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Kunstnerisk aura

Et begrep fra den tyske filosofen Walter Benjamin. Det motsatte av standardisert, serielt. Knyttet til det historisk unike (kunstverk som enkelttilfeller), det singulære/partikulære. Unike kunstverk er “ladet” (engelsk: “charged”). De har autentisitet. Auraen oppstår gjennom den spesielle fascinasjonen vi får overfor et verk som er unikt (Heinich 2001 s. 22). Auraen skyldes en ren kvalitativ verdi, uten noen vare-status (Perniola 1977 s. 302). Verket får patina, et preg av elde og ærverdighet, av autentisitet.

Auraen er en kunstnerisk “utstråling” eller “vibrasjon” av verdi og opphøyethet, av autentisitet, en “larger-than-life”-status. Den er et estetisk mysterium som bare det unike og ekte har. Et slikt verk har en gåtefull, hemmelig kraft, er omgitt av en slags estetisk magi. Auraen omfatter den ærefrykten man kan føle i nærheten av et unikt kunstverk. Verket har en slags “utilnærmelighet”, noe “fjernt” – uansett hvor fysisk nær bildet eller teksten måtte være (Berndt 1978 s. 164). Aura kan også oppstå på bestemte steder, da oppstår auraen “on a particular type of encounter – touching the place where the actual thing was/happened/happens” (Gray, Sandvoss og Harrington 2007 s. 146). Steder der berømte diktere har bodd kan ha en spesiell aura (Neuhaus og Ruf 2011 s. 380). Auraen har også blitt beskrevet som verkets “overlay of magical and religious sanctifications, its residue of mystery.” (Stam 1992 s. 210)

Den kunstneriske auraen er knyttet til at verket (f.eks. et maleri) i tidligere tider ble produsert manuelt og møysommelig, og fantes kun i ett eksemplar. I *Kunstverket i tidsalderen for dets tekniske reproduserbarhet* (1935) diskuterer Benjamin det han oppfatter som kunstens tap av aura etter den industrielle revolusjon og denne periodens mulighet for å masseprodusere kopier av kunstverk. Det ekte som var knyttet til det enkelte kunstverk, tenderer til å forsvinne. Et reprodusert verk er ikke lenger “ekte” i tradisjonell forstand, fordi det ikke er stedsbundet og unikt slik det var i tidligere tider. Kunst som blir masseprodusert, (reprodusert) mister sin aura. Med dagens produksjonsteknikker kan det lages mange kopier som ikke skiller seg visuelt fra originalen. Vi har blitt vant til å se flere og flere reproduksjoner, og langt færre originaler, og dette gjør oss ufølsomme for kunstverkenes aura og kanskje ute av stand til virkelig å verdsette dem (Aumont 2005 s. 235-236). Den tekniske mangfoldiggjøringen forandrer også innholdet i begrepet “verk”.

“Det som her [i reproduksjonen av kunstverk] faller bort, kan sammenfattes i begrepet aura, og man kan si: det som forsvinner i den tekniske reproduserbarhets tidsalder, er kunstverkets aura.” (Benjamin 1975 s. 39) “Det som imidlertid i begge tilfeller sto klart, var statuens unike karakter, med andre ord: dens aura. [...] Definisjonen av auraen som “en unik framtrødelse av det fjerne, så nert dette kan komme” er ikke noe annet enn en formulering av kunstverkets kultverdi i kategoriene for sanseforneemelse i rom og tid.” (Benjamin 1975 s. 41)

I en bok om Walter Benjamin forklarer Richard Wolin aura-endring pa denne maten: Den tekniske reproduksjonen av kunstverk “represents a qualitative change in the intrinsic definition of art itself such that its status as an object for aesthetic enjoyment or satisfaction assumes a role subordinated to its function as an instrument of communication. “Cult value” turns into “exhibition value”; quantity is transformed into quality; the institution of art, it would seem, has reached a historical point of no return.” (Wolin 1982 s. 189) Kunsten blir “profanert”.

“Two years after the birth of the Third Reich, in “The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin spoke ambivalently about the implications of mass reproduction of works of art in the capitalist industrial culture of the 20th century. On the one hand he warned that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space.” The loss of authenticity, in Benjamin’s view, jeopardized its unique historical testimony, thus depleting it of its ‘aura.’ But on the other hand, he welcomed the political power that mechanical reproduction of the work of art granted the masses in the form of emancipating art from “its parasitical dependence on ritual.” ” (Najmeh K. Mahani i https://offscreen.com/view/digital_reproduction; lesedato 25.10.18)

Et sted i sitt *Passasje-verk* (utgitt posthumt i 1982) skriver Benjamin om fotografier: “Spor og aura. Sporet er tilsynekomsten av en narhet, uansett hvor fjern den er, det den etterlater. Auraen er tilsynekomsten av en fjernhet, uansett hvor nar den er, den den trekker fram. I sporet far vi tak pa tingen, i auraen bemektiger den seg oss.” (sitert fra Grimm og Scharf 2008 s. 54)

“Aurabegrepet til Walter Benjamin bestar av to hovedelementer, det forstnevnte var “det unike” hvilket innehadde en karakter av Her og Na, hvor fremtrødelsen var ulik hver gang, det sistnevnte var “det fjerne” hvilket var noe utilnarmelig som var knyttet til kunstens samfunnsmessige funksjon/kultverdi hvilket innebar en deltakelse. [...] Benjamin mener at vi slar i stykker gjenstandens aura ved at vi, mennesket, onsker a kjenne til alt omkring oss i tilvarelsen, hvorav vi tar i bruk mekaniske hjelpemidler for bringe dem narmere oss. [...] de mekaniske reproduksjonsmidlene som for eksempel fotografiet er en forutsetning for at ulike kunstverk skal bli tilgjengelige i var tid, nettopp pa grunn av dets forminskningsteknikk som hjelper menneskene til a beherske verkene.” (Hilde Hernes i <http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/EST3010/v05/hildeh.doc>; lesedato 27.05.14)

“The modern manuscript, especially since the Romantic era, has about it what Walter Benjamin calls an “aura” – a numinous quality of “authenticity” ” (Brandon Hopkins i <http://humstatic.uchicago.edu/faculty/wjtm/glossary2004/manuscript.htm>; lesedato 03.10.16).

Det kan hevdes at verket i vår industrialiserte tid får sin aura *via* kunstneriske reproduksjoner: Det er på grunn av at verket blir fotografert, gjengitt i reproduksjoner og at folk får kjennskap til det egentlige, ekte, unike kunstverket at det får sin privilegerte status (Heinich 2001 s. 22). Det autentiske blir tydelig gjennom en sosial prosess, ved at verket blir kjent og oppvurdert.

Auraen øker når verket blir “avritualisert” fra en religiøs eller annen ikke-estetisk verdi og blir et kunstnerisk utstillingsobjekt (Heinich 2001 s. 22). Auraen bevares når verket er systematisk atskilt fra det sosiale, fra praktisk bruk (Winter 2010 s. 83).

Men bruk kan også paradoksalt gi aura. I “Om noen motiver hos Baudelaire” (1939) hevder Benjamin at brukte, slitte gjenstander har aura og kan vekke ufrivillige minner hos dem som bruker eller betrakter slike gjenstander (gjengitt fra Milon og Perelman 2010 s. 44). En gammel utgave en av bok, velbrukt og slitt med gulnete ark osv., kan ha aura gjennom å være unik for eieren av boka, med minner om når den første gang ble lest osv. (Milon og Perelman 2010 s. 42). Det at samme eksemplar av en bok har blitt lest av mange, kan også gi den aura – tiden har gitt slike bøker en aura som de opprinnelig ikke hadde (Milon og Perelman 2010 s. 43). En bok vil kunne bli sjeldnere med tiden, f.eks. hvis det fra et førsteopplag på 3000 eksemplarer hundre år senere kun eksisterer 30 eksemplarer. Bøker utsettes for en “temporal entropi” (Milon og Perelman 2010 s. 43), de smuldrer opp og forsvinner som fysiske objekter fordi de kastes, brennes osv. Hvert velbrukte bokeksemplar som fortsatt finnes, blir mer og mer unikt for hver leser som avsetter spor i det (flekker, rifter, små bretter, margnotater osv.).

“Benjamin writes of the loss of the aura through the mechanical reproduction of art itself. The aura for Benjamin represents the originality and authenticity of a work of art that has not been reproduced. A painting has an aura while a photograph does not; the photograph is an image of an image while the painting remains utterly original. [...] Benjamin writes of the loss of the aura as a loss of a singular authority within the work of art itself. [...] The location of anything we might call the aura has to be moved into a mythological space; into the cult of genius. This cult of genius relates back to the cultish characteristic of the aura itself; in its absence there is a grabbling for a replacement. What does it mean to place an aura on “someone” or “something”? Is it even necessary to reclaim the aura in the first place? The mystical cult of the original is broken with the loss of the aura, and now every one can go to a gallery, a museum, the theater or the cinema. A whole new appreciation of art is introduced while at the same time, a whole new mode of

deception and distraction also enters. For Benjamin, the aura is dead and it exists in an improbable and mystical space. [...] For Benjamin, a distance from the aura is a good thing. The loss of the aura has the potential to open up the politicization of art, whether or not that opening is detrimental or beneficial is yet to be determined. However, it allows for us to raise political questions in regards to the reproducible image which can be used in one way or another.” (<http://frankfurtschool.wordpress.com/2008/02/28/summary-the-work-of-art-in-the-age-of-mechanical-reproduction/>; lesedato 25.04.14)

“Anything but a clearly delimited, stable concept, aura describes a cluster of meanings and relations that appear in Benjamin’s writings in various configurations and not always under its own name; it is this conceptual fluidity that allows aura to become such a productive nodal point in Benjamin’s thinking. However, since my goal is to defamiliarize the common understanding of the concept, let me first cite the two main definitions familiar from his work: (1) Aura understood as “a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance [apparition, semblance] of a distance, however near it may be” (or, “however close the thing that calls it forth”); and (2) aura understood as a form of perception that “invests” or endows a phenomenon with the “ability to look back at us,” to open its eyes or “lift its gaze.” When Benjamin develops the second definition in “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” he refers the reader back to his earlier formulation in the artwork essay; the two are conjoined in *The Arcades Project* when he invokes his “definition of aura as the distance of the gaze that awakens in the object looked at” (“meine Definition der Aura als der Ferne des im Angeblickten erwachenden Blicks”)) (Miriam Bratu Hansen i http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/uploads/pdf/Hansen,_Benjamins_Aura.pdf; lesedato 28.05.13).

“The aura of objects such as clothing or furniture stands in a metonymic relation to the person who uses them or has been using them. Thus [den tyske 1800-tallsfilosofen] Schelling’s coat will pass into immortality with the philosopher’s image – “the shape it has borrowed from its wearer is not unworthy of the wrinkles in his face” (SW, 2:514; GS, 2:373). In other words, the aura of Schelling’s coat does not derive, say, from its unique status as a handmade, custom-made object but from a long-term material relationship with the wearer’s physique or, rather, physiognomy. It thus seems to participate in – and figuratively instantiate – the logic of the trace, the indexical dimension, or existential bond, in photographic signification. Benjamin elsewhere refers to this type of aura as the “aura of the *habitual*” (AP, p. 461; emphasis added) or the “experience that inscribes itself as long [repetitive] practice” (*Übung*) (SW, 4:337; GS, 1:2:644).” (Miriam Bratu Hansen i http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/uploads/pdf/Hansen,_Benjamins_Aura.pdf; lesedato 28.05.13)

“[T]he aura is not an inherent property of persons or objects but pertains to the *medium* of perception, naming a particular structure of vision (though one not limited to the visual). More precisely, aura is itself a medium that defines the gaze

of the human beings portrayed: “There was an aura about them, a medium that lent fullness and security to their gaze inasmuch as it penetrated that medium” (SW, 2:515-17; GS, 2:376). In other words, aura implies a phenomenal structure that enables the manifestation of the gaze, inevitably refracted and disjunctive, and shapes its potential meanings. [...] Benjamin suggests that aura as a medium of perception – or “perceptibility” – becomes visible only on the basis of technological reproduction. The gaze of the photographed subject would not persist without its refraction by an apparatus, that is, a nonhuman lens and the particular conditions of setting and exposure; it already responds to another – and other – look that at once threatens and inscribes the subject’s authenticity and individuality. This element of contestation captured in the contingency of the long-forgotten moment, the oscillation, in Eduardo Cadava’s words, “between a gaze that can return the gaze of an other and one that cannot,” accounts for the aura of these early photographs (“beautiful and unapproachable” [SW, 2:527]), *their* ability to look back at *us* across the distance of time, answering to the gaze of the later beholder.” (Miriam Bratu Hansen i http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/uploads/pdf/Hansen,_Benjamins_Aura.pdf; lesedato 28.05.13)

“Benjamin distinguishes between a *genuine* aura, which is irrevocably in decay, and a *simulated* aura that prevents a different, utopian, or at the very least nondestructive interplay among those three terms – art, technology, the masses – from winning. It has been argued that it is only the simulated or “pseudo aura” (“an already distorting reaction formation toward the historical ‘decay of aura’”) which is the object of the artwork essay’s call for demolition. But I believe that the force of this call cannot but hit “genuine” aura as well; it rhetorically executes the same “destructive, cathartic” function that Benjamin ascribes to film in relation to traditional culture (SW, 3:104). In that sense, the artwork essay would have to be seen as a desperate experiment, an existential wager comparable to the tabula rasa approach of “Experience and Poverty” three years earlier, the stakes exponentially raised with the darkening of the political – and Benjamin’s personal – situation. However, considering that aura as both medium of experience and epistemic model was essential to Benjamin’s own mode of thinking (and resurfaced as such in his writings and letters as late as the second Baudelaire essay and his theses on the concept of history [1940]), the matter may be still more complex. For the “genuine” aura that Benjamin surrenders in the face of the overwhelming efficacy of aura simulation is, as I have tried to show, already a pocket version – circumscribed by the tradition of Western art and poetry, its range of temporalities foreshortened into a simple, irreversible pastness, an *auréole* or “halo,” like the one in Baudelaire’s prose poem, that the poet would do well to be losing (see SW, 4:342). One might argue, therefore, that the self-denigrating reduction of aura in the artwork essay is not least an act of defense, a fetishistic deflection that would protect, as it were, the vital parts of the concept inasmuch as they were indispensable to the project of reconceptualizing experience in modernity.” (Miriam Bratu Hansen i http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/uploads/pdf/Hansen,_Benjamins_Aura.pdf; lesedato 28.05.13)

“Historically, works of art had an ‘aura’ – an appearance of magical or supernatural force arising from their uniqueness (similar to *mana*). The aura includes a sensory experience of distance between the reader and the work of art. The aura has disappeared in the modern age because art has become reproducible. Think of the way a work of classic literature can be bought cheaply in paperback, or a painting bought as a poster. Think also of newer forms of art, such as TV shows and adverts. Then compare these to the experience of staring at an original work of art in a gallery, or visiting a unique historic building. This is the difference Benjamin is trying to capture. The aura is an effect of a work of art being uniquely *present* in time and space. It is connected to the idea of *authenticity*. A reproduced artwork is never fully present. If there is no original, it is never fully present anywhere. Authenticity cannot be reproduced, and disappears when everything is reproduced. Benjamin thinks that even the original is depreciated, because it is no longer unique. Along with their authenticity, objects also lose their authority. The masses contribute to the loss of aura by seeking constantly to bring things closer. They create reproducible realities and hence destroy uniqueness. [...] The traditional work of art is experienced mainly through distanced contemplation. [...] such as photographs, TV shows and film do not lend themselves to contemplation. They are imperative, challenging and agitating the viewer, putting up signposts. Benjamin argues that *distraction* became an alternative to contemplation.” (Andrew Robinson i <http://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/walter-benjamin-art-aura-authenticity/>; lesedato 01.11.14)

“This echoes contemporary discussions of how media exposure reduces attention spans and may even produce stimulus overload. Most often, this takes the form of right-wing concerns that people are losing the ability to pay attention or concentrate on tasks. But radical authors, too, usually analyse it in terms of a debilitating submersion and a loss of space and time to think. The loss of aura seems to have both positive and negative effects for Benjamin. He sees the aura, authenticity, and uniqueness of works of art as fundamentally connected to their insertion in a tradition. The reproduced work of art is completely detached from the sphere of tradition. It loses the continuity of its presentation and appreciation. Art was originally derived from ritual, and depended on it for its aura. [...] On the positive side, this loss of tradition brings the work of art into the distinct life-situation of the reader, viewer or listener. The work of art can be disconnected from its past uses and brought into new combinations by the reader.” (Andrew Robinson i <http://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/walter-benjamin-art-aura-authenticity/>; lesedato 01.11.14)

Den tyske filosofen Theodor W. Adorno sitt “aurabegrep er knyttet til en metafysisk erfaring, som vender mennesket mot noe unikt og åpner opp for det en annen sfære. Samtidig må det sies at denne metafysiske erfaringen ikke er en erfaring av noe virkelig, men innebærer en foregripelse av noe virkelig. [...] I verket *Det lyse rommet* gjør Roland Barthes bruk av ordet aura som bildets air, hvilket ifølge han er dette utilbørlige som leder fra kroppen til sjelen, *animula*, den lille individuelle sjel, hos den ene god, hos den andre ond. Aurabegrepet hos han er

en subjektiv og individuell erfaring som forenes mellom det kroppslige og det sjelelige, en følelse hvis [= som] stiger oppover. Det er en plutselig oppvåkning som finner sted hinsides all likhet, en satori [= buddhistisk oppvåkning] hvor ordene svikter og den sjeldne og enestående evidens gir uttrykk for noe fullkomment.” (Hilde Hernes i <http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/EST3010/v05/hildeh.doc>; lesedato 26.05.14)

“Aura, to Adorno, is significantly canceled by modern art itself. Reacting to an age in which social consciousness lags behind art itself, modern art cancels its aura to include its opposite, the anti-art. Thus musicians like Schoenberg deny the tonal aspect of music, and modern novelists revolt against the traditional novelistic omniscience. “If anything does have an aural character,” says Adorno, “it is surely the film which possesses it to an extreme and highly suspect degree” (A & P 123). One example of how the Hollywood films retain the illusion of aura is the cult of Mickey Mouse.” (Kate Liu i http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/Literary_Criticism/marxism/Adorno-benjamin.html; lesedato 05.06.14)

Amerikaneren Orson Welles film *F for Fake* (1975) har som en av de sentrale personene maleren Elmyr de Hory, som plagierer bilder av andre malere (blant andre Picasso) og utgir bildene for å være ekte. Hory sier om sine forfalskninger: “If you hang them in a museum, in a collection of great paintings, and if they hang long enough there, they become real.” (her sitert fra <http://www.anderbo.com/anderbo1/afilmreview-02.html>; lesedato 22.04.14)

For en kunstsamler eller f.eks. en bibliofil som samler på vakre bøker, vil det vanligvis spille en stor rolle om det enkelte verket er unikt (at det finnes kun ett eneste eksemplar i hele verden) eller ikke. Verket i så fall preg av å være en fetisj – en bærer av en hemmelighetsfull “makt” – med en “kultisk kraft” knyttet til seg.

Forlag ønsker at potensielle bestselger skal bli “snakkiser” (mye omtalt blant folk flest) og ha en aura av noe hemmelig, sensasjonelt og/eller skandaløst (Neuhaus og Holzner 2007 s. 57).

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