

These different perspectives underscore the essential role of beauty in connecting the individual, art, and the cosmos, showing how it can influence cultural, spiritual, and social values.

When synthesizing literature, beauty can be understood as:

- a) Aesthetics and sensory experience: Beauty evokes sensory responses perceived through sight, hearing, touch, and even taste, often associated with harmony, proportion, and color.
- b) Values and morality: Carrying an ethical weight, beauty is often associated with good and virtue, reflecting our aspirations and ideas about a meaningful life.
- c) Emotions and connections: Beauty awakens deep emotions, such as love, joy, and contemplation, promoting empathy and solidarity among people.
- d) Culture and identity: The concept of beauty is shaped by cultural and social contexts, reflecting norms and values that influence collective identity.

When we seek beauty, we are looking for:

- 1) Inspiration and creativity: Beauty as a source of motivation and imagination, both in art and in everyday life.
- 2) Harmony and balance: Beauty brings order and balance, both in the personal realm and in communities and in the world.
- 3) Meaning and transcendence: As an expression of the transcendent, beauty helps to find meaning in existence and experiences.

- 4) Positive relationships: Beauty strengthens meaningful connections, serving as a link between people.

Beauty takes work. Involves:

- a) Effort and dedication: The pursuit of beauty requires hard work, commitment, and constant practice.
- b) Authenticity and reflection: True beauty goes beyond appearance, reflecting authenticity, values, and actions that positively impact others.
- c) Care and maintenance: Beauty must be cultivated through care for oneself, in relationships and with the environment, promoting practices of harmony.
- d) Transformation and growth: The search for beauty is a process of personal transformation, where challenges are overcome and result in evolution and growth.

As an example of Beauty in the visual arts, the work *“The Kiss”*,<sup>7</sup> Figure 1, created by the Austrian Gustav Klimt, an icon of the Art Nouveau movement and one of the most notable examples of the search for the ideal of beauty in art. The painting depicts a couple wrapped in an intimate and serene embrace, enveloped by an atmosphere of gleaming gold and geometric patterns that emphasize the sensuality and depth of the moment. Klimt’s aesthetics combine love, eroticism and spirituality, giving the work a transcendental character. From a philosophical perspective, *“The Kiss”* can be interpreted as a manifestation of the idea of sublime beauty, aligned with Platonic thought, which associates beauty with truth and the elevation of the soul. The work goes beyond visual appeal, capturing universal and complex emotions, and exemplifies how art can express beauty in a deep and multifaceted way.



**Figure 1** Gustav Klimt - 1907-1908.

Oil and gold leaf on canvas - 180 X 180 cm - Belvedere Palace - Austria  
<https://www.etsy.com/pt/listing/1048281349/reproducao-de-gustav-klimt-the-kiss>

The work *“Carnaval nos Arcos da Lapa”*,<sup>8</sup> Figure 2, by the Brazilian artist Heitor dos Prazeres, is a celebration of the popular culture of Rio de Janeiro and the joy of Carnival. Painted in Naif style,

it depicts a festive dinner in one of the symbols of the city, reflecting the cultural richness of the peripheries and favelas of Rio de Janeiro, bringing to the canvas the pride and beauty of traditions.



**Figure 2** Carnival in Arcos da Lapa – 1961.

52X37cm - not located, available in: <https://www.catalogodasartes.com.br/obra/DzGtBc/>

In his work *“Faculty of Judgment”*,<sup>1</sup> Kant proposes that beauty is an intrinsic quality of the object, he argues that beauty is experienced when an object elicits an aesthetic response that transcends mere utility or interest. The work of Heitor dos Prazeres can be framed in Kant’s ideas, as it presents an aesthetic experience that resonates universally, emphasizing the beauty of everyday life. This approach broadens the understanding of beauty beyond traditional and elitist standards, highlighting the richness and complexity of human experiences.

The song *“Aquarela”*,<sup>3</sup> composed by Toquinho and Vinícius de Moraes, captures various aspects of Aristotelian aesthetics, especially the idea that beauty is a harmony that reveals itself in forms and artistic expression. This song invites the audience to reflect on the aesthetic experience that resonates with Aristotle’s philosophical ideas.

The song *“What a wonderful world”*,<sup>4</sup> performed by Louis Armstrong is a poetic celebration of the beauty of the natural world, combines simple but deeply emotional lyrics with Armstrong’s unmistakable voice and trumpeter, creating a work that resonates with the idea of beauty in multiple dimensions. This music is in keeping with the philosophy of St. Augustine, emphasizing beauty as a reflection of the divine, the search for will, the importance of emotions and joy, and the interconnectedness between creation and creator. It invites the listener to contemplate the beauty of the world and to recognize the presence of the sacred in the simple experiences of life.

About the architecture, harmonious, traditional projects, integrated with the environment, humanized and functional, promoting the sense of place. This view is connected to biophilia, a concept proposed by biologists Edward Wilson and Stephen Kellert,<sup>13</sup> who understand the connection with nature as an intrinsic need of human beings. They suggest an architecture that fosters health, well-being and an uplifting experience for the spirit and is linked to the philosophy of Roger Scruton.

A striking example is the *Garden of Versailles*, in France,<sup>5</sup> Figure 3. Designed by André Le Nôtre in the seventeenth century, this space is one of the icons of the Baroque style, combining order, proportion and natural beauty in a way that inspires and delights.

Bringing it to our scenario, we can exemplify the Salgado Filho

Square, by Burle Marx, at Santos Dumont Airport, Rio de Janeiro. *“First public Garden”*,<sup>6</sup> Figure 4, to be designed in the city of Rio de Janeiro.



**Figure 3** The Garden of Versailles, in France. Designed by André Le Nôtre in the seventeenth century.

Available at: <https://www.unitur.com.br/blog/jardins-do-palacio-de-versalhes-a-arte-da-simetria-entenda-por-que/>



**Figure 4** Salgado Filho Square, by Burle Marx, at Santos Dumont Airport, Rio de Janeiro, 1938 Available at: <https://www.brasilfiscaliza.com.br/ir/estacao-de-passageiros-do-aeroporto-santos-dumont/>

The article *“From Garbage Flower Is Born”* evokes the idea that, even in the most adverse conditions, beauty can emerge. This phrase is also part of the lyrics of MC Racionais’ song. (DVD - Mil Trutas Mil Tretas - Vida Loka - Part 1, the song is considered one of the group’s biggest hits and is used to close most of their shows.

This observation can be seen in nature, where flowers and plants are able to grow in degraded environments (Figure 5).



**Figure 5** From Garbage grows flower - From Garbage grows flower - From Garbage grows flower - From Garbage grows flower.

Cast iron: Fábio Félix Domingues

Challenging the idea that what no longer serves us is necessarily useless or garbage, what may be considered waste by some, in the hands of others, can turn into luxury. From a social perspective, the expression “*from garbage to luxury*” symbolizes a cultural and artistic transformation that resignifies the discarded, giving it a new value.

A striking example is the work of the artist Vik Muniz (Figure 6), which was part of the opening of the soap opera “*Passione*”,<sup>14</sup> aired by TV Globo from May 17, 2010 to January 14, 2011, in 209 chapters. The piece highlights the power of art in reimagining materials and challenging concepts about waste.



**Figure 6** Vik Muniz - Passion - 180 cm x 225 cm, 2010.

Source: Sales Website - <https://www.catalogodasartes.com.br/obra/DeAezPB/>

Below, we have a work by the artist Oseas da Mata, 50 years old, with 17 years of experience at Comlurb. Always passionate about art, he began to reuse discarded materials in his creations after suffering an accident that took him away from the streets, integrating the internal services team of Galpão. During the work, Oseas selects materials discarded in selective collection to transform them into extraordinary pieces, such as an impressive painting of an eagle,<sup>15</sup> Figure 7, made with small pieces of cut wood and reuse of discarded fabrics. His works elevate the concept of reuse, combining sustainability and beauty.



**Figure 7** Relief floor, made with materials collected by Comlurb, South zone of Rio de Janeiro 40X40 – 2022. Artist Oseas da Mata.

Source: SITE - <https://jbemfolhas.com.br/galpao-das-artes-reluz-o-ouro-do-lixo>

Below is one of the works of the author, who is also a visual artist, developed in the context of her research based on the *Art Based Research methodology*. The work, entitled “*Os Donos do Morro*”,<sup>16</sup> was created with materials collected in the community of Vidigal, Rio de Janeiro, during the October 2022 election period. The work was carried out as part of the Contemporary Art discipline, guided by professor and artist Cadu Costa, who encouraged artistic creation from everyday materials. The play represents, in an affective way, the community of Vidigal, where the author lives, capturing subjective moments and emotional connections present in her investigative approach (Figure 8).<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 8** 40X40 Packaging - The owners of the hill - made with material collected in the community of Vidigal/2022 - Artist Evânia de Paula.

Source: Evânia de Paula.

## Conclusion

This reflection highlights the importance of the search for beauty at a critical time for humanity, in which ethics and connection to the environment are under threat. By exploring the concept “*From garbage a flower is born*”, we recognize nature’s ability to regenerate itself and transform what is discarded into something beautiful. As part of nature, we also possess the ability to regenerate, create art, design meaningful spaces, and develop products that embody beauty—evoking the essence of our deepest desires. When beauty is evoked, it mobilizes, inspires, and transforms us. This article demonstrated how the experience with beauty contributes to well-being and mental health, even in the midst of chaotic urban environments and ecological crises.

Through a qualitative methodology, based on literature review and analysis of practical examples, the article examined the perspectives of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Immanuel Kant, and Roger Scruton, each offering different approaches to the concept of beauty. These philosophical voices provide a basis for understanding how aesthetics can enrich individual life and promote ethical and cultural renewal in society.

The results indicate that the appreciation of beauty can act as a catalyst for personal and collective transformation, stimulating authenticity, reflection and care. Examples of works of art, architecture, and landscaping demonstrate how beauty is present in everyday life, generating meaningful emotional and social connections.

Additionally, the notion of biophilia—the love of life and nature—reinforces the importance of cultivating a respectful relationship with the environment. This idea resonates with the papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), in which Pope Francis emphasizes the interconnectedness between humanity and creation, as well as our responsibility to care for the planet as a common good. Recognizing that “from garbage a flower is born” invites us to resize our relationship with what we consider worthless, promoting a future in which beauty and ethics go hand in hand.

The pursuit of beauty is not just an aesthetic necessity, but an essential condition for building a balanced society, capable of facing contemporary challenges while cultivating a more conscious, respectful, and harmonious world.

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest for the publication of this scientific article.

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