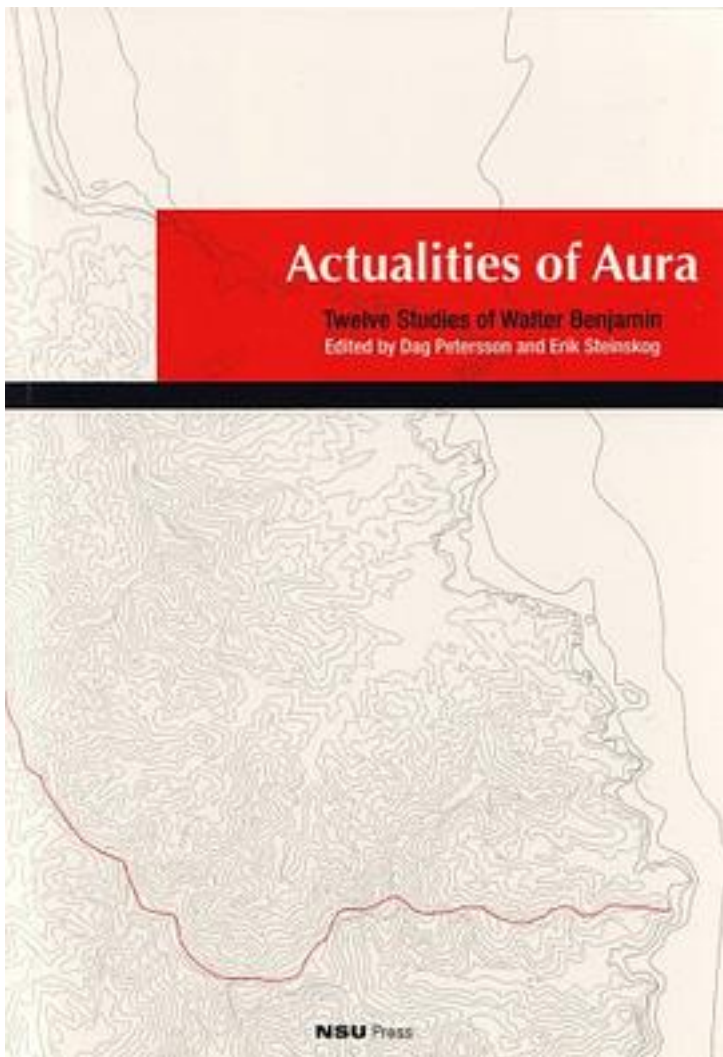


Actualities of Aura



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著者:Dag Petersson

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This volume provides an invaluable overview of Walter Benjamin's writings about technology, history, politics and the visual. From a variety of theoretical viewpoints, twelve brilliant scholars have come together to map the aura - perhaps the most elusive concept in Benjamin's philosophy. The collection is a scholarly feat that serves as an introduction to one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, while at the same time providing new perspectives for the advanced reader. The writings of Walter Benjamin once hovered on the margins of modern literary genres. From there he developed a unique type of critical writing, positioned between the technical, historical and political ramifications of dialectical thinking. Today Benjamin is centrally placed in most curricula for modern art, literature, and social sciences, and his text "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility" is often referred to in contemporary critical theory. It is in this article that readers have to confront the notorious concept of the aura. This concept characterizes the typically bourgeois way of relating to art, history, media and perception, but the aura is also a philosophical concept with complex implications for a dialectical sociology, aesthetics and history. Assessing the critical force of Benjamin's concept in our time is the prime achievement of this collection. Actualities of Aura is indispensable reading for anyone engaged in the discourses of visual culture, critical theory and continental philosophy.

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