Anastasia Loukianov, in her essay on approaching sustainability through aesthetics with a sociological angle, astutely addresses the numerous definitions of the term 'aesthetic', from Aristotle's understanding of the term to modern day usage by sociologists currently working. However, I believe there is another more colloquial use of the term that is especially pertinent when it comes to promoting sustainable practices – the broader, more trend-oriented definition made popular by young adults through social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. Beyond academia, the term has been defined by Vogue writer Sarah Spellings appropriately broadly as 'something to categorise our own identities by' (2021), and is generally used to refer to hyper-specific curations that correspond to an individual's tastes and/or broader trends. For example, 'cottagecore' is an internet aesthetic centred around sharing images of pastoral landscapes, 19th century clothing and tools, and women participating in rural homemaking activities such as gardening. Exploring this in conjunction with my own film studies research on Studio Ghibli's use of images of the 'spectacular mundane' (Crombie, 2021), referenced by Loukianov at the end of her essay, could reveal another avenue through which aesthetics can promote sustainable lifestyles through social media.

Although film studies as an area is often concerned with images and aesthetics rather than purely the narrative content of a text, discussions surrounding sustainability and cinema frequently refer to films that are explicitly addressing sustainability and climate issues. For instance, although many of the Studio Ghibli films I research feature images that promote sustainable lifestyles, articles addressing environmental concerns from the studio such as Michelle J. Smith's 'Animating child activism' (2012) and Eija Niskanen's 'Deer Gods, Nativism, and History' (2019) tend to focus on *Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki, 1997), a text

that is directly about nurturing sustainable relationships between human development and natural resources. This has, perhaps, resulted in the implication that in order to effectively create images of sustainability, a text must explicitly include this in the narrative or theming – this is not the case, with the popularity of Studio Ghibli 'aesthetics' online revealing the significance of these sustainable images even when divorced from a narrative context. Notably, many of the stills and clips from Ghibli films reposted by 'aesthetic' accounts depict mundane or domestic actions: laundry blowing in the breeze, cutting and sharing a pineapple, or brushing a dusty floor, for instance. In my own research, I argue that the defamiliarized presentation of these actions through formal methods such as long takes, closeups, and phenomenologically pleasing sound design serve to transform them into an appealing spectacle, with their recent social media popularity confirming their compelling nature not just in spite of but *because* of the conventional actions they depict. This importance of form over content reflects Loukianov's understanding of aesthetics in the essay, specifically the reference of Dewey's idea that 'aesthetics should not be sought in the artwork, but in the experience of art' (p. 6).

When it comes to promoting sustainability, this aspirational sharing and presentation of mundane actions becomes significant, particularly against much of the hegemonic consumerist ideas of what constitutes an 'aesthetic' online. This is explained by scholars Emily Hund and Lee McGuigan as a 'shoppable life', the 'branded and monetizable self' promoted by social media influencers that depends upon the desirability of their 'aesthetic' (2019). The images shared from artworks produced by Ghibli present an alternative to this, in which the ephemeral online image itself is enough to brand oneself with without the need for additional and likely wasteful purchases. Furthermore, the actions depicted in the

images themselves are suggestive of sustainable practices, promoting ideas such as sharing resources with those around you and mending and repairing objects rather than purchasing new items. When an individual chooses to retweet a gif of a scene from a Ghibli film or reblog it onto their page on Tumblr, they are participating in a curation of sustainable images, which are then shared to others in the online community who follow their account. In this process, aside from material necessities such as the power to operate devices and power/carbon emissions from the servers that keep the websites running, comparatively less waste is being created – in this respect, it is important to note that I exclude NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens) from this discussion, due to their environmental impact and false scarcity. Even if the individuals interested in this 'aesthetic' treat it as a passing trend, no items have been purchased that are now likely to be discarded, creating a kind of conspicuous consumption in which transient images rather than objects are the currency.

Of course, Studio Ghibli are a highly successful corporation as well as a collective of largely left-wing filmmakers, and many of their revenue streams (and the revenue generated by illegally using their intellectual property) are based upon selling consumer goods in what is arguably part of an unsustainable capitalist system. But in the realm of 'aesthetics' as understood by internet users, the physical products they produce are less important signifiers of taste than the ephemeral images shared across the internet through more sustainable means. The mostly incorporeal mass production and distribution of screenshots and gifs depicting sustainable ways of living has the potential to influence the material lifestyles of those (primarily young) people who invest in these 'aesthetics' online in a positive way. This also transforms the experience of viewing the film over a brief two-hour

screening into a broader way of perceiving the world in everyday life, reflecting Dewey's idea of aesthetics as a vital and constant aspect of living.

Loukianov's essay effectively addresses the need for research into the sociological functions of aesthetics and how they can be used to promote sustainable futures– here, I hoped to shine a film studies centric light on one such way that this idea has manifested through online subcultures.

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