

PRESS RELEASE
19 September 2023

The Uffizi dedicates a major exhibition to Aby Warburg (1866–1929) and brings his revolutionary ideas back to their place of origin.

Starting today and running until 10 December 2023, over 100 drawings, photographs, paintings, and documents – as well as the panels of the famous *Mnemosyne Atlas* – will present the life and the legacy of the pioneering art historian from Hamburg Aby Warburg, who fundamentally changed the study of images and visual culture.

Rooms with a View: Aby Warburg, Florence and the Laboratory of Images

19 September – 10 December 2023

Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi

An exhibition organized by the Gallerie degli Uffizi and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut in cooperation with the Warburg Institute, London

When, in the last year of his life, the art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929) wrote “Florence is my destiny,” he was looking back on a relationship with the city that had lasted over forty years, and which began with his first visit in 1888. Florence was fundamental to the development of his way of thinking and his revolutionary approach to a history of images and visual culture, and he was a central figure in the early years of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, founded in 1897. The importance of the city for Warburg’s studies does not only lie in its ancient and Renaissance works of art, but also in the extensive social, political, and urban transformations of Warburg’s time. This is the point of departure of the exhibition *Rooms with a View: Aby Warburg, Florence and the Laboratory of Images*, curated by the Gallerie degli Uffizi and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut in collaboration with the Warburg Institute in London, on display from 19 September to 10 December 2023 at the Uffizi.

The exhibition presents a conspicuous number of panels of Warburg’s last project, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, an open laboratory of images, which remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1929. This series of panels composed of reproductions, largely photographic, of artworks and all kinds of images offers itself as a cartography of cultural memory. The panels of the latest version of the *Atlas* are documented by photographs from 1929 and were reconstructed with original materials from the Warburg Institute in 2020: a selection of 12

panels is shown for the first time in Italy in this exhibition, together with two panels of the second last version reconstructed on this occasion.

The exhibition brings Warburg's revolutionary experiments back to the place from which he took many inspirations. It stages a three-fold dialogue between the *Atlas* plates; the works of the permanent collection of the Gallery, among them the *Adoration of the Magi* by Gentile da Fabriano, *Primavera* and *Birth of Venus* by Botticelli, the Portinari Altarpiece and the *Laocoön* of Bandinelli, and of other collections; and the interventions of contemporary artists like William Kentridge, Lebohang Kganye, Alexander Kluge, Goshka Macuga, Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, Sissi Daniela Olivieri, and Akram Zaatari.

It is a dialogue that invites reflection on the coordinates and paths, past and present, of the Uffizi Gallery itself, understood as an atlas in its own right with its ancient statues and Renaissance paintings. At the same time, it demonstrates the topicality of thinking with images enacted by Warburg with his practice of cutting, scaling, and mounting ever-changing constellations: images, he asserts, migrate, in space and time, condensing and re-activating reserves of energy, simulating motion, and expressing emotional states. A topicality both in terms of the digital dynamics of visual culture today, and in terms of a global history of images and art.

Making use of a rich documentary apparatus, the exhibition invites visitors to take a metaphorical tour of Florence (for example, to the great fresco cycles of the fifteenth century) accompanied by Warburg, revealing aspects of the cultural life of the city at the turn of the twentieth century, and uncovering the traces of Warburg's presence and his studies in the museums and archives of Florence today.

Director of the Gallerie degli Uffizi Eike Schmidt says: “For Aby Warburg, the role of Florence, and especially of the Uffizi, is more than evident considering that after his first stay in the city in 1888–89 he wrote his doctoral dissertation on what are today two of the most famous mythological paintings by Sandro Botticelli: the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus* (in Warburg's time they had certainly not reached the level of popularity that they enjoy today). It is on his comparative method, as seen in the *Atlas of Images* that he called *Mnemosyne*, that the foundation of our museum's major transformations and displays after World War II lies, a testimony to the modernity – still relevant today – of his thinking.”

Director of the Warburg Institute Bill Sherman says: “Almost 100 years after the Institute founded by Aby Warburg was exiled to London, Warburg's work is finally enjoying a homecoming. In 2020-22, we were happy to help with exhibitions of his projects in his native Germany. But his heart was in Italy—and his soul, as he said, in Florence—so it is thrilling to bring Warburg back to the very museum where he found his calling. The encounter between Warburg and the Uffizi changed the course not just of Warburg's career but of art history itself, and it is my hope that the new encounters staged in this exhibition will give new life to the questions he posed in the 1890s.”

Director of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut Gerhard Wolf says: “*Rooms with a View* is the result of an impressive collaborative effort

aiming to demonstrate the continued relevance of Warburg's image laboratory today. His experimental approach to thinking with or by images is of great inspiration one hundred years later – especially when we consider the digital 'world' of images – and also in the case of his studies of the psychic energies of art. What is particularly fascinating about this exhibition is the triple dialogue between the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Warburg's images, and the works of contemporary artists. ”

Curator of the exhibition Marzia Faietti says: “This unprecedented, and in some ways experimental, exhibition works in dialogue with the tradition embodied by the Uffizi, characterized as it is by an intricate ensemble of historical and monumental collections and spaces. The museum, a fascinating palimpsest of our history, at the same time encourages us to look beyond, following in the footsteps of the experimentalism of the artists of past centuries and the gaze of the Medici towards new worlds.”

Aby Warburg

Born in Hamburg to a Jewish banking family, Aby Warburg (1866–1929) studied art history in Bonn, Strassburg, and Florence, where he met his future wife, the artist Mary Hertz, and was among the founders of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz. In 1893, Warburg published a dissertation on Botticelli's mythological paintings. After a trip that brought him close to the art and culture of the Hopi and Pueblo peoples in Arizona and New Mexico, he married and settled in Florence in 1897. By 1904 he was in Hamburg and expanded his research to the history of astrological imagery. He created and enlarged his famous Library of Cultural Studies, later to become the Warburg Institute, which emigrated from Nazi Germany to the United Kingdom in 1933 and is now part of the University of London. After World War I, Warburg's mental health worsened and he spent years in Binswanger's clinic on Lake Constance (1921–1924). Returning to work, he resumed and broadened his studies on Renaissance festivals and theater and devoted himself to the creation of an Atlas of Images, entitled *Mnemosyne*, that, at the time of his death, would remain unfinished.

The **Gallerie degli Uffizi** is one of the most important and most visited Italian museums; officially opened to the public in 1769, it now houses one of the largest collections of ancient and Renaissance art.

www.uffizi.it

The **Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut**, founded in 1897, is a leading research institute dedicated to art histories and their global challenges in the contemporary world.

www.khi.fi.it

The **Warburg Institute** in London, originally founded in Hamburg by Aby Warburg, is a leading center for studying the interaction of ideas, images, and society and is part of the University of London.

warburg.sas.ac.uk

Credits and Related Content

An exhibition organized by the Gallerie degli Uffizi and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut in cooperation with the Warburg Institute, London.

Curators

Costanza Caraffa, Marzia Faietti, Eike Schmidt, Bill Sherman, Giovanna Targia, Claudia Wedepohl, Gerhard Wolf

Concept

Gerhard Wolf

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated **catalog** published by Giunti and edited by Marzia Faietti, Eike Schmidt, Giovanna Targia, and Gerhard Wolf with Bill Sherman, Katia Mazzucco, Lunarita Sterpetti, and Claudia Wedepohl.

The app ***Aby Warburg's Florence*** (available on [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play Store](#)) invites visitors to follow three itineraries in Florence, related to Warburg's studies. A selection of 'Florentine voices' offers unexpected perspectives on the city from the second half of the fifteenth century to Warburg's time.

Press Images

Available for download here:

<https://owncloud.gwdg.de/index.php/s/m8c9gvoU2ombLpX>

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