

ATMOSPHERES AND PHAENOMENOGRAPHY: THE ABILITY OF IMAGES TO GENERATE ATMOSPHERES

Camilla Sette

University of L'Aquila

Department of Civil, Building Construction and Environmental Engineer

camilla.sette@graduate.univaq.it

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ATMOSPHERES

QUASI-THINGS

IMAGES

PHAENOMENOGRAPHY

PERCEPTION

This paper explores the evolving concept of atmosphere in contemporary aesthetics, emphasizing its influence on images and visual representations. Traditionally seen as mere reproductions of reality, images are now recognized for their capacity to evoke atmospheres that shape perceptions and emotions. Drawing on the phenomenological theories of Hermann Schmitz, Gernot Böhme, and Tonino Griffero, the study redefines atmospheres as 'quasi-cosial' entities that exist between the subject and environment. Unlike static objects, atmospheres are fluid, multisensory, and affectively charged, influencing human experience holistically. The research also examines the role of im-

ages as 'generators of atmospheres', highlighting their performative power beyond representation. 'Phenomenographies' are proposed as innovative tools for capturing the ephemeral nature of atmospheres, bridging subjective experience and visual communication. This perspective challenges conventional distinctions between subject and object, offering new interpretative horizons in architecture, visual arts, and aesthetics. By recognizing the affective and sensory dimensions of atmospheres, the paper invites a re-evaluation of contemporary experiences, enhancing emotional engagement and deepening our understanding of lived spaces.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of atmosphere has become increasingly central to contemporary discussions on images and visual representations. While images have traditionally been regarded as mere reproductions of the visible world, they are now recognized as having the capacity to evoke atmospheres, profoundly influencing our perceptions and emotions. This change in perspective not only broadens the understanding of images but also enriches the debate on the relationship between aesthetics, space and sensory perception. Despite the increasing use of images to evoke atmospheres, there is still a lack of a shared language to represent them in a systematic way. Unlike objects that can be described through technical language, atmospheres elude objective codification, remaining vague and tied to the experience of the subject. In an era dominated by hyper-visibility and digital immersion, the focus on atmospheres invites us to reflect on non-visual and multisensory dimensions of experience.

This evolution opens new perspectives not only in art and design, but also in architecture and philosophy. Understanding the atmospheric power of images allows us to explore new modes of aesthetic storytelling and emotional interaction, enriching our experience of the contemporary world. Architectural visualizations, for example, no longer simply represent shapes and spaces, but seek to communicate the atmosphere of the designed environment, evoking feelings of warmth, coolness, intimacy or openness.

Philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gaston Bachelard explored the link between sensory perception and imagination, suggesting that the image is not just a static representation, but a phenomenological event that transforms the experience of the world.

Sensory perception is not a passive process of registering stimuli, but a dynamic, interpretative activity. According to the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we perceive the world not as a series of separate

objects, but as a continuous perceptual field in which body and environment co-constitute each other. In this sense, perception is embodied and situated: it involves not only the senses –sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste–, but also memory, attention and emotion. Every perceptual experience is imbued with expectation and anticipation, as the brain constantly compares sensory stimuli with mental schemata constructed from past experience. A key aspect of the link between perception and imagination is the concept of mental images, internal visual representations that reproduce perceptual experience in the absence of the actual stimulus (Purves et al., 2013; Giacchetta, 2022).

For example, studies in the field of neuroscience have shown that imagining an object activates the primary and secondary visual cortices, just as if one were observing it live. This suggests that imagination is not simply an abstract cognitive activity, but a quasi-sensory experience, involving the same neural networks as perception (Beighle et al., 2023). This dynamic view of the image is particularly relevant in contemporary aesthetics, where there is a re-evaluation of embodied experience and the role of the body in perception. Atmospheric images not only activate the emotional sphere, but also influence our corporeality, engaging the senses in a holistic and multidimensional way. Following on from these considerations, we now turn to the concept of ‘atmosphere’, despite its familiarity in everyday language and increasing academic attention, it remains an elusive and complex phenomenon, characterized by a series of tensions and ambiguities that make its definition and understanding a daring task.

ATMOSPHERES

But what is atmosphere? To define it, we start with essays by philosophers Hermann Schmitz, Gernot Böhme and Tonino Griffero. According to an aesthetic, phenomenological and

ontological view, atmosphere can be defined as a sensory and affective quality diffused in space. It is that particular tone that determines the way a person experiences his or her surroundings. It was 1969, when for the first time Hermann Schmitz, the most influential philosopher of corporeality, lived space and atmospheres, founder of the 'New Phenomenology', raged against psychologist-reductionist-introjectivist objectification with his neo-phenomenological thesis: "feelings are atmospheres and spatially effused – but not locally circumscribed – forces that grasp the felt body" (Schmitz, 2003, p. 20). Schmitz proposes a phenomenological interpretation based on 'spatial affects' – *räumliche Affekte*: the atmosphere manifests itself as "the complete occupation – *Besetzung* – of a space or region without surface within the felt body" (Schmitz, 2023, p. 45).

It is important to clarify at once that for Schmitz, the atmosphere is not to be reified as a third element between two, it is not to be seen as a relationship between two fixed and pre-existing poles – the percipient subject and space; in fact, he firmly opposes this dualistic view, as the proper dimension of the atmosphere is rather holistic (Schmitz, 2023). The atmosphere is "a vague whole or power, without visible and discrete boundaries, which we find all around us and which, resonating in our lived body, even involves us" (Griffero, 2010a, p. 15).

Atmospheres are hardly tangible and cannot be experienced with sight alone, but rather with the whole body, synaesthetically. To this 'hybrid' status of the atmosphere, Schmitz attributes precisely its own ontological genre, for which he uses the term 'semi-thing' – *Halbding* or quasi-thing – (Schmitz, 2011). The ontologies of things deal with things understood as concrete solids, experienced with sight; semi-things, on the other hand, are not tangible like solid things, yet they are not pure inner sensations, as they are also spatially experienced in the external world. The primary differences between semi-things and things are duration and extension. Things persist in space in a stable manner over time, as long as they exist, whereas quasi-things can interrupt their duration over time. They also present two different types of causality: in quasi-things cause and action

coincide, whereas in things we can distinguish between them – as opposed to things in which cause and action are separate (Schmitz, 2005). But what are quasi-things? Schmitz states

feelings are semi-things. Among the almost-things are the voice, the wind, the impetuous weight on us when we slip and fall or manage to stay on our feet, a recurring pain, a melody or a problem that does not want to leave our head, a person's unique and sharp or changing gaze, the piercing cold, the sultry heat, the deep darkness of the night or the time that does not seem to pass while we are bored or waiting nervously. (Schmitz, 2023, p. 81).

And according to Griffero

atmospheres, and, more generally, half-things, are ontologically other than things in the proper sense. Firstly, because a) they come and go without there being any point in asking where they have been in the meantime, but also b) because in their action they coincide with the phenomenon itself, without implying an external cause of their own. (Griffero, 2011, p. 14)

Atmospheres are not easily describable, because they are characterized by an intrinsic vagueness (Böhme, 2017b, p. 159; Rauh, 2017, p. 2), nor are they georeferenciable in a space, nor temporally circumscribable because they are ephemeral as they change over time. For example, a physical space may be the same, but by varying the boundary conditions, the atmosphere we perceive is totally different. Schmitz states that he is happy when he can capture an atmosphere, “a positive feeling, an impression from which I could later deduce particulars and ask myself what had triggered in me that feeling of warmth, of welcome, of lightness or amplitude that remained etched in my memory” (Schmitz, 2011, p. 104). However, it must be specified from the outset that not everything is atmosphere: “While it is true that affectivity ubiquitously colors our existence, not all of this affectivity really possesses the requirements most soberly assigned to an atmospheric feeling by the New Phenomenology” (Griffero, 2011, p. 12). And yet, while all feelings are atmospheres, not all atmospheres are feelings. Moreover, not all quasi-things

and situations are atmospheres: they can also be affectively neutral or have an affective effect only accidentally (Schmitz, 2023). Thus, only some situations are quasi-things and only some are feelings, and thus properly atmospheric. The conception of space ingrained in Western culture has led to feelings and atmospheres being regarded as internal to the soul, and therefore spaceless. But this introjection of atmospheres must necessarily be overcome (Schmitz, 2023). In fact, feeling an atmosphere does not necessarily mean being directly grasped by it

a serious observer caught at a stupid party feels the stupidity of the atmosphere, but this does not make him stupid too; on the contrary, he gets sad and frowns. Stupidity catches him in a mediated way through a presentiment of sadness and desolation. Often this indirect presentiment is the fluid seriousness of an open yet distanced participation, which elsewhere I have called aesthetic reverence – *ästhetische Andacht*). (Schmitz, 2023, p. 129)

Gernot Böhme, a German philosopher and one of the leading exponents of the 'New Phenomenology', expands and deepens the concept of atmosphere, placing it between phenomenology and aesthetics. For the philosopher, the quasi-cosmic character of atmospheres manifests itself in the ability to communicate and discuss atmospheres intersubjectively, as also highlighted by Albertsen (2019), and suggests that atmospheres, while not being tangible objects, possess a kind of autonomous existence, capable of exerting a tangible influence on individual and collective experience: we can agree on the presence of a cheerful atmosphere at a party or perceive the somber atmosphere at a funeral, regardless of our pre-existing state of mind. A central theme of Böhme's aesthetics, atmospheres are that something between the subject and the object, which constitute the 'prior' of our perceptual and affective experience of the world and our involuntary involvement (Griffero, 2010a).

Atmospheres, therefore, arise between people and things; they are neither objective nor subjective, but "the shared reality of the perceiver and the perceived" (Böhme, 2017a, p. 23); "they are not something relational, but the relationship itself" (Böhme,

2010, p. 92). Following in the footsteps of Schmitz (Schmitz, 2003), who calls them semi-things, Böhme defines the quasi-cosial qualities of atmosphere “neither subject nor object - and yet not nothing” (Böhme, 2013a, p. 66).

Atmospheres are indeterminate, especially regarding their ontological status. One is not sure whether to attribute them to the objects or environments from which they emanate or to the subjects who experience them. Moreover, one is not sure where they are located. They seem to fill the space with a Gefühlston (tone-feeling), like a haze, as it were. (Böhme, 2017a, p. 13)

They are not conceived as ‘something objective’ –i.e. as properties of things–, yet they are something like the thing, belonging to the thing. Böhme defines the atmosphere as an intermediate phenomenon that can neither be reduced to an intrinsic property of things nor merely a projection of the self, “[it] is rather unclear where to place them: should they be attributed to the objects and the environment from which they seem to come, or should they be attributed to the subjects experiencing them” (Böhme, 1993, p. 22).

Atmospheres emerge from the complex interaction between human bodies, material objects, sensory elements such as sounds, lights, smells and other environmental factors, spreading through space in a fluid and dynamic manner: “the primary object of perception is atmosphere. [...] Atmospheres are apparently what is experienced in the bodily presence of humans and objects, and in space, respectively” (Böhme, 1993, p. 120).

Atmospheres therefore constitute the object pole of bodily presence in space, while the other pole is the subjective disposition. The presence of the percipient subject is therefore necessary to experience an atmosphere: it is necessary for him to be ‘exposed’ to it, to be present ‘here and now’ (Minkowski, 1970).

The essence of atmospheres can only be defined if and when we are affectively involved in them, and thus present. When there is therefore no subject involved, atmospheres cannot be “fully determined in their essence [...] Without the sentient subject, (atmospheres) are nothing” (Böhme, 2013b, p. 3).

In contrast to Schmitz's approach, which emphasizes the floating character of atmospheres and severely limits the feasibility of atmospheres (Schmitz, 2011), Böhme asserts that atmospheres are not free to float, but, on the contrary, are "something that emanates and is produced by things, people or their constellations" (Böhme, 2017b, p. 19) atmospheres do not float freely, but radiate from things and grasp us emotionally, characterizing our state of being. "It 'radiates', so to speak, into the surroundings, takes away the homogeneity of the surrounding space and fills it with tensions and suggestions of movement" (Böhme, 2017b, p. 19). The relationship of the atmosphere with the sentient subject occurs through this irradiation, which Böhme calls the "ecstasy of things" (Böhme, 1993, p. 121). Through ecstasies, from the Greek *ekstasis*, coming-out-of-self literally –and in a properly spatial sense–, we can perceive things and people. Atmospheres, therefore, can be produced: it is not just something that can be felt, but something that can be deliberately generated. Atmospheres can therefore be generated by generators of atmospheres (Böhme, 2013a). We can identify at least five types of generators of atmospheres: moods, synesthesia, motor impressions, social characters and communicative characters (Böhme, 2017b).

Böhme, moreover, identifies and analyses classical aspects, such as geometry, shape, proportions, size, but also light, color and sound, among the objective means by which atmospheres can be generated (Böhme, 2017a), but other generators have been identified in the most disparate elements (DeSilvey, 2006; Edensor, 2012, 2015; Bille et al., 2015; Hudson, 2015).

Each atmosphere then has its own distinctive character. Indeed, we usually speak of atmospheres by describing their character, and everyday language offers a very rich repertoire for this purpose: "we always already live in atmospheres... we know how to move in them, and we discover, working with them, that we also have a rich vocabulary for naming them" (Böhme, 2017b, p. 88). This character of the atmosphere can influence our mood and transforming it, of exerting a certain authority over the subject, regardless of his or her will or disposition. Through the

experiences of ingression and discrepancy, Böhme supports the previous statement, such that for example even if we are sad, we can perceive the joy of a sunny day, which therefore cannot be our projection, as it is discrepant to our sad mood. The moods of joy and sadness then have a different authority, so that the latter will prevail over the former: “atmospheres can be experienced as surprising and sometimes at odds with one’s mood. An example is when, cheerful, I enter a grieving community: its atmosphere can transform my mood to the point of tears” (Böhme, 2013a, p. 2). Again, Böhme states

perceiving atmospheres means opening up emotionally. This can compensate for the externalization of the environment and counteract the lack of contact, the coldness of modern individuals. To involve oneself in atmospheres is to want to participate and expose oneself to impressions, an indispensable condition for experiencing the pleasure of life and for discovering one’s own body as a means of being. (Böhme, 2017a, p. 50).

According to Griffero, atmospheres possess an affective quality that immediately and pre-reflectively affects the individual, constituting a form of intuitive and immediate knowledge: “atmospheres are perceived before they are understood, they are felt through the body before they are felt through the mind” (Griffero, 2019a, p. 125). For Griffero, who echoes the phenomenological definition of Schmitz and later Böhme, atmospheres are “this And, this in between, through which environmental qualities and human states are related, is the atmosphere” (Griffero, 2019a, p. 128).

Among the various phenomenological philosophers who have related atmosphere to the sensations and emotional tone of environments, spaces or places, Griffero defined atmospheres as “spatialized sensations” and “the specific emotional quality of a given ‘lived space’” (2015, p. 37). Atmospheres have an important incipient and liminal quality, as they belong neither to the percipient subject nor to the situation experienced by the subject. The paradox of ‘being precise with respect to the vagueness’ of atmospheres is addressed by Rauh (2017), who

focuses on the elusive and undefined nature of atmospheres, arguing how this aspect, often considered an obstacle in science, can instead be a fundamental characteristic for understanding and analyzing atmospheres, and not lead us to neglect them as subjects of investigation (Bille et al., 2015).

Rauh starts with the definition of atmosphere as a phenomenon that lies between the subject and the object, an 'and' that mediates between the subjective state and the qualities of the surrounding environment – see Griffero. This 'and', however, introduces an element of 'vagueness', making it difficult to define precisely what an atmosphere is and what its boundaries are. "The origins of vagueness can be traced back to the relational triangle world/language/self. Vagueness appears possible at every level and thus three forms can be distinguished: semantic, ontological and epistemic" (Rauh, 2017, p. 5). Rauh compares the experience of an atmosphere to that of being 'in the clouds' (Rauh, 2017). Like clouds, atmospheres are elusive and ever-changing phenomena, impossible to grasp completely. However, it is precisely this indeterminacy of theirs that makes them fascinating and capable of arousing intense emotions.

PHENOMENOGRAPHIES

One of the main difficulties when speaking of atmospheres lies in the ability to make the affective and experiential dimension of the lived space visible and shareable.

The perception of an atmosphere is, as mentioned earlier, a holistic experience that eludes analytical breakdown and precise description. This 'vagueness' of atmospheres should not, however, lead to a rejection of analysis, but to a search for methods better suited to grasping its complexity. Among the various methods, phenomenographies present themselves as fundamental tools for exploring, analyzing and representing the plurality of atmospheric worlds.

Phenomenographies are distinguished from traditional forms of spatial documentation and representation, such as

maps and photographs, by their focus on the atmospheric dimension: they do not set out to provide an objective or universal representation of a place, but seek to capture the sensations, emotions and bodily dispositions that a place arouses in those who inhabit or pass through it. Phenomenographies can be understood as “deferred representations of an experienced situation, real or imagined, using one or more expressive media –including written narratives– to embrace the spatial, bodily and affective spheres” (De Matteis et al., 2019, p. 5).

Phenomenography is “the deliberate application of technical tools that produce a description. In this sense, it can either be an interpretation of reality, as an account of a perceived atmosphere, or produce atmospheric effects itself” (De Matteis et al., 2019, p. 6). Phenomenographies thus attempt to translate the multisensory and subjective experience of lived space into a communicable format, using tools such as images, texts, sounds, or a combination of these, often relying on the collaboration between different sensory domains that are synaesthetically intertwined, and are in turn linked to the object of representation (Sumartojo et al., 2019; Morselli, 2019; Mackrodt, 2019; Canepa et al., 2019; Havik, 2019; De Matteis, 2022).

Representing lived space, and in particular atmospheres, is a complex and multifaceted undertaking. Indeed, atmospheres are by their very nature vague and elusive and do not lend themselves to overly sharp descriptions, but their phenomenographic description can paradoxically be very precise in capturing this vagueness, through “vague descriptions of precise phenomena or rather, and preferably, precise descriptions of vague phenomena” (Griffero, 2010a, p. 55). Capturing them through a specific medium, such as an image, text or sound, necessarily involves selection and interpretation, which risk betraying the original experience. De Matteis writes (2022) “The distance between direct experience and any form of subsequent representation cannot be eliminated, as even the most accurate phenomenography

produces a new perceptual object distinct from its origin in real space. However, affective topography does not stand as an imitation of reality” (De Matteis, 2022, p. 67).

It is therefore not an imitation but rather has something in common with lived experience. We have various phenomenographic tools at our disposal, of which the primary ones are undoubtedly images which, although they cannot faithfully reproduce an atmosphere, can evoke feelings and emotions, stimulating the reader’s imagination and creating a bridge between the lived experience and its representation. Images, following a distinct change in ontological status, can capture visual and spatial aspects of an atmosphere, but fail to convey its multi-sensory and temporal dimension. However, the very act of framing and selecting a specific moment in reality can amplify the affective content of the image (De Matteis et al., 2019, p. 9). Böhme (1999) in *Theorie des Bildes* –Theory of the Image– examines the role and function of images in contemporary culture, starting from a reflection on the ontology and aesthetics of images themselves. The philosopher attempts to develop a comprehensive theory that addresses the meaning, power and impact of images in our perception and society (Böhme, 1999). Indeed, the image is not just a vehicle of symbolic representation but possesses a presence and reality of its own. Images are not merely copies of reality, but create a world of their own, exerting a direct and immediate effect on our senses and experience. Their power lies in the fact that they manifest themselves as more than mere representation: they act as ‘apparitions’ that influence our perception (Böhme, 1999, p. 29). Böhme explores the aesthetic dimension of images, proposing a theory according to which images are aesthetic phenomena that actively involve the observer. In this context, aesthetics is not only a question of beauty, but of a sensitive experience that emerges through the encounter with the image (Böhme, 1999). Images, therefore, are not only objects of contemplation but have a performative function, capable of modifying the viewer’s perception of the world (Böhme, 1999).

Taking up Benjamin's (2020) concept of aura in part, but expanding it in original directions, for Böhme "the aura of an image refers to its ability to evoke a sensory and affective experience that goes beyond the represented object" (1999, p. 69). Images create atmospheres, influencing the surroundings and the mood of the observer.

The philosopher also addresses the role of images in contemporary society, particularly in relation to the media and visual culture. Images have an intrinsic persuasive and formative power, which goes beyond the content they represent. Böhme analyses the power of images as instruments of manipulation or control, highlighting how they are used to influence public opinion, arouse collective emotions or create group identities (Böhme, 1999). The author notes that images are never neutral: they carry a specific power that can be used for different purposes, from artistic to political or commercial.

Images touch our bodies and senses, influencing our emotional and physical state (Böhme, 1999). This connection between image and body is fundamental to understanding how images engage us on a deeper level than mere intellectual contemplation.

Böhme criticizes the Western philosophical tradition, in which the image has often been seen as a 'double' of reality, an imperfect imitation of reality, or as a sign to be decoded (Böhme, 1999). On the contrary, he proposes to consider images as autonomous entities that have their own capacity to act on the pathic subjects as primary objects of perception rather than as symbols of a represented reality (Böhme, 1999); they are much more than the imitation of reality (Böhme, 1999), they have their own perceptual autonomy – what Josef Albers calls 'actual fact' (1971).

His criticism is mainly directed at idealistic and semiotic philosophy, which has subordinated images to the domain of concept or language (Böhme, 1999). For Griffero (2013), among the most tenacious prejudices is the idea that the image is always the image of something and not a thing itself,

“the temptation is always to see in the image, realistic or not, a primarily denotative if not even documentary role. And yet, the image notoriously ensnares us [...] It undoubtedly arouses our desire for it [Images] do not just speak of an atmosphere, they create it. The images themselves are this atmosphere and not just its representation” (Griffero, 2013, p. 82). Images, Griffero argues, are not mere copies of reality, but ‘things’ with which to ‘make’ something else. They ‘entice’ us with their ‘*Wirklichkeit*’, their reality in action, arousing emotions and desires. The atmospheric image is distinguished by its vagueness, its ability to evoke a distance, its deobjectivization and its ephemerality. For Griffero, of all images, the twilight image is particularly evocative as a combination of these four characteristics: it distances the near, alienates the familiar and transforms it into a memorial silhouette (2013). Images, which, prejudicially, are always regarded as denotative and documentary, for Böhme “do

Fig. 1 Olafur Eliasson, *Your rainbow Panorama* (2011). Credit: Studio Olafur Eliasson

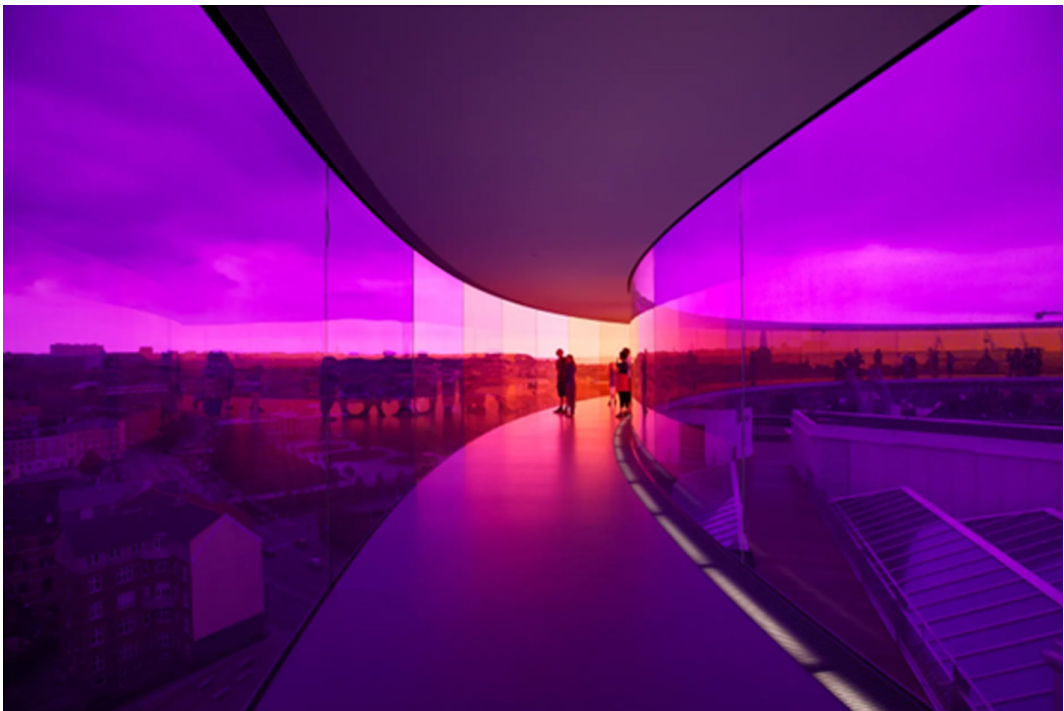
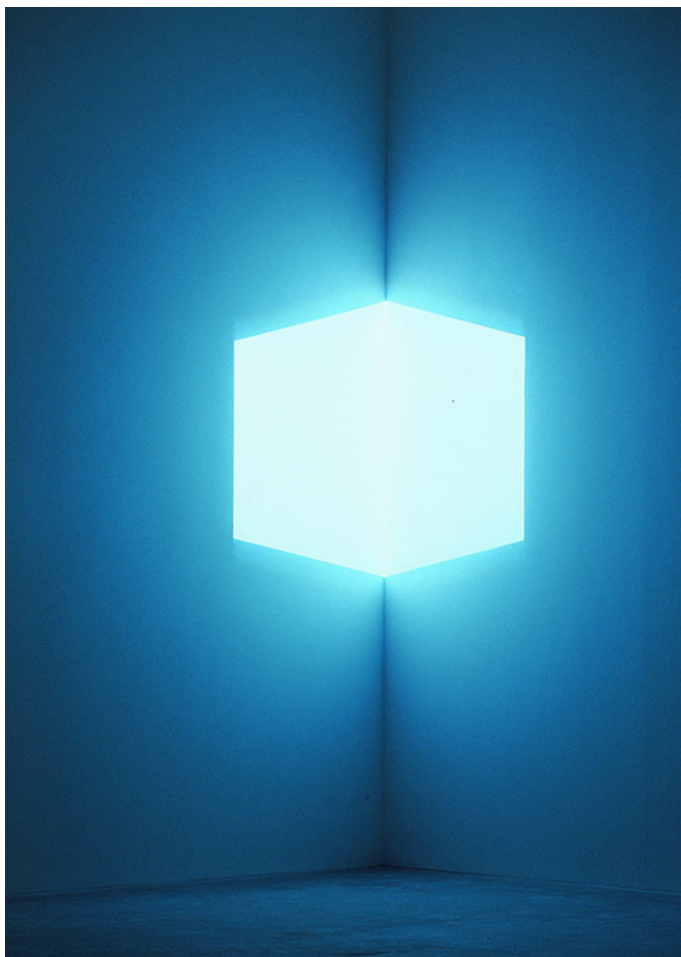


Fig. 2 James Turrell, *Afrum Pale Blue* (1968). Credit: James Turrell



not merely speak of an atmosphere, but create it; the images themselves 'are' this atmosphere and not its representation" (1999, p. 149). Atmospheres are 'diffused' in the very image that generates them.

On a psychological and emotional level, the impact of images on human beings is analyzed by Freedberg (2009), who shows how the power of images is not only an aesthetic issue, but also a social and political one, and calls for a reassessment of the traditional approach of art history, which often focuses on formal, stylistic or contextual issues, but ignores the role of emotional and experiential reactions.

Fig. 3 James Turrell, *Stone Sky* (2005). Credit: James Turrell



Wunenburger (1997) also examines the role and significance of images in human culture, knowledge and thought, assessing how images influence our understanding of the world and what functions they play on an epistemological, cultural and social level. The image for Wunenburger is not only a visual representation, but also a mediating tool between the subject and the world, capable of conveying meanings and values (Wunenburger, 1997). The image becomes a bridge between sensory experience and abstract conceptualization; not simply a reflection of the real world, but a tool through which we perceive and interpret it.

In contemporary art, artists such as James Turrell and Olafur Eliasson explore the atmospheric potential of images and light installations, immersing the viewer in sensory spaces that solicit emotional and bodily participation (Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4). These works demonstrate how the image can transcend representation to become an atmospheric experience itself. Of the various types of images, photographs also represent a social “memory bank” (Shanks, 1997, p. 98). Photography works on memory and time, crystallizing a past moment that becomes present again. And if “memory is the act of remembering from the point of view of a later time” (Shanks, 1997, p. 99), photographs help us in the reactivation



Fig. 4 *A moment suspended in time, where the silence of dawn intertwines with the vastness of the mountains on the horizon. Credit: Camilla Sette*

of the same, soliciting a bodily resonance felt through multi-sensory effects. "Photography is a medium capable of articulating reality in a non-representational manner, bringing the dynamics of the emotions to the fore [...] Images become formidable descriptors of the qualities of lived space, capable of making present that surplus that otherwise remains invisible to analytical methods" (De Matteis, 2022, p. 139-142). Photography makes it possible to capture "the situation of the moment" (Hasse, 2012, p. 65) and the immediate presence of atmospheric perception, a direct impression of what exists in the form of an image (Figure 4). Not all images, however, can generate an emotional response, and thus fix an atmosphere. Only images that stimulate us synaesthetically can generate an emotional response (Morselli, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the analysis of the concept of atmosphere revealed the complexity and depth of a phenomenon that eludes rigid definitions but, at the same time, permeates every aspect of our sensory and affective experience. Through the theories of Schmitz, Böhme and Griffero, it has been highlighted how atmospheres are not simply objective properties of space or mere subjective projections, but quasi-cosical entities that inhabit the intersection between subject and environment, influencing our state of being in a holistic and multisensory manner. The phenomenological approach has allowed us to overcome traditional dichotomies between subject and object, opening new horizons of interpretation in contemporary aesthetics, architecture and the visual arts. In this context, images not only represent, but also create atmospheres, confirming their evocative and performative power. The future challenge will be to develop phenomenographic tools capable of capturing and communicating this ephemeral and multisensory dimension, overcoming the limits of traditional visual representation.

Attention to atmospheres not only enriches our cognitive baggage but invites us to rethink our experience of the contemporary world, enhancing the emotional and affective dimensions of the body.

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