

Real Things

Abstract

Carolyn Korsmeyer

Although we experience many cultural artifacts by way of reproductions, there remains a particular thrill in experiencing genuine objects—‘real things.’ I argue that genuineness is a property that possesses many dimensions of value, including aesthetic value. Typically aesthetic qualities are perceptual, but genuineness is not a perceptual property. I investigate the aesthetic dimensions of genuineness by considering the example of an ancient bronze figurine whose reputation as genuine has waxed and waned, along with its aesthetic assessment.

I ground my claims about the experience of the genuine in the covert operation of the sense of touch. Touch is particularly disposed to impart an experience of presence in which one occupies the same position as others, forming a chain into the past, as it were. This phenomenon functions with many kinds of artifacts, paramount among them the remnants of the past that occupy archaeologists.

Other places where I have advanced similar arguments include: ‘Touch and the Experience of the Genuine,’ *British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 52 (2012): 365-77. DOI:10.1093; and ‘Aesthetic Deception: On Encounters with the Past,’ *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66:2, Spring 2008: 117-127.