



The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

An audio-visual interactive publication

EXPLORE

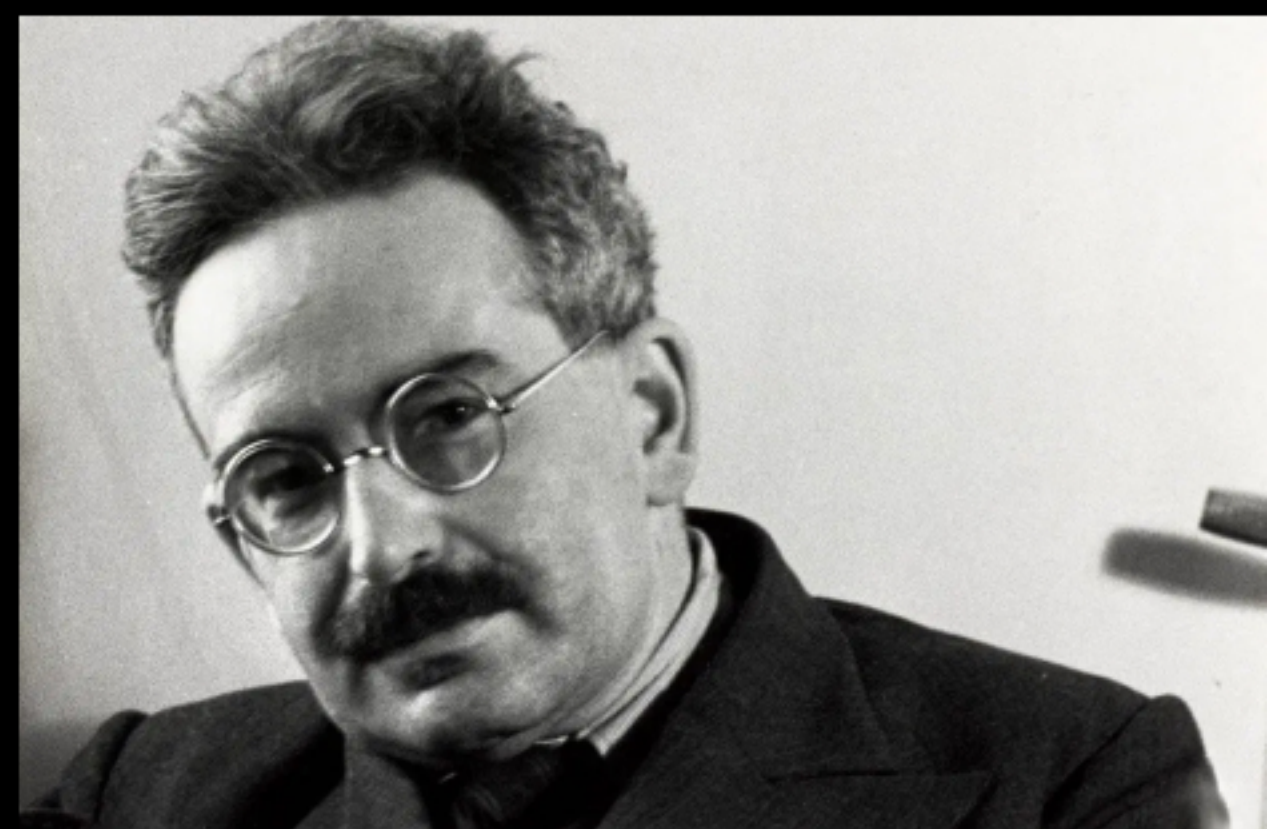
AUTHOR

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER

SETTING

WALTER
BENJAMIN



GERMAN
REICH

Walter Benjamin was a German-Jewish philosopher, literary critic and cultural critic active in the first half of the 20th century. His thought was a blend of Marxism, Jewish mysticism and Frankfurt School ideas, and had a profound impact on philosophy, aesthetics, history and cultural studies.

Benjamin had a distinguished career in art and design theory, arguing that mechanical reproduction liberated art from the sacred and authoritative towards democratisation and mass communication, a view that was foundational to modern design, media art and visual communication theory.

DETAILS

1892
1940

AUTHOR

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BENJAMIN

Walter Bendix Schönflies Benjamin was a German-Jewish philosopher, cultural critic, media theorist, and essayist. "The medium is the message," is a famous formula with broad applications that was derived from Benjamin's work by one of his readers. An eclectic thinker who combined elements of German idealism, Jewish mysticism, Western Marxism, and post-Kantianism, he made contributions to the philosophy of history, metaphysics, historical materialism, criticism, aesthetics and had an oblique but overwhelmingly influential impact on the resurrection of the Kabbalah by virtue of his life-long epistolary relationship with Gershom Scholem.

Among Benjamin's best known works are the essays "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935), and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940). His major work as a critic included essays on Baudelaire, Goethe, Kafka, Kraus, Leskov, Proust, Walser, Trauerspiel and translation theory. He translated the Tableaux Parisiens section of Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du mal and parts of Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu.



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MECHANICAL
REPRODUCTION



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SYNOPSIS VIDEO

HISTORY
AND FUTURE

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MECHANICAL
REPRODUCTION



AURA
OF ART

<The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction> explores the impact of technological developments, particularly mechanical means of reproduction such as photography and film, on traditional art.

The article points out that mechanical reproduction has deprived works of art of their unique 'spirituality' and changed people's aesthetic experience and perception. At the same time, it has also liberated art from elite culture and shifted it towards mass communication and political expression. The work stresses that art should serve social change and opposes the aestheticisation of art for political control, which is one of the important foundations of modern art and media theory.

SYNOPSIS VIDEO

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Sound Settings

Headphones ☐

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AUTHOR

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THE ART AND THE FUTURE IN THE
DIGITAL AGE



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ARTISTIC 'AURA' AND THE IMPACT
OF ARTISTIC REPRODUCTION



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Chapter 3

In
Principle
The Work Of Art
Has Always Been
Reproducible

Walter Benjamin

CHAPTER 1
THE
HISTORY
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REPRODUCT
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MENU PAGE

ARCHAIC
GREEK ERA
Metal
Pottery

THIS IS THE EARLIEST
TRACEABLE FORM OF
REPRODUCTION, USED IN
METAL AND POTTERY,
AMONG OTHER THINGS.

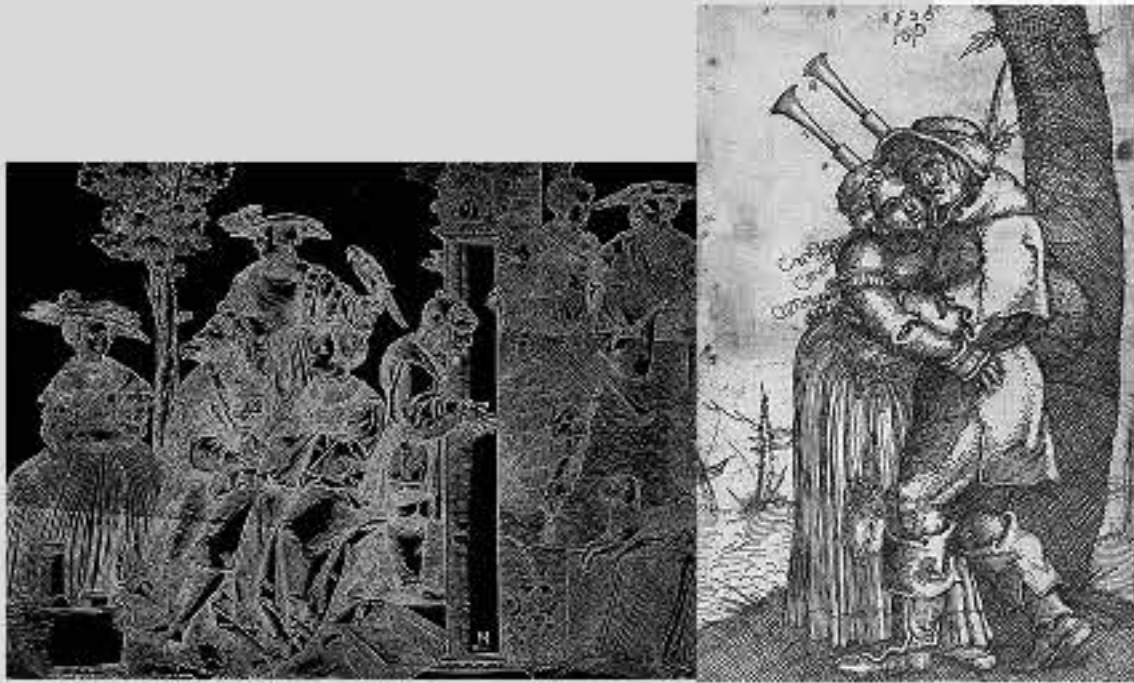
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MIDDLE AGE
WOODCUT
DECALITER

WOODCUTTING, ETCHING AND
OTHER TECHNIQUES WERE
GRADUALLY POPULARISED IN
EUROPE, PAVING THE WAY FOR
THE DEVELOPMENT OF
PRINTING.

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PRINTING
REVOLUTION
PRINTING WITH
MOVABLE TYPE

THE MOVE FROM ELITE TO
MASS SHARING OF
KNOWLEDGE IS THE FIRST
'MASS PRODUCTION' OF
INFORMATION.

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THE LITHOGRAPHIC
REPRODUCTION
PERIOD
LITHOGRAPHY

IMAGES CAN BE REPRODUCED
QUICKLY, LAYING THE
FOUNDATION FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN
ILLUSTRATION, ADVERTISING,
AND SO ON.

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THE PHOTOGRAPHIC
REPRODUCTION
PERIOD
PHOTOGRAPHY

HUMAN REPLICATION
TECHNOLOGY HAS SHIFTED
FROM MANUAL DEPICTION
TO 'MACHINE EYES' FOR
MORE REALISTIC AND
FASTER REPLICATION.

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THE AUDIOVISUAL
REPRODUCTION
PERIOD
FILM & SOUND

HUMAN MECHANICAL
REPRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY
HAS ENTERED THE ERA OF
'IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES',
WHERE SOUND AND IMAGES ARE
REPRODUCED AND TRANSMITTED
SIMULTANEOUSLY.

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ATTIC BLACK-
FIGURED AMPHORA
GRAYSON PERRY
530 BCE

THE DURABILITY, ELEGANCE
AND VARIETY OF GREEK VASES
MEAN THAT THEY ARE AS
COLLECTABLE TODAY AS WHEN
PRIZE EXAMPLES FIRST BEGAN
TO BE ACTIVELY UNEARTHED
DURING THE RISE OF THE
GRAND TOUR IN THE 17TH AND
18TH CENTURIES.

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DECALITER

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BRONZE HYDRIA
(WATER JAR)
JOSEPH PULITZER
510 BCE

THIS HYDRIA, LIKE GREEK
ART IN ALL ITS FORMS, IS
MARKED BY CLEARLY DEFINED
PARTS ORGANIZED INTO A
HARMONIOUS WELL-
PROPORTIONED WHOLE. THE
PLAIN BODY SWELLS GENTLY
TO THE SHOULDER ZONE,
WHICH TURNS INWARD WITH A
SOFT, CUSHIONLIKE CURVE.

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ILLUSTRATION, ADVERTISING,
AND SO ON.

'Only A Few Decades After Its Invention, Lithography Was Surpassed By Photography. For The First Time In The Process Of Pictorial Reproduction, Photography Freed The Hand Of The Most Important Artistic Functions Which Henceforth Devolved Only Upon The Eye Looking Into A Lens. Since The Eye Perceives More Swiftly Than The Hand Can Draw, The Process Of Pictorial Reproduction Was Accelerated So Enormously That It Could Keep Pace With Speech.'

'A Film Operator Shooting A Scene In The Studio Captures The Images At The Speed Of An Actor's Speech. Just As Lithography Virtually Implied The Illustrated Newspaper, So Did Photography Foreshadow The Sound Film.'

— WALTER BENJAMIN



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REPRODUCTION, USED IN

'The Enormous Changes Which Printing, The Mechanical
Reproduction Of Writing, Has Brought About In
Literature Are A Familiar Story. However, Within The
Phenomenon Which We Are Here Examining From The
Perspective Of World History, Print Is Merely A
Special, Though Particularly Important, Case.'

'With The Woodcut Graphic Art Became Mechanically
Reproducible For The First Time, Long Before Script
Became Reproducible By Print.'

— WALTER BENJAMIN

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FILM & SOUND

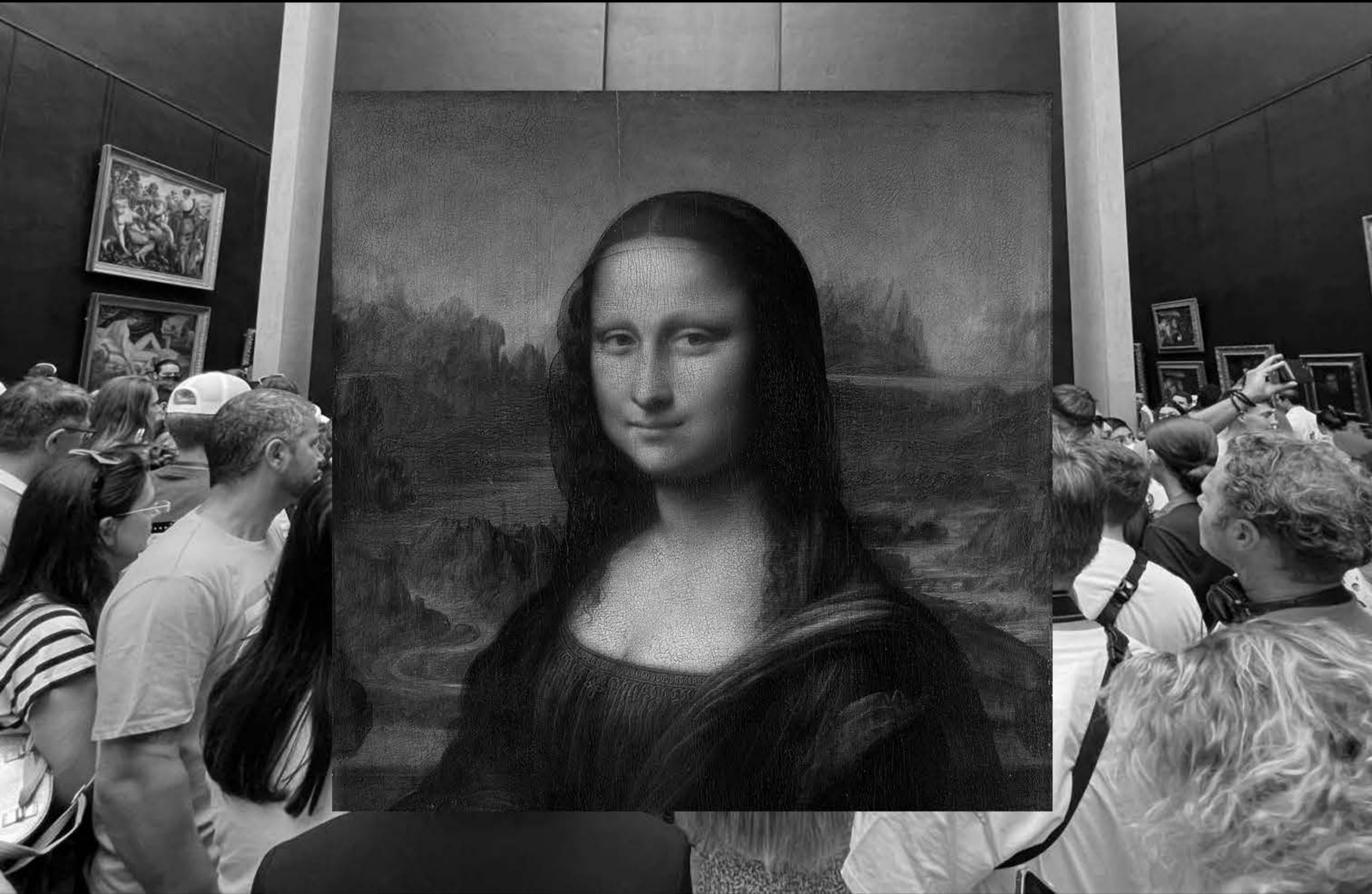
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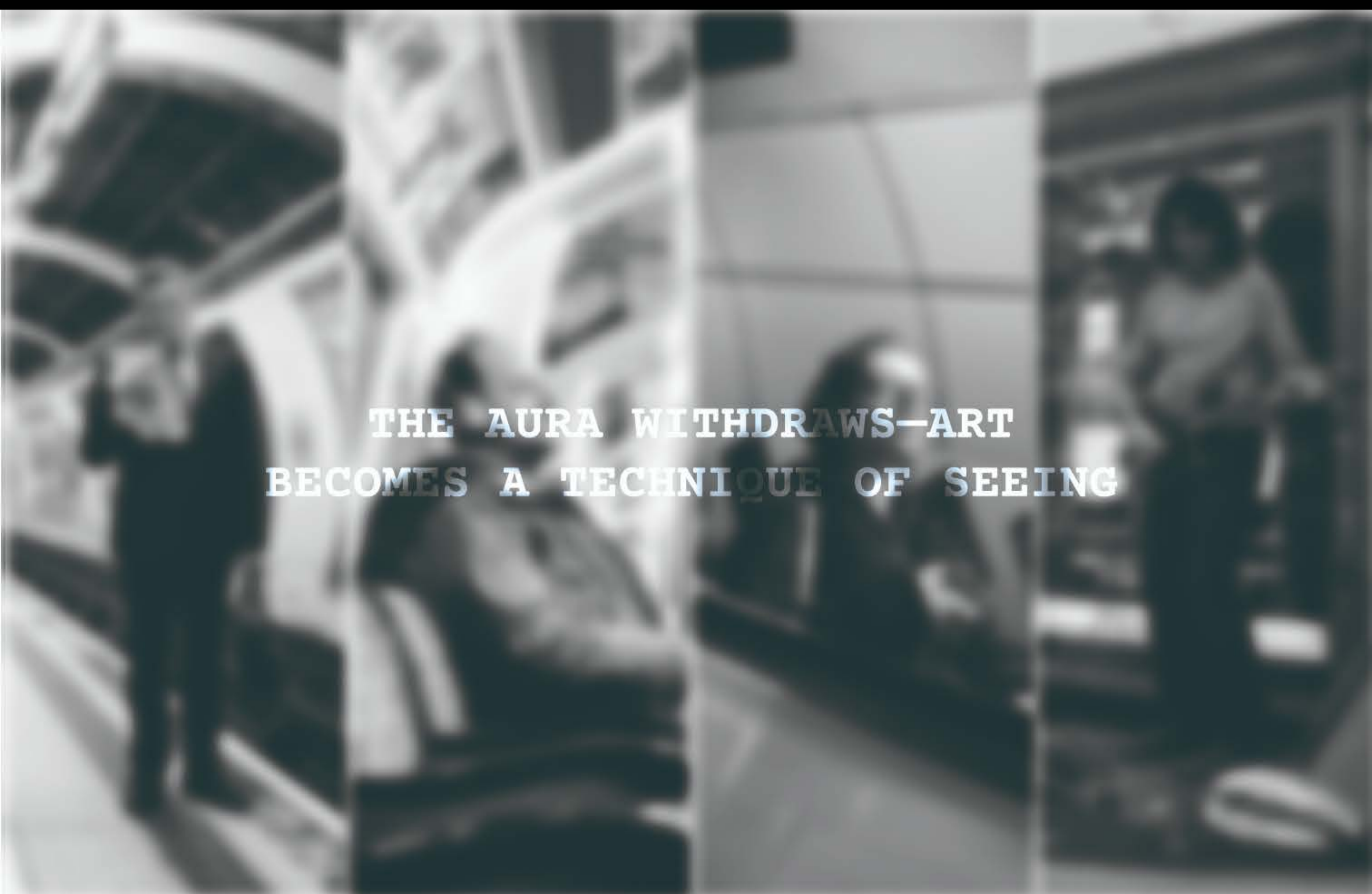
CHAPTER 2
ARTISTIC
'AURA'
AND THE IMPACT OF
ARTISTIC REPRODUCTION

[MENU PAGE](#)

'The **Aura** Have Dissipated, They Are No
Longer A Miracle But Just An Image.'



'Under The Shutter, **Reality** Is Calmly
Captured. The Subjectivity Of Art Gives
Way To Mechanical Precision.'



THE AURA WITHDRAWS—ART
BECOMES A TECHNIQUE OF SEEING

'Those Works, Once **Copied**, Are Detached
From The Realm Of Tradition.They No Longer
Belong To History — Only To The Image.
The Mona Lisa We See May No Longer Be Her.
She Can No Longer See Us.
And We... Can No Longer See Her.'

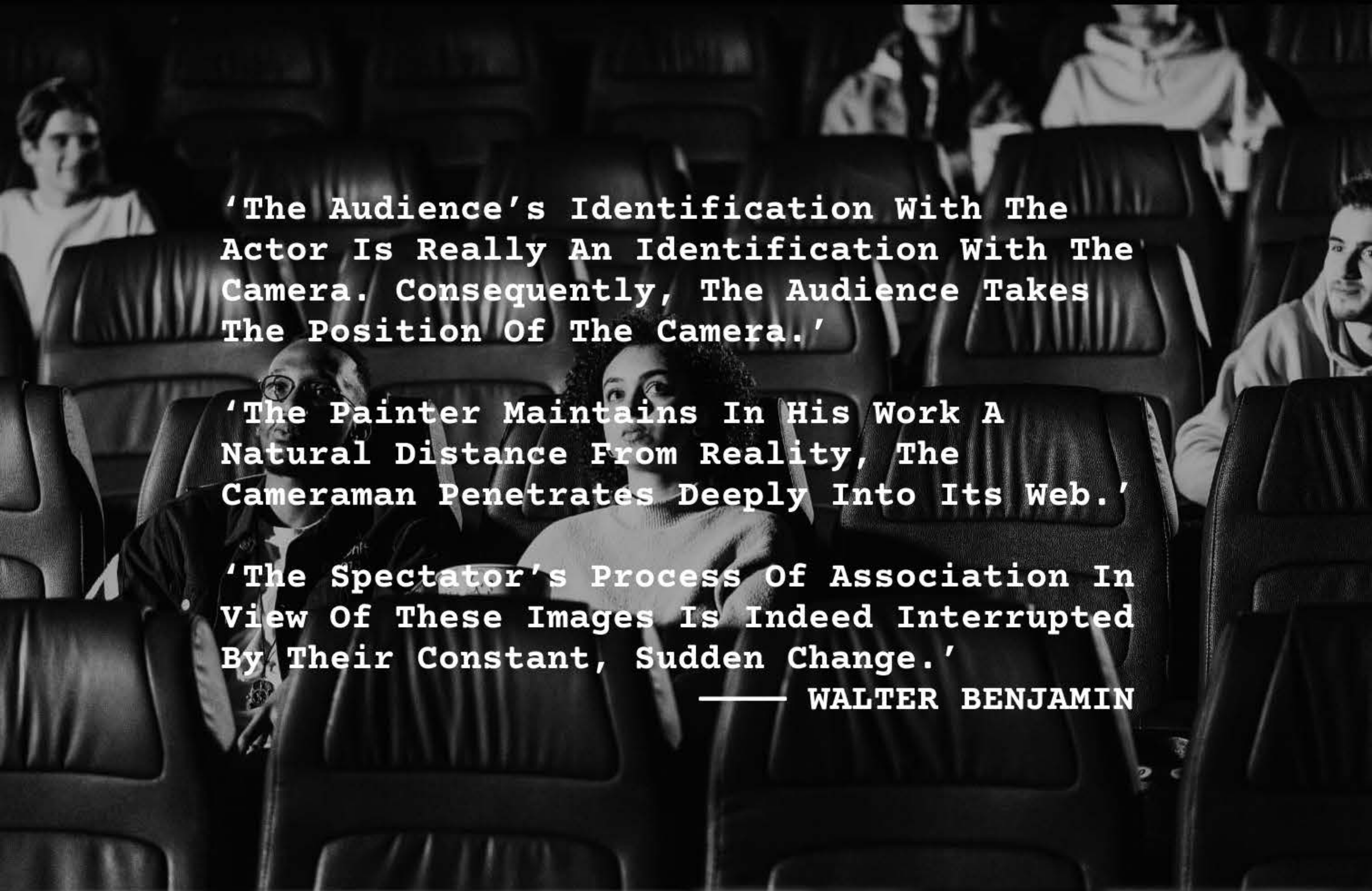
—— WALTER BENJAMIN

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CHAPTER 3 THE ART AND THE FUTURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

MENU PAGE



'The Audience's Identification With The Actor Is Really An Identification With The Camera. Consequently, The Audience Takes The Position Of The Camera.'

'The Painter Maintains In His Work A Natural Distance From Reality, The Cameraman Penetrates Deeply Into Its Web.'

'The Spectator's Process Of Association In View Of These Images Is Indeed Interrupted By Their Constant, Sudden Change.'

—— WALTER BENJAMIN



DISCONTINUITY SHOTS



PERSPECTIVE RECONSTRUCTION



Heathen
Earth, Sky,
Nature,
Knowledge

HansWurst
You Shall
Not Pass!



THE AURA OF ART



EveCrowe
8 Rome
In Hand



SensoryDe
privation
Pocket
Dragon



NO LONGER SHINING IN TIME AND PLACE

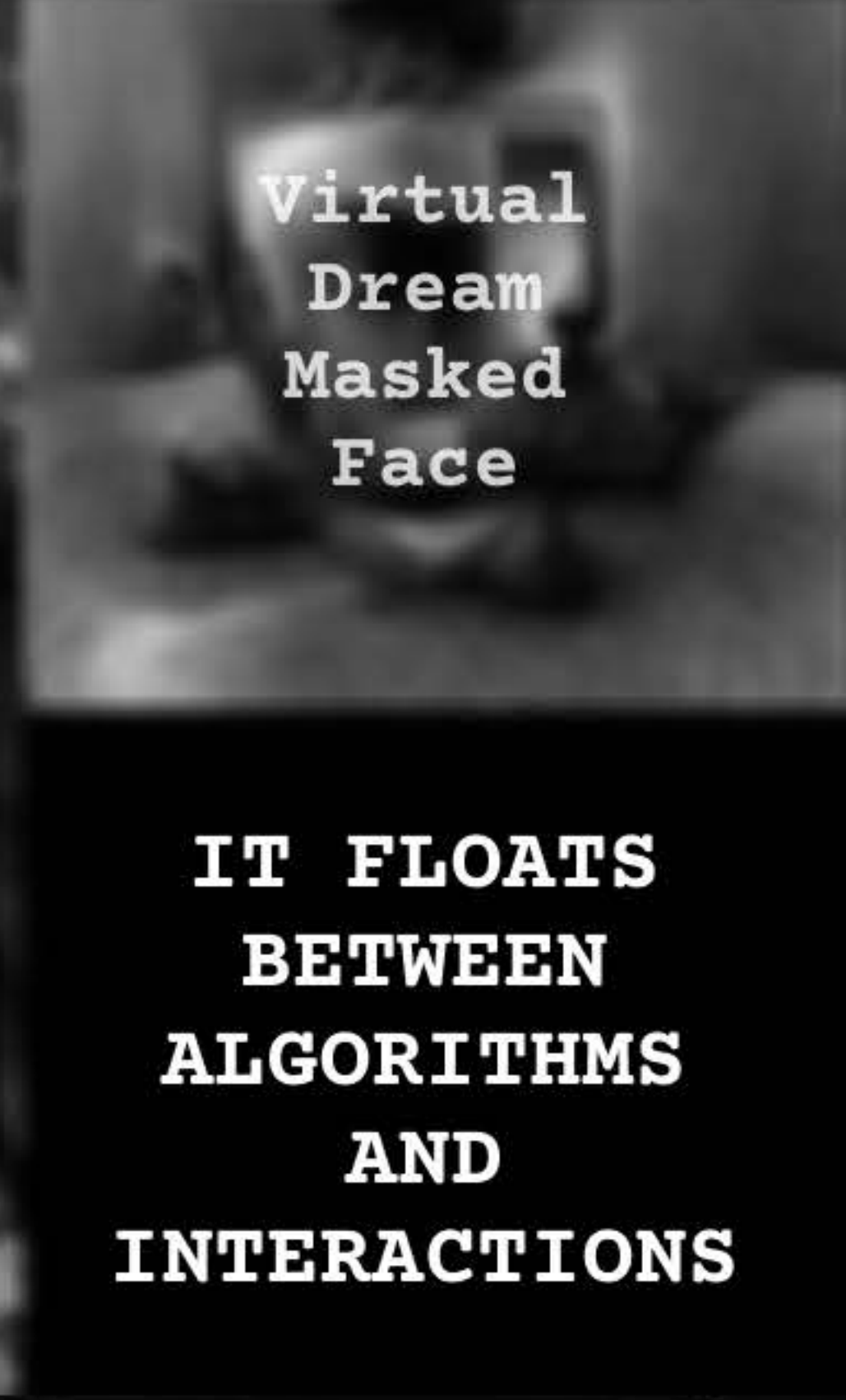
Virtual
Dream
Masterp
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Virtual
Dream
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Virtual
Dream
Future
World

Virtual
Dream
Night
Banquet



Virtual
Dream
Masked
Face

IT FLOATS BETWEEN ALGORITHMS AND INTERACTIONS



The Aura Will Eventually Fade Away
We... Will Continue To Reproduce

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