



# Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics

*Kimberley Curtis*

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## **Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics** Kimberley Curtis

This bold and persuasive study rereads the works of Hannah Arendt to recuperate her relevance to contemporary politics and to show that her deepest concerns are oriented by her ontology. Kimberley Curtis interprets Arendt's earlier work through the lenses of *The Life of the Mind*, elucidating what Curtis calls an "aesthetic sensibility of tragic pleasure" as a way out of the enclave politics of late modernity. Arguing that oblivion and radical forgetfulness of others are among the most ethically troubling features of our political landscape, Curtis shows that Arendt's aesthetic account of politics offers us an idiom in which to name and resist the deprivations and dangers of our political condition. Curtis also elucidates Arendt's debt to phenomenology and argues that our sense of reality is born through highly charged sensuous provocation and mutual responsiveness. Arendt's innovation is to recognize that this countenancing of others is an aesthetic experience that creates the political world. Curtis plumbs the relevance of this work in current issues such as gated communities for the privileged and prisons for the disenfranchised, and in the extraordinary relationship between a black civil rights leader and a Ku Klux Klan officer. *Our Sense of the Real* is a poetic invocation of Arendt's politics, at once lively, passionate, and crucial.

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