Unsanitary Practice:
What Does Programming Have to Do with Beauty?

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Abstract: The field of technosciences has been traditionally seen as the major domain where rationality lives. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the idea has been that in order to exercise science or produce knowledge, one had to eliminate all subjective interferences (Daston and Galison 2007). Sciences have been sanitized from any kind or irrational or subjective behavior. Computer science is not an exception to this rule. Practices of writing code have been trapped in this tradition of positivistic thinking and are often discursively rid of any messiness associated with both human or non-human forces. But if we treat technoscientific practices as rational, situated and material we see only a part of the surface of things. I argue that what often subtly evade our research attention is aesthetics. I am going to show how developers use the language of aesthetics to describe their practices. In the case of programming, the focus on beauty and ugliness of code allows us to reveal how aesthetic judgments about code can orchestrate a developers' community from a blind spot of rationality