

Nataša Lah

Lethe Atlas

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It is the world which, through the image, produces its own self-portrait
Baudrillard, 2006, 94

We shall speak of substituting un-forgetfulness for forgetfulness in art – and vice versa – as of the cases of semantically blind, though visually depictable pictures. To this end, we are proposing two artworks for consideration. One is based on the idea of un-forgetfulness (Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1924–1929), while the other is based on the idea of forgetfulness (Allan McCollum, *Collection of Forty Plaster Surrogates*, 1982)¹. We shall actualize, compare and substitute both artworks, *per se* and in the context of crisis in the postmodern art world, to reveal them as the respective forms of regulatory character, fragment, networking and of the high subjectivity of authorial insight.

Concerning the above-stated context, we understand the postmodern crisis as the weak influence that art's value systems are exerting over the fate of the art world, as well as the impotence of the art world with regard to regenerating the function of artistic value. The referred evaluation is one we are familiar with from the tradition of the history of aesthetics,² that is, from the early Greek culture to its axiological downfall. This downfall was announced by a modernist idea of “the revaluation of all values”,³ and finalized by the dominance of value relativism, that was formulated through an “anything goes” credo (possessing religious strength). Therefore, the artwork as an object became displaced from its autonomous position as an object and its affiliated authorial identity, in a direction of sociological, political or cultural identification. This opened a path leading from the self-explanatory artwork's atmospherics towards

1 Cast and painted in 1984.

2 The reference targets the wholesome history of aesthetic ideas, and not only the period ensuing the establishment of the said scientific discipline. Moreover, because aesthetics as a scientific discipline was established with Baumgarten's work in 1750, experiencing its deepest crisis (critique) already by the late 19th century (in its native philosophical domain, as much as in the art production from Romanticism onwards).

3 A formulation by Nietzsche, which appeared in his *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), as a theoretical derivation from the critique of Western history of ideas, based on “prejudices” concerning the dialectic nature of thought, objectivity and moral (from Socrates onwards).



the communicational (networked), discursive and completely unbounded space of incessant communication. However, following the totality of previous intellectual and historical experience of the world, it is rather certain that – by rejecting postmodern relativism – we do not intend to invoke a deceptive objectivism. What are we left with, then? Which aspect of evaluation we feel nostalgic about? Which form of faith in consensus do we swear by? It seems that instead of objectivism we can speak – with great certainty – of universalism, which is not tested only by a rational mechanism such as objective thinking, but is also checked within the communality of unconscious knowledge, i.e. in the symbolic resource of un-forgetfulness (Read, 1957, 88). In this regard, Herbert Read emphasizes how the historical role of aesthetics was directed towards a relation between the artwork and the emotions of pain or pleasure it evokes in an observer. However, due to its symbolic function, art does not target the emotional reactions, but rather the observer's memories. To denote this characteristic, Read introduces a notion of re-co-relation (Read, 1957, 89). This re-correlating act of accepting the symbolic artwork's value replaces the emotion of pleasure in an observer, wherein an artwork's value function lies with reconnecting to other receptions, i.e. correlation to the experience of what is other (and different). Thus, it ceases to be subjective or even idealistically objective, all to the advantage of universal un-forgetfulness, which links the differences through experience. Read claims that here art can assist by collecting “the traces remaining in spirit”, the vestiges of various emotions that are (symbolically) remembering the true experiences, to the advantage of achieving “a boundlessly strong emotion” (Read, 1957, 89). Thus, the recipient's emotion gets verified by the world's experientiality. Besides, un-forgetfulness and forgetfulness are being mutually substituted within the symbolic experience, crystallizing into knowledge that is graspable via direct perception. In this context, the scientific perspective (of observation and reflection, equally) presents a construct that is insufficient to evaluate art aesthetically. This happens because scientific deduction gets incessantly endangered by direct perception, as the latter is the only one succeeding in connecting the artwork's fragments and the world, via the pleasure of remembering. Here, Read gives a significant example, pointing at the fallacious forms of teaching children how to draw. The actual example refers to learning the skill of drawing a curved ellipse, such as in the fruit bowls in Cézanne's paintings. Read notices that an ideal ellipse will be much closer to an ellipse as seen by the untrained eyes, than the one to which we painstakingly direct the child at, forcing it to construct ellipse based on *a priori* principles (Read, 1957, 62).

*Those who have crossed / With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom / Remember
as – if at all – not as lost / Violent souls, but only / As the hollow men / The
stuffed men* (Eliot, 1969, 83).

In the final chapter of *Lethe: The Art and Critique of Forgetting* Harald Weinrich (1997) concludes how, at last, we should offer a sacrifice at the shrines of two deities – Mnemosyne and Lethe. But, what is the point of celebrating un-forgetfulness and forgetfulness at the same moment? It seems that Malraux hits the problem's very heart in his *Voices of Silence* (Malraux, 1951), where he discloses how un-forgetfulness and forgetfulness are not opposed. On contrary, claims Malraux, the fragility of gathered elements of humaneness (man) consist in forgetting the whole of humaneness (man). If we keep associating then in the moments of its power history is being condensed into a wholeness, just like a man in his health. On the other hand, when in focus, history is being dispersed out from a whole into the elementary particles, while power is being defragmented into the various stages of powerlessness. Consequently, seeking a support within a frail supplementation of the whole, a man celebrates (seeks) the forgetting of reality (the dispersal of memory and recollection) as the individual freedom of not belonging to the real (painful) world, thus winning both a personal and a metaphysical victory. In this manner, the radical will of potential success in coexisting with people (history) gets confronted by the loneliness of individual freedom, which ends in radical silence. The latter, as sung about by Eliot (Eliot, 1969, 83), is being strikingly announced not as a bang, but as a whimper. Fragmentariness, scattering and eventually the perpetuating discursiveness, together dethrone the truth, arming an army of truths against it. As a distortion of the truth, fragmentariness is being shaped as the recollection (as offered by Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*) or as the deadly violence of forgetfulness (as offered by McCollum's *Plaster Surrogates*). Nevertheless, both of these works beget the radical silence, wherefrom we shall perhaps (following the panics pertaining to the postmodernist disintegration of networked disconnectedness) bewail the rejected "slavery" of integral experience.

Abraham Moritz Warburg (1866–1929) was an art historian who was educated at universities in Bonn, Munich, Strasbourg, and Florence and wrote his PhD thesis on the subject of the Italian Renaissance and Sandro Botticelli's oeuvre. Later on, he expanded the domain of art history by exploring outside the methodological frames of its scientific matrix, towards a wide field of the cultural context of visibility. Today, Warburg is considered to be the originator of visual arts' interdisciplinary research.

In his youth, Warburg gave up his right, as the firstborn son to a family of Hamburg bankers, to inherit the family bank. In return for this he demanded some compensation, asking that his family buy him any book he might come to need for the rest of his life. Thus, Warburg begun forming a library of cultural sciences, which resulted in establishing *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg* in Hamburg, in 1902. At the time of Warburg's death the library comprised around 60,000 volumes. In 1933 it was relocated to London, where it became, and to this day remains, a part of

London University. In 1924, after undergoing the treatments for psychological illness in Swiss clinics, Warburg begun creating *Mnemosyne Atlas*. He died in 1924, leaving this large and complexly envisioned project uncompleted.



Figure 1: Aby Warburg, *The Mnemosyne Atlas*, Panel 46, 1929, The Warburg Institute, London, UK⁴.

The wooden plates, of approximate dimensions 150 x 200 cm, coated with black textile, hold temporarily fixed – with the possibility of supplementation or exchange – black and white photographs. These photographs portray historical art heritage, from the time of Ancient Greece to the epoch in which modern German art in the Weimar Republic was advancing on the art scene. Warburg combined photographs of artworks with those of geographic maps, his own handwritten notes with then-contemporary newspapers clippings. The panels were subsequently numerated, in a manner enabling the closures of particular thematic wholes. Themes cover the domains of cosmology, genealogy, archaeological and astronomical sciences during the Arabian and European Middle Ages, the art of the Quattrocento – including individuals such as Virgil, Dürer, Rubens, and Rembrandt – as well as “a trans.substitution of sacred into profane” in the artwork’s finale.⁵ Fragmented and subjectively tailored, this digressively staged

4 Source: <https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/collections/warburg-institute-archive/bilderatlas-mnemosyne/mnemosyne-atlas-october-1929> [12. 6. 2018].

5 A detailed survey and study analysis of the panels can be found on the webpage of Warburg Institute,

panorama of time – presenting Warburg's study of the immediate perception of art – is a system of networked fragments within a wide corpus of culture, cogitated simultaneously in a synchronic and diachronic manner. In Read's words, this is a re-correlation and a symbolic encounter of the world in itself.

By formalising *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Warburg ascribed significance to the historic un-forgetfulness. His actual formalization procedure follows the clear strategy of fragmentation, and therefore also of a predilection in a process of extracting the significances, which is entirely in accord with the paradigmatic, historiographic-museological regime of representation. This act and this very manner of formalization have gained an important position within the cultural memory of the 20th century, although to a significantly lesser degree than the particular photos from the books, magazines, and newspapers which Warburg attached to his black-clad panels. Since the pictures are grouped thematically, the significance of such grouping has surpassed that of particular pictures – which became comprehended mainly as the elements and documents of a respective theme. Therefore, the fragments of un-forgetfulness are collapsing into a representational forgetfulness. On the other hand, the actual fragmenting and grouping, as the formal procedure of executing *Mnemosyne Atlas*, endured – exerting an especially momentous impact on formalizing the paradigmatic idea of museum, library and archive. Thus, the subjective and authorial choice of un-forgetfulness' fragments was overshadowed by the whole.

In a way, Warburg was interested in a phenomenon of contact between heritage and its heirs' misunderstanding. It's a place wherein appropriation of the iconographical givens – i.e. of a connotatively definable symbolization – takes place. This does not necessarily presume the empathic cover for reception in a new epoch of inherited values. Such recognition of the conflict between values allows one to discern an ironical moment within Warburg's metonymy of long historical time.

The classical thought of antiquity certainly doesn't correspond with the way antique classics were comprehended in Renaissance, though many of the latter's cases feature a formal style transfer. Let's take the examples of the Ancient Greeks being oriented at realism, and Renaissance artists being oriented at the idealized picture that achieved the illusion of realism. How can we render such sources of change comprehensible, when we know that the envisioned equilibrium between words and pictures failed, leaving behind mainly the pictures? One of the suggestions could be to understand *Mnemosyne Atlas* as Warburg's own artwork, and consequently interpret it as a peculiar anticipation of the situation, presently witnessed as an epochal change in the status of the picture.

Cornell University, Ithaca (NY): <https://warburg.library.cornell.edu> [12. 6. 2018].

As we know, this change begun with the 20th-century paradigmatic turn, that was begotten in the fear of all our “hot” and cold wars. The change of the picture's status was manifested in a gradual change of its function. Namely, the form of the picture could no more retain the position of the independent exponent. It got assimilated into the multimedia complex of general informativeness, losing its own formal code. In the hyper-real world's network, the picture grew to be less and less depictable, because it became increasingly less based on the significant effects of its form. On the other hand, the picture became more and more based on its sustainability within the structure of the media and cultural context in which it was sited. Despite the fact that the picture cannot be extracted as an independent entity, its manner of existence continued to firmly correspond with a paradigmatic regime of representing the reality in which it happens to arise. This is true in today's conditions of hyper-formalization and the global, universal and universalist exposure, just as it was true in the Warburg's era of general musealisation. In both cases the picture is but a fragment of the paradigmatic representational regime, the latter being systematized through collecting and multiplying, as a meaning that surpasses the focus of each particular picture. To put it vividly, it is like when the structure of an exhibition setup – which represents the exhibited pieces – becomes a meaningful reflection per se, regardless of the connotative nature of particular pieces. Or, it is just like an interactive social network, which presents everything it displays by structuring the actual communication, while the displayed materials reflect the structure of the networking configuration, regardless of the connotative nature of that which has been displayed. Hence, the cultural significance of formalization (as a mere state of being displayed) surpasses the social role of representation played by the particular fragments of what is being presented. With *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Warburg has shown history as a phenomenon where exposure puts forward a network. And in this network, each visible (particular) picture remains a groove on a blind map of the whole.

A comparison between Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* and McCollum's *Plaster Surrogates* (1982) reveals an identical principle, one of a preferentially selected number of formats, that are set up to bring forth a multitude of connotatively blind pictures. McCollum's recent apostrophizing of fragmentariness formally presents a counterpoint to *Mnemosyne Atlas*. However, *Plaster Surrogates* is rendered in a new key, one belonging to the new paradigmatic regime of representation, in a context of deriving the historic forgetfulness. We could name it *Lethe Atlas*, that is, the formalization of a paradigmatic code which refutes the sharp border between sign and connotation. *Mnemosyne Atlas* remembers, says the form, because each of its fragments is filled with something. On the other hand, *Plaster Surrogates* forgets, because each of the work's fragments is filled with nothing. Something and nothing are not the rhetorical effects

of meaning, but of form. This is a result of these two different formalizations sketching the significance of contentual occupancy and contentual vacancy. And each of those formalizations find their respective fulcrums in their respective paradigmatic regime, within which they're being articulated. Throughout many epochs, un-forgetfulness and forgetfulness have been able to live in the bodies of narratives which shaped them. The sign was a carrier of undoubted connotation.

The iconographic culture of reading artworks has persisted until the point when, in the visual arts, a semantically empty sign (stain, flat surface, colour) appeared outside of context, one moving away from connotation towards the issue of signifying system. From then onwards, language did not have to necessarily be linked to the consensus of meaning. Up to that point, the questions were: What do we really mean when we say something? What is represented by the picture we are looking at? Now, these questions have been replaced by others, such as: How are we structuring the signs of expression? How are we constructing a visible form?

With forgetfulness, the relation between sign and meaning disappears, which in fact is supported by the phenomenon of the so-called semiotic or semio art during the 1980s. Therefore, this is primarily the issue of an artistic phenomenon, which remains in the domain of conceptualist tradition, but with an essential orientational shift from the analytical towards the critical practice of pointing at the symptoms of a massive and mediated culture.

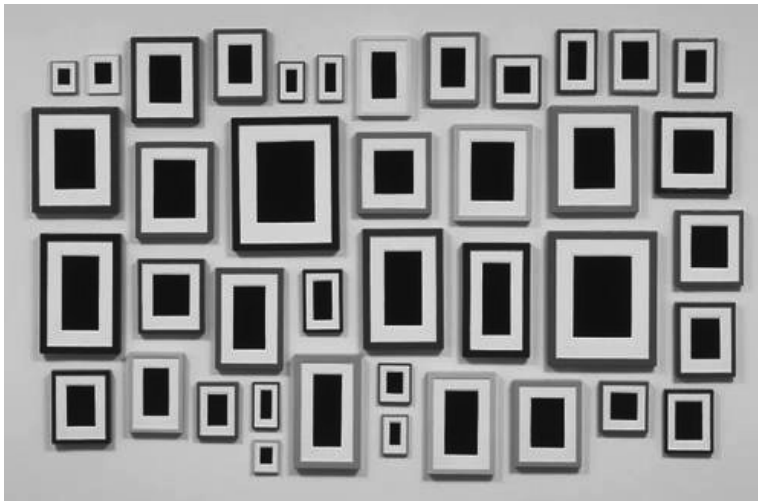


Figure 2: Allan McCollum, *Collection of Forty Plaster Surrogates*, 1982, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA⁶.

6 Source: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/allan-mccollum/collection-of-forty-plaster-surrogates-1982> [12. 6. 2018].

The ideas above stated bring us closer to the idea of replacement (or substitution) in Allan McCollum's work.⁷ A surrogate is, above all, a substitute of true meaning, while picture without meaning presents an ironical disengagement from the well-known phrase "a picture does not lie". Namely, if the picture doesn't mean anything (doesn't signify anything), it testifies the connotative emptiness, and neither truth nor lie reach out from a message anymore. *Plaster Surrogates* presents a collection of "pictures" made from plaster. These appear as pictures only because of the object's associative form, which presents itself as a picture. Since we discern this object as a picture, we have to activate and invest an effort to find a meaning or content of the latter. However, content and meaning do not appear, they are absent and black (coloured black). The other cycle's element is the multiplication of "pictures" which differ only slightly, by tiny variations in formats. This effect and this rhetorical figure of the whole stimulate our exploration, since their respective non-identicalness refers to a hidden presence of significance⁸. In her introduction to an interview (1985) with McCollum⁹, Beth Biegler interprets such artistic action as the artist doubting the value of the system, as one that defines the value of information and its visual presentation. Further on, she arrives at a conclusion that McCollum's work can be classified as part of postmodernism, yet expressing her own – rather considerable – reservation towards various "isms" in general. In short, Biegler believes we should avoid stereotypes. And it is exactly here, in a discrete, even personal receptive grasp of interpreting McCollum's work, that we find a very interesting code of interpretational stereotype in the history of art, one that employs classification to exterminate qualification. Because, if we wedge McCollum's cycle *Plaster Surrogates* within a stereotype of the postmodernist expressive sphere, it will lose the authenticity of the blind pictures' group, which it actually presents. In other words, by classifying (according to the traditional pattern of style analysis) *Plaster Surrogates*, we can conclude that the work answers the demands of postmodernist disengagement from the matrix of modernism. Linda Hutcheon offers an excellent interpretation of this issue, as the actual case of a dominant poetical/

7 Allan McCollum is a contemporary American artist, born in 1944 in Los Angeles, California. He has been living and working in New York ever since 1975, when a work was accepted by The Whitney Biennial. During the late 1970s he became rather widely known for his series of chromatically strong pictures titled *Surrogate Paintings* wherefrom, in the 1980s, he developed a cycle of wall objects titled *Plaster Surrogates*.

8 A set of identical objects would by classified be our attention as a set of "reproductions" without originals, while a set of various formats would be perceived by our attention as a range of "originals". This aspect of communication is being, among other things, questioned by the so called Glitch Art in the sphere of digital picture, where a visual datum's discovered or caused error aims at attracting a peculiar aesthetic attention. Here, a digital electronic datum is being consciously manipulated, using the concept of error to break the system of endless reproductiveness. In other words, it aims to sway a fictitious proposal of virtual reality according to which the indestructibility (endless multiplicability) of data gives credibility to their significance and meaning.

9 See interview: Biegler (1985–1986).

political discourse, whose basic characteristic is to avoid definability. In a modernist key, an artwork wasn't oriented at forgetting the sign but its transformation. The described division does not serve delimitation, as much as the change of focus within a picture's semantic cover. While modernism kept discovering new languages for the world's old meanings, and did this by tackling un-forgetfulness in a new key of the modern era, the postmodern epoch is characterized by its focus on the sign, performed in a new sphere of semantic forgetfulness. Therefrom stems that evasive poetical/political discourse which tackles the identity-related characteristics of the picture, in order to avoid any sort of identification of the object. This means not identifying with the values of world, life, and art, and instead with the manipulated memory of revised semantics, such as offered by the surrogate of virtual reality, that rose on the wings of the Cold War political crisis, a crisis that culminated in the (postmodernist) 1980s.

Nicolas Bourriaud's inspiring essay *Allan McCollum's Aura* contains, among other things, a link between McCollum's work and the practices of Newman, Kosuth or Ryman i.e. a connection with abstract expressionism, conceptual art, and minimalism. All these cases present a certain form of non-referentiality, a phenomenon defining the present state of the world, within a context of impossibility to differentiate between reality and simulacrum.

These artworks have a fascinating effect on the recipient, exerted through a tense relationship among a few factors. On one hand, there's abundance and availability, while on the other there's the emptied state and the universal unavailability of sense, arising from hyper-production. Thus, we are confronted with something whose form we no longer know how to name. Is it a work of art, an idea, an installation or an object? (Bourriaud, 1988) Let's return to McCollum, who names it a surrogate. That is, he calls it a substitute for the touching motions of reality and simulacrum. This is a manner in which an entire range of plaster casts is being condensed into a countless collection of homonymous objects, that possess no meaning. It is an abundance of fragments from the simulationist culture of "screen", that is fascinating us and devouring us. It does not deepen us, but takes away the only thing we possess, which is the fulcrum of un-forgetfulness. Something deeply mortal inhabits this monochromatic life of things, something resembling the oblivion.

Let us recall forgetfulness. Λήθη (Lethe) was the mythical river of forgetfulness, on whose water the shades of the dead quenched their thirst, in order to forget everything they did or heard during their earthly life. Since Λήθη (Lethe) is antonymous to the word ἀληθεία (Aletheia i.e. truth), it seems that un-forgetfulness and truth live an inseparable life. On the other hand, forgetfulness is the mere disappearance of the worldly, earthly and symbolically universalized knowledge. Thus, surrogates are not

the pictures of lies. Instead, their semantic emptiness is a picture of materialized forgetfulness, which is actually the multiplied, proliferated, omnipresent, simulative, violent and abundant forgetfulness.

Κλειώ (Clio) is the fourth of nine *daughters* (Muses) begotten by Zeus and Mnemosyne. Her name literally means “to recount” or “to make famous”. Clio is the muse of history and heroic poetry. However, today Clio is intoxicated by the forgetfulness of Lethe's water. She vanishes into the objectness of blind meaning, continuing to exist as a mere sign.

Here, a blind picture – one deprived of meaning – permanently postpones the identification of an observed object via any sort of recollection. By doing this, the post-historical man marks an alarmingly dangerous direction of his expedition into the unknown, whereto he is heading lead by the pleasantness of forgetfulness' neutrality, being “purified” from the anxious and helpless un-forgetfulness. The endless reproductiveness of the sign, which is deprived of meaning, is being compulsively compensated with quantity. All that time forgetfulness, as brilliantly observed by Hannah Arendt in her phenomenology of politics, keeps flirting with “the banality of evil”, naively questioning the (historical) experience (of the world) as if it is being polysemantic. Forgetfulness reiterates picture, sound, and form, not as Mnemosyne's collage – but as Lethe's gloomy stream, which hides the picture of its deep riverbed.

Conclusion

By destroying the communicational consensus of agreeing, in this world's globalized and globalizing omni-culture, we have derided modesty. We have musealized the history of art by fragmenting un-forgetfulness, by severing a connection between the history of philosophy and actual thought. And we did this by the actual fragmentation of thoughts' forms. We have drowned ourselves in the exchangeable pictures of the world, that glide over our simulated screens. As for now, we hold onto our sluggish and networked silence, exchanging only the scales of un-forgetfulness, within a total darkness of forgetfulness. By employing language, postmodernism attacked the thought, masking the thinking under its most semblant guile (namely the language). Thus destroying the wholeness of experience, postmodernism offered the fragments of boundlessly renewing notional reflections. Once again, the style has overpowered epoch. In its beginning, postmodernism established itself as an anonymous, diagnostic contribution towards exposing the illnesses of old identities. To this end, the postmodern epoch introduced the “liberating” notions of discursiveness, deconstruction, simulacrum, the analytics of a schizoid state... imposing those not only as an extorted state but also as a self-healing, one causing us to increasingly wither in ever-deepening misapprehension.

The cohesive illusion of all the gathered instances of loneliness has offered correctness, as the aesthetic and ethical balance of their joint recognisability. Yet their foundations are buried deeply within the bioethics' domain of "naked life". The chances of reaching this naked life, through deep sediments, all the way down to the authenticity of humanism, are growing hopelessly scarce. Together with truth, art has drifted into an invisible world ... the world discernible and floating in a place where one cannot comprehend it in the pure corporeal representation and the non-evading presence. The Pythagoreans believed silence to be the sound of the harmony of spheres. In the same manner, the connotative obliteration of symbolical un-forgetfulness is now being heard as the new innocence of forgetfulness, though it fills an observer – violently alienated from the demons of the past – with unease and fear. The great semantic Nothing, defragmented and networked through numerous "blind" pictures, is the only sincere portrait of the invisible (forgotten) picture of the real world.

Actually, the difference – and not the identity (Lyotard, 1983) – was the true formula of forgetting the whole, done in the name of self-renovation of mere self-recollection, in other words: of confronting oneself with any identity issue whatsoever. What would the portrait of a world formulated in such a manner appear like? As Mnemosyne and Lethe symbolically united by artistic creation, as knowledge and forgetting the knowledge, as life and death simultaneously. Perhaps.

In conclusion, we should recall Ingarden's (Ingarden, 1969) contribution to understanding the relational characteristic of artistic value i.e. of the symbolic effect of value, one living in a constant interdependence with something external. In this sense, we were encouraged to compare various efforts in deriving the re-correlations between Warburg's and McCollum's work. Within both works' contexts, the chained fragments offer an analysis of the fragility of both aesthetic and truth-giving value. In both cases, the works adhere to the respective given cultural value (paradigm). Warburg's work fights forgetfulness via the autonomously strong recreation of subjective memory, under the auspices of modernism, from which it grows. On the other hand, McCollum's work is subversively revealed as forgetfulness, since it grows inside a body of an epoch that conceals forgetfulness with the help of a simulated picture. Admittedly, both works aim at a potential for the final revitalisation of the picture's aesthetic effect, in the post-aesthetic world. Both works are directed at a recipient who is communicating with his own existence via art. Because work exists only if it affirms the value of existence, not necessarily as pleasure but, rather certainly, as reality. Let us recall that the pleasure caused by an artwork is not created by producing a copy of reality, but by the immediate perception of the work as a symbol, which is validated through that very pleasure of reception. Does this enable us to open a path towards universalism and communicating the compassion of joint recollection? If so, excellent.

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Nataša Lah

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Ključne besede: Aby Warburg, Allan McCollum, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, *Plaster Surrogates*, vizualna oblika nepozabe, vizualna oblika pozabe

Pozaba briše meje med znamenjem in njegovim pomenom. V vizualni obliki je teoretska struktura pozabe izražena kot konotativno slepa podoba. Aby Warburg je s tem, ko je formaliziral svoj *Mnemosyne Atlas*, izrazil pomen zgodovinskega nepozabljenja. Primerjava med paradigmatičnim Warburgovim delom in McCollumovimi *Plaster Surrogates* iz leta 1982 nam omogoča opazovati identični princip, ki temelji na hoteno izbranem sklopu slikovnih formatov in znotraj oblikovanja, ki predstavlja množstvo konotativno slepih podob. Zaradi izbrane formalizacije je McCollumovo delo aktualiziralo fragmentarnost in je nasprotni pol *Mnemosyne Atlasa*. Vendar so *Plaster Surrogates* izraženi v sveži predstavitveni obliki, to pa poteka v proceduralnem kontekstu, izhajajočem iz zgodovinskega pozabljenja. McCollumovo delo lahko naslovimo tudi kot *Lethe Atlas*, kot obliko, ki se odreka mejam med znakom in njegovo predstavitvijo. *Mnemosyne Atlas* se spominja, apostrofira svojo obliko, ker je vsak fragment napolnjen z neko vsebino. *Plaster Surrogates* pa pozablja, ker je vsak od fragmentov prazen. Tako se nekaj in nič kažeta kot obliki retoričnih učinkov, pri čemer podobni formalizaciji nakazujeta konceptualno polnost nepozabnosti, kar je vsebinska izpraznjenost pozabljenja. V zgodnjem 20. stoletju je bila – hkrati z razmahom abstraktne umetnosti – pozaba izražena kot nekonotativnost lika (vsebinska praznina). Na drugi strani so neoavantgarde, zlasti tiste z izraženim konceptualnim značajem, radikalno razširile medijski prostor pozabe.

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Lethe Atlas

Keywords: Aby Warburg, Allan McCollum, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, *Plaster Surrogates*, the visual form of un-forgetfulness, the visual form of forgetfulness

Forgetfulness erases the border between the sign and its meaning. In a visual form, the notional structure of forgetfulness is manifested as a connotatively blind image. By formalizing his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Warburg gave importance to the historical un-forgetfulness. A comparison between this paradigmatic work and McCollum's *Plaster Surrogates*, dating from 1982, allows us to observe an identical principle, one of a preferentially selected set of picture formats, within a layout which presents a multitude of connotatively blind images. Through its manner of formalization, the latter work becomes a more recent apostrophising of fragmentariness, and a counterpart to *Mnemosyne Atlas*. However, *Plaster Surrogates* is delivered in a fresh key of the new paradigmatic representational regime, all within a procedural context of deriving historical forgetfulness. McCollum's work could also be named *Lethe Atlas*, as a form which denies the clear borders between the sign and its representation. *Mnemosyne Atlas* remembers, says its form, since each of its fragments is filled with something. *Plaster Surrogates* forgets, because each of its fragments is filled with nothing. In this manner, something and nothing appear as the form's rhetorical effects, while two similar formalizations sketch the conceptual fullness of un-forgetfulness i.e. the contentual emptiness of forgetfulness. By the early 20th century, along with the rise of abstract art, forgetfulness was articulated as the non-connotativity of the sign (contentual emptiness). On the other hand neo-avantgarde, particularly one endowed with a conceptual mark, radically expanded the media space of forgetfulness.