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## Mnemographic Atlas or Painted Atlas

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*A sort of productive disorder is the canon of involuntary memory and also of the collector.*

W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Direct references to the photographic material that I cumulate and collect, as a way to trigger a beginning, seem to be a constant in my artistic production. The archive itself is placed at the beginning of the project, as a collection of impacts that are usually invisible, kept in drawers or folders along with sketches, quotes and books, awaiting to be rescued from their anonymous existence by a fresh pair of eyes.

I understand painting as the process of assembling pre-existing images of any nature, that are reconstructed against a fictional background, in fictional situations. In them, each imported fragment “acts” as an ingredient of the scene. It contributes its interaction, unexpected fusions and meanings. This vision of painting implies a watchful attitude towards the surrounding images, that relate to each other and interact through the way they are assembled and the random associations that are connected to one's own visual memory, experience, reflections and readings. This would be a necessary condition to translate those photographic albums in a pictoric event.

The project under the title *Atlas mnemográfico* (Mnemographic Atlas) aims at displaying in this solo exhibition a methodological process that would favour the development of the practice of painting. To that end, we set off to commit to “painting the archive” daily, as a neverending sketchbook where we could pour,

without restrictions, in complete freedom, some of the findings or meetings caused by heterogeneous themes. This archive of cuttings painted on prints works as a visual, experimental laboratory, as though painted images were the pieces of a pantograph inspiring and allowing for pictorial drifting.

We are aware that *Atlas* is usually first associated with the printed book format that contains a collection of prints full of images, in its bound pages. For Didi-Huberman this archiving formula compiling the visual form of knowledge could also propose another possibility where a wise form of seeing could be displayed.

Equipo Realidad on “what to see” stated that they were not interested in reality, but in its image, this is to say, in the thousands of images that circulate around us and that curiously enough, some of them become part of a personal archive that classifies them in subjects. I share their work system to register “what is real”. This system also records, through this random encounter with what is paralysingly unusual in all visual material that we cumulate as mnemonic tools that may favour a more reflexive attitude towards “looking” at our surroundings.

Many are the artists that have worked with this cumulative process of images found or deliberately produced. The archiving systems generated by such disparate artists as Gerhard Richter, Hannah Höch or photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher among many others, describe a very diverse landscape connecting with the viewers interested in knowing the work processes and formal drifting that any artist faces when translating reality into a new presence.

Art itself is a mystery which has accompanied us since human beings became conscious of their own existence. Humans have projected a variety of structures that aim at bringing order to the world and understanding its chaos, which are of more or less visible. Their representations encompass great diversity of languages and commu-

nication formats that technology has accelerated dizzily. They help us to understand things, to obtain knowledge about events, about mental or emotional territories that concern us, as species. Therefore, image as an encoding structure may operate as an epistemologic element of knowledge, of approximation to that reality that gives us fragments of information, what Aby Warburg would define as “engrams”, physical marks in our collective memory<sup>1</sup>. When juxtaposed by assembling them intentionally, they could produce new semantic codes without the objective qualities that text brings. Glints of signification<sup>2</sup> that the viewer may connect with other significant belonging to their own biography, as a cartographer in search of new constellations.

When someone fixes what they see or how they look through drawing or painting, they are offering a piece of what they observe, a fragment of reality through a gesture that questions reality, to become image, thus abandoning its quality of disconnected signs on a surface, to become a new presence.

This fact we just described fascinates today's viewer, who is very curious about the images that are part of the personal experience of artists, where we discover not only the aesthetic manners of the author. It may also offer other information on the creative processes of the work, concepts and ideas comprising what the viewer sees or the diversity of their forms to interpret what they see, as a catalyst inviting us into the artist's mind.

As we have stated in this summary, presenting an archive or painted atlas might connect us with spaces and places which are not specific, places difficult to define. Maybe these printed pictures form part of the states of our uncousciouness that we like to keep; spontaneous traces of reality that might favour exploring new territories. They can also show the multiple intents of the author trying to limit an area while developing a creative

project; visible borders that leave traces of their formal quest as a collection of visual propositions which, besides being portable, are declarations, manifestos in a waiting room...

Many are the questions cropping up at the beginning of a project, when trying to define a stance, in order to foresee possible itineraries. Finally, the project *Atlas mnemográfico* (Mnemographic Atlas) aims at displaying the paintings on linen as a possible end piece of the pictorial series, and as the neural core of this project, a painted archive as an Atlas.

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1. Warburg, Aby. *Atlas*. Spanish edition by Fernando Checa. Madrid: Akal, 2010.

*Mnemosyne. L'Atlante delle immagini*. Turín: Nino Aragno editore, 2002.

2. Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Atlas: ¿Cómo llevar el mundo a cuestas?* (Atlas: How to Carry the Weight of the World?). Madrid: MNCARS, 2011.



*Instrucciones para ser humano*, 2014

Óleo sobre lino. 67 x 90 cm

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*Instructions To Be Human*, 2014

Oil on linen. 67 x 90 cm (26.37 x 35.43 in)