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In 1923 the art historian Aby Warburg began an epic project called the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a fittingly enigmatic title for a work so unique that no other example of art historical scholarship has matched its form and content. It consisted of stretching black cloth on metal frames, upon which Warburg mounted hundreds of images from numerous fields.

In total, Warburg created 79 screens, each one a complex, multi-dimensional network of pictorial anthologies, and visual juxtapositions. His endeavor was to find a revisionist method for studying art—one that surpassed the limitations of understanding it through language. But Warburg’s goal set up a new challenge. How does one understand his “art history without text”? Since Warburg died before the *Mnemosyne Atlas* was finished, the work has left art historians baffled for almost ninety years.

Arguably, a fundamental obstacle in understanding the *Mnemosyne Atlas* has been a question of approach. Since it is unlike anything that has come before or after it in art-historical scholarship, the work must be addressed in a new light. To move toward an alternative comprehension of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* my study investigates the work in an anthropological context, utilizing a theoretical framework outlined by Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency: Towards a New Anthropological Theory* (1998) which views the complete creative output of an individual as a network of its creator’s distributed personhood.

Following Gell’s methodology, this study first maps Warburg’s oeuvre. Then it takes a close look at plate 79 of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* not only Warburg’s final and least understood piece of output, but one that can be identified as a reflection of his artistic personhood between 1891 to 1929. According to Gell, each separate work in an artist’s oeuvre can be seen as a recension of previous ones—a particularly fitting description for the atlas as Warburg understood it. Just days before his death, Warburg wrote that its purpose was to unite his “different and specialized studies into a unified work, which would demonstrate the goal of all my artistic endeavors.”

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