

How to carry the world on one's back?



Atlas is a proposal to put the frame of thought introduced by German art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929) into the context of historical knowledge and images. This is not a monographic exhibition on Warburg, but a journey through the history of images from 1914 until the present day, where warburgism constitutes the *genius loci*.

Warburg is for Art History the equivalent to what Freud, his contemporary, was for psychology: he introduced radically new questions for the understanding of art. Through his *Bilderatlas* or atlas of images, composed between 1924 and 1929, which remained unfinished, Warburg managed to transform the way in which images are understood. He called it *Mnemosyne*, as a way of expressing that his questioning was referring to the memory of the images, including the unconscious memory, theorised during the same period by Freud on a psychological level.

The *Mnemosyne* Atlas has 60 sheets with images that trace the survival of symbols and archetypes that migrate from antiquity. This open device establishes for Warburg the response to a psychological situation that kept him confined to a sanatorium in Kreuzlingen from 1921 to 1924. In it he gathers all the objects of his research into a "mobile panel" device which is constantly mounted, dismounted, remounted. *Mnemosyne* was his masterpiece and methodological testament, an atlas of images that constitutes a work of reference for art historians and artists as it implies a worldview susceptible to putting itself back together again and again through the play of associations. With it he changes the way we conceive the relationships of art-works between themselves and of all of them together facing historical development. It is the labourer of endless thought on images and their destinations, a visual essay far from museological performances.

The exhibition has been designed to foster an understanding of some of the artists' work and how their pieces can be considered from the point of view of an authentic method and even from a transverse but not standardised knowledge of the world. In this exhibition Paul Klee's gorgeous watercolours are not exhibited, but his modest herbarium and the graphic or theoretical ideas that spring from it are, Sol LeWitt's minimalist cubes are not exhibited, but his photo collages on the walls of New York are. Before the pieces, as a result of work, the operating spaces are shown, the production surfaces of the work itself, it constitutes a new way to tell the story of the visual arts, far from the historical and stylistic patterns of academicism.