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5. The enchanting aesthetic effect of transformation on curved and angular stimuli

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Abstract
The purpose of this project is to investigate how aesthetic preferences for "transformation" and "smoothness" interact with one another to determine aesthetic preferences. There is evidence that when stimuli are dynamic, they stimuli tend to be preferred over quiescent stimuli (Soranzo et al., 2018; Wright & Bertamini, 2015) and that curved stimuli tend to be preferred over angular stimuli ("smooth curvature effect", Bertamini et al., 2015). However, it is possible that factors interact, and a smooth transformation may strengthen the advantage of smooth stimuli if static and dynamic smoothness factors tap related mechanisms. For this purpose, two computer-based experiments were conducted, in which participants were required to evaluate the aesthetic appeal of stimuli displayed on the screen. In experiment I, stimuli consisted of abstract static polygons differing in type of contour (angular vs. curved) and number of vertices (22 and 26). In Experiment II, the same stimuli as Experiment I were used, and transformation was added in terms of fluent expansion or fluent shrinkage. To make the size of the polygons comparable to those of Experiment I, the polygons expanded and shrank to the same degree. As a result, the average visible size of the polygons was the same as the size of the static polygons. Results confirmed both the transformation and the smoothness effects. These results are discussed considering Graf and Landwehr (2015)'s "Dual process fluency-based aesthetic" model which shows how "positive fluency discrepancy" adds aesthetic value.