

In Western philosophy, *essence* stands for the trait, or set of traits, that make something what it fundamentally is and without which its identity is lost. Yet how is the essence of something represented and transmitted to someone not in the presence of the actual thing? This text considers how art is able to successfully convey the essence of its subject, in contrast to modes of communication, such as textual description and documentary photography, focused on reproducing its sense data. Known for making ambiguous and complex photographs that are physically and emotionally affective, the work of the British artist Darren Almond is an ideal study in this respect. In mediating an auratic site, Almond's series of eight photographs, entitled *Present Form* (2013), of the Neolithic stone circle *Callanish* on the Isle of Lewis, is particularly interesting (Ill. 1). These photographs convey *something* that moves us – something we might consider to be the essence of Callanish. In this article, Walter Benjamin's concept of *aura*, developed in his writings of the 1930s, is used as a tool that helps us to interpret and to articulate how art can transmit essence.



1 Darren Almond, *Present Form: Trì*, 2013, C-print, 29 1/8 x 19 11/16 in. (74 x 50 cm) (unframed) © Darren Almond. Courtesy White Cube.

Representing and experiencing phenomenological essence

Whilst starting to write about Callanish and Almond's elusive photographs of it, the limitations of descriptive writing – most specifically the difficulties in communicating intangible subjects via the delineation that is implicit within the act of writing – began to emerge. Yet far from being a frustration, these limitations became an interesting parallel to the text, not only consistent with, but also enriching its thesis. For the trouble that writing has in conveying essence simply highlights art's unique ability to do so and, therefore, studying the limitations of writing helps to distinguish the capabilities of art.

In order to communicate its subject, descriptive writing requires it to be de- and re-constructed or, in other words, for it to be dismantled and for its constituent parts to be repackaged into a textual form. Writers break things up so as to re-group and categorise, they make comparisons and by necessity adopt linear structures. The writer is only able to convey parts of their subject: those aspects of it that can be perceived, understood and described linguistically. Yet, as existential phenomenology has it, in our *Lebenswelt*, we do not experience things as a stack of perceivable characteristics, but as a whole. We encounter things in the world through our daily *unthinking* actions and responses, as the German philosopher Martin Heidegger explains:

What we (first) hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling [...]. It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to (hear) a (pure noise). The fact that motor-cycles and wagons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case *Dasein*, as being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside (sensations); nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide a springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a (world). *Dasein*, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood¹.

Clearly, Heidegger rejects an empiricist attitude built on sensation and in fact goes further, opposing a utilitarian view of the world that reduces things to their usefulness. One of the vital approaches of phenomenology is to stop at things themselves, rather than take them as instrumentalities for some further end. In letting things themselves guide our understanding, phenomenology is, according to the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his famous introduction to *The Phenomenology of Perception*, «the study of essences»². Above, Heidegger proposes that to reach an object's essence we must consider it in its entirety, taking into account both its perceivable and imperceptible characteristics. In this case, the descriptive writer, who is bound to the analytical and sequential delineation of their subject's describable characteristics, is destined to fail and, as they are unable to convey an object's entire essence, something is lost. As writers, we have creative ways of trying to minimise this loss. We use adjectives as a way of orbiting essential aspects of the subject and incorporate similes and metaphors that hint towards things beyond empirical approach. This particular text provides an excellent example of these limitations, because here we are caught in a double bind: *essence*, the subject discussed through the writerly act of delineation is, in fact, the very thing that gets lost in the process. Let this be further demonstrated by beginning, again, with a textual introduction of Callanish.

Representing Callanish textually

The Neolithic stones stand on the western side of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. Remote and liminal, Lewis, the most north-westerly point of the British Isles, exists as a physical and conceptual boundary between the mainland and the Atlantic Ocean. Lewis was as far as our Stone-Age ancestors could travel in that direction and – with no knowledge of what lay beyond – was the edge of existence. There are 11 other stone circles and arrangements in the region, yet only Callanish, which stands on a prominent ridge, is visible from miles around. The main part of the monument comprises a circle of 13 tall stones that measures around 13 meters in diameter and at the heart of which is a solitary monolith 4.8 meters high. Lines of smaller stones radiate from the circle to the east, west and south and from the north two lines of stones mark an 83 meter long avenue that narrows as it approaches the circle. The overall layout of the monument recalls a distorted Celtic cross.

The individual stones vary from around 1 to 5 meters in height and are of the local Lewisian gneiss. Lewisian rocks date to the Precambrian period so, at 3.5 billion years old, the Callanish stones are the oldest in the British Isles and some of the oldest in the world. Lewisian rocks are created in the core of the earth by heat and pressure over time. Their textured, stripy or mottled surfaces are visually distinctive, with a base of greyish gneiss rich in quartz, feldspar and iron-rich minerals, within which igneous intrusions occur, including granites, pegmatites and dolerites. The rocks thus hint at ancient processes that happen deep within the earth's core.

Excavations of Callanish during the 1980s by archaeologist Patrick Ashmore have revealed that the monument, erected 4500–5000 years ago (around 3000 BC), predates Stonehenge. Ashmore speculates that these monoliths are a lunar clock in tune with the long cycle of the moon: «The most attractive explanation [...] is that every 18.6 years, the moon skims especially low over the southern hills. It seems to dance along them, like a great god visiting the earth. Knowledge and prediction of this heavenly event gave earthly authority to those who watched the skies»³. There is no doubt that Callanish was and remains an auratic site.

How has Callanish been introduced textually? Its «thingness» (the location in time and space, and its configuration, as well as the individual stones, their size and their material) has been described. The short and long histories of the site, as well as its purpose and use, have also been considered. Deconstructed and delineated, the stones have been conveyed as best possible through writing. Yet this textual method has only been able to approach some aspects of Callanish and has not really conveyed how it looks and certainly not the experience of being there – its essence remains elusive. The description simply leaves the reader wanting more, such as to see a photograph of Callanish.

Representing Callanish visually

The predominant use of Callanish today is as a tourist – rather than a ritual – site. Thus an image of it that we frequently see is a typically-associated type of visual communication: the traditional postcard. These are a way of transporting a place to a faraway location and to unknown people, as Susan Sontag says: «to collect photographs is to collect the world»⁴, so the traditional postcard customarily selects a recognisable viewpoint, choosing a clear and accurate reproduction, in order to most effectively communicate that place for mass visual consumption.



2 Vintage postcard of Callanish © Charles Tait.

The vantage point assumed by the postcard (Ill. 2) offers a clear and descriptive view of Callanish. It gives us an idea of the stones' arrangement and their wider environment, as well as a sense of scale. Yet while we would expect this recognisable view of Callanish to convey its essence, this is in fact not the case. As with writing, the traditional postcard attempts to approximate the essence of something by transmitting only its sense data, such as its shape, structure and site. Yet because the essence of Callanish includes not only sensory characteristics, but also an aspect of how it affects us, the reproduction fails to convey any sense of Callanish's presence – we are not moved as we are by Almond's photographs. Although singularly the textual and photographic modes cannot voice the essence of Callanish, in combination they do start to encircle it. By each addressing a different attribute (spatial, historical, visual), when seen together we understand that Callanish is an auratic place. Yet, since they do not hint towards a physical encounter and experience with the site, an essential element of Callanish remains missing.

Interpreting phenomenological essence via the aesthetic category of aura

Naming it helps to bring the missing element to the level of language and analysis. Since philosophical essence is neither an artistic term nor an aesthetic category, a term that might effectively relate it to art is Benjamin's *aura*. Through his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), Walter Benjamin wrestled the term *aura* from the spiritualists and into philosophy and consequently into art history. With this aesthetic pedigree, *aura* is helpful to understand how the philosophical concept of phenomenological essence can be translated into artistic strategies and techniques. A vague and unstable concept, *aura* has, in Benjamin's writing alone, a constellation of (often) contradictory meanings. Yet this very fluidity makes it an equally flexible tool in interpreting and articulating how art represents essence. Benjamin himself uses *aura* to describe what he considers to be an *eliminated element of essence* in reproductions: «The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced... and what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object [...] One might subsume the eliminated element in the term *aura* [...]»⁵.

The idea that you need something more than a reproduction of sense data to reach a thing's essence is compatible with phenomenological thought. Recent scholarship on Benjamin's early writing not only shows that he was influenced by phenomenology, but suggests that in the early 20th-century phenomenology culminated not with Edmund Husserl's most prominent student, Heidegger, but in the theory of Benjamin⁶. It seems no coincidence that Benjamin's previously cited artwork essay was published in 1936, concurrently with Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in which the latter considers art's phenomenological capabilities. Reading Benjamin's concept of aura against a backdrop of phenomenology is appropriate, since phenomenology approaches the essence of things by considering them as a «whole that is more than the sum of its parts», reflecting how we experience things in their entirety in the world, and we can include aura within this.

There are further links between aura and phenomenology that we can tease out. Merleau-Ponty states: «When an event is considered at close quarters, at the moment when it is lived through, everything seems subject to chance [...] But chance happenings offset each other, and facts in their multiplicity coalesce and show up a certain way of taking a stand in relation to the human situation, and reveal in fact an event which has its definite outline and about which we can talk»⁷. This need to consider things from a distance so as to see the truth of them is echoed by Benjamin: «aura is the appearance of a distance, however close the thing that calls it forth»⁸. Evoking a seeming paradox, both Benjamin and the phenomenologists suggest a type of vision that surpasses and disrupts linear notions of time and space and clear definitions between subject and object.

Representing Callanish artistically

A key that can unlock how *Present Form* approaches the essence of Callanish is to study how Almond's creative strategies correspond to the properties of aura. A first glance reveals that he does not attempt to accurately *reproduce* the site (as the postcard did) but instead *directly transmits* his encounter with it. In doing so, Almond approaches intrinsic auratic aspects of Callanish that cannot be reached analytically and the conveyance of which transmits its essence. For a more detailed analysis, significant properties of Benjamin's aura can be applied. In her reference text *Benjamin's Aura*⁹ (2008), the film historian Miriam Bratu Hansen identifies several characteristics of aura that Benjamin uses in his writing of the 1930s. Firstly, in *Little History of Photography* (1931), aura as the result of temporal and spatial distance, as a «strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance [apparition, semblance] of a distance, no matter how near it may be»¹⁰. Secondly, aura as «auratic gaze», in which aura is «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'»¹¹. These two definitions are subsumed in the artwork essay by Benjamin's «definition of aura as the distance of the gaze that awakens in the object looked at»¹². A third characterisation is Benjamin's use of Marcel Proust's *mémoire involontaire* to suggest that the auratic experience relates not only to spatial distance but also to a disjunctive temporality.

Almond's Callanish: auratic distance and proximity

Almond's close framing presents the stones individually and, in doing so, removes each from the carefully-constructed formation that signifies Callanish's identity as

an ancient stone circle. Even in the photographs *Sia* and *Còig* that contain more than one stone, there is no sense of the circular constellation and the stones' site specificity cannot be recognised. This strategy also dislocates the stones from the wider landscape and their liminal location in Scotland. Almond's removal of spatial references is an abstraction that eradicates context, pulling the stones out of time and place. He thereby creates a distance between the stones and the surroundings that are a frame of reference and starting point for an analytical mode of perception. This idea is compatible with the following characterisation, where Benjamin expands on the concept of aura as relating to distance (in historical objects) by using nature as an example:

The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch¹³.

The example of a distant mountain and a close branch show us that, for Benjamin's aura, actual distance is of no consequence. Rather, aura is understood in terms of the «apparition» of distance. Maintaining a semblance of distance from the Callanish stones amplifies their aura, because we don't look at them in terms of their sense data, but have space to approach their essential being abstractedly. In his catalogue text for Parasol Unit's 2008 exhibition of Almond's work *Fire Under Snow*, the curator Julian Heynen similarly links the success of Almond's oeuvre to distance: «all these pictures of nature only function in this seductive form because they are in fact images of a distance or of a dislocation that really never could be synchronised»¹⁴. In his text *Goethe's Elective Affinities* (1924–25), written before he developed his concept of aura, Benjamin uses the metaphor of a veil to convey the idea of distance: «the beautiful is neither the veil [Hülle] nor the veiled object but rather the object in its veil»¹⁵. Correspondingly, in his *Protocols of Drug Experiments* (1930), in which Benjamin first mentions aura, the metaphor is halo: «the distinctive feature of genuine aura is ornament, an ornamental halo [Umzirklung], in which the object of being is enclosed as in a case [Futteral] »¹⁶. Almond's distancing of Callanish veils it and encloses it in an auratic halo.

Almond's lighting choices also distance and abstract Callanish, further veiling it. The photographs are made in daylight (marking a point of departure from his more frequent moonlit landscapes) under overcast skies with no specific light source. This creates an expansive background of flat, grey cloud which dislocates each stone from its original context, anchoring it to the centre of the photographic image. Taking up almost half the surface area of each photograph, the sky's grey flatness is undoubtedly abstract and becomes a colour-field torn apart by the stone. This echoes Barnett Newman's colour-field paintings broken by a vertical band of colour that he came to call the *zip*, which drew the viewer into an intense physical and emotional experience of the work¹⁷. A similar effect is evident in *Present Form*, where the different perspectives mesmerise the viewer. One's eyes flicker around the background and, finding nothing, are constantly drawn back to the stone where they rest, absorbed. The mode of perception is active, the effect is of disorientation and of a hypnotic possessiveness that evokes the disquieting presence of Callanish. The green grasses at the base of the stones provide the only real colour in the pho-

tograph. They occupy a similar proportion of each – around the lower 6th – and are intensely clear and focused, in contrast to the stones themselves that push out from the abstract colour-field of the background and defy reason.

Just as they distance them, Almond's creative strategies bring the stones into proximity with us. The daylight close-up accentuates their surface detail: the layers of rock with stripes of dark and light stone, some a slate grey and some with a tawny tint, the lichen and moss and the textured surfaces that have been carved by millennia of weather. The stones' surfaces become skins that, closely examined, reveal their stories; we read the marks and grooves as we might facial expressions. For Benjamin, this closeness opens up new avenues of understanding: «the enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject»¹⁸. Almond opens a new avenue in which we are hypnotically absorbed by the individual detail of the stone's surface.

To summarise the paradoxical entwinement of distance and proximity, Benjamin suggests that these «complementary poles» should be seen as *modes of perception* and conversely that the mode of perception used gives something its nearness or farness: looking at something in an *immersed* or *dreamlike* manner will distance it¹⁹. Almond's photographs first separate the stones from their environment, a distancing that prevents us from perceiving them analytically, allowing us to safely focus on the stone intently and from close quarters. In veiling them in an auratic halo, Almond enables us to look at the stones in an immersed and dreamlike manner.

Almond's Callanish: returning the auratic gaze

Although Almond's photographs are in no way figurative, the stones within them do formally echo a figure. This semblance of a human presence invests Callanish with agency and the ability to return the auratic gaze, a mode of perception detailed in Benjamin's characterisation of aura: «experience of the aura [...] arises from the transportation of a response characteristic of human society to the relationship of the inanimate or nature with human beings. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To experience the aura of a phenomenon, we look at means to invest it with the ability to look back at us»²⁰. Benjamin elaborates on the auratic gaze and, if it is to be returned by the photographic subject, advises against a direct look into the camera²¹. In conveying a veiled and abstracted Callanish, Almond – and his camera – do not look at it directly (and vice versa), rather creating a distance through which the stone can return the lens' gaze.

The agency created by the human metaphor in *Present Form* is heightened by the installation of the series, which was first exhibited in the solo exhibition *To Leave a Light Impression* at White Cube, London, in 2014. The photographs were hung in two groups of four, on opposite walls of a gallery (Ill. 3 & 4). Almond scaled the images so that the stones echo the size of the viewer, who walks between the two rows, surrounded on either side. This arrangement hints towards the essence of the original which, as three dimensional objects in a three dimensional formation, are intended to be experienced by people circling them as they simultaneously encircle people. Through this presentation, Almond creates a *gallery of ancestors* in which the individual in the photograph addresses the viewer directly. This deliberate blurring of the distinction between subject and object gives the photographs and the stones within them a power over the viewer – following Benjamin's thought: «in



3 Installation view, Darren Almond, *To Leave a Light Impression*, White Cube Bermondsey, London, 22 January – 13 April 2014 © Darren Almond. Photo © Ben Westoby Courtesy White Cube.



4 Installation view, Darren Almond, *To Leave a Light Impression*, White Cube Bermondsey, London, 22 January – 13 April 2014 © Darren Almond. Photo © Ben Westoby Courtesy White Cube.

the trace we gain possession of the thing; in aura, it takes possession of us»²². In bringing the stones into proximity with us as if we were walking amongst them, engaging us on an embodied level, Almond challenges the Cartesian dominance of consciousness over the body, reflecting Merleau-Ponty's resolve that we «put essences back into existence»²³, by which he means that essence is best mediated through the body, as the root of our being and experience, and not the mind.

Almond's Callanish: mémoire involontaire and temporal dislocation

Benjamin links the auratic experience with ideas of the unconscious and memory via the Proustian concept of *mémoire involontaire*, which he describes thus:

Concerning the *mémoire involontaire*: not only do its images appear without being called up; rather they are images we have never seen before we remember them. This is most clearly the case in those images in which – as in some dreams – we see ourselves. We stand in front of ourselves, the way we might have stood somewhere in a prehistoric past [*Urvergangenheit*], but never before our waking gaze²⁴.

Within *mémoire involontaire*, images that we have never seen – but which are familiar – appear to us, bringing us face-to-face with ourselves. Almond's photographs and their installation achieve precisely this effect. *Present Form* is shown alongside another series, *Apollo* (2013), which contains 12 bronze cylinders situated around the gallery, each inscribed with the initials of astronauts who have walked on the moon, with some cylinders lying flat represent astronauts who have since died. In juxtaposing these two series, Almond alludes to time and the distances travelled physically and conceptually since Callanish was constructed. He reminds us that, just as Neolithic man looked out over the Atlantic and up at the sky, so we step out into space and continue to stand at the limits of our existence. These thoughts of time and memory are echoed by Almond himself: «What I like about the stones [...] is that when you are confronted by them you are compelled by the surface of them, because they have this attainable memory. You have this relationship to time [...] you're also trying to assimilate yourself in the context of the stars and the exploding galaxy around you. It doesn't half put you in a questioning mood»²⁵. In a visionary encounter with an older, other self we get a sense of our prehistoric ancestors gazing back at us through the traces they left upon the earth. The photographs arouse other powerfully affective recollections: the Easter Island figures that stare endlessly out to sea or Caspar David Friedrich's *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (1818). They evoke Edward Steichen's night-time photographs that communicated the essence of Rodin's perpetually contemplative *Honoré de Balzac* (1891–1897) so well that the sculptor famously compared the figure to Christ walking through the desert. Almond's *Present Form* echoes this lonely mark, an abstraction of man standing and reflecting on eternity, recalling Adorno's suggestion of «aura: as a trace of a forgotten human element in a thing»²⁶.

By invoking *mémoire involontaire* Benjamin suggests that auratic experience relates not only to spatial distance but also to a disjunctive temporality. His thoughts on temporal dislocation are summarised by Hansen as the «defining elements of disjunctive temporality – its sudden and fleeting disruption of linear time, its uncanny linkage of past and future and the concomitant dislocation of the subject»²⁷. In juxtaposing two different times, *Present Form* fabricates an alloy of them, embedding a layered temporality into a two dimensional plane. The rough texture of the 4000 year old stones, a surface created by the elements over thousands of years, is

transported to a very contemporary setting – the minimalist space of White Cube. This may help to explain the slightly puzzling series title *Present Form*, which hints that the stones may change tomorrow, or the day after, or in fact every day, while indicating their duration and future.

This rupture in the continuum of time recalls the work of the French philosopher Michael Serres, who through applying mathematical topological thought to history, perceives time as something that can flow and fork like a river, or be crumpled and folded like paper, using the metaphor of dough to conceptualise kneading time in an action that connects distant temporal nodes²⁸. *Present Form* moves towards Serres' topological manipulation of time, becoming a 'dough of history' or time machine that evokes unseen images of the distant past, encapsulates objects in the present and preserves them for the future. In *The Natural Contract* (1995), Serres develops his thoughts on time: «we have *lost the world* through our isolation from its time and weather (*temps*) [...] we are isolated from the rhythms of night and day, the seasons, the clocks of plants and animals, and the effects of the weather – long time. We live now in short time – hermetically sealed minutes and hours»²⁹. He echoes the commonly-held belief that in the modern era our ways of knowing ourselves, others and the world have become rationalised and disembodied. This was predicted in 1917 by the sociologist Max Weber, who claimed that «the fate of our times is characterised by the rationalisation and intellectualisation and above all by the disenchantment of the world»³⁰. In removing us from *short time* and invoking *geological* or *archaeological* timescales *Present Form* goes some way to *re-embody* us and explore what it means to be a human in the world. As Merleau-Ponty says «all of [phenomenology's] efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status»³¹. By evoking spatial and temporal distances and igniting primordial memories, Almond's work re-achieves this «direct and primitive contact» and, in rethinking how we relate to ourselves, others and the world around us, art becomes a compensation device that can counteract the temporal identity diffusion of modern life and re-establish these lost connections.

The phenomenological significance of art

Via Darren Almond's ambiguous and complex photographic series *Present Form*, this text has explored how philosophical essence is communicated through art. As interpretations rather than reproductions of Callanish, Almond's photographs convey more than only sense data; they transmit the aura of the ancient site and approach its essence. We intuitively realise that the *Present Form* photographs are auratic and, indeed, by applying Benjamin's theory to the work, Almond's strategies were shown to be consistent with the creation of aura. Almond removes Callanish from its frame of reference, distancing and veiling it. Within this auratic halo, we become hypnotically absorbed by the individual detail of each stone's surface, whilst the scaling and presentation bring the stones into proximity with us. These techniques engender an immersed and dreamlike manner of viewing that allows the stones to return the auratic gaze, creating a hypnotic possessiveness that evokes the disquieting presence of Callanish. The true essence of Callanish as a liminal site built by our ancestors looking out to sea, interpreting and marking their place in the universe, is conveyed via an active mode of perception that plucks us from the *short time* of the modern world and plunges us into *geological* and *archaeological* timescales, compelling us to explore what it means to be a human inhabiting the world.

This interpretation of *Present Form* is consistent with Merleau-Ponty's theory that art is not a reproduction of reality, but a communication of the totality that the artist sees. In this sense, art can be interpreted as not only being consistent with phenomenology, but perhaps even as a type of phenomenology: «art can give us access to the world that we encounter in the primordial situation of our being: in our bodies in a particular time and place, and from within particular contexts and vantage points»³². Indeed, art can function as a way of guiding us to significant phenomena and helping us to interpret them in their own standing. This sense of art as phenomenology is appropriately expressed by Heidegger, who, in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, claimed that art «according to the highest possibility of its essence» is a «revealing that establishes and brings forth»³³ aspects of the world around us that cannot be reached in any other way.

Endnotes

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- 2 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), translated by Donald Landes, Abingdon 2002, p. vii.
- 3 Patrick Ashmore, *Calanais: The Standing Stones*, Edinburgh 2002, p. 21.
- 4 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, London 1978, p. 3.
- 5 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility* (1936), in: *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, London 1999, pp. 211–244, p. 215.
- 6 Peter Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction: Walter Benjamin and the Shape of Time*, Stanford 2010.
- 7 Merleau-Ponty 2002 (see note 2), p. xxi.
- 8 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (1980), translated by Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge Mass. 1999, p. 447.
- 9 Miriam Bratu Hansen, «Benjamin's Aura» in: *Critical Inquiry*, 34, Winter 2008, pp. 336–375.
- 10 Walter Benjamin, *Little History of Photography* (1931) in: Hansen 2008 (see note 9), p. 339.
- 11 Benjamin in: Hansen, 2008 (see note 10), p. 339.
- 12 Benjamin 1999 (see note 5), p. 314.
- 13 Ibid., p. 216.
- 14 Julian Heynen, *A Journey Through Time But No Arrival* in Ziba de Weck Index, London 2008, p. 122.
- 15 Walter Benjamin, *Goethe's Elective Affinities* (1924/1925) in: Hansen 2008 (see note 9), p. 353.
- 16 Walter Benjamin, *Protocols of Drug Experiments* (1930) in: Hansen 2008 (see note 9), p. 358.
- 17 Thomas B. Hess, *Barnett Newman*, New York 1969, pp. 63–64.
- 18 Benjamin 1999 (see note 5), p. 230.
- 19 Hansen 2008 (see note 9), p. 366.
- 20 Benjamin in: Hansen, 2008 (see note 10), p. 343.
- 21 Ibid., p. 343.
- 22 Benjamin 1999 (see note 5), p. 447.
- 23 Merleau-Ponty 2002 (see note 2), p. vii.
- 24 Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (1972) in: Hansen 2008 (see note 9), p. 348.
- 25 Darren Almond in: Liz Jobley «To Leave A Light Impression» in: *Financial Times Magazine* January 17, 2014, p. 9.
- 26 Theodore Adorno, *Letter to Benjamin* 29 February 1949, in: *Adorno and Benjamin The Complete Correspondence 1929 – 1940*, ed. by Nicholas Walker, Cambridge Mass. 1999, p. 320.
- 27 Hansen 2008 (see note 9), p. 347.
- 28 Stephen Connor, *Topologies: Michael Serres and the shapes of thought*, 2002 in: *Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art: Nature*, ed. by Jeffrey Kastner, London 2015, pp. 44–48.
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- 31 Merleau-Ponty 2002 (see note 2), p. vii.
- 32 Joseph D. Parry, *Art and Phenomenology*, London 2011, p. 4.
- 33 Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1936), translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Hayes, Cambridge 2002, p. 38.