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Editors Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

Aura in the 21st Century

Editorial by

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Texts by

Federico Biggio
Maria Giulia Franco
Francesco Mangiapane
Carlo Andrea Tassinari



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direttore Rosario Perricone

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Editors

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Université de Nîmes, France



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www.edizionimuseopasqualino.it – info@edizionimuseopasqualino.it



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EDITORIAL

Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

88 years have passed since the first publication of Walter Benjamin's essay *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (English title: *The work of art in the age mechanical reproduction*) where the notion of aura has received a first assessment, referring to a quality allegedly missed by the mechanically reproduced work of art, that of its uniqueness, defined by its presence in time and space, at the place where it happens to be located.

All along the century, this concept has gained immense fortune, exerting its influence in heterodox fields of knowledge, firstly Theory of Art as well as Sociology, Semiotics, Literature, History, Political Sciences and still others. Aura's definition involves a number of philosophical and æsthetical problems related at least to the dichotomies of truth/false, authentic/in-authentic, unique/serial, beautiful/ugly, artistic/kitsch, which emerge as of central importance in the social discourse.

Indeed, within the current Socio-Technical assets, the problem of Aura continues to inspire the intellectual debate, showing up as a general and eminently political issue. Following the ongoing process of *artification* of daily life, the problem of the uniqueness may be intended as an effect, whose construction / translation / migration / dissipation has to be re-thought in terms of management: how do social forces construct such an effect? How do they capitalize on

it, in their activity? How does it get recognized and valued?

The four essays in this collection are drawn from a variety of contexts, including software culture and virtual reality, oenotourism and the representation of it in a classic film like Ridley Scott's *A Good Year* (2006), the role of photographs in the Antimafia movement in Sicily, and, finally, the changes that public spaces have undergone in the wake of the Pandemic of SARS-CoV-2. All of them explore new meaningful instances of aura's emergence in our articulated daily life.

Bodø, Norway and Palermo, Italy
May 2023

88 years have passed since the first publication of Walter Benjamin's essay where he firstly proposed the notion of aura. Following the ongoing process of artification of daily life, the problem of the uniqueness of the work of art, as identified by aura, continues to be inspiring for understanding and criticizing the social world.

This issue of Global Humanities proposes the idea that the concept of aura may be considered as an effect of meaning which demands to be managed by social actors in the mediasphere. Such a move enlightens the relevance of a proper struggle for "authenticity" to be pursued as an added value of daily life: How do social forces construct such an effect? How do they capitalize on it, in their activity? How does it get recognized and valued?

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