

## **Snapshots of present: photography's ontology as contemporaneity symbolic form from Renaissance to present.**

Aby Warburg's notion of survival of antiquity (*Nachleben der Antike*) exemplified throughout his texts and visual practice (The Atlas Mnemosyne) develops an understanding of temporality as the survival of certain images and motives deriving from the classical canon (and its Renaissance reception) in the cultural memory. In particular his analysis grounds on the photography's double possibility to freeze an instant of time in the quasi-eternal and to simultaneously operate a comparison between artworks throughout reproducibility and juxtaposition, phenomenon theoretically entailed in his ground breaking concept of visual *Pathosformeln*.

A plethora of polarities (now/becoming, unique/reproducible, movement/stasis) entailed in the ontology of the photographic image allows the possibility to conceive the very idea of contemporaneity as a projection of hardly perceivable fragments of now-presence and untimeliness. Warburg addresses such constitutive ambivalence of the image with the development of a theory of temporalization as the manifestation of certain recurring gestures in the body of the image, introducing an untimely presence in the perception of the image.

In an interestingly complementary manner, Jeff Wall's photography, grounding on the relation between traditional painting and contemporary photography, presents in the medium of large size *tableaux* a visual representation of these series of fragmentation, of antique gestures re-staged in modernity.

Taking, in the light of this similarity Warburg's theory of the image as the idea of a recurring present manifestation throughout art history (with an emphasis on Renaissance) and Jeff Wall's critique of contemporaneity as a mere art-historical projected category, I aim to trace the shifting value of the term *contemporaneity* both for the Warburghian notion of Renaissance and for Wall's reintroduction through the medium of photography of an untimely presence of gestures in modernity.

It is throughout the development of a constellation ranging from Warburg's theory to Wall's photography that I intend to trace an understanding of contemporaneity for art-history after the advent of reproducibility. At the center of such temporal horizon lies the radical impossibility of contemporaneity to be experienced, allowing only to trace its metamorphic status throughout time and art-historical classifications.