

HAL FOSTER

The “archives” of my title are not the dusty rooms filled with dry documents of academic lore. I mean the term as Foucault used it, to stand for “the system that governs the appearance of statements,” that structures the particular expressions of a particular period.¹ In this sense an archive is neither affirmative nor critical per se; it simply supplies the terms of discourse. But this “simply” is no small thing, for if an archive structures the terms of discourse, it also limits what can and cannot be articulated at a given time and place. Here I want to sketch a few significant shifts in the dominant archival relations that obtained among modern art practice, art museum, and art history in the West circa 1850 to 1950. More specifically, I want to consider the “memory-structure” that these three agencies coproduced over this period, and to describe a “dialectics of seeing” within this memory-structure (I trust these terms will become clearer as I go along).² I will focus on three particular moments—perhaps more heuristic than historical—and I will concentrate each moment on a particular pairing of figures and texts. For better or worse, all my figures are men and all my texts are canonical, but the men do not look so triumphant in retrospect, and today the canon appears less a barricade to storm than a ruin to pick through. This condition (which need not be melancholic) distinguishes the present of art and criticism, politically and strategically, from the recent past (the past of the postmodernist critique of modernism), and part of my purpose is to point to this difference.

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1. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper Books, 1976), p. 129. Unlike Foucault, however, I want to put these archives into historical motion; my emphasis will be on the shifts between them.

2. I borrow the first term from Michael Fried (see note 4) and the second from Susan Buck-Morss in her *Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

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My first pair in this dialectics of seeing is Baudelaire and Manet. “Memory,” Baudelaire writes in his “Salon of 1846,” “is the great criterion of art; art is the mnemotechny of the beautiful.”³ What he infers is that a great work in an artistic tradition must evoke the memory of major precedents in this tradition as its ground or support (for Baudelaire this meant ambitious painting after the Renaissance; he denigrated sculpture). But the work must not be overwhelmed by these precedents: it must activate the memory of such important images subliminally—draw on them, disguise them, transform them.⁴ As a positive instance of this “mnemotechny of the beautiful,” Baudelaire points to the persistence of the Géricault *Raft of Medusa* (1819) in the Delacroix *Barque of Dante* (1822). This kind of subtextuality of mnemonic afterimages—to be distinguished from any sort of pastiche or overt citations—is what constitutes an artistic tradition for him,

3. Charles Baudelaire, “The Salon of 1846,” in Jonathan Mayne, ed., *The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies of Charles Baudelaire* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 83.

4. See Michael Fried, “Painting Memories: On the Containment of the Past in Baudelaire and Manet,” *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 3 (March 1984), pp. 510–42; also his *Manet’s Modernism, or the Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). I am indebted to “Painting Memories” throughout the next few paragraphs.



Thomas Struth. Louvre IV, Paris. 1989.
Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

almost in the etymological sense of “tradition” as a passing-on of potential meanings, and in this light memory *is* the medium of painting for Baudelaire.⁵

Two brief emendations might be added here. First, in a reversal that has become familiar ever since T. S. Eliot wrote “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1917), these after-images can also be retroactive: the *Barque* might work its way back into the *Raft* as well, that is, into mnemonic elaborations of it. In this way tradition is never given but always constructed, and always more provisionally than it appears. This provisionality has become patent to us, to the point where, if the modernists felt tradition to be an oppressive burden, we are likely to feel it as an unbearable lightness of being—even though some of us continue to project a weight onto it that it no longer has, as if we needed it as a habitual object of attachment or antagonism. Second, the model of artistic practice intimated by Baudelaire is already art-historical, as it were, and it already presumes the space of the museum as the structure of its mnemonic effects, as the place (more imaginary than real) where an artistic tradition happens. Put differently, this “mnemotechny of the beautiful” assumes an institutional relay between the atelier and studio, where such transformations are made, and the exhibition and museum, where they become effective for others (this relay is further mediated, of course, by the many discourses of Salon critics, review readers, caricaturists, gossips, and so on). In short, in the Baudelairean scheme, painting is an art of memory, and the museum is its architecture.⁶

Soon after this Baudelairean intervention in the mid-nineteenth-century discourse on artistic memory Manet emerges. As Michael Fried has argued, he disturbs the Baudelairean model somewhat, as his practice pushes the subtentuality of mnemonic afterimages toward a pastiche of overt citations. More explicitly than his predecessors, Manet exposes or, better, proposes a “memory-structure” of European painting since the Renaissance, or at least one allusive cluster in this complicated text. According to Fried, Manet is overt in his citations because he aspires to subsume a post-Renaissance past in European painting—through part-for-whole allusions to French art, Spanish art, and Italian art (his relevant allusions are to Le Nain, Velázquez, and Titian, among others, and his *Old Musician* [1862] is one kind of compendium of references).⁷ In this way Manet produces, perhaps for the first time, the effect of a trans-European art, of a near totality of such painting—an effect that soon allowed painting to be imagined as Painting with a capital *P*, and later led to the association of Manet with the advent of modernist art.

One obvious test-case here is *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), not only in its well-known evocations of Renaissance masters like Raphael (a detail of his lost *Judgment*

5. I prefer the term “survival” as a living-on of such meanings, a *Nachleben* or “afterlife” in the sense of Aby Warburg (more on this below). Christopher Pye points out to me that both the Géricault and the Delacroix thematize surviving as well, and Eduardo Cadava that a buried meaning of “tradition,” perhaps relevant here, is a betrayal.

6. Might some of the mnemonics that Frances Yates traced from antiquity to the Renaissance in her classic *The Art of Memory* (1966) be continued in the modern museum?

7. Fried, “Painting Memories,” pp. 526–30.

of Paris is cited in the central figures by way of an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi), but also in its unusual combination of traditional genres of painting such as the nude, still life, portraiture, and landscape, all of which are transformed into a “painting of modern life.” For Fried this text of images and combination of genres create a heightened *unity* of painting that is characteristic of Manet and his followers, a unity that Fried values from the neoclassical tableau espoused by Diderot to the late-modernist abstraction achieved by Frank Stella: a unity *within* painting that promotes an autonomy *of* painting. Of course Baudelaire saw things differently: with his ambivalent homage to Manet as the first in the “decrepitude” of his art, he implies that the memory-structure of painting, its continuity as a subtextuality of afterimages, is in danger of corruption with Manet, perhaps because his citations are too explicit, too various, too “photographic.”⁸ However, rather than choose one reading over the other, we might reconcile the insights of both if we propose—in a manner not as paradoxical as it sounds—that the memory-structure of post-Renaissance painting is already strained at the very moment that it is somehow attained.

Let me underscore two points mentioned above: that modern art is already conceived by Baudelaire and Manet in implicitly art-historical terms, and that this conception depends on its museal setting. Again, this museum is mostly imaginary, an extended Louvre based on mnemonic traces, workshop imitations, graphic reproductions, and so on—a museum without walls before André Malraux declared it so or, better, a museum with myriad walls, both real and fictive. And yet this memory-structure is also very limited, centered almost entirely on painting and run on a narrow geographic track (mostly Paris to Rome, with a few detours to Holland and Spain—hardly trans-European). Moreover, it is fiercely Oedipal, built on a network of patriarchal workshops and rivalrous groups from “David to Delacroix” and beyond.⁹ Yet it is these very limitations that make this nineteenth-century French painting—the transformations of its terms and the displacements of its desires—so effective formally, semiotically, and mnemonically.

For the most part these conditions still obtain in the model of the “Valéry Proust Museum” that Theodor Adorno locates, in his 1953 essay of that title, toward the end of the nineteenth century. Yet here, with Valéry and Proust, the next moment in this museal dialectics of seeing, we are a few decades on from Baudelaire and Manet, and the views on this museum have changed somewhat. For Adorno, Valéry represents the view that the museum is where “we put the art of the past to death.”¹⁰ “Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than

8. Baudelaire, 1865 letter to Manet, in *Correspondance*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1973), vol. 2: p. 497. In some respects Jeff Wall returns to this crux in Manet, and claims it as the dynamic of his own pictorial practice.

9. On this Oedipal structure in nineteenth-century French painting see Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), and Thomas Crow, *Emulation: Making Artists in Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

10. Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), p. 177.

phonetic association,” the German critic writes as if in the voice of the French poet-critic. “Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art. They testify to the neutralization of culture.”¹¹ According to Adorno, this is the view of the producer of art in the studio who can only regard the museum as a place of “reification” and “chaos,” and he distinguishes it from the view that Proust represents for him. In the Adornian scheme Proust begins where Valéry stops—with “the afterlife of the work”—which Proust sees from the vantage point not of the producer of art in the studio but of the viewer of art in the museum. For the idealist viewer à la Proust the museum is a kind of phantasmagorical perfection of the studio, a spiritual place where the material messiness of artistic production is distilled away—where, in his own words, “the rooms, in their sober abstinence from all decorative detail, symbolize the inner spaces into which the artist withdraws to create the work.”¹² Rather than a site of actual reification, then, the museum for Proust is a place of fantastic reanimation, indeed of spiritual idealization. And rather than a chaos of works, the museum for Proust stages “the competition among works [which] is the test of truth” (here Adorno speaks for him).¹³ Although Proust presents this “competition” as benign, it is essentially the same Oedipal struggle that underwrites the memory-structure mentioned above; it is only more agonistic than the subtextuality of afterimages implied by Baudelaire. In fact Proust and Valéry represent more extreme versions of the positions associated with Baudelaire and Manet: the former figure in each pair focuses on the mnemonic reanimation of “the beautiful,” while the latter figure foregrounds its museal reification.

By the same token, however, the Valéry and Proust accounts of the art museum are no more opposed than the Baudelaire and Manet models of artistic memory. Rather, each of these pairs points to a *dialectic of reification and reanimation* that structures all of these reflections on modern art and modern museum. As we saw, Adorno used the first notion, “reification,” in relation to Valéry; Adorno derives it, of course, from Lukács, who developed it, not long after the statements of Valéry and Proust, from Marx on commodity fetishism. In his great essay “Reification and Class Consciousness” (1922), Lukács implies that spiritual reanimation of the sort urged by Baudelaire and Proust is an idealist compensation for capitalist reification; in effect reification and reanimation make up one of “the antinomies of bourgeois thought” that he details there.¹⁴ This antinomy (I have called it, more optimistically, a dialectic) also permeates “the history of art as a

11. Ibid., p. 175.

12. Ibid., p. 179; Marcel Proust, *À l'Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, 2 vols. (Paris), vol. 2: pp. 62–63. This brief reflection on the museum comes in the midst of a long meditation on departures and arrivals, on de-contextualizations and re-contextualizations and their effects on habit and memory. “In this respect as in every other,” Proust writes, “our age is infected with a mania for showing things only in the environment that belongs to them, thereby suppressing the essential thing, the act of mind which isolated them from that environment.”

13. Ibid.

14. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), p. 110.

humanistic discipline,” and this is my principal implication here: art history is born of a crisis—always tacitly assumed, sometimes dramatically pronounced—of a fragmentation and reification of tradition, which the discipline is pledged to remedy through a redemptive project of reassembly and reanimation. I don’t mean, as Karl Kraus once remarked of psychoanalysis, that art history is the illness of which it thinks it is the cure. The memory crises to which the discipline responds are often real enough; but precisely because they are actual, art history cannot solve them but only displace them, suspend them, or otherwise address them again and again.¹⁵

I want to include, in this second moment, another pair of figures, less dialectical than the others but more central to art history: Heinrich Wölfflin and Aby Warburg.¹⁶ Like their near-contemporaries Valéry and Proust, Wölfflin and Warburg inherit the archival relation associated here with Baudelaire and Manet, the one that first projected both a totality of European art and a chaos of museal fragments. In this light this first archival moment all but demanded the sort of synthetic model-terms that these foundational art historians proposed in our second moment: I mean the diacritical “styles” of Wölfflin (the system of Classical versus Baroque attributes laid out in his *Principles of Art History* [1915] and prior texts) and the “pathos formulas” of Warburg (the emotive poses and gestures in “the afterlife of antiquity” traced in his *Mnemosyne* atlas project and various articles). More precisely, these synthetic terms emerge in such a way as to defend against the museum as a chaos of fragments in the Baudelaire-Manet moment—to defend against it in the service of a formal unity and a historical continuity that are presented as always threatened but never lost.¹⁷

In the service of unity or continuity: when Wölfflin discusses “The Why of Development” in *Principles of Art History*, this “why” might betray an anxiety that art no longer displays a “development” of the sort that he posited in its past.¹⁸ Warburg shared this anxiety, and both men worked it over in their art history, in a sense *as* their art history. Perhaps they hoped that the order projected there would find its way into their lives; perhaps this is not unusual among (art) historians. In any case, Wölfflin published his *Principles* only in 1915, though it was finished well before, a delay that is telling, as Martin Warnke has argued, for Wölfflin regarded

15. On memory crises see Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993). In “Tradition’s Destruction: On the Library of Alexandria” (forthcoming, *October* 100 [spring 2002]), Daniel Heller-Roazen argues that mnemonic loss is foundational to the archive (both library and museum), not catastrophic to it, that memory crisis is its natural *raison d’être*. But these crises also occur only at particular pressure points in history (more on this below).

16. The late work of Alois Riegl—the Riegl of “The Cult of Monuments” (1903), say—might serve as well here.

17. Not to mention, in the case of Wölfflin especially, in the name of original work, singular subjectivity, national culture, and so on.

18. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of Development of Style in Later Art*, trans. M. D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950), p. 229. This is not only the Hegelian sentiment that art is “a thing of the past” and that art history is belated by definition. What is at issue here is the redemptive logic inscribed in the dialectic of reification and reanimation (more on this below).



*Aby Warburg. Panel 55 of
Mnemosyne Atlas. 1928-29.*

his *Principles* “as a repository of sensory prewar experience,” an archive of refined prewar sensibility destined to be shattered in the Great War—in effect a memory-structure of European art transcribed for pedagogical preservation.¹⁹ Certainly, when Wölfflin did publish his *Principles*, it was stillborn epistemologically, for it did not suit advanced art at all (1915 marks the full advent of the monochrome, the construction, and the ready-made—all resistant to the terms of Wölfflinian style-discourse).²⁰ Again, Warburg suffered this same historical crisis, even more profoundly. As is well known, he was committed to a psychiatric institution after a mental breakdown in October 1918 (which coincided precisely with the military collapse of Germany), and, especially as a Jew, he faced the additional threat of an emergent fascism upon his recovery in 1923. Certainly “the afterlife of antiquity” would take on an entirely other significance four years after his death in 1929 with the Nazis.²¹

19. Martin Warnke, “On Heinrich Wölfflin,” *Representations* 27 (summer 1989), p. 176.

20. Nineteen hundred fifteen is the year that Duchamp finds his “ready-made” term in New York, a model of art that mocks style-discourse, especially its encoding of singular subjectivity and original work; the year that Malevich exhibits his early Suprematist paintings and Tatlin his early Constructivist reliefs, two initial attempts to overthrow style-discourse altogether, especially its encoding of bourgeois forms of production and reception; and the year that Picasso reverts to drawing à la Ingres, that is, to a kind of postmodern pastiche *avant la lettre* that complicates any historicist narrative of styles (far more so than the nineteenth-century eclecticism that worried Wölfflin). Yet if Wölfflinian formalism could not address avant-garde art, some of its legatees felt that it might be adapted to “modernist painting,” first French, then American. For example, Greenberg and Fried extracted a “dialectic of modernism” from such painting that is expressly Wölfflinian. It was driven by the same dynamic of palling in perception and problem-solving in form that Wölfflin saw at work in his history of styles, and it too was pledged to the reanimation of art and vision against reification—against the reification of “kitsch” (for Greenberg) and “theatricality” (for Fried), that is to say, of mechanical reproduction and commodity culture. Again, all in the service of formal unity and historical continuity. (On the “dialectic of modernism” see Fried, *Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella* [Cambridge: Fogt Art Museum, 1965], reprinted in *Art and Objecthood* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998].)

21. Of course we face neither the world war nor the fascist threat that Wölfflin and Warburg faced, but there are some parallels to the crisis of nearly a century ago: a far deeper challenge to the Eurocentric tradition, an equally dramatic transformation of the technological bases of society, a greater extension of capitalist Empire, and so forth—certainly enough to provoke a renewed anxiety about the memory-structure of artistic practices and historical discourses today. This anxiety is effectively treated—not merely acted out—in two recent interventions in art-historical methodology: *The Judgment of Paris* by Hubert Damisch, which traces a “judgment” specific to art history, and *The Intelligence of Art* by Thomas Crow, which registers an “intelligence” specific to art; see *The Judgment of Paris*, trans. John Goodman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and *The Intelligence of Art* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). In different ways both authors are concerned with a transformational logic not immanent to art but nonetheless particular to it. Hence, they do not view art as autonomous but they do see art history as distinctive. And the spirit of Warburg hovers over both texts, explicitly in the Damisch. In terms of disciplinary models today, Wölfflin in his formalist guise is beyond the pale; so is Panofsky, at least in his iconographic guise, at least for the modernist field. Riegl was called up, because of his interest in marginal forms and neglected periods, in the service of canon-critique during the postmodernist heyday, so there already exists a late Riegl industry. But Warburg has become attractive for reasons beyond the process of elimination. Certainly his personal troubles speak to our traumatophilic times, as does his deep interest in the mnemonic survival of the image, however problematic his near-conflation of the mnemonic and the traumatic might be. More important is his broad method that offers an interdisciplinarity within art history that touches on concerns, both psychoanalytical and anthropological, that extend the discipline as well.

At this point, however, our second moment in this museal dialectics of seeing has already shaded into a third moment. Above I referred to “the history of art as a humanistic discipline.” This phrase is familiar to art historians as the title of a 1940 essay in which Erwin Panofsky defines the discipline in terms that also point to a dialectic of reification and reanimation. “Archaeological research is blind and empty without aesthetic re-creation,” Panofsky writes, “and aesthetic re-creation is irrational and often misguided without archaeological research. But, ‘leaning against one another,’ these two can support the ‘system that makes sense,’ that is, an historical synopsis.”²² Written in the face of fascism (which Panofsky addresses in his conclusion), this text presents the historian as humanist and vice versa, and asserts that “the humanities . . . are not faced by the task of arresting what otherwise would slip away, but of enlivening what otherwise would remain dead.”²³ This, too, is an idealist credo: just as Proust wanted the studio reanimated in the museum, its materials sublimated there, Panofsky wants the past reanimated in art history, its fragments redeemed there. This idealist position must then be counterposed to the materialist position of Benjamin, who, in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” which was also written in 1940 in the face of fascism, all but inverts the Panofskyan formulation: “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was,’” Benjamin writes. “It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”²⁴ Rather than reanimate and reorder tradition, Benjamin urges that its fragments be emancipated “from its parasitical dependence on ritual” and pledged to the present purposes of politics (as he puts it, famously, in his 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”).²⁵

In this way, if Panofsky attempts to *resolve* the dialectic of reification and reanimation in favor of reanimation, Benjamin seeks to *exacerbate* this same dialectic in favor of reification, or rather in favor of a communist condition posited on the other side of reification. Many leftists in the 1920s and ’30s (Gramsci prominent among them) took up this call to fight through “the murky reason” of capitalism, which, Siegfried Kracauer argued in “The Mass Ornament” (1927), “rationalizes not too much but rather *too little*.”²⁶ Through the “Art Work” essay Benjamin holds to this “left-Fordist” line as well: the shattering of tradition, advanced by mechanical

22. Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 19.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 24. This formulation speaks to a Hegelian preoccupation of the discipline: how great art can be both “a thing of the past” and available to contemporary consciousness. On this point see Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), especially the introduction.

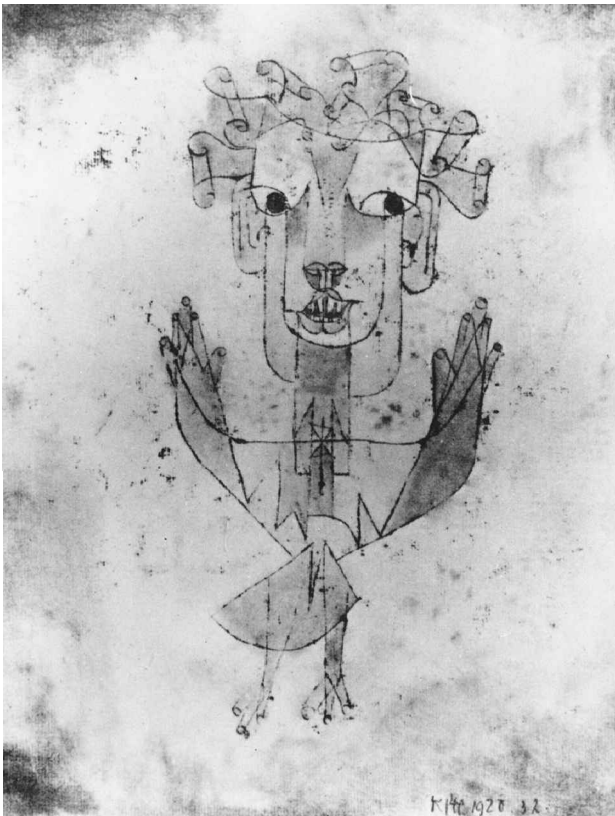
24. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 255.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

26. Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 81. Warburg bridges our second and third archival relations; and, to deepen the third one I have associated here with Benjamin and Panofsky, a pairing of Kracauer and Warburg, who complement each other uncannily on the relation between the photographic and the mnemonic, should be developed—but Benjamin H. D. Buchloh has already done so, brilliantly, in “Gerhard Richter’s *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive,” *October* 88 (spring 1999), pp. 117–45.

reproduction and mass production, is both destructive and constructive; or, rather, it is initially destructive and so potentially constructive. At this time Benjamin still had a vision of this potential construction—the Constructivist experiments in the Soviet Union—which would sweep away the fragments of the old bourgeois culture or reassemble them, radically, in a new proletarian culture. But with the Stalinist suppression of the avant-garde in the early 1930s this mirage had already evaporated, and Benjamin never reached the other side of reification. What seemed imminent in his “The Author as Producer” (1934) had become utopian only four years later in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” Like the allegorical figure of this essay, the *Angelus Novus* drawn by Paul Klee and owned by Benjamin, he feels the winds of modernity in his wings, but they have turned foul: “His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.”²⁷

27. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 257.



Paul Klee. *Angelus Novus*. 1920.

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So far I have posited three different archival relations among modern art practice, art museum, and art history in three different historical moments: the first associated with Baudelaire and Manet in the mid-nineteenth century, the second with Proust and Valéry at the turn of the twentieth century, the third with Panofsky and Benjamin on the eve of World War II. In different ways the first figure in each pair projects a totality of art, which the second figure reveals, consciously or not, to be made up of fragments alone. Again, for Benjamin the principal agent of this fragmentation is mechanical reproduction: in his “Art Work” essay it strips art of context, shatters its tradition, and liquidates its aura. Even as it allows the museum a new totality, it also dooms it, and cinema advances to supplant it culturally. In this way the “cult value” of art is eradicated and replaced by the “exhibition value” of art, its making for the market and the museum. But, at least potentially, this value is also challenged, and in lieu of these rituals, both old and new, Benjamin advocates a political refunctioning of art. Such is his dialectical account of the second archival relation as it passes into a third, an account that demonstrates how each archival shift is both enabling and disabling, transgressing and trumping.

Yet this account was disputed, directly and not, by other voices. I mentioned Panofsky, but Malraux may be more pertinent here, for he was in dialogue with Benjamin at the time of the “Art Work” essay, which was important to his initial sketch of the *musée imaginaire*.²⁸ Malraux glimpsed the same archival transformation as Benjamin, but he drew different conclusions. For Malraux mechanical reproduction not only erodes originality; it can also locate it, even construct it.²⁹ And though the reproduced art work loses some of its properties as an object, by the same token it gains other properties, such as “the utmost significance as to style.”³⁰ In short,

28. On this relation see Denis Hollier, “On Paper,” in Cynthia Davidson, ed., *Anytime* (New York: Any Foundation, 2001). Also see Rosalind Krauss, “Postmodernism’s Museum without Walls,” in Reesa Greenberg et al., *Thinking about Exhibitions* (New York: Routledge, 1996). The “museum without walls” is the unfortunate translation of *le musée imaginaire*. For a contemporaneous critique of the notion see Georges Duthuit, *Le musée inimaginable* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1956).

29. Yet this too is implicit in the “Art Work” essay, though most commentators overlook it. “At the time of its origin a medieval picture of the Madonna could not yet be said to be ‘authentic,’” Benjamin writes in a footnote. “It became ‘authentic’ only during the succeeding centuries and perhaps most strikingly so during the last one” (*Illuminations*, p. 243).

30. André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). “All that remains of Aeschylus is his genius. It is the same with figures that in reproduction lose both their significance as objects and their function (religious or other); we see them only as works of art and they bring home to us only their maker’s talent. We might almost call them not ‘works’ but ‘moments’ of art. Yet diverse as they are, all these objects . . . speak for the same endeavor; it is as though an unseen presence, the spirit of art, were urging all on the same quest, from miniature to picture, from fresco to stained-glass window, and then, at certain moments, it abruptly indicated a new line of advance, parallel or abruptly divergent. Thus it is that, thanks to the rather specious unity imposed by photographic reproduction on a multiplicity of objects, ranging from the statue to the bas-relief, from bas-reliefs to seal-impressions, and from these to the plaques of the nomads, a ‘Babylonian style’ seems to emerge as a real unity, not a mere classification—as something resembling, rather, the



André Malraux with the photographic plates for The Museum Without Walls. ca. 1950. Photo ' Paris Match/Jarnoux.

where Benjamin saw a definitive rupture of the museum forced by mechanical reproduction, Malraux saw its indefinite expansion. Where for Benjamin mechanical reproduction shatters tradition and liquidates aura, for Malraux it provides the means to reassemble the broken bits of tradition into one meta-tradition of global styles—a new Museum without Walls whose subject is the Family of Man. Indeed for Malraux it is the very flow of a liquidated aura that allows all of the fragments to course together in the River of History, or what he calls “the persisting life of certain forms, emerging ever and again like spectres from the past.”³¹ Here the reified family sepulchres in the museum of Valéry become the reanimated kindred spirits in the museum of Malraux. Here, too, the angel of history-as-catastrophe imagined by Benjamin becomes the technocratic humanist embodied in Malraux who works to recoup local crises for global continuities, to transform imagistic chaos into museological order.

Of course there are other critical voices to add to this third moment, and I have not touched on the myriad modernist practices supported by it. Clearly, too, there is a fourth archival relation to consider, one that emerges with consumer society after World War II, to be registered in different ways by the Independent Group in England, the Situationists in France, and artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol in the United States, and Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke in Germany.³² But the question I want to pose here concerns our own present: Is there yet another archival relation, a fifth moment in this dialectics of seeing, allowed by electronic information? If so, does it shatter tradition and liquidate aura all the more à la Benjamin on mechanical reproduction, or, on the contrary, does it permit the finding of ever more stylistic affinities, the fostering of ever more artistic values, à la Malraux on the *musée imaginaire*? Or does it render this opposition, all these terms, this entire dialectic, somehow outmoded and defunct? What cultural epistemology might a digital reordering underwrite for art practice, art museum, and art history alike?

I have no conclusions at this point, only a few impressions. In some ways the dialectic of reification and reanimation continues, and with greater intensity than before. On the one hand, as a digital reordering transforms artifacts into information, it seems to fragment the object and to dissolve its aura absolutely. On the other hand, any dissolution of aura only increases our demand for it, or fabrication of it, in a compensatory projection that is now very familiar. As new aura is difficult to produce, established aura skyrockets in value (as Rem Koolhaas once

life-style of a great creator. Nothing conveys more vividly and compellingly the notion of a destiny shaping human ends than do the great styles, whose evolutions and transformations seem like long scars that Fate has left, in passing, on the face of the earth” (p. 112).

31. Ibid., p. 13. Malraux is hardly alone in this totalizing mode; this was a moment for grand speculations on art and architecture by Siegfried Giedion, Gyorgy Kepes, Henri Focillon, Joseph Schillinger, and Alexander Dorner, among others.

32. It is no accident that my narrative of archival relations matches, loosely, the periodizations of spectacle proposed by Guy Debord, T.J. Clark, and Jonathan Crary.

remarked, there is just not enough past to go around). Thus, in an electronic continuation of the Mona Lisa Syndrome whereby the cliché only heightens the cult, the art work might become more auratic, not less, as it becomes more simulacral in the electronic archive. A version of this compensatory projection is now part of the common rhetoric of the art museum: the electronic archive does not deflect from the museal object, we are told, much less supplant it; it is pledged to lead us back to the art work and to enhance its aura. And, at least at the operational level, this archive does not conflict with the basic protocol of art history, for both are iconographic in bias; in this way at least, both are pledged to the referentiality of the object.

But let me end with another tack, and return once more to our first archival relation. Foucault also associated this moment with Manet and the museum (as well as with Flaubert and the library) in the well-known formulation, “every painting now belongs within the squared and massive surface of painting and all literary works are confined to the indefinite murmur of words.”³³ In many ways this “squared and massive surface of painting” is sublated—transgressed and trumped—in the Museum without Walls, and for Foucault as for Malraux the very basis of this imaginary museum of modern art is discursive: it is all but created by *ideas*—the ideas of Style, Art, and Museum. Benjamin is not content with this discursive account alone, as he foregrounds the material role not only of photographic reproduction but of “exhibition-value.” By this term he means exchange-value as it penetrates the institution of art, and transforms both the art work and its contextual frames. Of course this transformation was explored by various movements in his own present, our third archival moment. Consider the Bauhaus in this regard. In its project to transform the art work, the Bauhaus contested the archival relations of painting and museum that obtained in our first two archival moments; yet this contestation also facilitated “the practical extension of the system of exchange value to the whole domain of signs, forms and objects.”³⁴ Thus the Bauhaus transgressed the old orders of art, but as it did so it also promoted the new sovereignty of capitalist design, the new political economy of the commodified sign. And this political economy dominates social and cultural institutions like never before.³⁵

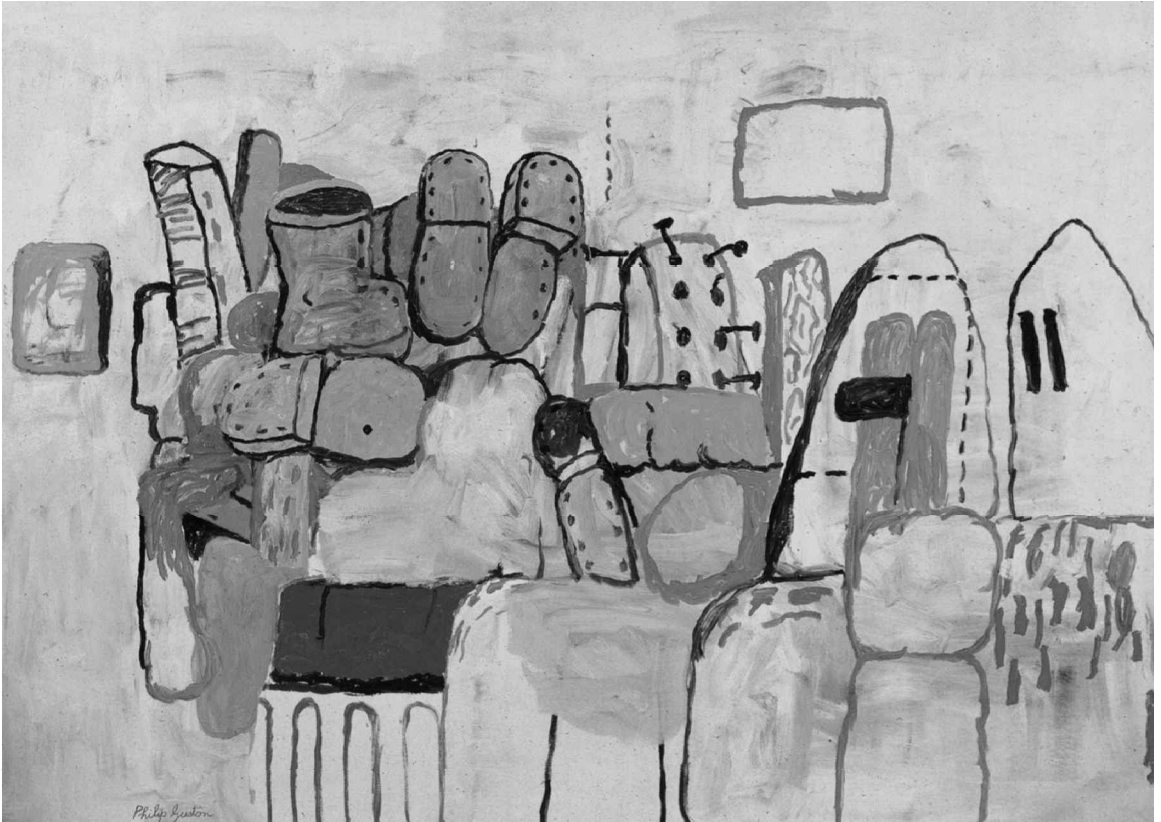
33. Michel Foucault, “Fantasia on the Library” (1967), in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 92–93.

34. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), p. 186. The most trenchant account of this dialectic remains Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979). On the “mediation” of modern architecture, see Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).

35. In some ways the contemporary museum (the Guggenheim is the flagship of this new fleet) reconciles in perverse fashion the dialectical opposition first presented by Malraux and Benjamin. On the one hand, a version of what Malraux imagined, the virtual Museum without Walls, has become a reality with the electronic museum, the museum on-line. On the other hand, a version of what Benjamin foresaw, a cinema beyond the museum, is now brought back within the museum in the form of exhibition designs calculated to flow cinematically, or to stream like Web pages. In this way, too, the

Some aspects of this historical transformation are familiar to us, such as the imbrication of modern art with the display of commodities from its beginnings (with the museum flanked by the industrial exposition on one side and the department store on the other), or the conformity of modern art, in its categories of discrete objects made for display and purchase, to exhibition and exchange values. But there are more recent developments to consider along these lines, such as the extent to which exhibition value in art has become all but autonomous, to the point where it often overwhelms whatever is on view. Indeed design and display in the service of exhibition and exchange values are foregrounded as never before: today what the museum exhibits above all else is its own spectacle value—that is the principal point of attraction and the chief object of reverence. And among many other effects there is this one: if the old museum, as imagined from Baudelaire through Proust and beyond, was the site for the mnemonic reanimation of visual art, the new museum tends to split the mnemonic experience from the visual one. More and more the mnemonic function of the museum is given over to the electronic archive, which might be accessed almost anywhere, while the visual function is given over not only to the exhibition-form of art but to the museum-building as spectacle—that is, as an image to be circulated in the media in the service of brand equity and cultural capital. This image is the primary form of “art” today.

institution of art continues to conform to new structures of exchange, to be reformatted around the visual-digital paradigm of the Web site. And many artists and architects have followed suit, either affirmatively or critically—though what might constitute critique in this context is not yet clear.



*Philip Guston. A Day's Work. 1970. All
Guston works ' The Estate of Philip Guston.*