

Walter Benjamin

“The Work of Art in
the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction”



Traditional Art

Time and Space

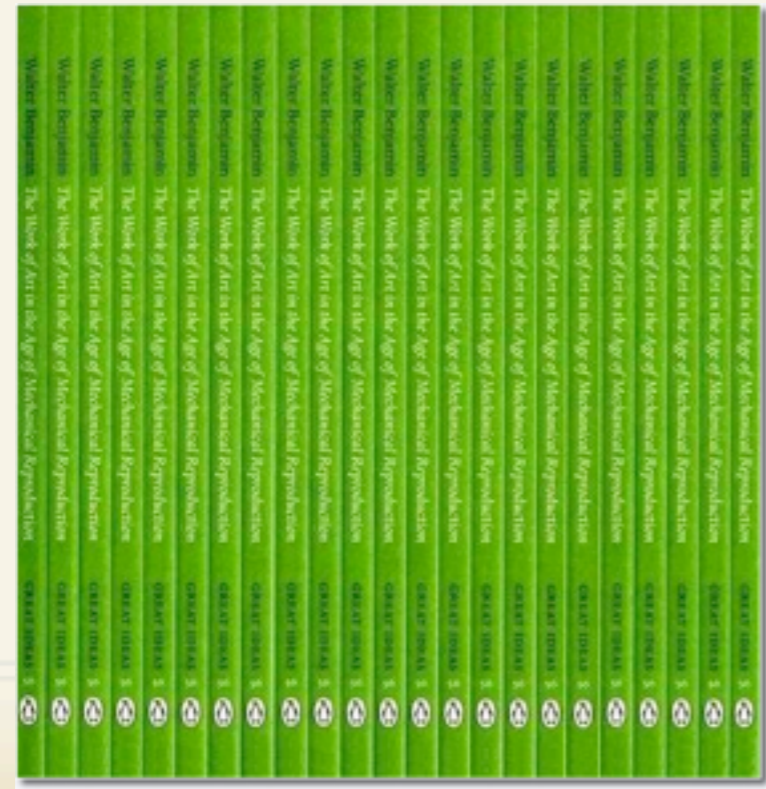
Unique

Presence

Authenticity



Mechanical Reproduction



- Materialistic
- Exhibition
- Not authentic



Aura

Traditional art is defined by having an “aura.”

One of a kind

Experience

Individual

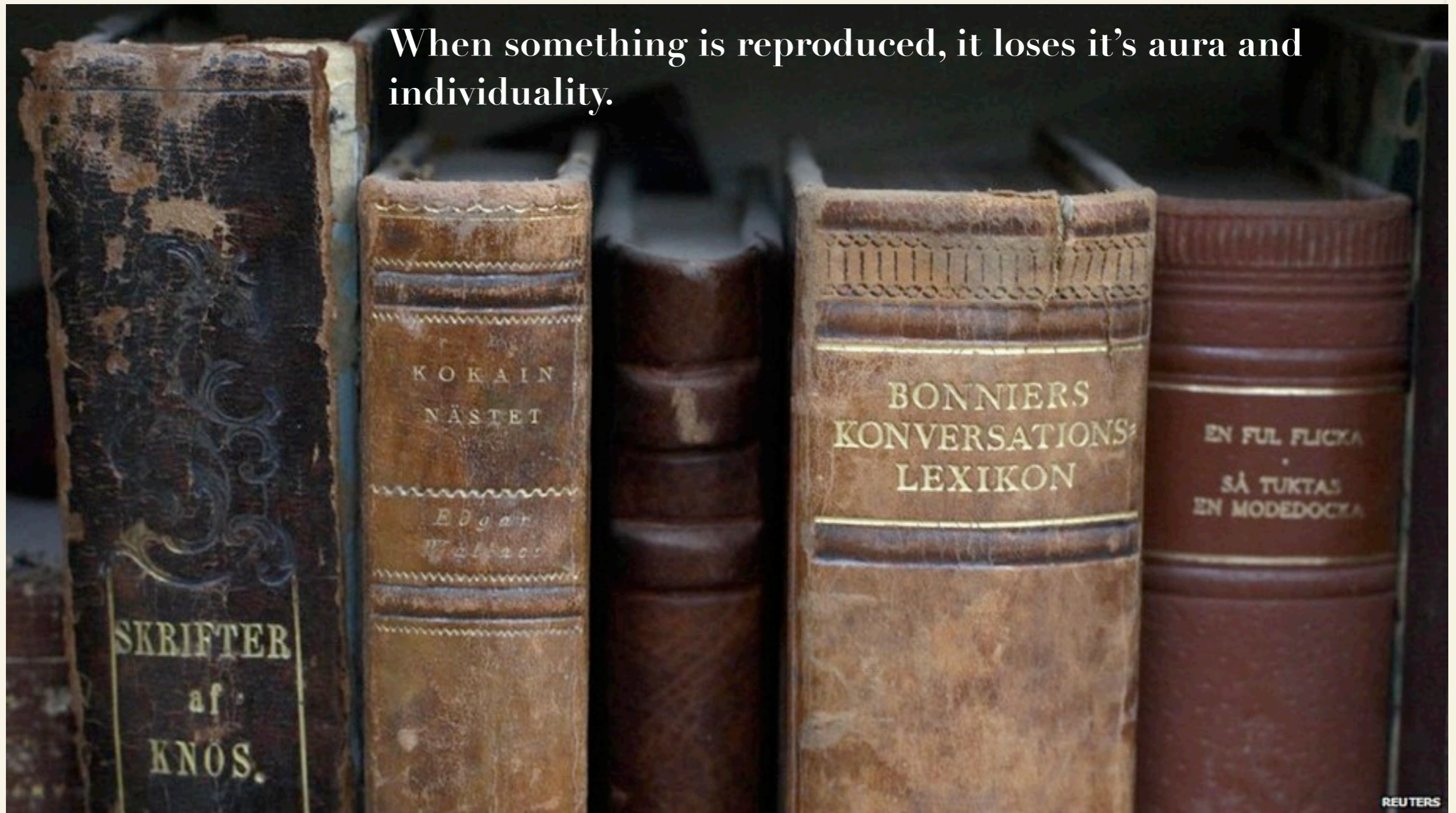
Aura

The uniqueness of a work of art

Inseparable from ritual function

Authenticism includes origin, time,
distinction.

When something is reproduced, it loses its aura and individuality.



HOWEVER, THE BENEFITS INCLUDE ACCESSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC. TAKE THE PRINTING PRESS FOR EXAMPLE...

“In principle a work of art has always been reproducible”



“Man made artifacts could always be imitated by man”

Mechanical Reproduction

Brings the contemporary masses closer while *uniqueness* is...

SHATTERED

Uniqueness is imbedded in tradition.
Mechanical reproduction breaks tradition

Aura decays as sense of individuality is stripped away

“The masterpiece meets the beholder halfway”



“Mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual”



Herein lies a distinction along the lines, for example of the first Model T Ford, and the rest.

“A work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility”

Reproduction of art
lends itself to
formation of new art

Film and
photography

The-Digital-Picture.com Reviews



Technology and *Art*



According to Benjamin, an actors work in a movie is for the camera.

An actors work on the stage is for the audience

In film, the ensemble is presented by the **CAMERA**, which acts as the eye.

On stage, the performance is presented to the **AUDIENCE**.

FILM VS. STAGE



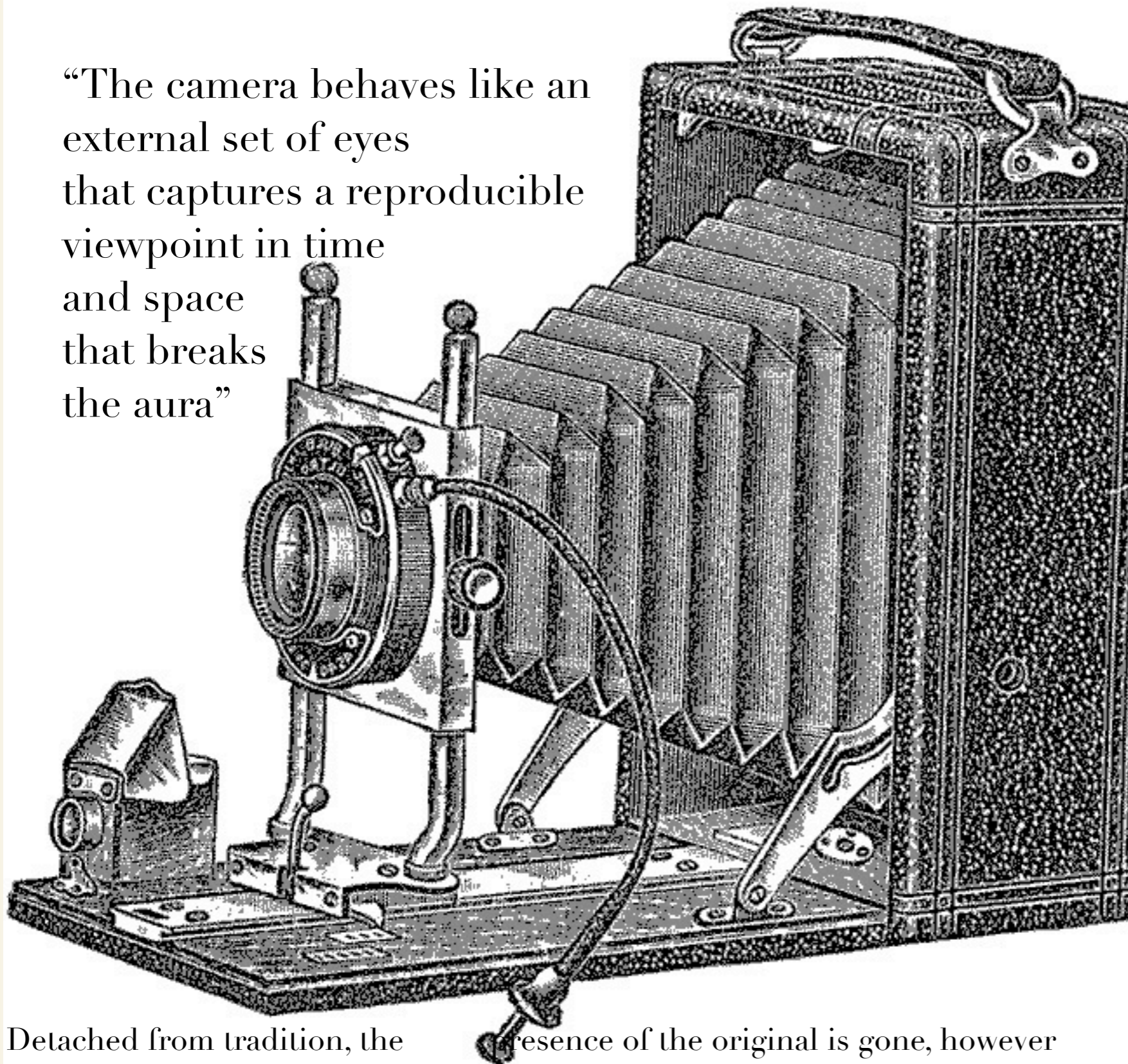
- Many takes
- Multiple camera angles
- “The connections are to the camera NOT the actor

- Authentic
- Aura
- Present in time
- Public



Photography

“The camera behaves like an external set of eyes that captures a reproducible viewpoint in time and space that breaks the aura”



Detached from tradition, the presence of the original is gone, however the image remains. Photography walks the line, bringing the masses towards art.

“Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience”



Reproductions of paintings eliminate authenticity, thus...

Losing its sense in time, space, and ultimately its aura.

It is this give and take which Benjamin attributes a reproduction's positives vs. negatives.

“It constitutes a serious threat as soon as painting is confronted directly by the masses.”